

JOIN THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP

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

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

For further information write to:

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

Take a Radical Step!

Join a walking tour led by David Rosenberg, author of *Battle for the East End and Rebel Footprints*

Tours run throughout out the year in different parts of the East End as well as in Battersea, Bermondsey, Bloomsbury, Hackney, Islington and Westminster.

"Your walk was interesting, instructive, moving and funny! Every lover of London and every lover of freedom should take it."

Prof Carlotta Fontana, Milan, Italy

Cost £10/£7 (unwaged)

Book online at <https://www.eastendwalks.com>
or email david@eastendwalks.com



JEWISH SOCIALIST

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

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Send this form to: Jewish Socialist,
BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX.

(cheques to Jewish Socialist Publications)

☐ Please send me the next four issues
of Jewish Socialist starting with issue.....
I enclose £15 (inc p&p).

☐ I also enclose a donation of £.....
Overseas subscription £30 Sterling

Name

Address

Postcode

Country

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, gays and lesbians and transgender people 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 opinions expressed in Jewish Socialist are those of individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editorial committee or of the Jewish Socialists' Group. Jewish Socialist is published quarterly by Jewish Socialist Ltd, BM 3725, London WC1N 3XX. Printed by Absolute Print, 50 Proctor Road, London E13 9BE. Names and addresses of Jewish Socialist subscribers are held on a computer to facilitate efficient distribution. This information is used for no other purpose. The Data Protection Act 1994 requires us to inform subscribers that they may object to information being held in this form.

JEWISH SOCIALIST

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP
No 80 Autumn 2024 £3



WHY ARE THE FAR RIGHT RISING? HOW DO WE WIN?

- Zack Polanski interview ■ World Jews for Palestine ■ Cable Street musical ■
- Environmental war on Gaza ■ Alderney - the truth ■ JSG 50th birthday ■

EDITORIAL

Welcome to issue 80 of *Jewish Socialist*! Our cover photo depicts the menacing scenes of unrest that exploded in Britain's urban areas just weeks ago. Instigated by organised fascists, they drew in wider layers of the discontented wanting to vent their frustrations. The media and political establishment labelled these events "riots" and "mindless thuggery". Antiracists, recognising that the principal targets were Muslims and refugees, named them pogroms.

There was an immediate and heartening response across communities in many areas, and Jewish Socialists' Group members who participated were pleased to find many other Jews there, but we cannot doubt that there is a far-right resurgence that mirrors the gains racists and fascists are making across Europe and beyond.

We should be celebrating the downfall of Britain's Tory government that brought misery to so many while enriching their friends. But Labour's massive victory in seats was built on far fewer votes than the party received when it stood on a radical left programme in 2017. In the 2024 election 4.1 million votes went to Reform-UK, a party with an embryonic far-right ideological programme led by Nigel Farage. They came second in nearly 100 constituencies.

The global picture of far-right gains should worry us as antiracists, socialists and Jews. The bigotries that are being stirred up include both Islamophobia and antisemitism, and conspiracy theories are enjoying renewed popularity.

Some on the right try to explain the recent unrest here as "Russian interference", while elements purporting to be leftwing, claim that "Israel pushed the riot button" and chose to "burn down Britain", as if racists and fascists in Britain needed help or advice from Israel on how to be Islamophobic. The situation is far too serious for such glib ideas. We have tried to get to the heart of that resurgence, and understand its relationship with mainstream politics, by publishing Aaron Winter's challenging analysis (page 20).

Both Farage in parliament, and the YouTube and street rabble-rouser Tommy Robinson are gaining confidence and strength from the increasing popularity of the European far right. The right-wingers who dominate the Jewish establishment cry crocodile tears about the far right elsewhere, but feed the same Islamophobic narratives that help Farage

and Robinson here, and, like them, have sought to demonise those who show solidarity with the Palestinians.

The unfolding horrors for actual Palestinians are not letting up. The Israeli military is engaging in a genocide under the cover of its government's "war on Hamas". It continues to be armed principally by the US, Britain and Germany, whose complicit politicians have no red lines around continued support. We don't want to simply reproduce on paper the shocking events people are witnessing on their TV screens daily, but instead to make our readers aware of under-investigated phenomena with wide ranging consequences. So, we are very pleased to publish Georgia Gee's powerful exposure of the insidious role played by volunteer agricultural workers in Israel recruited by the not-for-profit Hashomer Hachadash organisation (page 10), and to publish Tony Booth's deep analysis of the monumental environmental consequences of Israel's war on Gaza (page 18).

In our last issue we catalogued the inspiring growth of the Jewish Bloc for Palestine in London and similar blocs elsewhere in Britain. Charlotte Prager Williams (page 8) provides fascinating descriptions of the activities of like-minded Jews far from Britain. Our resistance to any claims by Israel to speak in our name is global!

Our search for allies in struggle remains constant. As Britain's Labour Party shifted rightwards, several of its MPs/candidates lost to left wing and pro-Palestinian independents. Dissent from Labour was also expressed in an increase in votes and seats for the leftward-shifting Green Party. Their deputy leader is Zack Polanski, a Manchester-born Jew who has been outspoken over Palestine. He gave a very frank interview to *Jewish Socialist* (page 13).

In times of such immense suffering in the world right now, it can be hard to celebrate, but we are determined to mark with pride and with joy, the fact that this is the 50th anniversary year of the creation of the Jewish Socialists' Group in Britain. Julia Bard and David Rosenberg (page 16) look back on some memorable and unusual moments that laid the foundations of our unique politics, and we look forward to what we can create and contribute as part of progressive humanity in the coming decades.

Jewish Socialist Editorial Committee: Julia Bard, Judith Cravitz, David Rosenberg, Raf Salkie, Zach Smerin and Charlotte Prager Williams. With thanks to Sue Levi Hughes and Simon Lynn for additional proofreading.

Cover photo: Sunderland Riot/Mark Pinder

CONTENTS

NEWS

- 3 Struggle and solidarity
- 4 Getting a handle on rising racism and fascism; A promising publication
- 6 The Battle of Holbeck Moor

REGULARS

- 5 Change the World
- 7 Wisewords
- 31 Ask the Rabbi

FEATURES

- 8 **Jews for Palestine around the world**
Charlotte Prager Williams talks to Jewish activists across the globe who are standing up for justice for the Palestinians and an end to the genocide
- 10 **Pick peppers, patrol for Palestinians**
With major government funding, Hashomer Hachadash sends volunteers to cement Jewish control of open farmland – on both sides of the Green Line.
Georgia Gee reports
- 13 **Green, Jewish and seeking truth**
Zack Polanski, Deputy leader of the Green Party and a member of the London Assembly, spoke to *Jewish Socialist* about democracy, inequality, being a Jewish politician and more

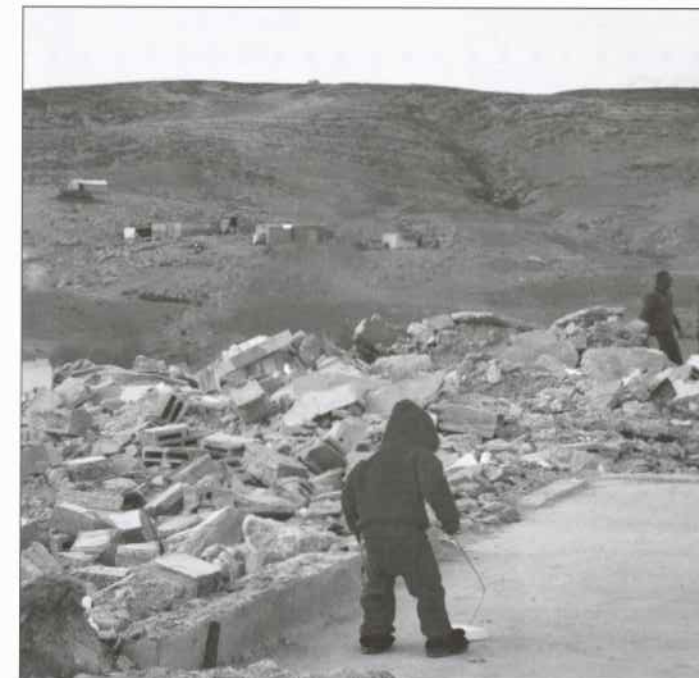
- 16 **The Jewish Socialists' Group is 50!**
Highs, lows, losses and laughs. David Rosenberg and Julia Bard look back at what the JSG has been doing since 1974
- 18 **Gaza's devastation**
Tony Booth has been fighting environmental breakdown for nearly half a century. Here he documents and assess the impact of the Israeli onslaught on Palestine
- 20 **Riots, racism and the left**
Aaron Winter analyses the responses to the outbreak of far-right violence over the summer
- 23 **Who goes there? Friend or foe?**
David Landau argues that when the far right is threatening communities and campaigners, we need to simultaneously challenge the police and demand their protection
- 24 **Hiding in plain sight**
Clara Usiskin delves into Britain's account of the Nazi occupation of Alderney, and discovers a continuing story of avoidance, denial and cover-up

REVIEWS

- 28 Kosher Jammers: Jewish Connections in Jazz Vol 1
- 29 What does Israel Fear from Palestine
- 30 Cable Street: A new musical

Struggle and solidarity

NEWS



A new film, *No Other Land*, tells the story of Basel Adra, a young Palestinian activist from Masafer Yatta, who has been fighting the mass expulsion of his community by the Israeli occupation since childhood. Basel documents the gradual erasure of Masafer Yatta as soldiers destroy the homes of families in the largest single act of forced transfer ever carried out in the Occupied West Bank.

He encounters Yuval, an Israeli journalist who joins his struggle, and for over five years they grow closer as they fight against the expulsion. But their complex relationship is overshadowed by the extreme inequality between them: Basel, living under a brutal

military occupation, and Yuval, unrestricted and free.

This film, by a Palestinian-Israeli collective of four young activists, was co-created during the darkest, most terrifying times in the region as an act of creative resistance to apartheid and a search for a path towards equality and justice.

Jewish Socialist will review it in the next issue. In the meantime, you can see it in cinemas from 8th November.

No Other Land is directed by Yuval Abraham, Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal and Rachel Szor.

For more information and to buy tickets, go to <https://releasing.dogwoof.com/no-other-land>

Getting a handle on rising racism and fascism

"I was shocked to hear my own nieces in Manchester say, 'We're not going out today because the fascists are out on the streets and we'll be attacked.' When politicians play the race card, it's we who pay the price with blood on our streets, and we saw that in what happened over the summer."

Asad Rehman, antiracist activist in east London and Director of War on Want, was describing the collective trauma in minority ethnic communities amid the explosion of far-right street violence in Britain in the summer of 2024. He was one of four speakers sharing their analyses of these events at a Zoom forum organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group on 15th September.



Asad Rehman

The immediate backdrop to what the mainstream media described as "riots", even "protests", but which activists have labelled "pogroms", were the tragic murders of three children in Southport. Far-right networks, including Tommy Robinson's, spread the lie that they were committed by a Muslim asylum seeker. The pogroms occurred just weeks after the ultra-nationalist and racist Reform-UK Party, led by Nigel Farage, won more than four

million votes and five parliamentary seats, at the General Election, gathering more votes than the Liberal Democrats, Britain's traditional third party.

Aaron Winter, a Canadian Jewish academic at Lancaster University, who researches the

political mainstreaming of racist populism, told the forum: "It was attributed to misinformation, disinformation and radicalisation by individuals like Tommy Robinson on social media, Telegram and X, but definitely not [portrayed as] structural or linked to any systems that affirm these ideas. For example, platforming Robinson and Farage regularly on mainstream television and radio." He condemned Labour's new Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, for simply calling it "pure violence", with no link to anything in the system. The established media outlets described these violent racist and fascist outbreaks as "protests", implying that they were "expressions of legitimate concerns of the white working class, the left behind people". He slammed the BBC for calling them "pro-British" protests, "muting the fascism and

normalising the term."

Laura Pidcock, grassroots activist and former left-Labour MP for North West Durham, described how the far-right take "really serious, complex issues, like sexual abuse, injustice in the judicial system, poverty, and they racialise them in their morally



Aaron Winter

selective ways. They haven't been at the forefront of the anti-cuts campaigns over the last decade. Nor are they part of the network of volunteers at food banks. They're not known for efforts to fight for services for women escaping

violent partners. They only care about these issues if there's an opportunity to blame minority communities, the main targets being Muslims at the moment." But, she added: "What worries me most is that their arguments are compellingly put." She spoke of how they "are distancing themselves, too, from the term 'far right', with placards that say things like 'not far right, just right so far', in a concerted effort to make their reactionary racism palatable and mainstream."

Asad Rehman described how "now, people think it's not acceptable to use the P-word and the N-Word. But Islamophobia has become the vehicle in which

The Jewish Socialists' Group brought together an inspiring panel of analysts and activists to discuss the meaning of the events instigated by the far right in Britain this summer. **DAVID ROSENBERG** reports

racism becomes legitimate, and therefore I'm less worried about the Tommy Robinsons. It's the Melanie Phillips. It's the Douglas Murrays. It's the Trevor Phillips. It's these people, normalising it in the mainstream."

Aaron Winter noted the way the mainstream "taps into the far right or uses the far right as an excuse in different ways. They can be street soldiers to maintain white supremacy and capitalism, or they can be a distraction. They can exceptionalise it or they can embolden it. We saw the Tories embolden it. We see Labour exceptionalise it, and say, 'if you don't vote for us, they'll get in'."

Apsana Begum, MP for Poplar and Limehouse in East London, blamed the political establishment in general for "maintaining one of the greatest political myths of modern times, that the way to defeat the bigoted far right is to pander to them. It's fundamentally wrong in principle and in practice. Politicians who spread the lie that migrants are the problem are guilty of whipping up that anxiety of fear, fuelling the racism."

She warned of the consequences of "Keir Starmer's position on Gaza, civil liberties, migrant rights, his attacks on

democracy and Labour Party members, his support for austerity, big business, and privatisation and the return of Blairism – pursuing imperialism abroad and at home, pandering to right-wing narratives on migration, civil liberties, Islamophobia and social security." She foresaw that this will "eventually blame the very people who've been victimised by this summer's violence."

Laura Pidcock described "the *Daily Express*, for goodness sake, facilitating a protest outside Parliament, joined by Conservatives and Reform against Labour's cruel cuts to winter fuel payments. And you can almost see the transfer of confidence and support to the far right. In real time. I thought a right-wing Labour government would

grow the far right, but I completely underestimated the speed with which that would happen."

Apsana Begum commented: "We've already seen banners unfurled of 'Pensioners before migrants'." At the same time, though, she was heartened by the



Laura Pidcock

responses from the grassroots "working class people this summer, coming out on to the streets to defend local communities. That was very beautiful and inspirational."

Asad Rehman drew attention to the wider picture in Europe, the gains the far right have made in France, Germany and Sweden, with a surprising level of support from young people. He said: "The idea that somehow Gen Z or the Millennials are a product of a multicultural society, therefore, are going to be implicitly antiracist, it's simply not true. You have to win these arguments." He urged trade unions to think about organising "not just at the factory gate, but also at the school gate and into the community."

Apsana Begum recalled with pride the Battle of Cable Street that took place on her home turf in 1936. "There are still lessons to learn from there. But I think there are also things that we take from more recent periods in terms of how we tackle the far right. The only way, I think, to defeat the politics of fear, despair, and disempowerment is through the politics of hope, solidarity, and socialism."

See the feature article by Aaron Winter on p20.



Apsana Begum MP

A promising publication

A new publication is being founded in Berlin: *The Diasporist*, a bilingual online magazine of culture and politics. As the German media become entrenched in their own distorted reality, increasingly out of step with facts and allergic to disagreement, *The Diasporist* intends to offer an alternative. As the name suggests, this alternative is premised upon a diasporic approach, privileging stories that explore life from the margins, analysis made at a critical distance, and writing that represents a multiplicity

of perspectives.

The Diasporist is committed to translation in practice and in concept, demystifying debates and overused terms, and making nuanced conversations accessible to different audiences. Its work attempts to consolidate the conversation about culture and politics in Germany, offering international readers a view into life there and offering local audiences a path out.

The core editorial team, supported by the international advocacy group Diaspora Alliance, aims to make space

for progressive Jewish voices together with other progressives of all backgrounds, and especially of other diasporic backgrounds. This is a coalition-based approach, inspired by the Jewish Labour Bund. In Germany, with its tiny Jewish community and even tinier Jewish left, this kind of cross-community co-operation is especially vital.

The magazine seeks to feature multiple takes on single issues. Its editors favour writing that straddles genres, including reportage, analysis, close reading, fiction, poetry

and criticism, all held to high editorial standards, reflecting the belief that writing that is inquisitive, open, witty, provocative, well-informed and eclectic can convey complex ideas in style as well as substance.

The Diasporist is launching at <https://thediasporist.de>. Until the full magazine is ready, visitors are invited to subscribe to a newsletter featuring content previews and project updates, and are welcome to contribute a donation to help realise the publication's vision.

Michael Sappir

Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR-UK) is a progressive Hindu organisation that is anti-caste and opposed to ethno-nationalist Hindutva politics.

It advocates for pluralism, civil and human rights in South Asia, the United Kingdom, North America, and across the South Asian diaspora, rooted in the values of *shanti* (peace), *nyaya* (justice) and *satya* (truth).

HfHR-UK provides a Hindu voice of resistance to caste, Hindutva (Hindu nationalism), racism, Islamophobia and all forms of bigotry and oppression.

The organisation's vision is of a world defined by *lokasangraha* (the universal common good), where there is peace among all people, and our planet is honoured and protected.

HfHR make a connection between their politics and those of Jews challenging ethnocentrism in Israel

and the allegiance of our self-proclaimed communal leaders to it, saying: "Just like we are committed to fighting for a secular, democratic, pluralistic India where all citizens, regardless of faith, are entitled to equal rights and equal justice, we support a liberated future for Palestine where all the land's inhabitants – Muslims, Christians, Jews, and everyone else – are able to live together as free and equal citizens, from the river to the sea."

"As Hindus who stand against caste and Hindutva, we take inspiration from our anti-Zionist Jewish siblings who are fighting the forces of hate and far-right nationalism within their own community."

Find out more
Contact HfHR-UK at info@hindusforhumanrights.org
Website: www.hindusforhumanrights.org/

CHANGE
THE
WORLD



The Battle of Holbeck Moor

RICHARD BURGON, Independent MP for Leeds East, commemorates the day in 1936 when local people stopped the British Union of Fascists from gathering in their city

On 27th September 1936, 30,000 antifascists assembled to prevent the leader of the British Union of Fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley, and his Blackshirts from holding a rally in Leeds – an event which came to be called The Battle of Holbeck Moor. On 29th September this year I had the honour of addressing the gathering for Leeds Civic Trust's unveiling of its blue plaque to commemorate that victory.

At the ceremony, participants whose parents or grandparents were amongst the tens of

thousands who had mobilised to stop the fascists on Holbeck Moor, shared memories of their relatives' accounts of that historic day. In a particularly moving

moment, people held up photos of their family members who had been there to stop the fascists that day, 88 years ago.

My grandad, Tommy Burgon, was there, so, I was proud to be invited to the plaque unveiling both as a Leeds Member of Parliament and as the

descendant of one of those 30,000 antifascist heroes.

Tommy worked at Montague Burton's in East Leeds, then the largest clothing factory in the city. He was an active member of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers at Burtons – not a left leader but an ordinary worker, who was 22 when he went to stop the fascists at the Battle of Holbeck Moor.

He linked the fight against

Mosley with the support given to the Spanish Republic during the Civil War, which started in July 1936, by workers at Montague Burton's who collected aid for the Republic. Many of Tommy's fellow garment workers and union members at Burton's were Jewish. No doubt that was a motivating factor in his decision to turn out on Holbeck Moor to oppose the British Union of Fascists' rally, which threatened to stoke up antisemitism in the north of England.

The night before the planned fascist rally, the Leylands – a working-class Jewish area in Leeds – was targeted, with swastikas and slogans daubed on doors and windows. The fascists had intended to march through the Leylands but the Leeds Policing Committee prohibited this; instead, the fascists went from Calverley Street in Leeds city centre to Holbeck Moor.

Around 1,000 fascists, many from out of town, were at Holbeck Moor, but 30,000



antifascist counter-demonstration sent a clear message to other cities, including London. The Battle of Cable Street took place just a week later – another humiliation for the fascists.

It is important to remember this history and to learn from it in the struggles we face today to tackle an emerging far right, both here and across Europe.

This important Leeds Civic Trust plaque was sponsored by Leeds Stand Up To Racism and supported by a wide range of community groups, trade union branches, political organisations, Leeds City Councillors and Leeds residents. I congratulate everyone involved in organising it.

I was proud to be at the commemoration of this significant chapter in Leeds antifascist history. Those who turned out in huge numbers last summer, mobilised by Stand Up To Racism, to demonstrate mass rejection of the far right's violent attacks on migrants, minorities, hotels housing asylum seekers and mosques today, walk in the footsteps of the 30,000 who turned out to oppose fascism on Holbeck Moor in Leeds in 1936.

History shows that the far right, with its antisemitism, Islamophobia and scapegoating of migrants and refugees can not only be demoralised but can be defeated by mobilising the vast antifascist majority to reject their siren calls. That's why, 88 years on, the Battle of Holbeck Moor holds relevance for us all today.

drowning Mosley out. The fascists were chased away. My grandad, Tommy, often talked of the clash on Holbeck Moor and recalled "bricks flying all over the place" when they confronted the Mosleyites.

It was a humiliation for Mosley and the British Union of



Above right: Richard Burgon MP speaking to the crowd in September this year.

Above: Participants hold up pictures of their relatives who were at Holbeck Moor in 1936. Below: Richard Burgon's grandfather, Tommy, on his wedding day.

Jewish Socialist Archive

We are very pleased that the **Bishopsgate Institute** in collaboration with **Jewish Socialist** has created a digital archive for this magazine. So far the first 50 issues are available 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 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 Dickers 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.



WISEWORDS

We cannot trample upon the humanity of others without devaluing our own.

The Igbo, always practical, put it concretely in their proverb
Onye ji onye n'ani ji onwe ya: "He who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down."

Chinua Achebe

From *The Education of a British-Protected Child: Essays* (2009).

Achebe was a Nigerian novelist, poet and critic. His powerful first novel, documenting the impact of colonisation, *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, changed the course of African literature. He died in 2013.



JEW^{FOR} PALESTINE

BELGIUM



In Belgium, Jews from three organisations working in solidarity with Palestinians have come together in a Jewish Bloc as part of large national Palestine solidarity protests. The French-speaking **Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium** (UPJB) was set up in 1939 by antifascist Jews to help those fleeing Nazi Germany. The objective of the UPJB is "The promotion of a contemporary, secular, and progressive Judaism in the diaspora." Its members are of all ages; it runs a non-Zionist Jewish youth

movement, and has been active in the movement against Islamophobia in Belgium, but its focus is more communal than political.

Alongside UPJB, two younger and newer groups in Belgium, **Another Jewish Voice** and **Anti-Zionist Jewish Alliance**, work across the languages spoken in Belgium, and so draw in both Dutch-speaking Belgians and non-Belgians, particularly Israelis, who don't tend to speak French, and have a more political focus. Most members come from a

secular background and aren't involved in mainstream Jewish life.

There is a great deal of overlap between the groups, and they have been working together to make an alternative Jewish voice more visible via articles in the press and support of student actions at several universities. As well as Gaza solidarity protests, members took part last summer in an antifascist protest that brought attention to the rise of the far right in Belgium and across Europe. They also organised an action with descendants of resistance fighters and deportees, as well as Shabbos and Rosh Hashanah gatherings.

In an article about conflict on campuses published by *De Morgen*, Fenya Fischler and Itamar Shachar say: "Where some pro-Israel students see insecurity, we rather see discomfort. These are different. While we reject violence against any student, we believe the university is a space where discomfort and challenging oppressive value systems should be welcomed. We also reject the weaponisation of the concept of safety and of the just struggle against antisemitism to silence movements for solidarity with Palestine. We strongly reject the confusion between Israel and Judaism that this entails."

NEW ZEALAND

Alternative Jewish Voices (AJV), also known as **Sh'ma Koleinu**, is a group of 18 progressive anti-Zionist Jewish people living in the North Island, mostly in Wellington, and they have certainly got their work cut out. With only between five and ten thousand Jews in the whole of Aotearoa-New Zealand, and a Jewish Council similar to our Board of Deputies in its conservatism, the work of demonstrating an alternative Jewish voice falls to them. They work closely with **Justice for Palestine** and another Jewish group, **Dayenu**, joining solidarity protests as a Jewish bloc, doing joint advocacy work with government agencies and speaking at rallies. They have also carried out educational work, particularly around antisemitism and the IHRA definition, both for Justice for Palestine members and for progressive parties.

Part of their philosophy is *tangata Tiriti* (a person of the Treaty signed between the Maori and the British Crown), which means that they are committed to building a relationship with Maori – to understand how the nation was formed, to acknowledge that Aotearoa is a multicultural country and to join the fight for Maori self-sovereignty.

AJV members have mixed backgrounds but are generally less secular than many

Jewish pro-Palestine groups. They run a Zoom-enabled Minyan group and have regular weekday and Shabbat services. Several members have had to leave their synagogue communities because their views were not accepted there, but they have found ways to continue their religious practice.

Reading the website of AJV has been a moving experience. Threaded through the biographies of the members, I read about deeply held values of tolerance, respect, equality and antiracism, and especially of their commitment to the parallel struggles of the Maori and the Palestinians.



AROUND THE WORLD

SOUTH AFRICA

The first big campaign of **South African Jews for a Free Palestine** (SAJFP), was to raise awareness of the real purpose of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) – the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians – and of the JNF's use of environmentalism education in the cause of theft of Palestinian land. Not only was it using the name of ANC activist and hero, Walter Sisulu, in one of its flagship projects, the JNF Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre, but it was also courting the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

From 2011 to 2023, the group consisted of no more than 10-13 activists, operating originally in Johannesburg but more recently in Cape Town too. Many of them had known each other from anti-apartheid activism, but when they decided to focus on Palestinian solidarity, they asked younger Jewish people to join them. These were mainly the

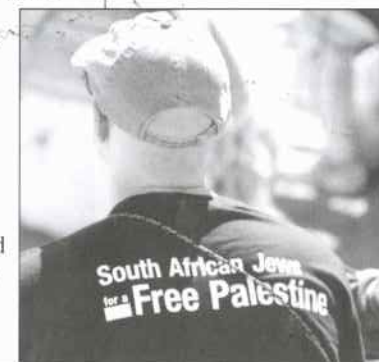
children of activists, and some of them had been in Netzer or other Zionist youth movements.

In 2016 SAJFP partnered with Zochrot and the Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID), which represents Palestinian citizens of Israel who have been displaced, to bring attention to the South Africa Forest, which had been built on the land of a Palestinian village, Luby, emptied and destroyed in 1948. They gathered 250 people who regretted that trees had been planted in their names, and who came forward in support of the campaign. Thirteen of them travelled to Luby to create a memorial ceremony for those who had lived there. They cleaned up a neglected graveyard and some of those who had fled in 1948, either to nearby villages or to other countries, returned to mourn their former home. Following this, SAJFP created a Nakba Forest at the

Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, where they planted olive trees. Since then, they have planted more olives to mark particular occasions and developments.

The current incarnation of SAJFP was formed in 2016, after the trip to Luby. Members wanted to broaden the focus beyond their JNF campaign, and become part of the BDS and Palestine solidarity organisations. Since 7th October, more than 100 people have joined. They are fully integrated into the Palestine Solidarity movement and have organised Shabbat against Genocide events in public places and in several mosques and churches. One Shabbat event in Johannesburg was in honour of the International Court of Justice, and was attended by one of the ICJ lawyers and a government minister.

CHARLOTTE PRAGER WILLIAMS talks to Jewish activists across the globe who are standing up for justice for the Palestinians and an end to the genocide



CANADA

Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) started in 2008 and operates across the breadth of Canada in campus chapters and student groups. It's an established grassroots organisation with paid staff members and well-formulated principles.

Apart from acting in support of justice and peace for everyone in Israel-Palestine, there's a strong emphasis on opposing all forms of racism, including against indigenous peoples of Canada. IJV also works to combat antisemitism and distinguish it clearly from critiques of Zionism and Israeli policies.

As with other non-Zionist Jewish groups, many members want to express their Jewishness whilst experiencing hostility from Jews with strong ties to Israel. Like our Jewish Socialists' Group, they have made powerful statements on human rights through its gatherings and celebrations of Jewish festivals. These lines from

IJV Canada's website, introducing an online Chavurah meeting, probably encapsulates it: "As Jews whose ethical heritage does not permit us to be silent in the face of Israel's violent oppression of the Palestinian people, we are often turned off by the tacit acceptance of this oppression granted through the deafening silence of the Jewish establishment. As many of us yearn for spiritual meaning, we ask ourselves: How can we learn Torah without checking our politics and our values at the door?"

IJV has been in the forefront of the BDS movement, and campaigns vigorously against the general take-up of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. A particular success came this year, when the Canadian government revoked the charity status of the Jewish National Fund after its long history of breaking Canadian tax law and refusing to comply with government regulations. This was a direct result of decades of grassroots campaigning by IJV and their allies.

SOUTH AMERICA

In Brazil, São Paulo's **Coletivo Vozes judaicas por libertação** started running educational meetings and solidarity actions in 2012. These were instigated by Iara Haasz and her brother, who had been brought up in Israel but who found they could not express their feelings and opinions with their families and others in the Jewish community. But immediately after 7th October, many more Jews in the city came out on to the streets and began to discuss with each other what they could do about Israel's shocking attack on Gaza.

Many of the group's members had spent their younger days

in Zionist youth organisations. They are mostly young and secular, and strongly welcome others who feel that they are on the margins of Jewish life such as LGBTQ+ people and leftists. They stand for a way to express their Jewishness and uphold Jewish values at a time when this has become impossible in traditional Jewish circles.

They join with others in Brazilian Palestine solidarity and BDS movements on protest marches. Only too aware of the deep rifts among Jews in relation to Zionism, they held a Passover Seder that other family members attended. This was an opportunity for parents to learn from their children and comrades what their campaigning entailed in a less conflicted and more supportive

Continued overleaf



environment. The group has made common cause with Jews in Chile and Argentina and has supported President Lula in his strong statements condemning Israel, and defending him when he was accused of antisemitism after he pronounced that Israel was guilty of genocide. They also started a campaign against some of the many military contracts Brazil holds with Israel.

Argentina has the largest population of Jews in South America and here too, Jewish activists in *Judies X Palestina* are saying "Not in our Name". As in Brazil, most members are experiencing family quarrels, especially as many Jews moved to Israel after the 2001 financial crisis, which reinforced the already strong ties between the two countries.

The early members had been comrades in the fight for public education at the University of Buenos Aires and came together as a group in response to Israel's 2021 war on Gaza. Others knew each other through Palestine solidarity actions. After 7th October, a wave of newcomers joined them.

Palestine solidarity is the group's central purpose. This includes having a clear one-state policy, which distinguishes them from other progressive organisations in Argentina and attracts people from the left. They aim to use their Jewishness to contribute to the fight for Palestinian liberation and to challenge the right-wing monopoly on Jewish voices in Argentina.

"However", says group member Ivan Zeta, "we've also found that many of us feel more Jewish, even at our most Jewish, through participating in *Judies X Palestina*. Many Jews have become distant from community life because they've accepted the story that you have to be a Zionist to be a Jew. In Palestine solidarity, people with this experience are finding a positive way to connect to their Jewishness."

With thanks to Fenya Fischler (Belgium), Fred Albert (Aotearoa-New Zealand), Iara Haasz (Brazil), *Judies X Palestina* (Argentina) and Jessica Sherman (South Africa).

PICK PATROL

On farms across Israel, volunteers pick strawberries, plant zucchinis, and harvest cucumbers. American college students pose with peppers and pineapples while wearing T-shirts branded with the logo of Hashomer Hachadash, an Israeli nonprofit organisation. They have become "the best ambassadors Israel could ask for," Avi Cohen-Scali, Director General of the Diaspora Affairs Ministry, recently said. "It's moving and heartwarming."

Hashomer Hachadash (The New Guardian) is the most prominent of Israel's volunteer-based "agricultural" organisations. For over a decade and a half, its wide-ranging youth programmes – from farming to horseback riding – have helped it grow into one of the biggest nonprofits in the country, with a budget exceeding \$33 million and allegedly more than 120,000 annual volunteers.

Since the start of Israel's war on Gaza, the organisation has stepped even further into the spotlight. The Hamas-led attack of 7th October triggered a mass exodus of foreign workers from Israel, and so Hashomer Hachadash encouraged volunteers to come and save "Israel's agriculture from ashes". Thousands from around the country – and the world – heeded the call and rushed to assist Israeli farmers.

But the romantic farming scenes belie an agenda that goes beyond fruit picking, and is in practice often about patrolling land to cement Jewish-Israeli control – on both sides of the Green Line. It isn't the only organisation doing this: last month, the United States announced sanctions against Hashomer Yosh, another Israeli NGO that sends volunteers to farming outposts in the occupied West Bank and facilitates the violent theft of Palestinian land.

Hashomer Hachadash is less open than Hashomer Yosh about its political agenda, and has a far more mainstream reputation. And despite the similar name, the two organisations appear to have no formal ties with one another. But Hashomer Hachadash's ambitions, activists argue, are no less insidious than those of Hashomer Yosh.

"It's always surprising to note how legitimate this organisation is among mainstream communities," said Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu, co-executive director of The Abraham Initiative, a nonprofit promoting Jewish-Arab partnership. In reality, Hashomer Hachadash has always been "based on extreme national values, and wants to make sure Arabs stay away from open spaces."

This has become more evident since the war began, and the group has been aided in its mission by the Israeli government. The Settlement and National Missions Ministry, headed by Orit Stroom, a far-right leader who has denied the existence of the Palestinian people, recently transferred

PEPPERS, PALESTINIANS

approximately NIS 50 million (nearly £10.3 million) to Hashomer Hachadash.

The grant aims to increase the group's "presence in open areas" – including in the West Bank – and to strengthen "community resilience in the settlement area". As part of the deal, Hashomer Hachadash has committed to performing 15,000 guarding shifts. There was no tender because the Ministry determined that the organisation was the "sole supplier" in the field.

"They've received all the money from the government since 7th October [for this kind of work]," said Hagit Ofran, director of the Settlement Watch project at Peace Now, an advocacy group. "All of a sudden everything was going through Hashomer Hachadash."

Hashomer Hachadash has also further expanded the scope of its policing efforts, and not just on farms. In November, it established "The People's Guard" to train ultra-Orthodox communities in defence techniques and assist with procuring weapons licences for guards. The Israeli police signed off on the project.

When +972 approached the organisation requesting more information about its activities in the occupied West Bank and links to the Israeli government, a lawyer sent a statement describing Hashomer Hachadash as "an educational, Zionist, non-partisan, volunteer organization that helps farmers from all over the country regardless of religion, race, or gender in the fight against agricultural crime." The lawyer also threatened to sue us if we published this article.

The ideological roots of Hashomer Hachadash can be traced back to the original Hashomer movement that was set up in the early 20th century to patrol Jewish settlements in Palestine. Its pioneer, Alexander Zaid, a Zionist immigrant from Russia, remains the symbol on Hashomer Hachadash's T-shirts.

Yoel Zilberman, the founder of Hashomer Hachadash, likes to tell the story of how it all began. In 2007, his father announced he was going to sell the family's ranch in the lower Galilee because of constant theft on their property by Bedouins, which, he says, the police failed to stop. The young Zilberman, who was serving in the Israeli navy at the time, couldn't let this pass. He returned home and set up camp, with an Israeli flag, a pile of books, and a tent. Along with some friends from the military, he began patrolling his father's land to fend off "encroachers".

From the outset, the organisation's actions went beyond guarding farmland. It sought to use agriculture to bolster Jewish presence on rural land, displacing Palestinians in the process. The mission was to "create a mental and strategic shift in Israeli society, reforge the weakened link to the land

and the ground, and increase the importance of holding lands in the open territories in the Negev and Galilee" – regions in southern and northern Israel respectively that are home to large Palestinian communities – by establishing observation posts near grazing land.

In March 2008, Hashomer Hachadash held its founding conference in the Galilee. It was scheduled to coincide with and obstruct Land Day events, when Palestinian citizens of Israel commemorate the 1976 killing of six unarmed protestors who were demonstrating against Israel's confiscation of nearly 5,000 acres of Palestinian land.

Several weeks later, the group organised a protest against a Nakba Day commemoration, also in the Galilee, which quickly turned violent and resulted in the arrest of 31 Palestinian attendees. Not long after that, *Mondoweiss* reported that members of the organisation had illegally entered land belonging to a Palestinian family in the West Bank.

In 2011, +972 reported that the Israeli military was so impressed with Hashomer Hachadash that it permitted dozens of recruits to defer their army service for a year to volunteer with the group. The pre-military programme included lessons on horseback riding, cattle herding, and theories on "minorities in Israel, security, and law enforcement". Ram Shmueli, former head of intelligence at the Israeli Air Force, then became chair of the organisation. (For this story, the Israeli army told +972 they have no connection with Hashomer Hachadash.)

"Hashomer Hachadash is continuing the militaristic tradition that has long existed in Israeli culture, which you can also find in other youth movements, but on a different scale," said Dr Nir Gazit, head of the department of behavioural sciences at Ruppin Academic Center, who has researched and written several papers on the organisation.

During those early years, the organisation was rapidly expanding: its network of annual volunteers grew from 3,700 in 2013 to 21,450 in 2015. That year, it laid out a plan to further establish 100 observation posts in the Negev and Galilee over the

With major government funding, Hashomer Hachadash sends volunteers to cement Jewish control of open farmland – on both sides of the Green Line. **GEORGIA GEE** reports



A monument to Alexander Zaid one of the founders of the Hashomer movement in the early 20th century, near Bet She'arim National Park, Israel. Photo: Ilan Guy/Wikimedia Commons

following five years, with “two to four guardsmen patrolling the land [at night] in a manner that openly shows their presence”. It also established four “affiliated agricultural schools”, which have the highest military enlistment rates in the country.

A GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED MILITIA

Alongside an exponential rise in volunteer recruitment, the next few years also saw Hashomer Hachadash entrench its relationship with the Israeli government. In 2017, it received a massive influx of state funding when the Religious Services Ministry’s Jewish Identity Administration – set up by former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett – expanded a project called “Zionism and Judaism”.

The money went toward some programmes in schools and others involving Jewish youth from around the world, which were designed “to strengthen the link between the Jewish people, its heritage, and its land”. The funding also supported “guard duty and assistance to farmers and cattle ranchers”.

Bennett was on the organisation’s board in 2010 and was photographed wearing the group’s T-shirt during his tenure as Economics Minister a few years later. In 2022, during his Premiership, Bennett announced that he was aiming to establish a civilian armed force that could be based, in part, on Hashomer Hachadash. After the Israeli election at the end of that year, the new National Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, presented a similar plan while looking into the possibility of recruiting volunteers from Hashomer Hachadash.

Even Israel’s National Security Adviser has said that the organisation should be working alongside the country’s police forces. “The volunteering spirit of Hashomer Hachadash should join the organisational capabilities of the Border Police, the Israel Police, and all security authorities”, Tzachi Hangebi said at a conference last year. “This is the real equaliser.”

“The very idea that Hashomer Hachadash helped start – [that] civilians do policing – it’s very problematic,” said Ofra from Peace Now.

Meanwhile, Hashomer Hachadash appears to be expanding its presence in the West Bank. In 2022, Local Call reported that the organisation was operating on privately owned Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. Last year, according to the Hebrew publication Kenes Media, the group embarked on an “accelerated process” of establishing activities in all of the Jordan Valley settlements. Individuals wearing Hashomer Hachadash clothing have also been documented participating in settler violence and attempting to force Palestinians off their land.

“They are walking a fine line,” Gazit told +972. “The potential for violence is constantly there but they intentionally try to whitewash it, to keep it behind the scenes – not as part of their official practices.”

Since 7th October, Israeli settlers have stepped up their efforts to displace dozens of Palestinian shepherding communities in the northern Jordan Valley, in collaboration with the security forces and the Jordan Valley Regional Council. While Hashomer Hachadash’s role in this remains opaque, the organisation continues to hold all-

expenses-paid volunteering days in the area.

“They’ve said before that they don’t work beyond the Green Line – but they do,” said Dror Etkes, founder of the Israeli organisation Kerem Navot, which monitors settlement activity in the West Bank. “I’ve seen them in the northern part of the Jordan Valley, which used to be a bit quieter [in terms of settler violence] compared to other parts of the West Bank. This is not the case any more.”

Zilberman, the organisation’s founder, said earlier this year that, as part of the effort to strengthen Israel’s grip in rural areas, he was preparing to plant a vineyard “right on the Syrian border fence, 100 metres from it.” He added: “I’m not afraid, on the contrary. This is precisely the time.”

BANKROLLED BY AMERICAN BILLIONAIRES

From the start, Hashomer Hachadash has been heavily supported by US foundations. In 2010, over half of the group’s funding came from the late billionaire, Irving Moskowitz and his wife Cherna, who heavily supported settler groups in East Jerusalem. Through their American foundation, the pair donated over NIS 1.4 million (nearly £290,000) to the organisation from 2010 to 2013.

In more recent years, there have been at least half a dozen donations to Hashomer Hachadash from American foundations that were sent via the Jewish National Fund. In 2021 and 2022, Donors Trust – an infamous conservative American foundation – gave anonymous donations totalling \$140,000 to the organisation. Most strikingly, the late Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam, who have been among the biggest donors to Donald Trump as well as supporting numerous right-wing causes in Israel, gave over \$6 million to Hashomer Hachadash between 2019 and 2022 through their California-based foundation.

After 7th October, Hashomer Hachadash positioned itself as the saviour of Israeli agriculture and received a dramatic uptick in funding from the Jewish diaspora. In February, Hashomer Hachadash announced it would provide emergency interest-free loans of up to NIS 100,000 (over £20,000) for Israeli farmers in the areas near Gaza and the Lebanese border – funded by donations from Jews in the diaspora.

The Jewish Federations of North America, an umbrella organisation representing hundreds of Jewish communities, gave \$300,000 “in response to the agricultural crisis currently unfolding because of the war”. In March, Boston-based Combined Jewish Philanthropies also gave an emergency grant of \$250,000. And the Ruderman Family Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation in Boston, gave \$100,000 for “The People’s Guard” project.

“You see the magnitude of this organisation and the way it has very elegantly succeeded in penetrating wide sectors of Israeli society,” Gazit noted. “It has a lot of power, and very strong political backing. It’s very difficult not to ask – where is this going?”

This article was first published in +972 Magazine on 16th September 2024.

+972 is published online at www.972mag.com

GREEN JEWISH AND SEEKING TRUTH

Jewish Socialist: What were the most significant things for you about the Green Party’s performance in the general election?

Zack Polanski: People often associate the Green Party as an environmental party, and the climate and environment is at the centre of everything we do. But there’s no environmental justice without racial, social and economic justice, too. Often people don’t realise the correlation between inequality, poverty, racism and austerity. You’ve got to keep joining these dots. At this general election, people from all sorts of communities understood that this was a time where voting for the Green Party was voting for what the Labour Party should have been a long time ago, but they’ve abandoned that space. I just watched Rachel Reeves’ [Conference] speech. A young protester heckled her about selling arms to Israel and was yanked out the conference hall by the neck. The crowds cheered. Rachel Reeves said, “The Labour party has changed.”

And I just thought, you were on 33% of the vote – not a resounding victory. Never mind the awfulness of what it looks like, a young person is worried about our complicity in what is being described as a genocide, is speaking to that and protesting. It should be the party that respects peaceful debate and protest. You’re physically yanking that person out of the conference, then gleefully carrying on with your speech as if you’ve earned the right to absolute power with no dissent. You were on this tiny minority of a vote. The Tories lost it as opposed to Labour winning it.

JS: Fewer than 60% voted. And without the SNP collapse, Labour wouldn’t have many seats in Scotland.

ZP: The amount of people in Britain who are absolutely disillusioned with politics is a challenge for anyone in any party, really. You can stoke that and go, “Isn’t it brilliant that everyone’s sick of the Labour Party and Conservative Party?” But if you don’t create an alternative that will genuinely make a material difference to people’s lives, that excites and inspires people, then Reform-UK are not even waiting in the wings, they’re on the stage and shouting.

JS: It’s very worrying. So where would you locate the greens now on a left/right or a progressive /reactionary spectrum?

ZP: Without doubt, we’re a progressive party. That’s always been at the heart of everything that we do. The official answer is that labels just aren’t helpful. We’re a green party. Our policies are democratically decided through a grassroots movement. The party is what our members are voting for. My more personal answer is, I think the party is strongest when we’re in the eco-socialist space and being really clear that those are our values. We’re progressive and internationalist, intersectional and left wing.

JS: How fundamental are the changes needed to sustain the planet? Can they be achieved under capitalism?

ZP: Totally fundamental. It’s an existential crisis. The debate often gets pitted as economic growth versus protecting the planet. It’s a false binary. If you want economic growth, the best way to get it is tackle the climate crisis, create good jobs that have good pay, fair working conditions, that tackle racial, gender, disability and inequality, and workers are in trade unions, so people are properly represented and organised. Though, I don’t think economic growth *should* be the answer. It should be about communities that live with purpose, better mental health, where people have a stake in their community, a more democratic society that protects people and planet rather than profit, and isn’t serving solely corporate interests.

JS: Which issues and perspectives most differentiate Greens from Starmer’s Labour Party as an alternative to Tory rule?

ZP: The one most important to my heart is migration. The Green Party have a completely unapologetic stance on migration, and recognise that it benefits this country. We are a country built on migration. We always have to be careful that we don’t make it sound like people of colour or migrants are only welcome here if they’re contributing to music, art, culture, and food, because, although they’ve done that, it’s also about common humanity and collective humanity, and recognising that if people are fleeing persecution, or they just want a better life, that actually benefits us too.

The Battle of Cable Street was the big story of my conference speech – recognising my Jewish heritage alongside trade unionists, socialists, communists, workers, migrants.

With the recent riots in our streets, the Green Party really believe in that collective solidarity, not pitting communities against each other. Not trying to create tensions between Jewish and Muslim communities, but recognising that Islamophobia and antisemitism are two sides of the same coin. Our communities are at our best when we recognise our differences. There’s no need to be homogeneous.

The second big difference is to recognise mass inequality in our society, and challenge trickle-down economics. The Green Party are very clear that we need a wealth tax.

The third thing is the climate crisis. Labour talk a good game on climate crisis, but even in London, Sadiq Khan, one of the better people in Labour on the climate crisis, would still not condemn private jets in their entirety. Private jets are the pinnacle of climate injustice.



ZACK POLANSKI, Deputy Leader of the Green Party and a member of the London Assembly, spoke to *Jewish Socialist* about democracy, inequality, being a Jewish politician and more

Continued on next page

If you say that the multimillionaires and billionaires can continue to live their polluting, luxury lifestyles, then you can't speak to people in their communities and to workers and say, "You need to change your habits." They'll rightly laugh you out the room because of the flagrant hypocrisy. The inequality issue and the climate issue are the same conversation. You can't tackle either without tackling both simultaneously.

JS: How would you describe your Jewish family and cultural background?

ZP: A very traditional Jewish background. I went to King David's school [a Jewish primary school]. I was involved with Habonim/Dror [a left-wing, Zionist youth movement]. I am concerned about the repeated messages to young people around Israel. As an adult I would question some stories that I was told, but so many of my values, my love of community, challenging inequality, love of migration, definitely come from some of those days in Habonim/Dror, too.

I had a Bar Mitzvah, then didn't go to synagogue for years. My Jewish identity didn't come back up again until decades later. I started to get involved in the environmental movement, veganism and animal rights, and came across the [Jewish] concept of "mending the world" and looked again at my Jewish background and those Jewish values.

I've definitely re-embraced my Jewish identity. Very often, groups that I don't agree with try to dismiss many of our Jewish identities as not those of "real Jews", or other negative language that I've heard frequently. So it becomes even more important to reclaim your Jewish identity, to say, "Actually what you are presenting as Judaism is a completely distorted form of what it can be". I don't speak for all Jews. No one can. We're very diverse, but I certainly do speak for a group of Jewish people, proud of their Judaism, proud of their heritage, but who also reject some of the narratives around what you need to believe or say in order to be a "real Jew".

I remember growing up, having Jewish conversations, but it would be through the lens of what I would now class as social justice. What was going on in the Torah was around inequality. I went to a largely Christian [secondary] school. While everyone else went to pray, a small group would go to a separate room with the French teacher. Each day one of us would have to prepare a debate around a topic that was happening in the news. What's more Jewish than a group of Jews coming together in a room every morning and having an argument about what was going on in the news?

I saw Em Hilton's interview by Owen Jones a year or two ago, where she talked about the long lineage of left-wing socialist Jews in a way that had never resonated with me before. My Judaism and my left-wing, progressive politics had always been slightly separate topics, almost at odds with each other. Em made me realise that these things are absolutely in alignment. They were just not the stories that I've necessarily been told. I've done lots more research, know a lot more left-wing Jews now, and recognise that for centuries Jews have been challenging power and injustice.

JS: Given your critical public positions on Israel/Palestine that you've expressed, for example, on Na'amod platforms, how are your relationships

within and across the Jewish community?

ZP: It's been very polarising. I remember doing an LBC interview quite soon after 7th October, and the host said: "As one of the most senior Jewish politicians in the country, I'm interested...". I've never thought of myself as representing the Jewish community, but I do think of myself as representing a block of Jewish voices that are against the occupation, that are seeing a genocide in Gaza and are wanting to name that for what it is, to get the violence to stop in order to move towards peace and negotiation. We need to be able to name things appropriately, to provide caution, when appropriate, about things we say, but to tell the truth. That's the key element.

My relationship with the media has been difficult, and I include Jewish journalists in that during the election, I was repeatedly asked about so-called antisemitism in the Green Party – increasingly absurd allegations – or whether I was an antisemite. No matter how many times you ask to see evidence or refute allegations, if the media decide they're going to tell a story, then they will. But one that really resonated was a Jewish journalist who was saying, "I'm asking you, because I'm Jewish, and I'm concerned", and you try and connect on the human level around the fact that, very obviously, as a Jewish person and deputy leader of a party, I wouldn't allow antisemitism in the Green Party, and I would certainly make sure it is challenged.

I'm really proud of the Jewish Greens group within the party. There are a diversity of opinions, but conversation has always been respectful. People have both listened and had their voice. The thing I'm proudest of about the Jewish Greens is the regular statements and meetings they've had with Muslim Greens and Greens for Palestine.

JS: Do some Jewish Greens join the Jewish Bloc on the Palestine demonstrations?

ZP: Quite a lot of them do – probably a majority.

JS: Have you been approached as Deputy Leader of the Green Party by Jewish establishment organisations?

ZP: Yes. Last week I met with the London Jewish Forum, more in my role as a London Assembly member, and I've had meetings with the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council. I didn't say anything to them that I've not said in this interview, which is, I'm proud of my Jewish heritage. I take protecting Jewish communities really seriously. And if you are going to accuse the Green Party of antisemitism, then there better be some credible evidence. Then I'll take that seriously but also I will very robustly defend the party against the weaponisation of antisemitism. The Board of Deputies objects to the phrase "weaponisation of antisemitism" and I can understand why. It's not a phrase even a few years ago that I would have wanted to use. But some accusations of antisemitism are so egregious and so obviously politically motivated. *The Times*, for instance, printed on its front page allegations against several of our candidates on the day that nominations closed. All done under the pretence of "We're just trying to stop antisemitism in the Green Party." But if you've printed that on the front page of *The Times*, you've had those stories for quite a while. You could have given us some notice to then

be able to try and deal with it before nominations close. But this was a very obvious political attack.

JS: The Greens have been accused of providing a welcoming home for Jews who have been expelled from Labour, accused of antisemitism.

ZP: One of those [Jewish] organisations was very insistent that Jo Bird shouldn't be allowed into the Green Party and, once she was allowed in, that she shouldn't be able to run for Parliament. Jo can speak for herself, and does very eloquently. The evidence against Jo that anyone presented to me was absurd. But this indicated to me the difference between the Green Party and the Labour Party. The idea in the Green Party that even if I wanted to, and I certainly didn't, to just start expelling people or suspending people as someone who is in a leadership position would be absolutely absurd. We're a grassroots democratic party. There's no way that I would interfere with a disciplinary process like that.

Some of their stories of Jewish people who felt unwelcome in the Labour Party, are horrific. It can be tempting to fight the Labour Party, but a much more positive and effective thing to do is recognise that a home is there in the Green Party that is supportive, intersectional, works with people, and has a fair and robust disciplinary process based on a concept of natural justice, and can build an alternative to Labour.

It's important to say that that there were also instances of people who have been kicked out of the Labour Party for what I would say are legitimate reasons. They continued to engage in problematic antisemitic behaviours. And the Green Party said, "No, you're not welcome." So that does happen too. Antisemitism exists in society. It's about being clear where the lines and boundaries are. Giving people a chance for education is really important too.

JS: The Greens – like other parties – were bullied into accepting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, but then also adopted the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. Can you elaborate?

ZP: I'm really proud of the nuanced approach that we took, because the debate around antisemitism had become increasingly polarised. We wanted a disciplinary process that reflected a diversity of views and opinions. Rather than accept one definition, pushed as the "gold standard", we have taken diverse definitions from Jewish academics and authors. If someone is accused of antisemitism, the committee ruling over that disciplinary process have these different definitions and come to a collective agreement.

Establishment Jewish organisations often ask: "How can you have conflicting views of antisemitism?" My answer is because there are conflicting views about antisemitism. Let's have more information and more nuanced discussion, led by Jewish people.

JS: What do you think is driving the growth of the far right in Britain today? What strategies do the Green Party have to challenge it and encourage people from minorities to join the Greens.

ZP: We've got this incredibly unequal society and then you've got politicians pointing at people of colour or migrants, or so-called benefit scroungers, saying they're the problems. The solution to this is



Zack Polanski speaking at an event organised by Na'amod in support of the people of Gaza

for politicians to always tell the truth and point out that if people are worried about getting an NHS appointment or a dentist appointment, or they're worried about getting their kids into schools, these are genuine concerns. But these concerns are not being created by some of the poorest, most vulnerable people in our society. These problems have been created by austerity and underinvestment, a project deliberately designed by the Conservative Government, but pushed also by Tony Blair through neoliberalism, and of course, very much right now with Keir Starmer.

I think also the complete obstruction to the idea of nationalisation or public services being in public hands is a key component of this idea of not trusting your country, which further fuels that kind of nationalism or racist patriotism that can exist in the far right. We need to reclaim our kind of sense of identity and pride in our country, and not allow those groups to do it for us. The answer to it, as well, is to have leadership from within those communities. I really hope that one of our next Green MPs is someone I've never met yet, because they are in those faith or non-faith minority communities, already doing grassroots, community organising but think that politics is a little bit dirty and not what they're into. The work I'm doing at the moment very much is to go to those communities, encourage other Green Party members to go to those communities and speak to them about what our politics is, and what grassroots politics is, to get them involved. And we'll support them to become an MP.

JS: Are the Greens seeking more contact with and influence within trade unions?

ZP: In the last year I've met the Fire Brigades Union, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB), United Voices of the World (UVW) and the TUC. I'm constantly meeting with trade unions. A future in which we tackle the climate crisis and inequality has to be a future that involves the trade union movement, because it must have workers at its heart. My role is to make sure that the Green Party is a space where people recognise themselves. And that includes a party that is talking about a class analysis and a class consciousness.

THE JEWISH SOCIALISTS' GROUP IS 50!

1979: THE WRONG TYPE OF...

A London branch of the JSG was started by students who returned home between university terms and began organising speaker meetings and joining protests together. Back for good in autumn 1979, we advertised an open meeting in *Time Out* and *The Leveller* for anyone interested in the JSG. We hoped to attract around 30 people. More than 70 turned up! Fortunately, it was held in a Jewish house in Ilford so they had already knocked down a wall to make a through-lounge.

During a break, I spoke to a guy who seemed bemused by the politics. "I thought it said 'Jewish Social Group'," he admitted. Still, he stayed to the end.

Every left meeting, though, needs a denunciation. It duly arrived. One newbie denounced another. They were in rival 4th International groups. A case of "the wrong kind of Trotskyist". The person who was denounced – Charlie Pottins – became a treasured member of the JSG and a great contributor to our magazine until his death in 2015.

1985: "SHUT UP YOU POTZ!"

A public meeting in Stamford Hill, Hackney about fighting racism. Paul Boateng, chair of the GLC's police committee, vice chair of its Ethnic Minorities Committee, and adviser to the Scrap SUS campaign was sharing the platform with JSG member Steve Ogin.

There were three flashpoints. First: police had to help stewards remove two far-right Zionists who frequently tried to physically disrupt our meetings. Second: Boateng mentioned Palestine. Two men towards the back, who resembled Stadler and Waldorf, the hecklers in the Muppet Show, shouted: "We call it Israel." Boateng replied, "Well, I call it Palestine, and there's the problem!". Third flashpoint: when Steve Ogin spoke about fighting racism by positively promoting minorities' cultures – including Yiddish culture, the two hecklers began shouting, "What's all this Yiddish? Nobody speaks Yiddish these days!" Before Steve could respond, a thick-set man, who we didn't know, turned round and shouted "shut up you potz!" (Yiddish for prick/idiot). Lots of laughter, the meeting continued, and the muppets kept shtum after that. That man was Neil Collins, a Jewish social worker in Hackney, and lifelong anarchist who joined the JSG soon after, and remained a member until he died in 2023.

NO SUCH THING AS JEWISH SPERM

It was a hot day in 1984, and at the end of demo we stopped to rest in Victoria Park Gardens, near the Houses of Parliament and had our usual rant about the dire state of the Jewish press (we had no idea, then, what depths it would sink to over the next few decades) and imagined what we could do if we had our own magazine. By the end of the afternoon we had recklessly decided to do it, and in 1985 we produced the first issue of *Jewish Socialist*.

In those early days, when computers were but a dream for us, we spent a lot of time crawling around on the floor looking for bits of lost type, picking cow gum off the pages, debating whether or not to correct the mistyped "Chief Rabbi". We refused to carry an advert for "Jewish sperm" from a reader who is still broyges with us for asserting that there was no such thing.

We broke taboos, questioning the practice of male circumcision – a debate which led to a powerful TV film in which we participated – and the Jewish way of death, confronting the sidelining of women and the power games of rabbis in imposing arbitrary and insensitive rules.

Ten years after our launch we organised an incredible comedy benefit at the Cochrane Theatre, compered by our own Ivor Dembina and including Jo Brand, Arnold Brown and the late Jeremy Hardy and Linda Smith, both of whom we miss so much. They were most amazed by the catering – including mountains of bagels – in the Green Room.

DON'T JOKE!

In the early years of Jewish Socialist magazine, JSG members took copies to sell at other group meetings – this included Mapam (socialist Zionists) who met frequently in the late 1980s. Outside one Mapam meeting, Charlie Pottins called out "Jewish Socialist!". One person, thinking he was being clever, said: "No thanks, I'm a Jewish capitalist." Quick as a flash Charlie replied: "Don't joke, there are some!"

1984-86: WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR KEN

While Thatcher sat in Westminster royally fucking up 1980s Britain, an alternative London was rising over the water in County Hall, home of the Greater London Council, which turned Labour in 1981. An internal revolution there brought the left to dominance under Ken Livingstone, John McDonnell et al. They replaced old paternalistic funding systems and invited grassroots Londoners, especially marginalised minorities, to apply for funding for their projects. Radical Black, Asian, Irish groups and women's groups benefited, as did Jewish groups, including the JSG.

We created a London-based project: the Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project – pronounced J-CARP. With initial funding for a year, a small office and a paid worker, we organised conferences and local public meetings that platformed Jews and other minorities discussing common anti-racist challenges and, on the cultural side, organised Yiddish classes and events. We also did the mundane things such as opening a bank account. A bank worker invited me into the nearest branch office saying: "Step this way, Mr Carp." I refrained from saying, "It's Mr Gefilte Fish, actually."

As the first year ended we applied for continued funding. We had big plans. A travelling exhibition on the 1905 Aliens Act, more conferences, publications and Yiddish initiatives. We attended the committee meeting that would confirm the coming year's funding. Livingstone read out the names of the groups they had approved. Labour had a built-in majority, but the Tories could intervene if they particularly disapproved of a decision, to say, "We object". Livingstone would reply "We support," and that was that.

He read out our name very slowly, deliberately emphasising each word, and smiling: "Jewish... Socialists'... Group". A Tory said, "We object!". Livingstone replied, "You don't like the name! We support." Our funding continued for another year until Thatcher shut down the GLC completely.

Highs, lows, losses and laughs. **DAVID ROSENBERG** and **JULIA BARD** look back at what the JSG has been doing since 1974

TROUBLE AT THE COUNTY HALL

During the last year it has been the most natural thing for growing numbers of Jews to march together with Palestinians and diverse Muslim communities for Palestinian rights in the Jewish Bloc. In the early 1980s it was much harder. The Lebanon War was the watershed. For the first time, a Jewish organisation, formed in Britain, proudly held its banner (featuring a big red Star of David) on a march against Israel's warmongering.

The JSG had passed policies at its conference recognising the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians, which Israel's government must negotiate with. In the wake of the Lebanon war, we became part of the International Jewish Peace Union (IJPU), created by a Paris-based Israeli leftist, Maxim Ghilan. He brought us together with likeminded people to set up the first public meeting in Britain with an Israeli peace activist, Uri Avnery, and a high ranking PLO member, Issam Sartawi.

It was held in London's County Hall, then under the leadership of Ken Livingstone. Some 300 people packed the room. Most were there to listen and learn, but two factions tried to disrupt it: far-right Zionists and ultra-rejectionist Palestinians. Fights broke out with the stewards. Armed police were present. For several months Sartawi had been receiving threats to assassinate him for having dialogue with Israelis. Sartawi and Avnery made superb speeches. But six weeks after our meeting, Sartawi was assassinated by the Abu Nidal Group as he left a Socialist International conference in Lisbon.

The JSG's direct engagement with the PLO had begun. We later held our own public meetings with joint Jewish/PLO platforms, with the PLO representative in Britain, Faisal Aweida, and his deputy Karma Nabulsi. Two JSG members, Mike Heiser and Charlie Pottins, were part of an international Jewish delegation that met PLO leader Yasser Arafat. In the 1990s, Afif Safieh, the PLO Representative who followed Aweida, came with his family to a JSG Passover Seder. While the Jewish establishment and its media denounced us in the vilest terms for such meetings, more liberal elements in the Board of Deputies began having private dialogue with Palestinians in London. A taboo was broken – by us!

1978: NAZIS, JESUS AND NORTHERN PRIDE

National Front fascists were regularly goose-stepping through immigrant areas but Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi League were uniting the youth through punk and reggae. Brightly coloured badges displayed their niche identities: "Skateboarders against the Nazis", "Social Workers against the Nazis", "Gay whales against racism" and suchlike. The Board of Deputies told Jews to stay away (as in Cable Street), because they might (shock, horror) mix with anti-Zionists. Aubrey Lewis, a JSG founder, told us it's nothing to do with Zionism: "They just want to keep young Jews away from the left".

Many Jews were among the huge numbers marching east from Trafalgar Square to Victoria Park for the Rock Against Racism Carnival. Some of the JSG's founding members came down from Manchester and Liverpool for this long hike, among them, Joe Garman, veteran of the Young Communist League's Cheetham Hill branch in the 1930s. He displayed his large home-made badge: "Right wing extremists against the Nazis". Typical of his humour. When he was growing up in Manchester, he told us, people would say to him: "The Jews killed Jesus." "It wasn't us," he said. "It was the Leeds Jews!"



1987: AHEAD OF THE KLEZMER CURVE

Before the klezmer revival reached London, three women, two of them JSG members, set up a klezmer band – with some Iraqi and Sephardi influence from the fiddle player. The band was called Royte Klezmores – Red Musicians – though as they were repeatedly and emphatically informed (by men), there is no such Yiddish word as the feminine "klezmores", only the masculine form, "klezmerim". The band were in demand in radical circles and beyond. They brought people to their feet at the launch of Women Against Fundamentalism in 1989, played regular gigs for Jewish Women Support the Palestinians, Jewish Socialists' Group benefits and many others – even getting paid for weddings, barmitzvahs and birthday parties.

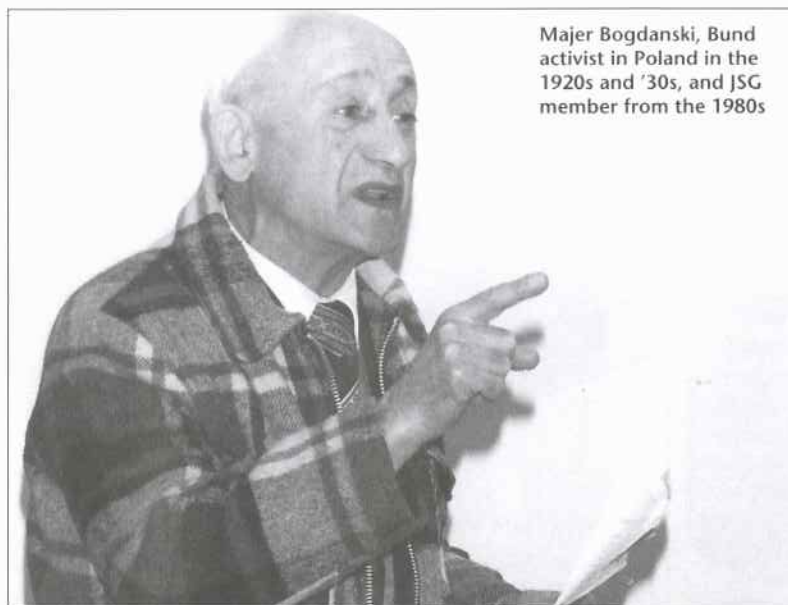
WHY DON'T YOU DRY UP?

In that short period in the mid-late-1980s when open dialogue among Jews and Palestinians was reluctantly accepted in Britain, Chipping Barnet Labour Party went with the zeitgeist and held a seminar on Israel and Palestine. On the platform were an anti-Zionist Israeli journalist, a Palestinian academic, a JSG member, and a speaker from the Labour Party's Zionist affiliate, Poale Zion. They had sent Dr Jacob Gewirtz, better known as a paid officer leading the Board of Deputies Defence Department, with a legendary short temper.

For two and a half hours there was the most serious and thoughtful exchange of views in a packed room. Dr Gewirtz was the final panellist and had the benefit of hearing the other contributions before making his own. Disagreements were stated honestly and respectfully... until the chair closed the floor discussion and asked the speakers for brief comments in reverse order. In a flash it dawned on Dr Gewirtz that he wouldn't have the last word. He started shouting and screaming that it was unfair. In a brief moment when he paused for breath, the chair called a member of the audience to comment. She calmly pointed out that this was a normal convention in public meetings. She had barely finished when Dr Gewirtz, red in the face, shrieked, "Why don't you dry up?" before storming out, to the audience's astonishment and disgust.

We were astonished, too, when the Jewish newspapers claimed that Dr Gewirtz had been hounded out of a meeting by anti-Zionist left wingers! Still, good to know that the defence of the Jewish community was in the hands of such a well-balanced individual.

Continued on next page



Majer Bogdanski, Bund activist in Poland in the 1920s and '30s, and JSG member from the 1980s

THE LIVING TRADITION

Some of the most exciting moments in JSG history have been learning directly from the Jewish radicals who came before us. In the 1980s and '90s several Cable Street veterans spoke at JSG events: Charlie Goodman told us how he was imprisoned for his activism on that day. After his release, he fought Franco's forces with the International Brigades. Issy Pushkin told us about his work for the Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Antisemitism, a grassroots body that built links with non-Jewish antifascists and mobilised Jews while the Board of Deputies was telling them to ignore Mosley. Mick Mindel, a tailors' union leader and communist spoke at a JSG May Day event in the East End about his excitement on the day of Cable Street, and how proud he felt that so many trade unionists were there. In 2006 Aubrey Morris spoke at a JSG event marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle. At 16 he helped build barricades in Cable Street, determined to stop the fascists marching past his bubbe's Bagel bakery!

In the 1930s, Majer Bogdanski was further east. In an incredible meeting in 1985 he described his life as a Bundist in 1920s Piotrkow and then in 1930s Lodz, when the Bund was becoming the leading Jewish political force in Poland before the Nazis invaded. He opened up a new and exciting diasporic world for us, full of possibilities.

Majer brought us into personal contact with other Bundist survivors in London. In 1987 we sent two JSG delegates to New York for a conference celebrating the Bund's 90th anniversary. In 1997 Mike Heiser represented the JSG at the 100th anniversary events in New York, and David Rosenberg attended a Warsaw conference on the Bund, addressed by Marek Edelman – Second in Command of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A JSG celebration in London of 100 years of the Bund, with talks, workshops, music, films and children's activities, was attended by 350 people.

Between those two anniversaries, we worked with Bundist survivors here and with the Polish embassy to mount a plaque in London for the Bundist, Szmul Zygielbojm, who committed suicide in London as a protest at the Allies' passivity in the face of genocide, after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was crushed. In 2023 Zygielbojm's grandson Arthur joined a JSG Zoom meeting from California to speak about his grandfather.

Our most recent Bundist connection, who was part of that JSG zoom and others, and has written for Jewish Socialist, is Irena Klepfisz. She lives in New York but was born to Bundist parents in the Warsaw Ghetto. Her father was killed on the second day of the Ghetto Uprising. Irena and her mother survived and got to New York via Sweden.

GAZA'S

The environment for Palestinians has been degraded in many ways. There is the long reshaping of their territory through the occupation and the erosion of their capacity to live off the land, often through settler violence. There has been a devastating spoiling of land during the Gaza onslaught. But Palestine is also in an area of the globe most affected by climate breakdown, which ultimately may create the biggest threat to Palestinian survival.

During the 2024 Jewish Socialists' Group Seder, I offered to talk about environmental breakdown as a modern analogy to one of the plagues visited on the Egyptians before the exodus from Egypt. The war on nature waged by the fossil fuel empire is arguably the greatest of modern plagues: 69% of all mammals, amphibians, reptiles and birds have disappeared in the 50 years since 1970, with similar declines in insect populations. In the web of life, the disappearance of one species affects the survival of many others.

This period of the earth's history when humans are shaping geological time – often called the Anthropocene but more accurately, the Capitalocene – will hurt everyone, but is harshest for the poorest and most vulnerable people on earth, disproportionately affecting countries of the global south. So it remains bewildering that groups on the left are sometimes reluctant to prioritise looming environmental collapse when it should be the overarching concern of all of us. One of my tasks as an environmental activist is to persuade left groups I work with to shift their priorities.

We are in the endgame to preserve the environmental conditions in which future generations will flourish, our own near dear descendants included. We have a chance, a very small number of years, to limit climate and biodiversity collapse, but the window of opportunity is rapidly closing and the forces destroying nature are still gathering strength.

OUR CHOICES, THEIR LIVES

It was during the rise of neoliberal hyper-capitalism in the 1980s that I first realised there was a contradiction in the way people profess care for their families while being prepared to jettison their descendants because of their attachment to profits and the capitalist system. I characterised the spirit of the Thatcher/Reagan era as "grandchild murder" following Thatcher's announcement on the steps of Downing Street: "We are a grandmother". With widely available knowledge of the rapidly growing threat to life from increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the contradiction has become starker. The oil industry and the governments they lobby continue to pursue policies that accelerate global environmental collapse, knowing in their hearts the extent to which they imperil life on earth. A decade or so ago, I started to use the term "nepoticide" rather than "grandchild murder" to capture the spirit of our times.

For me, the idea that we live in an age of nepoticide is a stark reality. I say in court trials for my actions to publicise the destruction of nature, that I want to be able to look my grandchildren in the eye; that my grandchildren stand for all children in their generation and future generations. But I know that many people hide away from what is happening

DEVASTATION

through one or another form of denial. There is ignorant denial, lying denial, as in the misinformation campaigns of the oil companies since the 1950s, self-deluding denial and hiding under the duvet denial. I think the end of denial involves passing through a portal connecting truth with action. For socialists it involves a move from "Oh yes I know it's happening and it's really worrying," to putting the defence of nature at the centre of our socialist political activism.

IMPACT ON PALESTINE

The crisis for Palestinians and the rest of the world is exacerbated by global failures to stop oil and gas extraction. Yet even as the bombardment of Gaza gathered force in October 2023, Israel was exploiting gas reserves off the Gaza coast. British Petroleum was amongst the beneficiaries of licences awarded in areas within Palestine's maritime boundary.

More heat, less rain

Palestine is hot and arid. Temperatures are increasing faster than the global average. At present rates, Palestine/Israel will be 4 degrees C above preindustrial levels by the end of the century, when it will become unliveable for most people. Annual rainfall has dropped by 10%. This combines with more intense yet sporadic precipitation and more rapid evaporation to reduce the availability of fresh water. Rising sea levels threaten to salinate fresh-water aquifers along the Mediterranean coast, adding considerably to water crises.

The spring and summer of 2024 in Palestine/Israel have been particularly hot. My sister in Tel Aviv told me that for the first time she has had to keep the air conditioning on through the night to be able to get a good night's sleep. This says everything about the unequal impacts of global warming in the region. The heatwave raging in Gaza in April, with temperatures reaching 41 degrees, killed a woman and several children whose weakened bodies were unable to cope. The nylon tents in the camps operated as greenhouses and there was very limited water to cool people down. Around Rafah, adults and children left their tents and went in the sea to cool. Zakaria, a five-year-old boy, said that his swim in the ocean had made him happy. But for his father, the heatwave had been "torture, in every sense of the word. We don't know what to do with our families, with our children. We don't know how to face this heat, we are terrified."

Reshaping the land

From its inception, the colonisation of Palestine involved a reshaping of the environment, breaking the links developed over thousands of years between humans, animals and plants. The destruction of 800,000 olive trees since 1967 has been a direct assault on the history and livelihoods of Palestinians. In November 2022, Israeli settlers uprooted and destroyed 2,000 olive trees in the Palestinian village of Qarawat Bani Hassan. Omar Ghoneym, the farmer, expressed his defiance:

They fight the tree, they fight the stone, they fight the land: they fight anything that bears testament to Palestinian history. They want to change the face of the land because they are afraid of the truth it holds. But we have one weapon that they can't have, with which we resist all their attempts to drive us away: the ancestral love for and duty to protect everything

which grows on Palestinian soil. Palestine is our mother, and we will never abandon her.

After 1948, Israel mass planted invasive species like the European pine to erase the memory of destroyed villages, financed from the gifts of Jews around the world into the Jewish National Fund via the familiar blue tin. As temperatures rise, their close planting makes them susceptible to forest fires.

The control of water resources by Israel severely impairs agriculture in the West Bank. Israel steals 87% of the mountain aquifer that lies equally under Israel and the West Bank, and the military prevents people from harvesting rainwater and sinking new wells.

Destroying, polluting, contaminating

The deliberate eradication of food growing capability in Gaza has been intense. By March 2024, Israel had destroyed nearly half of tree cover and farmland. Following aerial bombardment, ground troops dismantled greenhouses and tractors, while tanks uprooted orchards and fields of crops.

Water has been polluted by 130,000 cubic metres of sewage discharged into the sea every day, made immeasurably worse by the bombing of infrastructure and cutting of fuel for water and sewage treatment. Groundwater and soils are contaminated by toxins and munitions. Gazans survive on 2-3 litres of water a day, and this is often contaminated.

Bombing has created 37 million tonnes of debris and hazardous material, much of which contains human remains. The air has been polluted by smoke and particulates. Much of Gaza has become a wasteland, unable to sustain life independently. Genocide and ecocide have gone hand in hand with systematic eradication of the means of survival for Gazans.

Global impacts

The global military industrial complex is a major contributor to climate emissions, more than aviation and shipping combined. The first months of the war on Gaza produced more greenhouse gases than 20 climate-vulnerable nations do in a year. Emissions from US cargo planes in support of the war are almost as big as those from Israeli fighter jets. Those generated by the Hamas war machine are minuscule in comparison.

Rebuilding Gaza will warm the planet even more. Globally, the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases are USA and China; after them, come the concrete and cement industries. The destruction and rebuilding of Gaza will contribute more than the total annual greenhouse gas emissions generated by 135 countries.

FINALLY...

Environmental breakdown is the greatest of modern plagues affecting humanity and much of life besides. If we are to fully recognise the plight of Palestinians, we must connect the genocide and ecocide taking place in Gaza and the West Bank to the global ecocide of the Capitalocene. If we do that, we may see the need to incorporate environmental concerns into our socialism and forms of activism.

TONY BOOTH has been fighting environmental breakdown for nearly half a century. Here he documents and assesses the impact of the Israeli onslaught on Palestine



Israeli forces destroyed Palestinian olive groves in the aftermath of 7th October 2023

RIOTS, RACISM

AARON WINTER analyses the responses to the outbreak of far-right violence over the summer

This summer, we saw far-right racist riots and pogroms across England, as well as in Northern Ireland and Wales. They followed the horrific murder of three young girls in Southport on 29th July in an attack falsely attributed to a Muslim asylum seeker. Amongst those involved were followers of Tommy Robinson and members of Patriotic Alternative, Britain First, the British Movement and football hooligan firms, as well as members of the public, including families. They intimidated, harassed and attacked racialised communities and individuals, as well as their businesses, mosques and hotels housing asylum seekers. According to The National Police Chiefs' Council, as of 30th August, 1,280 people were arrested and 796 charged.

In addition to law enforcement and anti-racist, anti-fascist and community responses, one of the dominant reactions from the mainstream media and political establishment was to individualise, exceptionalise and delegitimise the riots and those involved in them. For Starmer it was "pure violence". For others, it was "madness", "morons",

"criminality", "lawlessness", "extremism", "terrorism", and classist descriptions like "yobs", "mobs" or "thugs" and "thuggery".

The riots were widely attributed to misinformation, disinformation and radicalisation on social media, such as Telegram and Twitter/X, and to far-right figures such as Robinson. But they were not described as being connected to anything structural, systemic or mainstream, such as politics and media, which had long platformed and mainstreamed far-right ideas and figures – including Robinson and Nigel Farage. As such, this response logically necessitated state, law enforcement and security countermeasures, rather than reflection. The other dominant response did make connections to something

larger, structural and political, by claiming that these were "protests", expressions of "legitimate concerns" of the "white working-class", "left behind" or "ordinary people", and "pro-British".

MISALIGNMENTS

This was different from the mainstream and state responses to the 2011 "riots". These were also demonised and denounced – albeit with racist and classist language – but, unlike this year's events, were not also granted legitimacy. This may have been because they were actual protests against the

system and status quo, rather than serving and supporting them as the far right does.

It is interesting that some commentators connected 2024 to 2011 and not to Notting Hill or the battles of Cable Street, Lewisham and Brick Lane, where the far right also terrorised racialised communities, often in line with law enforcement and the state. We also saw this representation and alignment in the way that politicians, the mainstream media and the far right labelled Palestinian solidarity and ceasefire marches – which were also actual protests – as "hate marches", "extremist" and "anti-British". They were united in this by shared Islamophobia, anti-immigrant racism, nationalism/patriotism (ironically referencing the defeat of the Nazis), and support for Israel, which served simultaneously to whitewash and embolden the far right. This informed the far right's violent "counter-protest" on Armistice Day. Although they were denounced, and Home Secretary Suella Braverman, who was widely accused of encouraging them both then and in the February 2023 hotel attack in Knowsley, Merseyside, was sacked, there was no change in the mainstream political and media positions on pro-Palestinian activism, Zionism, genocide, immigration or other issues on which they were aligned with the far right.

While the responses to the riots appear contradictory, and their differences from how other "riots" were represented and responded to make them appear hypocritical, they all served the same purpose: to maintain the social, political and economic status quo. The far right serves this function because it can be treated as both an outlier – representative of all society's racism and threat to democracy – and an expression of people's legitimate concerns, which must be represented both to be democratic and to prevent something worse. Their role and function changes in different contexts and within any given one.

CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS

The riots surprised some people, but they did not come out of the blue. They occurred in the context of longer-term mainstreaming and emboldening of the far right which has reached a crisis point. Since the financial crisis in 2008, and the election of the Tories and austerity in 2010, ever more extreme anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies have increased and expanded within the mainstream, including the establishment of the Hostile Environment in 2012. One of the main arguments used to justify this were the concerns of the impact of migration and multiculturalism on the white working-class "left behind" that were often attributed to or projected on to them.

A case could be made that this had started earlier under Thatcher(ism) and continued under New Labour, with deindustrialisation, neoliberalism, the undermining of the welfare state, the left, trade unions and working-class

AND THE LEFT

interests and solidarity. At the same time, those governments also used the threat of the National Front and the British National Party (BNP) to justify tougher immigration policies and appease voters they had neglected. We saw this at its peak with Brexit in 2016 and in the reactionary culture war, which has seen far-right figures repeatedly offered platforms in the media, and in the mainstreaming and normalisation of far-right ideas about Muslims, migrants and the left. This included conspiracy theories about wokeism, Cultural Marxism, the Great Replacement, grooming gangs, and trans rights. This summer's riots were also the latest in a series of street level mobilisations over the past year in Knowsley, Harehills and London, which could be read as an indication of things to come.

There were contextually specific triggers for the riots, including the Southport murders, the cost of living crisis and an election the far right could exploit, as well as the return of Robinson and others to Twitter/X. In terms of the election, even though Labour defeated Reform UK and the Tories, they are following the Tories on austerity, migration and the mainstreaming of far-right ideas.

Having already vowed to be tougher than the Tories on small boats, Starmer met Giorgia Meloni in the wake of the riots to discuss strategies to address migration, which may include replacing the Tories' Rwanda plan with Meloni's Albanian one. Yet, they are still accused of being far left, socialist and woke.

Though Reform did not win, they achieved more votes and seats than expected, and had a significant influence on the debate (and a victory in forcing the BBC to apologise for describing them as far-right). In light of this, the Tory defeat and far-right electoral gains in France, Italy and Germany, the far right may see Reform as the unofficial opposition with greater future potential. This may have emboldened and motivated many, and played a strategic role in opportunistic mobilisations. Although, as noted, it was not only an organised far right that was involved in the riots, but subcultures, less formal networks and members of the public. This not only plays a role in how they are represented, and also reflects the impact of mainstreaming and the current character of the far right as what Hope Not Hate terms "post-organisational", it also presents challenges to stopping them.

RACE V CLASS

While the processes and factors involved in mainstreaming are complex, there are two narratives that correspond to the different responses to the riots and functions of the far right that should most concern us as antiracists, antifascists and socialists. The first is that racism and the far right are expressions of the "legitimate concerns" of the white working-class "left behind". While it is true that the mobilisation of the far right can be a response to economic conditions, it is a



Photo: Paul Mattsson

mistake to assume it is the working class doing this. It is not only incorrect, but classist. It constructs the working class as white, racist and potentially extremist, privileging racial interests above class ones and pitting them against racialised minorities and migrants who are denied working-class status in a false competition for increasingly scarce, deregulated and casualised employment and ever decreasing resources and rights.

Far from being about class inequality and addressing their material interests and needs, this is the far right exploiting such conditions. But mainstream political parties and the capitalist class are also using the far right and class inequality to distract from these conditions, with ever more cuts and crises, and the failure to remedy them. This is evident in the way the narrative serves up reified racial and "cultural" interests and fears about losing power and privilege – which may also serve a white victim narrative that can be shared across white social groups, including elites and the far right – as if they are examples of economic inequality.

We saw this in 2009 in the context of the economic crisis and BNP gains in East London, when Labour Communities Secretary, John Denham, launched a £12-million Connecting Communities programme by stating: "Class still matters in Britain and the politics of identity ignores it at its peril. The position and growing self-confidence of minority communities can be seen as a threat to communities under pressure." If neglected, he argued, this could provide fertile territory for far-right extremism. This shows that class inequality really matters, and resources can be made available if it is about fighting extremism (even while it legitimises a far-right narrative) and playing divide and rule.

In addition to legitimising racism and the far right, and scapegoating the white working-class for it, this narrative also invisibilises and exacerbates the inequalities faced by racialised and migrant working class peoples. They are just unworthy



Photo: Paul Mattsson

WE MUST REJECT THE IDEA THAT THE FAR RIGHT IS AN OUTLIER, OR THAT WHAT WE ARE SEEING IS AN EXPRESSION OF LEGITIMATE CONCERNS, NOTABLY WORKING CLASS ONES – EVEN IF WE AGREE THAT THE SYSTEM IS UNEQUAL, UNJUST AND BROKEN.

competition. The working class is the most diverse class, with a long and rich history of labour and anti-racist activism, and thus presents the greatest threat to entrenched racial and capitalist interests, so divide and rule should come as no surprise.

The second issue is how the far right is represented as the main source of racism in, and threat to, our tolerant liberal society and democracy. While it is a threat, particularly to those they target, this construction can serve to distract from and deny the reality and experience of mainstream and systemic racism. It not only lets society off the hook and blames the white working-class, but also create a logic of equivalence, where reverse racism and white victimisation are equally likely or even more likely. This is something both the far right and the mainstream right use the “left behind” narrative to push and legitimise.

The threat narrative also allows the far right to be evoked to push more “moderate” versions of their politics, to see off that threat electorally and in the streets, and protect the system (and status quo). This is made easier if the rationale is not just a threat, but claims to address inequality and democratically represent the “legitimate concerns” of the people. We saw this in 2018, when Hillary Clinton made the argument in The Guardian that Europe needs to curb immigration to stop “rightwing populists”, euphemising the far right as “populist”, but accepting their anti-immigrant racism and representing it as a popular demand as opposed to something extreme. We then saw it in practice in the 2024 British election when Labour and the Tories tried to outdo Reform (and each other) as the least bad, but toughest option on

immigration.

USED AGAINST THE LEFT

The delegitimisation of the left is crucial here in terms of Labour's electoral and internal politics, as well as the maintenance of the social, political and economic status quo. The left is frequently accused of being ill-equipped to fend off the far right because, due to antiracism and “wokeness”, they allegedly do not represent the working class – and are antisemitic, closer to the fascism “we” defeated.

This can be seen in the accusations of antisemitism against Jeremy Corbyn in ways that ushered in the Labour right and centrists to fight the next election. The very same people who accused Gary Lineker of diminishing the Holocaust for calling fascist anti-immigration politics what it is, and accused Corbyn of antisemitism, mobilised the far right against pro-Palestinian activism in the name of anti-antisemitism, call us socialist Jews “Kapos” and

“Nazis”, and deny genocide. Quite the state we're in – and it won't end unless something radically changes.

The only way to address this is through left-wing, antiracist and antifascist resistance, opposition and alternatives on the streets, in communities and in politics. We cannot allow the far right to be portrayed as the only political alternative, or let opposition to immigration be seen as the only concern that matters. We must reject the idea that the far right is an outlier, or that what we are seeing is an expression of legitimate concerns, notably working class ones – even if we agree that the system is unequal, unjust and broken.

We must also reject the notion that we can address class inequality and stop the far right by mainstreaming their ideas or criminalising and securitising perpetrators. Not only is this contradictory and impractical, but these responses will always disproportionately target Muslims, migrants, racialised activists and the left.

Following from this, we must challenge the notion that the left is just as bad as the far right, that antifascism is as bad as fascism, that antiracism is as bad as racism, and that centrism is the solution, rather than part of the problem.

There is hope in the antiracists, antifascists and communities who took to the streets against the far right this summer, as well as in Palestinian solidarity activism in the UK and globally, and in the New Popular Front, the left coalition in France, which played a role in the defeat of National Rally. In the UK, there is also hope in the Greens, who won four seats in Parliament in the election, and in the Independent Alliance MPs. What is particularly significant about that, is that this is only one seat less than Reform, who are treated as democratically representative and a serious electoral threat. It is curious, though, why a real alternative to consensus and reactionary politics would not be treated as such if they hold such a close number of seats. It may be because of how well-established the construction of the far right as the main threat and alternative is, and how valuable a constituency their supporters are in our political system and culture. Or perhaps it's because the Greens and Independent Alliance MPs would actually present a threat and alternative to racial capitalism and British policy on Israel in ways the far right would not. As such it makes more sense to marginalise and undermine them and their politics, while amplifying and legitimising those of the far right. This may also be why the police were paying more attention to climate and pro-Palestinian activists than the far right.

We are at a point of crisis and opportunity. We need a left that can understand the relationship between, and oppose and help provide an alternative to, the far right and the system of racial capitalism that underpins and depends on them. We also need to understand the relationship between – and oppose – all forms of racism, and connect all working class people and those at the sharp end of inequality and injustice, locally, nationally and globally, including in Gaza.



Sunderland, summer 2024
Photo: Mark Pinder

WHO GOES THERE? FRIEND OR FOE?

Back in 1978, I was on a demonstration against the National Front in Brick Lane, East London, opposing the fascists' repeated attempts to establish a pitch to sell their newspaper and threaten the local immigrant population. On this occasion we were vastly outnumbered because many of the usual antiracist protesters were at a Rock Against Racism carnival in another part of London.

Despite our precarious situation, a group of antifascists started to taunt the police, chanting: “Police protect the fascists!” when it was perfectly obvious that without the police there, we would have suffered a battering from the fascists.

Nevertheless, the underlying principle when fighting the far right should be to build solidarity and capacity so that the community, and particularly the people targeted for attack, can defend each other. We

essential and must be treated with respect by national and international antiracist/antifascist movements, as these local initiatives are the foundations on which the wider movement will be built. There have been tremendous mobilisations to defend communities, but they can only be sustained if they are rooted in local campaigns.

There are dangers, though, that the authorities – the government and the police – will use this to normalise more policing. Keir Starmer has demanded – and the police and courts have delivered – stiff prison sentences for the rioters. Fascists behind bars? We may not have sympathy for them, but who is next? The Tories have claimed that there is two-tier policing which benefits minorities. But I suspect Starmer will find opportunities to urge the arrest of left activists, environmental activists, trade unionists... and that they will incur huge sentences.

In the 1930s, after the primarily Jewish and Irish communities of the East End of London prevented Mosley's Blackshirts from threatening them and marching through their streets, the state introduced the Public Order Act – ostensibly to prevent fascist violence. In practice, though, this legislation, and further similar laws, have been used much more against the left than the far right.

There is no need for new legislation to deal with thuggery. Riot legislation has been integrated into the current version of the Public Order Act, with two layers of severity. People have received severe sentences under this legislation. It is tempting to call for further legislation but this could be shooting ourselves in the foot. Hate Crime legislation could also have been applied. The problem here is that not all protected characteristics are treated equally.

Where the question might be more difficult is in the Online Safety Act 2023. This introduces a number of new offences: encouraging or assisting serious self-harm; cyberflashing; sending false information intended to cause non-trivial harm; threatening communications; intimate image abuse; epilepsy trolling. The Act recognises that illegal online content – which includes harassment, stalking, controlling or coercive behaviour, extreme pornography, and revenge pornography – disproportionately affects women and girls, and the law puts the onus on platforms to tackle this proactively.

This is slightly different territory but the connection between the Online Safety Act and the Public Order Act is highlighted by the fact that the fascists have been mobilising on social media against migrant and migrant-support targets across the country. So Keir Starmer and Yvette Cooper have been testing whether changing and strengthening the Online Safety Act can challenge the fascist and far right opinion-formers and influencers. Feminists, along with the left in general, need to keep a close eye on this and think through its implications quickly.



Anti-National Front
protest, Brick Lane 1978
Photo: Alan
Denney/Wikimedia
Commons

DAVID LANDAU argues that, when the far right is threatening communities and campaigners, we need to simultaneously challenge the police and demand their protection

HIDING IN

CLARA USISKIN
delves into
Britain's account
of the Nazi
occupation of
Alderney, and
discovers a
continuing story
of avoidance,
denial and
cover-up

The Channel Islands were the only part of the British Isles, the only British territory anywhere, in fact, to be occupied by Germany during the Second World War. What happened there runs counter to all known rousing Churchillian memes and does not therefore make for easy national myth making. The whole truth about what happened, including the extent and nature of collaboration of some officials and other locals with the Nazi occupiers, remains contested territory.

On 15th June 1940, facing imminent invasion by the Nazis there, the British government demilitarised the Channel Islands, leaving them undefended. This information – embarrassing and undermining of Britain's war messaging – was suppressed and therefore not shared with the Germans. A bombing raid on the undefended Islands on 28th June 1940 killed 44 and injured 30. The Germans landed in Guernsey two days later, on 30th June 1940, reaching Jersey the day after. Alderney was occupied on 2nd July, and the tiny island of Sark on 4th July. The invasion was announced to the British public in *The Times* on 2nd July 1940.

Following the invasion, on advice from Westminster, Channel Islands leaders immediately capitulated to the Germans. Alderney's residents were evacuated to make way for a series of slave labour prison camps, named after the German North Sea islands of Sylt, Norderney, Borkum and Helgoland. Thousands of war crimes, including rendition, slave labour involving people of 12 nationalities brought to Alderney, and mass murder, were undoubtedly committed on and around Alderney during the Nazi occupation. Whilst Channel Islands leaders who co-operated, and in some cases collaborated, with the Nazis were lauded after the war, those islanders who were deported to Continental prisons and concentration camps, and members of the local resistance, were not celebrated. The Lighthouse Memorial to the Jersey 21 who died in concentration camps and prisons was unveiled only in 1996. It took Guernsey a further 20 years to honour its resisters – people such as Frank Falla, a journalist who was deported for his role in the underground newsletter *GUNS* (*Guernsey Underground News Service*).

Alongside the hundreds of Slavic and other slave labourers brought to Alderney by the Nazis, Jews on the islands were also persecuted. Between 1940 and 1942, nine antisemitic orders, including requirements for Jews to register their ethnicity, were made at the Royal Courts of Jersey and Guernsey. It remains unknown exactly how many people were impacted by these orders, however those who were affected include: Miriam Jacoms and Lucy Schwob, who did not register and became part of a resistance group – they were captured and sentenced to death (the sentence was eventually commuted); Therese Steiner, Marianne Grunfeld and Auguste Spitz, who were rendered to France in 1942 and later sent to Auschwitz, where they were



A Nazi bunker on Alderney.
Photo: Andree Stephan/
Creative Commons

murdered. A further seven Jewish people from Jersey and Guernsey are known to have been rendered to various concentration camps and survived. Of those who remained on the islands, Victor Emmanuel took his own life in 1944 and at least two but likely more are known to have spent the occupation in hiding. 594 French Jews are known to have been rendered to Alderney by the Germans with at least four dying on the island. Justice for the victims of these war crimes has long been elusive. Uniquely in occupied Europe, no official – of German or any other nationality – has ever been prosecuted for atrocities committed during WW2 in the Channel Islands.

The British government had, since 1946, remained officially silent on the topic of war crimes carried out on Alderney during the occupation. From the beginning, the wider Channel Islands occupation was embarrassing for the British Government, and they dealt with that embarrassment by silence and avoidance, thereby further abandoning the Channel Islanders to their

PLAIN SIGHT

fate. Linda Holt, in the *London Review of Books* (May 1995) writes:

The BBC broadcast no messages of encouragement to Channel Islanders as they did to other occupied populations. For the same reason, the Government resisted pressure to send food parcels, although other parts of occupied Europe were allowed them. After D-Day, supplies from France came to a halt, and the islands were under siege from the Allies. "Let 'em starve. No fighting. They can rot at their leisure" was what Churchill scribbled in the margin of a liberation plan – and it came to apply as much to the Islanders themselves as to the German garrison. Only in December 1944 did Islanders receive Red Cross food parcels; liberation for "our dear Channel Islands" didn't come until five months later, when the Germans surrendered on the day after VE day.

Following liberation, British investigators from the War Office established that serious war crimes, including mass murder, had occurred on Alderney. Five German officers, likely perpetrators, were still being held by the British on the Channel Islands. Ten others were held in prisoner of war camps in Britain, and a final 31 were held in the Allied zones of occupied Germany. Despite the zeal of initial investigators, Britain chose to prosecute none of these people, and since 1946 has remained silent on this decision. It might be expected that the first British governmental pronouncement since 1946 about what happened on Alderney during the war would attempt to engage with all of this in good faith.

According to Sir Eric Pickles, Britain's Holocaust Envoy, who in May 2024 published a report about war crimes on Alderney during the war, the prime reason for his intervention was that a sort of tax-haven-cum-disaster-tourism scenario appeared to be developing. With no reference to the decades long British silence, Pickles was finding it concerning that increasing numbers of visitors had been visiting the Channel Island in order to explore the remains of the Nazi occupation and engage in wild speculation about how many thousands of transported slave labourers may lie buried in unmarked locations around the island.

Something had to be done, and thus, on 27th July 2023, an official inquiry with an extraordinarily narrow scope was born. "The truth matters", boomed Lord Pickles in his introduction to the report of that Inquiry, the *Expert Review Report on the Nazi Occupation of the Channel Island of Alderney*. It matters, he suggests, because in this context, to not serve the truth is to participate in Holocaust distortion. "Nothing compares to the virulence or personal nature of arguments over numbers in Alderney," he opines. "Numbers do matter. It is as much of a Holocaust distortion to exaggerate the number of deaths as it is to underplay the numbers. Exaggeration plays into the hands of Holocaust deniers and undermines the six million dead. The truth can never harm us."



Plaque at the entrance to Lager Sylt, run by the SS on Alderney

Numbers do matter, and the report appears to do a good job on establishing some basic facts about the Alderney prisoners: who they were; where they were from; and what happened to them. In doing this, it stands on the shoulders of earlier researchers who are not credited, in particular Madeleine Bunting, whose estimates of numbers on Alderney in her book *Model Occupation*, published in the 1990s, remain convincing.

The report also places what happened in Alderney in an operational context with respect to the wider Holocaust. Pickles clarifies that in Alderney's camps, prisoners and a small "volunteer" force were mainly tasked with fortifying the island with vast concrete tunnels and structures. These operations were connected to Germany's wider genocide industrial complex, of which slave labour, like that on Alderney, was a key element.

As to the identities of those who laboured on Alderney, and how many of them died there, the report's panel of expert historians and archaeologists confirm a series of key findings: between 7,608 and 7,812 prisoners and forced- and slave-labourers were sent to Alderney during the German occupation. These individuals were of diverse nationalities and heritage, and included people who were Channel Islanders, Flemish, Belgian, French, Algerian, other North African, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Eastern European, German, French Jews, and a group of French women who other researchers have noted are likely to have been sexually exploited. The number of prisoners who died on the island is likely to have been between 641 and 1,027. The report also suggests that at least 97 prisoners died in transit to the island and at least one prisoner disappeared.

Where Lord Pickles' report falters is in its treatment of the question of why Britain failed to prosecute the German perpetrators of all these crimes and in its total silence on the related question of whether there was criminal level collaboration from the Channel Islands leadership or any other locals. In this way, Pickles perpetuates a cover-up. Not the straw-man kind of cover-up that the report invokes and makes a show of dismissing in its focus on the numbers. Rather, a criminal liability kind of cover up, carried out via silence, evasion and a touch of pomposity, dogged in its avoidance of embarrassing truths.



The island's only campsite is situated exactly where the Nordeney workcamp once stood.

Pickles wants to clarify the numbers whilst leaving intact wider myths about British conduct in the Channel Islands in relation to the Holocaust there. In doing this, his foray into historical context is in the style of an Englishman abroad, as though finding himself in a theatrically empty place. Where others may acknowledge a measure of politics, contest and ambiguity, Pickles is silent even on the question of silence itself. Precisely no reference is made in his introduction to the thunderous silence from the British state that has, since 1946, accompanied, indeed must be causally related to, these arguments over numbers. Nor is any respectful reference made to earlier dedicated independent researchers such as Solomon Steckoll and Madeleine Bunting, who ensured that the question of what happened on Alderney during the German occupation was not wholly forgotten. Steckoll, an Israeli Jewish journalist, was one of the first inflators of numbers, working as he was in the 1980s, in good faith, with limited access to official information and incredulous at the lack of prosecutions.

The report simultaneously avoids engaging with the multitude of relevant facts and context, and declares itself willing and capable of providing a satisfying answer to the question of why the British carried out no prosecutions of these war crimes committed on Alderney. There is even a claim that the report has a new finding: *that the British failure to prosecute was in good faith*. Sir Anthony Glees has been specially recommissioned from the Thatcher Government to deliver this pearl. Apparently, the report offers, with reference to almost no relevant source information, the Brits really really wanted to prosecute the top Nazis responsible, even having most of them in their custody at the relevant time. But it was decided that for reasons of diplomacy and nationality, it would be better if the Russians prosecuted: the case was handed over to Russia in 1945 but unfortunately they did nothing. The plucky Brits' hands were tied: *What was "covered up", it should be emphasised, was not a lack of fervour on the*

part of the British to convict Nazi war criminals (indeed it was believed the Soviets would be far more severe in their punishment of the war criminals than the British). Rather it was that the case had been handed over almost at once to the USSR and that the USSR did nothing with it. This has been hidden from public view until now."

The question of why the British decided to assert, despite being aware of evidence to the contrary, that most if not all of the victims of Nazi atrocities on Alderney were Russian, is left unanswered. As is the question of why the British knowingly misled the French about the existence of evidence showing mistreatment of French nationals on Alderney. Glees suggests that simultaneously with being handed to the Russians, the original British 1945 war crimes report was lodged in the archive at Kew. This may be the case, but the Pickles Report neglects to note that it was unavailable to researchers until 2008, and stored in an unknown location.

An alternative hypothesis might therefore be that the British had found themselves with an embarrassing case file relating to the Holocaust on their own territory, with most, if not all, of the potential defendants in their custody, and plenty of political reasons, but no good legal reason, not to prosecute. They had however identified a loophole in the rules around jurisdiction, whereby if they falsely asserted that most or all the victims were Russian, they could appear to absolve themselves of the responsibility to prosecute for long enough to punt the case over to a state with which their relationship was deteriorating rapidly, and which was almost certainly never going to pursue a prosecution.

Of course, clarity around who was held on Alderney, where they came from and what happened to them, could still now be foundational to exploring new ways to engage with all of this. Grave human rights abuses must be known and understood if we are to have any hope of not repeating them. In one important sense, in its granular work on the numbers and nationalities of the imprisoned and

dead, Pickles' report adds something to our understanding of what happened in the Channel Islands during the German occupation. In another sense, where it proffers misleading explanations of the British failure to prosecute war crimes on Alderney, it is deeply conservative, selective in its contextualisation and examination of the facts, and dismissive in its descriptors of those who would seek to question its conclusions.

So, what to do next? The people of Alderney didn't ask for this to happen on their island, and whatever the diversity and complexity of engagement with the occupiers, they weren't the perpetrators. Almost all of them lost their homes and were wholly abandoned by the British government during the occupation. But in a very real sense these historical events and their contested, messy narratives are tied to this place. Locals live with the tangible legacy every day, and if that were not enough, there is persistent talk of mass graves, possible excavations, and if and how the island's occupation history can be better incorporated into its tourist strategy.

During their five-year occupation of the island, the Nazis covered the coastline with so many concrete bunkers that there was, in principle, nowhere around the coast that could not be seen from one of the German observation posts. Later residents of Alderney appear to have learned to live with the scars, pits and carbuncles on the landscape left by the Nazis. Alongside the civic Holocaust memorial close to unmarked mass burial sites on Longis Common, and an exhibition in the capital St Anne's, relics of this time are worked around, ignored, stepped over and in some cases still used.

Old Nazi bunkers on the coastline are used as beach huts by locals. The fancy pillars from the front of the SS Kommandant's villa (demolished) appear to have been moved and incorporated into someone's front gate. The island's only campsite is situated exactly where the Nordeney workcamp once stood, with a German structure now functioning as the main campsite building. A regular rave has been held in the bunker where the peace treaty was signed for the surrender of

Alderney by the Germans.

Underpinning contemporary debates about memorialisation and excavation of Alderney's World War II heritage are the same questions of locus, power and responsibility that have dogged this matter since the British decision not to prosecute the perpetrators. Awful things happened there to people who were long ago deemed to have not enough purchase on justice, in the main no connection to the land in question, who were stripped of the "right to rights" not only by the Nazis who took them to Alderney, but also by the British who failed to prosecute their abusers, and who carried out their own strategy of omerta for decades.

Like contemporary questions of where and how we might remember or seek justice for asylum seekers who die every week trying to cross the English Channel, when people have slipped between the cracks, horrible things have happened to them, and we have turned away, how then to remember? And if we don't remember, what hope for a better future? To return to Lord Pickles' opening words, the truth may never harm us. But in its entirety it may be impossible to face.

Find out more

The Channel Islands: Occupation and Liberation, 6th May, 2020. 75 years after the liberation of the Channel Islands, this article explores how the islands were occupied and how the occupation was debated in the House of Lords lordslibrary.parliament.uk/the-channel-islands-occupation-and-liberation/

The Lord Pickles Alderney Expert Review (The Pickles Report), May 2024 assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6656f459dc15efdddf1a84b6/Lord_Pickles-Alderney_expert_review.pdf

The "Lost" Pantcheff Report blogs.staffs.ac.uk/archaeology/the-lost-pantcheff-report/

The Alderney Death Camp by Solomon Steckoll, Granada, 1982

The Model Occupation: The Channel Islands Under German Rule, 1940-1945 by Madeleine Bunting, Pimlico, 2004

"Our Dear Channel Islands" by Linda Holt, *London Review of Books*, 25th May 1995, a review of two books on the occupation of the Channel Islands www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v17/n10/linda-holt/our-dear-channel-islands

The ideas, activities and achievements of the Jewish Workers' Bund, which was founded in 1897 and whose high point was between the world wars in Poland, are at last coming into their own after decades of being undermined by both the Zionist telling of 20th-century Jewish history and a skewed interpretation of Bundist history and ideas by orthodox Marxists.

Our pamphlet brings the history and ideas of the Bund to life through a variety of voices.

You can buy a copy for £5 + £2.50 p&p – write to jsg@jewishsocialist.org.uk for details. Or read it online or download it from the publications and resources section of the Jewish Socialists' Group website at www.jewishsocialist.org.uk



OLD NAZI BUNKERS ON THE COASTLINE ARE USED AS BEACH HUTS BY LOCALS. THE FANCY PILLARS FROM THE FRONT OF THE SS KOMMANDANT'S VILLA (DEMOLISHED) APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN MOVED AND INCORPORATED INTO SOMEONE'S FRONT GATE.

Discord and harmony

KOSHER JAMMERS: JEWISH CONNECTIONS IN JAZZ, VOL 1
by Mike Gerber
Vinyl Vanguard,
£19.99

This book is a treasure trove for jazz lovers – a chronology of Jewish involvement in American jazz, peppered with anecdotes and interviews. The title, *Kosher Jammers*, is a reference to Mickey Katz's band of that name (Katz was Joel Gray's father).

The book is not polemical but it confronts the major issue of tension between Black and white musicians. As an aside, in my experience, no African American, especially from the South, would believe that a white person could understand or identify with the life that they experienced – the handed-down memories of slavery, grinding poverty and sheer humiliation of being treated not so much as a second class citizen but almost as a different species. Jews often did identify with that, since we have our own recent memories of persecution, and maybe because we celebrate our own liberation from slavery, but, the tensions are understandable.

There are some conclusions which are implicit in the book. Jazz emerged from Black America, most of its great innovators were Black, and it remains predominantly a Black American art form. Nonetheless, there was an important white input and a significant Jewish contribution.

Jews were prominent in exposing jazz to a wider public, promoting it, recording it and managing venues where it was played. Jews felt an empathy for Black music because they identified with underdogs, but there are always tensions between promoters and musicians. That is no less the case when the musicians are Black and the promoters are Jews. But there were also many Jewish virtuoso musicians and bandleaders, including, amongst others, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Shelley Manne, Buddy Rich, Stan Getz, Lee Konitz.

Jewish bandleaders were the first to break the segregationist barriers by including Black musicians and crediting Black composers. That also caused resentments because Jews, as whites, could reach a wider audience and earn more. Jewish band leaders could also offer Black musicians better rates than Black bandleaders.

Jews like George Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Johnny Green, Jerome Kern and Richard Rodgers made a disproportionate contribution to the composition and development of popular American music, and that indirectly fed jazz composition. One example is Gershwin's "I've got Rhythm", where the chord sequence was so well known as a basis for jazz improvisations that they were known as "Rhythm changes" and were used as exercises for students.

There was some evidence of klezmer and cantorial music directly influencing Jewish jazz musicians but most of that influence came indirectly, via popular song composition. But, Jews were also attracted to jazz which, like Jewish music, does not conform to western classical music rules: the notes need bending and "krechts" to sound right.

There are some wonderful anecdotes in the book, such as when Eddie South, a blind Black fiddler, was playing at Café Society, and the venue was half empty. Barney Josephson, the Jewish owner, had forgotten it was Yom Kippur but Eddie South hadn't; he played a moving version of Kol Nidre. Later, Eddie told Barney that he had a Jewish grandfather.

One of the most important collaborations was between Billie Holiday and Artie Shaw, whose band she sang with. Her trademark song, "Strange Fruit", was written by a Jewish man, Abel Meeropol, and she first performed it at Café Society, run by a Jew, then recorded and distributed by another Jew.

When Miles Davis left Charlie Parker's band, he was replaced with Red Rodney – a Jew. When the band toured in the South, Parker avoided segregation laws by claiming that Rodney was a Black albino. The segregationist restrictions in the South and to some extent in the north, too, were draconian. Officially until 1964, but in practice long after that, Black and white people could not stay in the same hotels, eat in the same restaurants or attend the same clubs.

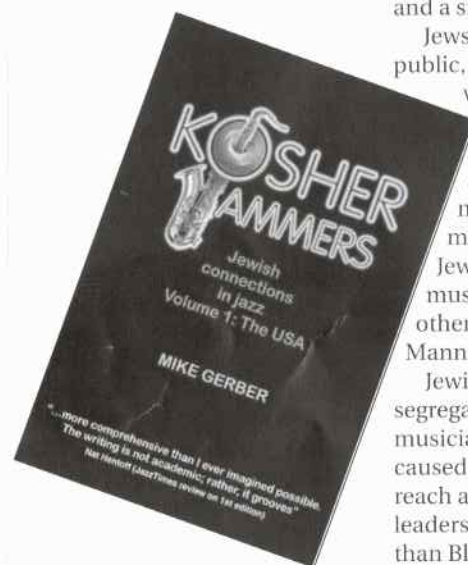
Benny Goodman was the first band leader to challenge segregation by hiring Black musicians, including Charlie Christian, the pioneering guitarist. Goodman was known as a difficult man but he was staunch in his defence of his musicians. While the band were setting up for a gig at the Grove in Los Angeles, he saw the doormen telling his Black musicians to use the back door. He told the band to pack up their instruments and they left, turning down a lucrative gig.

Interestingly, Benny Goodman was a big admirer of Naftule Brandwein, a famous klezmer clarinetist. According to the British klezmer clarinetist Susi Evans, Naftule Brandwein was known in the Yiddish community as "the Jewish Benny Goodman" in sarcastic reference to Goodman's lack of Jewish identification. Artie Shaw was less protective of Billie Holiday. She left the band in a fury when she was made to use the back door and the goods lift at a gig in a smart New York hotel. The inequality still existed in the 1970s. At the Village Gate in New York, Miles Davis was on the same bill as Blood Sweat and Tears. He was paid \$5,000 a week; they received \$25,000.

An interesting topic was women in jazz. I had not come across the International Sweethearts of Rhythm before – a Black women's swing orchestra, which included some Jewish women who passed as Black when they toured in the South. I had come across Emily Remler, a fabulous guitarist, and Barbara Carroll, a pianist, but Jane Ira Bloom, Mimi Fox and Jessica Williams were new to me. Other Jewish artists who were huge talents and influences were Al Cohn, Mel Powell, Ziggy Elman, Stan Levey, Barney Kessel, Shorty Rogers, Steve Lacy, Paul Bley and Randy Brecker. They're all in the book.

Jewish Jazz promoters included Irving Mills (Duke Ellington's manager), Joe Glaser (Louis Armstrong's manager) and Norman Granz, who promoted Jazz at the Philharmonic. There's an interesting interview with George Wein, who started the Newport Jazz and the Newport Folk Festivals and countless other clubs, festivals and record labels. He summed up the relationship between entrepreneurs and musicians, saying: "Entrepreneurs were looking for ways to make money. Musicians were looking for how to get paid. Nothing difficult to understand about that."

The book took me a long time to read because I kept turning to YouTube to listen to yet another example of a musician I hadn't heard or heard of. Very enjoyable! **Simon Prager**



Are there any reasons to hope?

I grew up in an intensely pro-Israel Zionist family and milieu, surfacing in my early 20s and becoming a committed Israel-critical Jew in solidarity with the Palestinian people's long struggle for justice, self-determination, equality and liberation. This shift involved deep un-learning, new learning, finding comrades, friends, new family, discussion and activism. The bitter arguments with my birth family have always been, and remain, painful (in this present terrible time, just silencing each other), but this shift has been essential.

Through the 1970s and early '80s, one thing that enabled this "traitorous" change in perspective about Israel/Palestine, was reading – puncturing a young lifetime of being inculcated with "from time immemorial" pro-Israeli myths and propaganda. The bias and lies I grew up with couldn't survive reading even a few pages of Edward Said's work and other equally devastating writing. Now Raja Shehadeh's pithy, scathing, clear, persuasive short book joins the fray.

Even though I was already a convinced anti-Zionist when I read Raja Shehadeh's 2007 book, *Palestinian Walks*, it was a revelation, connecting with my love of nature, hiking and landscape, as well as my hatred of injustice. He showed, then, in intimate detail the terrible change being wrought to the Palestinian West Bank, particularly from late 1970s, by the violent, dispossessing, discriminatory Israeli state and its settlers. His powerful legal critique and the rootedness of his writing in a love of place deepened the reader's empathy and solidarity with the Palestinian people and their land. I interviewed Raja Shehadeh about *Palestinian Walks* in 2008 (*Jewish Socialist* No 57, Spring 2009) and have looked out for his writing ever since.

If you have been reading, watching, listening, attending to, protesting against Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, as well as its increasingly violent dispossession of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, then perhaps the information and understanding here will not be new. But the questions asked are interesting and salient, and the arguments thought-provoking, fresh and useful.

This short book is in two parts, the first, "How did we get here?" focuses on two questions. Following hopeful world events in late 1980s and early '90s, including the end of apartheid in South Africa and fall of the Berlin Wall, Shehadeh asks why "the ending of long-standing injustices didn't inspire the Israeli government to end the occupation of the Occupied Palestinian territories, resolve outstanding issues between Palestinians and Israelis and usher in lasting peace?" Secondly he asks: "Why didn't the world put its weight behind making this happen?"

The first part of the book details a modern history of Palestine/Israel from the Nakba to the present, suggesting some clear answers to these questions. Shehadeh highlights one glimpse of hope during this time, in the convening of the 1991 Madrid International Peace Conference. He quotes in detail the inspiring address at the opening from the head of the Palestinian delegation Dr Haidar Abdul-Shafi which "thrilled" Shehadeh. But his hopes were dashed in the "bitter disappointment" of the

1993 Oslo agreement and what followed.

The second part of this short book is focused on "thinking about the current situation, what role might the Gaza war, with its terrible human toll play, if any, in bringing about the beginning of a global shift?"

There is so much material out there online, particularly regarding the section of the book on the current situation in Gaza, and the author can only document the devastation up to a point in time in Israel's daily atrocities against Palestinian citizens. Yet there still feels a sharp usefulness to this small physical book, one we can return to, spend time with and reflect on, recommend or pass around to others, offering a thoughtful, angry, constructive marker in this storm.

In addressing these questions, Shehadeh draws on the contributions of others familiar to *Jewish Socialist* readers, including Uri Avnery, +972 Magazine, Gideon Levy, the Gazan psychiatrist Eyad El-Sarraj, the Jenin People's theatre, Peter Beinart, the Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darwish and Refaat Alareer. Throughout, he connects the argument with his detailed knowledge of, and decades of struggle against, Israel's discriminatory legal system, and points clearly to Israel's continual and longstanding breaches of international law, which have been confirmed again by last July's ICJ ruling on the illegality of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (see Shehadeh's *Guardian* article, 23rd July 2024).

If the opportunity had been seized in 1991, as passionately proposed in the Palestinian lead address to the Madrid Conference, could there have been a move to a just peace in two countries living side by side, sharing lives with each other? The Israeli state and its international enablers rejected this trajectory, instead deepening colonialism through settlement and apartheid, culminating in the violent extremes of this current government with its far-right Ministers.

Perhaps our glimmer of hope now lies in the developing anti-apartheid, decolonising struggle rooted in Palestine, with the world's peoples waking up and making brilliant, creative, determined protest again and again in solidarity. And there is hope for us in the the Jewish Socialists' Group, witnessing a new generation of Jews openly and confidently rejecting Zionism, and forging new Jewish identities based on solidarity, anti-oppression and decolonisation, most effectively in US but here in the UK, too, with the Jewish Bloc for Palestine. These protests are contributing to making Israel more internationally isolated as well as it being in deep legal jeopardy.

Shehadeh ends by saying that "for the majority of Palestinians, who are not part of Hamas; for those Israelis who could only watch with dismay at what their government was doing, powerless to stop the horror; for those of us who know with unshakeable certainty that the only future for the two peoples is to live together – the future might seem bleak. And yet looking back at the history of the region, it is only after great upheavals that hopeful consequences follow."

Let's damn well hope so.

Simon Lynn

WHAT DOES ISRAEL FEAR FROM PALESTINE?
Raja Shehadeh
Profile Books
£7.99



BATTLE

DAVID ROSENBERG reviews a stunning dramatisation of a pivotal moment in antifascist history, in *Cable Street: A New Musical*

The Battle of Cable Street in London's East End on 4th October 1936 was undoubtedly the most iconic confrontation with fascism in 1930s Britain, although people in Stockton, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Bristol and Bermondsey will point to other serious clashes in that decade that should be commemorated and celebrated.

Cable Street, though, has a special claim, and not only because of the scale of the event with upwards of 100,000 people on the streets, bloody clashes and scores of arrests. In October 1936, half of the entire national membership of Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) was concentrated in four east London branches that formed a horseshoe around the enclave of Aldgate/Whitechapel, where 60,000 Jews – a third of all London's Jews – eked out a living in one square mile.

They were already facing growing antisemitic harassment and violence from Mosley's Blackshirts. Then the government gave the go-ahead for a potential invasion of their streets by thousands of uniformed, jackbooted fascists. A petition to the Home Secretary with nearly 100,000 signatures calling for Mosley's march to be banned was ignored: thousands of police were mobilised to facilitate the fascists' free speech and free movement.

By summer 1934, Mosley could boast 500 BUF branches around the UK and a cross class membership of 40,000. His increasingly obsessive antisemitism had struck a chord among rich and poor. But by 1936 the BUF had narrowed its sights strategically to a few key inner cities, where they sought to build a working class power base.

In clipped upper class tones, Mosley proclaimed in 1935: "We are now the patriotic party of the working class." (Fun fact: on the day that Paul Nuttall, a former history lecturer at Liverpool Hope University, became UKIP's leader in 2016, he told a press conference: "We are now the patriotic party of the working people.")

SCPTICISM AVERTED

The Battle of Cable Street has been marked in several ways, most permanently by the stunning mural that covers the side of the former St George's Town Hall in Cable Street. Since 1986 – the 50th anniversary – the event has been celebrated with marches, rallies and local festivals, initially every 10 years, then from 2011 every five years.

I was very sceptical when I heard that a musical about Cable Street was being produced. I feared that



the raw anger, the stark brutality and terror would be sanitised and softened into something comforting and light on the ear – and that the courage of those organising a political struggle of resistance would be collapsed into a feelgood reminder of how community spirit triumphs over evil.

I could not have been more mistaken. This was dynamic and gritty theatre. Actors played countless roles that changed instantly with slick changes of scene. Tim Gilvin's well-crafted songs, with powerful lyrics, were conveyed with real conviction in diverse styles, old and modern. In the intimate space of Southwark Playhouse, the action takes place at floor level, almost within touching distance of the audience, recreating an atmosphere of crisis felt so viscerally in the mid-1930s.

The precariousness of people's economic lives was ever present. Alex Kanefsky's script deftly demonstrated how easily the desperation felt by those suffering hardship could open their ears to the messages of populist right-wing demagogues who made promises they knew they could not fulfil. Those drawn into this new movement, as hopeful footsoldiers of a New Britain, sank deeper into a politics of hate.

At the heart of the drama is the dynamic between the East End's two biggest minority groups, which the BUF tried to manipulate. Mosley sought to win impoverished Irish Catholics against equally poor Jews, while a growing antifascist movement, in which the Communist Party played a leading role, worked to unite the two communities against the fascists. On 4th October 1936, many Irish people helped Jews to build barricades to repel the fascists.

The musical shows the somewhat uneasy coexistence of the two communities. The reality in the 1930s East End was that it was demarcated into distinct areas. Two thirds of Cable Street itself, to the west, was almost entirely Jewish, while the eastern end was almost entirely Irish. The two rarely mixed. It was true, though, that some Irish

David Rosenberg is the author of *Battle for the East End* (Five Leaves) and *Rebel Footprints* (Pluto Press), and was convenor of the Cable Street 80 commemorations in 2016. For details of his walks, see www.eastendwalks.com

This article was first published in the Spring 2024 issue of *Searchlight*.

SCENES

people worked for small Jewish businesses.

In the play, Mairead, a young Irish woman attracted to communist ideas, works in a Jewish bakery. She becomes romantically involved with an unemployed Jewish boxer, Sammy Scheinberg. Mairead's more right-wing and prejudiced mother does not welcome her daughter's politics. And Sammy's growing political awareness brings him into conflict with his father's more cautious approach, handed down from aloof middle-class Jewish community leaders far from the East End.

GUIDING SPIRIT

Two clever devices deftly filled in some of the period's political detail. A group of street corner newspaper sellers appear several times, articulating different stances on the latest political developments by opinion formers.

The other device – a present day tour guide who describes the events of yesteryear – made me feel personally honoured. Since 2007, I have led tours of London's radical history. One walk, Anti-Fascist Footprints, tells the story of the East End's explosive encounter with 1930s fascism. On the tours I insist that the story did not end with Cable Street. On 4th

October 1936, the anti-fascist victory across the ethnic/religious divide was then cemented over the following years through common struggles in housing. This was what achieved concrete gains for those working class communities, not the false promises of the fascists. This musical includes that crucial part of the story.

The show's first four-week run sold out even before the first preview. No doubt many members of the audience had relatives who had taken part in the 1930s struggles that demonstrated unity, solidarity and courageous defiance.

But the theme cannot help but strike a chord today, in the dismal vacuum of mainstream politics: as people struggle to stay afloat economically in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, this once again provides ample opportunities for right wing populist movements.



ASK THE RABBI

Our respected teacher is here to solve your problems

Dear Rabbi

I was shocked to hear that the Jewish Chronicle has consistently fabricated news stories. Regrettably I must cancel my subscription. Can you suggest an alternative?

The Rabbi replies

I am thrilled to announce the launch of a new publication – *The Netanyahu Voice* (Netanyahu is Hebrew for truth and integrity, according to a new Musk online translator).

The paper's sponsors, GMTV's Richard Madeley and ex-MP Jonathan Gullis, are deeply connected to our diverse community and all aspects of Jewish life. *The Netanyahu Voice* is committed to being independent, open and transparent. It is funded by Yair Netanyahu who heads Miami-based StormTheCapita Fund. Joining the consortium will be Sheikh bin Deatoh/Migrantworkers and others who are based somewhere or other and are also open and transparent.

We are fortunate to have secured the services of ex-Culture Minister Nadine Dorries, who will be the new editor. Nadine tells us, "I love Jews and have read all their bestsellers. Particularly the *Kama Sutra*."

Dear Rabbi

Our family in the US is conflicted about who to vote for in the forthcoming elections. Which one will be better for Israel?

The Rabbi replies

Not an easy choice. We know that some of Israel's staunchest supporters will be voting for Donald Trump. He warned us in September that if he loses, "Jewish people would have a lot to do with the loss."

However, in July the then Democratic National Convention nominee, Joe Biden, reminded us that: "If there weren't an Israel, every Jew in the world would be at risk."

What words of wisdom can we take from Talmudic scholars?

The popular and well-loved Rabbi Badenoch gave many lectures on the separation of men and women when squatting in the desert to relieve themselves. Rabbi Badenoch was particularly troubled by Joseph wearing a coat of many colours.

Rabbi Jenrick called for the erasure of wall paintings to discourage homeless Phoenician children from feeling comforted.

Rabbi Cleverley entreated us to "Stop the small camels".

Rabbi Reeves admonished those who

gave extra firewood to elders during winter.

Rabbi Starmer – always a dapper figure amongst the sages – warned us against hypocrisy.

The Talmud has spoken. You must vote for whoever will continue to send 2000-lb bombs to Israel.



KOL NIDRE APPEAL

This year's Appeal will focus on children

* Can you help a distraught parent who – through no fault of their own – has been unable to get tickets for Taylor Swift?

* Can you help a child revise for exams by providing a balcony with riverside view?

* Can you provide clothing vouchers? (Burberry, Hobbs, Reiss only please.)