

## 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 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](mailto: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 Junction Road, London N19 5RD. 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 1984 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 81 Autumn 2025 £3



## FIGHTING BACK IN TRUMP'S NEW WORLD

- Interviews: Andrew Feinstein; Mike Feinberg
- Combatting Reform UK
- West Bank witness
- Talking about genocides
- Black and Jewish liberation

## EDITORIAL

When we look at the history of the 20th century, we repeatedly, and painfully, explore the question of how people could have let the Nazi genocide happen. We ask, at what point – and how – could the step-by-step process of segregation, marginalisation, victimisation, dehumanisation, ghettoisation, deportation, imprisonment, and mass industrialised murder have been stopped? What were the mechanisms that made people collude, deny what was happening or fear speaking out.

This issue of *Jewish Socialist* is being produced simultaneously with Israel's seemingly unstoppable devastation of Gaza and the West Bank – the destruction of lives, homes, institutions, culture, the very future of the Palestinian people. Month after month, since October 2023, we have demonstrated and campaigned in solidarity with the victims, supported the Israelis campaigning against their government and demanded an end to the complicity of ours. And the repression of protest has grown harsher and harsher.

At the same time, the far right and fascists here and elsewhere are being emboldened, encouraged by governments colluding with their racism. They are building on genuine fears to peddle conspiracy theories and dangerous false narratives, blaming migrants, minorities and whoever they deem to be the enemy – including the left. When people face real, concrete problems and encounter a crumbling framework of support – the health service, utilities, water, transport, housing – they are vulnerable to snake-oil salesmen, like Reform UK and beyond, who stoke up anxiety, paranoia, hostility and jealousy, promising solutions while pocketing their cash.

We have to distinguish between the villains and the targets of their villainy, even though they may seem to be entangled with each other. Mark Brown has reviewed a stunning piece of theatre that faces this conundrum head on. *Revenge: After the Levoyah* vividly, hilariously and brilliantly describes the tangled web of violently conflicting views in the Jewish context (page 30).

We know how dangerous it is to speak out, fight back and challenge wrongs, and how difficult it is to sustain a vision and find strategies for attaining a just and peaceful world. Uri Horesh writes a powerful account of how he was driven out of his job and his country (page 14) and Shimshun describes his time in Palestine, sharing and learning about the daily terror that residents of the West Bank experience at the hands of the army and the settlers (page 15).

Zrinka Bralo, a journalist who escaped from the Bosnian genocide, talks movingly about denial: people's refusal to believe the worst, even as their

lives, homes and families are being destroyed; and the impossibility of resolution when the perpetrators continue to deny their crimes for decades afterwards (page 18).

But there are models to inspire, galvanise and give us the courage to make real change.

Mike Feinberg, a political campaigner in America, describes the atmosphere in New York and across the USA during Trump's second presidency (page 7). Trump is not a clown. His shock tactics and extreme actions are part of a longstanding plan that is being relentlessly pursued. But there are flashes of light in the darkness. Zohran Mamdani's spectacular success in becoming the Democratic nominee for New York Mayor results from him confidently conveying his vision for changing the lives of New Yorkers, as well as his uncompromising criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. He achieved this with the support of tens of thousands of volunteers, many of them Jewish, who canvassed for him on foot and by phone.

As the pictures on our screens become ever more horrifying, the claimed consensus within the British Jewish community is proving impossible to sustain. Joseph Finlay (page 12) recognises the immense pressure to stay united but argues that, however late in the day, we need to encourage people who have gathered the courage to speak out against the destruction Israel is wreaking in Gaza, saying that ending the violence is more important than communal unity.

Successful political activism, which changes hearts, minds and concrete situations, rests on foundations of real solidarity, collaboration and practical support. Andrew Feinstein's political career has ranged from digging latrines in South African townships via serving in Nelson Mandela's government, to standing as an Independent against Keir Starmer in the last General Election. We explore his ideas in depth in a fascinating interview (page 23).

Aviah Sarah Day, of the Black Jewish Alliance (page 10) argues powerfully for Jews to be active in anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements, saying: "Organising on antisemitism in those movements isn't about gaining sympathy, virtue signalling or gaining a platform to showcase Jewish problems. It's about understanding and dismantling a dynamic that isolates Jews and antisemitism from the wider struggle against racism."

We apologise for the late arrival of this issue of *Jewish Socialist*, which was due to unprecedented personal and political circumstances, but hope you enjoy reading it and think it was worth the wait.

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

Cover photo: Sipa US/Alamy. A group of young protesters in New York in April 2025 as part of a nationwide anti-Trump rally in which over 1,200 towns and cities participated.

## CONTENTS

## NEWS

- 3 In memoriam - Awdah Hathaleen; Cultural resistance and solidarity
- 4 Refusal and defiance – an international Seder
- 5 The people will not be divided; Jews 4 Gaza takes the stage

## REGULARS

- 4 Change the World
- 6 Ask the Rabbi

## FEATURES

- 7 **Fighting back in Trump's new world**  
David Rosenberg interviews New York-based Jewish socialist, Mike Feinberg, about life and struggle in the USA after Donald Trump's return to power
- 10 **We must refuse to be used**  
Aviah Sarah Day makes the case for Jews organising as Jews in anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements
- 12 **The new peaceniks**  
Stopping the war is more important than communal unity, says Joseph Finlay
- 14 **Don't mention the genocide**  
Uri Horesh's personal experience of repression at the hands of an Israeli academic institution, exposes a deeper web of lies and self-deception
- 16 **Seeing the occupation from the inside**  
Shimshun reports on a month he spent staying with and supporting Palestinian families in the West Bank

- 18 **Continuing the learn from our shared history**  
Zrinka Bralo and Rob Ferguson reflect on the Bosnian genocide and the Holocaust, and what we need to understand from them today
- 21 **The resistable rise of Farage's party**  
Tony Conway provides an in-depth analysis of Reform UK and considers how we can campaign to stop them in their tracks
- 23 **Taking a stand**  
Andrew Feinsten former ANC Member of Parliament, who stood as an independent socialist candidate against Keir Starmer, spoke to *Jewish Socialist*

## POETRY

- 6 **Defiant Words** by Michael Rosen
- 11 **The Orange Emperor's Nightmare** by Robert Lizar

## REVIEWS

- 27 *The Passenger*
- 28 *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza; and Genocide Bad: Notes on Palestine, Jewish History and Collective Liberation*
- 30 *Revenge: After the Levoyah*
- 31 *The Locked Safe: A Family Memoir and The Jewish Anarchist Movement in America: A Historical Review and Personal Reminiscences*

In memoriam –  
Awdah Hathaleen

Just a day before Awdah Hathaleen, a 31-year-old Palestinian teacher, activist and father of three, was killed in Masafer Yatta by an Israeli settler in late July, he



was a special guest on the monthly webinar organised by the Green Olive Solidarity Network. Green Olive is a joint Palestinian-Israeli initiative based in Jerusalem, with which the Jewish Socialists' Group and other international groups are affiliated.

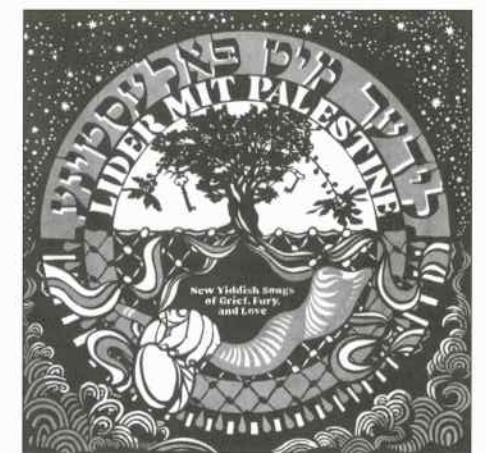
A Green Olive spokesperson wrote: "Our hearts go out to the family and community. Awdah... was an English teacher and activist... part of the crew on the Academy Award-winning documentary *No Other Land*. We condemn this killing and the settler-colonial regime that supports and arms psychopaths and killers. Green Olive rejects settler violence and expansion, and we recommit ourselves to the non-violent resistance embodied in Awdah's work. May his memory be an inspiration to all of us to continue co-resistance and solidarity."

Cultural resistance  
and solidarity

A remarkable new album has recently been released called *Lider mit Palestine* – Songs with Palestine – subtitled "New Yiddish songs of grief, fury and love." Comprising 17 original songs, the album is the outcome of a call shared by Joe Dobkin, Josh Waletzky and Isabel Frey a year ago. They make clear that each artist on the album speaks for themselves, not for any of their fellow artists or for the organisers. They say: "In the midst of the ongoing nightmare in Palestine, inflicted allegedly on our behalf as Jews, we are moved ... to proclaim our commitment to a future of liberation for all people; and to put a nail in the coffin of the lie that occupation, apartheid and genocide can keep us safe..."

"What unites these songs is a language that carries centuries of diasporic Jewish life, and with it visions of a future where we struggle alongside our neighbours around the world for survival and freedom ... we are singing out and screaming that 'Never again' means never again for anyone."

The album, which includes a booklet with lyrics in Yiddish and English, and notes



on the songs, and artists, is available to download and stream. CDs and printed booklets are available to order at: [lidermitpalestine.bandcamp.com](http://lidermitpalestine.bandcamp.com)

Proceeds from the album will go to Gaza Birds Singing, a project born during the genocide, which teaches and supports children in Gaza with the life-giving power of music.

# Refusal and defiance – an international Seder

This year's online Passover Seder organised by the Jewish Socialists' Group on 20th April was truly international. Activists shared news and opinions directly from Germany, Türkiye and the USA. Other attendees zoomed in from locations here and abroad.

Our theme was "Refusal and Defiance", which referred directly to the Passover story of slaves in revolt. Our first guest speaker, the inspirational, veteran disabled campaigner, Barbara Lisicki, spoke about the protest movement that recently held mass demonstrations in London against cuts to disability benefits. She encouraged campaigners today to be more daring. We dedicated the first of the traditional four glasses of wine to those disabled protesters.

The second glass was dedicated to Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian territories. She has faced vicious opposition for her stand for justice for the Palestinians, including physical threats, slander campaigns and cancelled events, but she remains undaunted.

Our Ten Plagues section identified the plagues currently inflicted on the Palestinians during Israel's latest war on the people of Gaza. Tony Booth reported from Cambridge on a local solidarity initiative, supporting volunteer health workers in Palestine. Among several other examples of solidarity we celebrated, special mention was made of Claudia Scheinbaum, first female and first Jewish president of Mexico, who had recently officially recognised Palestine as a state, and welcomed the new Palestinian Ambassador Nadya Rasheed.

At our annual Seders we always pay tribute to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which started at the beginning of Passover 1943. Our Seder this year was on 20th April, which, in 1943, was the second day of the Uprising. This is a particularly poignant date for our close friend, the poet, teacher and activist, Irena Klepfisz, born in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941. She sent a message from New York:

"I'd love to be at your seder, but can't. [This year] 20th April is the last day of Pesakh ... and Hitler's birthday ... and my father Michal Klepfisz's *yortsayt*. Yes, he was killed on Hitler's birthday, on the second day of the Uprising, during Pesakh. I've always been very conscious of this. Michal's death – a birthday present ... History mocks us."

We had a very moving live contribution from Irena's close friend, Wlodka Blit-Robertson, who was smuggled out of the Ghetto with her twin sister, Nelly, a few weeks before the Uprising, and hidden by a Polish Catholic family in the same flat as Irena's father.

Wlodka vividly described life as a child in the Ghetto. "I saw selflessness, self-sacrifice, refusal, defiance." She remembered how "the resistance organised immediately – young people distributing leaflets and bulletins... When the deportations began, bunkers were built by so many people to try to survive. My family built a bunker out of big beer barrel in a cellar. I remember how my poor grandmother had so much trouble trying to squeeze through one of these barrels. I also remember we built a hiding place behind the big fireplace, and how we used to squeeze through the opening of the big fireplace. It became so important for people to be able to hide somewhere. One of the Bundists, called Borekh Elenbogen, was a very expert carpenter, and his job was to go both into the Ghetto to help people to build bunkers, and also [help] the people who managed to hide outside the Ghetto."

Wlodka made a special mention of Irena's father, "my hero, Michal Klepfisz ... such an amazing person, managing to save so many people's lives. He was an engineer. He lived in a little tiny room on the Polish, the Aryan side [in the same flat as Wlodka and her twin sister Nelly]. She described how he made explosives, "but he also was very busy trying to buy revolvers from all sorts of people."

Wlodka spoke of how he took his last

weapons into the Ghetto just before the Uprising. "He put his body in front of a gun and was shot. He sacrificed his own life by standing in front of a number of his comrades."

Another young boy, a Bundist, who also barricaded the opening of a bunker [was killed]. His name was Dawid Hochberg."

Wlodka's daughter, Isabel, described how Wlodka's own written memories of the Ghetto "are inspiring and astound her. The people there managed not to get dehumanised, despite the bestiality of the Germans," and she relates how Wlodka pays tribute to the Jewish fighters and partisans who, "almost unarmed and untrained, took on the mighty, murderous Germans, and also, all the other people who tried so bravely to survive the unbelievable terror and murder."

We closed that section with a recording of Black American Communist, Paul Robeson, singing *Zog Nit Keyn Mol*, the Yiddish hymn of the Partisans, written in 1943 by Hirsh Glik.

We then heard from two international speakers. Mike Feinberg zoomed from New York, to describe the early days and weeks of Trump Mark 2; the repression and the growing resistance (see our interview with Mike on page 7).

He was followed by Wieland Hoban, active in Global Jews for Palestine, who spoke from Frankfurt where activists are engaged in twin struggles – against the rising far right movement, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and against the repression by the current government and police, of protesters, including both Palestinians and Jews, who campaign for justice in Palestine.

He described the treatment of Francesca



Left, Irena Klepfisz. Right, Wlodka Blit-Robertson.

Albanese in February this year, when her lecture alongside Eyal Weizman – the Israeli founder of Forensic Architecture – was cancelled at "the so-called Free University". After the cancelled lecture, Wieland continued, "a longstanding leftist newspaper gave office space to us at this last minute... Masses of police were surrounding the building... some came and then insisted that they had to stay for the entire event to make sure nothing illegal, nothing antisemitic, was said... I said, in some opening remarks that ... in these sorts of circumstances, putting on an event like this, which should be normal in any sort of free society, ... even that becomes an act of resistance."

Wieland concluded on an upbeat note: "If you know that you're within a movement of people who are supporting each other, and who stand not only in solidarity with the oppressed in Palestine but also in solidarity with each other, then that atmosphere of repression can be turned on its head, and actually give an opening for a kind of invigoration of resilience and a sense of direction to defy and try to somehow push for change."

Closer to home, Michael Rosen performed a new poem about Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and his description of Israeli military personnel as "our soldiers" (this poem is published on page 6).

The third glass of wine was dedicated to the courageous democracy protesters in Türkiye. Milena Buyum, a human rights worker, born into a Turkish Armenian family, joined us live from Istanbul to describe the atmosphere on the demonstrations and the repression. She lives in London but was in Türkiye on an extended visit to her family. Her father, a prominent Communist, had died there last year.

Our fourth and final cup of wine was dedicated "to everyone who has defied and resisted injustice. This always takes courage, but opposing the pressure to conform in an unequal and oppressive world gives us all confidence to challenge wrongdoing and forge a future in which human beings nurture our fragile planet and the living things we share it with. Collectively we can share its abundant resources to support each other and look forward with hope."

Participants in the Seder were invited to use the zoom chat to make individual dedications on this theme, while we listened to Jimmy Cliff's anthem: *Many Rivers to Cross*.

We formally ended the Seder with a slogan based on the original Passover mantra: "Next year in Jerusalem." Ours read: "From every river to every sea, all the peoples of the world will be free." As participants said their goodbyes, we played a Chilean song from the earliest days of the struggle against Pinochet, *El Pueblo unido jamás será vencido!* The people united will never be defeated!

## The people will not be divided

If Trump and Netanyahu's confected mini-war on Iran was meant to temporarily deflect from Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and pogroms and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, or was hoping to divide opposition by tying them to defence of Iran's fundamentalist and human rights abusing government, it failed.

The national Palestine demonstration in London, on 21st June, during that mini-war, had a significant presence from Iranians UK for Palestine, a group comprising those who have stood bravely against the repressive Iranian regime. Somaye Zadeh made a defiant platform speech on their behalf.

"I stand here as an Iranian who has been a long-time campaigner for Palestinian rights. I stand here as an Iranian refugee who has been on all the protests in this country in solidarity with democracy movements in Iran. But today I stand here to say: No War on Iran! Not because I support the Iranian regime, but because I support the Iranian people. And this is a war on the Iranian people ... Israel's Defense Minister, Israel Katz, said in a tweet: 'The residents of Tehran will pay the price, and soon.'

"I say no to war because democracy cannot be delivered at the point of a gun. I reject the notion that social and political justice can be delivered by any foreign power, let alone one that is carrying out a genocide in Gaza. And let's not forget Iran's neighbours, Iraq and Afghanistan, that have been devastated by foreign governments claiming to bring democracy to those countries.

"I say no to war because it derails democracy movements and increases

repression. Since Israel's attacks have started, the Iranian government has cut off any internet connections to the outside world and rounded up, en masse, opposition writers and journalists.

"I say no to war because any regime change delivered by a foreign power that is backed by imperialist powers is not in the interests of the Iranian people. We haven't forgotten that the UK and US carried out a coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran in 1953 ... that they imposed the brutal regime of the Shah, who was toppled by the people of Iran. So why on earth do they think that we want the son of the former Shah back? Shame on Laura Kuenssberg for giving Reza Pahlavi a platform.

"What a topsy turvy world we live in where the state of Israel, a state that is not only denying people social and political freedoms but massacring them, a state that actually has nuclear weapons and is the one attacking other countries, accuses Iran of doing so.

"Finally I want to address Iranians in the crowd: however much we hate the Iranian regime, the most effective action we can take right now to help our loved ones inside Iran is to pressure the British government not to join the war on Iran and to stop arming Israel. Our struggles are intertwined with the Palestinian people's struggles, now more than ever! No War on Iran! End the genocide in Gaza!"



Somaye Zadeh on a pro-refugee platform

## Jews 4 Gaza takes the stage

Seven Jewish performers combined their talents in a spectacular night of entertainment in Camden, north London on 15th June. Daphna Baram, Henry Ginsberg, Sooz Kempner, Juliet Myers and Meryl O'Rourke provided comedy, while Michael Rosen read poems and Ian Saville performed socialist magic. The MC was Jewish Socialists' Group activist, Ivor Dembina.

The Jews 4 Gaza event sold out within 24 hours, raising more than £1,300 for Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and £500 for Daughters of the Land, supporting Palestinian families in distress in Gaza. A further Jews 4 Gaza Comedy event took place on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe



on 6th August where Jewish comedians, Ivor Dembina and Daphna Baram were joined by top Edinburgh Festival Fringe acts, Nish Kumar and Daniel Kitson. Again a sell-out, it raised a spectacular £3,000 for MAP.

CHANGE  
THE  
WORLD



### Jargon

Jargon is a non-profit cultural programming initiative based in London. It sells second-hand books, hosts film screenings, runs a book club, and organises talks, workshops, and performances.

The recent closure of London's Jewish Museum underlines the limited options available for those interested in understanding the history and future of Jewish life in Britain. Jargon aims to provide a space for alternative perspectives of the cultural politics of exile, with a view to

imagining a different Jewish tomorrow.

Once the language of the majority of Europe's Jewish population, Yiddish has long been derided as "jargon" (or zhargon), a vulgar form of speech fit only for the ghetto. Jargon aims to reclaim this history, platforming and celebrating parts of Jewish history that we are at risk of forgetting. While its focus is on the Ashkenazi diaspora, it also stocks books from Mizrahi and Sephardi thinkers, and actively collaborates with other diasporic and minority groups.

More information: [jargon.org.uk](http://jargon.org.uk)

# Defiant Words

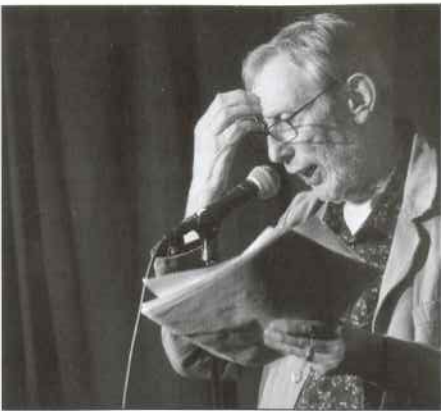
And the Chief Rabbi stood in front of the congregation and spoke of 'our heroic soldiers'. And when I saw that I thought how strange. What can he mean? He and I already have one army: the British Army. How come he has two? Who or what is this second army? How come he has two armies? Is he telling me that I have two armies too? And then I remembered the fury that's been flung at those who have suggested that the deeds of Israel are somehow the deeds of all Jews. I remembered how this was written down into a text that has become sacred: the IHRA code – bless its name – here it is: "An example of antisemitism": 'Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.'

And here was the Chief Rabbi pleading with the congregation to be part of the collective responsibility for actions of the State of Israel. Officially, religiously, with the authority of his office. And agree with him that not only is Israel's army heroic but it's ours. And then I remembered Norman Tebbit who brought in the Cricket Test

warning us that in our midst there were people who might support India, Pakistan or the West Indies cricket teams. How revealing. How shameful. How disloyal. He urged us to think. Where are the Norman Tebbits of now horrified by the Chief Rabbi's outburst of dual loyalty? Where are the Norman Tebbits of now warning us of the dangers of fifth columnists, the enemy within, the latent danger of people supporting a foreign team? No, the Norman Tebbits are only interested in being suspicious and hateful towards people of colour. It's only their teams and their supporters. That the Tebbits want us to worry about.

Teams? What am I saying? This isn't sport. This is an army. A foreign army. Sent into battle by people whose allegiances and origins lie with those who once blew up a hotel full of British citizens but are, mysteriously not described as terrorists.

And then I look more closely at that word 'our' in the phrase 'our heroic soldiers'. I pause over it. Savour it. Who is this 'our'? Who is the Chief Rabbi scooping up and allying with these heroic soldiers? It's Jews



Isn't that me? I'm Jewish aren't I? Wasn't he hoping or even assuming it's all of us? Even me. And as he hasn't ever withdrawn this speech he must still hope that we should all be cheering on our heroic soldiers going about their soldiering heroically killing and torturing heroically bulldozing and flattening now heroically making sure that 2 million people starve to death.

And this holy man steeped in knowledge and wisdom stands here in the UK is at heart in effect urging us to praise and applaud the terror for being terrible and the horror for being horrible.

Today we refuse this and we defy it. we defy him and refuse, if we can, this 'our' that he spoke of.

This poem was first performed at the Jewish Socialists' Group annual secular Passover Seder on 20th April 2025. It is published in Michael Rosen's collection of poems from 2024 and 2025, *Words United* (Culture Matters Co-operative, £10).

# FIGHTING BACK IN TRUMP'S NEW WORLD

**DR: What's it like in America under Trump Mark 2?**  
**MF:** Overwhelming. Every day there's some new horror. You can't keep up with it. People are overwhelmed. Their energy is just squashed. They don't know where to start. Steve Bannon said, the first time round, "Throw 100 things at them, and maybe they'll intercept two or three". That's what it is, every day, on every front, all going on at the same time. And it's unrestrained this time. The people around Trump, who hedged him a little the first time, are all gone. Now, they are all enablers, facilitators, "yes-men". There's nobody saying "No!". The gloves are off. It's complete open warfare on whatever liberal state was left in this country.

**DR: How united are these enablers, or do they have different interests?**  
**MF:** Elon Musk peeled off because he had a divergence of interest with Trump over tariffs and public spending, so some cracks are there, but they tend not to show it publicly until it reaches that kind of breaking point. Mostly they're just echoing whatever he says, like Marco Rubio, or certainly, JD Vance, and most of the Cabinet Ministers, too.

**DR: The first time round, he had people like Bannon also setting the agenda to some extent. Is this time different? Is it Trump making the agenda?**  
**MF:** I don't think he's smart enough to make an agenda. He's pretty much, point by point, enacting Project 2025. He claimed not to even know what it was when he was running, but he's doing it. This is something the political right has been hatching for 30 years. It's a consolidation, a systematic programme, from hollowing out the public sector to attacking unions across the board; just authoritarianism at every turn. A full-on assault.

**DR: Is that driven by an economic view that will keep certain people rich and other people not?**  
**MF:** It's complicated. His tariffs actually pissed off the capitalist class because the *Wall Street Journal*, that "liberal bastion", was pushing back, saying, "Don't do this, you're going to sink the economy." That's the *Wall Street Journal*, not some crazy socialist! On the other hand, he came in promising higher taxes on the wealthiest. This budget that's going through is exactly opposite: tax cuts for the wealthiest and stripping federal programmes. Poverty programmes. There's a tax increase on the poor and a tax cut for the rich. Bottom line: the billionaires are happy.

**DR: What about some of the people he has empowered? Who should we be especially concerned about?**  
**MF:** I'm especially concerned about Vance. He's waiting in the wings. If Trump doesn't make it through this term, or even if he does, Vance will be the incumbent. He's Trump, but clever and shrewd, not so spur of the moment, random, chaotic. He's an independent maverick. He wrote a book some years ago called *Hillbilly Elegy*, which gave his credentials as white working class, rural. He went to Yale! He's a Yale lawyer. He's not some working class Joe from the sticks, as much as he wants to put that one over on

people, and he's drifted hard right. He was once a very strong critic of Trump. He called Trump a Nazi. Now he's Vice President under Trump.  
**DR: How have people in the Jewish community reacted to Trump's re-election?**  
**MF:** To his general social agenda? With disgust and loathing – 80% of the Jewish community voted against him. But he has been incredibly good at weaponising antisemitism, splitting the Jewish community and using that to target domestic opposition, it's worked like a charm. Even people who should know better in the Jewish community fall in with that one, because there have been a few high profile antisemitic attacks that drive the fear and worry. And then sure, like, "Oh, he's going to handle antisemitism? Great." They like that.  
**DR: What is the "Jewish community" in the US today?**  
**MF:** The official institutions are represented by the wealthiest, the furthest to the right. They're not representative. They're not elected. There's no internal democracy in the organised Jewish community. But you've got this interesting generational divide, mostly around Palestine, of Jews that didn't grow up with that narrative. They're thinking it through themselves, and coming up in a very different place.

**DR: Is it just the younger generation who have radical politics? Aren't movements like If Not Now, and Bend the Arc more multigenerational?**  
**MF:** There are older veterans but the ones speaking most clearly on Palestine are all younger generation people. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and others that have really been in the fray about Israel, Palestine and Gaza are driven by younger activists.

**DR: The Jewish Bloc here in London has people from their 20s to their 80s marching together.**  
**MF:** We've got that, too. But the older generation are more marginal. The youth are the up-and-coming, and at some point will overtake. There's a lot of energy there from people who have realised at a young age that they've been lied to.  
**DR: How much interweaving is there between those groups? Does JVP work with people from If Not Now?**  
**MF:** Not enough. You've got the double whammy – Jewish factionalism and left factionalism!  
**DR: Where do you fit in personally?**  
**MF:** I'm still a proud member of Democratic Socialists of America. That's my broad political framework. I work with a lot of Jewish left organisations. But my politics do not, mainly, go to identity politics. It's a balance of how much I go there, and how much I go to a broad economic justice agenda that is not specific to any particular identity interest.

**DR: And where do Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) fit into this? How outspoken are they around Palestine?**

**DAVID ROSENBERG** interviews New York-based Jewish socialist, **MIKE FEINBERG**, about life and struggle in the USA after Donald Trump's return to power



Mike Feinberg is a Reconstructionist rabbi, a longtime socialist, active with Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and a proud member of the Jewish Socialists' Group. He has been an activist for human, immigrant and workers' rights for more than 45 years, in New York City, London and Israel/Palestine. He sits on the boards of Jewish Voice for Peace, Rabbis for Ceasefire and Religious Socialism DSA.

## ASK THE RABBI

Our respected teacher is here to solve your problems

### \*\*SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT\*\*

Our synagogue is – as you know – proud to host meetings of the newly formed organisation, **We Believe in Israel**. Unfortunately, while I was formatting their mission statement for our website, an error occurred and the word "Israel" was substituted with another word which really shouldn't exist in any dictionary. We are trying to rectify this error. Please bear with us and ignore the text below.

**At We Believe in Palestine, our mission is to impress on all people that Palestine has an undeniable and legitimate right to exist and thrive.**

**We Believe in Palestine** seeks to:

- provide a united front that brings together all the existing supporters of

Palestine in the UK, across the political spectrum.

- facilitate and support a grassroots network of supporters of Palestine in the UK.
- help create a fair and balanced political environment for Palestine in the UK.
- provide opportunities for people in the UK to engage in constructive dialogue and conversation about Palestine.
- provide opportunities for Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Palestine to express their support for Palestine.
- broaden active support for Palestinians beyond existing advocates, to include a wide range of Jewish and non-Jewish voices.

- provide an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual support that helps supporters of Palestine become active and feel safe and confident in expressing their support for Palestine.
- ensure support for Palestine is heard in debates, whether online, in the traditional media, or at public events.

Bushley End Synagogue is genuinely surprised and overwhelmed by the very many Jews in our community who we were not aware of and who have come forward since this was mistakenly posted. We would like to remind them however **that it is ISRAEL, not PALESTINE that has an undeniable and legitimate right to exist and thrive.**

MF: Unfortunately, I think too much, because their focus really was domestic, municipal. To the extent they go to Palestine, they lose a lot of that support. There are other organisations to do Palestine. There's no other groups doing that Jewish left domestic agenda. So why lose that focus? The Jewish establishment are falling in behind Trump and closing ranks. Trump, Netanyahu. It's gotten worse, not better. The internal policing, the Macarthyism has ratcheted out of control.

**DR: I've seen reports about their reaction to campus activity, denouncing it as antisemitism.**

MF: Half of those students out for Palestine on the campuses are Jews!

**DR: It's similar here. Our Jewish establishment claims, "London is a no-go area for Jews". Yet every national Palestine march includes hundreds, sometimes more than 1,000 Jews. What about other US minorities? Is there a similar political split between their establishments and grassroots activists?**

MF: Trump was horrifyingly successful in peeling off segments of all communities to get votes. I still can't fathom it. Black votes for Trump.

**DR: Higher this time around?**

MF: Significantly – triple really.

**DR: I know that the Jewish vote against Trump first time round was higher than the Latino vote against him. Was that true this time?**

MF: Yes. He tapped people's misogyny: "We can't have a woman as president." The whole Big Man/successful businessman image. Complete bullshit, but that's what he projected.

**DR: Were people shocked when they found that Trump had got in again? Leftists in Britain certainly sensed that his campaign had momentum.**

MF: I was shocked. I was helping the Harris campaign. It's not my politics, but I sure as hell didn't want Trump in. I guess I was in my own echo chamber. We thought: people know what Trump's about, who's going to give him a second term? And half the country gave him a second term!

**DR: Who has most to fear and who has most to lose from a Trump Presidency?**

MF: Probably a lot of the people who voted for him: white working class people; people who are going to depend on benefits. Immigrants, certainly undocumented immigrants, people of colour, gay people, with his attack on the diversity agenda. The whole public sector is being gutted. A massive transfer of wealth from public institutions into private pockets. Thousands of people who were involved in diversity/equality lost their jobs in a very short space of time. Hundreds of thousands around the world are affected by the gutting of the World Health funds – USAID. That's already killing people on the ground who depended on antiviral medications, health clinics. **DR: Presumably the billionaires will be very pleased that Trump has been elected.**

MF: Did you see the inauguration? They were all arrayed behind him. Zuckerberg, Bezos, Musk... They came to kiss the ring. Do you need a better public display of oligarchy?

**DR: How are the US media relating to all this?**

MF: The establishment media has raised critical questions, but they've not pushed it. He's gutted the press corps, so it's all sycophants, his chosen media. He's launching a systematic attack on the public TV and radio. The really independent media are in a bad place. The mainstream media? They just care about

ratings. Trump is Trump.

**DR: Here the media have fallen for Trump making himself the centre of global news stories. Every day: "Trump said this," "Trump did that." I remember from Trump Mark 1, many Jewish people and groups were mobilising against ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement.) Is that happening now?**

MF: There's a lot of interfaith work on immigrant rights against the mass deportations, for sanctuary. There's an immigrant freedom ride starting in New York, going all the way down to New Orleans, where there's a detention centre. People from New York have been shipped there, including Mahmoud Khalil, the Palestinian campus leader, though he has now been released.

**DR: Los Angeles has emerged as a centre of resistance to ICE.**

MF: Only because Trump decided to push it so far, with troop deployments and grabbing people off the street. They haven't done that to the same extent in New York. If they did, it would be happening here, too, for sure. In Los Angeles, though, it was an organic community response, largely Latino community and their allies. All ages, working people, neighbourhood people.

**DR: Is there a similar level of involvement of Jewish political groups against ICE this time, or are they diverted more into Palestine activities?**

MF: More on the Palestine issue. But the work on immigrant rights is important, and this is actually coming out of synagogues on the ground, grassroots, not NGOs. It's synagogue based. They're making common cause with other minorities and faith groups, churches, mosques.

**DR: What will Trump's impact be on global politics, global economics, the planet?**

MF: Trump and his supporters are rallying around the right. They rushed to the defence of the AfD in Germany. The first one out there was Vance, then Musk and then Rubio. Some time back they met in Budapest, with Orbán. He's one of their heroes.

**DR: Orbán's election in 2018 was achieved largely through an antisemitic conspiracy theory about George Soros, with big posters everywhere.**

MF But he's a "good" antisemite!

**DR: How will Trump affect Israel/Palestine?**

MF: He'll force the Palestinians out, create "Gaza Riviera", pass it off to the Kushner real estate...

**DR: Isn't this just a wild fantasy? How much of this is serious?**

MF: The Israeli far right are taking it seriously. They see it as a green light to do what they've wanted to do for decades. Whether Trump does it himself? It's like, "Yeah, sure, we'll turn a blind eye."

**DR: Is none of this a step too far for some of the US Jewish establishment bodies? Or are they just pleased that somebody's talking like that.**

MF: Would they rather he was doing this in a milder sort of way? They're going to stay shtum on that if he's "fighting against antisemitism". They think that he's not going to do much on the Palestine issue. He's going to do his deals with corrupt Gulf States, and Palestine will be part of the equation. America's always protected those kind of relations with Saudi Arabia and others.

**DR: So, how do you understand Trump's sudden military intervention on Iran in June?**

MF: Up until the last minute Trump was saying, "I'm giving them two weeks...". A lot of senior, more traditional anti-interventionist Republicans were

saying, "Don't do this," but we did this.

**DR: Was Trump played by Netanyahu, or did he really want to do it?**

MF: He wanted to do it. A mutually helpful thing. Trump did the calculus and felt that it ultimately would be to his advantage. He thought there was enough of a hawkish base within the Republican Party that would go along with it. He trumpeted it afterwards as "a clear victory", even when the CIA and the IAEA were saying otherwise. It's a Trump world!

**DR: How would you describe Trump's real attitudes to the Jewish community? Before the election, he said that if he doesn't get in, it's because of those Jews.**

MF: His attitude is completely transactional. If they do what he wants, then he'll show them some support. If they don't, they'll be in the enemies list. Practically everyone is on that list by now. So we're in good company: unions, colleges, even big law firms.

**DR: What are the trade unions making of all of this?**

MF : Union leaderships supported Harris and the Democrats. There were a few notable exceptions: the teamsters. The rank and file were more split, with significant union membership voting for Trump. A grouping called the Left Labor Project are working with the progressive unions to mount a response, particularly on municipal jobs. But across the board – labour, the Democratic party – there's a complete lack of coherent strategy and real leadership.

**DR: Who does Trump fear?**

MF: I don't know that he fears anyone. He's been so unchallenged in everything he's tried to do. The Congress has rolled over; the courts mostly haven't, but even where they blocked him, he just ran right over them and ignored their issue with the judgments. Why should he fear anybody at this point? There isn't a coherent opposition. The Democrats are going to win the mid-terms and we'll regain at least the House, and then there'll be some blocking, maybe, but it's not a strategy. We need a consistent, economic justice, populist agenda that doesn't throw it over to white nationalism or Christian nationalists. We just ceded the ground on that. The Democrats are almost as much about tax cuts as the Republicans. They get almost as much money from Wall Street as the Republicans.

**DR: It's interesting that you're centring the economic issues, because in our anti-racist movements here, many people operate in silos. They focus on racism, but some of us want to link it up more explicitly with housing, education and other economic issues.**

MF: There is also a revival of certain kinds of identity politics. The right appeals, the left appeals. I get it. People run to safety with their tribe. That makes sense in many cases. But if you're really about building an opposition going to your corner is not going to do it! **DR: Coming back to the Jewish community, are there any grounds for optimism in the current situation?**

MF: By and large, the Jewish community rejected Trump and Make America Great Again (MAGA). They voted against it. The antisemitism issue gets played and weaponised, but in the main his agenda is abhorrent to the Jewish community. How they'll turn that into active opposition other than voting, I don't know.

**DR: Hasn't something special and energising just happened in New York with left winger Zohran Mamdani, cross-endorsed by a Jewish candidate and winning the Democratic primary for the Mayoral Election there?**

MF: It's the most stunning thing I've seen politically in New York since I've been here. It all came down in such a flash. The amazing thing was that we had Mahmoud Khalil's release within the same week as Mamdani's victory. The 1-2 punch against Trump! **DR: Was Mamdani's victory expected or was that a surprise?**

MF: It was a surprise. His opponent, Andrew Cuomo, had massive inputs of real estate money. Billionaires who'd even funded the Trump campaign were intervening on his side. He had the name recognition, and they had pulled out the stock scare tactics for the Jewish community, like, "This guy Mamdani's dangerous, not just anti-Zionist, but an antisemite." it worked to an extent – more so among older voters. The Upper West Side liberal Jewish vote pretty much went for Cuomo. But the younger voters propelled Mamdani's campaign. An army of Gen Z volunteers, everybody, including young Jews, got out and did it.

They canvassed a million people. Every other day I was getting an invitation. "Come to Harlem... Come to Brooklyn...". It was the largest turnout in a New York primary in 50 years.

**DR: I presume Jewish bodies like JFREJ were involved.**

MF: Very involved. They invited him into a number of their community-wide events. They recruited volunteers.

**DR: I saw clips of Mamdani being interviewed with the left-wing Jewish candidate, Brad Lander (who we knew when he was studying in London more than 30 years ago). Their friendship and mutual support must have been powerful.**

MF: It was. Brad Lander was the chief Jewish shield deflector ally to Mamdani. I don't know what their cross-endorsement did in terms of votes for Mamdani, but just the symbolic fact of doing it was important. **DR: We've seen headlines that Trump wants to deport Mamdani.**

MF: That's completely predictable: "He's a Communist." "He's not an American Citizen." He's going to retread that one used against Obama. But more shocking is that the Republican and Democrat establishment state-wide in New York City has finally found something to unite on. It's hatred and opposition to Mamdani. He so threatens the establishment in both.

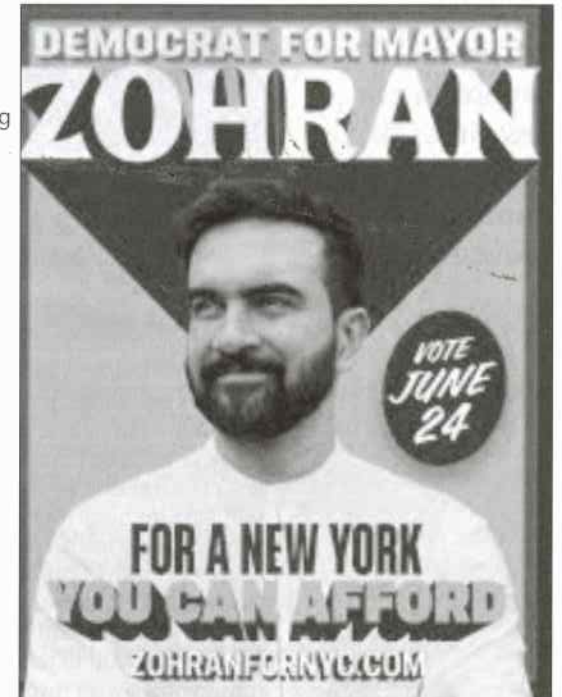
**DR: So it will be decided in New York on 4th November?**

MF: Yes. The current mayor is running again as an independent. Cuomo invented some party that he's going to run on. We've got a Republican who's a Trump supporter. All the forces that were intervening in the primary are not going to give up.

**DR: But it sounds like Mamdani's got a pretty good chance.**

MF: I would say, yes!

**DR: Good luck to Zohran Mamdani!**



# WE MUST REFUSE

Speaking at a Friday night gathering of the Jewish Bloc for Palestine in London, **AVIAH SARAH DAY** made the case for Jews organising as Jews in anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements



I have heard people question the point of Jews organising as Jews in anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements? Don't Jews take up too much space, have too big a platform in movements for a free Palestine? The issue is not limited to anti-racist organising for Palestine.

I'm also a member of Black Lives Matter UK, and last week I attended a political education session on antisemitism and Islamophobia. There, a comrade said they didn't see the point of talking about antisemitism; it gets too much space over other forms of racism, and they were tired of hearing about the problems Jews face.

I want to make the case for Jews organising as Jews in anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements, where I believe that Jews do have a particular role. Naomi Klein wrote that Jews have long been over-represented in radical and revolutionary movements, and I mean, really over-represented: Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman, Leon Trotsky, Karl Marx to name but a few. Now why have there been so many Jewish revolutionaries? The answer connects to why I think we are all here today. Historically, capitalists and imperialists have had one story to tell about Jews. I believe we are all here because we want to tell a different story. I want to turn to one Jewish revolutionary who had a different story to tell.

Abram Leon, a Belgian Marxist, researched his materialist history of the Jews while in hiding under Nazi occupation. He wrote his treatise about the uses of antisemitism to the global capitalist project, going as far back as the Roman Empire and continuing into the Nazi era. He argued that Jews have long undergone a cyclical relationship with elites. Time and again, from empire to empire, Jews have been positioned as a buffer class between the top and the bottom, and conveniently discarded in times of economic and political crisis through expulsion, exile and attempted annihilation.

Leon describes how Hitler harnessed the economic suffering of the lower and middle classes – impoverished by the First World War, followed by punishing sanctions, and the Great Depression – and was successfully redirecting that anger away from the capitalist system that was responsible by calling it "Jewish capitalism". The Nazis were able to repress class war by replacing class solidarity with racial solidarity. But knowing full well that the interests of bosses and workers will never be the same, "Jewish capitalists" served as protection

against the bubbling anti-capitalist sentiment of the masses. Leon's work was published one year after the war but he never knew, because he died in a gas chamber, aged 26.

Leon wrote all this knowing he was in grave danger. He thought it was worth telling a different story in the hope that his words would be useful in igniting an anticapitalist revolution that would see an end to antisemitism, to racism and to the whole class system.

We need to tell that story over and over again today. Today, Europe and western imperialism have found in Israel the perfect way to evade justice and accountability for their shameful history of holocausts and genocides whilst continuing to further their interests in oil and power by hiding behind Zionism and Jews. Right now, all over the world, when people think of violent imperialism they think: the Jews. Perfect cover for those at the top. The antisemitism of the ruling class has repeatedly divided our movements and acted as cover for our enemies.

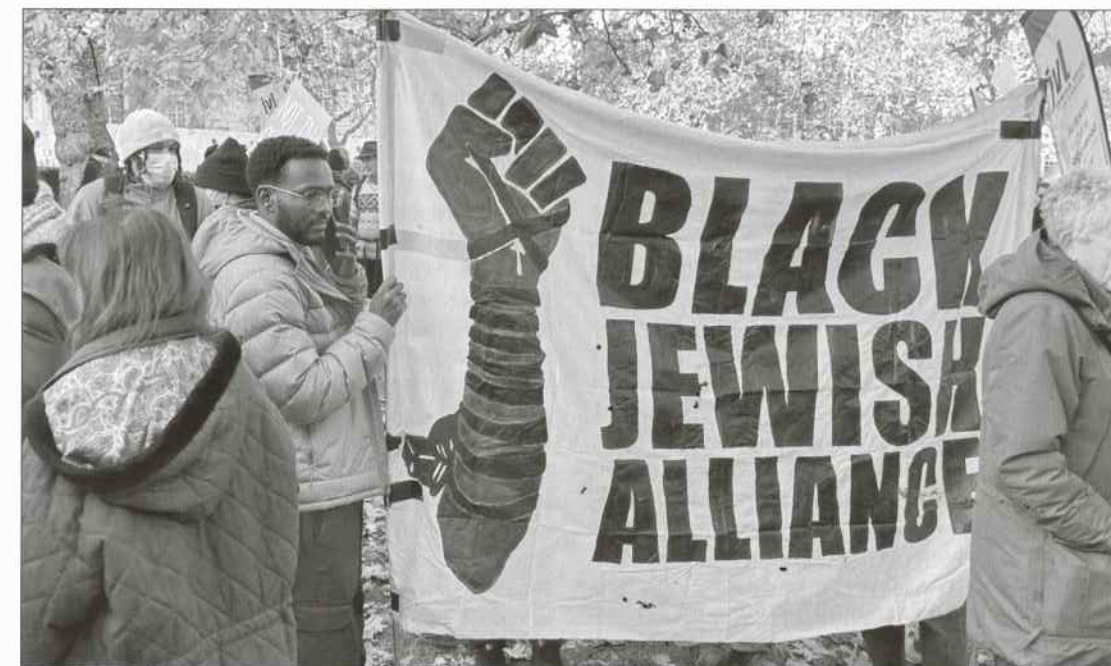
So what do we, as Jews, do about it? Well I hope this starts a conversation.

Is our role in the movement to be visible proof that not all Jews are Zionists and supporters of genocide? Is it to act as a counter to Zionist claims that to stand with Palestine is inherently antisemitic? Ultimately, the road to a free Palestine will not be led by Jews. Liberation for Palestine will be secured by the Palestinian people themselves. And while visible Jews in the movement may be helpful at points, our role is not really about Jewish visibility or representation. It is to resist the function foisted on us by capitalism, and to organise it out of existence. This means dismantling the fascist, antisemitic ideology of Zionism from within. It means convincing Jews that there is no safety in assimilation with western imperialism, and that an end to antisemitism will only come about when we have dismantled all racial hierarchies.

If we are to have any chance of breaking the position that western imperialism has imposed on Jews, we are going to have to bring many, many more Jews into our movement. And we have, over the past year, seen many more Jews joining us on the Jewish Bloc. But we need to reach all those with questions, those who are isolated in their communities. We need to be dismantling Zionism in our communities and communal spaces, through conversations, through political education, and, where necessary, through physical confrontation. We need to make strategic decisions about where we can wield influence in our synagogues and Jewish institutions, and when and where we need to establish new organisations and structures.

And what about the wider movement? As Jews we must establish ourselves as part of a wider

# TO BE USED



anti-racist and anti-imperialist movement. Organising on antisemitism in those movements isn't about gaining sympathy, virtue signalling or gaining a platform to showcase Jewish problems. It's about understanding and dismantling a dynamic that isolates Jews and antisemitism from the wider struggle against racism. It means staying connected with the struggles of oppressed and colonised people all over the world. It means rejecting our positioning as a buffer-class in one of many fronts in the fight against oppression.

The antisemitism of the ruling classes has

divided our movements time and time again. Our role is to root out Zionism and antisemitism from our movements, because they divide us. They are a major barrier to victory. Because one day, the strategies of the bosses will wear thin. They will point to the Jews and no one will listen. They will point to migrants and it won't work. They will try to scapegoat black, Asian or Arab comrades and it won't wash. When our movements count so many comrades amongst us that their weapons of racism and division no longer shield them, that's when we will win.

## The Orange Emperor's Nightmare

by Robert Lizar

On the Gaza Riviera lies the luxury town of Saint-Trumpez, Private yachts gloat in the harbour, exclusive hotels adorn the bay, They're all luxuriously furnished, it's an exclusive beach resort, (The fishing boats have disappeared, and no one recalls the port.) The ensembles are palatial, each one's an emperor's dream, Bathroom taps glint bright with gold, while the water gushes green.

This brand new town is clean, from top to bottom, it's been cleansed with every care, Nothing can upset the tourists; there's no trouble anywhere. The helicopter police are circling, always droning overhead, And through the night the searchlights guard against the raising of the dead.

By night, there's a ghostly moaning and an angry orange breeze, That blows through artificial orchards, filled with artificial trees. By day, admire the brilliant plumage of the artificial birds, And hear the soothing buzzing of the artificial bees.

On sand as fine as bone meal, rows of bodies glisten on display, Tanning, oh so gently, white to brown, as the sunlight shrouds the bay.

Drinking water is imported for a very reasonable fee, And all the advisory notices say, "No swimming in the sea."

The local market sells fresh watermelon, olives, figs and grapes, They're all flown in from Florida in the cleanest orange crates. Back street gift shops trade metal fragments from a now forgotten war, But local historians cannot tell us what the killing all was for.

The real estate's a great investment, the apartment values soar, Don't worry, no risk of your discomfort, from the presence of the poor. It's a vision of perfection, the property developer's pure dream, Hush child, now! His sleep must never be disturbed by your agonising scream.

But soon the hurricane will return, to blast Trump's nightmare Frankenstein, Then the world's weather team must honour that storm, by its true name – Palestine!

Aviah Sarah Day is the co-author with Shanice Octavia McBean of *Abolition Revolution*, published by Pluto Press (£20)

THE NAZIS WERE ABLE TO REPRESS CLASS WAR  
BY REPLACING CLASS SOLIDARITY WITH RACIAL SOLIDARITY.

# THE NEW PEACENIKS

Stopping the war is more important than communal unity, says  
**JOSEPH FINLAY**

Things are moving. After a long period that saw a high degree of support for the war, both in Israel and the Jewish diaspora, real change seems to be afoot. Increasing numbers of Israelis want the war to end, and they support a ceasefire/hostage deal to achieve this. There are reports that reserve soldiers are now refusing to show up, with some suggestions that the reserves are only at 40% or 50% of their full capacity. The 2023 Israeli pro-democracy movement is becoming an anti-war movement.

In Britain, it is some of the most Israel-connected people who are turning against the war. The clearest symbol of that was the Deputies' letter, signed by 36 members of the Board of Deputies from Reform, Liberal and Masorti synagogues (the number deliberately echoing the idea of the *lamed vovniks*, the 36 anonymous righteous people on whom the world depends). This was followed by a mass letter of synagogue members in support of those Deputies, and a strong letter from 30 Progressive rabbis which called for "an end to the bombing; an end to the siege; and the safe release of the hostages".

It is the mainstream nature of most of these people that has made them impossible to dismiss. We radical Jews have written countless open letters over the years. It's done little good. We need the people the mainstream finds impossible to write off, so they are forced to write tedious op-eds about communal unity rather than instantly dismissing their critics out of hand.

This group has begun to talk about Palestinian suffering more often recently, particularly the near famine in Gaza, but there is no doubt that the primary motivation for the new peaceniks is getting the hostages back. The hostage movement in Israel has been solidly anti-war for a good while, seeing it as the only way to get their loved ones out of captivity. The diaspora has taken a while to catch up, simultaneously demanding "Bring Them Home" whilst calling for a total victory that culminates in the destruction of Hamas – two goals that are in total opposition to one another.

Crucial for the new peaceniks was the ceasefire period earlier this year – hostages were regularly released, as agreed, and there were no disastrous consequences. The Netanyahu government then resumed hostilities, with no pretext other than it refused to move to Stage 2 of the agreement, which would have meant a permanent end to the war, instead demanding that Stage 1 be extended indefinitely. Centrist Israelis and diaspora Jews could see that, during the ceasefire period, hostages came home; once the war resumed, they did not. They have understood the obvious corollary: to return the rest of the hostages, another ceasefire is required, recognising that this means the end of the war and a full IDF withdrawal from Gaza.

This shift has allowed people who supported the war in 2023 and 2024 to oppose its resumption in 2025. This speaks to an underlying psychological reality: it is difficult for people to do a volte-face and accept they were previously wrong; it is much easier to say that reality has changed and their position has changed with it. This shift will only be heightened by the recent announcement of an unhinged plan to

fully conquer Gaza and permanently occupy it. It is increasingly clear to many that the interests of Netanyahu and his hard-right government are diametrically opposed to the interests of most Israelis, and certainly of diaspora Jews.

There will be a strong temptation felt by people on the left to accuse the new peaceniks of doing too little too late. Where have they been? Why haven't they opposed the war from the outset, when it was at its most destructive and lethal? Why aren't they saying more about Palestinian suffering? What is their wider vision for Palestinian liberation and human rights? Such responses are understandable but tactically mistaken.

There is a broad political point here: when people come over to your side, you don't say "What took you so long?", but rather "Welcome! It's good to have you." They won't necessarily say all the same things as us, perhaps not yet, perhaps not ever. But we need to make such people feel welcome and supported, and thank them for crossing the Rubicon. There's little virtue in being right all along and performatively declaring your absolute political purity; there is much more in creating actual political change. We don't need everyone to sign up to some absolutist anti-Zionist platform. We just need them to agree that the war has to end. This is a moment for a broad-based anti-war movement where we put aside our differences to stop the bombings, withdraw the troops, allow the aid in, and make a deal to bring the hostages home.

How else is the war going to end? Pressure from other countries? It's been utterly absent, particularly from the USA, with no sign of any improvement. Military defeat of Israel at the hands of Palestinian and Arab forces? That was the thesis of 7th October, that a rapid surprise attack would lead others to join the fray and force Israel to make concessions. It failed and it's simply not plausible. Israel is militarily far too strong. A wave of pressure from the BDS movement and international court cases? These can make a difference, but they also are not strong enough to force a ceasefire. For any meaningful change to take place, it will need the support of a reasonable proportion of Jewish Israelis. This pressure from within is a *sine qua non*, and is needed to drive the one thing that will make a difference – mass military refusal. Were this to reach certain levels it would be impossible for Israel to continue the war, at least at its current level of intensity. We need to do everything we can to support Israeli refuseniks and encourage more to join their ranks.

The Jewish diaspora has an important role to play too. Not just in showing the Israeli government that it has lost their support but also in persuading Western governments to be braver. Concerted, and "mainstream" Jewish anti-war activism can show governments such as Britain's that they can take steps such as a full arms embargo, obeying the ICJ arrest warrants, sending aid into Gaza over Israeli objections and implementing a refugee scheme for Gazans who wish to flee and come to Britain (and be permitted to return to Palestine) – and do so without plausibly being labelled as antisemitic or anti-Israel. Even a campaign for sanctions is

justifiable – not for the maximalist aims of the BDS movement but simply to force an end to the war.

At this juncture I want to address the arguments raised by the Board of Deputies, President Phil Rosenberg, against the 36, even though they are entirely risible. His central claim is that the group sought to pass off their own positions as being those of the Board as a whole, and thus were duplicitous. A moment's thought shows this to be nonsense. The letter writers described themselves as "representatives of the British Jewish community" – exactly what they are – rather than "the Board of Deputies", or the leadership of it. This was reflected in the coverage of the story which noted that the letter writers represented around 10% of the Board, explicitly distinguishing it from the whole. Phil Rosenberg and BoD Chief Executive, Michael Wegier, relied on this figure, contrasting it to an assumed 90% who support the leadership (although subsequent reports cast this in doubt, showing that around 30 more Deputies had been considering signing). If 10% is insufficient, there would presumably have been a number which was sufficient – 20%? 30%? 51%? – and thus a majority.

For Rosenberg to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the Deputies is a risky game for him to play, since his legitimacy as President is entirely dependent on the Deputies who voted for him last year. In the first round of voting (which showed a voting electorate of 244, making the 36 signatories more like 15%) Rosenberg scored 39%, so presumably this is the percentage critics would need to achieve. Of course, for us to be able to do this kind of analysis properly, the BoD would have to release the numbers of Deputies that exist, the numbers of organisations represented, and the numbers of votes received for Deputies in external elections, all of which they refuse to do.

The repeated claims that "the vast majority of the community" support certain positions and the leadership of the Board, lack any evidence whatsoever. A genuine democratic exercise would show the existence of at least four camps on Israel: non- and anti-Zionists, who are constantly undercounted; Kahanists, supporters of genocide against Palestinians; liberal Zionists, who are now largely "new peaceniks"; and a traditional centre-right who hope for a return to the pre-7th October reality, believing that criticisms of Israel should only be made in private and that a public face of unity must be maintained at all times. This last group reflects the positions of Rosenberg and Wegier, but I would wager that it is a minority position, heavily reliant on the Kahanists when it needs to reach any kind of numbers.

But it's not really about numbers. The claims that the 36 are not entitled to speak out, and the bizarre move to subject them to disciplinary measures by an internal kangaroo court, is not based on majoritarianism but rather on a notion of heresy. Rosenberg is behaving like a secular chief rabbi, declaring certain views to be outside the boundaries of normative Judaism and thus impermissible in the *goyish* public domain. Zionism, in its contemporary Netanyahuist form, is the new orthodoxy, and anyone who dissents from it needs to be excised or at least silenced. According to this reading, there is no percentage of deputies, or British Jews, that would make an anti-war or Israel-critical position

acceptable. Even if a future letter could get 50%, 60% or 70% support, it would count for nothing because the "position of the mainstream Jewish community" is not susceptible to democracy; it is a dogma that relies on a model of

rabbinic fiat. Rosenberg behaves less like an elected leader and more like a *posek* (legal expert), issuing *halachic* (Jewish religious) guidance to his followers and placing his opponents in *cherem* (exclusion from the community).

Being a Chief Rabbi, this language comes naturally to Ephraim Mirvis. In an op-ed designed to give religious support to Rosenberg's reign of reaction, Mirvis issued an impassioned call for communal unity. Firstly he referenced *Pirkei Avot* 2:4 (Ethics of the Fathers): "Do not judge your fellow until you have been in their place", to suggest that diaspora Jews shouldn't criticise Israelis until they have lived in their shoes – meaning they had to serve in the IDF or run to bomb shelters. He then quoted the *halachic* principle that "One who is a witness cannot become a judge", suggesting that: "It is the observer with distance and perspective [that is, diaspora Jews] who sees more."

How can this apparent contradiction be resolved? Simple: the first applies when it is diaspora Jewish voices that need to be silenced; the second when it is peacenik Israelis that need to be ignored. He didn't literally say that. But he might as well have done; his appeals to "context, intention and audience" amount to the same thing. When prominent Israeli critics of the government write in support of the 36, they can safely be discounted because "transplanting criticism from one political context to another can be ill-judged and damaging". Evidently, they are the wrong kind of Israelis, just as the 36 and their supporters are the wrong kind of Jews.

The question that must always be raised in response to calls for unity is: unity on whose terms? If there is no suggestion of a compromise position between different sides, then this is simply a call for submission, for the dissident group to shut up. This is a unity behind warmongers, betrayers of the hostages, enforcers of starvation, and usurpers of the Jewish ethical tradition. We must not consent to this. I hope that the new peaceniks, who inevitably disagree with me on some things, are not seduced by these false calls for unity. If I may speak to them directly; *chaverim* (friends/comrades), you are doing vital work, and you have the warmongers rattled. Please do not give up. We need you to stand firm against calls for censorship. We cannot do this without you. We need to focus laser-like on stopping the war. Disagreements over the long term can come later. Without an end to the bombing, the full resumption of goods into Gaza and the associated return of the hostages, nothing good can happen.



# DON'T MENTION THE GENOCIDE

**URI HORESH'S personal experience of repression at the hands of an Israeli academic institution exposes a deeper web of lies and self-deception**

Over a decade ago, when I was living in the United States, I coined the acronym TODITME, sarcastically referencing the false mantra that Israel is The Only Democracy In The Middle East. I frequently tagged it on to news stories I posted on social media that highlighted instances of the state denying people under its control basic human rights, with cases of sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and repression of free speech. It was only a matter of time until I became the direct target of Israeli actions that were blatantly undemocratic.

In September 2023 I flew from Tel Aviv to Chicago to spend a month in the United States before the academic year began at the Israeli college in which I was working as a senior lecturer in Arabic linguistics. I made stops in San Francisco, Washington DC and Philadelphia, before arriving in New York for a linguistics conference where I was representing the college before I was due to return for the beginning of the semester. But by the time I arrived in New York it was the second week of October, and my flight home to Tel Aviv had been cancelled due to security concerns. Not wanting to be stranded for weeks, seven time zones away, in a place where I had nowhere to live, I rebooked my flight so that I could go to London and stay temporarily with friends in the home counties.

On the morning of my flight from New York to London, the last day of the conference, I received an email from the college president and vice president, informing me that I was being suspended from my job pending a disciplinary hearing. What was the reason? The college administration had been made aware of two Facebook posts of mine: one that showed a sign that read "Free the Gaza ghetto" in Hebrew and English (taken at a demonstration in Tel Aviv after one of the many previous Israeli massacres in Gaza); and another in which I "alleged" that Israel was committing genocide. The undeniable conclusion, said my superiors, was that I supported the murder of over 1,000 Israelis by Hamas operatives on 7th October.

As I stayed longer in England, waiting to hear about my professional fate, I realised that the college had, to all intents and purposes, sacked me, with no opportunity for me to voice my concerns. While they later invited me to attend a pro forma online meeting in which I could be heard, I had spent weeks with no access to my work email, or to my students' records, whose coursework I was in the midst of marking, and with my professional web page scrapped from the college server. I declined to attend the meeting and, shortly thereafter, my termination was made official.

In an interview I gave to the journalist Owen Jones on 26th October 2023, I said that this was not about me. It was not even about the other academics, teachers, students and others who faced sanctions from their Israeli employers and even from the authorities. Some, mostly Palestinians, were being rounded up and arrested for the most

benign social media posts. Our empathy and concern, I explained, should be for the people of Gaza, who were then only beginning to experience what we now know is a full-on genocide, not just a prediction or projection thereof.

Having been involved since the early 2000s in calls for universities to divest from entities involved in fuelling the Israeli occupation in Palestine, I became more deeply involved in the BDS movement following a large conference held in 2012 at the University of Pennsylvania. Like many



others, I was at first reluctant to call for boycotting Israeli institutions of higher education. A product of this system myself, as a graduate of Tel Aviv University, I wanted to believe that blocking cooperation with Israeli universities would unjustly punish and stifle the few decent people in Israeli academia, the people who do call out Israel for its heinous acts in Occupied Palestine and in neighbouring Lebanon, and have been doing so for decades. I was one of them, and while I was furthering my education abroad, many of my friends back home still were fighting the good fight. But BDS is not really about individual people. It is about the institutions they represent, the establishment that funds them, and the broader role that anything and everything that bears the name, symbols and shekels of the genocidal machine represents. So I was very much on board.

I recently heard that a high-ranking figure at a prestigious British university had used the trite argument that Israeli academia is where political dissent thrives, to push back against calls for their university to cease scholarly and educational collaborations with a major Israeli university. Ironically, that very Israeli university was at the centre last year of a highly publicised effort to

ostracise one of its distinguished Palestinian professors, causing Israeli police to arrest that professor, and drive them out of active teaching, for their vocal objection to Israel's illegal, violent, and morally bankrupt actions in Gaza.

My personal story is disturbing, not because it has upended my life. It caused me to feel unsafe in the country where I was born and raised; left me far away from my loved ones, particularly my elderly father, my brother and my niece and nephew; and made me abandon a flat with all its contents, forcing me to pay a year's rent in a place where I could no longer live. But I am privileged. I have a supportive family and supportive friends; I was able to find a job in Scotland that would keep me afloat for three years; I am not homeless or hungry. I will overcome.

It is disturbing because of all the other people who have been stifled and who are less fortunate than I am. It is disturbing because the people of Gaza, their homes, their hospitals, their schools, their universities, their streets, their shops – their everything – are being bombed and shredded to dust. And it is disturbing because merely calling out this tragic truth, pointing fingers at the perpetrators of this crime against humanity, has become grounds for disciplinary and criminal actions in a country that still believes it is The Only Democracy In The Middle East. A country that still believes it is any kind of democracy. A country that believes it can be both Jewish and democratic – in that very particular order.

I regularly have nightmares. I am ashamed to say that most of them are not about the horrors carried out by "my" country in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria,

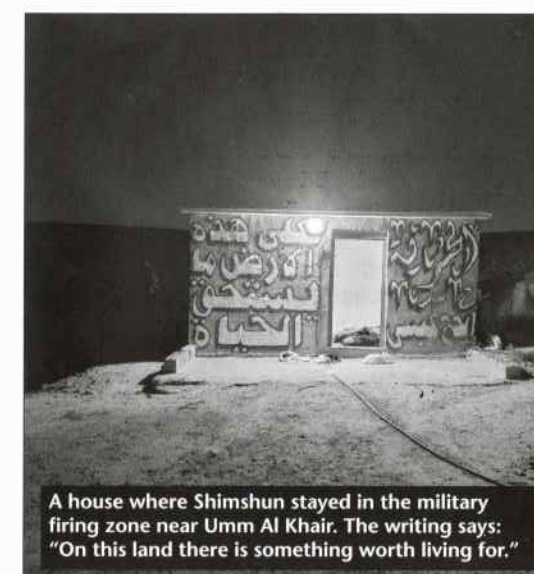
and Iran. My nightmares are about encounters I have with my former colleagues who have abandoned me and with my former employers who threw me not under a bus, but under a proverbial tank. At the end of the day, though, perhaps I owe the people who fired me and effectively banished me from my original home, a debt of gratitude. Perhaps this was the final nail in the coffin, signalling to me that this is it. I am no longer a part of that place. I am no longer a part of a people, a majority of whom want to continue seeing Gaza being wiped off the face of the planet and make Israel, Palestine, whatever you wish to call it, Arab-rein.

So, in the hope that they will read these words (though I suspect they won't), thank you, president and vice president and dean and union chair of the Israeli college I used to work at. I will not do you the honour of mentioning your names or the name of your fine institution. While your intentions were far from pure – they were as filthy and contaminated with blood as the atrocities they meant to defend – you have done a good deed. You helped prove yourselves wrong. Thanks to you and to millions around you, the world is gradually learning how very ironic the branding TODITME has always been. The only real beef I still have with you is that you have used me to intimidate my former Palestinian colleagues and my former Palestinian students. They now know that if you can do that to a senior lecturer of Jewish descent, their fate, that of the already weakened members of the community, is potentially much worse. I only hope that they, like all Palestinians, will find the strength to resist.

## SEEING THE OCCUPATION FROM THE INSIDE

It has been two months since I returned from the West Bank. The intensity of my journey to Palestine and travel within it, as well as the weird elation on return, are deep memories. But I am conscious that memories have a half-life that I am desperately trying to lengthen, so important are these to me – especially now that many of us are on the brink of being "terrorists" in law as well as in the invective of the Red Top press.

I traveled to Masafer Yatta in the southern Hebron Hills, to undertake what is called Protective Presence with International Solidarity Movement (ISM). On one level, Protective Presence is about witnessing and documenting, but it is also about standing beside Palestinians. It aims to be supportive, to provide documentation for legal action and it is hoped that being there might dampen the violence from settlers. ISM is an organisation made up of dedicated activists, committed to living the world we want to see; it is



A house where Shimshun stayed in the military firing zone near Umm Al Khair. The writing says: "On this land there is something worth living for."

**SHIMSHUN** reports on a month he spent staying with and supporting Palestinian families in the West Bank

Uri Horesh is a lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Persian at the University of St Andrews and an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex.

Palestinian-led, decisions are by consensus and when acting under their auspices, you undertake to commit to non-violence.

A couple of general observations before I describe key aspects of my visit.



Women from the village of Qawwais, making cheese

First, the occupation is everywhere – but at different intensities. There are raids in the cities daily, and attacks by settlers on isolated communities, supported by the army. Checkpoints are set up permanently in some places, while in others, barriers are at hand to be closed at any time, but may not have been for some days. This unpredictability is part of the unsettling nature of the occupation.

Second, there is a clear difference between the town and the country. The army enforces the occupation in the towns, driving through refugee camps at high speed, tearing down buildings with adapted vehicles, raiding houses and, when challenged, carrying out summary executions. Meanwhile, in the country and villages, it is largely settlers that enforce the occupation. They often carry M16 rifles supplied by the state, and they go about unheeded. Sometimes the police and the army turn up, but only to enable their action, not to inhibit them.

Finally, the occupation is surreal. Palestinian people try to live their lives and some can ignore the occupation; it has a gradient of intensity based on class as well as a geography. The occupation does its best to give the impression that

Palestinians do not exist. Israeli-only roads are well-known aspects of Apartheid. Less well known, are cultural artifacts declaring Palestinians dangerous: red notices boldly forbid Israelis from entering Area A (those parts of the West Bank nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority), and there are many barriers hiding Palestinians from Israelis. The Apartheid Wall is the most famous, but roads carving their way through Palestinian towns have walls so high that you cannot see the town.

Equally surreal, however, is the town called Battir. The 1948 Green Line follows the path of the railway which passes at the bottom of a valley above which this picturesque town sits. The Apartheid Wall was due to run through it, and a plan was hatched to apply for World Heritage status in the hope this would deter the wall. It is an ancient village and its irrigation system is famous. The application was successful. So, Battir sits above the Green Line and Palestinians and tourists alike can simply cross the railway – which no longer operates – into Israel, seemingly without impediment. Walk a mile up the hill and you will be in Jerusalem. I crossed and walked about 100 metres. It was weird.

There are four words I have used to describe my time here: amazing; beautiful; terrible; and shocking.

It was amazing because I stayed with people whose generosity knows no bounds. I was a constant reminder, because I would not be there otherwise, of how terrible it is for them. Their homes are small and I am sharing their intimate family spaces. They must trust me, a stranger. Unarmed, they face settlers with violent intent every day. People encroaching on their land, driving through villages at high speed in 4x4s, frightening sheep and children, trying to make their lives impossible, so they will want to leave. These people are the real heroes of this struggle: isolated and with little support, they are determined not to leave. My experience was to receive unwavering kindness.

It is beautiful because the land, rocky and constantly battered by wind, offers some of the most stunning landscapes I have seen. Staying with a family deep in the forbidden firing zone, we had to leave at sunrise so as to avoid detection. The rise and fall of the hills, with dirt roads seemingly pencil-sketched into the distance, coupled with the quiet of the day just starting, filled me with calm. These places should be thriving, with people walking and staying in Palestinian guest houses and enriching the local economy. But the occupation strangles this and steals the livelihoods from Palestinians.

It is shocking because much of the daily encroachment, while supported by armed adults, is perpetrated by young boys. I have seen videos of boys, not yet teenagers, tormenting Palestinians. Where I was, it was teenagers – maybe 15, 16 or 17.

Child soldiers: boys whose minds are poisoned, declaring that Judaism is fundamentally about conquest of land. How will they be able to tear themselves away from this ideological position and see Palestinians as people with equal rights, to whom reparations should be paid?

And it is terrible and terrifying for many reasons.

First, it is terrible because, as much as you want to stand against the occupation, you have to accept it exists. For example, a settler brings sheep to pasture on some land that belongs to a Palestinian. The Palestinian farmer has the papers and he calls the police. Eventually they turn up and he shows them the papers. Activists hover, take pictures and, when challenged by the police, might say it is our Palestinian friend's land. But this is a collaborationist conversation that Palestinians have everyday, based on the premise that the settler might have some claim to the land and there is a demarcation across which he should not stray. It is ridiculous. It is all Palestinian land. The settler is there illegally. Any papers a settler has declaring ownership are illegal.

Second, the army is everywhere and the settlers are backed up by the army. Settler violence is rarely, if ever, punished, it is encouraged. While I was there, a man was shot trying to stop settlers from going across his land. The settlers are intent on harassing this man because he has a spring on his land that they want. A man called Budi pulled the trigger. He is a well-known settler. At the time, I was with the sister-in-law of the man who was shot and her family. Lovely people who I will not forget. Fourteen months previously, Budi had rampaged across the valley, beating up the people I was with, terrorising the family and wrecking their home. I could see that, with the news that Budi had shot her brother-in-law, an agitated mood had descended on the courtyard. Where would their protection come from? Not from the organs of state – who not only allowed Budi to go home afterwards but arrested the son of the man who had been shot.

Since I have returned, the militarisation has intensified and settler violence has been further emboldened. The recent war with Iran, aside from blacking out the terrors in Gaza, gave further excuse to the army in the West Bank, the police and settlers to steal, harangue, beat up and generally make life for Palestinians so dreadful that they might leave.

It is true that some people sell their land: the pressures to do so are great. The Palestinian economy is shrinking. Each locality feels under



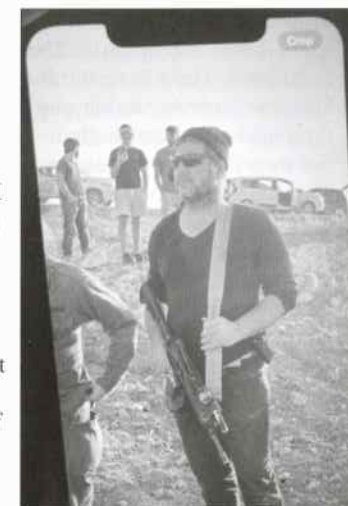
A boy watches his father negotiating with the army as settlers disrupt the shepherding

great pressure: the range of pasture for farmers is reduced because of settler encroachment; routes to market are hard because of checkpoints and other red tape impediments; land is expensive, and a new law has enabled individuals to purchase Palestinian land, opening up the possibility that wealthy Israelis will offer large sums.

Equally, there is resistance to this, exemplified by the support there is for people to keep their land. In al Massara, 10 miles south of Bethlehem, where I stayed with a friend for a day, a co-operative is planned to help Palestinians collectively buy land that is vulnerable to being sold to Israelis. In this village, many farmers are determined to continue working the land as active resistance to the pressure on them to leave.

As Jews, we should recall that this is being done with the declared aim of making Jewish people safer. And it is being done with the Holocaust looming in the background. A soldier coming to the aid of some settlers asked me what I was doing there. I asked him what he was doing there. The soldier said to me "Have you not heard of October 7th? It is Arab versus Jewish." I managed to hold off saying anything more, even though this was incorrect on many, many levels. Denying Palestinians identity, proclaiming a battle between Jewish people and Arab people – as opposed to Israelis or settlers. And more besides.

Quite aside from the criminal behaviour of the settlers and the connivance of the occupying forces, this is an abuse of the memory of the Holocaust, and it is certainly not making Jewish people safer, either in Israel or further afield. The soldier's reply was an awful reminder of how, while it might not be our fault, it is our responsibility, as Jewish people, to support Palestinians and campaign to end the occupation so Palestinians can return to their land. Silence is not an option.



Mobile phone photo of Budi – the settler who shot Sheikh Said. While Sheikh Said's son was arrested, Budi went free

THE ARMY ENFORCES THE OCCUPATION IN THE TOWNS,  
DRIVING THROUGH REFUGEE CAMPS AT HIGH SPEED,  
TEARING DOWN BUILDINGS WITH ADAPTED VEHICLES, RAIDING HOUSES AND,  
WHEN CHALLENGED, CARRYING OUT SUMMARY EXECUTIONS.

# CONTINUING FROM OUR

This year's Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) on 27th January 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army. The official commemorations in Poland and elsewhere took place in a tense political atmosphere, pervaded by ghostly silences. The generation of survivors, who were the direct victims of the Holocaust, have almost died out. So few testimonies of their horrific experiences can be heard now.

Another eerie silence concerned other genocides. The official HMD materials in Britain also featured Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia – 2025 is also the 30th anniversary of the mass murders in Srebrenica, part of the genocide in Bosnia – but there was no mention of the genocide in Gaza, that is being carried out with weapons and support provided by our own government.

The Jewish Socialists' Group was conscious that, in response to these silences, there were calls by some to boycott HMD events or hold counter events, focusing solely on Gaza today, which would diminish the

## ZRINKA BRALO

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak. I was pleasantly surprised when Julia reached out to me to join you tonight, as we met decades ago – before we had grey hair – in an anti-deportation campaign to support a Congolese family with children in London. Campaigning works, they won and they're now probably British citizens going about their lives.

So, indeed, I came from Sarajevo and I was there when the siege of Srebrenica started happening 1993. This was the first attempt by war criminals to expel and murder the Bosniak Muslim population from the region, and it was prevented by the UN declaration that Srebrenica is a safe haven.

That was before the internet, but the world was watching. I was a journalist, and I was working with international journalists, and I kept thinking: if only the rest of the world could see what's happening, then people would know, and we could stop this. Of course, I was young, and I was naïve. People did see and they didn't stop it. There are many reasons for that – books have been written and there are transcripts from trials that went on for 20 years in International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague – but at the time, despite the evidence, it was really hard for people to believe what was going to happen, even though it had happened before.

This was part of my personal history: tonight is the night, on 26th January 1942, when my grandfather from Sarajevo somehow ended up in the Mauthausen concentration camp. We know that around 300 people from Bosnia were deported to Mauthausen. I

significance of the Nazi genocide.

We decided to hold our own political and cultural commemoration on Zoom, to affirm that collective memories of persecution must not compete in a zero-sum game. Instead, they must raise our collective consciousness and enable us to remember the depth of suffering of the past, celebrate the multiple forms that resistance took then, and also confront the present-day challenges of racism, fascism, ethnic cleansing and genocide wherever they occur.

Our event featured art from a Holocaust survivor, Jewish and Roma music, and six spoken presentations. We present two of their contributions here.

One is from **ZRINKA BRALO**, a Bosnian, who worked as a journalist during the siege of Sarajevo before coming to Britain as a refugee in 1993. She has worked here in various human rights campaigns, and today is the CEO of Migrants Organise. The other (on page 20) is from **ROB FERGUSON**, a thinker, writer and anti-racist, anti-fascist activist.

don't know how he ended up there. There is no plaque. There is no book. There is no family story, because my father, my aunt and my uncle all died before telling me that story. There is now an online record that he arrived on that terrible January night. My grandfather survived and came back to Sarajevo. He became an alcoholic – self-medicating as a result of that experience. So the inhumanity, violence and genocide was part of my family history, and yet I couldn't believe it was going to happen again.

This is what was really difficult for us – for me and for many Bosnians: we were hoping for a miracle, but actually all the signs were there. People who were about to carry out genocide told us that they were going to do it. And they were doing it already. Complete destruction was everywhere around us – thirty years on, you can still go to Sarajevo and see the damage on our streets and homes. Yet somehow we clung to this idea that it might not happen; that it would somehow be prevented.

After the genocide in Srebrenica happened in 1995, and there



# TO LEARN SHARED HISTORY

was no intervention – even though the UN peacekeeping troops were there – it is still really difficult to actually say that that genocide is in the past because if we take Gregory Stanton's definition of the stages of genocide [Classification, Symbolisation, Discrimination, Dehumanisation, Organisation, Polarisation, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination, Denial] the genocide is still happening because it's being denied in Bosnia. Some of the Bosnian Serb leaders ended up in The Hague and were convicted of war crimes and a few are in prison. Still, many are in power and, at the time when these declarations and convictions were coming, they declaratively said: yes, they accept that that genocide happened in Srebrenica. But now they're saying: "No! No! No! It didn't happen." Again, for their political gain. And this is where we get stuck a lot of the time and there is no way to move forward.

I have gone back to Bosnia to places where war crimes happened, ones that didn't make it into the indictment for genocide. We are a small and insignificant country with no power or resources, where other powers make decisions about what has happened to us and what will happen to us. In the original indictment, my neighbourhood was listed as an area of genocide – and then somehow it got dropped. We were promised justice, and the trials went on in the Hague, but direct accountability is often lacking in many cases, particularly for survivors still looking to find their dead.

In 2005, I went back to northern Bosnia – to the Prijedor area, where there are still people missing, and where infamous camps were discovered by British journalists in 1992. In that place the head teacher of one school imprisoned and tortured the headteacher of another primary school. They were colleagues before the war started and then suddenly they were transformed into these people who were willing to torture their former friends in the name of ideology and nationalism in our case.

Any form of the kind of ideology that treats people as "other" is clear to me. I have spent my entire life – and I'm no longer young – and, in particular, the last three decades, fighting that othering, sharing my story, raising awareness and making sure that it doesn't happen again. It's unfortunate that it does, but we must not give up.

A lot of the time, I am a lonely voice when I raise the alarm about the far right. People dismiss me because of my experience. They say, "Oh, Zrinka, this is not Bosnia." And in many cases, I say, "Well, actually, it is sometimes worse than Bosnia because you're completely unaware and in denial, and think it cannot happen to you."

This is where I think we're now facing a difficult challenge with racism in this country – with the world as it is right now – when people are telling us who they are and we're struggling to believe them and to take them seriously. I have to say that it really saddens me. I still have rage in me at the horror of what's happening. This drives me to work with people who are seeking protection from persecution, war and genocide because I think that the best way to honour the dead is to help the living.

I work for a refugee charity and, currently, we do not feel safe publishing our address online. That is really scary. But when I share



Sarajevo after the war in the 1990s

that fear with some of my British friends, they just cannot relate to it. They cannot understand what I'm talking about. But my risk assessment of all the threats we're getting online, from all the racism that our members are experiencing, and from the direct attacks that we experienced last summer, has made me fearful, and we have to take steps to protect our staff, our volunteers and our members.

This is really an indictment of where we're at. Another thing that scares me is that, starting from Syria and Sudan and the genocide that is happening in Gaza, we can actually see it in real time. And still nothing is being done – or not enough is being done to prevent murder, genocide and war crimes.

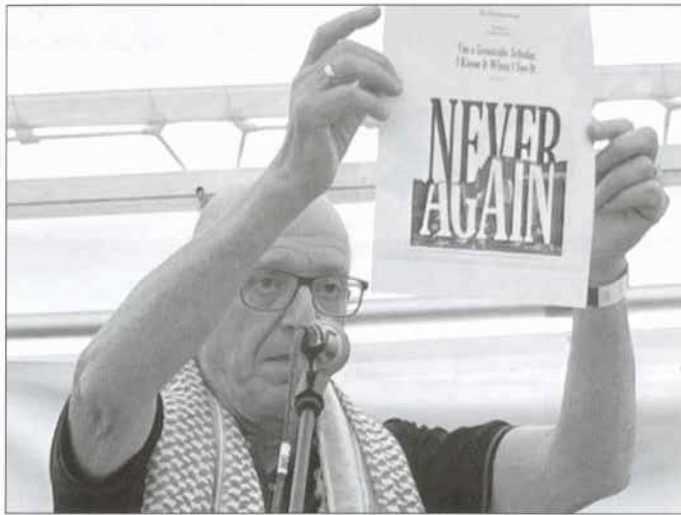
I feel that my work is the way to honour the dead in my family, as well as the people of my country, and show how borders feature in our lives. My grandfather never moved and he lived in three countries. My grandfather was imprisoned in Austria during the Second World War by people for whom he had fought 25 years earlier in the First World War, because he was drafted to fight for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bosnia was their colony and that war started in Sarajevo! Borders are part of fictional stories that we tell ourselves about differences between people defined as nations, after army generals and politicians draw lines on a piece of paper – usually preceded by war and genocide.

When I came to the UK to claim asylum, Germans and Austrians, from countries that had imprisoned my grandfather five decades earlier, could travel as members of the EU, which was observing the war in my country, pretending to keep an imaginary peace, and standing by while genocide was happening. I couldn't travel freely and had to become a refugee. To make it worse, once I escaped, I was refused protection.

These are the stories that I still haven't got round to writing down. But it does enrage me, how we perceive these differences and take them for granted and forget about humanity, with complete disregard for what that does to the world, to our future and to our children.

So I'll stop my rage and rant there. And will listen and take part in the conversation. Thank you very much for inviting me.

Continues on next page.



## ROB FERGUSON

Tomorrow is the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Yesterday, Elon Musk told an AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) election rally – a far-right party with a Nazi wing – that there's too much focus on past guilt, and called on his audience to make Germany great again. Don't tell me it wasn't a fascist salute.

That message would have resonated with his audience; Björn Höcke, chair of the AfD in Thuringia, rails against what he sees as German guilt over the Holocaust. He's the leader of the AfD's Nazi wing, Der Flügel. He called the Berlin Memorial to the Holocaust "a monument of shame", and bemoans Germany's mentality, as he saw it, of a totally vanquished people. The AfD is set to become the second largest party in next month's elections. And all this in Germany. Germany!

But the AfD is not alone. Revisionist histories of the Holocaust and wartime collaboration are embedded in the politics of the entire European far right: Meloni in Italy; Rassemblement National [formerly the Front National] and Marine Le Pen in France; the Austrian Freedom Party; Vox in Spain; the Law and Justice Party in Poland; Orbán in Hungary; the Finns Party. And here, Farage, Reform UK and Tommy Robinson's fascist street movement. All boosted by Trump's victory.

Far-right and fascist parties are on the rise across the globe, and antisemitism is not confined to the margins of their racist worldview. It is an increasingly prevalent element of far-right ideology. It needs to be understood, explained and fought. As we saw in the riots last August, support for the far right and fascists is fuelled primarily by Islamophobia and anti-migrant racism.

But a constant drumbeat pervades far-right social media. That's of a "globalist elite" presiding over a Muslim and migrant invasion, bent on eroding national identity, undermining the family, promoting gender ideology in the form of trans, LGBTQ equality, feminism and promoting an anti-white culture. This is the ideology of Great Replacement conspiracy theory. The neo-Nazis and white supremacists describe this openly as a global conspiracy by Jews.

The main far-right and fascist currents try to avoid such explicit references but rather they will personalise Jews as individuals, notoriously George Soros. Yet they constantly vent against "globalists" and "globalist interests" – used as a dog-whistle – as surrogates for "international Jewry", "cosmopolitans" with no loyalty to country or nation.

This is Vox President, Santiago Abascal: "Soros is redoubling his efforts to favour the Islamisation of Europe and chaos in the continent." Jörg Urban of the AfD: "Soros seeks the abolition of nation states and the dissolution of cultures." Jaroslaw Kaczynski, of the Polish Law and Justice Party, claims Soros is seeking to undermine national identity and manipulate the populations of Europe for profit. And this is our own Nigel Farage: "We are in the midst of the greatest political battle of our time: globalism versus nationalism." Soros is seeking, Farage argues, to fundamentally

change the demographic makeup of Europe and presents, "The biggest danger to the entire Western world." Tommy Robinson openly refers to the Great Replacement – constantly.

Of course antisemitism represents a threat to Jews. All Jews. But to see that threat as confined to Jews alone is mistaken. Antisemitism is a sword at the throat of every social movement, working class organisation and the oppressed. Its significance lies not only in scapegoating and racist hate – it has for its advocates an explanatory power. It speaks to the despair and rage at the ruin brought down by seemingly incomprehensible forces.

The roots of modern antisemitism, after all, lie in the late 19th century amidst the first great economic crash of the capitalist system, fuelled by colonial racism, military rivalry and imperialist war, and the rise of working class socialist and revolutionary movements.

Today this ideology has returned, seeing a hidden hand behind every threat and foe. Antisemitic notions of Cultural Marxism and Great Replacement are normalised by politicians and find gateways in anti-vax and COVID conspiracy theories. Great Replacement theory acts as a frame in which every foe presents another front in an existential battle to defend national identity. Great Replacement marks the manifestos of all the white supremacist mass killers: Anders Breivik, Dylann Roof, the Killers of Christchurch, Halle, Pittsburgh, Escondido, Poway, El Paso, Colorado Springs. And the victims: a socialist youth camp; Muslims; Jews; an LGBTQ bar; Black worshippers attending a church service; Hispanic shoppers at a Walmart. These killers are the outriders of fascism. A vision of the horror if fascism was ever allowed access to power over the state machine that enabled the Holocaust, that we are remembering today. For all their disavowals, these eruptions of fascist terror are rooted in a shared ideological terrain with the likes of Trump, the AfD, Musk, the Tories and all.

What lessons would I draw? One: the fascists feed off the mainstream. The Nazis did not invent notions of a global Jewish conspiracy or a Judeo-Bolshevik menace. Then, as now, they radicalised mainstream racist ideology. After all, it was Churchill who wrote of the "International Jew", who, he declared, was responsible, "for a worldwide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence and impossible equality."

We should remember that, between them, in the 1930s, six press barons, including Rothermere and Beaverbrook, and Randolph Hearst in the US, promoted support for Hitler and the Nazis and their homegrown variants to 65 million daily readers across Britain and the USA. And today, the entire establishment – as in the 1930s – is bending towards the far right and conceding terrain to the fascists. The tech bros (Musk and Zuckerberg); the Republicans, the established parties of Europe; the Tories; and, I have to say, Keir Starmer.

But in 1936, despite the press barons and the police in the East End of London, 100,000 Jews and Irish Catholic dockers (who had their own divisions by the way), Communists, smashed the Blackshirts off the streets at Cable Street. In 1939, 100,000 laid siege to a Nazi rally in Madison Square Gardens, New York. And that is a lesson that we must draw from the past – and a challenge.

But also, never again can we repeat the divisions that beset the German working class movement that enabled Hitler to take power. It was never inevitable. We have to unite to defend every target of the fascists and confront them together in unity. We don't face a threat on the scale of the antisemitic and fascist movements of the 20th century. We do not face 400,000 Brownshirts on the streets. But we cannot wait for catastrophe before we fight it. And the first step, I think, is that as many of us as possible need to be out facing Tommy Robinson supporters when they take to the streets.

This year, on the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the horrors of the past are once again casting their shadow. For me, "Never Again" is not just a slogan. It's a call to arms. Here, now – now is the time!

# THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF FARAGE'S PARTY

Opinion polls are consistently giving Nigel Farage's Reform UK a potential vote share of 30%. With increasing fragmentation of British party politics, the fall off in electoral loyalty, and the continuation of a first-past-the-post election system for Westminster, Reform UK could gain a significant majority in the House of Commons. There are some who see them as a useful vehicle to split the right, and no doubt votes will continue to seep from the Conservative Party, but the lesson from elsewhere across the globe is that populist far-right parties can build and gain power through elections.

There are also those who believe that Reform UK will show itself up – a line taken by several liberal-minded commentators. But the mass of the people today see all politicians as corrupt and inept. A resignation or two is fine. A racist tweet can be covered up. In this atmosphere, it is likely that, unless Reform UK is stopped now, in the 2026 elections it will build on the 10 English Councils it already runs.

Those councils are Derbyshire, Doncaster, Durham, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, North Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, West Northamptonshire and Staffordshire. On top of these victories, they won approximately one third of the council seats in Cornwall, Devon and Northumberland, and more than a third in Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Reform UK's first mayors were elected in Greater Lincolnshire, and in Hull and East Yorkshire. They are collecting votes especially in deindustrialised areas and predominantly white rural areas.

At the beginning of May they also won the parliamentary by-election by a very small margin from Labour in Runcorn and Helsby, in Cheshire. There the Tory share of the vote dropped by almost 9% and the Labour share by more than 20%, though around the country Reform UK are generally peeling off more Tory votes than Labour votes.

In late May, a known fascist councillor from a small village in Cornwall attended a protest in Truro as part of the Great British Strike – now known as the Great British Protest. He was filmed and recorded saying: "World Jewry declared war on Germany in the Second World War. They were bankrupting them from the Treaty of Versailles... The Jews, who are communist, were responsible for a lot of problems in the Weimar Republic." When asked whether Hitler was right to kill so many Jews, he replied: "The Holocaust has been massively

over-exaggerated," and "the revisionist historians I have read cannot find a single order from Adolf Hitler calling for the execution of the Jews." In the crowd were Reform placards and other paraphernalia, and participants were filmed chanting "Reform UK! Reform UK!"

Reform are not a fascist party, unlike the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). They do not have thugs marching the streets. But they do attract fascists, sometimes organised, who will use the anti-migrant rhetoric that many Reform supporters use, and Reform UK seek to attract racists on the back of this anti-migrant language and action. This is why Labour in particular are so wrong in seeking

to ape the anti-migrant narrative, and that is why we must continue to challenge it – including that contained in the Government's recently produced White Paper "Restoring Control over the Immigration System". We must make the positive case for migration and expose the treatment of people seeking refugee status.

Some may characterise Reform UK as an insurgency, but they are not actually a new political party. Farage himself came from the Tories. Many of Reform's members joined from UKIP – now an outwardly far-right party. Farage led UKIP. Reform was created as The Brexit Party and in 2021

became Reform UK. It is currently registered at Companies House as Reform UK Party Limited, with two owners and five officers. It is fundamentally different from most parties in its structure and governance. This allows a couple of people to wield massive power. But when I've spoken to Reform voters they don't seem to care about policy formulation; they just follow the main line: Britain is Broken. Make Britain Great Again – following Trump's mantra Make America Great Again, and seeking to replicate his assault on diversity, equality and inclusion policies. In that respect, Reform UK are part of an international movement.

Some define it as a "Far Right of a Special Type" which seeks to use existing democratic and liberal structures as a means of both getting their message heard and delivering their popular vote. In the 1970s, the New Right grew as an alternative to "one nation Conservatism", and was founded on two distinct ideological traditions: a commitment to a free market economy, and individual freedom, running alongside Conservative social thinking based on law and order, traditional values and public morality.



**TONY CONWAY** provides an in-depth analysis of Reform UK and considers how we can campaign to stop them in their tracks

THEY ARE ANTI-MIGRANT BUT SOME REFORM UK COUNCILLORS SAY THIS IS BECAUSE BRITAIN IS A COUNTRY BASED ON CHRISTIANITY AND VALUES ESTABLISHED GENERATIONS BACK – IN OTHER WORDS IT IS WHITE.

These trends are present in Reform UK policies.

They are anti-migrant but some Reform UK councillors say this is because Britain is a country based on Christianity and values established generations back – in other words it is white. Reform UK's policy statements have an anti-immigrant focus. They call all people who come in via unsafe routes "illegal" and want to close hotels where asylum seekers are held. They blame immigration for the country's ills. Their tax policies will penalise companies that rely on overseas workers.

In broader economic terms, their tax policy is small state – which is why their extra spending pledges are so hollow. They want small business taxes and Corporation Tax lowered or abolished.



Their proposed increases in personal allowances will benefit the well-off significantly. Their policies on health, education and contractual pensions are designed to transfer money via private insurance to health companies, private schools and to the massive and burgeoning financial institutions.

Reform UK remains not just climate-sceptical but positively supports fossil fuel companies who oppose green energy. Reform is largely funded by ex-Tory donors, and receives a lot of money from individuals with offshore ties. Energy and financial services donors figure prominently, as do climate change deniers.

Along with other right-wing movements, Reform UK has focused on influencing the news agenda, using social media and outfits such as GB News. They continue to attack the elite whilst being part of it. In opposing Reform UK we need to expose their policies on health, education and their opposition to workers' rights. We also need to identify people who are attracted to Reform and consider the reasons why they are.

Searchlight magazine's analysis shows that a significant number of those who vote for Reform UK do so for a negative reason – because Reform UK are not Labour or Conservative. Hope Not Hate (HNN) have done a similar analysis, based on polling of 4,000 people who said they would vote

Reform UK if there were an election tomorrow. HNN grouped these Reform UK voters into five "tribes": the working right; radical young men; moderate interventionists; older authoritarian right; and traditional Conservatives.

Two of these categories – "working right" and "older authoritarian right" – are the ones most exercised by immigration. The "moderate Interventionists" are more positive towards multiculturalism and are pro-state and workers' rights, but are drawn to Reform because they believe other parties have failed. The "radical young men", who comprised just over 12% of the sample, included some black and minority ethnic voters who were barely present in the other "tribes". The

"radical young men" were more likely to use social media for news; a majority among them believed that "feminism had gone too far", and they showed tendencies towards antisemitism and conspiratorial thinking.

The TUC, in its own report, showed that trade union members were less likely to vote Reform UK – the figure grew amongst ex-members. But 26% of current union members had either voted for Reform UK or considered voting for them. Among them immigration was by far the biggest driver.

Reform UK are undoubtedly a threat to established political parties. They have driven the anti-migrant narrative further to the right, and contributed to an atmosphere that

has seen an increase in far-right and fascist activity. Their policies are anti-public sector, pro-climate change and anti-worker. Their 2024 manifesto didn't mention poverty, and seems to advocate dealing with problems through tough law and order.

There is clearly potential for a movement to be built around social justice, anti-austerity, pro-worker and internationalist sentiments, which could peel away some of Reform UK's current support by focusing on progressive solutions. But there are hurdles. Reform has the support of 30% of the electorate: they have become normalised, so an anti-Reform campaign will not be enough. Unions must look to their representatives and activists to deliver a positive pro-worker message.

Community Champions need to build alliances and develop alternatives that are positive about migration. Exposing Reform UK's policies is an absolutely necessary step. We must attend hustings and challenge them, but shouting will not do the trick. We need to be there where Reform UK seek to slip into a council seat unnoticed. The most significant arena is in the workplace, but they also need be challenged online. In districts where Reform UK have made real electoral gains, we must build resistance through local groups that expose them in these areas.

# TAKING A STAND

INTERVIEW

**JS: You were born in 1964 in Cape Town. When did you first realise that you lived under an apartheid system?**

AF: Quite early. We didn't just live in South Africa. My mum was Austrian and my dad, who was a liberal white, would regularly decide that he couldn't live in apartheid South Africa. And we would literally, what my sister and I started calling, "semigrate", and spend time in Vienna. We never lasted more than three months at a time as my dad, having not managed to learn a word of German, had to go back. We did this three times before I was 12. But coming back, you suddenly see the way in a white suburb, after sunset, most black people would disappear. Obviously domestic workers were allowed to stay if they had a room. My parents made it clear to me that this wasn't normal.

My mum was very involved in the Black Sash [white women's movement for social justice in apartheid South Africa] and in the People's Space, an illegal theatre, where she was a puppeteer. During school holidays, I would hang out with her. Sometimes she'd go into townships with the Black Sash.

I went to a tiny primary school, about 200 kids. When my sister left, I was the only Jew in the school. When the Soweto riots happened in 1976 and there was instability around the country, I remember my class teacher having a gun. We were told that this was being done for our safety, and our parents were coming to fetch us. I remember talking to my mum as we were walking home and she told me this is a racist country, and what racism was.

**JS: As a teenager, did you and your parents hold similar views?**

AF: Very much so. My mum, who survived the war in Nazi-occupied Vienna, having lost dozens of her family, had a view that the majority of people in South Africa were being treated like the Jews of Europe. We only got television in 1976 in South Africa. I remember seeing on the news, BJ Vorster, a brutal Minister of Justice and then Prime Minister, on an official visit to Israel. My mum was seething and I didn't understand it. It was because he was at Yad Vashem paying respects to Holocaust victims, but he'd been jailed during the War as a Nazi! She just found this hypocrisy on the part of Israel awful.

**JS: How did you go from an understanding that apartheid is wrong to political action?**

I would illegally go into Black townships with my mum, which hardly any white South Africans ever did. When I got to the University of Cape Town, there was NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), which was quite radical and SHAWCO (Student Health and Welfare Centres Organisation), seen as politically moderate. Someone from SHAWCO got me involved in community projects in Crossroads and KTC and other townships.

That first winter we were digging trenches for toilets in KTC. The police, in the middle of winter, had removed the shacks and taken the materials that they were built with. I remember standing there looking at hundreds of ramshackle beds out in the rain. Being in the townships you'd see graffiti about the ANC, about Mandela. It resonated with me.

In 1985 or '86, I ran to be president of SHAWCO on a ticket of politicising the organisation, because I believed you could not have apolitical welfarism in an apartheid state. We won. We became an overtly political organisation and brought it much closer to NUSAS.

Then in '86, the "Crossroads Crisis" happened: 70,000 shacks burned to the ground by the security forces. We could see it burning from campus. Twenty-one of us took a SHAWCO relief vehicle, into Crossroads, illegally. Once the authorities found us, they wouldn't let us out. We were stuck there for three nights. We provided food to the residents who'd lost everything. About 170 people were killed.

I was asked to come to a local meeting, which I only later realised was actually an ANC underground meeting. They were talking about how we should respond. So I informally, became involved in this underground activity.

At the time, all white males had to serve in the South African Defence Force for two years. After Crossroads, they told me that my student deferment was being ended. I'd have to report for military service. "We're sending you to Grahamstown to the infantry; you'll be trained for three months and then we're sending you back to Crossroads in uniform." At that point I had to figure out a way to get out. I got a scholarship to go to Berkeley in California. Then I went from Berkeley to Cambridge on another scholarship where I did an MPhil in economics and politics. We had a cocktail party the night before it started. That's the first time I ever met Simone, my wife. I was the first white South African she'd ever come into contact with. She wouldn't speak to me.

**JS: When did you realise the struggle against apartheid was winnable?**

AF: About 1990. If anyone had told me, when I left the country in 1986, that four years later the ANC would be unbanned, prisoners released and a transition process started, I would have offered them a straitjacket. The apartheid state felt very, very powerful, militarily, economically. Conservative governments in the US and UK and other parts of Europe were giving them a massive amount of support, if not overtly, certainly covertly.

I knew that there was the prospect for change from the time that I started getting politically engaged, because of the energy and organisation in the townships, but I never really believed it would lead to the end of apartheid until much later.

I went back in 1990, as soon as the ANC was unbanned, and worked as a facilitator in the transition process. That's how I first met Mandela and, for my sins, de Klerk, and other key political players. In 1994 my parliamentary constituency was Jo'burg South, where the AWB [para-military neo-



**ANDREW FEINSTEIN**, a South African Jew, was an MP in the first ANC government in 1994. He resigned his seat in 2001 after the ANC refused to investigate allegations of large scale corruption against ANC politicians connected with a major arms deal. Andrew later moved to London and stood as an independent socialist candidate against Keir Starmer in the 2024 General Election, halving his majority. **JEWISH SOCIALIST** interviewed him

Daniel Wernberg spoke to Andrew Feinstein on behalf of Jewish Socialist.

Tony Conway is an anti-racist campaigner who currently lives in Cornwall. He represents the Communist Party on the Stop the Far Right working group of Stand up to Racism

Nazi White supremacist movement] was strong. In the second election from 1999, my constituency was moved to Sea Point.

**JS: How did it feel, being a white ANC politician in the early years of transition?**

AF: It felt like an enormous privilege. The fact that I was able to play a tiny role in our new democracy, I found extraordinary. A lot of people were excited to have a white Jewish MP. A quite radical American rabbi who headed an Orthodox synagogue befriended me early on. He allowed me to conduct all my community feedback meetings in the synagogue.

**JS: As a white South African in the 1970s and '80s, you had a minority opinion. And also within the Jewish community.**

AF: The Jewish community of South Africa likes to sometimes forget the role it actually played, and highlight a few notable exceptions, who it had shunned and rejected – like Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Rusty Bernstein, Ben Turok... They were regarded as traitors by the Jewish community. Then once the political pendulum had swung, the Jewish community was very proud of them.

In celebrating Dennis Goldberg, they forget that when Dennis was released from prison, the apartheid state sent him to Israel, where his daughter lived. Very soon after arriving in Israel, he denounced Israel and came to live in the UK. When they talk about Mandela, they forget how incredibly critical he was of Israel, how he described apartheid in Israel as even worse than in South Africa.

When I first published *After the Party* in 2007, I did an event in Sea Point, in the synagogue I'd used as an MP. I'd always promised the community that I would come back. The then chair of the Board of Deputies had a copy of the book and stood up, before I even started speaking. He said: "This is nothing more than a propaganda document for a one-state solution and that's the destruction of Israel". And he threw the book at me physically, which I found just bizarre.

**JS: The Jewish left seems to be a growing here in the UK, but in South Africa there's not too much of a Jewish left.**

AF: That's actually not true. The Jewish left in South Africa is probably not as well organised as the Jewish left in Britain, so it's less well known. But there is a significant Jewish left in South Africa. That's come together over Gaza in a sort of Jews for Palestine. Historically they went a broader political route rather than one within the Jewish community. In the 1950s, a lot of Jews got involved in the liberation struggle. Many of them were founding members of the South African Communist Party.

**JS: The South African Board of Deputies seems less of a factor in South Africa's political life than the Board of Deputies here.**

AF: The Palestinian struggle is so much a part of South African politics. The ANC has celebrated its links to the Palestinian movement since being in office. The organised Jewish community there doesn't feel quite as reactionary as it does here. Here, the Board of Deputies and most of the mainstream Jewish community activity

is remarkably right wing. Maybe that gives rise to a more organised left. They are far more involved in politics. The role of the organised Jewish community behind Starmer is profound. The fact that that has led to more of an organised Jewish left is sad because it's necessary, but good because it's bringing together leftist Jews with political programmes.

**JS: You are loud and proud about being Jewish and talk about how your family's experience during the Holocaust influences your politics. Is there a role for you in the Jewish left beyond just being a Jew on the left?**

AF: In politics, many people are driven by ego and self-advancement. I try to work in the opposite way. I'm driven by certain principles that come together in my day job, investigating the global arms trade and political corruption, and in my political work. I've never thought about whether I should play a more specific role in the Jewish left; I wouldn't avoid playing any such role. A few weeks ago, there was a Jewish anti-Zionist conference, which was one of the most enjoyable political events I've been to in a long time. I was surprised by the diversity of Jews there – age, income, political perspective – but united by deep concern about what the state of Israel is doing.

I found it a very homely place to be, actually, which surprised me a bit. I love the growing Jewish activism in the UK. When I first started getting involved in British politics, I never talked about my family. I didn't think it was relevant. It only became relevant when people started attacking me for criticising Israel. I'd grown up within the ANC, where the Palestinian struggle was seen as a fraternal struggle. I would justify it from a purely political rather than a personal perspective, though one of the first things I did in Parliament, was introduce a motion on Holocaust Remembrance. The Holocaust is very important in my life and to my politics.

**JS: Why was the charge of antisemitism against the left, until then hardly a major issue in British politics, the one which stuck?**

AF: Because of the way the media portrayed it and because there is this erroneous view that the left's criticism of Israel is somehow antisemitic. The left generally tends to be more critical of Israel than the mainstream, so the conflation of criticism of Israel with antisemitism in people's minds was a fairly easy connection to make. If you look at something in isolation, you can make an argument for racism and discrimination almost anywhere. If you identify that there is antisemitism in the Labour Party, which of course there is – there's antisemitism in the society – but you don't compare it to antisemitism in other political parties, you're presenting a distorted picture. Why did it stick? Because a lot of people don't look at the nuance of politics, especially at that time.

People's understanding of Israel's role in the world has changed a lot since the 7th October. In 2015, I don't think there was a nuanced understanding that antisemitism in the Labour Party was a fraction of the antisemitism in the Conservative Party, or certainly parties to their right, and similar to levels of

antisemitism in the Lib Dems. The media abrogated its responsibility. Mainstream journalists are effectively propagandists for the status quo. Jeremy was a threat to that status quo and the media were prepared to misrepresent his history and the levels of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

I have friends, fairly progressive politically, who still think Jeremy's an antisemite. We've all made mistakes about liking something on social media without really looking at it. That's not a reflection of antisemitism, whereas giving a Nazi salute at the inauguration of a president is a fairly obvious antisemitic symbol, or actually calling Jews dirty, disgusting people who rule the world... So it's more a reflection of the nature of our society.

You have confusion about what is antisemitism, and supporters of Israel, and Israel itself, use that grey area to label anybody who is critical of them as an antisemite. The reaction of the Labour Party to it was poorly thought out. Look at the way Bernie Sanders dealt with similar allegations in the US – obviously easier because he was Jewish. He just said, these are right wing nut-jobs calling me an antisemite. I know what antisemitism is, which you probably don't. I've even been criticised for being too supportive of the Israeli state, so to call me an antisemite is simply absurd. This is just because you're right wing and I'm left wing. That's the way it should have been called out here.

Jeremy should have surrounded himself with his Jewish supporters and said, I am the MP who has introduced more early day motions about antisemitism than any other MP in British parliamentary history. To call me an antisemite is simply wrong. The people doing that are far right-wing people and we should treat them as such. I will not entertain or engage in conversation about this any more.

**JS: The Corbyn movement in the Labour Party didn't achieve its goals. Was that five-year period ultimately one of failure?**

AF: In my work against the global arms trade, we have the phrase "success without victory". The Corbyn years had successes, but it didn't have victory. The weakness was that it didn't build a rooted, deep movement in communities across the country. At the rallies, hundreds of thousands of people were coming out to listen to Jeremy and buying into his politics. You had to turn that into something sustainable. Momentum wasn't that. It was just an adjunct to the political process in the Labour Party. To change our deeply corrupted political system, politics needed to be more from the grassroots up, rooted in community.

Since the last general election, a lot of independent groups have been setting up around the country. We've recently launched one in Camden. There's obviously Liverpool, Southport, Preston, etc, and I think that is the way to build a new left movement in this country. I've seen a politics rooted in community in South Africa that worked. It doesn't work any more because the ANC has become something very different, but in some other parts of the world there are very interesting electoral movements that have their roots in community.

**JS: Something rooted in the community will not necessarily be left wing. Britain has a lot of social reaction. There are structural reasons why chunks of the country politicise in a right-wing way.**

# RENT CONTROLS NOW!

**ANDREW FEINSTEIN**  
**WILL FIGHT FOR THEM.**

**VOTE ANDREW FEINSTEIN**  
*Independent*



AF: I don't start with a view that people who vote Reform are necessarily racist or that these people are instinctively anti-immigrant. Farage is, or at least weaponises racism. A lot of people are desperate because the situation in our country is dire. Britain is a rip-off nation, where the private sector can do whatever it likes. It feels as though every day, when you're on the street, you get knocked over the head and somebody takes the money out of your pocket, be it the water companies, the energy companies. It's a free-for-all. In the last 18 months, the people knocking us over the head are probably the government, who make it possible for us to be looted effectively.

Desperate people look for scapegoats. Again, the media has failed abysmally. Even the centrist and centre-left media have jumped on the bandwagon. A politician like Keir Starmer is getting away with dog whistle racism – not something I expected to happen in Britain. The right are far better at communications than the left. You have to organise in places like Clacton and Northampton. It's going to be far more difficult, which makes it far more important in my opinion.

A new movement needs long-term success. It's about effectively rewriting and restructuring British politics. The only way you do that is if you talk to people. The most extraordinary thing during the transition in South Africa was the "people's forums". As ANC leaders, we would sit and just listen to 500 people in a community, talking about their problems. Then somebody would address them as to what we were hoping to do, what was feasible. That stopped after Mandela, when the ANC leadership came to realise that they had their own looting opportunities. In the British context, we have to communicate through new media, but also in person, because in-person conversations are the most powerful ones. I see no reason in this country why we can't create a broad church of people who fundamentally believe that economically we're being ripped off, and that states and corporations do not necessarily do good but are

IF WE PUT IN THE ORGANISING WORK ON THE GROUND ... WE WOULD BE ABLE TO PERSUADE PEOPLE THAT IMMIGRANTS – WHO ARE NOT JUST PEOPLE WHO ARRIVE ON BOATS – ARE PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME. IT'S A HUGE POLITICAL CHALLENGE BUT, OVER THE MEDIUM TERM, IT'S ACHIEVABLE.

serving certain interests. We have to resist those interests and ensure they serve the interests of those who put in the money. That is a long-term process. **JS: In parts of the country last summer, people were trying to burn down hostels because they're sheltering asylum seekers. Somebody who's doing that isn't necessarily disagreeing with you on those points. But they're not in the broad church...**

**AF:** I spoke at the launch for the Southport Community Independent, Sean Halsall. This community went through awful stuff. There were people at that launch who had views very different to mine, Sean's, or Jeremy's, who also spoke there. But they were all committed to this idea of an independent vehicle that would run both in local and national elections, but would also do things for the community.

When it came to questions, we were asked why the hostel had been burned down, about Israel, about Ukraine, about Jeremy's "peaceism". It was an extraordinary conversation. These people are all involved in that community initiative because Sean has set it up and run it in a manner where those people feel welcome, where they can express and debate their views.

I sat for hours afterwards with a group of guys with very different views to my own. By the end of it, they were, in a far more extreme way than me, seeing corruption in the global arms trade as the root of the corruption of our political system, whereas they'd come to the meeting talking about immigrants. If we put in the organising work on the ground in these sorts of communities, we would be able to persuade people that immigrants – who are not just people who arrive on boats – are people like you and me. It's a huge political challenge, obviously, but over the medium term, it's achievable. And if we don't do that, the society is in big trouble because the direction in which it's heading is frightening.

**JS: You said that people need to be persuaded. Is there a tension between wanting to get people involved and represent them but also having a view that you already think is correct and want to fight for?**

**AF:** You've got to have certain basic principles. A lot of people involved in the Camden initiative have very different views to mine on lots of things. Some of them used to vote Tory. One of them still regards himself as a Thatcherite. Why are they getting involved? Because during the campaign they started to hear a discourse they'd never come across before in British politics; some didn't even know who their MP was. Some of them said, "I've never seen my MP, I've never seen my councillor. I don't understand why you're at my door." I'd say well, don't you think that if someone is seeking your vote they should be engaging with you; they should be representing you rather than making up what they think is best for you. That's why a lot of these people have got involved. Yes, it would be lovely if we all thought the same way. Our meetings would be a lot shorter. But we wouldn't achieve anything. We'd just be the normal small group of lefties.

A lot of people named Gaza because Gaza is making them reconsider how they see our own government, which is patently breaking our own laws to support this other state and kill tens of thousands of people. That's the issue the Thatcherite raised with me. He just finds this unconscionable. There's a guy of Northern Irish background – whose dad was an Orangeman – who is fully on side with us on Gaza. For others, it's because of

housing in Camden. They don't give a shit about my politics. They just want their housing sorted out and none of their councillors or MPs have done anything for them in decades. The other thing is the water and energy companies, where people feel fleeced. These things are the start of a conversation.

**JS: You had a very successful run in Holborn and St Pancras against Kier Starmer. Do you plan to stand there again?**

**AF:** If Starmer stands again, and the community want me to, I'll absolutely stand against him. I hope he does stand again because I think he could be, and should be, defeated. He is so emblematic of current politics, that defeating that individual takes on symbolic as well as political importance.

**JS: Do you think there's a need for a new left party on a national level rather than just a localised community party?**

**AF:** I absolutely believe that there's a need for a new movement/party that both organises in communities and contests elections locally, regionally and nationally. The time is right. Those of us in the so-called independence movement have had conversations. We have heard what people are saying. There is a need for a new movement, as broad and inclusive as possible, which needs to do two things. It needs to empower and energise communities, and to contest for state power – not for the aggrandisement of individuals who want to be in parliament or the council, but to get people who will be accountable to and represent their communities into those organs of state power, in order to fundamentally restructure and transform those organs of state. This is what Jeremy Corbyn and Sarah Sultana have announced they will be creating through a democratic conference of local organisers, organisations and movements.

**JS: Why not the Greens?**

**AF:** I was asked to stand as a Green candidate. The reason I didn't is because I have policy differences with them specifically their position on NATO and on HS2. But also, the Green Party has its own structures and functioning, its own long-time membership base. Why invest energy in trying to infiltrate and transform something that already exists when you could create something new from the outset as to what you want it to be – something new, rooted in community. In my experience the Greens in Camden don't have a community base. A new progressive movement/party would absolutely have to form co-operation arrangements, even an electoral alliance, with the Greens, if they were willing to. I think that's possible to do both at a local and a national level. And progressive people will then have a choice.

A far more productive use of energy is growing something new, building a new identity, creating hope and a new way forward. At a time like this, when the world and Britain feel like a pretty dark place, it's really important to engender and maintain a sense of hope. That's what we had to do in South Africa. When I left in 1986, I thought the prospect of a transition away from apartheid was very small in the short to medium term. That's what most people felt. Four years later, there was fundamental change. Our systems are in serious crisis, both global and national. People shouldn't lose hope. If we do manage to create a new movement/party with energy, that is welcoming to as broad a group of people as possible, we could really change the dynamics of politics in this country and the world.

# Believe refugees

The dramatisation of a 1930s novel, *The Passenger*, by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz, prefigures today's inhuman treatment of migrants, says immigration lawyer **SONIA ROUTLEDGE**

**9.11.1938 An office in Leipzig** A gente business, shuttered at the end of the working day. But, like many of his fellow party adherents, the owner still has "business" to attend to. As if the "stab in the back" hadn't been enough, now one of "them" has walked into the German Embassy in Paris and shot dead one of us. Unbelievable, or perhaps not, considering what he knows of "their" character. In the coming hours, fire will illuminate the night sky, glass will shatter, boots will kick into bones and, so far as the owner is concerned, "they" can then decide whether to stay somewhere they're not wanted or pack up and go.

**18.11.1938 An office in Lincoln** A short meeting, after all the months of agonising; short and to the point. In a few days F\_\_\_\_\_ will take the night ferry to France, then make his way by train back through an increasingly fractious Europe, to his home on the outskirts of Prague. His wife needs no persuading that the time has come to leave their infant country. Practicalities will need to be taken care of, whatever that means in these times. God knows what will become of the Czech arm of the business. But the decision has been made. All that remains is for F\_\_\_\_\_ to hope that U\_\_\_\_\_s letter will be enough to get them both across the British border.

**26.11.2024 An office in Croydon** Not the unmissable brutalist Home Office edifice outside which asylum seekers queue, while others go about their safe, ordinary lives around them – but her own "working from home office". A few final paragraphs in today's decision letter to complete, and she can call it a day. She reopens the template paragraphs folder and tries to pull her thoughts into focus: another illegal entrant, washed up at the border with no entry visa and an improbable tale to tell.

*It is considered that if you had a genuine fear of persecution in... (where was it again?) ... taken together with the numerous inconsistencies in your account, your failure to apply for asylum in France, a safe country, casts further doubt on the credibility of your claim to be in fear of persecution. Your application for asylum is refused. You have the right to appeal against this decision. If you have not yet taken legal advice you are strongly advised to do so now.*

**15.02.2025 Finborough Theatre, Earls Court, London** Otto Silbermann is pleading for his life with two Belgian border guards. He is no longer the successful, established, law-abiding man that only a few days ago he thought he was. He has lost control of his own destiny. His pleading, "*Je suis réfugié, je suis Juif*," falls on deaf ears. He doesn't have a visa, and "We can't let everyone in." His final resort, to bribery, doesn't work either: "You've committed a

crime; you crossed the border illegally." The only way across is through "official channels". Otto Silbermann is pushed back into Germany. Silbermann is the imagined protagonist of *The Passenger* (*Der Reisende*) by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz – a story that survived against the odds and was finally published in 2018. The first draft of the novel was written in England, where Boschwitz arrived in 1939 after having fled Germany in 1935.

Nadya Menuhin's flawless, critically acclaimed stage adaptation opened at the Finborough theatre in February 2025 and quickly sold out. Robert Neumark Jones's perfect depiction of Silbermann's plight as he tries to flee Germany in the days after Kristallnacht, cries out with contemporary relevance, as do the reactions to his plight of colleagues, friends, acquaintances, strangers (including those border guards) and even family members.

Silbermann's decision to leave Germany is evidently traumatic. On the various occasions when he denies to others that he is leaving the country, he is, perhaps, still in denial himself. His decision is not the result of calm calculation, the weighing of pros and cons, but of the incremental and terrifying recognition that he has no choice. Silbermann's pain should tear through the delusions of those who choose to believe that asylum seekers are mere chancers, seeking economic betterment on a whim.

By the time Silbermann tries to flee Germany, it is dangerously close to being too late. But as the playwright emphasised to me, it is important not to impute to characters knowledge they would not have had. Kristallnacht occurred more than three years before the Final Solution was drawn up at the Wannsee Conference, despite years of Nazi antisemitic legislation.

So why did Silbermann not receive the benefit of the doubt at the border? The guards' inability to see past his illegal entry or to regard it as positive evidence of his plight, echoes in contemporary discourse about "illegal migrants". Illegal entry – for Silbermann an absolute last resort – has come to be seen as first and foremost an indicator of bad character. The idea that someone who has made an illegal border crossing should be neither trusted nor given the benefit of the doubt has become the lens through which asylum seekers' experiences are regarded, disparaged and disbelieved.

The political response to the "hostile environment" of public discourse around illegal migration has been shameful. To cite just one recent



*The Passenger*, adapted by Nadya Menuhin and directed by Tim Supple, was performed at the Finborough Theatre in London in February and March this year.

Discussions are underway for a second run.

Andrew Feinstein is the author of three books: *Monstrous Anger of the Guns: How the Global Arms Trade is Ruining the World and What We Can Do About It*, by Rhona Michie, Andrew Feinstein and Paul Rogers (Pluto, 2024). *The Shadow World: Inside The Global Arms Trade*, by Andrew Feinstein (Penguin, 2012). *After the Party: Corruption, the ANC and South Africa's Uncertain Future* by Andrew Feinstein (Verso, 2010).

example, it was previously the case that if an asylum seeker established their claim to refugee status, they would be eligible to apply for British citizenship after five or six years. But so keen are politicians to lean into the stigmatisation of illegal entry that, earlier this year, a policy was announced to provide for the refusal of citizenship applications from those who originally entered the UK illegally.

For those I represent, just as for Silbermann, the pain of the decision to leave and the trauma of a dangerous journey is compounded by the experience of not being believed when you try to explain yourself. By the sense of your fellow

humans turning their backs on you – you become the “other”, the unwanted object of suspicion. And the pain is compounded further still by years in limbo – a protracted reflection of Silbermann’s days in limbo on German trains – with bureaucracy indifferent to your humanity.

Humans are still persecuted. The urgent imperative of belief should replace the culture of disbelief that permeates asylum decision-making, irrespective of how someone has crossed the border. *The Passenger* should be compulsory reading for every Home Secretary, in particular those who like to think they would have let Otto Silbermann in.

## The emerging literature of Palestinian and Jewish devastation

### BEING JEWISH AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF GAZA

Peter Beinart  
Atlantic Books, £10.99

### GENOCIDE BAD: NOTES ON PALESTINE, JEWISH HISTORY, AND COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

Sim Kern  
Interlink Publishing Group, £16.99

Israel’s war on Gaza has been going for so long that there’s been time for a substantial literature of “devastation” to have emerged, even before the killing has ended. This is not surprising. From the morning of the Hamas-led attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets on 7th October 2023 and the taking of 250 hostages into captivity in Gaza, it was clear that we were witnessing the start of a substantial and grim new chapter in the Palestine/Israel story. Previous “Gaza Wars” now look like minor skirmishes in comparison to the level of suffering that has unfolded since 7/10.

Two books published in recent months have stood out for me: Peter Beinart’s *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza*; and Sim Kern’s *Genocide Bad*. Taken together, they are examples of contrasting but complementary registers of Jewish protest – both equally essential to the broader discourse around the collapse of liberal values, and more specifically, what’s gone wrong for Palestinians and for Jews as a result of their collective encounter over the last 100 years.

Beinart’s starting point is that of a male, heterosexual, mainstream orthodox Jew with a well-established reputation as a journalist and political commentator. In other words, he has a great deal of social capital at his disposal. Over the last 15 years, Beinart has been burning through that capital as he’s made his emotional and intellectual journey from liberal Zionism to Palestinian solidarity. Where once his liberalism led him to support two states, now his same liberal principles have taken him to advocate for a single democratic state, where all citizens, from the river to the sea, have

equal rights. In the process, he has become something of a thought leader for a younger generation of Jewish dissent on both sides of the Atlantic, who are choosing to centre Jewish identity in their Israel critiques.

*Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza* is Beinart’s reflection on the damage being done to Jews and Judaism by Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people, both before, and undoubtedly since, 7th October. Beinart does not condone Palestinian violence, but he does seek to understand it and give it context. He also reminds his readers (best thought of as middle-class American Jewish liberals like himself) of the long history of Israeli violence towards Palestinians. “Israel doesn’t have a Hamas problem,” writes Beinart, “it has a Palestinian problem. Its problem is that Israeli security and Palestinian security are interconnected. Which means it’s

foolish to think that Israel grows safer when it reduces Gaza to rubble.”

Beinart adopts a rational, logical tone throughout, drawing on his family’s background in Apartheid South Africa, US Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights and Vietnam war protests, Talmudic commentary, and the wisdom of the ancient Hebrew prophets to make his criticisms of mainstream Jewish outlooks on Israel. His aim is to wake his readers from their denial of what has taken place, and still is taking place, and (re)connect them to his own vision of what politically liberal Jewish life should look like.

Critics of the book have castigated Beinart for centring Jewish concerns and using the word “destruction” rather than “genocide” in the book’s title. Personally, I’d say, give the man a break! He knows his target audience and the approach best suited to changing their

minds. When I finished the book, my immediate desire was to buy 50 copies and hand them out for free at my own synagogue in Leeds. Like Beinart, I hoped that closed minds could be opened with the right line of argument and a skilful appeal to Jewish values and traditions. But instead, I resigned from my shul in the spring, exhausted by months of Jewish institutional timidity in the face of a physical and moral catastrophe. I have no idea if Beinart has managed to sustain his own synagogue membership.

Sim Kern is equally adept, compelling and rational as Beinart but with a more passionate and uncompromising tone and a broader audience in mind. Kern writes as a trans, non-binary, patrilineal Jew who had a modest following online as a science fiction author and book influencer. They have none of the social capital afforded to Beinart, yet Kern, through short social media videos on TikTok and Instagram quickly built a huge global following for their commentary and analysis on Gaza after 7th October. But don’t worry, *Genocide Bad* is far more than a rehash of hastily made online content. There’s a great deal of deep thought in this book.

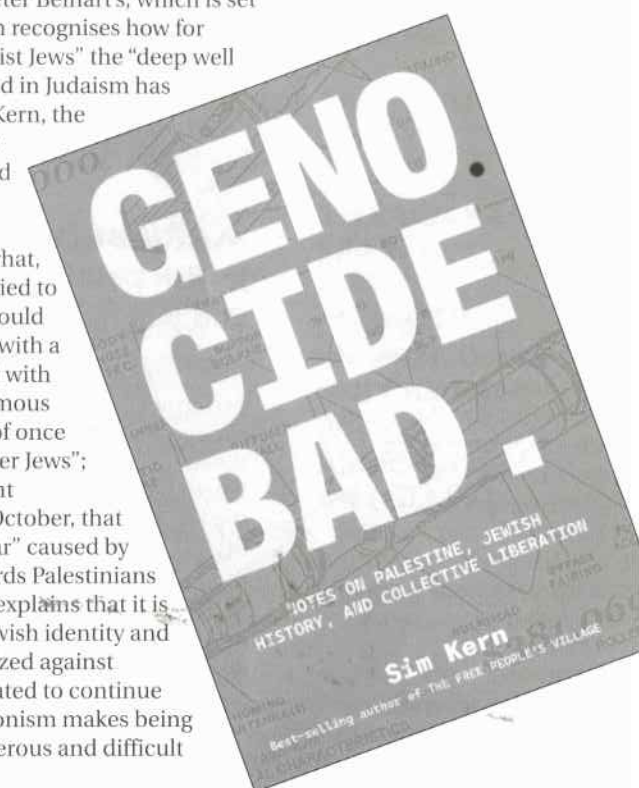
Unlike Beinart, Kern is not talking directly to a Jewish audience and their frame of reference is not liberalism but anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and the political outlook they have developed from their Jewish, trans/non-binary identity. Rather than the prophets of ancient Israel, Kern cites Cedric Robinson’s *Black Marxism* as a core text informing their understanding. As for Palestinian violence (including that committed by Hamas) Kern offers a nuanced, complex and, they admit, “messy” response to Hamas and its leadership. I found it a challenging but valuable take on what is happening.

*Genocide Bad* is an exhilarating read as Kern rips apart the Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda) playbook. It’s

also a deeply personal account of a complex Jewish identity, miles away from Peter Beinart’s, which is set out late on in the book. Kern recognises how for some “principled, anti-Zionist Jews” the “deep well of meaning” to be discovered in Judaism has been foundational. But for Kern, the violence to be found in core Jewish texts is too much, and they have no desire to “grapple with its hidden meanings”. If not religion, what, asks Kern, is keeping them tied to Jewishness? After all, why would they want to be associating with a people that seem “hell-bent with making themselves synonymous with genocide”? Kern talks of once feeling “at home among other Jews”; there was a “vibe” an “instant connection”. But since 7th October, that feeling had “curdled into fear” caused by the genocidal attitude towards Palestinians they were witnessing. Kern explains that it is now “because of the way Jewish identity and history and grief is weaponized against Palestinians that I am obligated to continue being Jewish, even when Zionism makes being Jewish infinitely more dangerous and difficult and humiliating.”

Just as Beinart’s appeal to liberal Jewish values spoke to me, so too did Kern’s more radical perspectives. Both are profound reflections on different manifestations of devastation – the existential devastation taking place for Palestinians and the ethical devastation for Jews. Both express valid and vital Jewish perspectives with a commitment and urgency that’s been sorely missing from mainstream Jewish discourse.

Robert Cohen



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](mailto: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](http://www.jewishsocialist.org.uk)

THE JEWISH WORKERS’  
**BUND**  
בונד  
PAST, PRESENT AND  
FUTURE

# A VERY JEWISH CAPER

**MARK BROWN** reviews *Revenge: After the Levoyah*, the barnstorming Jewish political comedy that was the toast of the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe, and will have its second London run later this year

Nick Cassenbaum, playwright, theatre-maker, performer and self-defined "participatory artist" extraordinaire, is a remarkable force in British theatre. Acclaimed for pioneering professional Jewish pantomime with *Little Red Riding Hood* and the *Big Bad Pig* at the JW3 venue in North London in 2023, he has made a career of successfully pursuing his stated aims of making theatre that is simultaneously accessible to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike, humorously entertaining and socially engaged.



His current play *Revenge: After the Levoyah* – which garnered rave reviews and a coveted Fringe First award from *The Scotsman* during its run at the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe – is a brilliant and distinctive example of his work. Set in Essex in 1919 during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, it is an extremely funny, superbly written and astonishingly well-performed stage comedy in which just two actors play a cast of dozens of characters.

Imagine a British heist caper involving Jewish gangsters, a rabbi, a neo-Nazi electrician, a kidnapping, road chases, helicopters, the secret services of three different countries, and a good, old-fashioned Mexican stand-off, and you'll begin to get just a taste of Cassenbaum's fantastic script.

Young adult twins, Lauren and Dan, bump into "ex-gangster", Malcolm Spivak, at their grandfather's funeral. Spurred on by the almost daily headlines about antisemitism in the Labour Party, Malcolm wants the twins to sign up for his plan to kidnap Corbyn.

What ensues is a fast-paced, fabulously sustained socio-political farce.

At the Edinburgh Fringe, actors Gemma Barnett

and Dylan Corbett-Bader played the piece in the unforgiving space of the former anatomy lecture theatre at the Summerhall venue (in its previous life, the arts centre was the Zoology School of Edinburgh University). Armed with only the few domestic props that emanate from the minimal kitchen set where their story begins, they play Cassenbaum's panoply of family members, kidnap-conspirators and others (from the aforementioned fascist tradesman to an array of secret service agents), with (sometimes bleakly) hilarious, jaw-dropping dexterity.

The diverse characterisations by both actors are genuinely stunning, both in terms of physical representation and voice/accent. There is immense humour and real empathy in Barnett's excellent playing of an old Jewish Holocaust survivor and Resistance fighter, who went on to do a bit of this and that in the world of organised crime.

Corbett-Bader's characterisation of Malcolm, a chunky gold neck chain displayed above his vest, is equally brilliant. His bonhomie and rage against antisemitism are as much part of his nature as his willingness to resort to casual violence.

Lauren and Dan aren't keen on the kidnap plan, but (no spoilers) let's just say that events involving the Jew-hating, Nazi electrician place them in Malcolm's debt. As events gather apace, there is a constant, socio-political subtext running under the play.

Most people within the twins' community of Jewish family and friends seem to think that Corbyn and the Labour leadership are antisemites, but no one is quite articulating why. Lauren visits her Nan, only to discover that – inundated with media stories of Judeophobic Labourites – the elderly lady is scared to leave her home for fear of racist attack.

The play's conclusion is cleverly imagined and very funny (who'd have thought that just two actors could conjure up a huge international incident in an imaginary Essex warehouse?). It's also gloriously pithy in its observation of the whole campaign to label Corbyn (along with everyone else in the pro-Palestine movement) as antisemitic.

Cassenbaum's script is successful in being, at the same time, marvellously Jewish in its humour and its cultural references, welcoming to non-Jewish audience members (such as myself), and subtly and meaningfully political.

A richly deserved hit in Edinburgh, the production enjoyed a successful run at The Yard venue in London early in 2025, and there's another chance to see it in London in December and January. Drive a black cab through a wall or climb a rope ladder into an ascending helicopter for a ticket.

*Revenge: After the Levoyah*, written by Nick Cassenbaum and directed by Emma Jude Harris will run at the Soho Theatre, Dean Street, London from 8th December 2025 to 24th January 2026. Tickets from: <https://sohotheatre.com>

Mark Brown is a theatre critic and socialist activist based in Scotland. He is the author of the book *Modernism and Scottish Theatre Since 1969: A Revolution on Stage* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Many of his writings can be accessed at: [scottishstage.wordpress.com](https://scottishstage.wordpress.com)

# KEEPING THEIR MEMORY ALIVE

Two very different books here, but with a lot in common. They are both huge and exhaustive. Each of them is a serious act of memorialisation, with masses of detail which the authors saw as their personal duty to record and preserve.

Miriam David is a member of the Jewish Socialists' Group, and a thoroughly good thing. This 400-page book is mostly the story of her parents. Her father, Carl David (1908-1980), was in his early life a mechanical engineer in Frankfurt am Main. His father had fought in the German army in the First World War and won an Iron Cross. In 1936, Carl saw that he had no future as a Jew in Nazi Germany and moved to England. He found work for a machine tools company in Manchester and in 1938 met, and later married, Esther Lea (1909-1995), Miriam's mother.

Miriam grew up knowing that Carl had been interned as an "enemy alien" when the war broke out, but her parents rarely spoke to her about that. After her mother died, she was searching through family memorabilia when she found an old safe. When the safe was forced open, it turned out, to Miriam's amazement, to contain five German passports from the 1930s, four of them of family members with Nazi insignia, and one of Carl that predated the Nazi period. This led Miriam and her daughter, Charlotte, on a voyage of research into the history of their extended family in various parts of the world.

The letters that Carl and his family exchanged while he was interned in the Isle of Man illustrate in detail the petty British vindictiveness towards refugees – nothing new there! The documents also show the extraordinary efforts that Esther went to, as she fought to get her husband released. Some of the snippets are heartbreaking. Miriam and Charlotte worked hard to unearth the information, with only old and partial documents and photos to help them.

Anyone who has tried to reconstruct their family history will recognise the shape of this story. As for the Nazi passports, you'll have to read the book to find out how important they were.

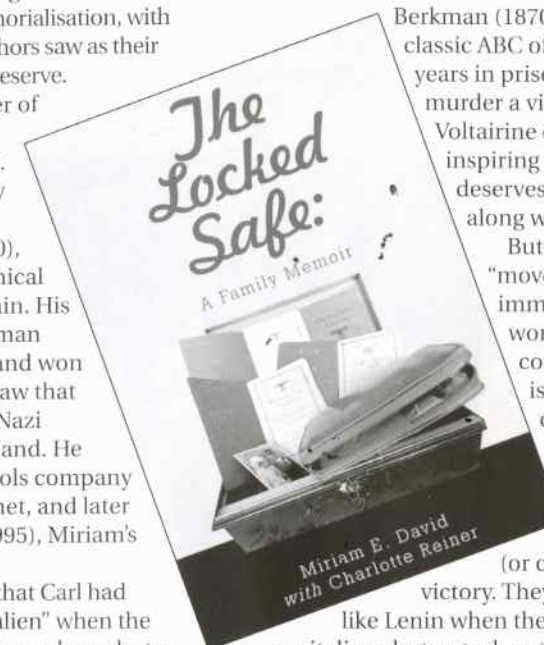
Moving now to a 600-page history of Jewish anarchists in America, originally published in Yiddish in 1945, the obvious but elusive question is how much it was a "movement". I have always been sympathetic to anarchism, and I was very familiar with some of the central characters: Emma

Goldman (1869-1940), a fiery and fearless agitator for freedom; her lover and comrade, Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), author of the classic *ABC of Anarchism*, who spent years in prison for attempting to murder a vicious steel magnate; and Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912), an inspiring feminist anarchist who deserves to be better known ... along with many others.

But were they part of a "movement"? Apart from their immense courage and tireless work, what did they have in common? The short answer is that they were committed to socialism and freedom, and were against the threat of authoritarian leftists who wanted to lead (or cajole) the masses to victory. They were with communists like Lenin when they fought against capitalism, but not when they worked for "the dictatorship of the proletariat". They admired Bakunin and Kropotkin rather than Karl Marx. Bakunin had warned of the terrible dangers of a red bureaucracy, and when Goldman and Berkman were deported to Russia for opposing US involvement in the First World War, the two of them quickly saw that the Bolsheviks were heading down the wrong path. Emma Goldman lived to see the Spanish Civil War and how the Spanish Communists betrayed (and often murdered) many of the working class.

Most of the history in the book revolves round the newspaper, *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (Free Voice of Workers), which was launched in 1890 and survived until 1977. Joseph Cohen, the author of this book, was the editor of the paper for many years. When the teenage Noam Chomsky, later to become probably the best known Jewish American anarchist, visited New York in the 1940s, he used to hang around the newspaper's office in the Lower East Side and talk with the people there. By that time, sadly, many anarchists had moved on, died or joined the American middle class.

The splits, personal problems and tactical disagreements which plague much of the left these days, are amply illustrated in this book. So are the courage and determination that we sorely need now. The struggle continues.



**THE LOCKED SAFE: A FAMILY MEMOIR**

Miriam E David and Charlotte Reiner

Authorhouse UK (£23.99)

**THE JEWISH ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN AMERICA: A HISTORICAL REVIEW AND PERSONAL REMINISCENCES**

Joseph Cohen, edited by Kenyon Zimmer, translated by Esther Dolgoff  
AK Press. (£21.98)