



# UJPO News



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The United Jewish People's Order is a national, nonpartisan, socialist-oriented, secular organization, serving Canada's progressive Jews in individual organizations since 1926 and collectively as the UJPO since 1945.

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Banner graphic by Avrom Yanovsky, 1911-1979

## Joe Hill, Labour's Activist "Troubadour of Discontent"

By David Abramowitz

Born Joel Hägglund on October 7, 1879 in Gävle, Sweden, the most prolific songwriter, and famous union organizer in the history of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was executed by firing squad on Nov. 19, 1915 with three bullets to the heart in the State of Utah. His murder conviction was based solely on circumstantial evidence.

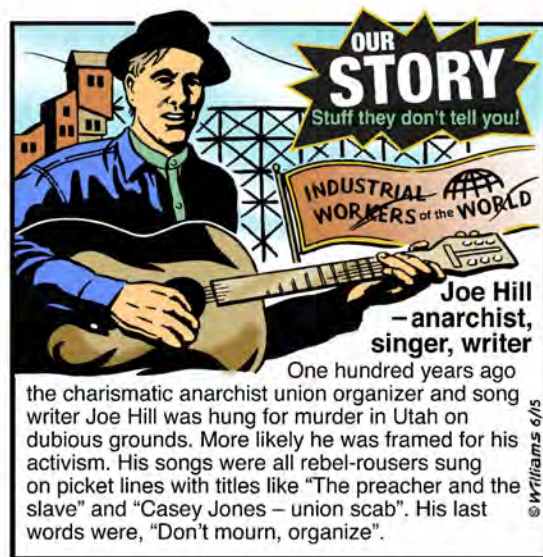
He and brother Paul migrated to the U.S. in 1902, after the death of their parents who had instilled music into the family; their father had built an organ and often led the family in song. Joel learned to play the piano and eventually the violin, guitar, and accordion, as his love for music developed.

He worked at various jobs in New York and later moved to Chicago to work in a machine shop. Not long afterwards, he was fired and blacklisted for attempting to organize the workers. As this made him unemployable as Joel Hägglund, he changed his name to Joe Hill. He traveled widely about the U.S. before joining the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in San Pedro, California in 1910.

Inspired by the objectives of the IWW, Joe dedicated himself to the "awakening of 'illiterates' and 'scum' to an original, personal conception of society and the realization of the dignity and rights of their part in it." To inspire solidarity in the ranks of the IWW he wrote songs like "The Preacher and the Slave" and "Casey Jones – the Union Scab" to recruit new members. He encouraged a "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency," not as a call for violence, but rather for a sprinkle of sand in the workings of machinery, and, more specifically, the efforts of anti-union employers.

Going from California to Chicago in 1914, Hill stopped for work in the Utah mines where he found three friends whom he first met while working in San Pedro: Otto Applequist and the Eselius Brothers. Edward and John Eselius allowed Joe to live as their house guest. Otto Applequist was one of Joe's closest friends and may have been involved in the alleged murder of John and Arling Morrison. Joe Hill was eventually convicted of murdering the Morrisons,\* and took his last breath in Utah before the firing squad. His last exhortation on the eve of his execution – "Don't waste time mourning, organize!"

There was a brief service in Salt Lake City, after which Hill's body was sent to his original destination, Chicago, where thousands of mourners heard Hill's "Rebel Girl" sung for the first time, listened to hours of speeches and then walked behind his casket to Graceland Cemetery, where the body was cremated and the ashes mailed to IWW locals in every state but Utah, as well as to supporters in every inhabited continent on the globe. One of Hill's Wobbly-songwriter colleagues, Ralph Chaplin (who wrote the words to "Solidarity Forever," among others), said that the envelopes were opened on May 1, 1916, and their contents scattered to the winds, in accordance with Hill's last wishes, expressed in a poem written on the eve of his death: (*continued on page 2*)



One hundred years ago the charismatic anarchist union organizer and song writer Joe Hill was hung for murder in Utah on dubious grounds. More likely he was framed for his activism. His songs were all rebel-rousers sung on picket lines with titles like "The preacher and the slave" and "Casey Jones – union scab". His last words were, "Don't mourn, organize".

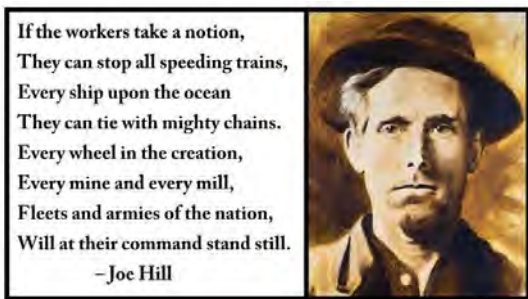
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Continued from page 1

My Will is easy to decide  
For there is nothing to divide.  
My kin don't need to fuss and moan.  
"Moss does not cling to rolling stone."  
My body?—Oh!—If I could choose  
I would to ashes it reduce  
And let the merry breezes blow  
My dust to where some flowers grow.  
Perhaps some fading flower then  
Would come to life and bloom again.  
This is my Last and Final Will—  
Good Luck to All of you,

Joe Hill

\*The facts of the case are circumstantial and somewhat involved and can be found on the Internet at <http://joehill.org/thecase.htm>. ♦



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## NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

### National Report – UJPO's 2015 highlights

By David Abramowitz, UJPO-Canada President (reprinted from *L'Khaim*, Jan.-Feb. 2016 issue)

What a year! We – along with millions of other Canadians – unseated the largely “unpopular” Conservative government and replaced it with the Liberals, who promised real change. Certainly they made promises which may not be possible to fulfill but that's the old normal. Of the first of UJPO's four priorities this year – reinstating door-to-door mail delivery – those who are already off door-to-door delivery may not get it back; we'll see how it develops. As for all our sections, recruiting new, younger members and activists will be a major 2016 undertaking for the National Board. There are no easy answers but where and how we search – ah, “there's the rub.”

Our major national achievement in 2015 was the Winnipeg opening of our Avrom Yanovsky political cartoon exhibit. Not only was it well reviewed by Winnipeg's *Jewish Post and News* (see *UJPO News*, Fall Issue), but also by Vancouver's *Jewish Independent!* It's a remarkable tale of hard work and coordination. We are grateful to Solly Blaser, who not only volunteered to photograph ten delinquent reproductions but to print, frame, box and ship the entire collection (see *UJPO News* Fall 2015). We thank also the originals' copyright holder, Anna Yanovsky; she was consulted at each step, and, with her

exceptional generosity, paid not only for the frames but for the shipping. In 2013 UJPO-Vancouver members displayed the exhibit at the Peretz Centre for Jewish Culture to the largest crowd for a Vancouver-UJPO sponsored event in years. A variety of gallery venues were sought in Winnipeg. Roz Usiskin, UJPO-Winnipeg's immediate past president, had also been involved in the creation of the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, including having been a former president. She approached the Jewish Heritage Society of Western Canada and its present-day leadership not only considered displaying it, but agreed to co-sponsor the exhibit at its central location. We owe a special vote of gratitude to both Solly Blaser and Roz Usiskin.

The fall issue of *UJPO News* published the review from Winnipeg's *Jewish Post and News* of September 30, 2015 by its editor Bernie Bellan. The exhibit was also reviewed from a different perspective in Vancouver's *Jewish Independent* on November 18, 2015 at: <http://www.jewishindependent.ca/commenting-with-cartoons> ♦

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## FROM TORONTO

By Julia Barnett, President

Over the fall months, our Boards and Committees have been actively carrying on with the business of leading the many facets of our organization. Strategic Planning continues to be on track as we form sub-committees to take on such priorities as: finances and fundraising, programming, membership growth and strengthening partnerships.

At our AGM on Nov. 28, guest speaker Malaz Sebai spoke about the history of the humanitarian crisis in war-torn Syria. Sebai serves on the Advisory Board of UOSSM (the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations) which co-ordinates medical relief missions to Syria and other conflict zones.

### In the community programming arena

- “What's on Your iPod?” on Jan. 29 was a gathering complete with pot luck dinner and a music sharing experience, led by Martin van de Ven (Naivelt's Music Camp leader since its inception five years ago).
- The annual Camp Naivelt Mid-Winter Mingle on Feb. 21 is a great way to keep the feeling of summer warming our hearts – a gathering complete with swimming, skating, friendships and sharing food.

In the activism arena, we recently endorsed the following actions:

- The 11th annual Strawberry Ceremony for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women on Feb. 14.
- Prof. Graeme MacQueen speaking on “The Ottawa Shootings that Led to Bill C-51” as part of Reel Activism on Feb. 16.
- The Leap Manifesto – marking 2016 as a leap year and mobilizing towards new economic and energy systems through teach-ins, film screenings, discussions and actions.

## At our Shule

Our Sunday school classes have been actively engaging our students and families. Kinder Kapers, our pre-school program, is popular and enjoyed by children, parents and Bubbies and Zaidies alike. Our Chanukah celebration on Dec. 13 was great fun complete with *draydel* games, Chanukah gelt, yummy latkes and musical entertainment featuring the talented Mitch Smolkin, Shule parent and musical artist. We marked *Tu B'shvat*, the New Year for trees, with a print-making workshop led by Shlomit Segal (Shule parent, UJPO activist, and artist). For Martin Luther King Day, the students re-enacted the story of Rosa Parks, made protest signs and sang "We Shall Overcome". Recently, special guest Kasha Slavner spoke about the Global Sunrise Project which she created and the documentary film she's making about travelling the world in search of stories of inspiration and empowered leadership.

Our Purim Carnival is coming up on March 20 ... lots of carnival games are being co-ordinated by some of our active Shule parents to ensure a great time for the children. For *Shalakh Mones*, Purim's tradition expressing the joy of giving, we'll be collecting household items to help welcome refugees as they settle in to their new homes in Canada.

### And more...

On Feb. 28 we made sandwiches in support of Ve'ahavta's Jewish Response to the Homeless program.

Book talks, film screenings and discussions with authors and film makers are great teaching and learning opportunities:

On March 3, we will be hosting a book talk and discussion, with Penny Rosenwasser, author of *Hope into Practice: Jewish Women Choosing Justice Despite Our Fears*. A book about liberation, anchored in Jewish ethical tradition and community, it links personal healing with activism for justice and offers a fair-minded perspective on Palestine and Israel. It is an activist's call to repair the world!

On March 20, filmmaker Kathy Wazana, will lead a discussion following a screening of her film "They Were Promised the Sea" – the award-winning documentary about the hundreds of thousands of Jews who left Morocco in the 1960s – a film about dispossession and exile, hope and the possibilities of coexistence.

On March 23, we're hosting a house concert featuring outstanding outspoken prolific troubadour David Rovics. This will be David's only Toronto stop on his 2016 world tour. No topic is out of bounds for David ... his repertoire is ever-expanding. This is an opportunity not to be missed.

### Check out our new BLOG!

How can we get more timely articles to you beyond our quarterly schedule?  
Costs prevent more frequent mailings.  
Would you like to share original or other items with our members and followers?  
To act on this query we've started a mediated blog!

We'll send an email each time we add an article with the link to click and get it instantly.  
A few items are there now – just go to <<http://ujpo.org/blog>>.  
Send your submissions to <[sambl39@sympatico.com](mailto:sambl39@sympatico.com)>.

### HAPPY READING!

For our Third Seyder – always a highlight of our activities – the theme is "May Day". We'll be celebrating our long and proud history of involvement in the labour union movement. We will honour all workers, past and present: those unionized and those in need of a union; precarious and migrant workers; the unemployed; refugees. Join us on Sunday May 1 for this important tradition.

The 2016 Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations (CSJO) conference will take place at York University's Glendon Campus in Toronto in May 27-30, 2016. The Morris Winchevsky School and UJPO-Canada, as affiliates of CSJO, are busy planning an engaging and enlightening conference. The theme, "Our Tradition of Solidarity," will be reflected by our keynote speakers and through a diverse range of workshops. A fantastic concert is planned for Saturday evening featuring the extraordinary Josh Dolgin, otherwise known as "So-Called". Full conference details will be circulated shortly and will be posted online. You will definitely want to register! ♦

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## FROM VANCOUVER

*By Carl Rosenberg*

The Peretz Centre continues to be the venue of many activities in which Vancouver members of UJPO (and the secular Jewish community generally) are involved.

### **Fraytik tsu Nakht**

I've always enjoyed the *Fraytik tsu Nakht* (FTN), our secular Shabbes gathering, with its readings, songs, dinner, and presentations, especially its cozy dinner-party atmosphere. In October the FTN featured Rachel Mines, an active Peretz member and Yiddish scholar and translator, recounting a week she spent in Skuodas, Lithuania, where she spoke to local high-school students and other residents at their annual Holocaust Memorial Day event.

November's FTN featured two old friends of my family, Ron and Wendy Bross Stuart. The Peretz community knows Wendy as singer Claire Klein Osipov's long-time accompanist. (My mother knew them through Vancouver's music scene; my twin sister Anne and I were in Wendy's music class.) Wendy is an ethnomusicologist, Ron is a cultural anthropologist, and they are both active explorers of various cultures and their music. Together with cinematographer David Stone, they made a documentary, *Happy Feet*, based in the Langa Township in South Africa. It deals with the Happy Feet Youth Project begun by Siviwe Mbinda, a Langa resident, to inspire the youth of the township through a culturally relevant performing arts program.

The last FTN in December featured a new Peretz tradition, “Jewish Christmas,” with Chinese food and a movie. Last year it was Gene Wilder in *The Frisco Kid*. This year it was the romantic comedy *Crossing Delancey*. This new tradition made me remember the “Jewish Christmases” I’ve observed visiting my father’s family in Philadelphia.

The first FTN of the new year featured a presentation by artist Lillian Broca, a creator of large-scale mosaic glass artworks, who spoke on “Mosaic Art: Biblical Heroines Esther and Judith.” Lillian has written, “My mythological subjects reflect a worldly awareness attuned to significant concerns. I draw attention to political grievances, acts of exclusion, suppression and violence.” She showed examples of her depictions of the legends of Ester and Judith, with commentaries on their meanings.

### **Sholem Aleichem, Peretz Centre, plus...**

At the end of October, the Jewish Seniors Alliance held an event together with the Sholem Aleichem Speakers Series featuring Shanie Levin and Al Stein reading aloud (in English) excerpts from Sholem Aleichem’s wonderful novel *Adventures of Menachem-Mendl*. Sholem Aleichem’s work lends itself well to reading aloud, and Shanie and Al did a superb job, bringing the story alive. We were also treated to a recital of Yiddish songs by Myrna Rabinowitz, who has been well known to Vancouver audiences over many years, both as a solo performer and as part of the group *Tzimmes*.

On Nov. 14 the Peretz Annual Banquet was held, celebrating the 100th *yortsayt* of the centre’s namesake, I.L. Peretz, one of the founders of modern Yiddish literature. Claire Osipov sang a wonderful adaptation of “I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night,” changing it to a tribute to the Yiddish writer. Claire also sang other songs accompanied by Wendy Bross Stuart. Victor Neuman wrote an amusing skit, narrated by David Skulski and performed by Chloe Smith and Gyda Chud. Chloe and her sister Maia also performed songs; Al Stein and Shanie Levin read a poem by Peretz in Yiddish and English, and Stephen (“Dr. Strange”) Kaplan performed his magic tricks.

Sunday Dec. 6, Claire joined Danny Bakan, who teaches children’s classes at the shule, in leading the fourth annual Hanukah sing-along, with a mix of Hanukah songs and pop and folk music, followed by latkes and sufganyot.

In the Sholem Aleichem Speakers Series, one of my favourite recent guest speakers was my old prof, Derek Carr, who speaks knowledgeably and entertainingly on Spanish literature, culture and history. Most recently he spoke on “Cuckolded Saints, Ichtyic Fetishism, Arboreal Lactation, Medieval Chicklets and the Great God of Priali: The Art of Translating Badly,” on the errors to be found in an early 15th-century Spanish translation of a Latin commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Yes, there was a Jewish connection, but it’s hard to convey in this summary – you had to be there.

On Sunday, Jan. 31 was the Sarkin Series Concert “From Classics to Klezmer,” featuring clarinetist Connie Gitlin and Eric

Hominick on piano. Connie and Eric played works from the Classical and Romantic periods, and klezmer and Yiddish tunes. The evening before, the Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir performed at Limmud Vancouver’s Saturday night cabaret. They performed *Yomervokhets*, the Yiddish translation of “Jabberwocky,” set to music by choir conductor David Millard. (Limmud – held in various cities – is an all-day Sunday program of presentations on various Jewish topics.)

Most appropriate for the Peretz shule is a new program, starting in mid-March: a discussion group on the work of I.L. Peretz. It will focus on the book *I.L. Peretz and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*, by Yiddish scholar Ruth Wisse, and will consist of discussion and readings aloud from the book.

There are two other events I attended – and in one case was involved in – which weren’t held under Peretz auspices, but in which readers of *UJPO News* might be interested. I wrote about them in my column in *Outlook*, but for those didn’t see it, I’ll cover them here as well.

On Nov. 8, the Peretz Centre was the locale for a panel discussion hosted by Independent Jewish Voices-Vancouver (in which I and a few other Vancouver Outlookers are involved): “A Conversation About BDS,” which presented various points of view on the campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel. The event aimed to bring reasoned discussion of this controversial topic to Vancouver’s Jewish community. The four participants were Dr. Mira Sucharov of Carleton University (she appeared in *Outlook* a year ago in a debate with Max Blumenthal); South-African born and former anti-apartheid activist Michael Barkusky; physician, author and speaker Dr. Gabor Mate; and Yonatan Shapira, a former Israeli pilot who in 2003 was one of 27 pilots who refused to take part in attacks on Palestinian civilians.

The presentations were followed by lively and civil dialogue with members of the audience. The evening was covered in the Vancouver Jewish community newspaper, *The Jewish Independent* (“Panelists talk about BDS movement,” Zach Sagorin, Nov. 20). I hope we see more such events in Vancouver and elsewhere.

### **Chava Rosenfarb remembered**

On Nov. 22, I attended an event at the Cherie Smith Jewish Book Festival at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver – “Remembering Chava Rosenfarb: Goldie Morgentaler introducing the documentary *Chava Rosenfarb: The Bubble of Being*.” The work of Chava Rosenfarb, a major Canadian Yiddish novelist, and her daughter Goldie Morgentaler, a devoted translator of her mother’s work, are well known to many UJPO members. The documentary, directed by Josh Waletzky and produced by Sheva Zucker, consists of an unscripted interview with Rosenfarb by Anna Fishman Gonshor, in Yiddish with English subtitles, on topics ranging from the prewar Jewish community in Lodz in which Rosenfarb grew up, to the relationship between Yiddish culture and the world beyond it, always influenced by Rosenfarb’s own experience of

the Holocaust which she wrote about so eloquently. The film was a League for Yiddish Production (2015), and the showing was sponsored in part by the Kirman Memorial Foundation for Yiddish Culture. Taken together, the film and Morgentaler's presentation were a moving tribute to a major part of Canadian Jewry's literary and cultural heritage. ♦

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## FROM WINNIPEG

By Henry Shorr

This is an account of UJPO Winnipeg activities since November, and upcoming events.

- The annual *Outlook* Fundraising Brunch was held on Sunday November 1. It featured a speech by Cecil Rosner, Managing Editor of CBC Manitoba, on "Why Should We Care About a Public Broadcaster." The presentation was very informative and the event was well attended.
- As of December, we had 27 paid memberships for the year 2016.
- In conjunction with the Yanovsky exhibit, UJPO Winnipeg and the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada (JHCWC) co-sponsored a panel presentation on Debating Free Speech and Political Satire on January 18. The opening remarks were made by Daniel Stone of the Jewish JHCWC. The panelists were as follows:
  - o Prof. Joanne Boucher, Political Science Department, University of Winnipeg
  - o Dale Cummings, former Editorial Cartoonist, *Winnipeg Free Press*
  - o Corey Shefman, Human Rights Lawyer and former president of the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties.

The moderator was Louise Waldman, a former UJPO Winnipeg executive member. There was a lively discussion. The event was very well attended, including many from the wider Winnipeg Jewish community.



Left to right:  
Daniel Stone,  
Prof. Joanne  
Bocher, Dale  
Cummings,  
Corey Shefman,  
Louise Waldman

- The North End Jewish Folk Choir performed at the Sholem Aleichem Chanukah celebration, at the Simpkin Centre and the Ukrainian Labour Temple.
- The UJPO Book Club met on November 1 and February 7; the next meeting is on January 28. In November we discussed Ta-Nehisi Coates' book "Between the World and Me", concerning the challenges of being an African-American in the US. In early January we read "We're Going to Run this City – Winnipeg's Political Left after the General Strike", by Stefan Epp-Koop.
- The UJPO and the Sholem Aleichem Community are co-sponsoring Sing Stranger: Yiddish Culture in the New World – A Lecture Series by Dr Itay Zutra. The first lecture was in late January and the remaining lectures will be in late February and March. Dr. Zutra teaches Yiddish and Hebrew at the University of Manitoba. He has a number of publications and had a number of fellowships. The topics are as follows
  - o From the Shtetl to New York: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the New World and Yiddish
  - o The Social Dimension: Yiddish Culture in New York and the Left
  - o Strangers and Natives: Yiddish Modernist Culture in New York between universalism and Jewishness
  - o Women in Yiddish poetry in America
- The Warsaw Ghetto Program will be on May 2. It will be titled "Warsaw Ghetto – Second Generation Perspectives".
- UJPO Winnipeg is co-sponsoring, with Independent Jewish Voices, the Heidar Abu Ghosh speaking tour in Winnipeg. He was born and raised in Imwas, a village in the West Bank. In June of 1967, the Israeli army occupied Imwas and the neighbouring villages of Beit Nuba and Yalu, expelled their inhabitants and demolished the three villages. The Canadian branch of the Jewish National Fund, which poses as a non-political environmental group, built a park and recreational area to cover up the remains of these villages.
- The UJPO Winnipeg executive plans to have a retreat in the spring. ♦

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## FROM HAMILTON

By Lyn Center

As mentioned in the fall issue of *UJPO News*, on January 13 our member Paul Weinberg organized a tour for our group of the exhibit at the Rosensheim Museum in Beth Jacob Synagogue. The current display features Henry Balinson, the publisher of Hamilton's first Yiddish newspaper called *The Jewish Voice of Hamilton*. It was an important part of the Jewish community from 1933 to 1943. The exhibit shows some of the pages that still exist, as well as metal pieces of the original press. It could print in three alphabets: Latin, Hebrew and Cyrillic. While the printing press was run in a store on King Street in Hamilton, his family lived over it.

Balinson, originally from the Ukraine, spoke seven languages. A socialist, he founded the Hamilton branch of the Workmen's Circle. When asked if he was orthodox, conservative or reform, Henry responded "labour". His son Morley took over the printing business when Henry gave it up. The Balinson family is still an important part of the Hamilton Jewish community, which numbers around 5000.

We are very grateful to Wendy Schneider, the current editor of *Hamilton Jewish News*, and a wonderful source of information (as well as a community activist). She organized the tour for us, spoke about his life, explained the exhibit, and answered our questions. It was a very memorable event. ♦

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## WHAT'S IN ORDER

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### Mazl tov

To Harry Rosenbaum on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Harry is a very long time member of UJPO Winnipeg.

To Richard Lee and Harriet Rosenberg on the birth of their new grandchild, Alice Roth.

### Heartfelt condolences

To Hyla Mendelow on the passing of her mother, Chickie Mendelow.

To Susan Conn on the passing of her husband, Bernard Conn.  
To the Klapman-Staughton family on the passing of Hilarie Klapman's sister, Lynn Henoch.

### Speedy recovery

To Sylvia Lustgarten and Dan Meaney.

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## YIDDISH

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### A short history of the Yiddish language

By Lyn Center

*Note: I gave this presentation to a gathering of Hamilton UJPO members and friends in October 2015. This article is a synthesis of my notes.*

#### 1. Is Yiddish a language or a dialect?

According to my former Linguistics Professor at U. of T., Henry Gleason, Yiddish is basically a German dialect. Another linguist, Max Weinrich, referred to it as a "fusion language".

#### 2. How much is based on the German language?

One source says that perhaps 80 percent of Yiddish's vocabulary has some variation of a medieval German root. But it also contains Hebrew, Slavic, old French and Italian, Aramaic, Latin, Turkic, French, Greek and more.

#### 3. How and why did Jews switch from Hebrew to Yiddish?

Jews originally spoke Hebrew, then Judean, then Aramaic. Their language was influenced by where they were living. While they did originate in Middle Eastern lands, they were forced to flee again and again.

Beginning with the Babylonian exile in 586 BC, and with the rise of Islam in 945 to 1055 CE, Jews left the Middle East and migrated to several different lands, to form eight different cultural territories: Sepharad (Iberian peninsula), Hoeyz (Italy), Hogor (Hungary), Yavan (Greece), Tugermo (Turkey), Knaan (Slavic and Baltic areas), Tsorfaz (France), and Ashkenaz (Germany).

#### 4. What caused the Jews to move, first into western, then more into eastern Europe?

There were at least thirteen different massacres, expulsions, burnings and inquisitions in many parts of Europe between 1066 and 1569. The three most notorious of these were:

(1) The Crusades (1095-1270). These were military campaigns sanctioned by the Catholic Church with the goal of restoring Christian access to the Holy Land and "avenging the blood of the crucified one by shedding Jewish blood and completely eradicating any trace of those bearing the name 'Jew'... At least 18,000 Jews were killed."

(2) The Rintfleisch massacres (1298-1303). Jews in the town of Röttingen were accused by a Lord Rintfleisch of desecrating a consecrated host; he claimed to have received a mandate from heaven to avenge the sacrilege and exterminate the Jews. Spreading from Franconia to Bavaria and Austria, the persecutors destroyed 146 communities and killed about 5000 Jews.

(3) The Black Death (1348-1350). These persecutions and massacres were a series of violent attacks on Jewish communities blamed for an outbreak of the Black Death plague in Europe, which annihilated nearly half the population of Europe. Jews were taken as scapegoats, in part because isolation in the ghettos meant in some places that Jews were less affected. Of the 510 Jewish communities destroyed, some Jews killed themselves to avoid persecution.

#### 5. Why a Germanic dialect?

There must have been a variety of languages that Jews spoke in that period of time; so why did a Germanic dialect eventually predominate? One writer, Paul Kriwaczek in his book *Yiddish Civilisation*, has this explanation:

"The Jewish dialect of German, the fusion with Hebrew and Slavic that would in time become Yiddish, spread rapidly among the Eastern Jews because the speech of the incoming westerners offered clear advantages. German was the language of international commerce and culture across most of central, northern and eastern Europe. The German-speaking Jews were of a higher class, they were better educated and better connected, they were richer and more powerful, part of an international network with access to royalty and the nobility; and their version of the ancestral religion laid claim to being more authentic than the half-forgotten Byzantine Judaism of the Slavs. To the incoming western missionaries, concerned to forge a single unified Jewish people with a single uniform faith out of the fragmented and disparate communities of Bohemia, Moravia,

Poland and Lithuania, their language would serve as glue to hold the new nation together.”

## 6. Why did they use the Hebrew alphabet to inscribe Yiddish?

According to the book by Paul Kriwaczek, “Yiddish is traditionally written, like other Jewish languages, right to left, in the Aramaic characters used for scripture, Torah and Talmud, and known as Square Hebrew, though the sound value of some of the letters has been changed to adapt them to their new use. The Jews of central Europe had no access to any other form of writing. Though archaeologists assure us that writing began in ancient times as a tool for accountants and tax gatherers, literacy was introduced to barbarian northern Europe by the Church, and both reading as well as writing were accessible only to those with a Christian education. Reading Latin characters ... was thus a religious Christian act. Jews had either to use the alphabet with which they were already familiar from their own sacred texts, or forgo literacy altogether.”

## 7. What other languages do Jews speak?

Currently there are three main groups of Jews: Ashkenaz, Sephardim (Spain, Portugal, northern Africa) who speak Ladino, and Mizrahi (Eastern) who speak a variety of languages (Arabic dialects, Persian, Azerbaijani, English, Tajiki, Marathi (India), Georgian, Judaeo-Georgian, Juhuri (southwest Iran) and various other languages, depending on the region where they live or lived. And of course, Israeli Jews who speak a modernized Hebrew.

## 8. Did Hamilton Jews speak Yiddish?

According to the 1931 census, almost 90 percent of Jews in Hamilton spoke Yiddish.

## 9. Yiddish enters English

Lastly, you have no doubt noticed that many Yiddish words have entered the English language. Can you think of any?

Sources:

*The Vanishing American Jew* by Alan Dershowitz

*An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics* by H. A. Gleason

*The Story of Yiddish* by Neal Karlen

*Words on Fire* by David Katz

*Yiddish Civilisation* by Paul Kriwaczek

*A Short History of the Jewish People* by Raymond P. Scheindlin

*Yiddish: A Nation of Words* by Miriam Weinstein

Wikipedia ♦

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# POETRY & SONG

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## The Preacher and the Slave

By Joe Hill

(Tune: “Sweet Bye and Bye”)

Long-haired preachers come out every night,  
Try to tell you what’s wrong and what’s right;

But when asked how 'bout something to eat  
They will answer with voices so sweet:

You will eat, bye and bye,  
In that glorious land above the sky;  
Work and pray, live on hay,  
You’ll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the starvation army they play,  
And they sing and they clap and they pray.  
Till they get all your coin on the drum,  
Then they’ll tell you when you’re on the bum:

Holy Rollers and jumpers come out,  
And they holler, they jump and they shout.  
“Give your money to Jesus,” they say,  
“He will cure all diseases today.”

If you fight hard for children and wife –  
Try to get something good in this life –  
You’re a sinner and bad man, they tell,  
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Workingmen of all countries, unite,  
Side by side we for freedom will fight:  
When the world and its wealth we have gained  
To the grafters we’ll sing this refrain:

You will eat, bye and bye,  
When you’ve learned how to cook and to fry  
Chop some wood, ’twill do you good,  
And you’ll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

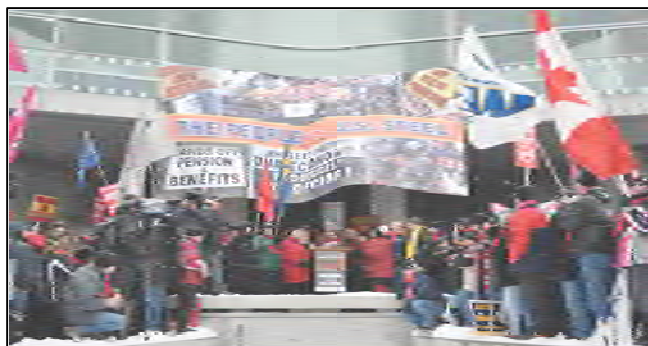
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# CANADA

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## Is this the end or rebirth for Stelco’s remaining steelworkers?

By Paul Weinberg, January 1, 2016, *The Monitor, Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives*



Former Hamilton mayor Bob Bratina speaks at a 10,000-strong rally in support of locked-out US Steel workers in January 2011. Photo credit: Ontario Federation of Labour.

The Labour Day marchers were out in force in Hamilton, Ontario this September, with their banners and other distinct paraphernalia to signify union allegiances. Conspicuously absent was the usual clarion call in the ranks of Local 1005 of the

United Steelworkers to save the city's century-old Stelco factory, known since 2007 as US Steel Canada, now under bankruptcy protection.

"I noticed that the 1005 T-shirts at Labour Day were not so much about the fight, and more about how you could never steal their identity as a steelworker," says Peter Graefe, a political scientist at McMaster University who was at the march. "Well, I saw that as an admission of defeat, but you don't want to say that too loud."

To be fair, this might be a reflection of the weakness of labour's position in general in 2015. "I don't like to use the word 'worried,' because it gives a sense of hopelessness," says 1005 President Gary Howe, whose local represents 600 active workers at US Steel Canada's Hamilton Works and the German-owned Max Aicher North America, as well as over 8,000 pensioners in the area. No matter how you squint, though, the situation for The Hammer's unionized steelworkers is bad.

Back in the early 1980s, the Hamilton-based Canadian company Stelco employed 26,000 workers. Today, as a branch plant of Pittsburgh-based US Steel Corporation, operations are more automated at both the older Hamilton Works plant and a newer, more modern Lake Erie Works in Nanticoke, south of Brantford. In total, the plants employ about 2,200 people.

Things went sour for the steelworkers shortly after the takeover in 2007. Despite making promises to the federal government related to production levels, employment and investment, US Steel was complaining a year later of a glut in global steel supply. It shut down its Canadian operations, locked out workers and shifted production to U.S. steel mills.

The Harper government sued the firm for breach of its Investment Canada Act conditions, but dropped legal action after US Steel made further, still secret promises to the government in 2011. Since then, iron- and steel-making operations at Hamilton Works have ended permanently with the shutting down of the blast furnace, among other tribulations for local workers.

The Canadian subsidiary filed for bankruptcy protection in late 2014 (those hearings continue). Furthermore, in an October 2015 decision, Ontario Superior Court Justice Herman Wilton-Siegel severed all legal ties between the U.S. parent and US Steel Canada. Equally controversial, the judge permitted US Steel Canada to suspend paying health care benefits to 21,000 retired workers and property taxes to Hamilton and Haldimand County.

According to Marvin Ryder, a marketing professor at McMaster's DeGroote School of Business who has been watching it all unfold, the Superior Court decision has turned what was US Steel Canada into a new Canadian operation – a Stelco-2 if you will – with an uncertain future. He is not sure it will be able to survive in a weak market that has seen the price of steel drop from \$650 to \$450 per tonne in the last year.

Ryder argues US Steel Canada, in its present diminished form, "is a sick company," and that it might be better for the bankruptcy to proceed so that a buyer can be found, at least for

the more modern Nanticoke plant. "My fear is that 15 months from now, US Steel Canada is back in the same place and the judge will have no choice but to make the bankruptcy decision then."

Aside from the Steelworkers, the company and (you would hope) the federal government, the Ontario government and Hamilton city council also have a stake in the fate of the steel plants, though, according to Graefe, the main political concern seems to be how to avoid getting stuck replenishing the underfunded US Steel Canada pension plan, reported to be \$838 billion in deficit. (The province agreed in December to cover benefit costs until March 2016.) Like Ottawa, the Wynne government in Toronto is just not interested in developing a strategy to maintain and nurture the steel industry in Canada, he says, even when one solution is staring them in the face.

In the early '90s, Bob Rae's NDP government helped fund and support a USW-led worker buyout of the Algoma steel operations in Sault Ste. Marie (bought by India-based Essar Steel in 2007). Graefe sees no political appetite for pursuing a similar plan in Hamilton and Nanticoke.

"It is a non-starter if the governments aren't willing to play," he explains. "In 2008 to 2010, they might have been more willing to try something in the wake of the financial crisis and the questioning of the neoliberal consensus, although it would have taken a real push to make it happen: occupation, community mobilization, etc. [by the Steelworkers]. More of a push than one might ever realistically imagine. In 2015, that is not longer the case."

David Livingstone, professor emeritus in social justice at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, accepts the merit of a worker buyout and laments that the union is not pushing the option now. "In my mind [this is] a gigantic failure of both imagination and courage," he says.

Livingstone is the co-author of the 2011 book *Manufacturing Meltdown: Reshaping Steel Work*, a culmination of research on the Stelco/US Steel Canada operation since the early 1980s. He says the evidence proves a vital manufacturing sector and domestic steel industry go hand in hand in ensuring a healthy economy. In the book, steel is described as "the most essential material," since you need it to make everything from thumb tacks to transport trucks, tin cans to transmission towers. "Without steel the world we know would not exist."

And though a domestic steel industry is preferable to a branch plant version as exists in Canada, it's important not to romanticize the old Stelco, says Livingstone. The Canadian company's history includes atrocious labour relations and a reluctance to invest in technological innovation, unlike Stelco's Hamilton-based rival, the non-union Dofasco (now ArcelorMittal Dofasco Hamilton).

The federal government-approved purchase included a commitment to produce 4.5 million tonnes of steel a year and maintain 3,100 employees in the plants to be operated by US Steel Canada. But according to Ryder, the U.S. parent company did not foresee its business becoming more difficult in the global



recession the following year. “I think they regret buying into the Canadian operations at all,” he says.

“US Steel bought [Stelco] for one reason and that was to capture a customer base and the order list. And make those people comfortable dealing with US Steel people and then shut this fucking plant,” says Smith.

As proof, he says US Steel is trying to move the finishing production lines out of Hamilton Works – those parts responsible for producing high-value steel components important to the auto industry, among others. “If you take that production out of that plant and transfer that to an American plant, that is pretty well the last bullet in the head,” says Smith.

Meanwhile, just to make things more complicated, Graefe warns the entire Canadian steel industry will be affected if Canada signs and ratifies the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which loosens the rules for auto parts made outside North America and Mexico in a way that can only encourage more offshoring to Mexican and Asian plants. ♦

*Paul Weinberg is a Hamilton, Ontario-based freelance writer. His work appears in NOW Toronto and Rabble.ca. The full article can be found at:*

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/end-or-rebirth-stelco%E2%80%99s-remaining-steelworkers>

*See more at:*

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/end-or-rebirth-stelco%E2%80%99s-remaining-steelworkers#sthash.REKWUR3G.dpuf>

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### Large turnout of grey-haired and under 30s in support of Tair Kaminer refusing to serve in the occupation army

*By Ronnee Jaeger, Jerusalem, Israel, February 11, 2016*



Ronnee Jaeger (far right) participates in demonstration in support of Tair Kaminer. (Photo: Oren Ziv/Activestills.org)

The Kaminer family in Israel is distinguished for its activism on the left. It can boast of three generations of conscientious objectors, or “refusers”. Tair Kaminer is the granddaughter of Reuven Kaminer; (UJPO members who were on any of the three Israel-Palestine tours were welcomed with an orientation by Reuven.) She was called up for army service, to present herself at the induction centre on January 10, 2016.



Conscientious objector Tair Kaminer is greeted by supporters outside the Tel Hashomer induction base on January 10, 2016. (Photo: Oren Ziv/Activestills.org)

She had already let it be known that she was going to refuse, quoted as saying “I care too much for this country and the people, to keep silent on the occupation army,” therefore refusing to serve in the IDF. As expected, she was sentenced to 20 days in prison.

A demonstration was called for January 23rd, outside the army’s women’s prison, known as Prison 400. The large turnout of about 80 demonstrators was very impressive. The drumming and the songs, written by resisters and supporters, were full of energy, clever, and had many demonstrators dancing, me included.... (couldn’t help it!) Being together with so many comrades of so many battles made the trip in the rain, sodden walk over slippery, grassy hillocks, well worth it. Tair Kaminer is a very principled and outspoken person.

Tair is not well, and we are worried about her health. The jail is cold and damp. But she is strong in her principles. As part of the Kaminer family, this is no surprise. Matan Kaminer, Tair’s cousin, was an outspoken draft refuser, and served two years in military prison as a conscientious objector. Dafna Kaminer, Tair’s grandmother, is a founder of Women in Black, and continues as an activist. Reuven Kaminer, was also a draft refuser, and organized the yearly Marxist Study Group; he continues to write for the left even now.

All of this made for a fine crowd of our best.

Gramsci was right – we think in despair but act in hope.

*Ed. Note:* Subsequent to her release, and upon being called up again, Tair again refused, and was sentenced to another 25 days jail time, this time to Military Prison 6, in Atlit, south of Haifa, (site of the notorious British mandate prison). (Tair vowed to continue her objection in protest against the occupation of the Palestinian Territories and settlement construction. “I’m not going to break,” she said. “I hope they understand that - I won’t break.” *The Independent*: 31 January 2016.)

Again about 60 demonstrators showed up, ranging in age from mid 80s to “young”. We had to climb a steep rocky hill overlooking the prison, and it was inspiring to see the oldest participant, age 85, struggling (with help) with a cane up the rocky slope. The drummers did not disappoint, and the chanting included support for imprisoned Palestinians and hunger striker Mohammed al-Qiq. ♦

*Ronnee Jaeger is a UJPO member who lives part of the year in Israel.*

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## On the eve of a new term in military prison

From Reuven Kaminer, January 31, 2016

Tair is scheduled for a new period in prison in a few hours. Here is a statement from her this afternoon.

“Tomorrow I will return to Tel HaShomer induction center and declare once again that I refuse to be recruited to the military and instead want to do alternative civil service. As a result I will likely be imprisoned in military prison for a second time.

I would like to thank you for your letters of support. They gave me strength to continue the struggle while in prison. In the 20 days I spent in prison I have been asked many times: ‘why are you here?’ When I answered, the other prisoners listened and respected me, despite our disagreements... But the moment I said the word ‘peace’, the conversation was over. Not for being a controversial word, but because to them it’s fictional. They were convinced that there isn’t and there will not be a solution. Desperation won.

I would like to dedicate my next prison term to the peace which will come, to the optimism we must not lose and for the end of the occupation of Palestinian territories and a political solution.” ♦

For a sample of the tremendous wave of solidarity here and abroad just go into Tair Kaminer on Facebook. Simply amazing.

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## INTERNATIONAL

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### A dictatorship that loses elections?

By María Páez Victor, *Correo Canadiense*, Dec. 11, 2015

It is my hope that the international right-wing and its minions in the Venezuelan opposition will have the honesty of admitting that the government of Venezuela is not a dictatorship but a democracy, because the opposition has just won an ample majority in the National Assembly. But I think I will be left with that wish ungranted because their favourite weapon is to lie to the media. For example, Hillary Clinton unashamedly announced that President Maduro was planning to commit fraud, and thus she showed her profound ignorance of the Venezuelan electoral process, a process that her fellow party member, former

president of the USA, Jimmy Carter, has deemed the best in the world.

I am proud of the election authorities, of the Armed Forces loyal to the Constitution and of my Venezuelan people who voted in peace and order.

However, it was not a contest between the government and the opposition; it was a contest between Venezuela and the government of the USA which planned the economic war, advised the opposition and gave \$18 million dollars to NGOs that carried out the destabilizing activities that the CIA cannot do openly. If in anything the Venezuelan government failed, it was in failing to rein in those NGOs that bought and intimidated people with their propaganda and dollars.

It has to be faced: the economic war triumphed. When Nixon decided to overthrow Allende he gave an order to make the economy of Chile “scream”. And so it was then and now in Venezuela. Taking advantage of the low oil prices, they promoted massive hoarding and smuggling and soaring prices, without caring for the suffering of the people. The opposition only wants to perpetuate its privileges. It is not a coincidence that the three most notorious opposition leaders (Capriles, López and Machado) come from the most ultra-wealthy families of the country.

But Chavismo is not dead, not by far. It is the most known and coherent political force in many decades. It has changed the political culture of the country. The opposition has no plan for the country further than “to get rid of the Chavistas” and it is formed by disparaging personalities and parties that openly antagonize each other.

Now that they will have governmental responsibilities, they will face this dilemma: if, as if by magic, the lack of goods and high prices disappear, it will be clear evidence that they themselves were the agents of the economic war, and thus they will help restore the popularity of President Maduro. But if they do not manage this economic turnaround, they will have gone back on their electoral promises, and the people will pay them back at the next election.

And there the Chavistas will be, with the people, prepared for victory.

Translation from the original Spanish by the Louis Riel Bolivarian Circle. ♦

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