

Truth behind BBC drama Ridley Road as resistance founder reveals what really happened

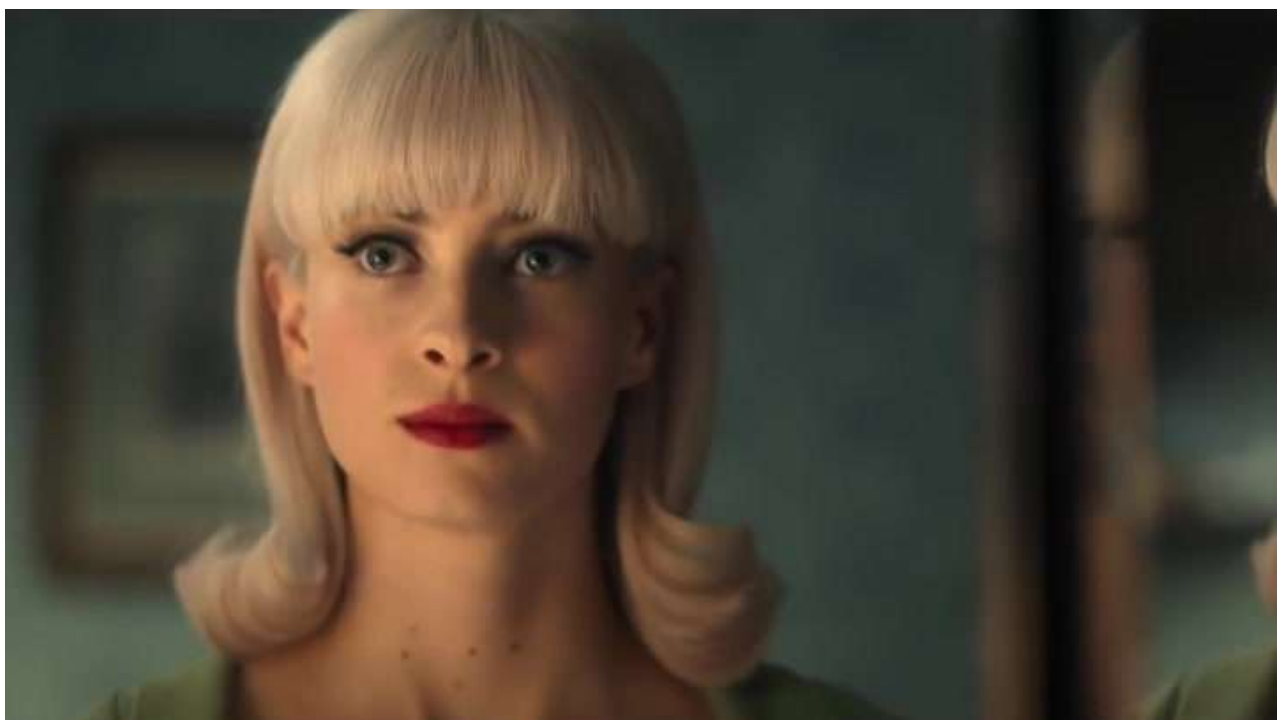
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Exclusive:

One of the few surviving members of the 62 Group, the inspiration of new BBC drama Ridley Road, reveals how the organisation managed to nail the arsonists and repel fascists hellbent on driving Jews out of Britain



Ridley Road: BBC release trailer for new drama series

By

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Dozens of arson attacks left London's Jewish community in fear as Neo Nazism reared its ugly head.

Barely a generation after Hitler was defeated, anti-semitic mantra had led to synagogues being torched and one student being killed.

Fascist leader Oswald Mosley stoked the hatred with a speech to bigoted supporters in the East End in the summer of 1962.

But in Dalston, Hackney, the fascists had met resistance.

The 62 Group, a militant movement set up that year by Jewish men and women, was ready to defend its community. It was led by Soho nightclub manager Harry Bidney and wasn't afraid to fight back.

Their campaign inspired new TV drama Ridley Road.

It sees actress Agnes O'Casey, 25, play Vivien Epstein, a hairdresser who goes undercover to expose the National Socialist Movement.



The 62 Group is the inspiration of a new BBC drama (Image:

BBC/Red Productions/Ben Blackall)

The opening scenes last Sunday saw her blonde character raise a Hitler salute with Colin Jordan, played by Rory Kinnear, 43.

And, one of the few surviving members of the 62 Group hierarchy tells the Sunday Mirror exactly how the organisation managed to nail the arsonists and repel fascists hellbent on driving Jews out of Britain.

Gerry Gable, 85 – an intelligence agent with 62 Group – worked as an adviser on the four-part BBC drama, based on Jo Bloom's 2015 book.

He has issues with the script's creative licence but is pleased the series exposes bigotry.

Gerry, who still edits Searchlight, the magazine he founded to tackle racism and fascism, tells how he was approached by the BBC after previously meeting author Bloom.

He says: "I read the book when it came out and frankly it is so inaccurate. The BBC rang and asked would I like to advise on the serialisation of Ridley Road.



Gerry Gable, 85, an intelligence agent with 62 Group (Image:

Richard Gardner/REX/Shutterstock)

“I got the first script and it was just unreal. It does not give an accurate description of what it was about.”

Gerry explains how Kinnear’s character Jordan was briefly married to Francois Dior – who helped finance the Nazi group. He describes her as “a monster who was inspiring quite young guys and a couple of ex-servicemen to go out and burn down synagogues”.

While Dior would flee the UK, Jordan remained as leader of the NSM.

Gerry reckons there were 38 unsolved arsons in just a couple of years in London.

He and Harry Bidney would help deliver the arsonists to police – and bring in Dior, after she returned to London on a Vatican passport.



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Gerry goes on: "At that time I worked with the police to bring the team of the NSM to the Arson Squad. We also got Dior.

"I met her on two occasions. I have some very rare books on Nazi cultism and one was a very rare copy so I used it to get contact with her.

"I posed as a journalist coming down from Birmingham and a sympathiser and I wanted her to swear an oath that, as a national socialist, she would return the book to me, which she did."

Gerry helped keep Dior under surveillance as police built a case.

She was eventually jailed for two years for conspiracy to commit arson.

Gerry says: "She was taking all these youngsters to bed and persuading them to go out and do terrible things. Jordan himself never got charged with conspiracies to the arsons."



Colin Jordan leader of the British National Socialist Movement at Nazi camp at Dead and Bury Hollow in Gloucestershire (Image:

Daily Mirror)

Nailing the rest of the arsonists came as a result of violent clashes between the two factions.

During protests against a Nazi rally, one of the 62 Group was stabbed in the stomach. Police rounded up a number of NSM supporters, who appeared before local magistrates.

One was named Paul Jukes – just 18 but an electronics expert who had been helping to make timed explosives used to bomb synagogues.

And Jukes would be the key to exposing the NSM arson gang.

Gerry says: “Harry Bidney followed him as he left court and said ‘look son I was just in court and could see how upset you were. Let me buy you a cup of tea’. He took him to a cafe on Dalston Junction – right by Ridley Road – where Jukes broke down in tears and

said 'I'm going to get sent to prison for life because I've made the bomb devices for the arsons'.



Sir Oswald Mosley on the back of a lorry where he made a speech, 31st July 1962 (Image:

Getty Images)

"Harry said 'give us your word you'd meet us in 24 hours time and we will work out something that will help you'. Jukes agreed and we contacted Special Branch and said we have a potential witness from the arsons and we think if he is treated properly you could have a really good Crown witness.

"Jukes turns up as agreed and he sits in the car between us in the back.

"I said, 'Harry told me how upset you are about this and it goes back to your stepdad and life has gone sour for you. We either take you to a police officer who is sympathetic to what we do or the alternatives are Special Branch track you down and they might not be so easy going.

"Or the worst thing is there are people out there that know you have been involved in burning buildings and the death of that young religious student and they won't be bothered about you getting a trial at the Old Bailey... they will come looking for you and string you up from the nearest lamppost'.



Colin Jordan with his wife, Francoise Jordan (Image:

EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS)

"He came with us to Stoke Newington police station and he gave them all the names of those involved in the arsons."

Gerry accepts much of the violence and subterfuge portrayed in *Ridley Road* is accurate. But some, he fears, has strayed from reality – like a real-life rabbi seen heading to a disturbance.

He says: "I saw this guy's name being put in the script in scenes where he is in a car with 62 Group heavies going to get stuck into enemies.

"He never done anything like that. He never went on any demonstrations or got involved in any violence."

But while pointing out differences of opinion over the script, he is pleased the 62 Group's efforts are recognised.

And of modern day fascists, he adds: "It's like stepping back in time.

"You think as the years go by people would have better sense."

Ridley Road is on BBC1 at 9pm on Sunday

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/truth-behind-bbc-drama-ridley-25176412>