



AJDS Newsletter

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The Australian Jewish Democratic Society

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Antisemitism report and the need for scrutiny

The latest report on antisemitism presented to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry has been treated as routine. It was covered in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *J-wire* and the *Australian Jewish News*. Neither they nor the Jewish Telegraphic Agency or others who picked the story seem to have done more than read the media release.

That is a pity, because you learn more from reading the report itself. One needs to start by praising its honesty. Its author, Jeremy Jones, carried out his research from the offices of his employer, the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC). As a political opponent of AIJAC, I was pleasantly surprised at Jones's frankness not only this year, but in previous years as well. He acknowledges that the method of self-selection is far from ideal. The research is based on the number of incidents reported either to AIJAC or to any other community organisation which has passed it on. This is quite unscientific. Writing in the *Australia/Israel Review (A/IR)* Jeremy Jones wrote about the FBI collecting hate crime statistics and noted that "in Australia, we do not have a comparable, centrally organised, government reporting system of either hate crimes or the broader actions which our Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission define as racial violence."

Problem with figures

As the report outlines, there is a conscious effort on the part of the compiler to try to counteract this inbuilt bias with very rigorous conditions being imposed on incidents being included.

However, there is a problem with the actual figures. The year includes 962 incidents, a 48 per cent increase over last year. It does seem alarming. But the media release only says that it is the highest tally ever recorded and close to three times the average of the previous 19 years.

Having observed Jones and the ECAJ using this methodology of comparison to the average over several years now it seems as if they treat antisemitism as if it were the weather: only very long-term averages seem to be important for them. The trouble is that the association of two of the biggest blips on the curve with the two most recent of Israel's wars disappears to a large degree when you handle the statistics this way.

Peculiar methodology

Hiding a plausible cause and effect relationship is one thing. But if you really want to know what's wrong with the method, imagine a steady improvement (ie decline in incidents) over the next decade, say a 5 per cent reduction each year. Guess what: next year the ECAJ can be told that antisemitic incidents are again more than double the average of the previous 20 years. In fact, Jones would be able to report an increase for 11 years running(!), while, at the same time, antisemitic incidents would actually be continuously falling.

There is nothing unusual about an ethnic community monitor choosing to put figures such as these in the worst possible light. Those who keep an eye on similar racist incidents against Muslims, Asian Australian, Indigenous Australians and others have all been known to engage in similar practices.

What is important is the reason for the inbuilt distortion. It is called email. Precisely two thirds of the recently reported incidents were related to abusive email. This new form of communication is instant, allowing people to vent their anger and frustration (and occasionally stupidity) before they have a chance to think it over. It is also anonymous. It is easy to create an identity and send a hostile message. But of course, there were no antisemitic

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The reinvigoration process continues!

Have a say in the future of YOUR organisation

Come to the AJDS Annual General Meeting!

Sunday 7 February, 2010

1.00pm barbecue, 2.00pm meeting; other details to be finalised.

More information at our website

www.ajds.org.au

**The Australian Jewish
Democratic Society Inc**
(Affiliated with the Jewish
Community Council of Victoria)

Contact the AJDS!

PO Box 685 KEW 3101

Phone 9885 6260

Executive Committee

Steve Brook

sbrook34@gmail.com

Helen Rosenbaum

hrose@vic.chariot.net.au

Les Rosenblatt

wandjina0@bigpond.com

Larry Stillman

larryjhs@fastmail.fm

Tom Wolkenberg

linton@bigpond.com

Harold Zwier

hz@doublez.com.au

David Zyngier

sndz@bigpond.com

Newsletter Committee

Steve Brook, Miriam Faine, Margaret Jacobs, Vivienne Porzolt, Dan Rabinovici, Les Rosenblatt, Sol Salbe (Editor)

**Editorial Phone: 9318 3107 or
0417 508496**

***The views expressed in this
Newsletter are not necessarily those of the AJDS.
These are expressed in its
own statements.***

What we stand for:

- Social justice and human rights.
- Opposition to the vilification and mandatory detention of asylum seekers.
- The struggle against racism, antisemitism in particular.
- Non-violent paths to conflict resolution.
- In line with this, the search for a negotiated solution to the Israel/Palestinian conflict.
- Equal rights, including land rights and justice, for Indigenous Australians.

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or any other kind of emails twenty years ago, so including them now may well show an increase over the average even if the reality is a serious decrease. In fact it would take a decrease of 60 per cent or more in incidents next year for the ECAJ to report a drop if they choose to stay with their current methodology. Anything else will be reported as an increase, given the continued use of the same methodology.

When he forwarded the figures to the present writer, Jeremy Jones sent three sets of figures: the raw figures, the figures excluding emails and "totals excluding emails, faxes, stickers and leaflets (the figures which I feel are least reliable)."

Most reliable figures

If one were to exclude the figures that Jones thinks are the least reliable, one gets a totally different picture. Yes, there was 20 per cent increase last year, but that followed a 10 per cent **decrease** the previous year. Over the past decade, the large increases were in 2002 (operation Defensive Shield), 2006-07 (Lebanon War II) and 2009 (Gaza War). Otherwise there is only a moderate increase of just over 4.2 per cent per annum over the past 19 years. Last year's figure of 269 wasn't the highest; at 308 the 2002 total is the highest to date. That one was followed by reduction of 26, 25 and 28 per cent respectively over the next three years which were comparatively quiet in Israel/Palestine and Lebanon. Thus by 2005 the figures were down to 130 only to double the following year with two wars on Israel's borders.

Defining incidents

Of course it is not always easy to define antisemitic incidents. While the undersigned subscribes to the view that some criticism of Israel can degenerate into antisemitism, criticism of Israel is not necessarily antisemitic, even if it is demonstrably wrong, distorted or even stupid. Jones draws the line in a different place. For example he regards the very comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany as antisemitic. Such a comparison is wrong and simplistic, in my view. The ECAJ's view is explicitly articulated in the report: "The most significant developments over the past 20 years have been the crossing of a variety of 'red lines' in anti-Jewish rhetoric, particularly from sections of the political Left, relating to false and offensive comparisons of Israel/Jews with Nazis/Nazism..." The implication here is that there is some sort of natural law that makes Jews incapable of acting in a certain way. No lesser authority than Israel's pre-eminent expert on the subject, Yehuda Bauer, Professor of Holocaust Studies at the Hebrew University, is on record as saying that "Israel could commit genocide on the Palestinian people." That is not to say that Bauer is implying that Israel is actually *committing* genocide, but arguing whether it is or it isn't is a matter of legitimate debate where what matters are the *facts* and not preconceived ideological agendas.

The ECAJ report is also far more sweeping: "One development in antisemitism in Australia in the period in review was the way in which individuals who identify themselves, or were identified, as Jews were given high profiles as being engaged in defamation of Judaism and/or Israel. A number of extreme right-wing groups published contributions from, or items by, Gilad Atzmon, Ilan Pappé and Neturei Karta. Norman Finkelstein and Antony Lowenstein (sic) were cited by Islamic sources with maximalist anti-Jewish agendas." Here the report lumps together someone who many Leftists accuse of antisemitism (Gilad Atzmon) with Finkelstein, who may be annoying, but is reasonably accurate, and Ilan Pappé, some of whose recent efforts have been inaccurate and unscientific, but who also is not generally considered to be antisemitic.

Antisemitism is an important issue that we should be concerned about. But reports on antisemitism obviously need more scrutiny both from within our community and without.

Sol Salbe

AJDS Annual Dinner rounds off great year

[By a special correspondent]

It is said that political work is a bit like an iceberg: only the top 10 per cent is visible. A lot of the hard slog that has gone into rebuilding and modernising the AJDS will only become obvious when the outcome is out there for all to see. But looking back over the year, it is quite obvious that quite a few aspects like a greater orientation to the media have already borne fruit.

One does not have to wait for the Annual General Meeting next February to find out that we have had more letters to the media, both sent and published. As well as the Executive and other active AJDS members, credit for this achievement should go to Robin Rothfield, who has made it his mission to constantly remind us that a far bigger potential audience exists out there, bigger even than that reachable by this *Newsletter* or even the combined membership of our emailing lists!

Fortunately the change of orientation coincided with the growth of the independent Jewish (and non-Jewish) new media. And even the old media has become more geographically accessible. Instead of just orienting ourselves to the *Age* and the *Australian Jewish News*, we send our letters and statements to newspapers in most capital cities. There are also websites like the *Sensible Jew*, *Galus Australis* and others where you can see more and more comments by members of the AJDS and even articles reprinted from this *Newsletter*.

While the last month has seen our banner flying in both a refugee rally and a climate change march for sustainability, many more themes of our activities were also brought together at our Annual Dinner on 13 December. It was good to see the continuing generational and personnel change. The evening was chaired by Sandy Joffe, who in recent months has been busy with a planning subcommittee designed to bring the AJDS structure into the second decade of this century back from somewhere in the mid twentieth century in which it was stuck. Joffe made chairing the dinner appear both easy and seamless, when in fact a fair bit of preparation went into it.

Great turn-up

The number of people attending was on a par with last year, but a much better organisation meant that the financial reward was much better. Not only was our membership represented in large numbers, there were a lot of our friends from the Greek, Israeli and Muslim communities. Many of the long-standing friends of the AJDS like David Spratt, Nancy Atkin and Nic Maclellan were there – you may say that they have become regular features.

Everyone was in for a triple treat of good food, great company and a very good speaker. But before the main speaker we heard a brief oration by Marty Kamener about his late mother Renate, an AJDS stalwart whose loss earlier this year was felt by all of us. (You can read his comments on **pp 8-9**).

We knew that Professor Denis Altman was going to be interesting, but his contribution on the night was remarkable. Even a friend who has been on the Left for many a decade and who is known for his sceptical cynicism wrote

to me the next day about the “good guest speaker.”

Introducing Altman, Les Rosenblatt went through the Professor’s academic and non-academic credentials ranging all the way from being on the board of Oxfam to being a Member of the Order of Australia. Rosenblatt quoted from Altman’s recent article in *Overland* magazine: “it is not possible to be a Jew and remain detached from feelings about Israel.”

YouTube

Befitting the modernisation of the AJDS, the entire talk from the introduction to the question and discussion session is available on YouTube for all to see. You can check it for yourself at <http://tiny.cc/altmanajds2009>. Larry Stillman who, like Rosenblatt, belongs to the “class of 2009” on the AJDS Executive, is the person responsible for this and other technological leaps forward.

Altman’s speech touched on the issue of when does one disclose being gay or being Jewish, outlining encounters with people who made antisemitic remarks in the US in front of him not realising that someone with an Australian, rather than Bronx, accent could be Jewish. It led him to think about the general issue of framing’s one identity -- and often it was easier to be gay than be Jewish.

He alluded to the tenuous relationship between the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and the major Jewish gay (men) group, Aleph. While not being directly involved in either the historical battle for the affiliation of Aleph to the JCCV (which never achieved the majority target required) or the putative current attempts to improve relations between Aleph and the JCCV, Altman reflected on the great irony of one group which has so suffered so much discrimination in the past showing so little empathy with a group that is suffering from that discrimination at the moment.

Dealing with the issue of Israel, Altman made two key points. One was the need for Leftist Jews to show “tough love” to Israel when its policies are endangering the future of the people who live in Israel even more than they endanger the Palestinians. The other was the important role that Australia could play in a dialogue with our two major Islamic-dominated neighbours of Indonesia and Malaysia, who have taken just as hard an anti-Israeli position as Australia has taken in favour. Professor Altman made it clear that support for whatever government happens to be running Israel was not really a pro-Israeli position.

Letters to the media

On the eve of our November *Newsletter* the AJD had a letter published in the *Age* saying that “a settlement freeze is the essential precondition to any credible negotiations”. As the letter had also been circulated by email the vast majority of our members have read it. While there is no need to take up valuable space and repeat it here, the Executive has decided from now on to circulate all AJDS’s **unpublished** letters to the entire membership. Our following letter on the subject of the Swiss ban on minarets was also published. So this success means that there is very little to report. May this record continue!

DRAFT AJDS BDS POLICY

The following has been submitted by a member of the AJDS Executive as a draft policy for the AJDS on the subject of BDS (Boycotts Divestments and Sanctions) in relation to Israel. The AJDS Executive has not discussed this draft as yet. We are waiting for your contributions as the matter is too important for the executive to decide on its own without any input from the members.

The AJDS is opposed to any BDS campaign aimed at the breadth of Israeli economic/cultural/ intellectual activity. Nonetheless, given AJDS's long-term opposition to Israeli occupation, blockade and settlement of legitimately claimed Palestinian lands (outside of the June 1967 Israeli borders), the AJDS will support BDS programs which are designed to bring about politically

negotiated change through drawing attention to their specific unacceptability as obstacles to conflict resolution.

Such limited and focused BDS support might include boycotts of settler-produced export products, divestment from military R&D and boycott of industrial/military activities un-related to Israel's defence and security. It might also include selected sanctions or boycotts against specific Israeli academics openly supportive of the occupation, blockade and settlement practices in clear breach of international law.

The AJDS will make any decisions on these matters on a case by case basis and exercise its judgement as to the political/social cost-benefits of any such actions before granting specific endorsement or approval.

Boycotts? Smart thinking required

Ran Greenstein

As part on the ongoing discussion of various aspects of BDS, we are including some annotated comments from South Africa-based Israeli academic Ran Greenstein on the subject.

Avnery: "The boycott was immensely important," Tutu told me. "Much more than the armed struggle." It should be remembered that, unlike Mandela, Tutu was an advocate of non-violent struggle. During the 28 years Mandela languished in prison, he could have walked free at any moment, if he had only agreed to sign a statement condemning "terrorism". He refused.

The main difference between Tutu and Mandela is not the question of violence, but the fact that Tutu worked from the inside, in the mass democratic movement, while Mandela -- and most of the ANC leadership with him -- were either in prison or in exile. Tutu speaks from the perspective of an internal campaigner who cherishes the support given by solidarity movements, the encouragement they gave to activists, and the extent to which they made life less pleasant for white South Africans.

Having said that, Tutu also cautions us to look at what specific issues should be emphasised. In SA it was sport, which is a crucial part of white identity. It is not only that rugby is the civil religion of white Afrikaners, it is also the sense that they were the best in the world and were prevented from receiving their due recognition (true to a lesser extent for cricket). And indeed, once permitted to return to the normal cycle of competition, SA rugby and cricket have been at the very top of world ranking. Anyone who thinks that preventing Maccabi Haifa from playing at the UEFA champions league would have even remotely the same effect is totally ignorant of SA. This is not an argument against BDS, but for a careful selection of targets, aimed at achieving the optimal impact. No-one (including Tutu) has ever tried to evaluate the **specific** impact of various boycott/sanction campaigns: we know that they worked overall, but what was the impact of specific focus areas, to what extent some campaigns may have undermined others, to what extent some campaigns may have had negative side-effects, and so on, is a topic that is still taboo. One weakness of the current BDS is that it is too intent on copying what is seen as a success-

ful example, rather than drawing focused lessons on how to use it wisely and effectively (given that the conditions are different).

Minority/Majority

Avnery: "The South African struggle was between a large majority and a small minority. Among a general population of almost 50 million, the Whites amounted to less than 10 per cent. That means that more than 90 per cent of the country's inhabitants supported the boycott, in spite of the argument that it hurt them, too. In Israel, the situation is the very opposite. The Jews amount to more than 80 per cent of Israel's citizens, and constitute a majority of some 60 per cent throughout the country between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. 99.9 per cent of the Jews oppose a boycott on Israel. They will not feel the "the whole world is with us", but rather that "the whole world is against us".

The numbers are not accurate, but setting this aside, there are two issues here: first, the very boundaries and citizenship status and consequent numbers are contested here. It must be recognised. Second, it is obvious that Israeli Jews respond as Avnery says they do. The challenge is how to get them thinking about what they take for granted (that they are a majority in Israel legitimately, that the boycott reflects antisemitism, and so on): this cannot be done by leaving things as they are, but also not by blanket boycott. Rather, what we need is smart, focused sanctions that would show the relationship between crime and punishment, between offensive behaviour, the related sanction, and the way to avoid it. This is a major weakness of the BDS campaign as currently conceptualised: it does not show those who face the threat of boycott what they can do concretely -- what is within their OWN power, in other words -- to avoid it. Instead it tells them what their government must do, and they have very little control over that. What alternative strategy exists? I have applied this logic to academic sanctions in <http://www.monthlyreview.org/mrzine/greenstein060209.html>, and other attempts at specific strategies can be made in all other fields: they won't be copies of SA campaigns, just as the SA sanctions were not copies of any other campaigns. They require original thinking.

Extracted from a longer contribution.

An unwarranted anti-Islamic angle

Sol Salbe

It was Alex Fein of the Sensible Jew who first noted the negative impact of the violence at the demonstration against Silvan Shalom on 6 December. Relying purely on media reports, she got many of the details wrong, including the crucial issue of whose demonstration it was. But her conclusion was spot on: an average Joanne Citizen watching the TV footage would have formed a negative view of the Palestinian cause.

Of course not everyone shares Fein's attitude that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a zero-sum game. There is a lot more involved in solving the conflict than just public perceptions in Australia. If certain groups get to play a bigger role on the Palestinian side, that is not necessarily a good thing as far as some of us who care about Israel are concerned.

Fein does not claim to speak for anyone but herself, but the Jewish Community Council of Victoria is very different. It is a representative body and when it puts up a statement it is obligated to check the veracity of its claims. The case for verification is even more vital where inter-communal relationships are concerned. The JCCV statement on the demonstration issued by president John Searle stated that "it was extremely distressing to witness the level of antisemitic violence and abuse displayed by many demonstrators outside the Australia-Israel Leadership Forum dinner..." Searle was particularly concerned to highlight the role of the Islamic Council of Victoria, the peak body of Victoria's Muslim bodies, one of the groups to have endorsed the demonstration.

The JCCV statement added: "Last Sunday, guests attending the Australia-Israel Leadership Forum dinner had to run the gauntlet of some two hundred demonstrators whose armoury included calls of 'Bloody Jews' and throwing projectiles at guests."

The statement concluded: "The ugly behaviour displayed by demonstrators inevitably tarnishes the name

of Muslims. We look to the members of the Muslim community, its leaders in particular, to join us in condemning violence and promoting harmony."

Variance with record

The JCCV take on the demonstration seem to be at variance with the accounts of the AJDS members who were present, as well as others I have spoken to. Not one of them heard the "bloody Jews" comment. Nor was it mentioned by the reporters present, the *Jewish News* or the Victoria police. The police in fact lamented the fact that the peaceful demonstration that took place while guests were arriving turned violent after the formal part of the protest was over. The notion of "projectiles" apparently relates to an article by the incoming president of the Australasian union of Jewish Students, Liam Getreu, who alluded to the protesters "hurling shoes at attendees". What my eyewitnesses tell me is that shoes were only hurled at one person, who went out of his way to eyeball the demonstrators: Liam Getreu himself. All other guests wisely ignored the demonstrators. At any rate, the throwing of shoes was purely symbolic as a row of police stood between the demonstrators and the hotel grounds and would have been the first to be hit.

But the nastiest distortion in the JCCV message was the emphasis on Muslims. This was overwhelmingly a Victorian Students for Palestine event. As my local Member of Parliament told me, her invitation to the rally came from that group and no other, unlike previous events. That group is not Muslim -- it is dominated by members of a particular Left sect. By the time the demonstration turned into a march, most of the Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims present had taken their children and gone home after more than two hours hanging around. All the eyewitnesses and the hour of YouTube material point to the people remaining being young and not fitting the police description of "being of Middle Eastern appearance". The JCCV point scoring at the expense of them is vindictive and unwarranted.

Zionist Council of Victoria debates settlements, sort of

Sol Salbe

The Biblical Saul went looking for the she-asses and found the throne instead. I went to listen to the debate on settlements organised by the Zionist Council of Victoria, and found myself at what best can be described as a family argument. Speakers and officials alluded to fathers, mothers, children (including future ones) and even one "beautiful girlfriend", making everyone feel as if this was a family occasion.

Except of course for outsiders like Norman Rothfield, myself and a Palestinian friend (I suspect there were not many other outsiders) – it was not our family. We came for some political sharpness and instead got something close to a one-sided debate.

The very framing of the question should have pricked our ears. The affirmative side was arguing for a negative proposition: That the settlements are not an obstacle to peace. But however it should have been framed, the settlements' supporters remained on message. No doubt it was easier than for those arguing against the settle-

ments, two of whom looked if they were there because they drew the short straw. Only Johnny Baker, who was the last speaker, came out firing on all engines. Whether they were conscious of it or not, the other two speakers repeated the mantra putting the main blame for the conflict on the Palestinians, and mentioned the obligatory criticism of the Goldstone report.

There is very little point in replicating the lines of reasoning. There was very little new or fresh in the way of argument. Perhaps the most enlightening bit came at the end when the adjudicator, Monash University's champion debater Tim Jeffrie, analysed the debate. (There was no question time or opportunity for rebuttal.) While clearly awarding the debate to the affirmative side, he tore one of their arguments to pieces. The affirmative argued that the Palestinian and other Arabs were opposed to peace with Israel before the settlements were established, ergo the settlements are not an obstacle to peace. Jeffrie pointed out that the same can be said about Hamas. The conflict existed before Hamas was established, therefore Hamas is not an obstacle to peace.

Focusing on the wrong Nobel?

More attention has been focused on the Nobel prizes than in most years. Most commentators concentrated on Barack Obama's prize, while Israelis basked in the Ada Yonath Chemistry win.

But nearly everyone seemed to have missed the most revolutionary turnaround, and that was in economics. Writing in the left-wing Israeli website *Haakets* (the Sting), Yossi Dahan explained:



Elinor Ostrom

What's interesting about Elinor Ostrom and Oliver Williamson's award of the Nobel Prize for Economics this year is the way their work undermines the very assumption that lie at the foundations of orthodox neo-classical economics. Their work challenges the notion of the efficient free market, where perfection is achieved by people

taking rational steps in self-interest. This year's laureates are researchers who do not base their work purely on theoretical models, but on the combination of varied empirical research and theoretical models.

One of Ostrom's students, **Henry Farrell**, outlined her contribution. "Her work focuses on the empirical analysis of collective goods problems – how it is that people can come up with their own solutions to problems of the commons if they are given enough room to do so. Her landmark book, *Governing the Commons*, provides an empirical rejoinder to the pessimism of Garret Hardin and oth-

ers about the tragedy of the commons – it documents how people can and do solve these problems in for instance the management of water resources, forestry, pasturage and fishing rights. She and her colleagues gather large sets of data on the conditions under which people are or are not able to solve these problems, and the kinds of rules that they come up with in order to solve them."

Farrell quotes Ostrom's book: "An important challenge facing policy scientists is to develop theories of human organisation based on realistic assessment of human capabilities and limitations in dealing with a variety of situations that initially share some or all aspects of a tragedy of the commons. ... Theoretical inquiry involves a search for regularities ... As a theorist, and at times a modeller, I see these efforts [as being] at the core of a policy science. One can, however, get trapped in one's own intellectual web. When years have been spent in the development of a theory with considerable power and elegance, analysts obviously will want to apply this tool to as many situations as possible. The power of a theory is exactly proportionate to the diversity of situations it can explain. All theories, however, have limits."

To quote Farrell again: "Elinor Ostrom has challenged the conventional wisdom that common property is poorly managed and should be either regulated by central authorities or privatised. Based on numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes, and groundwater basins, Ostrom concludes that the outcomes are, more often than not, better than predicted by standard theories."

At a time when the human race needs to find ways of working together to deal with climate change by acting in the common interest, the awarding of the prize contains a powerful message. There is a way for humans to work together in contrast to the selfish notion that someone else should make the sacrifice.

Speaking of Nobel Laureates for economics...

As the item above was being compiled the sad news reached us that Paul A Samuelson has passed away. Most of us knew Samuelson as the author of the standard textbook of economics just above everywhere in the 'sixties and 'seventies, and who knows how long afterwards. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency made much of him being the first American to have received the Nobel prize for Economics and his role in advising presidents and leaders.

No mention was made of his leading role in opposing the Iraq war in 2003 while already aged 87. Just over a year ago he gave an interview to the Asahi Shimbun. He seemed as sharp as ever:

I think it is definitely the worst crisis since the 1929-1939 Great Depression, both in America and globally, and I think it was an unnecessary breakdown as there was no need for America to have a meltdown.

When George W. Bush became president in 2001, he inherited a country with quite sound (fundamentals) from President Bill Clinton with an overbalanced budget. ... George Bush will go down in the history books as the worst president that America has had in more than 200

years. And, that couldn't have happened if the voters had not moved to the right ...

One is the Iraq war, which is a disaster. It's as bad as the Vietnam War and the Vietnam War entangled four or five presidents and there was no victory. ... But the other reason is because people on Main Street in America are hurting. The reason they're hurting goes back to 1995 when Alan Greenspan, as the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, made no efforts to curb the stock market bubble.

Rome was not built in one day, and Franklin Roosevelt did not get full employment. It took about seven years. Now I don't say it'll take seven years this time, but it won't be done with a balanced budget and it won't be done with "inflation targeting" ...

Spending in the direction of the poor part of the population (is important) because those are the people who are most likely to re-spend. If you primarily spend in the direction of your millionaires, that won't make any difference.



Samuelson

Ten best reasons to send more US troops to Afghanistan

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

10 If you want to breed and train more would-be terrorists who hate the USA, the best way to do so is attacking Afghan villages where key Al Qaeda cells have left to regroup elsewhere.

9 If you want to keep Afghan women powerless, ignore the advice of their own leaders that grass-roots economic development is crucial -- and send the Marines instead, to boost the power of macho warlords who gather loyalty by fighting foreign invaders.

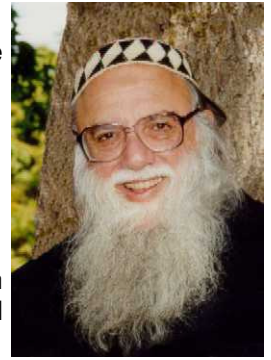
8 If you want to make sure that no one is learning that government could do good things like building schools and community health clinics in America, hiring teachers and writers and railroad construction workers, feeding hungry children, or renewing our rotting sewer system -- then sink hundreds of billions of dollars into this war so as to bankrupt domestic-needs programs.

7 If you want to make even higher profits from burning oil and coal instead of letting America invest in creating a wind/solar renewable energy network that will heal the climate crisis, free us from coal and oil, and make America competitive again -- a multi-billion-dollar war is terrific

6 If you want to stymie all investigations into past use of torture and "extraordinary rendition" by past US governments and utterly negate the closing of Guantanamo, multiplying prisoners in Bagram (Afghanistan) will help a great deal.

5 If you like to knit blankets for legless veterans while making sure the Veterans Administration is so swamped with the wounded that they have to wait months in rat-infested wards for treatment, more maimed soldiers are by far the best result of a war.

4 If you are trying to do research on the suicide rate, homeless rate, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome in returning soldiers, there will never be a better milieu for producing experimental subjects.



Arthur Waskow

3 If you want to create a surge of right-wing populist rage that will shatter the Democratic Party and elect Sarah Palin president in 2012, then combine thousands of dead and maimed American soldiers with millions of unemployed American workers.

If you can think of two more, please add them by clicking to this article



on our website at [The Shalom Centre](http://TheShalomCentre.org).

Rabbi Arthur Waskow is director of [The Shalom Centre](http://TheShalomCentre.org) and is co-author of *The Tent of Abraham*; author of *Godwrestling, Round 2*, *Down-to-Earth Judaism* and a dozen other books on Jewish thought and practice, as well as books on US public policy.

Australians to join Gaza march

Several Australians are among over a thousand activists who are planning to participate in a march to Gaza at the end of the year. The march, which coincides with the anniversary of the most recent Gaza war, operation Cast Lead, is designed to highlight the siege of Gaza.

Amnesty International has called the blockade of Gaza a "form of collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza, a flagrant violation of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention." Human Rights Watch has called the blockade a "serious violation of international law."

A recent news item from *Haaretz's* Akiva Eldar suggests that the Israeli blockade will continue even after captured POW Gilad Shalit is returned home, adding to the Gazan despair. The protesters plan to march alongside the people of Gaza in a nonviolent demonstration that breaches

the illegal blockade on 1 January.

The march has a particularly strong Internet component with plans for millions of people to watch the action as the protesters arrive at the Rafah Crossing from Egypt into the Gaza strip.

The list of endorsers includes both hard-line critics of Israel such as George Galloway and Ronnie Kasrils as well as more moderate voices like Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, Noam Chomsky, Tony Benn, Victoria Brittain, Oliver Stone, Mike Leigh and Arun Gandhi.

Among Israeli endorsers are Rabbi Arik Ascherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, academic Avi Shlaim and Yesh Gvul.

Our own Editorial Committee member Vivienne Porzolt is one of the Australians attending. Her stories and accounts of the march (and those of entering Gaza if the Egyptian authorities permit it) will no doubt be of great interest.

In memory of my mother Renate

Marty Kamener

[This year's AJDS's Annual Dinner was dedicated to our long-time activist and leader, Renate Kamener who passed away in March of this year. Her son Marty delivered these poignant remarks to the dinner.]

1933, Germany: I want you all to conjure up the implications of those words for you, and then add in your image of my mother.

My mother, Renate Kamener, nee Herrnstadt, was born on 8 June 8 1933 in Breslau, then in Germany, to Rudi and Thea Herrnstadt.

I knew my grandfather as a gentle man, always ready to laugh and talk, we played cards and Scrabble, and our conversations were generally about football or whatever else occupied my mind at the time.

About 25 years ago, he wrote his memoirs. They told of a life so strange to me, it was almost incomprehensible, Breslau from 1900 to 1930. Rudi was a man of deep Germanic culture, a lawyer, a lover of words, of music, of art, and of conversation. He was a lover of thought, and the process of thought. This is what epitomised Germany prior to the wars.

I was only just beginning to understand who he was, when he died, it took me until now to understand his influence on my mother.

Positive Germanic culture

Perchance over the last few weeks my fascination with Albert Einstein brought me to a book entitled *Einstein's German World*. As I was reading the book, I suddenly realised I had entered my grandparents' lives. The book describes the incredible cultural, scientific and philosophical energy which existed in Germany, post unification in 1870 and prior to WW2. The exuberance, and the brilliance, of thought that was emanating from Germany at the time were astonishing. People felt they sat on the edge of a brave new world, one in which possibilities were endless, and at the peak of this new world sat thinkers such as Einstein, Freud and Marx.

This world of thought, optimism and hope was the world in which my grandparents grew up, and into which my mother was born. This world is the world which Hitler destroyed, the collateral damage if you like, of his reign, and it was this world of thought, optimism and hope which my grandparents, and their family, carried with them when they left Germany in 1936, to arrive safely on the dusty shores below Table Mountain.

If you can, imagine my grandparents, their parents, and my mother on a pier in Cape Town, South Africa in 1936. Feel their mix of relief and despair, see them in their proud Germanness walking those far-flung colonial streets so far from Breslau.

This ironic scene would not have been lost on my grandfather. He would have been well aware of both the comedy, and the tragedy, which now surrounded him, as he sold washing machines and anything else he and his brother could, in order to survive. He was a terrible businessman, but in their house with a small group of like-minded exiles, they pursued their passion, as they puffed cigars, listened to Wagner and Mozart, read Goethe, and

wrote and loved. Around them were the mighty plains of Africa, lions and elephants, the Drakensburg Mountains and the extraordinary Cape. In the fierceness of this light and landscape, my grandfather sought to recreate harmony and beauty. As I engage my memories of him, I see a mix of despair, poetry, love, humour and irony.

My grandparents, despite Europe's violent divisions, were determined to grow a beautiful little flower in South Africa, a flower they called Renate. This is how my mother, an only child, grew up, surrounded by the cultural heritage of old Europe, inspired by the new, joyous and optimistic vibrancy of Africa. I believe that if you look into your thoughts of Renate you will see her here. Exotic, cultured, thoughtful spontaneous and optimistic.

Instinctively, in all she encountered, she sought to reinvigorate the salons of Breslau, yet she wanted them now



Renate and Bob Kamener on the occasion of her receiving the Governor's award for services to Multiculturalism through her work in Salam Shalom.

infused with the freedom and energy of the world post WW2. Here she was surrounded by the issues of southern Africa, the ideas of Marx, the words of Wordsworth and an enduring belief that harmony between people would always be more productive than enmity. Inspired by the quest for a better world, she joined an organisation called the Progressive Forum, which was led by world renowned thinker, Seymour Pappert. With the Progressive Forum she became involved in debate and action. She boldly walked into townships, selling newspapers and engaging the local population where possible, she walked into prisons, speaking to friends who were interred there and as we know she would walk into wherever she felt like injustice was being done.

Flowing discussion

In her presence, opposing views became part of a discussion, not an argument. She would instinctively seek the 90 percent the common element that unified people, rather than the 10 per cent, the extremes, which separated them. This was the magic that she brought to groups, to arguments, to meetings, to people of different cultures, literally to anywhere she went. Renate sought

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

out the common thread between us all, that thread which we recognise as humanity, and with that thread, she bound us all together and we felt good. Her methodology was simple, but profound, bring out what is good in people and the rest is easy. Why in this crazy world of ours does this now seem so difficult?

Modus operandi

Her modus operandi was always the same, encourage, unify, enable, and then allow to grow. From University campuses in South Africa, to Soweto, to Swinburne staff and students, to Labor Party gatherings, and of course the AJDS and Salaam Shalom, she simply asked for people to bring their humanity, not their exclusivity.

The perpetually addictive forces of nationalism and exclusivity, epitomised by Adolf Hitler, and the "us versus them" debate are what my mother battled all her life. In the AJDS she found a home for herself that energised her constantly. Jewishness, cultural diversity and the challenge to enable humanity are the hallmarks of this organisation, and of my mother too.

Over the last twenty years, the forces of nationalism have been in the ascendancy, and thoughtful organisations like

the AJDS struggled to impose themselves. Yet somehow in my mother's salon we could all feel the endless possibilities of a new world, that same belief which, a century ago inspired Einstein, Marx and Freud. We would leave her salon feeling inspired, not defeated. It is this gift of inspiration, that she carried with her and which she brought to all who knew her and which she now leaves with us. Above all, she maintained the optimism that somehow things could and should always get better.

Renate Kamener brought humanity into politics, respect into argument and joy to all who knew her. She linked the world of thought that existed pre-Hitler to those who existed post-Hitler, she managed this without bringing the guilt and the hatred that encumbers so many who also survived that period.

Cherish one's history and one's culture, and yet don't fall into the trap of becoming dogmatic about it. We need to keep space for new thoughts and ideas as that is what humanity should be about, for that is what evolution is.

To the AJDS.

I believe my mother meant a lot to you all, but please, when you think of her, remember too how much you all meant to her.

A state that flees bad news

Daphna Golan

Many wise men, including even president Shimon Peres, have mobilised to explain to us why the fact-finder is warped, or small-minded, or anti-Israel, or mistaken, or just doesn't understand. But perhaps Richard Goldstone will nevertheless succeed in making a small crack in our wall of denial and thus create an opening for the establishment of commissions similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that were established in the wake of his reports on violence in South Africa.

Israeli opposition to the Goldstone report reflects multiple layers of denial, ranging from literal denial (it never happened) through denial of its significance (these weren't really war crimes) to justification (we had no alternative; what can we do when they shell Sderot nonstop?).

There is also denial of the possibility that an international commission might be able to investigate better than the Israel Defence Forces (they're antisemites), denial of the existence of any international law that would also be valid in Gaza (awful things always happen in wars, and our situation is unique), denial of the pictures that were seen worldwide, but not in Israel (Al Jazeera is spreading propaganda), and denial of the possibility that there is another way besides the way of war.

We are not alone. The Americans are also uninterested in the judges and human rights organisations examining what their army is doing in far-off lands. And, just as in Israel, the combination of democracy and freedom of expression, on one hand, and military control over occupied territory, on the other, strengthens the walls of denial.

Robert Bernstein, in an opinion piece criticising Human Rights Watch, complained that it is spotlighting Israel, an open, democratic state, instead of investigating what goes on in closed states.

Bernstein, who served as chairman of Human Rights Watch for many years and is also a noted publisher, is well acquainted with the openness and liberalism of Israeli intellectuals - the peaceniks who are proud of their soldier sons even as they sign petitions against the occupation. Israel is indeed a very open society when it comes to Jews. But it also operates in besieged Gaza, which is closed off and closed in.

For more than 42 years, mothers have fled bad news and soldiers have obeyed orders and made another people wretched. This isn't happening because there is no other way, but because in the view of the generals who lead the army into unnecessary wars, there is no one to talk to, no other way, and it's better not to know.

Some 22,000 people testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. They painfully told their stories, asked pardon (which was granted to only a few of them) and described the terrible deeds they did -- those same deeds that they had denied for years, or else insisted that those who perpetrated them were exceptions, or explained that some things are done in secret because they are necessary, but one doesn't talk about them.

The Goldstone report is not sufficient, but perhaps it will pave the way to a discussion of the present and the past, en route to a better future. If Hamas has already expressed willingness to discuss the Goldstone report, perhaps it is possible to use it as a first step on the road to truth, justice and reconciliation commissions.

Daphna Golan is a senior researcher for Human Rights at the Minerva Centre for Human Rights at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The title of the piece given by *Haaretz* is a pun on a recent David Grossman novel.

Words for Palestine

Joan Nestle

[AJDS member Joan Nestle addressed the pro-Palestinian rally on 6 December (see report on page 5.)]

I want to thank Students for Palestine for inviting the Melbourne Women in Black group to be part of this demonstration against the uncritical welcoming of Silvan Shalom to this country. I speak with two voices today — as a member of Women in Black, and as a 70-year-old American Jewish woman who lost one third of her family in the Belzec concentration camp. Two voices but one heart — the brutalising of populations by the use of overwhelming military force, by governmental policies of ethnic cleansing and forced expulsion from family homes, by the unquestioned belief in the right of one people to live a full life while another is condemned to hopelessness, to endless humiliations, to erased pasts, to an impossible present and a murdered future — I cannot, will not, turn my head or heart away from the connections between my Jewish history and Palestinian history of the last 60 years.

In Haifa, at the beginning of the first Intifada in 1987, five Israeli women stood in silent vigil dressed in black to protest the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. The next week Palestinian women joined the protest and a few months later, 5000 marched through the streets of Tel Aviv asking for peace. Now Women in Black stand in over 30 countries demanding an end to the brutalisation of civilian populations and the planet, an end to what seems like a time of endless wars. Here in Melbourne, Women in Black have been organising for an end to the Occupation since 1988.

Common humanity

We stand in recognition of peace activists all over the world, to embrace our common humanity, as a bridge to mutual respect, to remind ourselves that seemingly small actions can lead both to change and hope. We make the following promises for the new year — we promise to expose the lies that demonise those who discuss nonviolent ways to end the Israeli Occupation. We promise to uphold the judgements of the UN's Goldstone Report and Breaking the Silence. We promise to stand in solidarity with Israeli and Palestinian activists who face jail for their anti-Occupation work— with the Shministim, a group of Israeli teenagers declaring their refusal to serve the Occupation, with Mohammad Othman, a Palestinian human rights activist, with the women who monitor the checkpoints hoping to reduce the daily abuses of Palestinians simply trying to get to work, with the citizens of Bi'lin who take on the Israel Defence Force every week, with the members of New Profile, an Israeli anti-militarism group, with Gideon Levy of *Haaretz*, with Dr Saida Atrash, the Direc-



**Conscientious objector
Or Ben-David**

tor of the Mehwa Centre, the women's shelter on the West Bank where every day she and others try to comfort Palestinian women who have lost their homes, and with it any sense of security for their families.

We hear the voices of power easily enough, but the voices of alternate visions, of the questioners of certainties, these we must amplify and honour, these are our deepest hope — as Mahmoud Darwish wrote in his homage to Edward Said: "Then you are prone to the affliction of longing? My dream leads my steps. And my vision seats my dream on my knees like a cat. My dream is the realistic imaginary and the son of will: We are able to alter the inevitability of the abyss!"

"To refuse means to say no!"

The voice of conscientious objector Or Ben-David, a 19-year-old Israeli woman from Jerusalem: "To refuse means to say no! No to the military rule in the West Bank, no to the use of violence as a means of defence, no to patriarchy, no to violence against innocent people, no to war and no to a society that claims to be democratic but forces youth to carry weapons, to kill or be killed. I refuse because I want to make a difference. I want all those Palestinian youths who have lost hope to see that there are Israelis who care and who make a different choice. I want all my friends who became soldiers or who are about to become soldiers to see that things do not have to be the way they are, and that doing these immoral things is not something to be taken for granted, that another way is possible." The author of these words is now serving 20 days in an Israeli military prison.

Know that our numbers, the numbers of dissenters, are growing, that cracks are running down that monstrous wall, know that more and more of us are not afraid of what they call us — traitors, self-hating Jews, antisemitic Jews, renegade Jews. What we are afraid of is what comes on the horizon when a people's daily dignity is so insulted, when others so absolutely and brutally control the possibilities of one's life — James Baldwin, an African-American writer who knew in his bones of daily dehumanisation, warned of the *Fire Next Time*. What hope will there be for reconciliation if the settlers keep dancing on the hearts of the dispossessed, if leaders like Rudd and Obama and so many others sit down to feast with representative bullies of the Israeli state, pretending that Palestinian agony does not exist? We have seen in the past the results of this calculated refusal to challenge national cruelties. Read the Palestinian poet, read Darwish — "Do I ask permission, from strangers who sleep/in my own bed, to visit myself for five minutes? Do I bow respectfully to those who reside in my childhood dream?"

Mr Silvan Shalom is the minister for regional development and control of the flow of water -- one of the regions he is in charge of is the upper Galilee, the one-time site of al-Birwah, a village razed to the ground in 1948, its people forced to flee and among them the poet I now always carry in my heart, Mahmoud Darwish and his family — his

(Continued on page 11)



Joan Nestle

In this issue...

Sometimes stories develop before your eyes. Even if you are the one writing an article you may not guess at the beginning how you will end up when you finish. Our front page feature is precisely such an article. Once I started analysing the raw figures that AIJAC's Jeremy Jones was kind enough to send to me I realised just how much I disagreed with the interpretation that was being universally accepted. Hopefully this research will generate a wide-spread discussion both inside and even outside of our community. If there is any way that you can help with the dissemination of this item which will be placed on our website aids.org.au please do so.

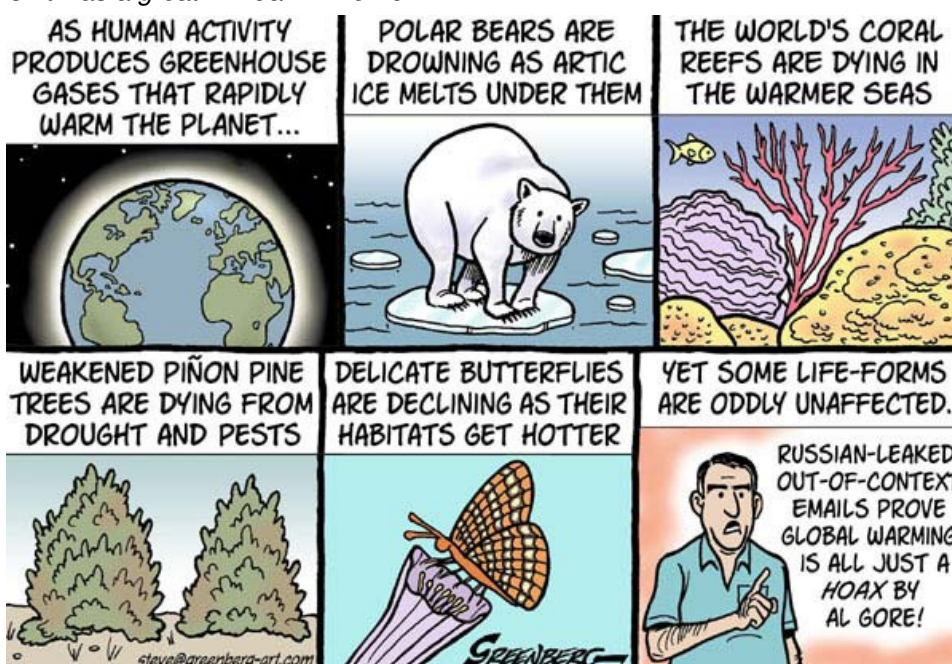
In consequence this column has been exiled to page 11. So let's start with the report of the last month's AJDS activities on **page 3**. It was a great Annual Dinner for

which so many people work so hard and only the most visible get acknowledged. Renate Kamener's son Marty's tribute to her was so moving it just had to go in the Newsletter; You can see it on **pp 8-9**.

This is the **AJDS's** organ and therefore special space has been set on **p4** for the ongoing discussion on the boycott issue. You can

read a proposed policy suggestion as well as an article continuing the debate. Your contributions are needed, particularly if you disagree!

A monthly publication does not specialise in real-time reporting but we have stories of events that simply were not covered properly in either the mainstream or Jewish media. So both the controversial and violent 6 December demonstration and The Zionist Council of Victoria so-called debate on the settlements are covered on **page 5**.



World events affect us as well, and their coverage is continuing. We feature **Joan Nestle's** talk at the Palestine demonstration on **these pages**. In addition there's Israeli journalist Aviv Lavie's article on the discrimination against the Bedouin on **page 12** and **Rabbi Arthur Waskow's** comment on Afghanistan on **page 7**.

Continuing our tradition of bringing material that you are unlikely to see anywhere we have an article on the implicit revolution in thinking embodied in the choice of Elinor Ostrom as Nobel Prize Laureate for Economics on **page 6**. On the same page we also highlight some facts about Paul A Samuelson that the rest of the media chose not to feature. Finally there is a must-read review of Steve Brook's latest book on **p13**.

Now I want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have helped in the production of this Newsletter in 2009: Tom Wolkenberg and Harold Zwier, our unsung heroes of the printing. And of course Ruth Arber, Red Bingham, Pablo Brait, Steve Brook, Pamela Curr, Miriam Faine, Jacob Grech, Margaret Jacobs, Sandy Joffe, Joan

Nestle, Alex Nissen, Vivienne Porzolt, Dan Rabinovici, Deb Reich (Abu Ghosh), Nura Resh (Herzliya), Les Rosenblatt, David Rothfield, Robin Rothfield, Keren Rubinstein, Ilan Salbe, Richard Silverstein (US), David Spratt, Larry Stillman, Zvi Solow (Kibbutz Nirim), Sandra Goldbloom Zurbo and Harold Zwier for their original contributions, advice and assistance in so many ways. Without your help, this Newsletter would have been poorer.

See you next year!

Sol Salbe

(Continued from page 10)

birthplace made invisible except in the words of his poems and on old maps, his very presence made absence, a poet in exile for much of his life, but against the roaring ugliness of Israel's dedication to the eradication of a people, I put the poet's yearning, lovely humanity, "The poem is what lies between a between. It is able to illuminate the night with the breasts of a young woman/it is able to illuminate, with an apple, two bodies/it is able to restore/with the cry of a gardenia, a homeland! The poet brings us back to the occupied body, the place of devastation, he into the night of war brings the perfume of longing, our rights of desire.

Long after the world forgets the name of this Vice Prime Minister of Israel, it will remember the words of Mahmoud Darwish, the poet, for he honours the wonders of life.

Like many others, Joan Nestle left the demonstration before the violence. She heard about it on the phone and added: I want no more violence. Civil disobedience, yes, in the hundreds of thousands, yes, but no more aggressions provoking more aggressions. Enough of this -- we will struggle against the Israeli state as we did against the apartheid South African state but in our own way, with an imagined difference. Blood against blood makes reconciliation impossible. Only the fire's devastation comes this way. We "must alter the inevitability of the abyss." But I am 70.

Vandalism in Avdat: the Bedouins didn't start it

Aviv Lavie

Ma'ariv's Aviv Lavie comments on a terrible incident of vandalism in Avdat, a Nabataean archeological site in southern Israel. Local Bedouin have been accused of destroying and defacing irreplaceable historical artefacts.

The stomach turned at the sight of the destruction in Avdat. Sometimes, it must be said, violence towards inanimate objects, certainly those of historical and cultural value, makes our blood boil more than does violence towards people. After all, those ancient columns cannot hit back.

Minutes after the extent of the vandalism was exposed, rumour spread – with the police's enthusiastic encouragement – that local Bedouins were responsible for it. The truth – one hopes – will be discovered, but in the meantime, and only for the purpose of discussion, I ask you to assume that it indeed was the vandalising joyride of Bedouins seeking revenge for the destruction of their homes.

The automatic response to such a possibility is: what's the point in destroying historical and cultural treasures? What do the Nabataeans have to do with the political conflicts of 2009? Were I able to say anything to the vandals,



Vandalised site in Avdat

I would ask just one thing: let's leave local assets, nature and culture, out of it. Fight the State – not the country. We all have to keep living in it.

It sounds good, but there's another side to this coin: the State of Israel itself does not leave the environment, nature and history out of the political game. On the contrary. It uses these as leverage for its own interests, primarily to dispossess Bedouins and other Arabs of all their rights in this country.

Green arm

To use a child's vernacular; the Bedouins – in case they did have something to do with what happened in Avdat – didn't start it. The Jewish National Fund's people, for instance, took part more than once in the destruction of structures and in conflicts with Bedouins living in the "unrecognised" villages (unrecognised by the State, even though they predate it); under the jurisdiction of the Nature and Parks Authority, a consistent effort has been

made to eliminate Arab history and memory from signs and information centres in the National Fund's forests and reserves.

Only two months ago an article appeared here [in Ma'ariv], telling of the decision to place the responsibility to manage the City of David National Park in the hands of the Elad Settlers' Association, which conducts diggings beneath Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem without hesitation. In the eyes of the Palestinians, this cooperation turns the inspectors of the Nature and Parks Authority into the Occupation's green arm. There is a direct connection between this constant tension and the recent riots in Jerusalem. You cannot take one of the world's historical assets in Jerusalem and turn it into a political tool, and expect that a similar asset in Avdat would remain outside the bounds of the dirty game.

The planning of the southern section of Route 6 is being accelerated -- sixty kilometres of asphalt that will reach the planned Training Bases City.

One has to see the route to believe it: despite the protest of the "Bimkom" planners' association, the road goes through – not next to! – through existing Bedouin villages, which house around 3000 people.

Apparently, one bright morning these people are meant to disappear. The problem of the Bedouin Diaspora is no closer to resolution, the Goldberg Commission's conclusions are piles of dust, but the Bedouins, in the eyes of the planning authorities, do not exist. There is no way to justify the crimes in Avdat; they are despicable, unwise, and will not lead to a solution. But when the State treats tens of thousands of citizens as dust, it should not be surprised that this treatment comes back to all of us, like a boomerang.

Many thanks to Keren Rubinstein who translated this from the original Hebrew.

Steve Brook writes:

This may be sour grapes, but here is a letter of mine that the *Jewish News* chose not to publish:

Morry Sztainbok (AJN 4 December) says that in the Middle East, "the only impediment to peace is a distinct lack of goodwill in the Palestinian leadership". This is after his argument that "If Israelis began killing Arabs..."

One does not like to be the only person to point to the elephant in the lounge room, but surely the violent death rate among Arabs to date has been about three or four times that of Israeli deaths, and most of these casualties have been precisely at Israeli, not Arab hands. This fundamental imbalance is widely acknowledged and understood in the Arab world. Mr Sztainbok, if you were an Arab, wouldn't you be lacking in goodwill, even a tad resentful?

This was ignored in the current issue of Melbourne's Jewish community newspaper, so that elephant seems destined to stay right where he is, just between the piano and the aspidistra. And the paper's readers miss out on a reminder that it might be useful to try wearing someone else's shoes for a change.



Aviv Lavie

A delicate matter of dog poo

Reviewed by Jill Sanguinetti

It's fresh, it's fast, it's freaky, and fiendishly funny.

Rick Arrowsmith, the off-beat hero of *Now Hit Enter* takes us on a satirical romp through community radio, cyber sex, Marxist-Leninist zealotry, religious fanaticism of all persuasions, multicultural coupling, a Balinese jail, a London honeymoon, and more. A few Jewish characters drift in and out of this unlikely combination: a fundamentalist sect called the Moshichites who believe that the Messiah will drop in at any minute to redeem the human race (Jews first), the Jewish Progressive League—denounced by the Workers' Insurrection Party as Zionist and by the Moshichites as self-haters—and Sam Cohen, a remnant of the East London community of Jewish clothiers, who has not yet come to terms with the presence in the East End of people of colour.

Anyone who was a member of Melbourne's Community Radio 3CR in the early 80s, as I was, will identify with the conspiracies and shenanigans that take place as the good volunteers of 3VP (The Voice of the Proletariat) battle to wrest control of the station from a controlling communist faction and save it from losing its licence at a public hearing of the Federal Broadcasting Authority. The Workers' Insurrection Party is finally ousted from the Management Committee by the combined forces of the Catholic Battler, the Church for the Muscular Jesus, the Gardening Program, the Voice of Romania and CLAM, the Catholic Ladyboy Association of Manila. But the dirty tricks of the foiled Marxist-Leninists just get dirtier and dirtier, while our laid-back hero plays some of his own dirty tricks in pursuit of democracy on the airwaves and a fair go. I laughed my head off and had fun trying to work out which if any of Rick's imaginary 3VP characters bore resemblance to the 3CR originals and trying to remember the (then dramatic) sectarian clashes on which Brook's satirical fantasy is based.

In his spare time, Rick roams internet chat rooms in search of soul mates and sexual relief. His sensual encounters on Cumcam, an online brothel, (which relies on webcam, audio linkup and pre-paid credit cards) are hilariously described in an in-your-face, innocently salacious kind of way. But when three of his online lady friends turn up in Melbourne to meet him in person, the

fun gets funnier.

Brook has a quirky turn of phrase and a great eye for the small absurdities of life. Tom Sharpe, eat your heart out! I reckon we have our own home grown Tom Sharpe who (hopefully) will do a job on more of Melbourne's more obscure organisations, sub-cultures and weirdly heroic characters.

I only have two small points of cri-



Jill Sanguinetti

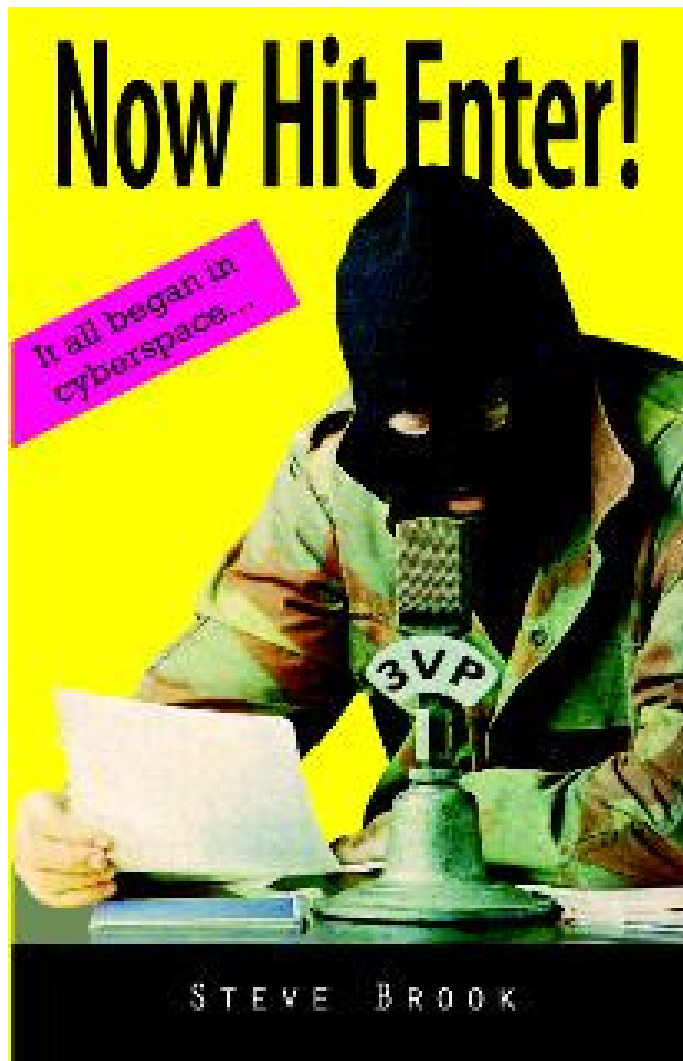
tique—although critique is too strong a word, because basically I think this is a terrific novel that succeeds on a number of levels. Why does Rick refuse to pick up Woggles' poo? As a dog owner and daily poo picker-upper myself, I felt affronted by Rick's arrogant, antisocial attitude to the picking up of his dog's poo, and almost put the book down as a result. I didn't start to like Rick Arrowsmith until his determination to stand up to the sectarian ideologues and promote democratic, community-owned media in the struggle for a better world comes through, several chapters later. (However, these admirable aspirations are at odds with his intransigence on the matter of dog poo.)

Our hero dashes at an alarming pace through a proliferation of themes and scenarios. Yoking together 3CR Community Radio of the late 70s and early 80s, the arrest and imprisonment of Aussie dope smugglers in South East Asia in the 90s, chat rooms and cyber sex in

the 00s and bushfires of recent months is a bit of a stretch. To my mind there is a lot more comedy (not to mention social and political juice) to exploit in each of these themes and I would have preferred a less dizzying skid from one to another.

I won't give away the ending but I think it is brilliant and quite profound. This book would be perfect on a beach holiday, slowly stewing in the sun after a big night out while tuned into Jazz on Tuesday, The Voice of Estrogen, the Gamelan Appreciation Society or their 3CR equivalents. Keep writing Steve!

***Now hit enter!* by Steve Brook, available from selected bookshops and from Australian Book Group, (03) 5625 4290.**



Ramla or Ramallah: crossing borders and boundaries

Britain Eakin

On the Muslim holiday of Eid Al Adha, I travelled to Tel Aviv for a belated Thanksgiving celebration with a dear friend, who I will call Yael. Yael is a Jewish Israeli with dual American citizenship whom I met in the US years ago, long before I knew anything about Israel or Palestine. However, as I've become more politically aware concerning Palestine, our friendship has developed an uncomfortable tension. This tension was particularly agitated when I started posting articles on Facebook that were critical of Israeli policies in Palestine, the height of which occurred during Operation Cast Lead, along with my outspoken criticism of it.

My political expressions via Facebook deeply offended Yael, who saw my posts as one-sided and interpreted them as a direct personal attack on her. The hurt ran so deep that even until very recently it was uncertain if our friendship would survive our political differences. This meeting was our first since the tension erupted and since I've been in Palestine this time, and was a sincere attempt to repair our damaged friendship.



One of Ramallah's main streets

Last year when I was here, I spent a significant amount of time in Israel, much of it with Yael. This time I've mostly stayed in the West Bank and have ventured into Israel on very few occasions. The hassle of crossing

Kalandia checkpoint often deters me, yet when I do go I try to engage with Jewish Israelis, making a point not to shy away from telling them I live in Ramallah. I do this for two reasons: one because I enjoy the looks of shock on their faces when I tell them I live here, and two because I enjoy hearing their responses, which are quite telling.

Very curious of "the other side"

On this trip the initial responses were the same without fail; with complete looks of surprise on their faces; they all asked me if I said "Ramla (a mixed Jewish-Arab city inside Israel) or Ramallah," as if I could not possibly have said the latter. Once it becomes clear that I did indeed say "Ramallah", a series of questions inevitably ensues; in my experience, Jewish Israelis become very curious when they encounter someone who actually lives on "the other side." I am a strange and interesting creature to them.

Yael and I spent Eid preparing a Thanksgiving feast and discussing the tension between us. As we cooked we took turns sharing our feelings with each other and tried to reach an understanding of where the other person was coming from. In the end, we decided to let bygones be bygones but did not come to a decision about how to walk the delicate political line of our friendship. In the past, we mulled over the idea of never discussing politics

again. Yet even if we had made that decision I don't believe it would stick. My life in Ramallah is much too interesting to ignore for a Jewish Israeli who has never been to the West Bank, and my conscience won't let me shy away from what I have borne witness to here.

After we finished cooking, Yael and I took the food over to her friend's house where five of her friends, all British Jews, joined us for the feast. Halfway into the meal, the daughter of one of Yael's friends asked me where I live. I told her I live in Ramallah, at which point her eyes grew wide and she asked me "Ramla, or Ramallah?" Once I clarified that I live in Ramallah, the questioning commenced.

Life is different to image

The first question asked was whether or not I have to cover my hair here. I told them it's not necessary, and pointed out the considerable Christian minority in Palestine, to which one of them responded that she thought all Palestinians were Muslims. They were also surprised to learn that you can buy alcohol here, and that some restaurants actually serve it. They asked about my social life, wanting to know if I socialise with Palestinians or other foreigners. I told them my contact with other foreigners is very limited and that I mostly interact with Palestinians. They inquired about what kind of television is available here and if we get any Israeli stations. They also asked if I feel safe here, to which I responded that I feel so safe I have no problem walking home alone late at night.

Additionally, they wanted to know if I was questioned while crossing Kalandia checkpoint – I told them I only have to show my passport photo and my most recent entry visa. I could tell as they questioned me about the checkpoint that it represents a clear boundary in their minds; one between safety and danger. The idea of a checkpoint seems to put their minds at ease concerning who has access to Israel.

As they questioned me it became very clear that my choice to live in Ramallah politicises me whether I like it or not, making me a conduit for information. Although many Jewish Israelis I've met have expressed a deep-seated fear of Palestine and Palestinians, they are also eager to know what it's like here, and I represent a portal into what is perceived as a forbidden world of danger. Yet as the girls questioned me, I began to realise just how serious the gap between the two places has grown, and I also realised the lack of accurate information they have about Israeli policies, leading them to be largely unaware of what the reality of life is like for Palestinians.

For example, the Goldstone Report came up briefly and one of the girls stated that the report was a farce because it only criticised Israel. I asked if she had read the report and she said no; this means her beliefs about the report are shaped entirely by the media and hearsay, which clearly omitted the fact that the report condemned the firing of rockets into Israeli civilian territory as war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity. More accurate information about Palestine and Israeli policies in the territories is readily available – it seems to me a matter of

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seeking to know or choosing to block it out. Yet even if most of the time the choice is made to block it out, the choice I've made to live in Ramallah invariably forces the issue of Palestine to the surface, making it impossible to ignore in my presence.

As someone who has the privilege of being able to travel freely between the two places, I realise that I am at times a bridge between the two worlds, particularly as contact between the two peoples becomes more severely limited. I am not entirely comfortable in this role and have not yet figured out the best way to navigate the crossing of these

boundaries. It is important for me to hear Yael's perspectives, but it is also important for me to find a way of expressing my own personal truths, whether it be telling my Palestinian friends that I have Israeli friends in Tel-Aviv, or telling my Israeli friends what their government and army is doing in the Palestinian territories. For now I will continue to live in Ramallah and hope that some good, no matter how small it might be, will come from my presence here and my ability to cross boundaries.

Britain Eakin is a writer for the Media and Information Program at the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH). She can be contacted at mip@miftah.org.

Tiger Woods deserves your scrutiny

Dave Zirin

During the Bill Clinton impeachment idiocy of 1998, many on the Left said if Clinton were removed from office, let it be for gutting welfare or for imposing sanctions on Iraq, and not the affair Lewinsky.

Today, Tiger Woods, the most famous, wealthy and most PR conscious athlete on earth, finally finds himself subject to scrutiny. But, similar to Clinton's scandal, it has more to do with his personal life than issues of substance. In Woods's roughly fourteen years in the public eye, he has never even been caught littering. His image has been cemented as a man of ungodly intensity.

This squeaky-clean reputation has helped Woods become the richest athlete in history, the first billion-dollar man. His career course earnings are \$92 million. Only when you factor in advertisements, corporate appearances and other off-course aspects of "Tiger Inc" does Woods reach billionaire status.

As the saying goes, behind every great fortune is a great crime. Following his car "accident" Woods's agent said that it is unclear whether he will attend his foundation's Chevron World Challenge Golf Tournament. In 2008, Chevron entered a five-

year relationship with Tiger Woods' foundation under the guise of philanthropy. But if Woods had a shred of social conscience, this partnership would never have existed. Lawsuits have been issued against Chevron for dumping toxic waste all over the planet. Alaska, Canada, Brazil, Angola and California have all accused Chevron of dumping. Even worse, Chevron has a partnership with Burma's ruling military junta on the country's Yadana gas pipeline project, the single greatest source of revenue for the military, estimated at nearly \$5 billion since the year 2000.

Ka Hsaw Wa, co-founder and executive director of Earth-Rights International, wrote in an open letter to Woods, "I

myself have spoken to victims of forced labour, rape, and torture on Chevron's pipeline --if you heard what they said to me, you too would understand how their tragic stories stand in stark contrast to Chevron's rhetoric about helping communities." Chevron is underwriting a dictatorship but Tiger Woods apparently sees them as upstanding corporate partners.

Then there is Dubai, the site of the first Tiger Woods-designed golf course. Located at the southern coast of the Persian Gulf, Dubai has been a symbol of both economic excess, and most recently, economic collapse. It has been called an "adult Disneyland" -- complete with indoor ski resorts and unspeakable human rights violations. As Johann Hari wrote in the *Independent*, it is a city that has been built over the last thirty years by slave labour. Paid foreign labourers work in more than 37 degree

heat for less than three dollars a day. Dubai also has a reputation as ground zero of the global sex trade. The Tiger Woods Golf Course cost \$100 million and Woods said nary a word about his benefactor's business practices. This is business as usual for Tiger, who would sooner swallow a five-iron than take anything resembling a political stand.

Now that Woods appears to have been

involved in a domestic dispute, the media is wondering if there is "another Tiger". They are desperate to pillory the man for his personal problems. It would be more appropriate if they took this opportunity to scrutinise him for the right reasons. Woods has every right to keep his personal problems personal. But when he makes deals that benefit dictatorships and unaccountable corporations, all in the name of his billion-dollar brand, he deserves no privacy.

Dave Zirin is the author of *A People's History of Sports in the United States*. Receive his column every week by emailing dave@edgeofsports.com.



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