



AJDS Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 2

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society

March 2009

Getting Durban II in focus: our view

For many members of our community, the word "Durban" is indelibly associated with antisemitism. The primary reason for this is not so much the September 2001 World Conference against Racism as the associated NGO Forum, which was unquestionably marred by virulent antisemitic behaviour by a number of Non-Government Organisations.

Unfortunately, the bitter taste left by the NGO Forum has led to the stigmatisation of the whole UN anti-racism conference by overzealous critics who have not mentioned the positive aspects of the event. Of course not all the NGOs behaved appallingly, but the blatant antisemitism of some tarred the official gathering of government representatives as well. This is why, by conflating the NGO Forum with the main conference, many members of our community believe that the whole meeting was antisemitic.

When UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson was shown an example of a clearly antisemitic publication she stood up, waved the offending booklet and said: "This conference is aimed at achieving human dignity. My husband is a cartoonist, I love political cartoons, but when I see the racism in this cartoon booklet of the Arab Lawyers' Union, I must say that I am a Jew -- for those victims are hurting. I know that you people will not understand easily, but you are my friends, so I tell you that I am a Jew, and I will not allow this fractiousness to torpedo the conference."

Other UN officials also condemned the behaviour of some NGOs.

It might be useful to look at what actually happened in 2001.

The official Durban declaration comprised 60 pages of detailed discussion of racism affecting Asians, Africans, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, Roma or gypsies, Jews and Muslims. Thoroughly acceptable recom-

mendations were made about how to address the causes of racism, to prevent it, and to establish remedies for its victims. The declaration expressed "deep concern" about "the increase in antisemitism and Islamophobia" and in racism and violence against "Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities" alike.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was strongly reaffirmed in the conference declaration. All states were called upon to counter antisemitism, and there was a declaration that the Holocaust must never be forgotten. Those who argue that reaffirming Durban I through the Durban II meeting in Geneva amounts to Holocaust denial are simply not telling the truth and are exaggerating the extent of the problem. In fact, only **6 out of 341** paragraphs of Durban I refer to Israel/Palestine.

The first of the six paragraphs says: "We recall that the Holocaust must never be forgotten." The second states: "We recognise with deep concern the increase in antisemitism and Islamophobia in various parts of the world, as well as the emergence of racial and violent movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities."

The remaining paragraphs include references to "the plight of the Palestinian people" and "the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel," as well as calling upon "Israel and the Palestinians to resume the peace process, and to develop and prosper in security and freedom." The rest of that paragraph reads: "We recognise the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State and we recognise the right to security for all States in the region, including Israel, and call upon all States to support the peace process and bring it to an early conclusion."

The AJDS concurs with both the sentiments expressed

(Continued on page 2)

Renate Kamener 1933-2009

As we went to press we received the sad news that Renate Kamener passed away on 12 March. Renate was a mainstay of the AJDS Executive and a long-time activist who played a major role in our organisation. We will do justice to our dear friend, colleague and comrade and to her memory in our next issue.

A celebration of Renate's life will be held on Sunday, 22 March from 4pm at Leo Baeck Centre, 31 Harp Rd, Kew

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

sjbrook1@bigpond.com

Helen Rosenbaum

hrose@vic.chariot.net.au

Les Rosenblatt

wandjina@vicnet.net.au

Sol Salbe

ssalbe@westnet.com.au

Larry Stillman

larryjhs@fastmail.fm

Tom Wolkenberg

lintom@bigpond.com

Harold Zwier

hz@doublez.com.au

David Zyngier

sndz@bigpond.com

Newsletter Committee

Steve Brook, Miriam Faine, Margaret Jacobs, Vivienne Porzsolt, 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.

In this issue...

*At the last Editorial Committee meeting we resolved to give the issues of Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens a special emphasis. But the best laid out plans of rodents and humans easily go astray. Strong anecdotal evidence of the antisemitic ripples of Operation Cast Lead convinced us to look at this, and you can read our feature on antisemitism on **pp6-7**. For Israelis the implications were different and **Naomi Chazan** reflects on the feelings of a troubled Israeli on **pp8-9**.*

*The debate on the merits of **Waltz with Bashir** is in a way another consequence of the Gaza War. Director Ari Folman's silence triggered several articles in the Israeli and the International media. The result, Steve Brook tells me, is simply an interesting debate. You can read my compilation of comments as well as a translation of a leading media figure's take on **pp 10-11**. One would guess that the NSW Greens who invited **Vivienne Porzsolt** to address them were also influenced by the war. The reports of her speech were so impressive that I had to read it for myself. Now you too can read it on **pp 12-13**.*

If it were up to me, the Newsletter would be full of articles about Charles Darwin (p14). It is the kind of perspective often missing from the mainstream media. Instead, future editions will include more on the Israeli elections (p3) and the Durban II conference (front cover).

Sol Salbe

(Continued from page 1)

and the words used here, as have many governments and organisations around the world.

Where we differ with Durban I is with the focus on Israel, to the exclusion of problems in race and ethnic relations in neighbouring countries under authoritarian regimes, particularly the use and promotion of racist, antisemitic stereotypes in their media.

A whiff of hypocrisy is involved here. In a litany of charges against Israel, one is conspicuous by its absence: Israel's highly unsatisfactory treatment of Sudanese refugees. But lambasting Israel for this would expose those who made the Darfuris and other Africans refugees in the first place.

Other accusations made against Durban II include the fact that the review committee is chaired by Libya, Cuba, and Iran, but such a role is formal, rather than functional, and has no effect on what is proposed. In addition, there are vice chairs and other functionaries from many democracies who have equal rights. The organisers of the Durban II preparatory event managed to schedule events on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which only adds fat to the fire, but then, Kevin Rudd had the same problem with his National Summit coinciding with Pesach...

The question remains -- what to do about Durban II?

On balance, we hold the view that a boycott would be ineffective. The UN itself is strongly concerned not to have another mess. "The Durban review conference is not, and should not be been as, a repetition of the 2001 World Conference," according to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour in her opening statement to the preparatory committee. "It is rather a platform to evaluate progress, an opportunity to reinvigorate commitments, and a vehicle to fine-tune responses in a purposeful and contextual manner."

Boycotting the conference will only leave the extremists free to impose their views on others. It would be far better to engage with them and help to negotiate appropriate and relevant resolutions which act as an international benchmark.

Racism is a scourge on humanity, and our country is well positioned to lead the fight against it. Despite the doomsayers, Australia should be represented at Geneva.

AJDS EXECUTIVE

New faces at 2009 AJDS AGM

[Contributed]

The shift workers like Dan Rabinovici and Yair Solow were missing; it's the luck of the draw with them. The "usual suspects" whom we see each year: June Factor, Judy Zimmerman, Solomon Gotlib, Leon Midalia, Robin Rothfield, Alison Harcourt, Richard Harcourt, Red Bingham and Paul Rappoport were there in force as were members of the Executive. There were familiar faces such as Linda Wyse, Miriam Faine and Eva Faine. But it was good to see some less familiar faces such as Joan Nestle, Eva White and Margaret Jacobs. In short, the Annual General Meeting was a veritable liquorice allsorts.

We noticed them all because to a large degree the Executive took a back row, giving members a chance to express their opinions on various subjects, from who our friends are (various opinions), can we recruit younger people? (optimists and pessimists) and this *Newsletter* (a rare unanimity – everyone liked it and wanted it to continue.)

Of course we noticed the absence of stalwarts of such as Norman Rothfield and Bob Kamener but the meeting took particular note of Renate Kamener's absence on account of her serious illness and sent the AGM's best wishes to her. [That feeling was mutual: Renate was very glad to hear of the positive tone of the AGM report.]

The members of the AJDS gathered on Sunday 8 February in a new location, one more suitable for less mobile members. [On the other hand, nothing can compare with the views from the "tree house" and sadly it was missed by many.]

The usual items were all there on the agenda. An outcome of the Finance Report was the meeting's decision to remove the effects of time of payment from the mem-

bership number by standardising the count as of 30 June each year. The treasurer, however, wishes to point out that anyone who has not yet paid their 2009 membership fee should not wait till the middle of the year, but pay it now. Membership becomes due on 1 January. In the *Newsletter* report we heard about the ten issues produced last year with the bulk of the discussion concerning increasing distribution, and how it can be done. In accepting the report, the meeting moved its appreciation to the Editorial Committee but in particular to Sol Salbe.

The bulk of the meeting time concerned members' views on the organisation itself, with almost everyone putting a point of view. It was a pleasure to hear so many people getting involved. Many contributions were based on the Executive summary of our "tasks and perspectives" as well as on a written submission by Robin Rothfield, both of which had been circulated in advance.

Of particular interest was the discussion on a new website for AJDS. This will soon come to fruition, so readers are urged to watch this space.

Two resolutions were carried: It was recommended that AJDS empower three people to make statements together on behalf of the organisation in times of urgency. [That has been duly done in the meantime: Steve Brook, Helen Rosenbaum and Larry Stillman were selected.] It was also recommended that the Executive appoint a media spokesperson. At its first meeting, the new Executive appointed Les Rosenblatt for the role.

The new executive reflects some of the generational changes in the organisation: Steve Brook, Renate Kamener, Helen Rosenbaum, Les Rosenblatt, Sol Salbe, Larry Stillman, Tom Wolkenberg, Harold Zwier and David Zyngier.

AJDS'S FUTURE: INVITATION TO A PLANNING WORKSHOP

The AJDS Executive would like to invite members to participate in a dynamic workshop aimed at confirming what AJDS's purpose is, what we want to achieve and how we will do it. The workshop will be held as two half-day sessions, with the first on Sunday, 29 March.

A statement of our basic principles appears on the inside cover of each *Newsletter*. However, these do not clearly express the AJDS's overall purpose. The purpose of the first session will be to clarify what this is, and also what changes AJDS would need to make over the next few years in order to realise its goal. These changes may be both internal to the organisation as well as in the external environment. Examples of the latter for other advocacy organisations commonly include developing relationships with other organisations, achieving a higher profile in certain sectors of the community or media, influencing community attitudes in certain ways and so on. Your input will be most welcome.

The second session will explore the most effective way to achieve our goals and objectives – that is, what activities, strategies/tactics and tools we should use. It will also help us clarify who are AJDS's stakeholders – allies, competitors/opponents and advocacy targets. The date for the second session is tentatively set for a fortnight later, on 12

April, but it is not yet set in concrete.

We believe that being clear about our goals, objectives and activities will enable us to work more proactively. Once we can express these succinctly, it will also help us to engage with other like-minded individuals or organisations and to recruit new members -- including younger people who may be looking to be inspired by a more vibrant organisation.

So what will the first session look like? Tune up both sides of your brain, and be prepared to be creative! This session will comprise a series of exercises looking at:

- How AJDS has functioned in the past and how it might work in the future?
- What significant changes has AJDS contributed to/ what impacts has it achieved?
- What impacts does AJDS want to achieve in the long term (big picture goal) and what changes in the short-medium term should AJDS be working towards to achieve its goal (objectives)?
- What lessons can be learned from AJDS's past to help it make a difference in the future?

(Continued on page 4)

Israeli elections – the big change is in Washington

Sol Salbe

It's said that truth is often revealed by what is said in jest. In that case, the number of jokes alluding to the greater interest that Israelis showed in the final phases of their Big Brother reality TV program than in their national elections tells us something. Of course, the argument could be made that the contrasts between the candidates on Big Brother may have been more substantive.

Superficially, this may sound ridiculous: what other country in the world offers such a bounty of different political parties, as Israel? The trouble of course is that there may have been lots of contesting parties, but not so many contrasting policies.

The election campaign coincided with the Gaza war. Without exception, all the "Jewish" parties supported the war. [Meretz was opposed to the ground offensive, but just as in Lebanon two and half years earlier, it mouthed the same pro-war arguments at the beginning.]

It is also relevant that the differences within some parties are bigger than those between the parties. This was brought out during the post-election negotiations to form a coalition. Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu had a natural coalition of 65 rightwingers. For various reasons, he wanted to persuade Kadima leader Tzipi Livni to join his coalition. Livni gave him a simple test. She wanted to hear him say that he supported a two-state solution. Netanyahu declined. Had he agreed to say this, at least two of his minor allies would have bolted the coalition. But Livni cannot be sure of support to the notion within her own party: *Ma'ariv* columnist Shalom Yerushalmi ran a Google search combining the name of Livni's deputy Shaul Mofaz with the words "Palestinian State". Yerushalmi was unable to find any statement of support for such a state by Mofaz in either Hebrew or English.

At any rate, as Haaretz columnist Akiva Eldar has not ceased to remind us, Livni may be formally committed to a two-state solution but she has made no progress over the years and months during which she has been conducting negotiations with the Palestinians. No progress whatsoever has been made in the negotiations. She, too, would prefer the negotiations to continue forever while Israel continues to establish facts on the ground. Livni's and all the other parties apart from Meretz are unwilling to tackle a confrontation with the settlers that would ensue had she agreed to an

(Continued from page 3)

The workshop will be facilitated by Helen Rosenbaum, a new member of the AJDS Executive. Although born and raised in Melbourne, Helen discovered fairly early in life she was a country girl at heart. She and her partner have lived in rural South East Queensland and now western Victoria near the stunning Gariwerd area (Grampians National Park). Helen works in the area of community development and has experience with local community organisations as well as many environmental and socially oriented organisations in Papua New Guinea. While she may be new to the Executive, a search of the files for an-

agreement for two states based more-or-less on the Green Line (the border as of the morning of 5 June 1967).

Much as been made of the spectacular success of Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu (Israel is our home), which obtained 15 seats and the third position in the Knesset. Lieberman's views are seen as extremist, but in many respects he only articulated the views that others had implicitly hinted at. The notion that human rights are not dependent on a loyalty test but are inherited by all human beings is alien to Israeli culture. This is something taken up in a big way by Shulamit Aloni in her new Hebrew book, literally translated as Democracy in Handcuffs. (The proposed English title is Democracy or Ethnocracy.) Aloni deals with the subject in detail in the interview I was able to get with her late last year, which will be published in the next Newsletter. But one does not need to steal Aloni's thunder. The point was that, again with the exception of Meretz, all parties were happy to include a loyalty test in the next government's guidelines.

Again this touches on another important subject which we will also be featuring next month: Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens and their rights. Even the first Arab government minister Rajab Majadele finds it difficult to sing a national anthem which talks about the hope within the Jewish heart. He stands up for the anthem but doesn't sing it.

In the meantime, who will govern Israel? As we go to press it seems almost certain that Netanyahu will lead a coalition of 65 rightwing MKs. The trouble with that coalition is that it will further damage Israel's international reputation. Imagine all the brakes taken off the settlement project! [The settlements expanded significantly when the government was committed to keeping them in check!] And to top it all, Avigdor Lieberman as Foreign Minister! Wisely, Tzipi Livni, by going into Opposition, chose not to provide a fig leaf for the country's most rightwing government

The biggest problem for such a government, however, will be the administration of someone in another country who was elected a few months earlier. The policies of the Netanyahu government on everything from Iran to a two-state solution are in sharp contrast to those of the Obama Administration. In Bernard Avishai's words, the Leader of the Opposition is now in Washington.

other matter came up with a missive from her expressing an interest in our previous attempt at the issue, initiated by Robin Rothfield, back in December 2004! She is keen to assist AJDS to more effectively achieve its mission of being a "A Jewish voice among progressives and a progressive voice among Jews". She would also like to invite anyone else who has had experience with these kinds of workshops to contact her, as she is always keen to learn from (and use) the experience of others.

Sunday, 29 March, 9.45am – 1.15pm
BYO snacks to share.

Naomi Klein withholds judgement on Obama

Haroon Siddiqui

Naomi Klein shot to international fame eight years ago with her book *No Logo*, which has since sold 1 million copies. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, published 15 months ago, has already sold 800,000 copies and been translated into 26 languages. Last week, a documentary based on the book was released at the Berlin Film Festival.

Her speaking engagements and political activism keep her on the road, around the world. Her newsletter goes to 30,000 subscribers.

No Logo charted the corporate commodification of youth pop culture and the casualisation of labour (what's sold in the West are expensive brands, not products, which can be manufactured cheaply in the East).

The Shock Doctrine is about the globalisation of the neo-



conservative ideas pioneered by Chicago economist Milton Friedman and popularised by Ronald Reagan. There was the massive privatisation -- not only of public services at home but wars abroad (private security forces and contractors galore in Iraq and Afghanistan) and even disaster relief (post-tsunami and Katrina). There was the deregulation of the markets, which led, inevitably, to the current economic meltdown.

Critics attack her for seeing corporate conspiracies. They particularly sneer at her hypothesis, announced in the book's subtitle, that right-wing economic policies have faced such popular resistance that they can only be introduced in the jet stream of shock-and-awe wars and natural disasters (laying off tens of thousands of Iraqis in order to sell state enterprises; building tourist beach hotels in Southeast Asian fishing villages washed away by the tsunami).

Prescience

Her admirers see the economic crisis as proof of her prescience.

The *New Yorker* magazine recently ran a 12-page profile: "She has become the most visible and influential figure on the American Left -- what Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky were 30 years ago."

She has campaigned against the University of Chicago's plan to build a \$200 million Milton Friedman Institute to

honour its former professor, who died in 2006. "The crash on Wall Street should be for Friedmanism what the fall of the Berlin Wall was for authoritarian communism, an indictment of an ideology," she has said. In a twist of fate, the economic crisis has dried up funding for the institute, and it has been put on hold -- much to her delight.

In an interview, Klein, 38, said she welcomes the election of Barack Obama. But she has two problems: his refusal to insist on accountability for recent American misdemeanours abroad and at home; and his "narrative that everything went wrong only eight years ago" with the election of George W Bush.

It was Bill Clinton who periodically bombed Iraq and tightened the economic sanctions that killed a million Iraqis, including 500,000 children, according to UNICEF. It was he who axed the Depression-era restrictions that had prevented investment banks from also being commercial banks. He and Alan Greenspan resisted the regulation of the huge derivatives industry.

Amnesia

If you develop amnesia about all that, "then you do exactly what Obama is doing. You resurrect the Clinton economic and foreign policy apparatus, and you appoint Larry Summers, the key architect of the economic policy that has imploded at this moment."

Obama's economic recovery plan, especially the bank bailout, is a disaster.

It is "layering complexity over complexity. What got us into this mess in the first place were these complex financial instruments that nobody understood. Now they have a bailout that nobody understands.

"The facts are easy to understand, namely, that these banks are bankrupt and they should be allowed to go under or be nationalised because there also needs to be a workable financial sector.

"The amount of money that's at stake in the bailout -- if you include everything, the deposit guarantees, the loans, Fannie May and Freddie Mac and AIG -- is now up to \$9 trillion. The American GDP is only \$14 trillion. So they've put more than half the American economy on the line to try to fix a mess that actually cannot be fixed in this way. Just look at what happened to Iceland. The debt that their three top banks held was 10 times their GDP. You can bankrupt the country this way."

Obama's stimulus package is not big enough. Almost 40 per cent goes to tax cuts. "And to pay for the cuts, they had to drastically scale back much more important and stimulative spending, on such things as public transport."

Among the many parallels to the 1930s, the one Klein



Naomi Klein

(Continued on page 9)

Is antisemitism on the rise?

Compiled by Sol Salbe

Is antisemitism on the rise? The anecdotal evidence, and we each have our stories [see box] certainly suggests so. But what about the more scientific approach? Several writers have recently ventured into this territory. Let us look at some of the surveys.

The most thorough approach was that of Frank Furedi in Spike online. Furedi starts by reminding us "that there is a powerful subjective and interpretative element to how we characterise another individual's words and behaviour -- and these acts of interpretation can be influenced by un-

stated cultural and political assumptions."

For a start, he contends, "contemporary Western culture continually encourages groups that perceive themselves as victims to inflate the wrongs perpetuated against them. As a result, we are always being told that racism is more prevalent than ever before, or that homophobia and Islamophobia

are rising, or that sexual discrimination is more powerful than in the past. It is unthinkable today for advocacy groups to concede that prejudice and discrimination against their members have decreased, and that the status of their community or people has improved. Such groups are acutely sensitive to how they are represented in the media, and to the language in which they are discussed and described. And this identity-based sensitivity is shared by Jewish organisations, too, which in recent decades have often been all-too-willing to interpret what are in fact confused and ambiguous references to their people as expressions of antisemitism."

I had a perfect example of this: a couple of months ago I was abused by a couple of youths on a bike. They shouted "Osama bin-Laden!" in my direction. Yes, it's possible that they were quick enough to note the Jewish Voice for Peace sticker on my car, and that they figured out that Osama is indeed an enemy of Jewish peaceniks. So it may have been an antisemitic incident. Alternatively, they were not capable of telling one person of Middle Eastern appearance from another and, seeing that there is a mosque around the corner, used bin Laden's name as a way to abuse to all Arabs and Muslims by calling them/me terrorist. So it could have been an anti-Muslim incident.

Therefore, Furedi argues, "the charge that a certain statement is 'antisemitic' should not be accepted at face value. Statements and acts need to be analysed and interpreted in the context in which they were made or carried out. It is particularly important to resist the temptation to characterise speech or behaviour as antisemitic by second-guessing its real meaning. An objective assessment demands analysis of what was actually said, rather than speculation about its 'true' or 'hidden' meaning."

But then there is the elephant in the room: in recent decades, those described in shorthand as the Israel-first crowd "have developed the unfortunate habit of labelling criticisms of Israel as a form of antisemitism. The aim of

these rhetorical attacks is to devalue the moral standing of Israel's critics, and thus avoid having to deal with their often difficult, persuasive arguments. The cumulative impact of this very defensive response to criticism of Israel is to undermine the moral weight of charges of antisemitism. Those who are anti-Zionist are often able to accuse Israeli politicians and their supporters of 'hiding behind' the charge of antisemitism. Worse still, the pro-Israel movement's propagandistic association of anti-Zionism with antisemitism has encouraged others to erode the conceptual distinction between Zionism and Jews."

Lying with figures

We don't have to go far to see the way figures are presented. On 3 December the *Australian Jewish News* reported that Australian Jews suffered a record 652 anti-Semitic incidents in the 12 months to October, almost twice the average of the past 18 years. The 2007-08 tally was two per cent above that of the period ending September 30 last year. So when the rise is a mere 2 per

cent, a statistically insignificant figure, the paper chose to use the unusual comparison to the average of the 18 previous years in order to show some growth.

This determination to show an increase was taken by Israeli academic Ran Hacoen. He took issue with a statement by Abe Foxman of the US Anti-defamation League [equivalent of our own ADC] on the subject. Foxman – not a man of understatement – made it into



Ran Hacoen

the headlines by decrying "a pandemic of anti-Semitism" as a consequence of Operation Cast Lead: the crisis was "the worst, the most intense, the most global that it has been in most of our memories."

Hacoen continued: "Operation Cast Lead began on 27 December, 2008. Now the ADL survey was conducted from 1 December 200 to 13 January, 2009; that is, its last third was conducted during the devastation of Gaza. If there is an 'antisemitic pandemic' due to the Gaza events, as Foxman claims, a serious survey should have made a clear distinction between data collected before and after the outbreak of that 'pandemic'. Actually, the ADL should have simply read its own survey to see the necessity of making such a distinction: one of its findings is that '23 per cent of those surveyed say that their opinion of Jews is influenced by the actions taken by the state of Israel.'

"At any rate – careful scientific distinctions aside – if all this were true, a survey conducted partly after the outbreak of the Gaza atrocities would be influenced by the alleged 'pandemic' and show a significant rise in antisemitism.

"Was this the case? Not quite. Actually, as the ADL admits, 'A comparison with the 2007 survey indicates that over the past two years levels of antisemitism have re-

(Continued on page 7)



Frank Furedi

(Continued from page 6)

mained steady in six of the seven countries tested.' Who was the party-pooper? Great Britain, of course, home of some of the most effective initiatives to boycott Israel: 'The United Kingdom was the only country in which there was a marked decline' in antisemitism. Steadiness in six continental countries, a marked decline in the UK – and this in a survey conducted partly during an alleged 'pandemic' of anti-Semitism. Go figure."

Not cut and dried

But even if AIJAC's Jeremy Jones and the ADL can be accused of exaggerating the figures, there are other underlying trends. Furedi again. And this time he deals with what he regards as the biggest problem: "Because in

contemporary Europe there are many and various obstacles to the expression of antisemitic sentiments in their traditional form, prejudice towards Jews is now likely to be expressed indirectly, through other issues. Although criticism of Israel can and should be conceptually distinguished from prejudice towards Jewish people, in recent years there has been a significant erosion of the distinction between these two phe-

nomena. As a result, some people have embraced the anti-Israeli cause as a way of making a statement about their attitude towards Jews. As a sociologist, I am well aware of the danger of attributing a sentiment to a statement that is not explicitly stated -- which is why this discussion needs to be handled with care, and why such interpretative statements about today's anti-Israeli/antisemitic outlook need to be clearly justified.

"So recently, during a demonstration against Israel's actions in Gaza, the Dutch Socialist Party MP Harry Van Bommel called for a new Intifada against Israel. Of course he has every right to express this political viewpoint. However, he became an accomplice of antisemites when he chose to do nothing upon hearing chants of ' Hamas, Hamas, all Jews to the gas ' and similar anti-Jewish slogans. Many people who should know better now keep quiet when they hear slogans like 'Kill the

Jews ' or ' Jews to the oven ' on anti-Israel demonstrations. At a recent protest in London, such chants provoked little reaction from individuals who otherwise regard themselves as progressive anti-racists -- and nor did they appear to be embarrassed by the sight of a man dressed as a racist Jewish caricature, wearing a ' Jew mask ' with a crooked nose while pretending to eat bloodied babies."

Antisemitism on the Left

Furedi has one more issue: One consequence of the rise of overt antisemitism among some Muslim youth is that it has given permission to others to express more traditional forms of European antisemitism. Old antisemitic themes about Jews having too much power and influence have become widespread in recent years. However, the

most striking development has been the absorption of such sentiments by Europeans who politically identify themselves as left wing.

Those who are active in left-wing politics are unlikely to hold coherent anti-Jewish prejudices. Nonetheless, one disturbing development in recent years has been the reluctance of left-wing anti-Israel protesters to challenge explicit manifestations of antisemitism. This accommodation

I don't know what my neighbour had been celebrating, but on the evening of Australia Day he was just removing his flag as I passed by. He offered it to me, but when I didn't take it, he said he supposed I wanted a "Jewish flag". He then laughed at the Israelis for being scared of a "few little rockets". To top it all, he asked me if I didn't agree that "Hitler should have finished the job". I was too shocked to reply, as he knows that I am a Jewish child holocaust survivor. Today is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, but it seems racial hatred is never far from the surface. A few drinks causing a little disinhibition, and out it comes.

I hear that I am not the only Jew to be the recipient of racial slurs at this time. As a result of the war in Gaza, some of those who believe that all Jews are rabid Zionists and support uncritically every policy of the Israeli government have been revealing their latent racism. Like half of the Jewish population all over the world, I condemn the war in Gaza with its loss of life and destruction of property. Perhaps the popular media are somewhat responsible for the perception that the weapons being fired into Israel are only "little rockets".

If this country is in fact celebrating the arrival of the first white people from Britain, it is no wonder that the less aware get carried away. If we must have an "Australia Day", let us have it on a day that is significant for all Australians and let us be quite clear what we are celebrating. Perhaps one day we may be able to celebrate the end of racial hatred.

A letter from an AJDS Member

to prejudice is often motivated by moral cowardice. Others try to justify their failure to challenge antisemitism by arguing that criticising the prejudices held by some Muslim youth will only let Israel off the hook.

The most worrying dynamic in Europe today is not the explicit vitriol directed against Jews by radical Muslim groups or far-right parties, but the new culture of accommodation to antisemitism. We can see the emergence of a slightly embarrassed 'see nothing, hear nothing' attitude that shows far too much 'understanding' towards expressions of antisemitism. Typically, the response to anti-Jewish prejudice is to argue that it is not antisemitic, just anti-Israeli. Sometimes even politically correct adherents to the creeds of diversity and anti-racism manage to switch off when it comes to confronting anti-Jewish comments .

Reflections of a troubled Israeli

Naomi Chazan

These are bleak days for progressive Israelis. The offensive on Gaza, which should never have been launched, has left a trail of death, trauma, destruction and despondency. The after-effects of those horrible three weeks are most obvious in Gaza, where the monumental task of emotional and physical rehabilitation is an Israeli as well as a global responsibility. They are also evident within Israel, where bravado and intolerance threaten to eat away at the country's democratic core and consume its internal moral compass.

When my phone started ringing on 27 December with the news that Israel was bombarding Gaza, I was shocked but far from surprised. I had opposed the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in the summer of 2005 because I feared that a pullback without an agreement on the transfer of authority would breed political anarchy. And indeed, the ascendance of Hamas and its takeover of Gaza immediately afterward verified the foolishness of



Palestinians inspecting destroyed house after war.

the unilateral approach. The Israeli siege of Gaza, accompanied by rocket attacks on Sderot and targeted killings by Israeli forces, fuelled an escalation of violence that transformed Gaza into an enormous, impoverished, dangerously armed cage governed by religious extremists. Its continuous victimisation, far from exposing Hamas, has sustained its dominance.

Failed truce

The failure of the six-month truce, brought about by the continuous smuggling of arms into Gaza and Israel's violation of its commitment to open the crossings, was predictable. Sadly and inexcusably, so too was the timing of Israel's assault: during the last days of the Bush administration and on the eve of yet another general election in Israel. Under immense public pressure to "do something," which saw Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu soar in the polls, the Olmert-Livni-Barak governing trio banded together to salvage their reputations and perhaps their careers under the guise of protecting Israel and reasserting its deterrent capacity.

All these thoughts and more raced through my mind in those first hours as I watched Israeli fighter planes surgi-

cally pulverising buildings and their occupants on Israeli television. I rebelled, almost instinctively, against the resort to massive force. Regardless of the immense provocation rendered by the rockets showered on the Negev, Israel had done little to exhaust other options. The post-Annapolis talks during the preceding year were marred by the fundamental asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis and Israel's unwillingness to address the roots of the conflict. And the short-sightedness of the military initiative was infuriating; too many people believed that what couldn't be achieved in the past through diplomacy and coercion in the West Bank and Gaza could be accomplished through the application of more force.



Naomi Chazan

Antiwar appeals

That very evening I helped to draft the first of several antiwar appeals, signed on to others and found myself, once again, in the street protesting what shouldn't be and what it would unleash. I had no inkling that the next twenty-one days would prove so emotionally hellish, intellectually discombobulating, politically stultifying and socially polarising.

The first hint came in a closed discussion in an avowedly leftist forum. I was taken aback at the extent to which some of my companions justified the attack in light of the ongoing Hamas rockets. The counterargument -- that no amount of missiles could excuse the severity of Israel's assault, which would yield countless civilian casualties -- fell on deaf ears. The widespread sense that there was "no choice" has permeated and deeply divided the Israeli peace camp ever since.

No less disturbing were some of the other discussions I had with fellow antiwar activists during those early days. Outraged by the disproportionate Israeli action, they refused to acknowledge that the totally unequal confrontation did not exonerate Hamas from meeting the same human rights standards expected of Israel.

Intensified uneasiness

The uneasiness I experienced in those first hours intensified as the fighting progressed and its horrors unfolded. Many Israeli human rights groups with which I am proudly associated as president of the board of the New Israel Fund courageously spoke out against gross infringements of international law. Simultaneously, social change and social justice organisations with which I am identified in the same capacity worked overtime to offer assistance to the over one million Israelis repeatedly traumatised by the missile bombardments.

But the media blackout from Gaza ensured that our public was exposed only to lengthy reports of the damage in Israel. They rarely got a glimpse of the terrible human cost of Israel's action, nor were they allowed to hear the

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 5)

finds most useful is that President Franklin Roosevelt was under constant public pressure to improve the New Deal. That "history of resistance, struggle and community organising" needs to be replicated to keep Obama honest.

"Obama is an important change from Bush, and the reason why he is important is that he is susceptible to pressure from everyone. He is susceptible to pressure from Wall Street, to pressure from the weapons companies, from the Washington establishment. But unlike Bush and (Dick) Cheney, I don't think he'd ignore mass protest.

"The irony is that just at the very moment when that kind of grassroots organising and mobilisation could have an impact, we are demobilising and waiting for the good acts to be handed down from on high, whether it is the with-

drawal from Iraq or the perfect economic stimulus package."

It is equally important that America come to terms with its recent past.

"So much of this moment for me comes down to whether there's going to be any accountability for what happened - - whether it's the illegal occupation of Iraq or torture or the economic crimes that led to this disaster.

"The FBI believes that there's a huge criminality at the heart of the economic meltdown but they've made a decision not to prosecute because they were afraid that might send panic through the market.

"All this argument for impunity, amnesia is really corrosive."

[Originally published by the *Toronto Star*.]

(Continued from page 8)

dissenting opinion of those who questioned its prudence. What is truly alarming is that to this very day, the legitimacy of such discussion is debated.

During the three weeks of the war, those few Jewish Israelis brave enough to decry what was happening were vilified or ignored. The human rights community, which coalesced to protest civilian casualties and deplore IDF tactics, saw their petitions denied by the High Court, and endured public reactions ranging from indifference to concerted efforts to discredit their loyalty as well as their evidence. Arab citizens of Israel were harassed and, in some cases, prevented from exercising their elementary right of dissent. As a shamefully jingoistic solidarity set in, they were subjected to unabashedly racist attacks spearheaded by the far right. Israel's heterogeneous, fractious, argumentative society was muted.

Polarisation

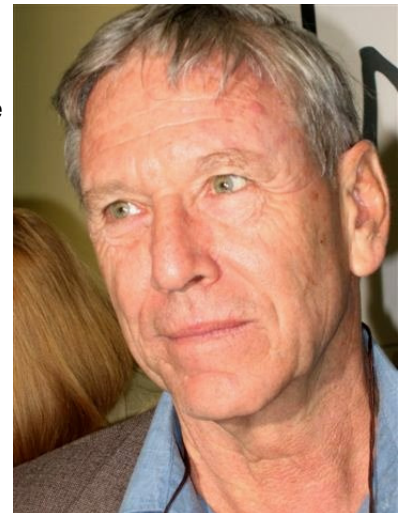
Tragically, voices from abroad made matters worse by magnifying polarisation within the country. Israeli progressives have been caught in a tightening vice. On the one hand, the knee-jerk support for government policy expressed by the American Jewish establishment is as distasteful as it is bewildering. It bolsters the militaristic image of the country and opposes the values of peace, pluralism and social justice which underlie the Jewish tradition and universal rights. On the other hand, the viciousness of the criticism of Israel has all too often crossed the thin line between condemning its actions and questioning its existence. I, along with most Israelis, refuse to accede to the demand for my own demise. Together with many others, I had hoped that there would be more backing for the development of a humane Israel free of conflict and occupation. That, I strongly believe, is what being truly pro-Israel is about.

The Gaza offensive has made fulfilling this vision considerably more difficult. But I don't think that it is hopeless. The Israeli left has emerged from this battle weakened and perhaps dispirited, but hardly irrelevant. The bedrock of a change-oriented and open civil society exists. As President Obama might be the first to point out, real de-

mocratic change is cultivated at the grassroots -- in neighbourhoods and communities that strive for equality and justice and constantly craft ways to realise these goals. I am comforted by the hundreds of forward-looking organisations and their enduring commitment to making a better environment for all Israelis. I am humbled by the impact that human rights and social justice groups have on shaping discourse and policy. And while I am fearful of their ability to survive and prosper with dwindling resources, I am gratified by their resilience and persistence.

For these reasons, despite my rejection of the recent actions of the Israeli government -- and my sad understanding of those who condoned it and are distressed by the results -- I am convinced that it is vital to try again. I know that the aggressive pursuit of an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular and the Arab-Israeli conflict in general depends on the active engagement of the international community and its determination to bring an end to the occupation. I continue to believe that the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians who yearn for a decent life can treat each other with mutual respect and human dignity. If we allow hatred and extremism, injustice and inhumanity, to win, it will not just be our loss; it will affect all freedom-seeking peoples throughout the world.

[Former Deputy Knesset Speaker Naomi Chazan became president of the New Israel Fund in June 2008. She addressed the AJDS Annual Dinner in 2004.]



The task of progressive Israelis was made more difficult by the initial support for the war by leading intellectuals such as Amos Oz.

Waltz with Bashir, controversy, again

Compiled by Sol Salbe

Six months ago we ran a review of *Waltz with Bashir*. We described it as a masterpiece. No one who has seen it, not even some of Israel's strongest critics, has taken issue with its artistic merit. But in recent months, with the combination of the Gaza war and the Oscars, a new controversy has erupted about the film.

I feel very objective about it. The film opened in Australia while I was in Israel, and the season was over when I returned. So I am yet to see it. But I have heard enough description of its impact on the audience at the AJDS fundraiser. As Renate Kamener put it to me, she was glad we had not planned for a coffee get-together afterwards, as everyone needed time to absorb what they had just seen and were in no mood for talking. On that basis alone, I regard it as an invaluable tool in getting the reality of Israel's wars across to Australian audiences.

Jewish Agency concerned

This view is reinforced by Tom Segev's report in *Haaretz* about the Jewish Agency reaction to the film: "The Jewish Agency is afraid that the tender soul of American Jewry might be hurt by the film and therefore it is offering them psychological relief on the Internet (jewishculture.org).

"It is not clear what the Agency sees as the main problem: Is it the psychological difficulty of remaining 'pro-Israel' after watching the film, or is it that viewers will not remain 'pro-Israel'? Whatever the case may be, a single solution has been found for both these problems: to disassociate the film from the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to transfer it to the most distant possible realms, as though it were just a work of art..."

"The site proposes discussions in forums that resemble support groups, and instructs their moderators to avoid making any binding statements: 'Don't expect to know the answers, in fact, don't expect there to be right answers at all!' In other words, it is an absolute no-no to criticise anything that was done under the aegis of Israel, even if it is a crime against humanity".

Unlike some other Israeli films such as *Walk on Water*, *Lemon Tree* and even the less political *Band's Visit*, *Waltz with Bashir* was not so warmly received by Palestinian friends and acquaintances. All said and done, this is a film about an Israeli trauma, not a Palestinian one. The Palestinian reaction reminded me of that unforgettable cover of *Time* magazine following the My Lai massacre back in 1969. Dozens of Vietnamese were killed but the cover's title was "An American Tragedy."

What really got the ball rolling was Gideon Levy's critique in *Haaretz*, as circulated by the Middle East News Service which I edit. Two paragraphs will suffice:

"I saw *Waltz* twice. The first time was in a movie theatre, and I was bowled over by the artistry. What style, what talent! The illustrations are perfect, the voices are authentic, the music adds so much. Even Ron Ben Yishai's half-missing finger is accurate. No detail is missed, no nuance blurred. All the heroes are heroes, superbly stylish, like Folman himself: articulate, trendy, up-to-date, left-wingers

-- so sensitive and intelligent.

"Then I watched it again, at home, a few weeks later. This time I listened to the dialogue and grasped the message that emerges from behind the talent. I became more outraged from one minute to the next. This is an extraordinarily infuriating film precisely because it is done with so much talent. Art has been recruited here for an operation of deceit. The war has been painted with soft, caressing colours -- as in comic books, you know. Even the blood is amazingly aesthetic, and suffering is not really suffering when it is drawn in lines. The soundtrack plays in the background, behind the drinks and the joints and the bars. The war's fomenters were mobilised for active service of self-astonishment and self-torture. Boaz is devastated at having shot 26 stray dogs, and he remembers each of them. Now he is looking for 'a therapist, a shrink, shiatsu, something.'"



Ari Folman with his Golden Globe. His silence on Gaza was noticed by many.

Israeli-Diaspora divide

Getting quite a few responses and reading lots more elsewhere did not surprise me. What did startle me was the breakdown. Normally those who are more critical of Israel line up one side and those who take a more forgiving view line up on the other. Not this time. Overwhelmingly it was Israelis, from all across the political spectrum, who shared Levy's perspective, while Diaspora Jews would not have a bar of the criticism.

Tom Wolkenberg wrote: "I completely disagree with Levy's article on *Waltz*. Nothing is hidden by Folman. He is telling us that Israel's finest soldiers, and probably Israeli society as a whole, have fallen as low as is possible, have lost the ability to distinguish right from wrong... watching porn movies in a flat broken into while all around is death and destruction, concern about the dead dogs in the midst of murder. If he wishes to hide these moral crimes, or sees them as unimportant, why does he show them? The last scene is clearly stating 'This is real! Don't be conned by the stylish animation up to now. We allowed this to happen.' I don't think it could be clearer or franker. He does not show the horror intending to blame the Phalange, but rather to shoot home the blame to Israel."

Jeremy Kenner was just as emphatic: "Interesting article. I quite disagree with Levy about Folman and *Waltz with Bashir*. I thought it much more self-critical than he did. To me, it mocked its own 'tortured soul' rhetoric while, at the same time, reflecting a very real phenomenon in some Israelis who have been in denial all these years about Lebanon I. Mostly it was a meditation on memory, not a

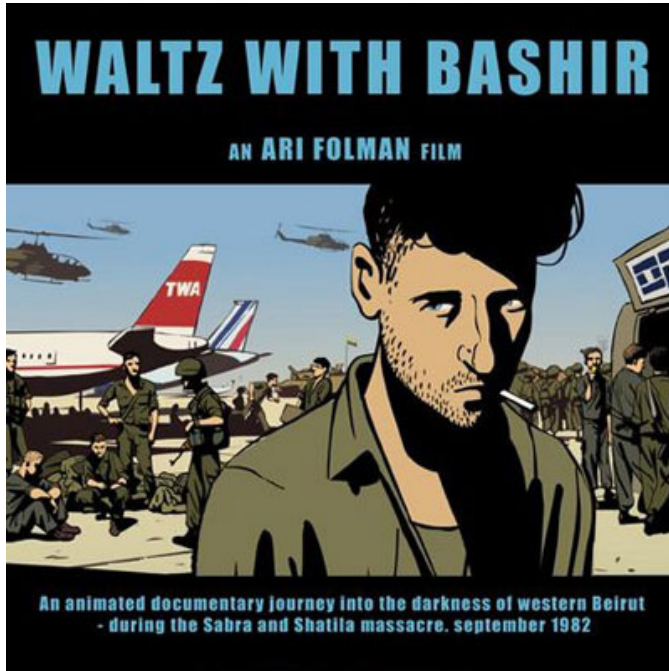
(Continued on page 11)

Bashir as international emissary

Uri Shenar

Waltz with Bashir did not receive the coveted Oscar, and following the high expectations in Israel, the sense of disappointment is understandable. But in fact Ari Folman's excellent film has already given Israel much more than its first Oscar. Folman can most certainly be disappointed but Israelis ought to be grateful.

Well beyond the international prestige and honour that it has given to its creators (also including art director David



Improving Israel's image?

Polonski and animation director Yoni Goodman), this wonderful, original movie has been an honorary emissary for Israel. It has been a ray of light in the hostile international media. Those who watched the Gaza operation on the BBC for example saw a one-dimensional soldier –

(Continued from page 10)

political tract. And I do not see why every Israeli film (or French or Turkish film) must genuflect to the misery of the Palestinians (or Algerians or Armenians) and current events in Gaza or wherever. A film can be about what it is about and not have to be everything to everyone. To me, it is Levy who is the propagandist, not Folman. If Levy were a Soviet critic circa 1930, he'd say the film didn't sing the praises of the proletariat loud enough.

"In fact, the film title itself is a clue. He is saying that we were dancing with the Phalangists in a tight clinch. They were our dancing partners and we are fully implicated in what happened. But maybe I'm projecting my own sensibilities onto Folman."

On the other hand, Tom Segev, mentioned above, is a typically cynical Israeli: "The film *Waltz with Bashir* belongs to the kvetch genre: 'Oy, how traumatic that massacre in Sabra and Shatila was for us!'"

professional but lacking humanity. Those who watched it on Fox News saw a black and white image of nationalist and heroic soldiers. Folman has succeeded in creating human, complex and multi-dimensional images of soldiers in battle. More importantly, he drew Israel as a self-critical nation -- and with captivating honesty.



Uri Shenar

In truly perfect timing, when the IDF features on television screens around the world, Folman's film presents IDF soldiers as complex human beings, psychologically damaged, full of self-doubt and uncertainties. This he did on the most prestigious international stage. The talented director Folman has intentionally done wonderful service to Israel. His very personal artistic creation on the Lebanon war became our most meaningful ambassador during the Gaza war...

It is important to emphasise that *Waltz with Bashir* provides the pinnacle of an exciting phenomenon. Over the last decade, Israeli cinema has penetrated the world's most important stages. Cinema has become one of Israel's most important and notable emissaries – chiefly in the US but also in other countries with global influence such as France, Britain, Australia and Russia.

The fact that for two years running Israel's Oscar candidates, *Waltz with Bashir* and *Beaufort* are war films, or more precisely, anti-war films, increases manyfold the value of the propaganda and image value of Israel's film industry. The exposure of *Waltz with Bashir* over recent months is an invaluable asset to Israel's Hasbara system, its image and its foreign relations.

[Uri Shenar is a former CEO of Israeli commercial TV franchiser Keshet. Translated from the Globes website by Sol Salbe (Globes is the Israeli equivalent of the *Australian Financial review*).]

Iraqi women struggle for lost rights

BAGHDAD. As the world celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March, Iraqi women were still struggling to gain their rights and freedoms amid improvement of security in the war-torn country.

Compared to those in other Arab countries, Iraqi women were once proud of their gains of rights and freedoms before the US-led invasion.

Under the regime of the ousted President Saddam Hussein, Iraq maintained a relatively secular society, in which women enjoyed more rights and freedom than others in the Arab world. In post-war Iraq, women are paying the price of occupation and chaos or being killed by militia groups for not conforming to the restrictions of extremist Muslims. "Iraqi women are now rising to start over to get the rights for themselves and freedom for the sons of Iraq," said Haifaa Makki, a female advocate and woman activist.

[From Jamal Hashim of Xinhua via *Portside*]

AJDS member addresses NSW Greens forum

Vivienne Porzolt

I grew up in a secular Jewish family in Auckland. My parents got out of Prague the day Hitler marched in and came as refugees to New Zealand.

My maternal grandparents were on one of the first transports out of Prague and many of my other relatives perished in the Shoah.

I inherited from my parents a rich Jewish tradition, which the historian Isaac Deutscher called that of the “non-Jewish Jew”. These were Jews like Spinoza, Marx, Freud and Einstein who found the dogmas and rituals and restrictions of Orthodox Judaism too confining and left them behind. Yet they retained an outlook still essentially Jewish: rationalist, critical and internationalist.

I have certainly taken from our history of exclusion and persecution the need to affirm the common bonds of shared humanity and fight those forces that undermine these bonds. For me, “Never again” means never again for any group of human beings. So my engagement with the issue of Israel/Palestine and my passion for a future of peaceful co-existence based on justice and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis is a deep affirmation of my Jewish identity as I experience it.

Jewish identity

Yet I find that my fellow Jews in such large numbers take a very different lesson from our history, that is, never again must this happen to Jews. And of course, it must not. I know where they are coming from – the Nazi effort to eliminate us as a people has burned a visceral terror into the psyches of many of us.

But it is not only the memory and experience of actual history that oppresses us; it is what we do with that history. It is the way we construct it in memory and in our day-to-day reality. In the stories we tell ourselves as a community, we construct Jewish identity as always-already victim, regardless of time and place. “From time immemorial”, “the longest hatred” are some of the phrases in which we eternalise our own victimhood. In this context, the Holocaust is constructed as an almost inevitable outcome of this never-ending hatred against us.

There are consolations in victimhood – it is a great psychic anaesthetic, one is absolved from often painful responsibility – the Other is always responsible.

If the world hates us, and we are always under threat, anything is justified. This applies particularly to the State of Israel. At the same time as we construct this victim identity, we provide a solution, a fantasy, an imaginary Israel that comes to the rescue. It is an imaginary Israel, because the conditions of its birth and continuation, the dispossession and brutal occupation of the Palestinians, are denied. Again and again, the Zionist syllogism, Holocaust annihilation conquered by Israeli triumphalism, is presented as self-evident logic. The solution to our Holocaust nightmare is always given by Zionist ideology as Israel.

An old refugee friend of my family’s, upset at the positions I take over Israel, pulled up her sleeve, defiantly displaying the Auschwitz numbers branded on her arm. No other argument was needed to demonstrate why she

would brook no criticism of Israel.

The constant defence of the indefensible actions of Israel by Jewish community leaders is wearing out the guilt of many westerners in regard to the Holocaust. When Diaspora Jewry at the official level and at a wide community level supports Israel, regardless of its actions, can we be surprised if Jews in general are targeted with the rage and despair caused by those actions?



Vivienne Porzolt

Antisemitism

Antisemitism is never justified. However, it cannot be denied that the actions of Israel do have an impact. And, indeed, in the context of rising revulsion amongst the people of the world in response to the latest atrocities in Gaza, we see a world wide upsurge in antisemitism. As a Jew, of course, I find this extremely uncomfortable. At the same time, I feel strengthened by the strong opposition by Palestinians and others to the manifestations of antisemitism which do emerge within the Palestine solidarity movement.

Along with the general rising opposition to Israel, opposition is rising more and more amongst Jews. This is in spite of the very strong pressures within the organised Jewish community against it. Anathematised as “self-hating Jews” and “not really Jewish”, many feel a lot of fear about voicing opposition within the Jewish community.

Yet these taboos are being eroded as I speak and more and more Jews are speaking out. In Australia, we have the letters sponsored by Antony Loewenstein and Peter Slezak; there is our group Jews against the Occupation in Sydney. In the UK, the US, Europe, South Africa, Jews will no longer be silenced.

Alternative voices

And the opposition is coming closer to the mainstream. In the UK, MP Sir Gerald Kaufman has spoken out very strongly. In Germany, Dr Rolf Verleger, a delegate on the Central Council of Jews in Germany has also written powerfully against the apologists for Israel and against Israel itself.

In the US, we have the formation of the Zionist Peace-Now type coalition, J-Street, to counter the heavy lobbying activities of the very right-wing AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Of course within Israel itself, there are the refuseniks, the soldiers and army reservists who in various ways refuse military service in the Occupied Palestinian territories. There are the Coalition of Women for Peace, Women in Black, Combatants For Peace, Gush Shalom led by peace veteran Uri Avnery. There is MachsomWatch, the group of Israeli women who daily monitor the checkpoints.

Despite the widespread support of Israelis for the war on Gaza, 10,000 marched in Tel Aviv at the launch of the

(Continued on page 13)

Sudan President's indictment – problematic but valid

The International Criminal Court's indictment of Sudanese President Omar Bashir for atrocity crimes in Darfur was met with an outcry in the Arab world. A good example was provided by the chief editor of *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, Abd-al-Bari Atwan, who wrote that the indictment "reflects the value of the Arabs and their leaders, whether they are moderates or oppositionists, in the eyes of the West and the international institutions under its influence.

He continued: "Before we are misunderstood, it must be asserted here that we -- the victims of the Israeli injustices and the massacres, displacement, torture, and stolen homelands resulting from them -- cannot support the crimes to which the sons of Darfur were subjected and are being subjected, whether they are committed by parties affiliated to the Sudanese Government or those rebelling against it."

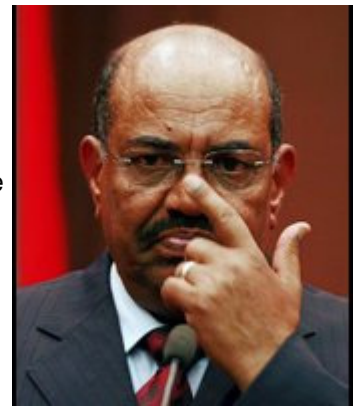
Quite apart from putting the perpetrators and victims on the same level, Atwan spent the bulk of his comments pointing out that no action has been taken when Arabs have been victims of Westerners. It is not as if he does not have a point. The authority of the court is diminished when it only selects from among one group of perpetrators. But crimes should not go unpunished and the indictment remains valid.

The International Crisis Group was very lucid in explaining its support for the court. The indictment, it said, "provides an opportunity for Sudan and the international community to both fight impunity and bring peace to the country.

"For the millions of Darfuri victims this landmark decision provides independent legal recognition of the massive crimes committed against them, and confirms that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Bashir is personally criminally responsible", said Crisis Group Deputy President Nick Grono. "The international community should affirm its support for the Court and insist that Sudan and other countries cooperate with it as required by the UN Security Council."

The Crisis Group's statement warned Khartoum of the risks of responding by lashing out against its own citi-

zens in retaliation by declaring a state of emergency or clamping down on internal political opposition. Sudan's international allies have a strong interest in the country's stability, and they must pressure the regime to react with restraint. The ICC prosecutor should make it clear that anyone responsible for further atrocities will be held accountable.



President Omar Bashir

In the Crisis Group's view, Bashir should resign and submit to the Court, but this is unlikely. Yet the status quo is unsustainable in the long term. There are increasingly those within the senior ranks of the ruling party who believe Bashir's policy of confrontation with Sudan's peripheral regions (Darfur, Kordofan, Eastern and Southern Sudan) has been counterproductive. To preserve its economic interests and guarantee its survival, Bashir's party is likely to look for a way out of the situation by changing its policies or its leadership. To succeed, it will need to change both.

As an incentive to drive change in Sudan, the ICG suggests that the international community should offer to lift sanctions and provide international aid, but only if the NCP provides irreversible and unconditional evidence of its commitment to the peace process. Similarly, the UN Security Council can consider the prospect of a deferral of Bashir's prosecution, but only after clearly demonstrated progress by the Sudanese government on all these fronts.

"The ICC indictment provides an opportunity for the NCP to change course and advance the cause of both peace and justice in Sudan, especially in Darfur," says Francois Grignon, Crisis Group's Africa Program Director. "But without fundamental change in the country's policies, pressure can only increase; Bashir and the NCP will become increasingly isolated; and the Sudanese people will continue paying a devastating price".

(Continued from page 12)

attack. But we see little of this in our media.

There are the Israelis who every day, side by side with the local Palestinians, non-violently resist the advance of the occupation wall. These ongoing solidarity actions have built strong relationships that will form the basis of peaceful co-existence whenever it emerges.

In the Palestinian village of Na'alín, a remarkable event has occurred. The local Land Defence Committee has held an exhibition on the Nazi Holocaust and the persecution of the Jews. Many local Palestinians had known nothing of this. I am awestruck and humbled by this generosity of spirit in the shadow of the occupation and the massacre in Gaza. It could not have happened without the staunch support from Israelis in the struggles of the local landowners.

So to my fellow Jews who, for fear of stirring up antisemitism, do not publicly condemn the crimes of the state of Israel, I say your silence is bringing about the antisemitism you fear. I say an unrestrained Israel is digging its own grave with its delusions of imposing its will by military force.

As a recent blogger said, the time comes when silence is betrayal: betrayal of the Jewish traditions of justice we make so much of as if we had a peculiar claim to such moral sensitivity.

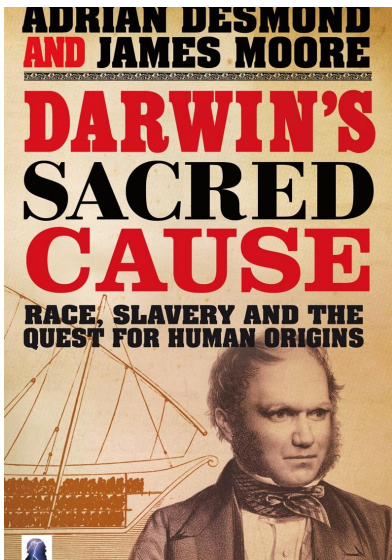
Diaspora Jewry has had a pivotal role in supporting Israel and preventing appropriate international action to curb its aggression. We can have an equally pivotal role in saving Israel from itself. We can learn from those Israelis standing in solidarity with the Palestinians. This is the way forward for a secure Israel at peace with its neighbours.

Hatred of slavery drove Darwin's ideas

Mike Collett-White

A new book on Charles Darwin says a passionate hatred of slavery was fundamental to his theory of evolution, which challenged the assumption held by many at the time that blacks and whites were separate species.

Darwin's Sacred Cause is among the first of dozens of works about the 19th century scientist to appear in 2009, the bicentenary of his birth and 150th anniversary of the publication of his groundbreaking *On the Origin of Species*.



Its authors, Adrian Desmond and James Moore, also expect it to be one of the most controversial, because it explores what they call Darwin's humanitarianism and challenges the notion that his conclusions were the result of pure scientific pursuit. "There's got to be reasons why he came to common descent images of evolution when there was no precedent for that in the zoological science of his day," Desmond told Reuters.

"It comes out of anti-slavery. No one doubts that the Galapagos Islands, mockingbirds, the giant ground sloths and the giant tortoises were absolutely fundamental to his views and what he was interested in.

"But you have to look at some sort of marshalling principle. Every ship carried more than one naturalist generally in those days -- why did none of them come to this kind of common descent view and yet most of them had seen exactly the same evidence?"

Moore said the book did not seek to reduce the argument to "I'm against slavery therefore I'm an evolutionist", adding:

"This is not a reductionist argument. We are making the case that it was necessary for Darwin to believe in 'brotherhood science' in order to see common descent. We can't figure out where else he got it from."

Desmond and Moore return to the naturalist 18 years after *Darwin*, their acclaimed biography of the man who concluded all species evolved from common ancestors. As he himself was aware, his theories were revolutionary. They knocked humans from their perch by suggesting they shared ancestors with monkeys and slugs, undermined the latest scientific research claiming whites were a superior species to blacks and challenged creationist assumptions.

Firsthand experience

Desmond and Moore argue that their view is important, because it shows Darwin was driven by human desires and needs, and throws new light on works that are still attacked today for being morally subversive.

The authors sifted through thousands of letters and other archive material from the Darwin family correspondence and Cambridge University Library and related Darwin to the key racial literature of his day.

The National Archives also contained the logbooks of HMS *Beagle*, the ship aboard which Darwin travelled the world and gathered evidence that provided the basis of his theories.

Darwin's Sacred Cause traces the naturalist's abolitionism to his grandfathers' opposition to slavery and to his friends and upbringing in Edinburgh and Cambridge at the height of the anti-slavery movement.

Crucially, he also had first-hand experience of slavery on the *Beagle*. During his five-year voyage Darwin saw evidence of thumbscrews, beatings, the result of armed clashes with white "masters" and heard of slave masters threatening to sell the children of their slaves.

"Darwin came home from the *Beagle* voyage and in months he plumped for the common descent view of evolution," said Desmond.

Moore said that while many scientists see politics and morals as "polluting" factors in research, Darwin is an example of someone who successfully combined the two.

"We know Darwin 'got it right'. At one and the same time, Darwin could see something as a moral position and as scientifically relevant."

Darwin's Sacred Cause is published by Penguin imprint Allen Lane. It was released in Australia on 2 March.

[From Reuters.]

Helen Suzman 1917-2009

Sandy Joffe

Helen Suzman was a different sort of freedom fighter, and a different sort of Jew.

The term 'heroism' is currently being overused and leached of its meaning in the wake of the Victorian bushfires, so I use it with intent when I say that Helen Suzman, who died earlier this year after fighting Apartheid in the South African parliament for 36 years, is a hero.

Born in Germiston, South Africa in 1917 to Lithuanian Jewish parents, Helen Suzman studied economics and

sociology at Wits University and later lectured there before going into politics in 1953. Others with similar views were joining the (then banned) African National Congress or the South African Communist Party (or both), but she chose to fight the system from within. A choice for which she faced severe criticism and one which I believe would have taken more courage than any other route.

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

I have pondered on that choice – it certainly wasn't made out of fear. She showed extraordinary courage standing up to the likes of successive National Party bullies like Verwoerd, Vorster and Botha, and is famous for the biting wit with which she did this. When a government minister once accused her of embarrassing South Africa with her parliamentary questions, she replied, "It is not my questions that embarrass South Africa; it is your answers." Helen Suzman was elegant, petite and articulate. She would have had little impact organising rallies or toy-toting through the streets. She chose instead the battleground of the parliament through which to fight Apartheid, and, alone for 13 years, she worked within the system that despised her and her views.

Again, in her relationship with the Jewish community, Helen Suzman chose to represent a community who despised (or pretended to) her views. Nonetheless, to the extent of identifying as a Jew, and attributing her values and support of Israel to her Judaism, Helen Suzman chose to be a critical voice from within. Through those dark years, the Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) re-

mained silent about the iniquities of Apartheid for fear of jeopardising the position of Jewish South Africans in the first instance and ultimately to maintain a comfortable status quo for their community. Helen Suzman was finally recognised by the SAJBD in 2007 through an humanitarian award.

Helen Suzman's story gives us much to reflect on as Australian Jews, and our role of speaking out against injustice. Although she never spoke officially as a Jew, it was her view of Jewish values and history that motivated her.

Helen Suzman fearlessly stood up against oppression. Her choices were neither sexy nor subversive, and some may even believe they were wrong, but in the face of opposition from all sides, she spoke out for what she be-



Helen Suzman

HARMONY DAY

A great interfaith, multicultural and environmental celebration with loads of music, mixing, fun and food for all the family. There will be soccer competitions, art exhibitions, music and dance, ethnic foods, cultural and interfaith stalls together with an environmental display - a toast to a great afternoon out.

WHEN & WHERE:

The festival will be held from 12 noon to 4pm on Sunday 15 March at Alma Park, between Alma Road and Dandenong Road, East St Kilda

HOW TO GET THERE:

Trams, buses, walking, bikes. Consider our environment and try to avoid driving if possible!

HOW MUCH?:

There is no entry fee and everyone from our wonderful, rich and diverse Victorian community is welcome.

AND THE BEST PART?

The AJDS is going to be there with its own stall!

So come along and join the AJDS team. We will be there with banners and with copies of past and current copies of the *Newsletter*. A chance to meet fellow members as well as enjoying yourself in a community event.

See you there!

Out of the mouths of babes...

A special lunch was being held at a religious school in Israel. At the head of the table there was a bowl of nice juicy shiny apples. The Rabbi told the children: "Take one only. God is watching."

At the other end of the table there was a bowl of chocolate biscuits. One of the children left a note: "Take as many as you like -- God is watching the apples!"

Quotable

Election suitability

I don't know how many times, if at all, has he held a gun and fired at someone.

Ehud Barak on Avigdor Lieberman in *Haaretz*

Gentle touch

"I don't like the word expulsion, I prefer the word distancing."

Yaakov Ganot, head of the Israeli Immigration and Population Authority in *Yediot Acharonot*.

Scoop News

"We believed that he has changed, Evidently he has not."

Ben Caspit on Binyamin Netanyahu in *Ma'ariv*

It is of concern that certain bankers demanded that the job cuts at Pacific Brands happen "quite quickly". Will these same bankers who imparted this wisdom be getting "performance bonuses" as a result?

Steve Goldberg Dulwich Hill (*SMH* 27/02)

Will Pacific Brands be replacing Michael Clarke and Pat Rafter with cheaper Chinese labour, or does cost cutting only apply to blue-collar workers?

Mark Pearce Richmond (*SMH* 27/02)

While Peter Costello has time on his hands, could someone please ask him if he knows where Australia's gold reserves accumulated by that communist Paul Keating's government have gone? Apparently they were no longer much use as the price was never going to rise.

Greg Keeley, Margaret River, WA (*The Australian* 5/03)

Private prison operators' payment of bribes to Pennsylvania judges to jail juvenile offenders ("Judges paid to keep juvenile jail numbers up", 9/3) shows once again the danger of privatising public services.

Norm Neill, Darlinghurst, NSW (*The Australian* 10/03)

AJDS SUBSCRIPTION

AJDS PO BOX 685 Kew Vic 3101 Tel (03) 9885 6260

Name(s): _____(New/Renew)

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____ Date: _____

Amount enclosed for Dues: \$_____

Donation: \$_____

Total: \$_____

Membership (Due 1 January each year):

\$40 single person; \$50 family; \$25 Concession. Subscription only \$30

AJDS NEWSLETTER

Australian Jewish Democratic Society

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

PO Box 685
Kew
Victoria 3101
Australia