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Iraq & Israel Double Stan- dards Debate

Norman Finkelstein
at the ICA

Equality and Socialism

The Origins of our Freedoms

The EU Kowtows to USA over
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Honourable Deception?

"I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons - biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed" (General Hussein Kamel, son-in-law of Saddam Hussein, interviewed by UNSCOM & IAEA, 22 August 1995)

Clare Short suggested that Tony Blair thought it was honourable to back the US in taking military action against Iraq and that therefore he saw the various ruses and devices he used to get us there as "*honourable deception*".

She was the second witness to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry into whether the Government presented "*accurate and complete information to Parliament in the period leading up to military action in Iraq, particularly in relation to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction*".

The first witness was Robin Cook, who proffered the alternative view that "*the problem was the burning sincerity and conviction of those who were involved in the exercise*".

We incline to the latter view: that Blair sincerely believed that he was doing right thing in taking Britain to war against Iraq alongside the US, and that he sincerely believed everything he said in pursuit of that goal, at the time he said it, whether it was true or not. Indeed, he seems capable of believing contrary things at the same time with equal sincerity.

Be that as it may, it doesn't take a Select Committee inquiry, merely a passing interest in the issue, to prove that the Government did not present "*accurate and complete information*" to Parliament and the public in the lead up the war.

That 45 minute claim

And the inaccuracies were not of the trivial kind, which has dominated the Committee's proceedings up to now. The Committee appears to be obsessed with investigating whether somebody in Downing Street drew unwarranted conclusions from intelligence information and forced the inclusion, in the Government dossier published last September, of the claim that:

"Some of these [chemical and biological] weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them."

This dossier made extravagant claims that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons, and the means of delivering them (and had re-established the means of manufacturing chemical and biological agents). If Iraq had retained these weapons, it would be very strange indeed if it hadn't plans to deploy them, that is, for example, to transport filled shells from a bunker to an artillery piece so that they could be fired, and to do so within a short period.

In other words, the sentence whose origin has generated so much heat is a bit more significant than the statement that night follows day, but not much.

In any case, the dossier published last September is a Government document, with a foreword by the Prime Minister himself. It doesn't matter a damn who wrote what bits of it – the Government published it, and the Government is therefore responsible for every word in it, no matter who wrote it, be it Alistair Campbell, or the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, or JK Rowling.

What can be said without fear of contradiction is that the authors gave the Government what it wanted: a *causis belli*.

Significant inaccuracies

The dossier itself is at times opaque, and it even contains errors of fact. But it is what it doesn't tell us, and what the Government didn't tell us in the lead up to war, that is most significant. Here, we are not talking about the Government making exaggerated claims from secret intelligence information: we are talking

about matters that are wholly in the public domain.

Examples of the Government's failure to give "accurate and complete information" are:

- the failure to mention that Hussein Kamel, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, told UNSCOM in 1995 that he had ordered the destruction of all of Iraq's proscribed weapons;
- the distortion of UN findings that that weapons were "unaccounted for" to imply (or say) that they actually existed;
- the failure to mention that many of Iraq's chemical and biological agents would by now be useless as warfare agents, if they hadn't already been destroyed;
- the failure to tell the public that UN inspectors had invalidated many of the claims in the dossier;
- the gross distortion of Hans Blix's report of 6 March, entitled "Unresolved Disarmament Issues", to give the public the impression that there were many of them;
- the blatant lie told that President Chirac said on 10 March that France would never support military action, when in fact he said the opposite.

Errors of fact

Last September's dossier is said to be the most important Government publication in a generation, and many high-powered people in the intelligence services read it, not to mention the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and, last and definitely not least, Alistair Campbell. Nevertheless, it was published with at least two errors of fact in it. Not intelligence assessments that are arguably wrong, but facts that are definitely wrong.

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Both errors are in Part 2 of the document, entitled *History of UN Weapons Inspections*. First, on page 34, paragraph 5, on UNSCOM access to presidential sites:

"In December 1997 [the head of UNSCOM] Richard Butler reported to the UN Security Council that Iraq had created a new category of sites, 'Presidential' and 'sovereign', from which it claimed that

UNSCOM inspectors would henceforth be barred. The terms of the ceasefire in 1991 foresaw no such limitation. However, Iraq consistently refused to allow UNSCOM inspectors access to any of these eight Presidential sites. [our emphasis] Many of these so-called 'palaces' are in fact large compounds, which are an integral part of Iraqi counter-measures designed to hide weapons material."

If you go to the UNSCOM website and look at a report by Charles Duelfer in document S/1998/326, you will read:

"The initial entry to the eight presidential sites in Iraq Ö was performed by mission UNSCOM 243 during the period from 25 March to 4 April 1998."

In other words, contrary to what the dossier says, access was allowed to all 8 sites. This was confirmed by the Foreign Office in a written answer to Paul Flynn MP on 4 February:

"Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether UNSCOM 243 entered Iraqi presidential palaces between March and April 1998. [94724]

"Mr. Mike O'Brien: Yes."

This error is of some importance, since the alleged exclusion of the inspectors from these sites gives credence to the view that Iraq was hiding something there that it didn't want inspectors to see. To reinforce this proposition, the next page of the dossier contains a map of an unnamed presidential site with Buckingham Palace and its grounds superimposed on it to the same scale. The purpose of the map was to convey the impression that there is more to this presidential site than just serving the needs of a head of state. And there are 8 presidential sites in Iraq. Of course, had an outline of Balmoral been superimposed instead, the impression would have been entirely different.

(This device must have dreamed up in Downing Street: perhaps it was one of the "presentational suggestions" Alistair Campbell has admitted making to the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee about the dossier. It served its purpose well because it was a big talking point when the dossier was published.)

The Government has known about this error since early January, at least, but needless to say, it has made no effort to publicise a correction. Of itself, it is not very important in the argument about Iraq's proscribed weapons. But correcting it would have meant admitting that the authors of this very important dossier got known facts wrong, which doesn't inspire confidence in their ability to assess intelligence. So, the Government kept quiet about it, lest the authority of their dossier be severely damaged.

Second error of fact

The second error of fact, on page 39, paragraph 13, is yet another instance of Government misrepresentation of what happened in December 1998, to cause the UN inspectors to leave Iraq. This is but one of the hundreds of such instances that took place in the lead up to war, most memorably in Jeremy Paxman's interview with Tony Blair on 6 February, when he had to be corrected five times.

The dossier speaks of "the effective ejection of UN inspectors" from Iraq in December 1998. Of course, the inspectors were not ejected by Iraq: they were withdrawn by Richard Butler at the request of the US Government because of the imminence of Desert Fox, the 4-day US/UK bombing campaign on Iraq, as the following extract from his book *Saddam Defiant* shows:

"I received a telephone call from US Ambassador [to the UN] Peter Burleigh inviting me for a private conversation at the US mission. ... Burleigh informed me that on instructions from Washington it would be 'prudent to take measures to ensure the safety and security of UNSCOM staff presently in Iraq.' Ö I told him that I would act on his advice and remove my staff from Iraq." (p224)

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The people who caused the UN inspectors to be ejected from Iraq were Bill Clinton and, his ally in Desert Fox, Tony Blair.

No evidence required

It would be unfair to accuse the people who got this wrong of lying. But it reveals their mindset: they are believers in the myth of unceasing Iraqi obstruction to inspection, which reached its zenith with the expulsion of UN inspectors in December 1998, thereby proving that Saddam had something to hide and, after almost four years without inspections, must have had even more to hide in September 2002.

For people with that mindset, no evidence was required to prove that Iraq had "weapons of mass destruction" in September 2002. It was "palpably absurd" to believe otherwise, to use Tony Blair's words to the House of Commons on 18 March. It is easy to see why those responsible for the dossier reached the bold conclusions they did: without evidence of Iraqi disarmament since 1998, for them it would have been "palpably absurd" to come to any other conclusions.

(In his interview with Jon Snow on Channel 4 News on 27 June, Alistair Campbell stated categorically;

"There were no errors of fact in the WMD dossier in September 2002"

The Foreign Office must be keeping things from him.)

Kamel says none

The final UNSCOM report in January 1999 emphasises the importance to its work of the defection of General Hussein Kamel, the former director of Iraq's Military Industrialisation Corporation, in charge of Iraq's weapons programme. Referring to him it says:

"the overall period of the Commission's disarmament work must be divided into two parts, separated by the events following the departure from Iraq, in August 1995, of Lt. General Hussein

Kamel. This resulted in the provision to the Commission of an extensive cache of documents on Iraq's prohibited programmes."

He was interviewed by a joint UNSCOM/IAEA team in Amman on 22 August 1995, but it was not until February 2003 that a transcript of the interview became public knowledge, thanks to Glen Rangwala (see www.casi.org.uk/info/unscom950822.pdf).

In the interview, Kamel says:

"I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons – biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed" (p13).

Earlier (p7), he described anthrax as the "main focus" of Iraq biological programme and when asked "were weapons and agents destroyed?", he replied: "nothing remained".

Of missiles, he said: *"not a single missile left but they had blueprints and molds [sic] for production. All missiles were destroyed."* (p8)

The Government's dossier emphasises the importance of the defection of Hussein Kamel, but strangely in this supposedly objective document there is no mention that he told UN inspectors that, on his orders, all of Iraq's proscribed weapons and weapons-related material were destroyed.

Unaccounted for material

A regular feature of Government pre-war propaganda was for ministers to read out a long list of weapons and weapons-related material, which UN inspectors had been unable to account for. That is, inspectors knew that the items had existed at one time; Iraq said it had destroyed them, but was unable to present quantitative evidence of their destruction to inspectors.

In making the case for war, ministers never made it clear that weapons and weapons-related material that UN inspectors could not account for did not

necessarily exist. As Hans Blix said to the Security Council on 5 June 2003

"it is not justified to jump to the conclusion that something exists just because it is unaccounted for."

The Prime Minister encouraged his listeners to make that jump when he made a statement on the dossier to the House of Commons on 24 September:

"As the dossier sets out, we estimate on the basis of the UN's work that there were up to 360 tonnes of bulk chemical warfare agents, including 1.5 tonnes of VX nerve agent; up to 3,000 tonnes of precursor chemicals; growth media sufficient to produce 26,000 litres of anthrax spores; and over 30,000 special munitions for delivery of chemical and biological agents. All of this was missing and unaccounted for."

99% of people reading that would conclude that we had it on UN authority that on 24 September 2002 Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons, plus material for making more, when all the UN inspectors have ever said is that such weapons and material have not been accounted for.

In his war speech on 18 March, he told the House of Commons:

"When the inspectors left in 1998, they left unaccounted for 10,000 litres of anthrax; a far-reaching VX nerve agent programme; up to 6,500 chemical munitions; at least 80 tonnes of mustard gas, and possibly more than 10 times that amount; unquantifiable amounts of sarin, botulinum toxin and a host of other biological poisons; and an entire Scud missile programme. We are asked now seriously to accept that in the last few years—contrary to all history, contrary to all intelligence—Saddam decided unilaterally to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd."

Think about that: he is saying that Iraq must have proscribed weapons now, since it is palpably absurd to claim that Saddam Hussein destroyed them since 1998 – even though according to the first sentence they were merely unaccounted for in 1998. Obviously, there is no distinction in the Prime Minister's mind between being unaccounted for and existing.

These are but two of the many examples of the genre in which ministers gave the impression, to put it at its mildest, that UN inspectors had said that weapons and weapons-related material actually existed, when they had merely said they were unaccounted for.

Opaque paragraph

It is difficult to work out whether the authors of the dossier itself made the jump that Hans Blix warned about – because the sources of the claims in it, and sometimes the claims themselves, are often obscure. This applies particularly to the core claims in paragraph 2 of the Executive Summary, which says:

"Much information about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is already in the public domain from UN reports and from Iraqi defectors. This points clearly to Iraq's continuing possession, after 1991, of chemical and biological agents and weapons produced before the Gulf War. It shows that Iraq has refurbished sites formerly associated with the production of chemical and biological agents. And it indicates that Iraq remains able to manufacture these agents, and to use bombs, shells, artillery rockets and ballistic missiles to deliver them."

That paragraph is extraordinarily opaque for any document, let alone a supposedly objective document, drawn up to inform the decision on peace or war.

The first sentence seems to place the same value on information from defectors as information from UN reports, which cannot be intended given the well-known unreliability of defectors.

The meaning of the second sentence is unfathomable. Is it saying that Iraq continued to possess these agents and weapons after 1991, which is a well-established fact attested to by UNSCOM? Or is it saying that it is well-established fact that Iraq continued to possess these agents and weapons right up to September 2002? Or is it merely an intelligence judgment that Iraq possessed these agents and weapons in September 2002? Likewise, are sentences 3 and 4 saying that it is a well-established fact that Iraq has reconstituted its production facilities, or merely an intelligence judgment?

To add to the confusion, in Part 3 of the dossier (Iraq under Saddam Hussein) page 46, paragraph 16, it says:

"Some twenty thousand Iranians were killed by mustard gas and the nerve agents tabun and sarin, all of which Iraq still possesses."

Is this categorical statement that Iraq possesses chemical agents a well-established fact, or is it based on intelligence judgment? Or perhaps the authors have jumped to the conclusion that Hans Blix warned against.

The degradation of agents

All of Iraq's unaccounted for chemical and biological agents were manufactured before the Gulf War. The dossier said nothing about the possible degradation of these agents, despite much independent evidence that many of them would no longer be useful as warfare agents.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published a report on Iraq's proscribed weapons on 9 September 2002, which the Government's dossier refers to approvingly in its Executive Summary as *"an independent and well-researched overview"*.

It comments on the possible deterioration of nerve agents manufactured prior to the Gulf War. Here, we are talking about so-called G-agents (tabun, sarin and cyclosarin) and V-agents (VX). The IISS assessment is as follows:

"As a practical matter, any nerve agent from this period [pre-1991]

would have deteriorated by now" (p51)

"Any VX produced by Iraq before 1991 is likely to have decomposed over the past decade" (p52)

"Any G-agent or V-agent stocks that Iraq concealed from UNSCOM inspections are likely to have deteriorated by now." (p53).

And as regards botulinum toxin, the IISS dossier concluded:

"Any botulinum toxin produced in 1989-90 would no longer be useful" (p40).

None of this was included in the Government's dossier. That cannot have been an oversight.

Before the invasion of Iraq, UNMOVIC published (on 6 March 2003) a 173-page document entitled *"Unresolved Disarmament Issues"*. Tony Blair and Jack Straw are very fond of referring to this document, and every time they refer to it they mention its title and its size. What more proof is needed that Iraq has "weapons of mass destruction", they imply, than an account of unresolved disarmament issues by the nice Mr Blix that is 173 pages long.

In fact, the title of the document is misleading: it contains an historical survey of Iraq's development of chemical and biological weapons and missiles, of their use and destruction by Iraq and UN inspectors, ending with a statement of unresolved issues for each item, plus suggestions as to what Iraq might do to resolve these issues. It also has something to say about the probable lack of effectiveness of some of the chemical and biological agents, if they still exist.

The Prime Minister quoted from it in his war speech to the House of Commons on 18 March. In the course of that speech (see quote above), he spoke of *"unquantifiable amounts of sarin"*, but he failed to mention the following UNMOVIC assessment about these *"unquantifiable amounts"*:

"There is no evidence that any bulk Sarin-type agents remain in

Iraq - gaps in accounting of these agents are related to Sarin-type agents weaponized in rocket warheads and aerial bombs. Based on the documentation found by UNSCOM during inspections in Iraq, Sarin-type agents produced by Iraq were largely of low quality and as such, degraded shortly after production. Therefore, with respect to the unaccounted for weaponized Sarin-type agents, it is unlikely that they would still be viable today." (Unresolved Disarmament Issues, p73)

Tony Blair also mentioned VX as an awful threat (again, see above). This VX was produced in 1990 by what UNMOVIC called "route B". According to UNMOVIC:

"VX produced through route B must be used relatively quickly after production (about 1 to 8 weeks), which would probably be satisfactory for wartime requirements." (ibid, p82)

Tony Blair also mentioned "a host of other biological poisons" (again, see above). One of the biological poisons known to have been manufactured by Iraq is botulinum toxin. Tony Blair failed to mention the following UNMOVIC assessment on botulinum toxin:

"Any botulinum toxin that was produced and stored according to the methods described by Iraq and in the time period declared is unlikely to retain much, if any, of its potency. Therefore, any such stockpiles of botulinum toxin, whether in bulk storage or in weapons that remained in 1991, would not be active today." (ibid, p101)

Tony Blair also mentioned mustard gas, but he failed to mention the following UNMOVIC assessment:

"There is much evidence, including documents provided by Iraq and information collected by UNSCOM, to suggest that most quantities of Mustard remaining in 1991, as declared by Iraq,

were destroyed under UNSCOM supervision. The remaining gaps are related to the accounting for Mustard filled aerial bombs and artillery projectiles. There are 550 Mustard filled shells and up to 450 mustard filled aerial bombs unaccounted for since 1998. The mustard filled shells account for a couple of tonnes of agent while the aerial bombs account for approximately 70 tonnes. According to an investigation made by the Iraqi "Depot Inspection Commission", the results of which were reported to UNMOVIC in March 2003, the discrepancy in the accounting for the mustard filled shells could be explained by the fact that Iraq had based its accounting on approximations." (ibid, p76)

Mustard is the only chemical agent once possessed by Iraq that, it is generally thought, does not degrade; however, UNMOVIC was content that the vast bulk of it was accounted for. As for biological agents, only anthrax was unaccounted for to any substantial degree. Opinion is divided as to whether the "wet" anthrax produced by Iraq degrades, but Blix was of the opinion that even after 15 years "it could be viable" (ibid, p98).

Needless to say, the above is not the whole story - for example, there are also outstanding questions about precursor material - but there is no doubt that Tony Blair gave grossly inaccurate information to Parliament about Iraq's proscribed chemical and biological agents. Had he given accurate information, it is highly unlikely that Parliament would have voted for war.

What UN inspectors found

In the limited time they were allowed, the IAEA inspectors confirmed that Iraq had not revived its nuclear weapons programme, which had been dismantled by UNSCOM. They also went close to disproving all of the claims in the September dossier that Iraq was trying to revive it. The documentation from British sources "proving" that Iraq had recently tried to import uranium from Niger was easily identified as a forgery. And the inspectors accepted that the aluminium tubes, which Iraq was trying

to import, were for rockets, not to build centrifuges for uranium enrichment, as was claimed.

The September dossier named about eight sites suspected of producing chemicals, which could be used for the production of proscribed chemical agents. Before the end of January, all these sites had been visited by UN inspectors and nothing suspect has been found. Replying to a question from Labour MP. Harry Cohen, in the House of Commons on 22 January, Foreign Office Minister, Mike O'Brien, was forced to admit:

"We understand from published information from UNMOVIC and the IAEA inspectors have visited all of the sites identified in the UK dossier. They have not reported uncovering any signs of weapons of mass destruction, or programmes for their production at the sites."

That doesn't entirely rule out that proscribed activity was going on at these sites last September as claimed in the dossier, but by January it was no longer going on - which is argument for continued inspection.

The Government never attempted to draw to public attention any of this information, which modified the assessment in the September dossier. On the contrary, the Government constantly derided anything the inspectors discovered as unimportant.

The French position

And finally, there was the Government's gross misrepresentation of the French position on military action against Iraq.

For example, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons on 18 March:

"Last Monday [10 March], we were getting very close with it [the second resolution]. We very nearly had the majority agreement. ... Then, on Monday night, France said that it would veto a second resolution, whatever the circumstances."

It is quite untrue to say that President Chirac ruled out military action in all circumstances on 10 March: on the contrary, he specifically ruled it in, if the inspectors reported that they couldn't do their job, as the following extract from his TV interview on 10 March shows:

"The inspectors have to tell us: 'we can continue and, at the end of a period which we think should be of a few months' - I'm saying a few months because that's what they have said - 'we shall have completed our work and Iraq will be disarmed'. Or they will come and tell the Security Council: 'we are sorry but Iraq isn't cooperating, the progress isn't sufficient, we aren't in a position

to achieve our goal, we won't be able to guarantee Iraq's disarmament'. In that case it will be for the Security Council and it alone to decide the right thing to do. But in that case, of course, regrettably, the war would become inevitable. It isn't today."

(see English translation of the interview at http://special.diplomatie.gouv.fr/article_gb91.html)

That the Government failed to give

"accurate and complete information to Parliament in the period leading up to military action in Iraq, particularly in relation to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction"

Notes On The News

By Gwydion M Williams

Half Of The World.

The current China-India detente makes sense. Their only real argument was about some border territories which are of no particular use to anyone. India holds some mountain lands that probably do belong to China, but are useless anyway. China holds the 'Askhi Chin', which is useless except for a road they built through it, which the Republic of India only found out about from some journalists reading a Chinese magazine featuring the road. A pointless and damaging border war followed, which the Chinese won decisively.

With the USA intent on imposing McLunatic Globalisation, it makes sense for the two big Asian powers to stop being rivals. Their long common border means little, it is almost impassable and neither China nor India were ever invaded by that route.

The Republic of India has officially agreed that the Tibetan Autonomous Region is just that. Given that the Dalai Lama's 'government' claims a much vaster territory that was mostly never ruled from Lhasa, it is an absurd claim and will perish when the current Dalai Lama dies.

Meantime China has implicitly ac-

cepted India's absorption of Sikkim, which was the last survival of British-India's system of autonomous princely state. Unlike Nepal and Bhutan—but very much like Tibet—it was never officially sovereign. When there was internal unrest during the 1970s, India sent in troops and incorporated it as a regular state within the Republic of India.

China and Republic of India are both growing faster than either the USA or Europe, and both are undergoing a controlled opening up to world trade, taking what they need and ignoring the rest. New Right economists preach that they would do even better if they opened up more, but those third-world countries that did obediently open up have been fucked over and didn't even get paid for it.

Loathing and Offensiveness In Mesopotamia

With mounting violence in Iraq, and no prospect of a democratic government that wouldn't at once order the US to quit, President Bush has promised to stay on the offensive. That's one promise he'll keep, offensiveness is his prime characteristic.

is not in doubt. The case against the Government is overwhelming.

The above should be the substance of the Foreign Affairs Committee's report. To write it, we didn't need sight of raw intelligence, or the Joint Intelligence Committee's assessments of raw intelligence. Nor did we need to take evidence from the Prime Minister, or the Foreign Secretary, or even Alistair Campbell. We just read publicly available sources, all of which were available prior to Parliament voting for war on 18 March.

David Morrison

Kill Iraqis, not foxes?

No one now doubts the broad untruthfulness of the US/British case for war. Specifics of who first dreamt up the 45-minute danger count for little. They fed us garbage, and the people who swallowed it at the time are now feeling queasy.

Despite which, there were many more rebels when it came to stamping out bloodsports.

Meanwhile in Iraq, the 'sensitive' British methods in a region which hated Saddam produced much the same results as Northern Ireland, but much more quickly. Only by comparison with the US troops could British troopers be described as sensitive. (US troops and rhinoceroses, to be more precise, but there are currently no rhinoceroses wandering the streets of Baghdad.)

The army are mostly thugs, which is the proper qualification for joining a peace-time army. If they are not thugs seeking to join the best-respected gang they can find, then just what are they joining up for? And whereas they knew just how rude they were being when they provoked war in Northern Ireland, it emerges that they were bringing dogs into Islamic homes, as offensive as if sniffer pigs were used in a British context.

Those who saw Saddam's government as a senseless evil are now discovering why Iraq has normally been governed as a dictatorship. It's not been through the West European experience of being hammered into a standardised herd of The Individual who will opt for Western standards with a minimum of coercion. Saddam in his own way was trying it, but too slowly and independently for the ignorant New Right crowd who dominate the Bush administration.

Britain and the USA are using a mix of methods to coerce as many countries as possible into an economic system that they dominate and which channels money from the poor to the rich. Dirty money of all sorts finds its way to obscure banks in London, while British troops make no pretence of 'defence',

but are sent as functional mercenaries wherever the Old Order needs defending.

Britain had lost an Empire and found a Swiss role.

Affirmative action

If one racial group in the US are getting less, then either they merit less or they are being discriminated against

Or both. A majority of Afro-Americans have a self-destructive and anti-intellectual culture. The two processes feed off each other, and 'affirmative action' has been the functional means of breaking the vicious circle.

The New Right sees viciousness as part of the Natural Order, and hates the idea of state power curing anything. Integration in the USA has happened where it was effectively enforced, in the military and in some of the police forces. Where it was left to individual choice, a functional system of apartheid has grown up.

The Supreme Court has not so far been captured by the New Right. But the hold-outs are Old Liberals, who feel obliged to uphold the fundamental truth that all of us are an undifferentiated herd of The Individual. They also allow some work-rounds that restore common sense and make the system functional

The actual judgement is less favourable than it seemed. Schemes for 'affirmative action' are both allowed and forbidden, with two contradictory judgements passed on the basis of esoteric legal gibberish. And the suggestion is made that the job has been done and that 'affirmative action' can soon be wound up, despite the fact that a majority of blacks are shut out by a system of informal but highly effective discrimination.

This is the same institution that upheld the notion of Afro-Americans as 'separate but equal' up until the 1960s.

Harry Potter and Tolkien

While British literati cherish elaborate books about nothing very much, the

literate public ignores them and insists that world does have some sort of meaning. So it's not hugely surprising that Tolkien won several polls among English-speakers for 'author of the 20th century'. Or that the latest

There are many differences, but also points in common. Both reject the sleazing-up and dumbing-down of the society, and its massive spread of commerce. Limited commerce in a social context is fine, but only limited. And the Potter saga, at least, is not really about old values, and quite relaxed on sexual matters.

Britannia Oppose The Waves!

People who talk glibly about '1000 years of British history' clearly haven't checked who it was who was then was ruling. It was in fact Ethelred the Unready, 978-1016, apparently a blunderer who wasted the heritage built in the previous century by Alfred the Great and his immediate successors.

History is tricky, of course. We get a favourable impression of Alfred from a biographer who wrote for his heirs. Our highly negative view of Ethelred is based on just one source who was partisan. Still, he did preside over a declining kingdom, and after the brief reign of Edmund Ironside, we had King Canute, the Danish-born conqueror of Anglo-Saxon England. Which recovered a precarious independence under Edward the Confessor, but was conquered again by the Normans.

When I was at school, we were taught to identify with those conquerors. Many people still do, but not all of us.

Englishness has been improved by Continental influence over the last half century, and I am all in favour of it continuing.

Weaving the web.

You can find the Bevin Society at—<http://members.aol.com/BevinSoc/is.htm> and details of the magazine at <http://www.atholbooks.org/>.

Iraq & Israel: Double Standards

by David Morrison

The Middle East roadmap is another example of how Israel is treated as a special case when it comes to obeying Security Council resolutions. Iraq suffered invasion, allegedly because it failed to obey Security Council resolutions. By contrast, the roadmap process, like the Oslo process before it, allows Israel to negotiate about the extent to which it obeys Security Council resolutions, if at all.

Jack Straw told the House of Commons on 25 November 2002:

"Today, Iraq stands in breach of nine separate chapter VII Security Council resolutions. It has completely ignored 23 distinct obligations out of a total of 27. That plainly cannot be allowed to continue. As President Bush said to the UN General Assembly on 12 September, the UN has either to enforce the writ of its own resolution or risk becoming irrelevant. Happily, the Security Council responded to his challenge [by passing resolution 1441]."

President Bush had told the UN General Assembly:

"We want the United Nations to be effective, and respectful, and successful. We want the resolutions of the world's most important multilateral body to be enforced. And right now those resolutions are being unilaterally subverted by the Iraqi regime."

Today, states other than Iraq stand in breach of upwards of a hundred Security Council resolutions. But, strangely, neither George nor Jack is in the least bit concerned that the UN is risking irrelevance by failing to enforce these. Israel is the worst culprit: it's in breach

of more than 30 resolutions stretching back over more than 30 years, all stemming from its occupation and subsequent colonisation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967.

It is widely assumed that these resolutions require action by parties other than Israel, and that is why it is appropriate to have a peace process in which all parties can take part. Israel has done a good job of giving currency to this notion, even though a glance at Security Council resolutions concerning Israel (which are available on the UN website) quickly shows that it is unfounded.

Even the Prime Minister believes it to be true, though perhaps it is merely a convenient pretence on his part. Defending his government's belligerent attitude to Iraq for non-compliance with Security Council resolutions, while condoning Israel's non-compliance, he told the House of Commons on 24 September 2002:

"I think that one thing, however, must be stated clearly: the UN resolutions in respect of the Middle East impose obligations on both sides. They impose obligations in respect of support for terrorism and recognition of Israel as well as withdrawal from the occupied territories. That is why, in the end, the only way of making progress in the Middle East is for all the aspects of the UN's will to be implemented in relation to the Middle East."

That is just wrong, as we shall see.

Arguably resolution 242 on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories passed on 22 November 1967 does

require action by other parties. The key paragraph of it is:

"[The Security Council] Affirms that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

"(i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;

"(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;"

Certainly, the inclusion of sub-paragraph (ii) has given Israel the excuse not to implement (i) and withdraw from the territories it occupied since 1967.

But this is not true of about 30 resolutions against Israel (see list compiled by Stephen Zunes at www.fpif.org). Each of these is an explicit demand for action from Israel, and Israel alone.

Three examples:

252 (21 May 1968) on the annexation of parts of Jerusalem:

"2. [The Security Council] Considers that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status;

"3. [The Security Council] Urgently calls upon Israel to rescind all such measures already taken and to desist forthwith from taking any further action which tends to change the status of Jerusalem;"

446 (22 March 1979) on the establishment of Jewish settlements:

"[The Security Council] Calls once more upon Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, to rescind its previous measures and to desist from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status and geographical nature and materially affecting the demographic composition of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and, in particular, not to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the occupied Arab territories;"

497 (17 December 1981) on the annexation of the Golan Heights:

"1. [The Security Council] Decides that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect;

"2. [The Security Council] Demands that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision;"

Those resolutions place obligations on Israel, and Israel alone, and it is obviously within Israel's power of Israel to carry out those obligations. None of them require negotiation with other states. Israel doesn't need to negotiate with anybody before undoing the annexation of the annexed parts of Jerusalem or of the Golan Heights. Nor does it need to negotiate with anybody before dismantling the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

The US/UK invaded Iraq and overthrew its regime, for failing to obey Security Council resolutions (allegedly). If the same standard were applied to Israel, it would be required to obey those resolutions that demand action from it alone, prior to any peace process to bring about a wider settlement in Palestine.

Ethnic cleansing

Double standards are in operation about the implementation of Security Council resolutions. They are also in operation about ethnic cleansing. Palestinian refugees expelled from their lands in 1947/8 and 1967 will not be allowed to return by Israel, and it can be guaranteed that no Western government will say a word of support for their right of return, let alone do something to bring it about.

Compare that the paroxysms of righteous anger that were generated by ethnic cleansing (of non-Serbs, at least) in Yugoslavia; it was unthinkable that ethnic cleansing be allowed to stand there, and the West was even prepared to contemplate military action to reverse it.

EU Kowtows to US on Cuba

by David Morrison

The following EU press statement was issued on 5 June:

Following the recent deplorable actions of the Cuban authorities aiming not only at violating fundamental freedoms in Cuba, but also at depriving civilians of the ultimate human right, that of life, the EU regrets that the Cuban authorities broke the de-facto moratorium on the death penalty and wishes to inform the international community that on 5 June it addressed the following demarche to the Cuban authorities:

"The EU, deeply concerned about the continuing flagrant violation of human rights and of fundamental freedoms of members of the Cuban opposition and of independent journalists, being deprived of their freedom for having expressed freely their opinion, calls once again the Cuban authorities to release immediately all political prisoners.

"While expecting a favourable response from the Cuban authorities, the EU, mindful of increasing reports about poor detention conditions of prisoners with serious health problems, appeals to the Cuban authorities that, in the meantime, the prisoners do not suffer unduly and are not exposed to inhumane treatment."

Furthermore and vis-à-vis the current situation in Cuba, the EU has unanimously decided to:

- limit the bilateral high-level governmental visits - reduce the profile of member states' participation in cultural events - invite Cuban dissidents at national days celebrations - proceed to the re-evaluation of the EU common position.

The issuing of this "demarche" was the latest in a series of protests to Cuba by the EU sparked by the execution in March of three men, who hijacked a ship off Cuba to take it to Florida. The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a spirited statement in response on 11 June, which suggested that the real reason for it was a desire on the part of the EU to make up with the US, after recent disagreements over Iraq:

"They are very conscious in Europe that their decision to join in the U.S. government's attacks against Cuba will be seen as more proof of their contrition and repentance over the differences that arose over the war in Iraq between 'Old Europe' - as Mr Rumsfeld called it - and the imperial Nazi-fascist government which is trying to impose a dictatorship on the rest of the world."

The Cuban Government is probably right. Recently, the EU has also joined with the US in threatening Iran for daring to consider

developing nuclear weapons, that is, weapons of self-defence, to prevent the Anglo-Saxon wolves falling upon it, like they did upon its neighbour.

US executions

One wonders how many "demarches" the EU has issued to the US authorities about the infringements of the right to life itself, which occur on a regular basis in the US. As the Cuban Foreign Office said:

"Cuba will not go into great detail about the extraordinary reasons, explained more than once, that forced it to take energetic measures against three armed hijackers who had criminal records, who threatened to kill dozens of hostages, including several European tourists"

"Cuba has never heard a word from the European Union condemning the death penalty in the United States. It has never seen the European Union spearhead a motion in the Commission on Human Rights condemning the United States for inflicting the death penalty on minors, the mentally ill and foreigners who were denied their right to meet with their consuls. Cuba has never heard the European Union criticize the 71 executions that took place in the United States last year, including the executions of two women. Why does the European Union condemn the death penalty in Cuba and not in the United States?"

And, they might have added, why does the EU not protest at the thousands of entirely innocent Iraqis that have been killed by US military action in recent months?

US prisoners without trial

The US gained control of Cuba after the Spanish-American war of 1898, and maintained control until the revolution. During its period of control, the US established a military base at Guantanamo, which it still holds on to today, despite the revolution. The base is under US control, but it is not part of the US and therefore not governed according to the constitution and laws of the US. It has

therefore been an ideal location for holding prisoners without trial.

It is a bit rich therefore that the EU should protest against the violation of "fundamental freedoms" practised by the Cuban Government while remaining absolutely silent about the violation of these freedoms being practised by the US in a piece of Cuba, which it holds on to by imperial fiat. The Cuban Foreign Office did not fail to point this out:

"Cuba will not repeat the arguments it has used over and over again. It will only point out that it has never heard the European Union say one word of censure about the hundreds of prisoners - some of whom are Europeans - who the United States is holding, in violation of the most basic norms about human rights, in the naval base in Guantanamo, which they force on us against our will."

"The European Union has never said a word about the thousands of prisoners that the United States has kept locked up since September 11, often simply because of the way they looked or because they are Muslims. These people do not enjoy even the most basic legal safeguards, nor have they been tried and their names have not even been published."

The statement blames Prime Minister Aznar of Spain for this increase in antagonism towards Cuba from the EU, saying:

"Mr Aznar, obsessed with punishing Cuba and now a minor ally of the Yankee imperial government, has been the person mainly responsible for the fact that the European Union has not developed an independent and objective approach to Cuba and today is the man mainly responsible for its traitorous escalation in aggression, just when our little island has become the peoples' symbol of resistance to the threat that the United States may impose a Nazi-fascist tyranny on the rest of the world, including European peoples - who were recently unrecognised and humiliated when their stalwart

opposition to the war in Iraq was ignored - and even on the American people themselves.

"How can we explain Mr Aznar's interest in 'promoting democracy in Cuba' if he was the first and only European head of government to support the fascist coup in Venezuela and offer his 'support and availability' to the ephemeral 'president' of the Venezuelan coup?"

The latter is a reference to the military coup against Hugo Chavez on 11 April last year, which was reversed after two days. Aznar was in good company: the coup was also approved of in Washington.

Helms-Burton Act

Aznar is also blamed for the EU caving in to the US in 1997 over the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (1996), better known as the Helms-Burton Act. Earlier, in 1992, after the Soviet bloc broke up and Cuba became economically vulnerable as a result, the US tightened its embargo on Cuba by passing the Cuban Democracy Act. It was hoped that, without Soviet help, the embargo would bring down the Castro government and the United States would be able to re-establish its profitable ventures in Cuba after a lapse of over 40 years.

But this Act, which forbade companies owned or operated by US nationals to trade with Cuba, merely disadvantaged the US, since foreign companies were able to do business there. An international embargo was needed, and that is why the Helms-Burton was passed in 1996. It attempted to force foreign companies not to have economic dealings with Cuba, by allowing them to be sued in the US if they did.

The Helms-Burton Act is contrary to the rules of the WTO (and NAFTA). Initially, the EU took a case to the WTO about it. However, the case was withdrawn in 1997 after US promised that EU nationals would not be proceeded against. So, the EU went along with the US attempt to throttle Cuba economically, contrary to international trade rules, as long as their nationals are OK.

Now the EU is lining up with the US against Cuba again.

The Origins Of Our Freedoms

By Gwydion M Williams

In the wake of the Iraq War, the USA sees itself as the grand defender of freedom. Champion of the cause since 1776, creator of liberty in Europe and the world. Hero of the 20th century, thanks to its role in two World Wars and the Cold War.

This view assumes a single monolithic entity, 'freedom'. And the discussion is confined to democratic and constitutional structures, which the USA did genuinely pioneer. This is the line of many ex-Marxists who have coincidentally switched from the ideology of a sinking ship.

The rhetoric of freedom can be traced back into the 18th century, indeed. But the same *name* has implied a very different set of rights and duties across the decades. Many of the freedoms that we now take for granted were pioneered in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries—notably the removal of class barriers and the rights of women. On racial equality, global communism was the pioneer—read Nelson Mandela's account in *Long Walk To Freedom*, for instance. The USA was very much the tail-ender, promoting segregation and a 'democratic racism' that could easily have become the global norm.

The USA was the first large country to have governments fully under the control of an electorate of most adult males (though not blacks until the 1960s). The USA also helped with the breaking down of class barriers, not least because their own attempt at a ruling class was clueless and never taken very seriously outside of the US itself. But such social equalising was just the expression in the North America of one strand of opinion

from 'Old Europe'.

The USA believes that it can create a Western system in Iraq, because it thinks that it created one in Germany and Japan after 1945. But both countries had been moving from autocracy towards liberal-democracy before 1914, without being pushed by any outside influence. It was the Great War and then the Wall Street Crash/Great Depression that pushed those countries back into autocracy.

Germany had had votes for all adult males from 1871: Britain's Parliament wasn't even elected by a majority of adult males until 1884, and only in 1918 did most working-class men get the vote. Japan had had an electoral system since 1890 and votes for all adult males from 1925.

Neither Germany nor Japan saw the sort of long-drawn-out conflict between Monarch and Parliament that Britain had seen, which meant that their elected representatives had fewer formal rights than their British equivalent. But when Germany opted for war in 1914, and when Germany and Japan opted for authoritarian government in the 1930s, it was with the support of the elected representatives of the people.

Authoritarian solutions were chosen in the 1930s, because Classical Liberalism and Classical Capitalism had brought misery and break-down. The US in the Keynesian era insisted that it was promoting 'Free Enterprise' or 'Mixed Economy'. It was not until the 1970s that significant numbers of the defenders of the Western system agreed that theirs was a capitalist system. And all through the Cold War, the rhetoric of 'freedom' went along with a willingness to support right-wing dictators and to

support or even organise coups in Greece, Brazil, Indonesia, Chile etc. Anywhere where actual democracy might lead to a departure from the US global system.

When it comes to building democracy, the most stable and open Third World democracy is India, where US influence was minimal and where the state was shaped by the socialism of the Congress Party. And the hardest transition was multi-racial democracy in South Africa, achieved by the Communist-influenced ANC. The white regime made repeated efforts to get a different solution, sectarian strife between Zulus and other tribes. And it's very hard to believe that they'd have dared do this without some sort of US approval.

It was the era 1945-1970 that was most successful in consolidating democracy in Europe, and in transmitting Western values elsewhere in the world, especially East Asia. Its best success happened when it was semi-capitalist, the system that the New Right boasts of having rescued us from.

The weakness of Keynesianism was its failure to produce effective reformers in the 1960s and 1970s. Lots of people wanted to defend the *Status Quo*, far too few saw the need and logic for reforms like Workers Control. The right of workers to control their own workplace would have radically extended Keynesianism in a way that would have pleased an increasingly prosperous and self-assertive working class. Instead, left-wing ideologists told lies to working-class militants, assuming that socialism would follow if they could manage to bust the existing system.

The system was disrupted, indeed. But not in favour of socialism, and not a

return to older values either. Working-class people in Britain and other Western countries had been interested in controlling their own lives as workers through some sort of Industrial Democracy. But when this was blocked, they dropped futile opposition to the existing system in favour of personal freedom as well-paid consumers and house-owners.

The big surprise since the 1970 is the discovery that bourgeois culture and capitalist economics are inherently separate, just accidentally joined in British culture when Britain industrialised. It was this that made nonsense of the Thatcher/Reagan idea that they should restore 'natural' economics, after which 'natural' culture would spontaneously re-emerge.

The finest ideals that money can buy

You must understand the utter novelty of what sprang up in the 1970s, capitalism that was uninterested in the former middle-class or bourgeois order. It used the official forms for a while, but has been increasingly discarding them. Crude cash-driven populism is the order of the day, the finest ideals money can buy.

Bourgeois culture and capitalist economics are both rigid impositions on an inherently disorderly natural world. And they were not linked except by historic accident. The actual history of the last two decades has been a continued withering of traditional values, plus a massive shift of wealth towards people who were already rich. The health and welfare systems which gave some security to vulnerable people have been damaged or removed.

All of this was done in the name of 'Freedom', of course. But whose freedom? Which particular set of freedoms? The US constitution defended slavery, and did not establish democracy. The American War of Independence was regarded as a "democratic rebellion" in Britain, but was aided by the same French monarchy that caused the French Revolution by resisting moderate reforms in France itself. And the newly independent USA did not think of itself as a democracy: the Constitution left it to each state to decide how it should choose its representatives in the Federal Government.

By the 1830s, electoral power had

passed to average white males, and those states which had had an established religion had chosen to abolish it. (The Constitution only prohibited an established religion for the Federal government, but in practice everyone came into line). Votes for women were legally established as part of a general wave of female rights throughout the Western world. Racial discrimination against free Afro-Americans was formally abolished after the Civil War, but was the norm up until the 1960s, and has not really ended. (The Republican Party owes its success in the last three or four decades to an influx of southern racists who used to be solid Democrats.)

The aim in 1776 and for a long time afterwards was to create a new and better Switzerland in North America. Slavery for Afro-Americans was seen as wholly compatible with this goal, and the idea was for each state to choose its own direction. But in practice, a fairly uniform social and economic order has been imposed, mainly via the US Supreme Court discovering that anything non-standard violated 'Freedom'.

Which is why the exact definition of 'Freedom' is a weighty matter. You may have heard of the controversy about remarks made by Rick Santorum, the third most senior Senator in the Republican Party. Under current laws, you are not free to commit sodomy if you live in Texas. Of course a lot of people have no wish to do either, yet it is a clear limit on choice. But the Senator reckoned it was a legitimate law:

"The Rev. Robert F. Drinan, a Jesuit who served as a Democratic congressman from Massachusetts from 1971 until the Vatican asked him to retire in 1981, said Santorum was "dead wrong" to lump homosexuality together with incest, bigamy and polygamy in his AP interview.

"Santorum was describing the possible precedent if the Supreme Court struck down a Texas law against sodomy. "If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery,".

"He said to the gays that if we allow this, we have to allow incest. That's ridiculous," Drinan said. "Catholics have no right to impose their views on others. Even if they say homosexual conduct is unfitting for a Catholic, they have no right to impose that on the nation." (Washington Post, 25th April 2003)

US law reserves a lot of matters to the USA's constituent state. Each state has its own murder law, for instance, and laws on sexual conduct also vary a lot. It was established practice that a marriage valid in one state was valid in any state, and this meant that divorce became legal when a few states allowed it as a scam to attract visitors. But while the US did a lot to actually undermine the former Western norm, it has not lost its nostalgic feelings for 'family values'.

Adultery is normally not illegal in US states, though it has been in the past. Incest has been outlawed by a great diversity of very different human societies, and remains a crime. Bigamy normally implies deception, but polygamy is a possible social arrangement, one which works well in some non-Western societies.

Our Western and Latin-Christian tradition is dominated by Pagan-Roman features—divorce was easy, but at any one time there could only be one valid wife (rather like the USA today). Monogamy seems to have become Jewish practice by the time of Jesus, but there were many cases of polygamy in Jewish tradition.

Islam standardised on different values from Christendom. Adultery was a serious matter, but a man could have up to four wives, each with a valid status, each theoretically equal to the others. The Chinese were different again, there might be a hierarchy of wives and the child of a concubine could be a valid and legal heir if the senior wife failed to produce a son (which greatly helped the continuity of the various Chinese dynasties).

Senator Santorum and his critics are agreed that polygamy is *not* a valid human freedom, the argument is over how to classify homosexuality. Reli-

gious scriptures are secondary: the Old Testament is just as strong against adultery as homosexuality, it was the mediaeval Catholic Church that decided that adultery could be winked at, while homosexuality must be stamped out as an abomination.

In Islam it was rather the other way round, homosexuality is officially forbidden, but actually allowed so long as the official moral order is not challenged. In a debate on comparative religion, the representative for Islam stated that homosexuality could only be punished if there were four Muslim men as witnesses, implying that a gay couple would have to perform sex acts in front of an invited audience of homophobes or personal enemies in order to run foul of the law.

In the USA, the Republican Party is split between the Religious Right and the Libertarians. One side says that homosexuality is *not* a valid human freedom, the other that it is. Both sides accept the basic idea that stopping people doing 'the wrong thing' is quite compatible with human freedom, a necessary part of it.

All of them talk about 'respect for choice'. This does not however mean respecting other people *as they are*, it's a matter of wishing them to be another sort of person. To be hated for what you are is not nice. But it is maybe less insulting than to be harassed to be what you can't be, or maybe don't wish to be. People within the Republican ranks are sort-of allowed to be gay, but also maybe not, and the ambiguity must sooner or later be resolved.

The Religious Right and the Libertarians are locked in a battle over the modern definition of the Standardised Individualist. At least one of them must lose, the two ideas cannot in the long run coexist. For both have a fervent determination to turn everyone else into a suitable version of a Standardised Individualist.

More human societies have normalised polygamy than have normalised homosexuality. In fact limitations on marriage seem like later rules, with polygamy and polyandry as the original norm. Polygamy was sometimes seen as oppressive of women, which it

certainly could be. But that's also true of regular marriage.

'Let us start from a dogmatic assumption that all of my prejudices are shared by God Almighty'. This is not something you're likely to hear anyone saying. But it's *exactly* what most people assume when they start talking about freedom. Or else 'Let us start from a dogmatic assumption that all of my prejudices are shaped by Objective Truths (maybe Genetic Blueprints or Selfish Genes)'. One must allow for the 'Rationalists', whose mode of thinking is clearly inherited from their religious background.

The New Right is full of 'smoke-and-mirrors rationalism', the appearance of reason arrived at by believing some unlikely ideas. (Not so much the Holy Ghost as the Ghostly Hole, as with Adam Smith's unproven beliefs that markets naturally find harmony and that personal profits for a rich minority will always add up to general social welfare.)

For the New Right—and indeed for many on the centre and left—there is a wonderful entity called 'Freedom', which does not include people freely choosing the things that shall be forbidden.

In fact all societies have categories of the forbidden, discouraged, neutral, encouraged and compulsory. Even this is a simplification, the reality is more like a continuum, and with different rules for different people. Women up until recently typically had fewer rights but also fewer demands on them. In any case, thinking about five categories for an undifferentiated population is a simplification, but sufficient to show the defect of freedom-ideology. And if you want to figure out what people *really* believe, look at what they do when their own interests are at stake.

Do you break a good rule, on the grounds that a good result would be achieved?

No.

It is necessary to be blunt, definite and unbending about such matters—always assuming we *do* really see a particular rule as a good rule. For social rules hold only when most people keep them, and when proven breaches are condemned and punished. And the best way to trash a rule which one privately disagrees with is to make breaches and

exceptions in the name of more freedom.

It's tempting and easy to say that it isn't *really* freedom, when people exercise their freedom in ways you dislike. And it's a temptation that must be resisted, because it amounts to claiming to be *objectively* at the centre of the universe, a denial that your own viewpoint is just one of many. Elevating your own viewpoint almost to divine status, in fact.

Some theologians would claim that a restriction on freedom imposed by Divine Will isn't *really* a restriction on freedom. Like a lot of theology, it strikes me as a dishonest evasion, serious religion insists that God *does* have the right to limit human freedom, which is a logical consequence of the religious view.

History also shows that the wealth and strength of a society depends on imposing a standardised system. This was done in a highly authoritarian fashion in Britain between the 15th and 18th centuries, with the aristocrats and the prosperous minority with parliamentary votes imposing their values on the rest of the society. Only in the 20th century did the majority of the population get the vote, and only then did the state start serving the interests of the majority. And only in the 1960s did traditional patterns of deference break down.

The right-wing tactic since the 1970s has been to play up to anarchic individualist feelings among the poor and among the working mainstream. People are flattered and tricked into thinking that they can do better as detached individuals than as part of a system. As with pensions, where people left secure publicly-run schemes in the belief that they'd do better on their own. And where younger workers remain passive and unconcerned as their employers opt out of responsibilities that used to be normal and unquestioned.

One must resist the New Right's 'nanny state' jibe. Ask them if perhaps they believe in a 'thug-state', a system that has a monopoly on force but does not try to make life any better. That is the actual position of some 'libertarians', a state machine for police, law and the army, but let the rest go to those who can pay. But since 'thug state' would not be

a very nice slogan to campaign under, they try to rubbish all non-thug aspects as 'nannyish'.

It's actually a contempt for motherhood, and the whole nurturing and socialising function. Nannies were the only humanised element in the highly abnormal family structures of upper-class Britons. They were paid to perform the necessary mothering role, without which a human baby cannot emerge as a functional human being. But because nannies were wage workers and from socially inferior backgrounds, this whole function was downgraded and the upper class got a totally twisted view of the world.

The authentic upper class has gone, but the New Right apes the fashion of this faded elite. Combining immense snobbery and restrictiveness with loud talk about freedom.

Is freedom an entity? Or a generalisation?

In Western society, 'our freedoms' currently include the requirement for car-drivers to possess a driving license and display a government-issued number plates. This is never questioned, whereas the possibility of an Identity Card is a monstrous threat to 'freedom'. Likewise there is a continuing battle on the issue of stopping drunken drivers and dangerous speeding. Speed cameras save vast numbers of innocent lives, but are seen somehow as unfair.

The logic is historic, licenses and number plates were part of motoring from the beginning and were seen as the norm. Speed limits and drink limits were new and so caused offence. Most European countries have always had identity cards and they bother no one, but Britain never did.

Every year some 3400 people die on Britain's roads, and it's not news. An average of 30 die on the railways, and it's always big news, often with long closures. A relatively safe system is always being disrupted, pushing more and more people onto a much more dangerous road system—which also encourages them to think as detached and fragmented individuals, the New Right ideal.

Surely one important freedom would be freedom from media manipulation? But the media have insisted that media freedoms are essential, and defined them as an absence of government control, never mind the disproportionate effect that business interests can have on commercial media.

'Our freedoms' are an ever-changing thing, and also arbitrary. 'Our freedoms' were built on Caribbean slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries, military conscription in the 20th. Also in the USA, you had the attempt to criminalize alcohol, based on Puritan belief but quite against the text of the Bible, which warns against excess but never rejects drink as such.

To claim that the Western tradition is based on freedom, you need to decide that the bulk of possible human actions are not *proper* and that suppressing them is not really an interference with freedom.

For most people, job security is one of the most important freedoms. From the 1950s to the 1970s, most people in Western countries count on having a job with decent money if they were willing to work to a minimum standard. But to the New Right, this was a horrible infringement of the 'Rights Of Money'.

Libertarians also say that controls operating through 'market forces' are not restrictions on freedom, though the logic for this belief is unclear. They speak of 'one dollar, one vote', apparently seeing it as *right* that the rich should grab more.

New Right economics has a mental model of small producers bring products and exchange, along with crafts. But such systems always depended on a slow and protected economy. The removal of 'unnecessary' regulations always encourages large-scale production.

In the real world, it was government restrictions that preserved independent small production. Big corporations have successfully pushed into more and more areas, including the media, whereas ordinary people are encouraged to only worry about government power. But economists have a *theory* that says that this will not happen. And also that if it

does happen, then it's a good thing. Or even if it's not a good thing, still it is inevitable.

Talk of 'free markets' is a deception. No one actually wants to go back to the weaker regulations of the 1920s, which produced the Great Slump and very nearly destroyed the Western system. Libertarian ideology is all very well for tricking ordinary people into accepting less, but those regulations that suit big business are retained.

Secure small business is a thing of the past. You do have a mass of insecure small businesses, a few of which may grow into big corporations (as Microsoft did, as other small computer enterprises have managed). But increasing insecurity has been the norm for everyone, and in the name of freedom.

The existing package of 'our freedoms' is relatively new, and of mixed origins. The current norms for sex and marriage would have been called Communist, 50 years ago, and in fact go beyond what the Soviet system ever allowed. The economic system remained a mix of private enterprise and state regulation, what used to be called Keynesianism and which was originally pioneered by Italian Fascism. But the key element of secure employment has been lost, the idea that there will always be a job for anyone with basic competence and willingness to work.

The right to work would be the most important freedom to re-impose in what is always and inevitably an arbitrary package of diverse freedoms.

WMD: the hunt is just beginning, says Tony

by David Morrison

"Army Col Richard McPhee said he took seriously US intelligence warnings on the eve of war that Hussein had given 'release authority' to subordinates in command of chemical weapons. 'We didn't have all these people in [protective] suits' for nothing, he said. But if Iraq thought of using such weapons, 'there had to have been something to use. And we haven't found it. Books will be written on that in the intelligence community for a long time'"

These days Tony Blair pleads Blix-like for more time to find Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction". The latest excuse for not finding anything is that the occupying powers have only just begun looking for them – because their first priority was to attend to the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people.

As Blair told Oona King at Prime Minister's Questions on 4 June:

"In respect of the search for weapons of mass destruction, I would point out to the House that the Iraq survey group, which is 1,300 to 1,400-strong, is literally now just beginning its work, because the priority after the conflict was to rebuild Iraq and to make sure that the humanitarian concerns of the Iraqi people were achieved."

The imprint of the Downing Street communications directorate is clearly visible on that formula. As usual with formulae from that source, the accompanying instructions were to repeat it over and over again, making sure to mention the strength of the Group each time, in order to ram home the message that a big effort was about to begin to hunt down "weapons of mass destruction". Blair duly obliged, and repeated it six times in the House of Commons that day.

This formula, like others from the same source, was designed to put Mr Blair and his government in a good light. The absence of "weapons of mass destruction" is an acute political embarrassment to them. Nevertheless, so the story goes, they care so much for the Iraqi people (having killed countless thousands of them, and injured a great deal more) that they were prepared to put the hunt for these weapons on the backburner, and bear the political embarrassment for now.

As usual with these formulae, this one doesn't bear close textual analysis. Are we really supposed to believe that by early June Iraq was reconstructed, and the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people attended to (and aid workers retrained as weapons inspectors) so that the hunt for "weapons of mass destruction" could begin in earnest?

This formula seems to have been a one-day wonder, not surprisingly, since it suffers from a serious design flaw, which Labour MP, Denzil Davies, exposed in a question to his leader:

"My right hon. Friend has made much of the survey teams that will look for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but is he not concerned that the failure of the coalition to look for those weapons as a matter of the highest priority in the immediate aftermath of the war could well have provided the opportunity for many of the weapons – if they are there – to find their way into the hands of the various terrorist groups that are operating in and around the middle east?"

Since the justification for war was, not merely that Saddam Hussein had "weapons of mass destruction", but also that he might pass them on to people even more evil than himself, there was no satisfactory answer to that.

Fruitless facts

So, what are the facts about the fruitless hunt for these weapons in Iraq?

The truth is that the hunt began before the first US/UK bombs fell. They were particularly worried about Iraq's capacity to hit Israel with chemical or biological weapons delivered by missiles from sites in Iraq's western desert. So before the first bombs fell, special forces had raided these sites but found nothing. They also raided other sites throughout Iraq, ahead of the US ground advance, without success.

Behind the ground advance came searchers from the 75th Exploitation Task Force, which visited, literally, hundreds of sites all over Iraq. It has now been withdrawn, and replaced by the Iraq Survey Group, which, as we will see, is a very different animal.

Frustrated Task Force

On 11 May, the Washington Post carried an article by Barton Gellman, entitled "Frustrated, US Arms Team to Leave Iraq". Gellman had spent a week with the 75th Exploitation Task Force in Iraq, and he paints a graphic picture of their frustration at their lack of success:

"The 75th Exploitation Task Force, as the group is formally known, has been described from the start as the principal component of the US plan to discover and display forbidden Iraqi weapons. The group's departure, expected next month, marks a milestone in frustration for a major declared objective of the war."

"Leaders of Task Force 75's diverse staff - biologists, chemists, arms treaty enforcers, nuclear operators, computer and document experts, and special forces troops - arrived with high hopes of early success. They said they expected to find what Secretary of State Colin L Powell described at the UN Security Council on February 5 - hundreds of tons of

biological and chemical agents, missiles and rockets to deliver the agents, and evidence of an ongoing program to build a nuclear bomb.

"Scores of fruitless missions broke that confidence, many task force members said in interviews.

"Army Col Richard McPhee, who will close down the task force next month, said he took seriously US intelligence warnings on the eve of war that Hussein had given 'release authority' to subordinates in command of chemical weapons. 'We didn't have all these people in [protective] suits' for nothing, he said. But if Iraq thought of using such weapons, 'there had to have been something to use. And we haven't found it. Books will be written on that in the intelligence community for a long time.'

"Army Col Robert Smith, who leads the site assessment teams from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, said task force leaders no longer 'think we're going to find chemical rounds sitting next to a gun.' He added, 'That's what we came here for, but we're past that.'

"Motivated and accomplished in their fields, task force members found themselves lacking vital tools. They consistently found targets identified by Washington to be inaccurate, looted and burned, or both. Leaders and members of five of the task force's eight teams, and some senior officers guiding them, said the weapons hunters were going through the motions now to 'check the blocks' on a pre-war list."

Iraq Survey Group

Major General Keith Dayton, the head of the Iraq Survey Group, gave a briefing to the press at the Pentagon on 30 May before he set off for Baghdad. (see <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030530-0231.html>). He said that searchers from the 75th Exploitation Task Force had "visited over 300 sensitive sites", mostly from a list of 900 sites selected on the basis of pre-war intelligence, and found nothing. And it had now been decided that visiting more sites on the pre-war list was a waste of time; that what is required is more reliable intelligence on sites before making a decision to visit them.

It is the task of the new Group to acquire that intelligence. In other words, it is the failure

to find anything based on pre-war intelligence that has prompted the setting up of the new Group, which is an intelligence gathering/collating organisation, rather than a body that merely searches sites. Furthermore its role goes way beyond gathering intelligence on "weapons of mass destruction". General Dayton described its role as follows at the Pentagon briefing:

"But in addition to WMD, the ISG will collect and exploit documents and media related to terrorism, war crimes, POW [prisoner of war] and MIA [missing in action] issues, and other things relating to the former Iraqi regime. It will interrogate and debrief individuals, both hostile and friendly, and it will exploit captured materiel. The goal is to put all the pieces together in what is appearing to be a very complex jigsaw puzzle."

General Dayton also made it clear that the number of searchers on the ground will increase very little (from 200 or so, to "probably between 200 and 300") and that 250 out of the 1300 to 1400 are media personnel, who will be based in Qatar.

That is not quite the story that the Prime Minister told the House of Commons on 4 June.

France didn't say No to war, just not now

by David Morrison

how could Blair's explicit promise not to take military action without, at the very least, majority support on the Security Council be reconciled with the fact that only 4 out of the 15 members of the Council supported military action?

The solution was to blame France, to claim that France was being utterly unreasonable: not only was she opposed to military action in principle, she had sabotaged support on the Council for a second resolution authorising military action by threatening to use her veto.

In that regard, a remark by President Chirac remark in a TV interview broadcast on 10 March

"But in that case [when inspectors report failure], of course, regrettably, the war would become inevitable. It isn't today."

The prime example of what Clàire short called the Prime Minister's "honourable deception" to get us to war was the misrepresentation of the French attitude to military action against Iraq.

Blair had promised that he wouldn't go to war without Security Council authorisation, or at least without a majority of the Security Council backing military action, albeit a majority overridden by a veto from France (and/or Russia or China).

After Hans Blix's relatively positive inspection report on 14 February, Britain began the quest for a second resolution authorising military action with the lukewarm help of the US. On that day, only two other members of the Security Council – Bulgaria and Spain – were willing to vote for military action. A month later on 17 March, when Britain finally gave up its quest for a second resolution, nothing had changed.

Blame France

Britain didn't come within an ass's roar of convincing a majority on the Security Council to vote for war. That presented the Downing Street cabal plotting the course for war with a difficulty:

was a godsend to Downing Street. The remark in question was:

"My position is that, regardless of the circumstances, France will vote 'no' because she considers this evening that there are no grounds for waging war in order to achieve the goal we have set ourselves, ie to disarm Iraq." (see http://special.diplomatie.gouv.fr/article_gb91.html).

What Chirac meant was that as things stood "this evening", France would use its veto. But the use of the phrase "regardless of the circumstances" allowed Downing Street to pretend that he had ruled out force for all time – and by so doing had torpedoed a second resolution.

Anti-French hysteria

This proposition, wrapped in a remarkable outburst of anti-French hysteria, was repeated ad nauseam in the week leading up to the Commons vote on 18 March. It covered Blair's retreat from his promise not to take military action without, at the very least, majority support on the Security Council. It was referred to over and over again in the Commons debate on 18 March and played a major role in limiting the Labour backbench revolt that day.

The resolution for war itself contained a reference to it:

"That this House regrets that despite sustained diplomatic effort by Her Majesty's Government it has not proved possible to secure a second Resolution in the UN because one Permanent Member of the Security Council made plain in public its intention to use its veto whatever the circumstances;"

And, in proposing the resolution, Blair told the awful story of how France's perfidy had undermined support for a second resolution on the Security Council:

"Last Monday [10 March], we were getting very close with it [the second resolution]. We very nearly had the majority agreement. If I might, I should particularly like to thank the President of Chile for the constructive way in which he approached this issue."

"Yes, there were debates about the length of the ultimatum, but the basic construct was gathering support. Then, on Monday night, France said that it would veto a second resolution, whatever the circumstances."

No such thing

On that Monday night, France said no such thing. On the contrary, in the interview that Monday night, Chirac made it very clear that there were circumstances in which France would not veto a resolution for war. Early on in that interview, he set out two alternative circumstances, one when the UN inspectors report progress and the other when the inspectors say their task is impossible – in which case, in his words, "regrettably, the war would become inevitable". That portion (which Clare Short pointed out in the Commons on 4 June) reads:

"The inspectors have to tell us: 'we can continue and, at the end of a period which we think should be of a few months' - I'm saying a few months because that's what they have said - 'we shall have completed our work and Iraq will be disarmed'. Or they will come and tell the Security Council: 'we are sorry but Iraq isn't cooperating, the progress isn't sufficient, we aren't in a position to achieve our goal, we won't be able to guarantee Iraq's disarmament'. In that case it will be for the Security Council and it alone to decide the right thing to do. But in that case, of course, regrettably, the war would become inevitable. It isn't today."

From that, it is plain as a pikestaff that France that there were circumstances in which France would not have vetoed military action, namely, if the UN inspectors reported that they couldn't do their job. But, with Blair having promised not to make military action without at least majority support in the Security Council, a little deceit was necessary to explain why this had proved to be impossible.

Larger deceit

This deceit was the final element of a larger deceit about France's behaviour in the Security Council in the six months prior to the US/UK attack on Iraq. The story told against France was that the international consensus on Iraq last autumn, expressed in Security Council resolution 1441, had been sabotaged by France refusing to support military action in March, and that this made war unavoidable.

This leaves out a large fact about the consensus in the Security Council last November: it was not for war. On the contrary, the unanimity was achieved because the US/UK backed down on their attempt to get the Council to vote for war. The unanimity was for inspection, followed by assessment of inspection reports by the Council, on the basis of which the Council would decide on further action.

France was demonised by the US/UK for refusing to vote for war, and a pretence was kept up that by so doing France had reversed its position of last autumn. In fact, France maintained a consistent position throughout, a consistent position with which a large majority of the Security Council, and the states and peoples of the world, agreed. It was that the inspectors should be allowed to do their job, until such times as they reported that they couldn't, and then and only then should the Security Council consider military action. This didn't suit those in Washington and London who were determined to overthrow the Iraqi regime, come what may.

Ridiculous proposition

Nevertheless, in a remarkable leap of logic, Downing Street blamed France for the war, even though she had opposed it. This proposition is, of course, ridiculous. It begins with the assumption that, had France agreed to vote for military action against Iraq if it did not account for its "weapons of mass destruction" within a few days, there would then have been a majority on the Security Council for the second resolution. It continues with Iraq, faced with this united front in the Council, coughing up weapons that probably don't exist, or in a few days proving to the satisfaction of the US/UK that they had been destroyed, which it has tried and failed to do for the past five or six years.

But let us suppose that this highly unlikely sequence of events did occur. To believe that war could have been avoided, we have to believe that at this point George Bush would have reversed gear, and taken his troops home, leaving Saddam Hussein in power, having spent the past year telling the American people that he was an awful threat to US and the world (and whom around 50% of the US electorate believe was responsible for 9/11). That would not have been a sensible move for a President seeking re-election next year, and it's an absolutely safe bet he would not have made it.

It is absurd to believe that if France had supported the US/UK in the Security Council, war could have been avoided. But three months later, Blair and Straw continue to tell us that France was responsible for the war – because she refused to vote for it.

Letter to the Editor from Gerald Adler

July 1, 2003

The Editor,
Labour and Trade Union Review

Sir:

David Morrison raises the question whether UN Security Council applies a double standard in enforcing its resolutions ("Iraq and Israel: Double Standards" January 2003, Issue 124).

Under UN Charter Article 25, Morrison argues that all decisions of the Security Council are binding and therefore ought to be equally enforced against Israel as they have against Iraq, regardless of whether the resolutions have been passed under Chapter VI - in the case of Israel - or Chapter VII - Iraq's situation.

Article 25 states: Members of the [UN] agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter" (gma emphasis)

Unfortunately, Dr. Morrison's analysis leads him to conclusions that are not only unsupported in law, but may be the exact opposite of the conclusions reached by a proper review of Security Council resolutions and behaviour. The arguments he makes are heavy and legalistic, yet it is evident that Morrison misconstrues Article 25 and in so doing misleads your readers both in fact and in law.

Morrison cites the International Court of Justice in the *South Africa and Namibia* dispute in support of his argument. The Court stated that in determining the binding force of a Security Council decision, the actual

wording of the decision must be considered; the provisions of the Charter upon which it is based; the intent of the Council as documented and the context in which the decision was taken. However Mr. Morrison has been brief in his use of these aspects of international law. Specifically:

In attacking Israel's alleged failure to comply with UNSC resolutions, Morrison selectively ignores any of the above factors;

As the article continues, Morrison misconstrues the text of the Resolution 242 which determines the extent of Israel's withdrawal obligation. It does not require Israel to retreat to the 1967 boundaries which were the 1948 cease-fire lines, a fact supported by the formulators of the Resolution;

Further, in alleging Israeli non-compliance with resolutions regarding Jerusalem and Settlements, Morrison ignores the legal, political and physical consequences of the 1993-4 Oslo Accords which have drastically changed the context within which the resolutions were originally passed. The Road Map released on April 30, 2003 may bring similar consequences;

Morrison also overlooks the thousands of armed terrorist attacks perpetrated on innocent civilians within Israel, authorised directly and indirectly by Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat since 2000. Israeli re-entry into the West Bank is justified both under the security provisions contained in Oslo II and Article 51 of the UN Charter which safeguards the inherent right of a state to act in self defence against armed attack. On a moral stance, no country in the world would permit

itself to be inflicted by such a constant threat and wave of terror without taking preventative action - never mind the terrible toll on human life and suffering;

Morrison also claims that a second double standard is being applied by the UN Security Council in that Israeli aggression has been condemned under non-binding Chapter VI when, in his opinion, Israel should have been condemned, like Iraq, under binding Chapter VII. Again Morrison ignores the fact that all of Israel's wars with its Arab neighbours have been acts of self-defence and therefore neither merit condemnation under Chapter VII nor meet the pre-conditions for invoking it.

The UN Security Council does indeed apply a double standard. It has never condemned the Arab states for their aggression against Israel. The UN has over the years committed an enormous amount of time and financial resources to the Palestinians in comparison with the little it has devoted to other areas in the world where horrendous human tragedy and loss of life of hundreds of thousands has occurred. The events in Africa around the Congo region this last year is but one example. In failing to raise these issues, ironically, Mr. Morrison leaves himself open to the charge of double standards.

Yours etc

Gerald M. Adler, LL.M., J.S.D.

Hove

Adjunct Professor of Law (1968-1983)

Technion, Israel Institute of Technology

Reply to Gerald Adler from the Ernest Bevin Society

Pollock and Maitland, who were both lawyers and historians of English law, said that law *begins* with the enforcement of judgements and that the system of law comes into being through a requirement that there should be some consistency between the judgments that are enforced. This is pretty well the reverse of what is now taken to be the case with law, which is that bodies of law are created on paper and are then enforced by an executive power. Law *de jure* comes first and makes possible the *de facto* application of law. Something like this becomes the case at a certain point in the development of domestic jurisdictions of regimes which have had a long period of secure existence. It is not the case with most states in the world, which are mushroom growths at the end of a long era of massive imperialist disruption of the world. And it is not the case at all in relations between states.

Professor Adler attributes to Dr. Morrison the view that "all decisions of the Security Council are binding". I cannot see where Morrison says that. What he does is quote the opinion of the Security Council and the International Court that all Security Council resolutions are binding on members of the UN, and discuss matters in the light of that view, which has not been repudiated by the British Government.

The views of the International Court are of no actual consequence unless the Security Council adopts them. It made a judgement against the USA, finding it in breach of international law against Nicaragua. That judgement was effectively struck out by the Security Council. A Permanent Member of the Council cannot be found to be in breach of law unless it finds itself to be so.

But the ideological prestige of the United Nations as the supposed guardian of law would suffer if that basic fact was rubbed in. The Security Council therefore agreed with the International Court that all its resolutions are binding.

This leads to the position where there are resolutions which are to be enforced (Chapter VII) and resolutions which are not to be enforced, both of which are said to be binding. The non-enforceable resolutions give rise to a wealth of fictitious law, in which there is no limit on pleading and counter-pleading.

Enforceable decisions might give rise to actual law if they were not made entirely capricious by the operation of the Veto system. On the other hand, the UN would not exist but for the Veto system. Morrison quotes an ideological statement in Article 24 that "Members confer on the Security Council" responsibility for the maintenance of peace. In

historical fact, the Security Council came first and assembled other states in a subordinate capacity around itself, allowing them no power to "confer" anything on it.

Israel is protected by the US Veto from enforceable Resolutions and has therefore been able to embark on a campaign of conquest and ethnic cleansing with impunity. The rest is debating points. What Morrison demonstrated was the inconsistency of the arguments of the British Government in terms of these debating points.

It is interesting that the Professor does not comment on Morrison's statement that, even in the formalities of the UN, General Assembly Resolutions are non-binding. The only UN Resolution which Jewish nationalists have taken to be absolutely binding is the 1947 General Assembly Resolution awarding the Jewish minority in Palestine over half of the country.

Most of Professor Adler's comment is political. It includes the assertion that "all of Israel's wars with its Arab neighbours have been acts of self-defence". 1948? When Israel was in course of rapid expansion beyond the territory awarded by the General Assembly. 1956? When it conspired with Britain and France to make war on Egypt. 1967? When it caught the Egyptian air-force flat-footed in a surprise attack.

Norman Finkelstein at the ICA

By Angela Clifford

Prof. Norman Finkelstein came to London from America to address a meeting on Palestine on the 26th as part of the Institute for Contemporary Arts' Palestine season. The format of the event, under guise of providing balance, was geared to preventing the controversial issues under consideration being properly aired. Indeed, the meeting lasted under two hours, though costing £8 entry (£7 concessions). Finkelstein was given 15 minutes to set out his thesis and there were three respondents to take up his points. After this, just 6 questions were taken from the audience by the Chairman Mr Gordon—the Editor of the *Jewish Quarterly*—in two groups of 3.

Extensive note-taking of Finkelstein's talk was impossible. He spoke against the clock, packing an hour's lecture into his slot. His essential argument was that Zionism had had two modes of hegemonising Palestine open to it: 'transfer' or ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and subjugation of them by the creation of "bantustans". David Ben Gurion, the Zionist leader in British Mandate Palestine, held that methods must depend on circumstances, with extreme measures depending on the advent of a 'revolutionary' situation. This he found in the circumstances in which the State of Israel was established in the post-Second World War period. It enabled Israel to expel 750,000 Palestinians from the State they established in 80% of the country.

At the time, forcible transfer/exchange of populations (as between Turkey/Greece) was a practice condoned by the international community, though that attitude was to change in 1949 with a Convention against the expulsion of populations.

Since Israel's occupation of the West Bank after the 1967 War, it was employ-

ing the second of the two methods of conquest: the gradual subjugation of the native population. It was whittling away the 20% of the country left to the native Palestinians.

This eventually provoked the first Intifada after various international initiatives and UN resolutions had failed to produce redress. However, after the first war on Iraq, America and Israel believed that the incompetent Palestinian leadership was sufficiently demoralised to accept an arrangement under the Oslo Accords which amounted to creating a number of 'self-governing' Palestinian Bantustans under Israeli hegemony in 10-15% of original Palestine. The number of Israeli 'settlers' on the West Bank in this period doubled from c200,000 to 400,000. A second attempt to implement this strategy, under the Clinton administration, failed to gain Palestinian acceptance and resulted in the Second Intifada. In the wake of the second war on Iraq—with further Arab demoralisation—another attempt was being made to force Palestinians to accept the Bantustan solution, with Pres. Bush's 'road map'.

Prof. Finkelstein drew attention to the Saudi peace plan of a couple of years back, which offered not only recognition of Israel, but full trading and other relations, in return for an Israeli withdrawal to the 80% of the country it held in 1967. Moreover, on the contentious issue of the Palestinian refugees, the Saudis dropped the 'Right of Return' demand [which Israel claims threatens its right to exist] with the more moderate 'just settlement of the refugee question.

[This formulation allows for negotiation on numbers returning, with perhaps monetary compensation for those whose right to return to their ancestral homes is not vindicated. Israel

has so far refused to make any restitution to those it drove out in the course of building its State—though European Jews have been compensated for their trauma by both German and Austrian Governments.]

Israel had resisted the Saudi plan to the utmost. Indeed, while it is mentioned—along with other initiatives—in the 'Road Map', the Israeli version of the Road Map drops mention of the Saudi offer.

Down the years, the consensus of the international community had been for the 'two States' solution. The UN General Assembly, on the two occasions the matter had come before it, had voted in favour of two States, with only the US and Israel against, joined by a couple of minnow-States.

Finkelstein's speech was received with prolonged applause from about nine-tenth of the audience. A group of around 10-15 in the middle ostentatiously didn't clap. The largely well-behaved audience was very partisan, only clapping the speakers it agreed with.

David Cesarini, a Professor of Jewish Studies at Southampton, followed—but was unable to respond to the substance of Finkelstein's speech. Ignoring what he said, Cesarini accused him of misquoting sources in his book (*Image & Reality In Palestine*), and of having failed to consult original archive material himself. The instances cited, however, were not compelling and certainly made no impression on the audience. Later, replying, Finkelstein listed the prestigious publications and eminent reviewers which found no fault with his methodology and dismissed Cesarini himself as not having published anything on the issue himself. The latter's defence, that his doctoral thesis had been

on the issue, made no impression.

The next speaker was Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at LSE. Again, her remarks were prepared and did not relate directly to Finkelstein's thesis. She spoke of tendentious language, which tended to demonise the violence of subject peoples as 'terrorism', whilst legitimising that of States as 'war'. She also pointed out that the UN operated double standards in the implementation of its resolutions, for instance, as between Israel and Iraq. And she welcomed the fact that recent anti-war demonstration in London had demanded a UN Resolution to legitimise the war. She looked forward to an era when International Law would govern relations between States and peoples. (As John Clayden beside me remarked, "Dream on".)

The first 'respondent' to Finkelstein was a young man from the Israeli Embassy, Dan Shahan. He made an emotional appeal for the right to a secure homeland as of right, instancing his own background with a father a Moroccan Jew, 'forced' to emigrate to Israel after the French Imperial withdrawal from the country, and his mother who descended from a respectable family forced to flee Germany. In a speech, singularly deficient in rational argument and heavily biased to emotion, he did not attempt to justify Israel's pre-emptive war of 1967 [since which it has been occupying and absorbing the rump of Palestine] as necessitated by Nasser's stance in Egypt. The allusion to Nasser failed to win any sympathy in the audience. Neither did the suggestion that the "fence"—as he called the Berlin Wall being built on Palestinian terrain to divide, control and wreck what remains of Palestine—was justified if it saved a single life. I felt that it was significant that the Embassy did not even attempt a justification on rational grounds of Israeli actions towards the Palestinians.

Finkelstein was given a few minutes to respond to the speakers, and to the six questions from the floor (one of which from a lady just returned from a Peace Camp beside the Jewish Wall). and the meeting ended.

There can be little doubt that, had the discussion not been so tightly chaired,

it would have degenerated into a slanging match. I observed the leader of the anti-Finkelstein group of young men entering the hall. He harangued a supporter of this magazine, who was selling *Serfdom Or Ethnic Cleansing. A British Discussion On Palestine*: "Aha, Palestine—that means you don't accept Israel's right to exist. But as many Jews from Arab countries were forced to leave, as Palestinians left Israel"—all this delivered very aggressively. [One of his smartly-dressed followers then attempted to get the pamphlet for nothing, on grounds of penury!]

Observing this incident, I fully expected this Jewish clique to break up the meeting. Thirty years ago, I had observed this done to a Palestinian protest meeting at the Conway Hall. I think the fact that it didn't happen this time shows that the Jewish lobby feels less confident about its position. This meeting was very much Middle England's, and it was noticeable that sympathy with the Jewish cause even in this sphere is at an all-time low.

Finkelstein was challenged by Cesarini as to whether he supported a Single State or Two-State solution to the Arab-Jewish question—with the suggestion that the former would be the end of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Finkelstein replied that he would prefer to see no States in the world, but he had consistently supported a Two-State solution, with Israel in its pre-1967 Border. However, the extensive settlement of the West Bank by Jews was jeopardising the Two-State option and could necessitate the eventual formation of a single State.

This corresponds with my own analysis. My feeling is that Zionism since 1948 has by subtle means prevented the partition arrangement from settling down with a view to eventually obtaining control of the whole of Palestine (with a militant fringe of Zionists looking across to the Jordan too). The Knesset is decorated with the programme, *From the Tigris to the Euphrates*). This policy has upped the stakes, and has made the Two States solution an impossible dream. The best Zionism can now hope for is a multinational Palestine/Israel—either that, or the Palestinians will roll over and accept

erasure: there is a lot more killing and ethnic cleansing to be done before that can happen.

Notably Cesarini agreed with Finkelstein's description of current Israeli policy as the creation of bantustans.

Cesarini criticised Finkelstein for taking the extreme Zionists as being representative of Israelis, rather than other socialist or moderate elements. It was a stupid accusation. It is consistently the Zionist extremists who have led the colonisation of Palestine. Indeed, the present-day political parties of Israel are lineal descendants of the terrorist formations, which drove out first the British, and then the Palestinians. Israel's antecedents now mean that the project can never be allowed to reach a conclusion or an end. If Hitler had known when to stop, Nazism would still be a major force in Europe. I think, in a generation's time, people will be saying that if Zionism had known when to stop, it would still be dominating the country at the cross-roads of the Middle East.

PS: The manager at the ICA bookshop, which stocks Finkelstein's book, refused to accept for sale *Memoirs Of My Jewish Grandfather* and *Serfdom Or Ethnic Cleansing* on the grounds that they were too historical.

Recent Publications

Memoirs Of My Jewish Great Grandfather

Translated and Introduced by
M.A. AbuKhalil/Clifford

With Appendix on the

Exodus of the Palestinians

and

Serfdom or Ethnic Cleansing

Churchill's suppressed evidence to the Peel Commission introduction by Angela Clifford from

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Equality and Socialism

By Christopher Winch

It is often said by anti-socialists that one of the motivations for socialism and communism is a desire for everyone to be identical in all important respects and envy of those who are rich or talented. For these disreputable reasons, so it is said, socialists are in favour of equality.

Equality leads to a society where talents are stifled and dynamism of every kind is extinguished. Often people on the left don't know how to respond to these charges, and perhaps one reason for this is that they themselves have not thought through what they understand the socialist demand for equality to be. Equality, like sameness, is a relative idea; something can only be equal to something else in some respect or other, just as two things that are the same are the same in some respect. Where two things have the *all* the same properties or are equal in *every* respect then they are identical. Socialists clearly don't want everyone to be identical—so what do they want? We need to understand *in what respect* equality is desirable.

An answer that seems to be popular is that people should all do the same things: everyone should have the same education, everyone should be in paid employment, for example. When seen like this, equality is in danger of looking like uniformity, since this scheme suggests a lack of variety in the way in which people are encouraged or allowed to live their lives. It must be admitted that a lot of people who consider themselves to be socialists do think like this. They cannot see that giving everyone exactly the same kind of education up to the age of 16 and beyond is not necessarily good for them; they assume that everyone should be in paid employment, whether they want to be or not. If this is what socialists want, then they should

think again. A society in which people are valued should be one where they are valued for what they are, for the contribution they can make to the common life, or by developing their talents to the full. And it is evident that a complex society needs many different kinds of talents and interests that need to be encouraged, nurtured and applauded. This means that socialists should feel that they have failed if they do not succeed in developing human individuality in the form of diverse interests and abilities. It is of the essence of developing abilities that they need to be worked on if they are to grow and none of us can develop more than a few abilities to a high degree. We must accept therefore that we are all going to turn out differently if we are serious about developing our talents.

So in what sense are socialists egalitarians? People should not all receive exactly the same education, because then not all will find it easy to pursue the things that they are most interested in and that they can do best. In a society which wants musicians, engineers, sportspeople and technicians, as well as academics, managers and clerks, there will need to be opportunities to develop those abilities. This means that there should be schools and colleges whose job it is to promote a love of and excellence in engineering, music etc. On the face of it, it might seem as if the current government is doing this with specialist schools, but this is not the case. Anyone serious about developing institutions that are genuinely specialist would have to spend serious money on buildings, equipment and teachers with experience of the activities that they are preparing young people for. Specialist schools have token sums of money and their claim to be genuinely specialist is nothing more than a gesture. There is no way that the current government would spend serious money on something that

might appeal to large numbers of working people and divert money away from the education of the middle class. Some forms of education may be more expensive than others, particularly education that requires specialist staff and equipment. Socialists believe that everyone should have the opportunity to develop their abilities to the maximum extent consistent with the resources available within the society. This means variety, not uniformity in the education system.

In any case, the current government cannot want more of these people, because their own predictions tell them that the only kind of educated people that employers want more of is graduates and postgraduates. If there is no interest in other kinds of specialist, what is the point in encouraging diversity? If you do want to encourage diversity it is not enough to increase the supply, you must make sure that there is a demand and there is not much sign of that among the employers, who are the only people this government really listens to.

Where Socialists should be More Egalitarian.

It is often said by critics of socialism, that socialists must be motivated by envy of the rich and talented. As far as the talented are concerned, I hope that I have disposed of that argument and shown it to be bogus. What then of the rich? Envy is an understandable, if petty, emotion and it is doubtful whether it could motivate a significant social and political movement. Nevertheless, socialists have never really shaken off the charge that they are motivated by envy. So what should they say? There certainly are critical issues to do with wealth and income. As social creatures, we are conscious of our place in society. We wish to be recognised for what we do well, but we don't wish to be treated as if we are of little or no worth. Very large

inequalities of income and wealth make us feel devalued, even if we have the necessities of life and so they should be avoided as much as possible. It is not necessarily envy that motivates people, but the feeling of being devalued, by being poorly off relative to other people. This feeling explains a lot of the anger that lies behind the award of 'fat cat' salaries and perks.

But there is a far more important argument that is not sufficiently exploited by socialists. Inequalities of wealth also lead to inequalities of power and thus prevent people from realising their own hopes. The opportunities of some people, if they are backed with disproportionate power and wealth, can stifle those of people who are less well off. If stockbrokers force up the prices of houses through their extravagant salaries then everybody else finds it more difficult to buy a house. If the Conrad Blacks and the Rupert Murdochs finance newspapers with their vast wealth, then it becomes difficult for people of more modest means to make their voices heard. If private patients buy up the best doctors, then these are not available for people who are not so well off.

This point is particularly telling in a liberal society whose main value is supposed to be that of allowing everyone to pursue their own projects in life. If inequalities of wealth and power ensure that this cannot happen, then such a society is something of a sham. It is ironic that the liberal philosopher of welfare, John Rawls, half realises this, by recognising that the full value of liberty has to be secured by preventing those with large resources from blighting the aspirations of the less well-off. If he had thought through the implications of this insight, his famous Difference Principle, which involves the prioritisation of the least well-off, would have to be applied before considerations of the distribution of liberty could even be considered. The redistribution of wealth would be a priority for anyone who was serious about promoting the maximum amount of liberty.

There is powerful empirical evidence that, beyond a certain level, increases in wealth have diminishing returns in terms of well-being and that unequal distribu-

tion of wealth has a detrimental effect on people's sense of their own well-being.² And when you think about it, what is the point of a society accumulating wealth and then distributing it in such a way as to make people more miserable than they previously were? So the policy implication seems to be that there should be far less inequality in wealth and income than there currently is, while at the same time more diversity of education and occupation should be encouraged. The redistribution of wealth could not only alleviate poverty but also allow for a more diverse education system. It could also allow for a carer's income which would mean that those who wished to bring up children or to look after elderly or infirm relatives could do so with dignity, while at the same time eliminating some of the social cost that arises from the inability of people to bring up their own children or to look after members of their family. Even the current rightwing government in France has started to do this, against a depressing if predictable backdrop of complaint by some on the left that choice is being removed, when in fact the opposite is happening. The notion that it could happen here seems farfetched. As far as Blair is concerned, if you are not in paid employment you are a cost on society and therefore evil.

Public goods such as collectively owned transport, health care and education have the social effect that their usage does not harm their enjoyment other people. A good surgeon, teacher or railway service are things that we can all benefit from without harming the use of other people. In the private sector, the use of the best surgeons and teachers is appropriated exclusively for the rich. The excessive use of private transport atrophies public transport systems which the less well off tend to rely on. So here is a socialist programme: more public goods, less inequality of wealth and income and more chances for people to develop their talents and interests.

It is highly unlikely that Blair and his clique would be attracted by such a programme, as it would involve offending businessmen and the wealthy. However, if it can be shown that greater equality actually increases people's choices, gives them more control over their lives and actually makes them hap-

pier, it is something that the left ought to take seriously, if only they can end their own muddled thinking about the relationship between "equality and uniformity."

(FootNotes)

1 'Education and Skills: The Economic Benefit' (2003) DfES, p.39.

2 This data is easily available on the web. See Richard Layard (2003), <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/lectures/layard/RL030303.pdf>, <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/lectures/layard/RL030304.pdf>, <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/lectures/layard/RL030305.pdf>.

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