

## THE OTHER 51st STATE

The last Boycott Israeli Goods protest was held in Wrexham town centre on Saturday 9th December. Craig (guitar and vocal) outside the Horse and Jockey welcomed us with Lennon's *Imagine*, and over the next couple of hours we made contact with a few people who were curious to know more. One of them volunteered to help dish out the leaflets. One passer-by put his finger on what could be the heart of the matter. Referring to the way the Israelis treat the Palestinians, he said: *It makes you wonder how they've got away with it for so long.*

Taking a cue from that remark, maybe it's worth inquiring just how the Zionists have managed to sustain their essentially colonialist project for decades, long after the decolonisation of the 1960s and 70s, in the process defying more UN resolutions than any other nation, repeatedly violating the Geneva Conventions, and flouting the rulings of the World Court.

The inquiry will touch on some sensitive issues not often mentioned on in the mainstream media:

- the Zionist exploitation of world public sympathy after the Holocaust
- the claim that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East
- the immunity offered by Israel's special relationship with the USA.

The Holocaust, the almost complete destruction of European Jewry by Hitler's Germany, was an unprecedented event. There's no question but that it happened, and that by comparison with previous genocides it was completely off the scale. It may not have been what the Second World War was fought over, but in the West the liberation of the death camps in 1945 became part of the celebration of the 'good' war against fascism.

Richard Drayton (*Guardian*, May 10, 2005) argues that the Allied victory in World War II has *underwritten the subsequent sixty years of war-making... and become an ethical blank cheque for British and American power. We claim the right to bomb, to maim, to imprison without trial on the basis of direct and implicit appeals to the war against fascism.* (It's not surprising then that the current bogey is called 'Islamofascism'.) I'm quoting this because it's possible to extend the argument. It looks very much as if the Zionists, taking advantage of the worldwide revulsion against the evils of Nazism and the natural sympathy for its victims, have also laid claim to these victors' privileges. The tragedy is that they have exercised them against the Arabs, the very people who have been most tolerant towards them in the past.

Over the years, worldwide support and sympathy for the post-1948 Israeli state, whose very existence seemed at first so precarious, has slowly ebbed away. Many westerners will recall the moment when their support for the underdog turned to disillusion. For many it will be the massacre of thousands of refugees, mainly women, children and old people, at the Sabra and Shatila camps in the Lebanon in 1982, a crime for which Ariel Sharon bore responsibility. For others it will be the revelations of the new Israeli historians such as Ilan Pappé, who have exploded the official cover-ups of the 1948 massacres

and expulsions, and have laid bare the Israeli policy of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians - a policy which may not yet have run its course.

Some Jewish people still try to explain away Israeli actions in terms of the Holocaust. In a recent debate in the correspondence columns of *The Independent* about the Israeli attack on the Lebanon, one woman wrote: *We cannot again walk meekly to the gas chambers.* Of course not. That goes without saying. But it's beginning to sound like an argument of last resort along the lines of 'You're being anti-semitic' (or, in a different context, 'You're just being anti-American'). The problem is, with arguments like that you can justify absolutely anything.

Some Jewish Israeli politicians - particularly those whose interest is in territorial expansion, 'redeeming the land' as they put it, rather than security - also talk as if the existence of Israel is still under threat and the Jews might suffer another holocaust, this time in the Middle East. But it's no secret these days that Israel possesses the fourth most powerful army in the world, an air force that's bigger than the air forces of the UK and France put together, not to mention an unrivalled capacity to drop nuclear bombs anywhere in the Middle East (not bad going for a country of only six million people), so even to sympathetic outsiders this all rings a bit hollow.



*US-made (with British parts)  
Israeli Air Force F-16 fighter plane*

Israel has also been able to sell itself on the basis that it's essentially a western-style democracy. As Blair says: *they share our values.* This has been quite a successful brand image. Israel holds elections, and it's a multi-racial state, in which some 20% of the citizens are Arabs who do indeed have the right to vote. So apologists for Israel can portray it as the only western-style democracy in the Middle East, surrounded by antagonistic non-democratic regimes, which don't share our values.

The trouble is that the political rights of the Israeli Arabs don't translate into real political power. Jewish Israelis tend to regard them as a potential fifth column; the bureaucracy treats them accordingly. It would be misleading to regard them as second-class citizens. It's probably more appropriate to place Jews of non-European extraction in that category. Israeli Arabs are more like third or fourth class citizens. If the test of a democracy is how well it treats its minorities, then Israel cannot be said to pass it with flying colours.

## A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

In any case, the argument works only if you define Israel as the territory that lies within the 1948 borders. When you look at the parts of Palestine illegally occupied, illegally colonised, and so virtually annexed by the Israelis since 1967 - the West Bank and the Gaza Strip - any talk of political, civil or economic rights for the three million Palestinians there is a sick joke. To make no bones about it, this Greater Israel is a Jewish state, arguably a racist state similar to South Africa under the apartheid system. Nevertheless, the claim to be a western-style democracy still probably cuts some ice with people who are only as familiar with the situation as their newspapers and TV channels allow them to be.

But the most important reason why Israel has been able to defy international opinion for so long is its close, indeed its ever closer, relationship with the USA. (And the beauty of this is that you get automatic British support thrown in as part of the deal, because the UK too has a special relationship with the USA, one that allows it - at a price - to prance about the world stage still posing as the world power that it hasn't been since 1941.)

The US-Israel special relationship didn't really take off until 1967. Then, with its overwhelming success in the Six Day War (against Egypt, Jordan and Syria), Israel proved its potential usefulness as a regional asset in the US suppression of Arab nationalism. This also coincided more or less with the period when the USA stopped being self-sufficient in oil, a turning point that reinforced its policy of controlling the even more abundant oil reserves of the Middle East.

The relationship was reinforced in 1979 with the fall of the Shah of Iran, an American protégé with whom Israel had also enjoyed close ties. Since then both Israel and the US have viewed the Iran of the Ayatollahs as the main threat to their interests in the Middle East.

9/11 brought them even closer together, as Israel signed up to the so-called War on Terror.

At any rate, after 1967 Israel became the number one recipient of US overseas aid to the tune of billions of dollars a year. Military aid poured in, currently in the form of F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopter gun ships. Close military and intelligence ties became the norm, including mutual support on covert operations. Diplomatic efforts particularly at the UN made sure that Israel was not completely isolated. For example, when the Sabra and Shatila massacres were condemned by the United Nations, the vote went 147 to two (Israel and the United States).

As Noam Chomsky points out, *everything that Israel does is done up to the limits that the United States supports and authorises* (p 95 *Power and Terror*, Seven Stories Press, 2003). So, when we talk about Israeli atrocities, we should really be talking about US-Israeli atrocities. It's not that Washington has any particular strategic interest in the Israeli occupation of Palestine. It's just that, so long as Israel acts as a projection of US power, it's allowed to do what it wants. It's widely agreed in the rest of the world that any diplomatic solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict should involve an Israeli

withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. But this is exactly what the Israeli leadership, indeed most Israelis, won't accept. So the US helps them to block it. And this, as Chomsky points out, is what's known as 'the peace process'.



Former Israeli PM Sharon with his buddy Bush

To a certain extent the power-brokers in Washington are locked into this relationship by the combined influence of the Jewish Zionist and the Christian Zionist lobbies within the USA itself. That's not to say that the lobbies necessarily have any direct influence on the details of American policy. But they will probably make it difficult for any American administration to back away from its links with Israel in the context of the search for a solution.

The fact remains that but for US support, Israel would have had to come to an agreement with the Palestinians years ago.

### URANIUM IN LEBANON?

The Low Level Radiation Campaign (LLRC) has been following up the issue of whether Uranium weaponry was used by Israel during the recent attacks on Lebanon. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) undertook a study which found no evidence of Uranium contamination. But does this mean that there is none? UNEP said of its instruments, previously used in the Balkans and Kuwait: *Thanks to their high sensitivity, effective sound alarm, durability, and robustness, these... have proven ideal for such missions.* LLRC says that this is far from the case: *In the Balkans and Kuwait UNEP was looking for Uranium from armour piercing shells; in Lebanon the situation was quite different. It was a bombing campaign in the course of which it became apparent that there was Uranium in the bombs.* Chris Busby has produced a Green Audit report, in which he observes that *the scientists who advised UNEP and who carried out the field survey are either incompetent or else designed their survey to deliberately miss the presence of uranium in the area.* There is also the possibility that enriched Uranium was used in bombs to disguise the presence of Depleted Uranium.

For more information see: [www.llrc.org](http://www.llrc.org).