Attachment F

Audience Affairs Manager SBS
Special Broadcasting Manager
Locked Bag 028, Crows Nest NSW 1585

Re: SBS Radio Russian Language Programme – Melbourne and Sydney Service

Dear Ms Begbie,

Please find the following complaint about the SBS Russian Language programming and the request to take an action in respect to breaches of SBS Code of Practice.

We seek to address the following issue of the **Balance of Programming and Content**:

SBS Russian language Radio mainly services two distinct community groups:

1. Ethnic Russian/Orthodox Christian Community, which has predominantly settled in Australia in post-WW2 years, and
2. Jews of the former Soviet Union/Russia, who started arriving in Australia in late 1970's and early 1980's and for whom Russian is the first language.

When the SBS Russian Radio Service commenced, the audience consisted predominantly of the first group and the programming that was developed, focused on their needs and interests and religious orientation.

However, over the past 30 years, the demographic balance has shifted tremendously. Jews from the former Soviet Union now comprise more than half of the audience of the SBS Russian language radio service.

In the Soviet Union, Jewish people were prevented from learning their history, culture, tradition and religion. An important part of our integration into Australian life is to be involved in the life of the Jewish community of Australia and to participate in communal affairs and to learn traditional religious activities.

The current programming of SBS Radio Russian language service is not reflective of these needs and sensitivities of the bulk of its audience.

Specifically:

1. Announcements of festivals and religious holidays are almost invariably referenced to Russian Orthodox religion. Topics based on Jewish festivals and traditions do not form a part of standard programming and rarely, mostly by the audience requests, there are references to the above topics.

2. Both studios of SBS Russian Radio are dedicating news, topical and other programs to Russia and inadequate small portion (15 – 20%) of air time to historical, political, cultural and other topics related to our current home - Australia.

The above positions are clearly at odds to the SBS Charter and the General Principles of operation as expressed in **Article 1 of the SBS Code of Practice** in reference to SBS Radio:

".....SBS Radio assists communities to participate as fully as possible in Australian Society."

We believe that failure of current news and communal affairs programming is actually preventing the Russian language service listeners from participating in Australian society especially elderly people with poor English. For these people Russian Radio is the only source of local and world news, advertising etc.

".....Where possible, it also supports the maintenance and development of their cultural identities and provides cross-cultural links"

Current programming fails to adequately address the cultural needs and development of cultural identities of Russian Jewish listeners.

"..... Language groups endeavour to be responsive to the needs and expectations of community audiences while remaining impartial and objective."

Current programming is not responsive to the needs and expectations of its audience, nor is this approach impartial and objective.

More specifically current programming is in breach of **Article 2.5 of the SBS Code of Practice**

2.5 RELIGIONS

"SBS is aware of the need for a responsible examination of the role of religion in society. In broadcasting programs about religion, SBS will not support any particular religion over any other, nor intentionally provide a medium for one religion to denigrate another.

SBS recognises the importance of religion for the many communities that make up Australian society and the potential for programming dealing with religion to cause cross-cultural tensions. Accordingly, SBS will be sensitive and careful in dealing with issues of religion."

Current programming is insensitive to the religious needs of its Jewish listeners, nor it is careful in dealing with the issues of the religion.

In view of the foregoing, we the undersigned, urge **SBS Audience Response Unit** to:

1. Carry out an overall programming review of the SBS Radio Russian language service taking into account changes in ethnic and religious balance in Russian speaking community in Australia.
2. For the successful integration of Russian speaking population with poor English into Australian society - majority of the air time dedicate to Australia.
3. To satisfy majority of the requests of the radio listeners – organize at least once a year meetings with senior representatives of SBS Radio in Melbourne and Sydney

Attachment to the letter to SBS Radio Russian Language Programme – Melbourne and Sydney Service

In addition to the general programming issues outlined in our letter, we would like to raise a specific instance that has caused a great deal of anguish to Jewish listeners of the Russian language service.

We refer to three instances last year, where a senior presenter at SBS Radio Russian language service, hosted on air who has made a concerted effort to propagate information that is designed to vilify and denigrate Jewish people, their traditions and history.

(Please refer to the article by Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs about – http://www.sem40.ru/lenta/news-dir/120339.html?print=1. Printed version of the article in Russian is included)

attacks on the of Holocaust attracts protests from the Holocaust survivors whom he is accusing in falsification the facts and using Holocaust in their "selfish" interests.

(Please refer to site: www. .net/ru/discurs12.htm,
Additional background materials on on anti-semitic/holocaust denial views and public statements involving racial and religious vilification can also be found on the following WEB sites: http://www.nigelparry.com/issues/ , http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?p=234)

in his programme provided with a forum for presenting his defamatory views.

, first interview with attracted a lot of protests from anguished listeners, who called to SBS Radio regarding this matter. Despite this provided radio interview with another two times. Then, less than a year later (1st February 2005) has expressed his willingness to invite again.

conduct in selecting such guests, with the knowledge of such guests' background and publicly stated views, is clearly in breach of **Article 2.1 of the SBS Code of Practice:**

2.1 PREJUDICE, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

"SBS seeks to counter attitudes of prejudice against any person or group on the basis of their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, physical or mental disability, occupational status, or political beliefs. While remaining consistent with its mandate to portray diversity, SBS will avoid broadcasting programming which clearly condones, tolerates or encourages discrimination on these grounds.

SBS views racism as a serious impediment to achieving a cohesive, equitable and harmonious society, and is committed to its elimination. SBS seeks to correct distorted pictures of cultural communities and issues of race generally. It does this through programming which reflects the reality of Australia's cultural diversity and exposes racist attitudes.

SBS aims to ensure that programs either counter or do not support individual or group stereotyping. SBS strives to eliminate stereotyping by presenting members of different groups in a variety of roles and by avoiding simplistic representations."

Иерусалимский центр общественных проблем призывает обратить внимание на "еврейских антисемитов"

04:11-27.02.2005

Иерусалимский центр общественных проблем призывает обратить внимание на "еврейских антисемитов" - группу евреев и израильтян, разъезжающих по миру, клевещущих на еврейское государство и сотрудничающих с террористами. "Антисемитские нападки на Израиль со стороны израильтян и евреев зачастую практически неотличимы от антисемитизма неевреев.

Однако есть и особенности - некоторые "евреи-антисемиты" используют в своих пропагандистских построениях ссылки на родственников, переживших Холокост, подчеркивают свое еврейство и указывают на ту или иную связь с еврейским государством", указывается в исследовании, проведенном по заказу Конференции президентов еврейских организаций Америки.

Речь идет о группе достаточно маргинальной, но очень крикливой - включающей как израильских "леваков", вроде "историка" Илана Папе из Хафийского университета, бывших израильтян, вроде Исраэля Шамира, разного рода левых экстремистов в странах Запада, наподобие американского лингвиста Ноама Чомски, и , наконец, сторонников фанатичной секты "Наторей карта".

Все они финансируются и активно привлекаются арабами и левыми антисемитами для участия в разного рода "международных конференциях" против еврейского государства. В документе подчеркивается, что особая вредоносность "евреев-антисемитов" заключается в том, что антисемиты всех мастей широко используют их для "легитимации" собственных погромных призывов.

Для того, чтобы более эффективно бороться с пропагандой "еврейских антисемитов, специалисты из Центра общественных проблем рекомендуют "с особой тщательностью анализировать их прошлое, мотивы и используемые методы".

АЕН

SBS Corporation - Australia's multicultural broadcaster

POSTED

Audience Affairs

5 May 2005

Your correspondence, received by SBS 7th March 2005 has resulted in a review of SBS Radio's Russian Language Program by SBS's Office of Audience Affairs. This Office assesses formal complaints against the requirements of SBS's Codes of Practice.

Your concerns fall into two parts. The first issue raises overall concerns about the Program's lack of suitable material, which fails to address the needs of the Russian Jewish audience, and the second deals with concerns about the interview with

You assert that the majority of the Russian Language Program's audience consists of Jewish people from the former Soviet Union. This does not concur with SBS's view.

The process for allocating air time to language programs is detailed in Code 2.2.2 of SBS's Codes of Practice. It states that language groups "are reviewed from time-to time on the basis of Census data and in consultation with communities."

This is what has happened with the Russian Language Program. The most current ABS Census data is from 2001. It states the total number of Russian Jews speaking Russian at home to be 7,854 and the total number of Russian Christians, including Orthodox Russians, speaking Russian at home to be 16,997.

The latest round of community consultations about the Russian Language Program occurred in Melbourne in on 3rd October 2001 and in Sydney on 22 November 2001. The next round of consultations is planned for later this year. The dates are still to be fixed but they will be advertised on air during the Russian Language Program.

You have suggested that the Russian Language Program does not satisfy Code 1 of the SBS Codes of Practice because it does not assist communities to participate as fully as possible in Australia society; inadequately addresses the needs of Russian Jewish listeners; and is not impartial and objective. Such broad statements can only be adequately reviewed in reference to specific claims.

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You have specifically referred to a perceived lack in community announcements to the Russian Jewish community, and to an inadequate proportion of Australian news content within the Russian Language Program.

The Russian Language Program complies with the SBS Radio Policy for Language Program Formats, which states:

Language programs will include a news bulletin (including homeland and other international news), current affairs, coverage of issues important to the language community in Australia, settlement information and community announcements. Programs will also include major breaking news and may also provide cultural, sports and other segments of interest to their audience.

The standard news format for the Russian Language Program consists of 15 minutes of international, homeland and Australian news. Australian news forms approximately 30% of total news output on the Russian Language Program. This complies with the SBS policy.

With regard to the broadcast of material designed to assist the Russian Community to fully participate in Australian Society, SBS Radio management reports that the Russian Language program broadcasts Australian political commentary, Australian news features and programs on Australian history and Australian cultural events, including 'Australian Notebook'.

With regard to material of particular relevance to the Russian Jewish community the following segments were broadcast in February and March 2005.

1. [redacted] explaining significance of Sukkoth (religious holiday),
2. [redacted] explaining significance of Purim (religious holiday),
3. Interview with the editor of Russian-Jewish Magazine *Menorah* [redacted]
4. Interview with [redacted] (largely Jewish organization), AND
5. Interview with [redacted] of Holocaust Survivors Association in a special segment commemorating Anniversary of liberation of Auschwitz.

In regard specifically to community announcements, SBS Radio management confirms that the majority of community announcements on the Russian Language Program service the Russian Jewish community. Typically these announcements are for events organised by Shalom Association, ex-Soviet War veterans association, community clubs Nadezhda, Ogonyok, Ulybka, Bodrost (all largely Jewish), and announcements from FREE (friends of refugees from Eastern Europe – Jewish Hassidic movement).

You also raised concerns that the Russian Language Program is insensitive to the need of its Jewish listeners, and suggest that it takes insufficient care in dealing with Jewish religious issues. Again, it is not possible to review such a broad based claim without specific examples of such a lack of care and sensitivity. However, in general terms, the Russian Language Program does broadcast religious material specifically to meet the needs of Russian Jews in the audience, and no religious information is broadcast on the Sabbath.

The second part of your complaint concerns the two part interview that the broadcaster [redacted] conducted with [redacted]. The review has found

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serious problems with the presentation and content of the interview and its transcript has been removed from the SBS radio website.

Although Code 1 of SBS Codes of Practice permit interviews with controversial figures, it expects that such material is handled carefully and responsibly. It is the view of SBS that was given a level of prominence that he did not warrant.

However, as there was an attempt to balance the views of with those of and too some extent and the journalist, SBS does not view that Code 2.1 on 'Prejudice, Racism and Discrimination' has been breached.

Nevertheless, SBS is concerned that the material was broadcast in the form in which it went to air. SBS regrets any distress caused as a result of this interview.

I note your request for annual meetings with the Senior Representatives of SBS Radio in Melbourne and Sydney, and your request that the majority of air time in the Russian Language Program be dedicated to Australian issues. These requests are probably best be addressed to the Head of Radio, Mr Quang Luu, and I will ensure he sees the correspondence you have forwarded to me. They are also issues you can raise in the Community Consultation process later this year.

The review into your concerns has now been completed. Thank you for expressing your concerns to SBS. Should you find this response inadequate, you are entitled to take your concerns to the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

SBS is pleased of the opportunity to review the Russian Language Program and in doing so, addressing your concerns.

Your active participation in SBS is appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Begbie
Audience Affairs Manager

Middle East Series
Guest: Israeli journalist, writer, [redacted]

TARANSLATION

Part 1 – Sun 2 May 2004
Part 2 – Tue 4 May 2004

PART 1 – Sun 2 May 2004 (segment with [redacted])

[redacted] **Middle East: Facts and Opinions. And let me introduce our today's guest starting with his answer to the question what it is in contemporary Israel that brings out joy in him and what makes him anxious.**

[redacted]: What more than anything that brings out joy in me is this orange tree and the oranges that are growing on it that I am looking at as I am talking to you right now standing on the balcony. But what makes me really sad is the fact that there are still many problems remaining unsolved and whilst this tree continues to grow and the roses all around continue to blossom there are bulldozers that are destroying other roses, and other bulldozers – other rare trees. And of course this makes me quite sad.

[redacted]**: Our guest by phone from Jaffa, is a well known Israeli writer, journalist, commentator, translator – [redacted]. He is one of those that openly criticises Sharon's policies, is critical of Israel, criticises Zionists, and openly comes out in support of Palestinians. I don't know how our listeners will react to his views and whether there will be people here who will share his views. However, he says that feels at home in Israel and has no intention of leaving the country for some other. He says that no one gives him trouble there and lately people started to show interest in what he has to say.**

[redacted]: Well, as a general thing, I don't feel, to be truthful, any personal difficulties. I can't say I encountered any real problems. On the contrary, people that in the past showed doubt and scepticism about my main message – that we all had to live together and not fight one another – now begin to more and more pay attention to what I am saying. You know, few years ago there was this conviction in the Israeli society that if there was a lack of might, then to get things right all you had to do was to increase this might. It is true that then I wasn't listened to and no one heard then what I was saying. Now it's different, people do listen to what I am saying and they in turn begin to say that just maybe we here should be doping things in the way it is done elsewhere in the world – in Australia, in Russia, in USA. This is to say we should start living together and put an end to this foolish notion of having and exclusive Jewish State.

[redacted]**: Israeli writer and journalist, [redacted]. This is part of the interview that we recorded with him this past Friday. First Question to our guest: What particular Middle East events occupy your attention right now?**

: The subject of the Middle East is something that to us embraces the entire region. The most important event right now is what's happening in Iraq. Granted that what's happening in our backyard, in our home, is most visible and important, however, the future of the region to a large extent will depend on what the Iraqi insurgents manage to achieve. I totally oppose the US aggression in the region and their occupation of Iraq. I have a deep sympathy for the Iraqi insurgents that are fighting for their country's independence. This is why I think that it is very important to follow the events there and to see if they manage to repel the American attack and whether finally they'll get the message to the American people that the US Army is an unwelcomed guest in Iraq. Generally speaking this is a defining moment. To be frank, everything else that's happening here appears to be quite minor in comparison with this. For example, as you know, there is a debate taking place in Israel right now, or to be more precise within the Likud party, to do with Sharon's plan of withdrawal from the Gaza. The plan is so, so and the chances that it will be implemented are not all that great. Then to be truthful again, even if it was carried out, it's not certain how successful it would be. So, this is another event that's taking place. However, to my way of thinking, the main events that are happening right now in the region are the ones in Iraq.

: Yes, but how what's happening in Iraq could ultimately impact on what's happening in Israel?

: The Middle East is an integrated single scheme. In Israel we have a number of different schools of thought and political directions. One of them, the dominant one now, is the Sharon's position and that of his people. Regrettably he is not alone here. This position can be summed up in the following terms: There is an external evil entity or spirit that gives support to the enemies of Israel. Once this entity or spirit is broken then everything will be fine. At the beginning this evil spirit was the Soviet Union. And it should be noted that Israel was one of the most active opponents of Soviet Union over a period of several decades. The Soviet Union is no more and now we have Russia that has very positive regard for Israel, or let us say at the very least always takes a neutral position. And so another enemy has emerged – Iraq. And Saddam Hussain is just another Hitler who is responsible for all the troubles. Saddam is no more. What's the next step? Now they are saying the main enemy is Iran. Let's break Iran. In other words, all the time it's let us break someone else instead of taking a good look at ourselves and ask whether we are behaving correctly. Maybe we don't position ourselves well, maybe we mustn't oppress the Palestinians the way we do – keeping millions of people without the minimal civil rights; maybe we shouldn't take way land and water from them. That's what we should be thinking about and not who or what supports them. But they are not thinking along these lines. And of course the war in Iraq in this sense is an example – an extreme event –a continuation of the very policy or the line taken by Sharon to destroy all in order that the Palestinians will not have this support and can in the end be squashed completely. That's why say it's important to see if the insurgents will succeed in driving the Americans out. Then perhaps this may lead to some reassessment of values in Israel. In the end they will understand that they can't break everyone and that what needed is to come to a position of peaceful co-existence.

: Do you think such peaceful co-existence is possible in the end?

: Of course it's possible. And why shouldn't it be? Take your country Australia. You have Jews and non-Jews living side by side in peace. Right? Why isn't this possible

in some other place? It's possible in Russian, in America, in any other place. Jews can live with non-Jews anywhere. The only condition for this is that there be no discrimination. Take your country again Australia. Isn't true that Jews and non-Jews enjoy the same rights? So, there you are. The same thing is true in other countries. Our country is the only one in the world where Jews have rights and non-Jews have considerably fewer rights. This situation is really the cause of all the problems. And all the wars and the like, they are really attempts to preserve this privileged status that Jews enjoy. As I see it this shouldn't be happening in the same way that's it's not happening anywhere else. When this inequality is going to end all the wars will end also. This is the simplest alternative how to end the conflict.

: What kind of war and a conflict is this that has now been going on for some 60 years and to this day they don't seem to be able to find a solution out of this paradox...

: It's not a paradox. The reason is that they are trying to find a solution without eliminating the main impediment – inequality. You know our country's total population is about 9 million people.

: You include here the Palestinian Autonomy?

: I am including all the territories and all the lands where people are living and are ruled by Ariel Sharon. Where there is no other army but the Israeli Army; where there are no other ships, but those belonging to Israel. We have this fiction in law that there is this Autonomy. This is just a fiction in law. There is no real Palestinian Autonomy. What else can I say? There could have been one, but there isn't. In reality we only have one country. In this country there are different law networks and 3 million people that have no voting rights and they don't vote for candidates to the parliament. Maybe even 4 million. No one really knows the precise number. In my opinion this situation is totally unacceptable. To give you an example, the newspaper "Haaretz" reported a couple of days ago that the income of a Jew per head of population is two times higher that of an Israeli Arab who represents a rather privileged group of Palestinian population that have Israeli citizenship. And if a comparison was to be made with those Palestinians that don't have Israeli citizenship, then the income of a Jew is 8 times greater than that of an ordinary Palestinian. In other words there is a serious inequality in the country based on political, social and religious or denominational factors. This shouldn't be happening. You know all the attempts to create a State in which the Jews will have rights and Gentiles will not, this is not possible. It can't be done. And of course it's quite unnecessary.

: Back before the General Assembly decided on the petition of Palestine – creation of two states – wasn't there also consideration given to the alternative that envisaged creation of one state in which Jews and Palestinian Arabs would have lived side by side enjoying equal rights. Which of the two alternatives you think would have been ideal?

: - Yes, of course, a single state. It was the right alternative. It was needed and that's how it should have been. Of course it's quite a pity that the Zionists managed at the time to have their way and imposed their position of a Jewish State. My view is that this should not have happened. You just think how is it possible to create a state in which the immigrants all of a sudden have rights over and above those of the local population.

Granted this is how it was sometime back in Australia where you live when the new settlers – colonialists enjoyed rights that were denied to Aborigines. But this was a long time ago and it's not the case now. What we have in our case is an attempt to turn the history back: trying to have a state with an archaic method of government, just like in the ancient Sparta. I think what was done was wrong.

: That may be so but we have to accept the realities as they are today. Palestine isn't it true is trying to have its own state. For some reason they haven't succeeded here. Can you still see a time in the future when there may be two states coexisting on this land: Israel and…

: (Interrupting) No, no. This cannot be and it will not happen. There is simply no room here for two states. In the same way as it is not possible to create say two states in Sydney or Melbourne where you live one for Jews and one for Gentiles, by the same token it is not possible to do it here. Jews and non-Jews live very close to one another. To divide the country in such a manner is impossible. I also hold the view that there is no Palestinian majority that wants some sort of a separate Palestinian independence. Sometimes you can hear some Palestinians say this but they are simply desperate. You know there are people who are saying that if they were to be given a block of land and that will be the last you'll hear of them. They say this from a position of desperation. It's not a viable alternative. My view is that you need to normalise the situation – give everyone the same rights to live together as one friendly family.

But in the framework of what State?

: Well, it will be one State, our State, where all will live together - a place for the Russians, Moroccans, Israelis and the descendants of the original Palestinians, both Christian and Moslem, that is to say - the Arabs. We don't have here just the two groups – Jews and Arabs – as this may appear from a distance. The situation is quite different. What we have here is a mosaic. We have for example a million Russians here. Many of them are of Orthodox faith and many are not very religious. In reality not many of them are interested in this Jewish paradigm. Even if we take the Russians that we are related to, the Russian community here is not all that keen on having an exclusive Jewish State. I think for the Russian minority here a common State for all is a far better option.

: But the Palestinian Arabs aren't they fighting for the creation of their own independent State…

(Interrupting). No, no, no. It's not at all the case. It's quite the opposite. What's more, before 1988 the Palestinian Arabs didn't want at all to have their own State. There was absolutely no need for it. They were engaged in a struggle always for equality in Palestine. That's how it was basically. It's another thing when what they had to say was misconstrued and their position was misrepresented. You need to talk to the people and to read what they have written on the subject and continue to write. In my case the person who had a profound influence on my development was Edward Said. He was a wonderful Palestinian thinker, a philosopher and an author of a book called "Orientalism". I will recommend it to your listeners to read it if they can find the time. He too always advocated equality. The message being: all that live in our country, in The Holy Land – in Palestine, in Israel – no matter how it is called, should all live together under the conditions of equality without this notion of Jewish suprematism.

: And you say how this State is called is not important?

: People don't always understand what's in the name. For example, there is a country called Suomi. Others called this country Finland. There are two names. The Finns, so to say, and those of Finnish origin, called it Suomi. The Finns of Swedish origin that makes up 10% of the population called it Finland. That's how we know the country. Or take another example. There is a country called Eire. The same country is known by the name of Ireland. For those that speak Irish it's Eire and for those that speak English, it's Ireland. The same can apply in our case. This is how it was before 1948. There was a country that for some was called Palestine and for others the Land of Israel. Or call it simply Israel. In other words, this is not a difficult thing.

: We recently had an interview with another journalist from Jerusalem. This was on the Remembrance Day and on the eve of the Israeli Independence Day. He spoke of how the Remembrance Day was celebrated and what preparations were being made to mark the Independence Day. And I asked him about the road that the country travelled during the past 56 years. What was that road? He told us about the way the country is today and how democratic it is and how the country is blossoming and how happy he is that he lives in Israel. I would like to ask you about the same thing. What was this road that the country had traversed?

To be honest, I don't see any many positives because in reality this whole thing is tied up with some very serious problems and profound things. In my view no country should be created, developed and be embellished in a way that takes no account of the local indigenous population. The people representing the local indigenous population are not only the carriers of traditions, but they also have the most profound knowledge of underlying mechanisms that make the country function. If you have a situation where the immigrants make all the decisions and the indigenous population is pushed aside then you have the situation that we have here today. The journalist that you've interviewed, I am sure is a wonderful man, but if he only showed interest in what is really happening here. The situation in reality is quite horrific, and not only because there is a war going on and all the shootings. It's horrific because the water resources have been practically used up. When the Jewish immigrants came to this country they had no idea whatsoever that they were coming to an arid desert country where the water resources were very limited. They were like you know how it is with a person that has been given for the first time a credit card – just keep signing and that's all. Whatever you want you can buy, just sign and that's all. However, a person sooner or later comes to an understanding that the credit limit has ran out. The same applies to water. We have very limited water reserves. Jews started creating industries that use up a lot of water. As a result there is no longer any water left in the mountains. I travelled the country a lot and visit lots of different places. Some of the sources that gave water – the life of the country – they have all practically dried up. This hasn't affected those Jews that live a comfortable life. If they lost their agricultural business they are not all that concerned. The thinking is that, oh, we can buy another. Israel's income now is not from the sale of agricultural produce, but from the sale of armaments. So, to them the situation is not all that terrible. For the local indigenous Palestinian population – and in the main they were farmers – what's happening in this regard is a terrible tragedy. And it is not only due to the fact that the Israeli bulldozers and the wall are pressing down on them from one side. The other reason is due to the fact that the water balance has been upset. So that's on the negative side. Then again in other respects this is a wonderful country, with a wonderful nature and a blue sky and good weather. The sea is

warm and the Palestinian people are very nice. You know I live to a great extent among Palestinians. Jaffa is a mixed city. There are Palestinians here, Russians, Moroccans and Isrelis. We all live here together.

: Could we talk for a minute about the Sharon's withdrawal plan. What are the positives and the negatives as you see them and are you for or against the plan?

: I don't really think the plan is taking us anywhere. Sure, on one hand it's good that some Israeli forces will be withdrawn from Gaza. But don't think this will dramatically change the situation. You see Gaza is a sort of a large jail, a concentration camp. And maybe not at all that large. It's a strip of land measuring 50km by 5 km. It's a narrow strip of land which is totally surrounded by barbed wire and which is patrolled from all sides by the Israeli Army. You can't just go there. No one can enter or leave the place. You can't take something there and can't take out. All the land and all the water there is under Jewish control. This is just one large jail. We now have a debate among the opponents and the supporters of Sharon's plan. That is to say should the Israeli forces be located along the perimeter of this jail or should they also go inside and stroll along the corridors there. That's basically it. At the moment the Israelis, the Israeli forces are inside the Gaza and control all the corridors there. The Sharon's plan amounts to the following: why do we need to spend time in these corridors and have a small Jewish settlement in one of the quarters of this jail. Let's transfer the Jewish settlement to some other place and strengthen the fence along the perimeter. That's the scenario. Of course, it's better if the settlement is transferred to some other place from this "Silver" section. It's occupying quite a bit of territory – 40% - and it's crowded as it is. However, it's not the solution to the problem.

: You are saying that this is not a solution to the problem.

: It's not a solution and moreover, it's not a significant easing of the problem. I recently talked to people from Gaza, with ordinary Palestinians there. They are in great despair. They say they would prefer not to have this fence that separates them from the rest of the country. Of course they want to see the fence taken down. And they don't want any sort of independence or to have the troops pulled out. All they want is to have is one country in which they will have full citizenship rights. This is why the situation we have here is really crazy. This is like taking some suburb of Sydney and building a fence around it and then saying: here, be independent. The situation is abnormal.

: Israeli writer and journalist sharing with us his perception of the reasons behind the Arab-Israeli conflict and how it should be solved.
"FACTS AND OPINIONS".
In the next final part of our interview we will have a bit more on the Sharon's Plan and the "Road Map". Also on the barrier wall, on the return of refugees and on literary works. We would also like to hear your points of view on the subjects that have been discussed.
Our phone number in Sydney with voice mail is: 9430 2815, 9430 2815. You will need to introduce yourself and please leave your phone number for contact.
SBS Radio Sydney. "The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict".

End of part of Part 1 of the interview.