

PART 2 – Tuesday, 4 May 2004

: In focus: ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. FACTS AND OPINIONS.

Firstly, are the listener reactions to the 1st part of the interview with Israeli writer, journalist . The interview was broadcast this past Sunday, 2nd May – in the previous edition of this segment. Let's listen:

1. Good afternoon. This is calling from Melbourne. I listened to your SBS program today on the Middle East and I liked it very much. I was pleasantly surprised to hear point of view – from a general position you may say – about his people. I am all in favour of peace and friendship. I spent my youth in Kazakhstan. And at school that I went to we had pupils of many different nationalities: Chechens, Kazakhs, Azerbaijanis, Ingushis and Jews, and many others. And no one ever said anything rude to one another because of nationality. We were strictly forbidden to hurt each other by saying something to do with one's nationality. So, I would like to see peace in this world and friendship. I am fully in agreement with . Goodbye.

2. Good afternoon. I am from Melbourne and my name is . I am calling in relation to your program today with the writer from Israel. Very interesting. Quite an original point of view on the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict and on the issue of rights. It appears that Jews and non-Jews have different rights and speaks of this openly. His point of view and his knowledge of the laws of Israel – very interesting because what we know here is not very much. has an interesting approach to all this. It's always interesting to hear a point of view that is not expressed under some pressure of propaganda but is free and in this sense it was quite satisfying that is not persecuted for his views that are different to that of Mr Ariel Sharon and the Likud Party. This was a very interesting and informative program. I want to thank for displaying what I would say some civil bravery. Thank you and all the best. Goodbye.

3. Hello. It's calling from Melbourne. I've listened yesterday to your program where the writer was expressing his views about the way the problem in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship could be solved. I think this is just brilliant because of its simplicity and humanity – to create one united State. Those in power should give serious consideration to this in order to achieve peace and harmony in this region. is a real peacemaker. God help him. All the best.

4. Hello. I am calling from Sydney. My name is . I am very grateful to you for covering such a pointed issue as the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Regrettably, your guest, journalist deserves a pity. A journalist that doesn't know the history of his own people deserves to be despised. He calls the Palestinians the original inhabitants of Palestine. This is a clear lie. The Al Aksa Mosque was build on the ruins of the Jewish Temple. The territory of the Judea speaks for itself. The tragedy of the Jewish people was in it's refusal to submit. The citadel of Mosada and the insurgence of the Maccabees also tells a story. Forceful expulsion of Jews by Romans, the Jewish war that has been written about by the historian Flavius – so, who is the original inhabitant of Palestine? The expelled Tartars and the Chechens – they returned to their homelands. Why can't the Jews have the same right? The s... Germans were expelled from Czech country for no reason and no one is demanding their return. The Palestinians left on their own accord from the lands

where they lived for a long time. All the Arab countries that started was against Israel used to tell them to leave the territory and don't stand in the way of them fighting the Jews and when we take them down then you can return. Nothing came of it. They inflicted punishment on themselves. Those Palestinians and Arabs that didn't listen to that empty talk to this day live in Israel and have received Israeli citizenship and have their representatives even in the Senate. So, how could there be all this talk about violation of human rights? The jail in Gaza has been created by Palestinians, by the Arafat who is pumping money to his wife in France. Arafat is a venal creature that should have been removed from the scene a long time ago and also journalists such as [redacted] that sing his tune should also be removed. All the best and I apologise for my temper.

These were views expressed by our listeners.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

We cannot of course living here solve any of the global conflicts especially such prolonged ones as the Arab-Israeli conflict. And just to think how many similar hot spots there are on the map of the world: Chechnya, Ireland, Spain, and so on. It's a pity that the Holy Land cannot serve as an example to the rest of the world how people can and should live in peace with one another without animosity towards each other, without acts of terrorism. After all, this is Holy Land! What then is the problem? It's the ordinary people that suffer before anybody else and the people as a whole are not to be blamed for what is happening. The ones that are responsible in the first place are the politicians.

Here is a view point from inside the country: a point of view by an Israeli writer, journalist [redacted] on the problems of his country and the Arab-Israeli conflict. He is one of those Jewish Israeli nationals who disagree with Sharon's policies and criticise him for his past and have some negative things to say about him.

[redacted] expresses openly his sympathy for Palestinians. He condemns the inequalities which he claims exist in his country in relation to non-Jews. If in the past he openly supported Zionism, today he openly opposes it.

This is his point of view. It's up to you to decide where he is right in what he says and where he is wrong.

Today, we are able to hear one point of view and tomorrow – another.

So, here's the 2nd final part of our interview with Israeli writer, journalist [redacted]

Q. And what is happening on the West Bank? There Sharon is trying to keep the settlements. What's different?

[redacted]: In general what we have in Israel is a sort of a game that is being played out constantly. This has been happening over a number of years and is done to create an impression that Israel is trying to achieve peace. People that in power in Israel never really wanted peace. But they do need to create this appearance and hence the reason for all these plans. There is a heap of different plans – at first one plan, then another, and a third plan, and now we have Sharon's plan. According to this plan we will leave Gaza but at the same time will annex some territories in the West Bank. All these things really distract from the essential reality of what is happening. And the reality is this: This huge wall is being constructed at a very fast pace. It is a huge construction – a concrete wall some 8 metres high. It cuts into, so to say, Palestinian territories. In reality they cut through the lands that belong to living Palestinians. And where this is taking place a huge corridor of destruction

is created. The bulldozers there are clearing olive tree groves and destroying houses. So a huge strip is created that stretches for hundreds of kilometres over a somewhat small territory. It goes in curves all over the place and where this happens everything dies. Furthermore, those territories that happen to be over the other side of the wall, they for all intense and purposes come under the control of Israel. And these are sizeable properties. The net result is that the farmers on the West Bank are left without a land, without water and in a very destitute position. The situation is quite bad. So, I think we needn't be preoccupied by details of this or that plan. We need to see a bigger picture. We simply need to work towards the goal of having Jews and non-Jews enjoy equal rights in this Holy Land.

: But what are the militants, the terrorists fighting for?

: They are fighting for the same thing. In the same way as the Russian partisans during World War II were destroying trains and were killing German occupants. Ultimately they were fighting simply to have the Germans and the Russians enjoy a free life – not to oppress one another – each in his own place and without problems. This was not a war against the German people as such. You would know that there were Germans that fought together with the Red Army. They were not few in number. So, in the same way, there are those that have sided with the Palestinians and it's not a small number. These are people of Jewish origin. They do exist.

: On the side of Palestinians?

: Well, they support Palestinians. Sure. To give you an example: just recently, a few days ago, I was in the village of Beidu and there was a large demonstration of Palestinian women together with Israeli women. They went there together to protest over the construction of the wall. The bulldozers were working there clearing an ancient street with olive trees. It was a very sad thing, a sad sight. The women joined hands and marched against the bulldozers when Israeli horse mounted police attacked them with their batons. Some sustained injuries on their heads and one was shot dead. Many got arrested. So again, to a large measure what is happening here is a struggle for equal rights in the Holy Land.

: But according to Sharon his main aim is to provide security for Israel. As a consequence, we have all these actions designed to physically eliminate leaders of organisations such as Hamas. Do you think he is succeeding here?

– Well, I don't call this as actions of physical elimination. I call this murder. And I don't think these killings achieve the objective. But then again this is a traditional Zionist policy. You have surely read the book Exodus and other publications. After all it's true that Zionist books always relate with great pride how the Zionists killed their enemies: whether they were English Ministers or members of the Swedish Royal House. That has always been their method, you know, if there is no man then there is no problem. And that is the best way to instil fear in your opponents by killing key people. It is a fact that Israelis have already over some period of time killed close to 200 Palestinian activists. In other words, as soon as you have an emergence of some Palestinian activist, with some prominence, he will end up either in a jail or an interrogation room or in another world.

: Not just activists, but ring- leaders, terrorists...

: (Interrupting). And who do you think are the ringleaders? Take Menahem Begin or Ariel Sharon, are they ring-leaders or activists? It's a fact that they have their hands soiled in blood. You have to be realistic about these things. Ariel Sharon started his career with a mass murder in the village of Kibie. You can read about it when in 1953 his Israeli Army unit, a battalion, the 101st strike unit killed 63 men, women and children in a Palestinian village of Kibie. From that time on his has left a long bloodied trail. So what so we call him-a ring-leader, a terrorist or a political activist? Of course, it's important to engage in a dialogue and to try and reach an agreement with these or that leaders. I think these killings don't take you anywhere. What needs to be given is equality. What is needed is to have a situation in which Jews and non-Jews will be equal. And then let the normal political process take its course, through the parliament. And that's it.

: And what about the "Road Map", what's your view here? Right now America is trying to make some corrections to some of its provisions. This is in view of the support that the USA has given to the Sharon's Plan. Sharon, however, said that the "Road Map" is no longer a viable thing. Maybe the "Road Map" is the way to go in search of peace, what do you think?

: No, I don't think so. As to the "Road Map", yes, it's a patient that is more dead than alive. The Map never did and never would have lead to anywhere. That's my opinion. It's one of many plans and they all appeared in their time to calm down the international community. It was there to give hope to people that things will settle down and that we know where we are going. In reality it's nothing. And we have this joke in Israel now that to save electricity they decided to turn off the light at the end of the tunnel. So, the answer is no. I never believed that the Plan could take us somewhere and it is because in my view it is not possible to solve this problem by any means other than by giving equality. Those that are trying to create a two-level State in which Jews will have rights and non-Jews will not, are going back to the way it was in Sparta. In Sparta they also failed to solve this problem. The way they were trying to solve it was through continuously waging a war. The same is happening here.

: But without the intervention of a third side the conflict is bound to continue, no?

: No, not at all. It is not the case that we just have the two sides fighting and no one interfering. The truth is that Israel is receiving constantly billions of dollars – material and moral support: from USA in the first place and from other countries. Australia is also involved. Australian forces are taking part in the operation in Iraq. The war in Iraq is conducted in order to help Israel maintain its dominance in the region. In my view there are no other reasons was this war in Iraq. So, Australian forces are also involved in what is happening. So Australia and other countries are involved in this. If all the countries stopped giving this massive help to Israel today, then the Israeli Jews would have been forced to reach an agreement with the Israeli non-Jews about, let's say, the creation of a normal State in which there will be equal rights.

: Regarding the problem of Palestinian refugees. It's quite a serious problem. How realistic do you think the demand made concerning the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel?

[redacted]: In my view it is an absolutely realistic thing: absolutely correct and absolutely just. There is absolutely no reason why I as someone who born in Novosibirsk can now live in Jaffa and for someone who was born in Jaffa and had all of his ancestors born there cannot return there. When you think about it it's quite immoral. It defies comprehension. Truly, I don't see any reason why not let the Palestinian refugees return. There is nothing contra-indicative in this. You know that we have hundred of thousands of people living here from other countries. We have right now close to half a million Chinese and Thai people who have been brought here to work. And none of them are in any particular hurry to leave the country. They are all wonderful people and I have nothing against them, but why the rightful owners of the lands are not allowed to return? I think the refugees need to be allowed to return and it would be good.

[redacted]: **What the Arafat's future? Do you think he is losing his influence?**

[redacted]: Frankly, President Yasser Arafat is not playing all that great of a role. As you have probably seen on television he is in these ruins, in a small half destroyed building that is surrounded by Israeli tanks. In effect he has been under arrest for a number of years now. And I wouldn't say that is now some important leading figure in the region.

[redacted]: **What would you like to say to the Russian Jewish Diaspora that is following the events in the Middle East very closely, and with great deal of feeling and interest in what is happening there. You live in the country and you see things from the inside.**

[redacted]: If I was to address myself to the Russian Jews living in Australia, then my point of view is this. There is a time in one's life when we have to make a decision. When people are of two minds – it's a complex split of consciousness – I don't think it is to the person's benefit. In my view if you have decided to be Australians, then be Australians. And of course there is nothing wrong if from time to time, once a year or so, you remember that you have there some additional roots or that your grandparents had some additional interests there. But in my view, one shouldn't give in to the attempts made especially by Zionists to pull you away from the general mass of Australians and drive you into some sort of a spiritual ghetto. This of course has to be avoided. All that is needed is to remember that you are Australians in the first place. Then maybe in the second place and in the third place or maybe in some ninth place, you can remember that you had a grandparent in Berdichev or that you have an aunt living in Israel. Generally speaking, however, it is something that you needn't think much about.

[redacted]: **About your literary works. What are your particular interests now?**

[redacted]: I am a writer and I write books. There are two things that are always important to me. This is what I write and that my works are published. I had a number of books published in the last month. I had my translation of the classical Israeli writer Shmoel Zef Agnon published here in Israeli by a joint Israeli-Russian publishing house. It's my translation from Hebrew into Russian of his selected works. It's quite a nice edition. It's called "Shmoel Zef Agnon: novels..." This of course is quite a happy occasion for me. Of course my translations of Agnon's works have been published many times before and the last a large edition was published in Moscow in 1996. That was eight years ago. The book was quite popular. It is good that a new addition has come out now of these translations of mine of his works. And my book "Pine Tree and the Olive" had just been published in Moscow by the publishing house "Ultra Culture". This is one of my books that I am very

fond of. The book is an attempt to give a more complete picture of all the things that are happening in the Holy Land and to describe how all the different groups that goes to make up the population can live together in the Holy Land. In general this has to do with the two main groups: as I see it this are the original inhabitants and the immigrants. That's how I see it and I think it's a good and interesting book. I really love the book and it has many followers in Russia. I get letters from time to time from people of very different background. People that read the book praise it very much. It was written a very long time ago – in 1986. You know since then many things have changed. So it was necessary to make some revisions. Some corrections had to be made and some things had to be added. The publishing house "Ultra Culture" took upon itself this task but as it happened there wasn't much in the book that had to be changed or added. In general everything there was written correctly. The main things that were there were left unchanged. I made only minor cosmetic changes. It just got published in Moscow. I also had a book published now in USA in English. It's called "The Flowers of Galilee". You can find out about these books on my website: www.net or www.com. It's the same. You can find all the particulars there including how to order them and they are available in English, Russian, and Spanish and in many other languages. So, this book has now come out in America and a version of it has come out in Spain. In Spain it came out in Spanish and is called "The Green Rain of Yasufa". In America it's called "The Flowers of Galilee". It is also presents a story about certain realities of the Holy Land and how everything is interconnected with what is happening here. A year ago I had my collection of articles published under the title of "Masters of Discourse". It's also a good book. In other words, I am also very fond of it as I am of all my other books. It was the best seller in the system of shops called "Ad Marginen". To say the truth these intellectual types of shops are probably not catering for mass readers. They are more for intellectual and probing readers that are capable of grasping some more fine points. But then again you know I always try to write so to say "holding a discussion eye to eye", that is, I try not to suck up to anyone or to talk down or up. I try to be straightforward, be myself.

..... : Of all the numerous writings that you have on topical issues which would you recommend to our listeners that may be of interest to them?

..... : Yes, there are two books in Russian that come our relatively speaking recently. They are: "The Masters of Discourse" and "The Pine Tree and the Olive". They both can easily be brought through the Internet. So, anyone of your readers can find the link to my site by doing a search in the Google. There is a large company Ozone which is one of the major book sellers on the Internet. They have all of my books there. So, you have the two books that I mentioned, if they are to be in Russian. If in English, then of course, it's the "Flowers of Galilee". It can also be found on my site. And to get a general idea, I have a great number of articles that I write all the time. In fact I write a great deal of articles which as a rule are not very long and deal with topical issues. To be frank, of late I write a lot more in English. But it's possible to find some articles written in Russian also.

..... (back announcement):

Israeli journalist, writer by phone from Israel. In focus: Middle East. The Arab-Israeli conflict. Facts and Opinions.

RECEIVED
21 MAR 2005

BY:.....

Dear Sir!

We consider it to be our civil duty to bring to the attention of the public, the wider community, the facts of the flagrant nationalistic insinuations., taking place on SBS Radio. For a very long time [redacted] Head/Executive Producer of the SBS Russian radio program in Sydney, regularly permits in his programs anti-semitic insinuations. Unfortunately, all the attempts of concerned listeners to stop the nationalistic direction of [redacted] activity were unsuccessful. At the same time in relation to Russia, in general, and the Russian Orthodoxy, in particular, [redacted] gives invariably only materials which express praise. The peak (highest point) of the shameful activities of [redacted] was interviewing [redacted] protege and ideologist of Russian fascism and world Arabic extremism, openly speaks in support of the deadly, lethal activities of the Palestinian terrorist organisations, as a result of which innocent civilians are being killed constantly. His books and publications are appearing in Russian, Palestinian and other countries' pro-fascist publications on a regular basis. [redacted], in particular, is one of the propaganda people who is preaching the delirius ideas, that during World War 2 there was no Holocaust, that there was no extermination of Jews, that it has all been made up by American Jews and Zionists. Among the listeners of SBS radio today, there is a great number of those who suffered during the Holocaust. After the first interview with [redacted] many extremely concerned listeners tried to call [redacted] however (despite the fact that there is an answering machine in the office of the editorial staff of the Russian program), it was impossible to reach him. Despite the protests, in the next program [redacted] again broadcasted [redacted] Sydney 2004 - [redacted] Interview Part 1: 5.5.2004 Middle East Series. Arab-Israeli conflict. Sydney 2004 - [redacted] Interview Part 2: 5.5.2004. It is necessary to emphasise that [redacted] is the first and the only person in Australia, who provided [redacted], the person, who openly denies the Holocaust, the opportunity to be on air. In his talk given at "The Dialogue of Civilizations: the Contradictions of the Globalization" International Conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, Israel [redacted] also openly supported the pogroms which took place in 1648-1656 in Ukraine, during these pogroms more than 100 000 Jews were killed. On [redacted] Internet site the interview with [redacted] is placed under the portrait of this neo-Nazi: "Take a look I have earned recognition in Australia itself." [redacted] provocations are very demonstrative and revealing. For example, he introduced the so-called Interactive Radio, where the listeners of Jewish background are presented as stupid, and the group of prepared beforehand Russian Orthodox listeners who are criticising Israeli foreign policies are represented almost as saints. That is how the malicious seeds of inter-ethnic and inter-religious hostility are sown. [redacted] by his nationalistic activities, has caused a huge moral damage to the Russian-speaking listeners of SBS Radio. In one of his recent programs [redacted] under the aegis of the 30th anniversary of the day that SBS Radio began its work, invited the Head of SBS Radio, Mr. Quang Luu, who thanked [redacted] for "his special contribution" into the work of the radio station. Sydney 2005 - Marking the 30th Anniversary of SBS Radio. No 1. Quang Luu.: 3.2.2005. Mr. Quang Luu also particularly emphasised that Russian-speaking listeners, who came to Australia from the Former USSR do not understand that in an open democratic society radio-journalists of SBS have the full right to invite people with all sorts of different points of view, and these people have the full right to express their points of view. In relation to that we would like to note that in majority of democratic countries, people who openly deny the Holocaust, have no right to express their views either on radio or on television programs. We turn to you, with the call to help to restrain [redacted] who uses SBS radio for provocation nationalistic purposes. We think that people like [redacted] have no place on SBS Radio, where the operation of the radiostation is paid for by taxpayers. From today's Campaign I and [redacted] numerous time by mortal danger, from [redacted] and his supporters. These people recently also ruined a plan of important meeting between [redacted] in Sydney. On behalf of [redacted] in Australia



POSTED

Audience Affairs

The Office of Audience Affairs at SBS has now finalised its review in the complaint it received from you on 21st March 2005. This office assesses complaints against SBS's Codes of Practice, and in doing so reviews material which has been broadcast on SBS.

Much of your complaint, which was presented as a petition, deals with issues other than that concerning material which was broadcast. Those issues are not matters for this office.

The two part interview with [redacted] which was broadcast initially in May 2004, remained active on the SBS website at the time of your complaint and is therefore a matter appropriate for consideration by this office.

The broadcast material has now been reviewed and was found to have been a slippage in the broadcasting standards required by SBS.

Code 1 of SBS Code of Practice permits interviews with controversial figures. However it requires that such content is handled carefully and responsibly. SBS considers the material lacked balance and is concerned about the manner in which the two part interview was presented.

The material has been removed from the SBS website. Should you consider this response to be inadequate you are entitled to take your concerns to the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

SBS regrets any distress caused as a result of this interview.

Yours sincerely,


Sally Begbie
Audience Affairs Manager