

Gaza

Another Chapter,
the Same Story

Canadian Diplomats
Kidnapped
in Niger

The US's
Homeland
Insecurity
Complex

Using
Science
to Fight
Poverty
in Kerala

Two Out of Three Ain't Half Good

MICHAEL RYAN WISEMAN

Two beings, alike in dignity, determination and dedication, became engaged in a standoff. Neither was willing to blink for fear that in that split second their adversary would finally strike. The result? Neither blinked. Their eyes dried-out, blinding them both.

A scorpion happens across a frog and asks him for a ride across the river. The Frog, wary of his potentially lethal interlocutor, queries, "If I help you across the river, will you promise not to sting me?" Quoth the Scorpion, "Kind Frog, I am King of the Scorpions, if you help me I shall tell all of my subjects to protect the frogs from all of the dangerous creatures of the world. Besides, if I sting you, we will both drown."

He values life as much as I, reasoned the Frog before adding, "I shall help you, Scorpion, and to thank you for your generous proposal I shall tell all of the frogs to help all of the scorpions across our many rivers." The Frog then put the Scorpion on his back and began to swim across

the river. In mid-stream he felt a prick and the poison, he then cried, "You fool, you have killed us both! Why have you done this?!" Came the reply, "It is our nature."

The theme of these two tales is trust. Trust of the mutual rather than the unrequited variety takes time, and time is the one thing generations-long conflicts and their countless victims have had far too much of. But neither is a slapdash bandage of any help. Alas, if I had the answer, I would not be writing this.

How easy it is to boil conflicts down to a parable or fable. It separates us from its reality and the toll it takes on our common humanity. It allows us to move into an abstract world of good and evil, where we can separate ourselves from others and divorce ourselves from the universal ties that bind our species together for better or— which is too often the case— for worse.

And although this month's issue tries to look at the Israel/Palestine conflict in terms of the human impact of the war, we remember that theirs is not unique

in its carnage. The wake of war carves up much of our planet, and so if we are lucky enough not to have been caught up in it, we owe it to those who are to help them however we can. Whether we conjoined twins like it or not, we share the same heart.

A father will die, leaving his 17 camels to his three sons to be divided thusly: a half to the eldest, a third to the middle and a ninth to the youngest. They will want desperately to respect their father's wishes, but a number such as 17 can never be divided. An argument will ensue about how they should proceed. Luckily, a sage on a camel will come upon the brothers just as the pique reaches a fever pitch. "I can help you," he says, "but I will require one camel." The brothers will agree that this is a small price to pay for peace and they gladly accept the sage's offer. The sage will get off of his camel and add it to the 17, for a total of 18. He will give the eldest 9 camels, the middle 6 camels, and the youngest 2 camels. The sage will then remount his camel and ride off into the sunset, happily ever after.

Alternatives International Journal

is a monthly magazine published by Alternatives. Alternatives is a member of Alternatives International.

The articles represent the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Alternatives International.

Contact Us!

Alternatives International
3720 Parc Avenue, #302
Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2J1
E-mail: ceyda@alternatives.ca

Editorial Board: Marie-Adele Cassola
Myron Frankman
Vanessa Gordon
Emmanuel Martinez
Feroz Mehdi
Sarah Mostafa-Kamel
Kari Polanyi-Levitt
Waleed Ziad

Editor: Michael Ryan Wiseman

Associate Editor: Ceyda Turan

Alternatives International Journal welcomes any and all feedback, comments, questions, suggestions, or criticisms.

We are always looking for new contributors and ideas. If you would like to submit an article for publication or get involved in any other way, do drop us a line.

The Curious Case of Fowler and Guay

Questions, questions everywhere...

ALAIN DENEAULT

Four pieces of information are certain: before being kidnapped in Niger, the two Canadians went to the local offices of Canadian mining company Semafo, based in Samira Hill, in the west of the country. They were in Niger under the banner of the UN as intermediaries in the conflict between the Tuareg minority and the central government. The UN could not guarantee the safe passage of the Canadians because it was unaware of their going to the Samira Hill gold mine. A third person, their driver, is also missing.

Questions abound as to the reasons for their presence at Semafo as much as to the identities of the culprits. The UN denies the Nigerien government's claim that Messrs. Fowler and Guay were in the area on a protocol visit. Mr. Fowler, the UN's special envoy for Niger, was "responsible for humanitarian problems and for finding a solution to the (Tuareg) rebellion," according to Modibo Traore, head of the local office of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "We were not aware of his trip out of town to the Samira gold mine," he added.

The association with Semafo is particularly unhelpful because regardless of how it is interpreted it makes the two Canadians difficult to defend politically. Were Messrs. Fowler and Guay fulfilling their duties with the UN mission, and so were in covert discussions with the mining company regarding the ongoing conflict between the Tuareg and the region's mining companies?



Robert Fowler

This would imply that the Canadian company is itself a covert player in the region rather than a simple commercial enterprise. Or were Messrs. Fowler and Guay not wearing their UN hats at the time? This would imply that they were using their mandate as a smokescreen for private or national interests. Either way, something is rotten in the state of Niger.

Having advised Prime Ministers Trudeau, Turner, Mulroney, Chrétien, Martin and Harper on diplomatic issues, Robert Fowler is considered to be "Mister Africa" in Canadian foreign relations. He chose Louis Guay to help him during his UN mission—a not insignificant choice. When the former Canadian ambassador to Gabon was not working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, he spent time in the private sector with stints at two mining companies: the Montreal-based Sofati in Cameroon and the Vancouver-based Placer Dome in the Dominican Republic. His job with Placer Dome, from 1996 to 1999, consisted of convincing the Dominican government to privatise their gold mines at Pueblo Viejo.

The subsequent 2001 deal between the two sides has been roundly criticised by environmental and labour groups.

Why was Robert Fowler at the Samira Hill gold mine, which is jointly run by the Canadian companies Semafo and Etruscan, without the UN's knowledge? Why was he with someone whom the President and CEO of Semafo, Benoît LaSalle, familiarly calls "Louis"? According to Mr. LaSalle, it was to observe this "Canadian success story" in Niger.

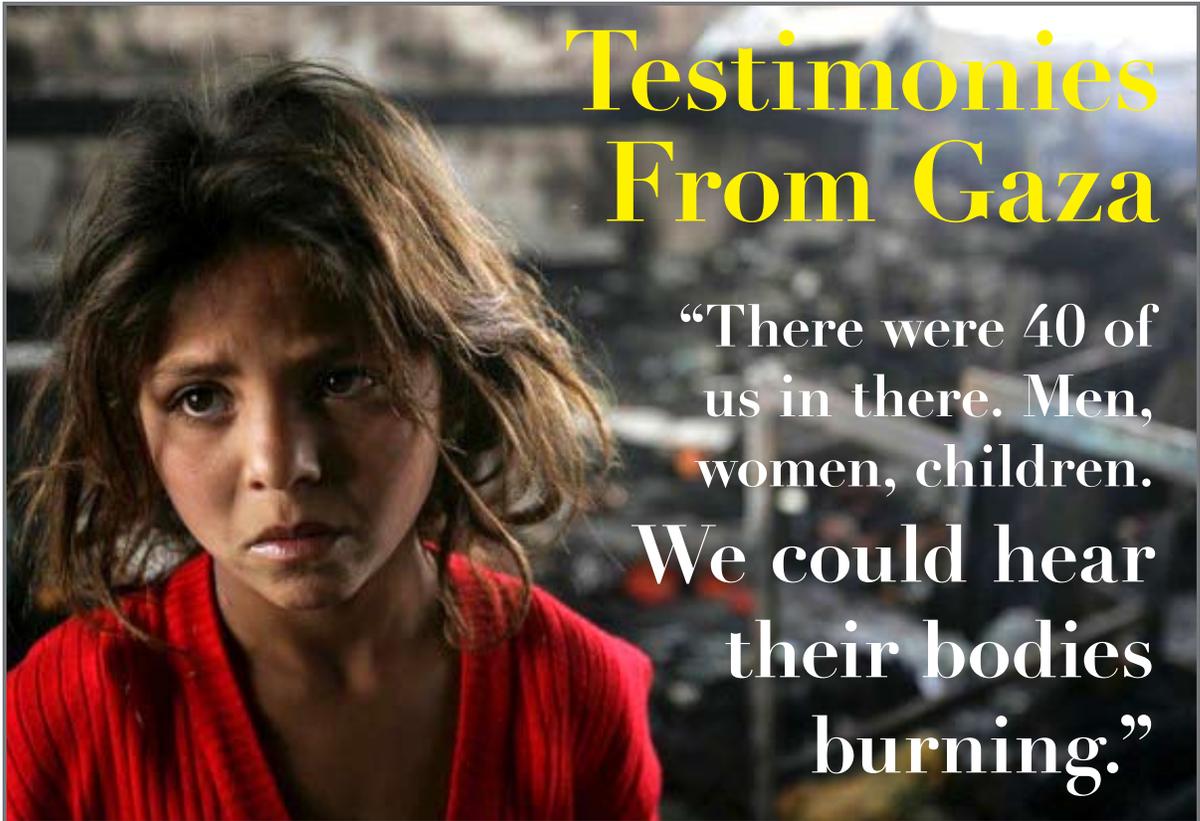
The favourable light cast upon the Canadian companies' presence is

not unanimous—Semafo and Etruscan have come under harsh criticism within Niger. They have been accused of plundering the country's resources to such an extent that the Nigerien government had to set up a commission to investigate the matter. They concluded that there is a discrepancy between the quantity of gold that has been mined and the amount of royalties that have been received. Worse still is the environmental degradation and the disruption caused to the local population.

Semafo's main motivation in the region is its own self-interest. It is building a dam in Guinea-Conakry in order to cope with the energy requirements of the region's mining operations and has also announced plans to begin mining for uranium, which duly raised their share price.

The fragile and financially crippled central government has had little choice but to cede its natural resources to private enterprise in exchange for much needed capital. It is a familiar story on the continent and it comes with a slippery slope. Bribery, brazen exploitation

continued on page 11



Testimonies From Gaza

“There were 40 of us in there. Men, women, children. We could hear their bodies burning.”

The story of Dr. Awni Jarw, aged 37. His house was bombed by the Israeli air force.

“Yusef was 18 months-old. My wife and I had been waiting for him for so long. He brought us joy and love, with his laugh and smile. He filled our home with happiness. But all of a sudden, I found myself searching for his tiny body parts all over my house. When looking for the body parts of my wife, I found Yusef’s tiny feet, the lower part of my wife’s body, my baby’s head and hand. I collected them and put them together so that they can be united in death.”

(Source: Palestine Monitor)

Ayman Al-Majdalawi is a nurse from Jabalia in the Northern Gaza Strip.

“I was working at the [Kamal Edwan] Hospital here in Jabalia, when the ambulances arrived with the dead and injured from Al-Fakhoura school. Most of the dead were women and children, and most of the survivors

had terrible shrapnel wounds. We had to turn the maternity ward into a surgical theatre so that we could try to save more lives. The ambulance drivers told me the Israelis were shooting at them as they were trying to evacuate the dead and injured. When the ambulances arrived at Kamal Edwan, there was chaos. This is a small hospital, and we were trying to save as many people as we could - but a lot of them had already lost arms or legs, and they were bleeding heavily. It was horrific.”

(Source: Palestine Monitor)

Testimony of Fadia Al-Najjar, 27 years old, 13 January

“The shelling with phosphorous bombs started in Khaza’a. Two of the bombs hit the area around our house. Neighbours were screaming, asking for help; the fire was changing. I woke up my kids, got them to my parents’ house, hoping to find a safer place. But the real catastrophe was two hours

after we had moved to my parents’ house; bombs hit their home too and the fire spread everywhere. The top floor was burnt completely. They wanted to burn us alive inside the house. There were 40 of us in there. Men, women, children. We could hear their bodies burning.”

(Source: Palestine Monitor)

John Ging, Director of Operations of United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Gaza

“We have provided the GPS coordinates to the Israeli military for quite a long time now. This is a long standing arrangement that we have with them. Our installations are clearly marked with UN flags... It was entirely inevitable if artillery shells landed in that area there would be a high number of casualties. I can tell you categorically that there was no military activity in that school at the time of the tragedy. They were innocent people.”

"There is nowhere safe in Gaza. I'm ashamed of this—there's international legal responsibility to protect civilians in conflict, and we're not doing it. They're in their homes. They're not safe. They're being killed and injured in large numbers, and they have no end in sight. The inhumanity of this situation, the lack of action to bring this to an end is bewildering to them. We're failing here, we're failing and there has to be accountability for that failure."

(Source: Unifeed and Irish Times)

Amnesty International finds indisputable evidence of widespread use of white phosphorus in densely populated residential areas in Gaza City and in the north.

"Yesterday, we saw streets and alleyways littered with evidence of the use of white phosphorus, including

*"There was no military activity in that school at the time of the tragedy. They were innocent people."
— John Ging, UNRWA*

still burning wedges and the remnants of the shells and canisters fired by the Israeli army," said Christopher Cobb-Smith, a weapons expert who is in

Gaza as part of a four-person Amnesty International fact-finding team. "White phosphorus is a weapon intended to provide a smokescreen for troop movements on the battlefield," said Cobb-Smith. "It is highly incendiary, air burst and its spread effect is such that it that should never be used on civilian areas. "Such extensive use of this weapon in Gaza's densely populated residential neighbourhoods is inherently indiscriminate. Its repeated use in this manner, despite evidence of its indiscriminate effects and its toll on civilians, is a war crime," said Donatella Rovera, Amnesty's researcher on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

(Source: Amnesty International, 19 January 2009 Press Release)

Things Are Falling Apart

The centre cannot hold as a blood-dimmed tide is loosed upon Gaza

JOEL KOVEL

It's sixty years and counting since the founding of the State of Israel, and nothing seems to change, except for the worse. The torment of the Palestinian people is unending—as is the massive control of the United States by Zionist lobbies, the passive yet deadly acquiescence of other Western democracies, the corruption of compliant Arab states, and, above all, the ever-mounting brutalization of Israel. All these forces are locked together into a nightmarish embrace that sows despair among people of good will.

The Zionist project once commanded the respect and sympathy of much of the world. It marched under the banner of socialism and as a national liberation movement, and

was shielded from criticism by the evocation of Nazi horrors against the Jews of Europe. Some discerning people saw the fatal flaw in Zionism, that being predicated upon ethnic purity, it required forcible elimination of the indigenous population from its

"Promised Land." But their dissent was swamped by the tidal wave of sympathy for the plight of Jews.

That was then. As Israel has degenerated into nihilism, its ugliness can no longer be hidden from the world. This is a sea change. The Gaza atrocities did more than annihilate a

continued on page 6



Things are falling apart
continued from page 5

great portion of Palestinian society, it also fractured Zionism's project for the seamless integration of Jews everywhere with the State of Israel. The charge of "anti-semitism" hurled against critics of Israel has been the glue that held together this bond. But how can this claim be sustained when Jews have taken part in nonviolent occupations of Israeli consulates throughout North America? How can it answer the voice of Michael Warschawski, Polish-born Israeli?

Together with tens of thousands of other Jews, from Canada to Great Britain, from Australia to Germany, we are warning you: don't dare to speak in our names, because we will run after you, even, if needed, to the hell of war-criminals, and stuff your words down your throat until you ask for forgiveness for having mixed us up with your crimes. We, and not you, are the children of Mala Zimetbaum and Marek Edelman, of Mordechai Anilevicz and Stephane Hessel, and we are conveying their message to humankind for custody in the hands of the Gaza resistance fighters: "We are fighting for our freedom and yours, for our pride and yours, for our human, social and national dignity and yours." (Appeal of the Warsaw Ghetto to the world, Passover 1943)

The rupture is written in Zionism's unfolding—because Zionism is not, as we have been led to believe, the valid national aspiration of the Jewish people, but a malignant cult that has defiled the legacy of Judaism and the hallowed names of its martyrs. It is time to place this realization before the world as a foundation for struggle against the murderous Israeli regime.

Joel Kovel is the author of *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine*

Jewish Opposition to Israel

The last refuge of scoundrels is under siege

JUDY REBICK

Part of the global outrage against the Israeli assault on Gaza has been a much stronger voice from dissident Jews. I was one of eight Jewish women who were arrested for an occupation of the Israeli consulate in Toronto on January 8. The next day, Jewish activists blocked the entrance to the Israeli consulate in Boston. The following Monday, 1,000 Jews demonstrated in front of the Israeli consulate in New York City and, a couple of days later, a group of young Jewish activists locked down the consulate in Los Angeles.

The BBC reported that the Council of Jewish Communities in Morocco declared itself as "in solidarity with the innocent victims who are suffering in Gaza." The director of the Foundation of Judeo-Moroccan Cultural Heritage, Simon Levy, described the killing in Gaza as unjustified and "more than deplorable. It is not like that, that I see Judaism."

In Britain, a long list of prominent Jews signed a public statement criticizing the Israeli attack. One of them,

Sir Gerald Kaufman, a Jewish member of the British Parliament whose grandmother was shot by Nazi troops while she lay sick in her bed said, "The present Israeli government ruthlessly and cynically exploits the continuing guilt from Gentiles over the slaughter of Jews in the Holocaust as justification for their murder of Palestinians. My grandmother did not die to provide cover for Israeli soldiers murdering Palestinian grandmothers in Gaza."

I've been reflecting on the significance of all of this. I myself have been an anti-Zionist since I visited Israel in 1970 and found a racist, sexist, militaristic society that had nothing to do with the progressive tradition that I valued about being Jewish. Indeed, there was a fierce debate about Zionism during the 1940s, with many progressive Jews arguing that Israel would be a trap for the Jews, and that expelling a people from their homeland was not only wrong but it would never create a safe homeland for the Jews. There has remained a strong opposition to the policies of Israel, and even against the very idea of a Jewish state, but it is a view quite marginalized within the Jewish community.

Over the last decade, Israel and the organized Jewish community in North America has endeavored to equate the Israeli state with Judaism.

"My grandmother did not die to provide cover for Israeli soldiers..."
—Sir Gerald Kaufman

If you criticize Israel, you are an anti-Semite. Inside the Jewish community too, it has become more and more difficult to speak out against Israel for fear of being ostracized. And

within Israel itself, dissidents report feeling more threatened than ever before. But Israel is a country not a people. It is a dangerous mistake to equate a country with a people, and by doing so Israel and the organized Jewish community actually feed anti-Semitism more than they fight it.

Judy Rebick is a social justice activist, writer, broadcaster and speaker. She currently holds the Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy at Ryerson University.

Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions

Can it bring peace and justice to Israel-Palestine?

CEYDA TURAN

In July 2005, a large coalition of Palestinian civil society groups issued a call for a global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions strategy (BDS) against Israel until it complied with international human rights agreements and UN resolutions. Calling on people of conscience all over the world, these organizations propose a non-violent tactic similar to that of the African National Congress in their struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Israel's dual laws for Jewish settlers and Palestinians, the segregation of roads and housing, and restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement strongly recall apartheid South Africa.

The BDS campaign calls for an immediate withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories (UN Resolution 242), respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties (UN Resolution 194), giving all citizens of Israel equal treatment under the law (Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 2 and 7), tearing down the wall, which has been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice, ending the seizure of Palestinian lands and house demolitions, providing compensation to those who have lost homes or land (Declaration of Human Rights, Article 17), and the recognition of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination (Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15).

Noam Chomsky, however, raised questions regarding the effectiveness of a BDS campaign before the necessary educational groundwork is laid down.

The majority of the public is not aware that Israel has expelled and

continued on page 11

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers joined the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign.

Below are their definitions:

Boycott:

Refusal to buy products from a particular country or groups of countries, usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions.

Divestment:

To force businesses and institutions into withdrawing funds from businesses that support occupation and apartheid.

Sanctions:

An economic measure usually adopted by several nations to force another nation, in this case Israel, to respect international law and human rights.

(Source: Canadian Union of Postal Workers)

alternatives
INTERNATIONAL
Journal

**Alternatives International
Journal needs your support!**

You can subscribe to Alternative International Journal for \$25/year and receive it at your door.

Send this coupon with your cheque to:

Alternatives International
3720 Parc Avenue, # 302
Montreal, (Quebec)
H2X 2J1

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

The Science of Equality

Scientists of the world unite...

BENOÎTE LABROSSE

"We are turning science and technology into a weapon that the poor can use to combat their poverty." For almost 50 years, this has been the creed of Indian NGO Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), who have helped impoverished citizens

K.K. Krishnakumar, an engineer who has been with the NGO since 1972, "There were populists inspired by the Soviet movement, researchers who believed the country needed to develop scientifically, and, finally, professors and writers who felt that the language of science—English—and the low literacy rates were an obstacle for the people."

The KSSP quickly became one of the most prolific scientific publishers in India with an average of fifty titles per year. Sold door-to-door by members of the organisation—today they are more than 50,000

under-privileged to understand scientific and political issues, thereby encouraging them to participate in the democratic process more efficiently," adds Krishnakumar, "it's science for a social revolution."

KSSP's first foray into the public policy debate came with its position against the building of a hydro-electrical dam in the Silent Valley region. "Since then we've had quite the love-hate relationship with the government!", exclaims the engineer while laughing, "We've had to critique their actions often, but sometimes the politicians are happy that we do it !" One of the



Photo: Wade Egan www.wadeshots.com

to actively pursue the social change that leads to greater equality.

The roots of Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, which translated from Malayalam means "The forum for scientific literature of Kerala", date back to 1962. The primary objective of this small group of researchers was to translate scientific works into their local language in an effort to further enlighten their community. "The founders came from three schools of thought that each influenced the movement," explains

strong— these publications are the principle source of their finances. "We mainly concentrate on scientific and political subject matter, but we also have children's books, tales, and also books on health," notes Krishnakumar, who was once the president of the NGO and remains on its executive committee.

In the 1970s, the KSSP decided to expand its scope by concentrating on the political aspects of science and technology. "We understood that our role should be to help the

most obvious examples is the highly successful literacy campaign that the KSSP ran at the end of the 80s in response to what they saw as a lack of government will to do so itself.

There is still a lot of work to be done, however, before a semblance of equality is reached, "We have once more seen the shocking impact of neo-liberalism," laments Krishnakumar, "the gap between the rich and the poor has widened further— and the poor are increasingly marginalised in society."

Do not think for a second that this has dented the optimism that has been a trademark of the KSSP since its inception. "We aren't fatalists and we don't believe in the 'there are no other alternatives' philosophy, we believe that when the right questions are asked it leads people to reflect and to create initiatives that can bring change," assures Krishnakumar.

Although the youth have always had an important role in the organisation, their membership levels have declined in recent years, Krishnakuma explains, "I think it is

due to the individualism that comes with a neo-liberal society. The bonds of the community are not as strong as they once were so we're rebuilding them in a new way."

"The reason that this movement has lasted so long is that it adapts to the needs of the population," he confirms. As well as working to incorporate new media and technology into its operation, KSSP is taking advantage of the year 2009, which marks the 150th anniversary of Darwin's Theory of Evolution and the 400th anniversary of the invention of the telescope by Galileo, to launch

a massive scientific campaign. "We are using every possible opportunity to get the community involved, discussing science and its impact on society because the biggest lesson we've learned is that social transformation must come from the local community." K.K. Krishnakumar emphasizes, "Once the community gets involved it shows tremendous creativity to reach its goals. Our job is to inspire that creativity."

Benoîte Labrosse, is a researcher at the University of Québec à Montréal's Communications Laboratory.

Have a Unique Two Week Vacation in Cuba or Mali



Alternatives and its partner organizations offer you a solidarity volunteering opportunity in August 2009 where you can participate in urban agriculture projects.

**Information Night:
February 19 at 6:30pm
3720 Parc Avenue,
Room 200, Montreal**

**For more information:
Nadia Litzky at
514-982-6606 ext 2248
or nadia@alternatives.ca**

America's Secure Flight Program

Canadian travellers under the microscope over the States

GABRIÈLE BRIGGS

This year will see the implementation of a new piece of American legislation developed by the Department of Homeland Security called the Secure Flight Program (SFP). The bill contains at least one measure that has raised the ire of many Canadian civil liberties organisations; airlines must provide the United States' Transportation Security Administration with such personal information as a passenger's passport and travel itinerary three days before any flight goes through American airspace. All information gathered is subsequently cross-referenced against lists of suspected terrorists and criminals. This vetting process determines whether a passenger is given a boarding card, required to undergo further screening, or is prohibited from travelling.

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), an association of 38 Canadian organisations and unions, worries about the repercussions this new measure will have on Canadian independence with respect to the United States. "The Americans will have a veto on every passenger that gets on a plane in Canada, even if they are not going to set foot on American soil," laments Roch Tassé, the ICLMG's coordinator. Tassé is also concerned because of the differences that exist between Canadian and American international policies, given that this program theoretically cedes to the United States control over immigration, refugee seekers and even diplomacy,

"What will happen if Canada invites the ambassador from a country such as Cuba?" He believes that the SFP is nothing short of a forced harmonisation of Canadian visa policies with respect to the Americans'.

The ICLMG is not alone with its concerns. The Air Transport Association of Canada (ATAAC) made their grievances known to America's Department of Homeland Security last December. Chief among ATAAC's critique, "the submission of Canadian passenger's details by Canadian airlines violates Canada's laws on the protection of personal information and electronic documents, as well as laws on aeronautics."

Indeed, even the Canadian government stuck its head ever so slightly above the parapet in response to its powerful neighbour's requests; Lawrence Cannon, the then Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, sent a communiqué in November 2007, "Considering our complementary aviation systems, as



well as the systematic cooperation between our two countries, the government of Canada believes there are solid reasons to exempt from the SFP a flight to or from Canada if the plane is only flying over American territory without landing there."

Benoît Gagnon, head of the Security, Identity and Technology Research Chair of Canada underlines that "the SFP is the next in a long line of information gathering programs. Little by little, we are letting the United States run our security." In fact, since September 11 2001 Canada and the United States have redoubled their efforts to integrate

their border security systems, most notably with the Canada-U.S Smart Border Declaration which facilitates information exchanges between the two allies. According to Gagnon, it is too early to tell what kind of an impact these developments will have on Canadian sovereignty.

Even without the SFP, the transfer of personal information between the two governments led to complications for Canadians crossing the border. In June 2007, Teresa Healy, the lead researcher of the Canadian Labour Congress, was the subject of a prolonged interrogation by American customs officers at the Cornwall, Ontario border crossing when she set-off a radiation detector. After it came to light that the radiation was due to medical tests, they switched the subject of the interrogation to her 1991 arrest at a nonviolent protest. No charges were filed at the time, but the customs officers had her digitized fingerprints at their disposal nonetheless. "They told me, 'don't worry about it, we're just keeping them in case you ever do anything else.'"

Healy is still outraged, "I was shocked that the Canadian government gave my file to the Americans when I was declared innocent." She tried to bring her case to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, but they told her that there was nothing that could be done as it is part of an international agreement.

Experiences such as Teresa Healy's risk becoming more common if passenger vetting begins to apply to those who are not entering the United States. Citizens wishing to register their opposition to the program, however, have problems of their own, warns Benoît Gagnon, "if we protest against it, the Canadian government will say that it isn't their policy and the American government will say that we aren't their citizens. It's a vicious circle."

Gabrièle Briggs is a Montreal-based freelance journalist

The Curious Case of Fowler and Guay continued from page 3

of resources, corruption, local warlords, secessionist rebels and ethnic liberation movements are all too often the epilogue.

It is always the civilians— mostly women and children— who bear the brunt of structural exploitation. As Canadian companies are involved one way or another, they have to take their share of responsibility concerning the continent's conflicts and how they can best help to resolve them. Canadian citizens, as well as the companies' shareholders, are also accomplices for their tacit support of the status quo.

This is the backdrop of the Tuareg rebellion, a battle over the rights to—and profits from— Niger's considerable uranium and gold deposits. Although they do not operate in the area in question and have denied any involvement in the kidnapping, the Tuareg rebels, who are entangled in a sometimes-violent dispute with the central government over the control of resources, are the prime suspects in the disappearance.

To solve the mystery of this kidnapping, all the usual suspects have been rounded up: the Tuareg rebels, the Nigerien government itself, competing French and Canadian mining companies, even the ever-present and always convenient Al-Qaeda.

Although every one of these suspects raises different but equally difficult questions, many an underlying question still begs to be asked. Chief amongst these involves the West's pillaging of Africa and the grave repercussions this continues to have on the continent.

Alain Deneault is a member of the *Collectif Ressources d'Afrique* and co-author, along with Delphine Abadie and William Sacher, of *Noir Canada, Pillage, corruption et criminalité en Afrique* (Écosociété, 2008)

Boycotts Divestment and Sanctions continued from page 7

intimidated into flight the majority of the country's population and then denied them internationally recognized rights to return to their homes; it has seized, without compensation, the properties of hundreds of thousands of refugees; it systematically tortures detainees and holds many of them without a trial, and assassinates its opponents, including those living in territories it occupies; it demolishes thousands of homes belonging to Palestinians, and settles its own people in their land.

Until the falsification and deceit are overcome, well-merited punitive actions are likely to backfire. It is not well known that Israel does not recognize Palestine's right to exist, rejected Hamas' call for a long-term ceasefire to allow for negotiations on the international consensus of a two-state solution, refuses to denounce violence, and does not comply with previous agreements— including the US-sponsored Road Map.

Samer Elatrash, a prominent Palestinian activist, also argues that the groundwork for raising public awareness of the occupation and Israeli crimes has to be done first. There needs to be a significant portion of public opinion that would support the tactic and lobby the government to implement it.

Nonetheless, he does not dismiss targeted boycotts. Calls for an arms embargo against Israel, or the banning of settlement products, which most governments are actually legally obliged to do, would be a step in the right direction.

According to Jason Kunin, a member of the administrative council of the Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians (ACJC), the BDS would primarily be an educational tool aimed at provoking awareness and action at the grassroots level. The goal would be “to provoke in

Israelis a change of consciousness by stripping away the veneer of normality that disguises from them the true nature of the Israeli state and enables them to believe they can continue to have an occupation and be a normal country. Hopefully, this will be done through education, though failing that it will have to be done through shame and isolation from the international community.”

The US, EU and Canada have not been passive collaborators; rather they are amongst the most active supporters of Israel's crimes against humanity. US aid to Israel has been the lifeblood of the occupation. A November 2008 Washington Report article put a conservative estimate of total direct US aid to Israel at \$118 billion, averaging \$3 billion a year. Likewise, the EU is the biggest importer of Israeli goods; the total trade between the EU and Israel amounted to \$36.7 billion in 2007, according to an economic analysis prepared by the Commercial Department at the Israeli Mission to the EU. The Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement blatantly legitimizes the Israeli occupation by applying to the entire territory of historic Palestine, including the territories that Israel has occupied since 1967, the West Bank and Gaza.

In a trade-dependent country like Israel, BDS can work. It is up to American, Canadian and European taxpayers to determine if they want to reward unlawful Israeli behaviour or pressure their governments to pull back their support and to stop the occupation and apartheid once and for all.

Ceyda Turan is a founding member of Jews For Social Justice.

alternatives
INTERNATIONAL
Journal

www.alternatives-international.net

Review: Rethinking Orwell's Definition of Fascism

Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning by Jonah Goldberg (New York: Doubleday, 2007)

EMRAH SAHIN

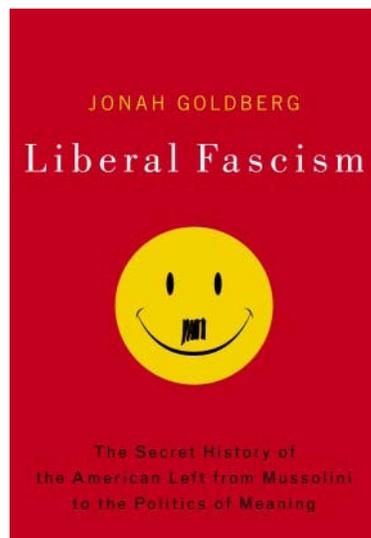
Fascism is a contested word. The average American associates it with everything from dictatorship, genocide, anti-Semitism, racism, eugenics, social Darwinism, and state capitalism to militarism and extreme nationalism. Scholars in the field do not reach a consensus either; they have agreed to use the word without agreeing on how to define it. Goldberg wryly observes that the more closely we study fascism, the less clear it becomes.

In *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell admitted that fascism has no explicit meaning—it merely signifies something undesirable. Goldberg, however, is unsatisfied with such glibness. In his view, fascism is a religion of state which assumes the organic unity of the body politic under a leadership attuned to the general will. Specifically, American fascism is totalitarian and justifies any government action for the sake of the common good; starting from the early twentieth century, we are told, the American government took responsibility for all aspects of its citizens' lives, including their health and wellbeing. Those who have held power—Goldberg labels them liberal fascists—have sought to impose uniformity of thought and action by force, regulations, and social pressure.

Goldberg builds his main criticism upon the pillar of progressivism, a

once profound political and social movement represented by William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. Here Goldberg paints with a somewhat narrow brush; he fails to take into account the broader panorama of the progressive movement, which was in no way monolithic and, as convincingly shown by Arthur S. Ling and Richard L. McCormick in *Progressivism*, cannot be reduced to a single ideology.

Goldberg moves on to reinterpreting American political discourse. Looking into the imperialist claims of the United States—read America's Monroe Doctrine and Big Stick



diplomacy from South America to the Pacific Islands and the Far East—convinces Goldberg that America was a veritable Christian-Fascist nation abroad. Second, looking into the government's intrusive and sometimes abusive domestic regulations—see Prohibition, the Palmer Raids, eugenics, loyalty oaths, and state-led capitalism—encourages him to argue that America was an authentic fascist nation at home as

well. Today, he laments that liberals use a secularized vocabulary of hope, their “golden word”, and construct explicitly spiritual philosophies, thereby ensuring American liberal fascism endures with a smiley-face.

Goldberg asserts that the French Revolution was the first fascist movement; the paranoid Jacobin mentality drove the revolutionaries to subsume everything under the state. Later, during the Wilson Era, Goldberg goes further to argue that the first appearance of modern Western totalitarianism was in the United States for the sake of “ending all wars.” Right before the Second World War, American progressives in the footsteps of Wilson supported Mussolini and sympathized with Hitler but had to distance themselves from the horrors of Nazism.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal takes a good share of Goldberg's criticism. Roosevelt's brain trust, including Rexford Guy Tugwell, vindicated Italian fascism as the cleanest, neatest, most efficiently operating piece of social machinery they had ever seen.

Hysterically harsh criticisms against liberals and the left, and superficial attempts to vindicate conservatives and the right notwithstanding, Goldberg's *Liberal Fascism* promises a debate-inspiring and interesting read of American historical discourse painted on a fascist canvas.

What Goldberg offers in *Liberal Fascism* is an alternative history of American liberalism, which he thinks was interwoven with fascism and its variants. Goldberg labels many so-called liberals of the past and today as “friendly fascists,” but this is no wonder in Goldberg's book, when even the usually irreproachable W.E.B. DuBois opines that the formation of a dictatorship might be absolutely necessary to get the state in order!

Emrah Sahin is a PhD Candidate in History at McGill University.