

# *The Free Thinker*

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Editor : Christian Lanciai, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Agents : John B. Westerberg (India, Finland)  
John Bede (Northern Ireland)  
Doctor Sandy (Athens, Budapest)  
Owe Svahn (Paris)

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The material in this issue is only a small part of the original, which appears in Swedish between 15 and 21 pages as a rule. This is a small beginning in English, all translated by the editor.

Gothenburg, Sweden, 29th March 1994.

## *Heard from Israel*

Two Jews discussing.

"Don't let the Hebron massacre disturb your mind. It has nothing to do with anyone's religion or move towards peace since it was only executed for egoistical purpose by a mad American. He claimed to be a Jew, but no Jew could possibly call him Jewish since he violated the most sacred of all God's commandments: *Thou shalt not kill*. His design was not only to kill as many Arabs as possible but also to destroy the entire peace process. He was not only the enemy of all Arabs but also of all Jews, all Muslims and all Christians and the mortal enemy of all people of a constructive mind. Those Jews who bless Benjamin Goldstein, extol his deed and honour his memory are not Jews but like Goldstein himself a disgrace to Israel.

On the other hand, those who hold forth this psychopathic example as an example typical of Israel, who use this example to curse Israel and to add fuel to the hatred of Israel are not in the least any better. The example of this American psychopath was unique as such and only prominent as an example of inhumanity and almost only comparable to the Charles Manson case, who was also an American.

Therefore, the less said and thought of this lonely psychopath, the better. Such loonies are only to be buried in memory as excrement smelling so foully to be humanly possible to be dealt with."

"No, brother, you can't explain it away. Baruch Goldstein was a Jew, born a Jew, educated a Jew and even a doctor, and he did what he did in the name of Israel and even on the eve of a joyous Jewish holiday. He had even planned it very carefully. It was a premeditated mass murder executed on purpose in the name of God. It can not be compared with the ritual murders of Charles Manson 25 years ago but rather with the suicidal attacks of Muslim fundamentalists. As Jews we can not free ourselves from the responsibility. We have to take it on our backs and carry it forever."

## *Talks in Jerusalem, part 3.*

On my second day in Jerusalem I entered by the New Gate and went directly to the Temple area. I had heard that the Chain Gate (the only entrance) was to be closed already at one o'clock, and my bus from Natanya was late. I reached the gate in the last minute and was instantly assaulted by the friendliest voluntary guide in the world, who was very disappointed when I didn't need his service. He wanted 20 shekels to show me the way to the ticket office and refused to leave me until he had obtained something. I got rid of him for 2 shekels - a bribe just to dispose of an embarrassing and depressing problem.

The Dome of the Rock, the oldest sacred monument in the history of Islam, now became the first mosque in my life which I entered. It is well worth a visit. You can well understand the enthusiasm of the emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen as he during his peaceful crusade to Jerusalem in 1228 was so impressed by the fantastic architecture of this sacred building that he later built his own most important castle (Castel del Monte between Aquila and Pescara in Abruzzi) in the same octagon form. As you wander about in this marvellous construction and study its wonderful cupola from the inside you are seized with a kind of vertigo and bewildering dislocation of

the perspective, which makes you think something is wrong with your eyes, but there isn't. The Dome of the Rock was simply designed that way by its incredibly clever architects.

From there I went out through the Damascus Gate and down back across Kidron to Gethsemane. Unfortunately the Russian church of St. Mary Magdalene was closed and inaccessible, which from the outside is the most beautiful church in Jerusalem. After having revisited the garden of Gethsemane and the ecumenical garden of prayers of pope Paul VI almost at the top of the hill I went back down to Kidron and followed it to the City of David to ascend Mount Sion and enter by the Gate of Sion. Next I went to make my second visit to Rabbi Yohanan.

He took me through Cardo to the Wailing Wall, where we seated ourselves on the long stone bench beneath the flagstaffs furthest from the Wall. He was in his very best teaching mood, and it was obvious how carefully he had considered the things he wanted to tell me.

"Moses was probably the only real prophet who ever existed. Elijah was of course number two, but then there were not many others. But even such a grand old man as Moses had his foibles. He was not easy to deal with when he got angry, in his fits he was about as mad as your saint Savonarola, who was burnt at the stake for a greater lack of sins; and he was probably much worse and more difficult than your Giordano Bruno. Our astrologers think he might have been born in the sign of Capricorn, since it's noticeable how he constantly wanted to climb mountains, both real ones and greater mountains of human effort. He was so enthusiastic about climbing Mount Sinai that he brought his whole people to the mountain, and as an old and dying man he insisted on getting up the Mount Nebo. But mind you: no ascension! He may have had fits of bad temper now and then, but he was not vain, but always strove honestly for the welfare of his people. And he was the first one to start compromising with his own Law, which art and practice has continued ever since. The Law of Moses has never been followed exactly, but it has always been compromised with. Moses himself probably only brought the commandments and then tried to apply them practically by taking their consequences in each individual case. The great bulk of the Law was probably collected after his time and then consisted of a collection and concentration of all those individual judgements and decisions he had made that could be remembered. He was really the first judge, and the final edition of the Torah might have been completed during the times of Samuel, the last great judge, since during the reign of king David the Law is already well known and referred to.

Take a look at these black-coat Jews with their long ornate whiskers. I can well understand that *gojim* find them ridiculous. These are today the Jews who come closest to the ideal pursuit of the Law of Moses, but just the way they do their hair is a compromise. The Law says, that no razor is to touch the head of a Nazir as long as he remains holy as such, which means he may not cut his hair nor his beard. But these holiest of Jews cut all their hair except the whiskers, which they grow just to show something to prove that they haven't compromised everything away."

"What about the other prophets then, like Jesus and Mahomet? Are they completely worthless from a Jewish point of view?"

"Of course not. Jesus was probably the most learned young Jew of his age, he must have known the entire Law, Prophets and Scriptures by heart, he was probably something of what we call an infant prodigy, but special circumstances made something unsound rise in his mind. He got the idea that he was the real Messiah, and he acted that part admirably well all the way to the bitter end but got the hell out of it and died too soon as a result of it. But his performance was unforgettable, which

resulted in the most powerful religion that ever existed, because all people with high regard for themselves, who wanted to be superior to everyone else, like kings and emperors, were inspired by the greatness of Christ's example and became Christians. He probably came closest to the Messianic ideal of all candidates ever, but that doesn't mean he was the only possible Messiah, no matter how much common sense he preached, no matter how much good he did, no matter how many patients he cured and how many he resurrected from the dead apart from his playing the part of the Messiah. Of course, many of your readers will object to my words if you quote them, so please, don't define my person too clearly but keep my name unknown. But the same thing that I am telling you, every rabbi in Israel and in the world would tell you also."

"And what about Mahomet?"

"That's the real problem. You see, of all religions only Islam takes itself dead seriously. You can not have a sense of humour in Islam, it has never been possible, and whenever someone has tried to crack an apposite joke about the slightest triviality in Islam, the bud of self-irony has been crushed and banned and never been permitted to blossom. In Islam, good humour, self-irony and self-criticism only exist as underground activities. That's why Islam has become the most imprisoned and bleak and morbid of all religions.

The less said about Mahomet himself, the better. I sincerely hope you don't have any Moslem readers of the only proper faith. He was an epileptic who used his illness for his own benefit by taking his epileptic hallucinations seriously. His epileptic ecstasy he called prophetic visions and revelations by the angel Gabriel. The Arabs at that time were the most primitive people in the world, and they were enough superstitious to believe in such a scary prophet. He didn't write anything down himself though, just like Jesus, but all his holy writ was taken down from hearsay long after his death, some even say in the Aramaic tongue by Jews. All he did was to copy the Torah, and he translated the Genesis into the Arabian mentality. For us, the Quran version of *B'reshit* is like a Donald Duck version of a great classic. But the Arabs liked it. And then he also fancied the absurd story of the Ascension. He found it a good idea, so he went up to heaven too, but he had to do it even better than Jesus, so he started off from the very rock of Moriah, the most sacred rock of Jerusalem, where Abraham had considered sacrificing Isaac, the holiest spot for all our three religions.

Of course, you can't just explain it all away like that, and also the prophet Elijah went up to heaven - but in an entirely different way. Elijah was picked up by something, while Jesus and Mahomet sailed up by themselves. Now there is in your theology a famous Christian phenomenon called levitation. Your Saint Thomas Aquinas is supposed to have levitated now and then and in the presence of witnesses, and the Ascension of Christ could be an expansion of the remarkable incident where he was seen by the apostles together with Moses and Elijah. In that moment he also appeared in a somewhat elevated situation. It is well known, that people subject to an extraordinary inspiration can be carried away to such an extreme degree of ecstasy by their emotions that it becomes noticeable to other people who are terrified by the fact that the inspired person becomes someone else, like an illumined stranger. The episode on the mountain with Christ appearing like this was probably such an occasion and why not to an excessive degree, so that the memory thereof became so unforgettable that it gradually developed into the Ascension, which Mahomet found such an irresistible idea, so he found it convenient to be placed in the same position and, if possible, in an even better one.

But most interesting and important about Islam is its origin as a challenge against Christianity, which at that time was suffocating the world in dogmas and intolerance. Still today, Islam is the greatest Christian challenge, and between ourselves I think it is quite appropriate that the Dome of the Rock over there in the middle of the Temple area remains Islamic giving both Christianity and all self-righteous over-learned all too orthodox Jews sore eyes. Also the nicest parts of Jerusalem are all Moslem, where life is at its most natural, while unfortunately the rest of the city no longer is dominated by poor pilgrims but rather by rich dollar tourists, who gradually are becoming the only welcome people here. Still, the state of Israel is not just an extra American state or colony. Only our economy is American. The identity of the Jew was rediscovered and resurrected in Germany in the 18th century, and Israel is still ruled and dominated by those German Jews, *ashkenasim*. Our culture is European. Only our economy is Jewish-American. But we shouldn't have turned Jerusalem into our capital. That was an error. We should have allowed it to remain a wholly international religious city reserved for poor pilgrims and sacred graves. Tel-Aviv is a much more positive, happy and extrovert city and much more suitable for a capital and centre of secular politics. The politicians should have left the sanctity of Jerusalem in peace, for there is no better witness in the world of the consequences of political power than our sacred Jerusalem. Many times Jerusalem has been destroyed, and here you see all that remains of the first, greatest and holiest Temple in the world, which after its restructurization was only even more utterly destroyed. This is the true God: the Wailing Wall, the crucifixion and all the graves of Jerusalem. God is history, which always will make all empires and political dreams of greatness crumble and fall to dust. Our God is the God of Job, who caused Job to lose all his children and all his property although Job had done nothing to deserve it. This is the only God we are able to present: the brutal and ruthless historical truth about the destruction of all empires and the death of six million innocent Jews for nothing. This is not the God of Moses, your Jesus or Mahomet, but it is the God that always exists no matter how you believe in him or not, always unfathomable, undefinable, relentless and overwhelming in his total power and control of history, which humankind never has been able to control."

"Do you mean to say that Islam has no future?"

"I feel sorry for Islam. Look at all these beggars in the streets of Jerusalem. They are all Muslims. Look at all these boys of the Intifada throwing stones at us, who have upset the whole world and almost turned the United States against us. They are only children, but they hate us, because they feel so painfully inferior to us. The Arabs and the Bedouins can not compete with us, because they are not that adjustable. We easily learn all the languages of the world, and we print and read five alphabets on our public signposts, but the Arabs only know their Quran and their Arabic. Their five service duties every day make it impossible for them to relax from the strains of their religion. They are constantly being brainwashed and made dependent like serfs. They have my sincerest and greatest compassion, I worry about them quite a lot, because unless we care for them when misfortune falls upon them, no one else will either. Islam has an increasingly bad reputation all over the world among the Hindus and Buddhists of Asia as well as among the Christians of Europe and America. And in Africa the Moslems are still trading with slaves. Enough. There was something you wanted to ask."

"Time is passing, and it will soon be dark. Isn't it about time that we come to the point?"

"What point?"

"Has anybody else come here to find you except me? Has any of the others written any message?" And I reminded him of the important theological question which our friend John had tried to make a theme for a conference.

"Best things last," he said. "Some letters really did arrive. You can see them, if you like. You can take them with you. I actually thought of it before leaving home."

And he offered me a package of letters. I hesitated, but he insisted benevolently. "Take them and read them! You may do whatever you like with them. I don't want them."

They were all there, almost everyone, - our Christian brethren from Egypt, our Muslim brothers from Iran and Bosnia, the Armenian and even the couple that got away. "None of them has complained about God," rabbi Yohanan said, "but they are all complaining anyway. Read!"

The perusal of the excuses gave me a shock. They were all about the same. Our brother from Egypt excused himself, saying that he would much have liked to come if only John had been there but that he couldn't trust a Jew. The Assyrian wrote that he would have enjoyed meeting John but was not very interested in meeting the Rabbi. The Gipsy from Bosnia stated bluntly that he could trust John with an ecumenical chairmanship but not a Jewish rabbi. Even the Iranian excused himself, stating that he would gladly have come to meet his friend John but didn't know the Rabbi. Only our Armenian friend expressed himself decently and correctly without wounding anyone's feelings, but also he excused himself although respectfully. But all the others were negative and condescending towards a Jewish hostship. They all consciously or unconsciously insulted rabbi Yohanan and Jewry.

"You see what I mean," the rabbi told me with a smile, "it's still the Jews who get most of the hell out of having founded all monotheistic religion."

And this was in the good old days before the massacre at Hebron.

### *The Palestinian's Complaint*

Baruch Goldstein, you didn't murder any Moslems.  
You only killed your own brothers and sisters and children.  
Those were your closest friends, whom you cut down  
with careful premeditation and without any concern.  
You didn't help or fight for Israel;  
you shot her down, your own mother, from behind,  
having planned it very carefully and with your fullest intention.  
Arabs do not do like that, nor any people.  
You proved worse than any traitor and worse than any swine.  
Your most cowardly massacre on people praying in peace by a sacred grave  
makes you a rapist of the inmost sanctity and soul of Israel,  
and thereby to a killer worse than any holocaust-executioner in history.  
Once again you have only caused your own people to bleed to death,  
you poor demented American assassin and inhuman suicide.

*A Vision*

by Gustaf Fröding, Swedish poet (1860-1911),

translated by request.

Hell was open to my eyes  
full of begging voices and hoarse cries  
for just a drop of water.

I heard voices stutter desperately,  
despairingly, in flames atrociously  
shining hot in fiery slaughter.

Glances painfully erring  
for vain comfort stirring  
in fights of desperation, -  
Faces terribly shivering,  
breasts in anguish quivering  
in languishment and desolation.

Then one tormented rose  
resembling to the devil;  
his face was like a withered rose  
with traces of pride though not of evil.

A faint light crossed his eyebrows,  
as if again a distant dawn was casting  
a ray into his lost and weary side-rows  
of some kind of newborn daybreak everlasting.

And he said: "It is ourselves  
who make our torments ache,  
who nourish all those flames  
that make us boil and bake.

But let us make an effort and forgive ourselves  
to end our selfish woes and tribulations,  
and let us always strive towards the future only  
and not dig our trenches turning down and backward solely  
just to find old grievous sins and shames  
but instead get rid of all our introverted complications."

And gradually the flames abated  
vanishing around the devil's apparition;  
and how splendid was the sight  
of everything becoming bright,  
and how the fallen angel's brows elated  
in a more majestic and magnificent complexion,  
and how his lips began to tremble from felicity  
and broke into a smile, -  
it was as if a breath went through of pure serenity  
extinguishing all flames of hell and guile.

(from "New Poems", 1894.)

(Since this translation there has risen a considerable English interest in this Swedish poet,  
and there is now a collection of his poems available in English.)

### *A Short History of Tibet in Modern Times*

In 1912, Tibet officially declared itself independent from China after the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911. One of the few nations to acknowledge and respect this independence was Britain. China refused to accept it, which resulted in the serious complications that for 38 years Chinese people could only travel to Tibet by India with a British visa. In 1947 India liberated herself from Britain and thereby took upon herself to maintain the British connections and responsibilities towards Tibet. When the People's Republic of China was proclaimed in October 1949, one of its primary objects was to lay hands on Tibet; a program for its annexation had already been made. In 1950 the projected invasion took place, and Lhasa appealed to the world and to the United Nations for help. Britain and India raised the issue in the UN. The status of Tibet as an independent state then appeared to be undefined (after 38 years of practical independence), and India hoped for a peaceful settlement. This peace was settled in Peking, where a delegation from Lhasa was compelled to accept a political program in 17 points, which made Tibet a voluntary part of China on condition that Tibet was granted full autonomy. The only alternative was war, under which threat the Tibetan delegates agreed to sign the settlement.

The systematical eradication of Tibetan religion, the genocide and the implant by force of Chinese in the country was commenced almost immediately. Already in 1956 the bombings of monasteries and mass sterilizations were a fact while innumerable Tibetan children were methodically evacuated by force into China to have a thoroughly Communist education and the monasteries were emptied of monks and nuns who were compelled to deadly physical labour and to marriage against their will.

In March 1959 Dalai Lama and his autonomous government professed that the Chinese had violated 13 of the 17 articles of the agreed-upon settlement, wherefore they declared the settlement no longer valid. The total independence and sovereignty of Tibet was proclaimed anew. The Chinese immediately took measures and intended to arrest and dispose of the entire Tibetan government, but Dalai Lama escaped and organized his exile government in India.

Nehru of India wanted Dalai Lama to return to Tibet and achieve a peaceful settlement with the Chinese, but Nehru's co-operation policy towards China came to a sudden end when China attacked India along two frontiers, in Ladakh and in Assam.

The Tibetan declaration of independence on March 1959 has never been retracted by Dalai Lama and his exile government and is consequently still valid after 34 years' indefatigable resistance against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. By right and by law, Tibet has been independent since 17 March 1959 and has in this century only belonged to China during the years 1900-1912 and not even during eight full years from 23 May 1951 to 17 March 1959.

At the time of the proclamation of independence in 1912, Tibet, apart from its official area nowadays, also comprised all lands up to the Altyn Tag Mountains and to the lake of Koko Nor (Tsing Hai) and to the east to the regions where the rivers of Hwang Ho and Yangtse Kiang run closest to each other. China not only transformed Tibet into an exploited and impoverished province but also truncated its geographical nature and natural limits.

Mention should be made concerning the remarkable position of the Panchen Lama. He is officially and traditionally the spiritual leader of Tibet while Dalai Lama is the political head of government. In reality they have changed parts: Dalai Lama has proved an unchallengeable spiritual leader while Panchen Lama has enacted some remarkable political turns. When the British came to Gyantse in 1904 Dalai Lama (XIII) escaped to the neighbouring country of Mongolia in the north while Panchen Lama (IX) remained and came to terms with the British. When China assaulted Tibet in 1910, Dalai Lama escaped to India while Panchen Lama remained and came to terms with the Manchu dynasty. When Tibet declared its independence from China on the 16th of December 1912, Panchen Lama found himself in such a precarious political situation that he felt obliged to escape to China, where he lived protected by the Kuomintang and by Chang Kai Shek under vain efforts to return to Tibet. He was not enabled to return until he was in his coffin in 1935.

When China attacked Tibet in 1950 it was from the official reason that the new 13-year old Panchen Lama (X) had asked China to come and liberate Tibet. When Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet in 1959 Panchen Lama remained, continuing to co-operate with the communists, according to or against his will, which he already had done since 1952. His rival of the title had been disposed of while making a pilgrimage from Tashilumpo to India - no one has heard anything about him since the Chinese arrested him in Yatung. The remaining Panchen Lama candidate was established by the communists, but when he in a more mature age proved loyal to Dalai Lama, he was obliged to come to Peking to spend some 20 years in isolation, at times badly tortured and unable to communicate with anyone outside China, until he agreed to co-operate again. Whether he was true or false as Panchen Lama, his position was most tragical. He died five years ago although several years younger than Dalai Lama. His death occurred under mysterious circumstances, and in that context a number of his family members expired from heart attacks, according to the Chinese. A new Panchen Lama has not yet been found.

China has violated 19 of the Human Rights in Tibet:

§3 The right to a private life, freedom and personal security has been violated by murders, rapes, imprisonments without trial and arbitrary executions.

§4 The prohibition against slavery has been violated by the fact that China, under the pretext of liberating the people of Tibet, has enslaved them instead.

§5 The prohibition against torture and against cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of people has been violated since this has been carried through against the Tibetan people.

§9 The prohibition against arbitrary arrest, detention and exile has been violated.

§12 The prohibition against interfering with people's private lives, family lives, home lives and correspondence and against defamation of character and the right to protection of law against such attacks has been violated by compulsory divorces, dispersion of families and the deprivation of children from their families against their will.

§13 The right to freedom of movement to and from and within one's own country and from any other country has been taken from the Tibetans.

§16 That marriage may be entered on only by the free will of both parties has been violated by compulsory marriages between monks and nuns and by that many Tibetan women were forced into marriage with Chinese.

§17 The right to property and the prohibition against arbitrary deprivation of property has been violated by mass confiscations as the Tibetans often were bereft of everything except clothes and household articles.

§18 The right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion was taken from the Tibetans.

§19 The right to freedom of opinion and expression was taken from the Tibetans mostly by the methodical destruction of their writings and the burning of their books.

§20 The right to peaceful assembly and association was forbidden by the Chinese as only meetings proclaimed by the Chinese were allowed.

§21 The right to take part in the government of one's country was forbidden by the Chinese.

§22 The right to social security was denied the Tibetans as 1) the economical resources of Tibet went to China, 2) the social changes in Tibet were disadvantageous to the Tibetans and 3) efforts were made to destroy the religion of the Tibetans.

§23 The right to work, free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to a fair salary was denied the Tibetans by forced labour under inhuman conditions without a salary.

§24 The right to rest and leisure with paid holidays from labour was denied the Tibetans.

§25 The right to a decent standard of living and to medical care and the right of all mothers and children to special protection was violated as all Tibetan economical resources were taken care of by the Chinese.

§26 The right to free education and upbringing was violated since the educational institutions of the Tibetans were closed and replaced by communist schools of propaganda and by the fact that the Tibetan children were taken from their parents to be indoctrinated in enforced propaganda.

§27 The right to participation in the cultural life of the home country was taken from the Tibetans by the Chinese effort to eliminate Tibetan culture by replacing it with atheistic communism.

§29 That personal freedom is to be limited only by appropriate consideration of other people was violated by the Chinese mostly through the bombings of Tibetan monasteries, which were built most of all to protect personal freedom and development.

The violation of Human Rights in Tibet has continued undisturbed for more than 40 years, since the systematical, methodical and well premeditated genocide against the Tibetans that was initiated in 1950 never has been interrupted although China is a member of the United Nations.

Development is now progressing in the right direction and has done so since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 but has constantly been disturbed and hindered by the Chinese (the Tiananmen Square in June 1989). The above-mentioned statements of violation of Human Rights in Tibet were ready and internationally known since 1960, and that was long before the Cultural Revolution. Nothing was done about it then, and practically nothing has been done about it ever since, except by the Tibetans themselves, who restore their monasteries by means of their own while the Chinese continue to abuse and expropriate their country.

Gothenburg, Sweden, March 17th, 1994.