

PRESENTATION OF WORK IN PROGRESS

History Teaching On Trial

'Case no. 240743: „Israelis versus Teaching History in the State of Israel“, 1212.'

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Abstract:

In this mock trial, „Case no. 240743: Israelis Versus Teaching History in the State of Israel,” the Prosecution and Defense present their closing arguments concerning the current state of teaching history in Israel.¹ Both counsel rely mainly on the Israeli millennium history textbooks and State Curricula (ibid, C) and compare them to earlier ones in order to demonstrate their arguments.

The Prosecution claims that despite changes, history manuals and the Ministry of Education C and guidance remain „Agents of Zionist Education”² which sabotage the intellectual development of students through „soft indoctrination”³ (R.F. – molding of opinions in democracies.)

The Defense argues that a national history education is a basic collective right which in no way opposes other human rights or pedagogical goals in the State of Israel.

Both counsel focus on the following major issues:

1. To cover or to discover? How does a description of the historical past relate to current issues, problems and controversies? When does such historical description have to represent the formal State's version of history? Should historical description necessarily include historical „Truth“ of the States enemies? Meaning: „Us” vis-à-vis „Others”.
2. To preach or to teach? Is there a contradiction between “history education” based on heritage and “history teaching” based on data? How do the conflicts between collective rights and individual rights of children influence history teaching?

The Prosecution and the Defense refer to the descriptive text and to the proto text on the various levels of explicit, implicit and null discourse (“black holes”).

The two contradictory opinions represent the clash between left and right in Israel concerning the “soft indoctrination” of the future Israeli citizens. Thus, the differences between “teaching history” and “history education” influence the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the Religious Secular dispute, and the problems of the Israeli welfare system.

While this mock trial concerns the teaching of history in the State of Israel, the issues discussed in it are highly relevant to other democratic states which struggle to reach equilibrium between values of human rights and the needs of the state.

Keywords: Mock trial – history teaching – history education – soft indoctrination – Pure arms – The Threat – Her-story

Introduction

Methodology

The present article, like historiography and history teaching, is a human creation and therefore based on a suspicious attitude towards any text that invites readers and researchers to do the same. It relies on the formal Israeli state history curricula, (ibid, C), history textbooks, experience of history teachers and teachers trainers, and on accumulated knowledge of other research works. Primarily, however, it reflects the creative understanding of the author of this article, and thus, it is similar to the work of the historians who bring together chosen facts, from which they create a whole sequence of logical events of the past.⁴

The nontraditional format of the current is legitimized by the daring spirit of the new millennium -the present time is characterized by speed and variety of “parole” – written, spoken and visualized, while the academic articles keep to their traditional formats and structure. This difference is justified by the conviction that every scientific article has to contain some degree of originality, and should not be satisfied by summarizing previous knowledge and long lists of references. This choice is freely influenced by Plato’s way of writing (thirty three dialogues), Galileo’s famous Dialogue, but mainly by the law experts who often use this technique of writing.

While the majority of the academic research in this field criticizes the existent history teaching/education in the State of Israel and its history textbooks, including the current writer, this article presents pros and cons to the readers and invites them to make an autonomous judgment.

“Case no. 240743: Israelis versus Teaching History in the State of Israel” contains the closing arguments of the Defense and the Prosecution who passionately defending their contradictory positions as based on testimonies and documents which were accepted into evidence.⁵ It includes serious arguments, sarcastic comments, and the interventions of the judge and the audience in the court room; thus it is a passionate and alive text that keeps the readers intrigued and inspired.

Context

The Israeli system school includes a general state stream and a state religious stream. The schools of the Israeli Palestinians (Arab and Druze) have their own school system as do the agricultural communities, but they are also subjected to the authority of the Ministry of Education. Only the ultra-Orthodox schools and to some degree, private schools and those of Christian institutions, have autonomous status.

The Israeli Ministry of Education contains the National Curriculum (C) department and Textbooks Bureau which confirm yearly selection of the textbooks and recommendations to the teachers. Despite such formal lists and policy publications, the school principals, teachers and sometimes even parents and pupils may make independent choice, buying their textbooks in the semi free market, while in classrooms, emphasizing, or explaining in different ways the past. Still, most of the Israeli teachers in the national religious

and national general streams follow the state C and the list of textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education. The free choice on one hand and the heavy involvement of the Ministry of Education on the other hand explains why the textbooks market and the history teaching/education may be considered a semi free system.

Content

In the current mock trial, the Prosecution claims that despite changes accrued in the history state curricula (C), history textbooks and the Ministry of Education published guidance, they are still the “Agents of Zionist Education”⁶ which sabotage the intellectual development of students through “soft indoctrination”⁷ (R.F. – molding of opinions in democracies,) that enhance right wing political opinions.

The Defense argues that a national history education is a basic collective right which in no way opposes other human rights or pedagogical goals in the State of Israel, and that the Prosecutor, has leftist, non – Zionist, political aspirations.

Both counsel focus on the following major issues:

1. To cover or to discover? How does a description of the historical past relate to current issues, problems and controversies? When does such historical description represent the formal State’s version of history? Should historical description necessarily include historical “Truth” of the State enemies? Meaning: “Us” vis-à-vis “Others”.
2. To preach or to teach? Is there a contradiction between “history education” based on national collective heritage/narrative and “history teaching” based on data? How do the conflicts between collective and individual rights and welfare of children influence the history teaching/educating?

In addressing these issues, both the Prosecution and the Defense refer to the descriptive text and the proto text on the various levels of explicit, implicit and null discourse or so the called, “black holes” in the stories.

The two contradictory opinions in this mock trial represent the clash between left and right in Israel as practiced by the “soft indoctrination” through history curriculum. Accordingly, the differences between “teaching history” and “history education” have their share in molding the political opinions of the future Israeli citizens who vote for the parliament and the government, which decide on the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the Religious Secular dispute, and the present and future of the Israeli welfare system.

While this mock trial is concerned with the teaching of history in the State of Israel in the middle and secondary levels of the state general and religious schools, the issues discussed herein are highly relevant to other democratic states which struggle to reach equilibrium between values of Human rights and the needs of the state.

The Trial

The Honorable Judge: Good morning, everyone. I can see that the jury is ready. I will again warn the media and the members of the public that your attendance is within my

discretion. No disturbances will be tolerated. Until now, we have heard the testimony of witnesses who are parents, teachers, and students. We also heard the testimony of both party's experts. We are grateful to both attorneys and their teams for, what they term, their profound research and brilliant cross-examination⁸.

Now, concluding the trial, Case no. 240743, "Israelis vs. History Teaching," with the consent of both sides, I shall change the court procedure and allow the Defense's request to present his closing argument first.

Prosecution: No objection to Defense going first, Your Honor.

The Judge: Fine, then let us proceed.

Defense

Your honor and members of the jury, I wish to start with an important clarification: I am not bound to present the official position of the Israeli Ministry of Education. I wish to explain: I have asked to be the first to conclude because I refuse to be presented as apologetic, which I am not at all. Once this is clear and with your permission, we shall go ahead and open with a quotation from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, which also is the solid core of the history teaching in Israel.⁹

Eretz Yisrael [Hebrew: The Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world. Exiled from their land,... and it continues with our historical tragic narrative, and then: In recent decades they returned in masses... And it concludes: WE EXTEND our hand of peace and unity to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land.

(Declaration of Independence – Friday, 14th May 1948 – *Erev Shabbat 5th Iyar 5708*)

So, naturally, I speak on behalf of the consensus of the Zionist Jewish Israeli State, thus, unfortunately excluding the case of the Israeli Arabs and the ultra-religious Jews of Israel, who deserve to have special trials.

The teaching of history that includes the state curricula, textbooks, teacher training, ministerial regulations, textbooks' recommendations and the practice in classrooms, is, first and foremost, Zionist, Jewish and Democratic.¹⁰ All the abuse of the non-Zionist elements in the Israeli society will not change this fundamental fact!

Prosecution: Objection! Demagogic abuse!

The Judge: The defense shall respect the right of the Prosecution to self-definition and shall refrain from labeling her and her team.

Defense: We believe, as do the majority of the Jewish Israelis, that there is no contradiction among these three founding pillars of the Israeli education and the teaching of history, because each of them includes the others, as we proved by evidence during the last few weeks.

This combination of value and practice is reflected in the fulfillment of “The Law of Redemption”¹¹ that rules the Jewish odyssey from its beginning, through the First Temple, the Second Temple and to the fulfillment of the third State of Israel. Our history teaching in classrooms is based on the narrative of the Israelites who became Jews and now are Jewish Israelis, and we have transformed the collective memory into a formal State version.

Hence, we prefer to allocate more time to periods of our history in which we lived in *Eretz Israel*, our homeland, as well as to the “Zionist Renaissance”¹² – epoch that is taught twice: in the middle and secondary schools.¹³

When teaching national history, we emphasize the well-known Jewish proverb that is a historical truth: “In very generation they (*the gentile*) raise up to destroy us, but the Lord saves us from their hand.” We strongly believe that the hatred towards Jews, the Anti-Semitism and Holocaust are real “Threats”¹⁴ for the Diaspora Jews and for the Jewish Israelis in their homeland. Therefore the “Threats” are the explicit and the implicit second agenda of the history teaching in our State schools.¹⁵

Like every other nation, we have the right to be proud of our heritage and uniqueness, and therefore, our history teaching that combines general and national history emphasizes a double message: we are a normal nation having the collective rights as other nations, but at the same time, we are different, special and unique because of our national narrative and cultural heritage.¹⁶

Having a long history of persecution and humiliation, it is essential for us to enhance and maintain our national proud. So yes, we need to select the facts that favor our perspective over the Arab perspective.¹⁷ Such policy of selective “cover” and “discover” exists in every collective memory and historiography, as well as in curricula and textbooks. It is a legitimate goal of every state and nation to educate its people and its young generation to patriotism and self-respect, and our selective policy is a legitimate device to achieve.

It goes without saying that any national uniqueness is obtained by a comparison of the “Us” to the “Others”; our combined history teaching, national and general, aims at leading the pupils to this conclusion. We have a unique history that includes returning to our homeland three times and in each period we were struggling “few against the many.” Our moral uniqueness was strongly emphasized during the conflicts of the Zionist area, when the mobilized Jewish Israelis have been committed to maintain “Pure arms.”¹⁸ Somehow, our enemies have ignored it all together! But in order to save our lives, we have to teach that sometimes when forced to do so, self-defense is more important than the moral call of conscience; this conviction is deeply enrooted in the Bible (Old Testament) and is basic in Judaism.

Because we also are obliged by human rights and democracy, in our national history teaching, we include failures and mistakes like the unfortunate event of Kfar Kassem in 1956, emphasizing the mandatory legal obligation to disobey a military order when obviously it is in contrast to human values¹⁹ Therefore, we strongly object to the apologetic approach of our Jewish Israeli opponents who, regretfully, have not completed the metamorphosis from being Jews to becoming Israelis. We do not have to apologize for being normal.

Your honor, my friend the Prosecutor and jury, the Jews returned to their homeland from hundreds of places. They had to revive their national unity by various means that included history teaching. Against this background, the momentous task of defending his-

torical “Truth” has been put in the hands of the Ministry of Education’s curricula teams, the Ministry textbooks confirmation department and the authors of the history textbooks. They have been obliged to consider the sensitivity of our ethnic groups; the versions of Judaism in the Israeli public, the differences of gender and political opinions, etc.²⁰, and all these considerations produce “The Truth” of our national collective memory that rules the teaching history in Israel.

The pressure to compromise on all these differences gets even stronger because of the need to tolerate other religions and nations, in spite of the fact that many of them were predators of Jews in the past, and some still are. In this matter we are exceptionally tolerant when compared to our Palestinian neighbors, who completely ignore the Jewish history²¹ and portray Jews and Israelis in a negative light!²²

The portrayal of Jews in the history teaching of other nations is minimal and very often not complementary. So apparently, we are better in this respect than many others, but still, even when we do our best, we can not please everyone all the time and certainly, we don’t have to!

Prosecution: Typical demagoguery! The situation with the Palestinians is asymmetric! They are the occupied people!

Defense: They had their chance to change this situation! But they chose not to! And you and your like know it!!

The Judge: Both counsel, approach the bench! *Whispering:* Both of you behave yourselves in my courtroom and stop this bickering and badgering! Or I shall end the proceeding without closing arguments.

Defense: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury – let me resume my closing argument by being frank with ourselves: History teaching in classrooms is basically History Education, focusing on transmitting the national heritage to the pupils in schools rather than pretending to experience the historian laboratory, which is for the students in the universities who wish to be future historians.²³

We, the adult authorities decide on curricula, textbooks and didactics, thus transferring our collective memory to formal State history and education.

Nevertheless, our teaching of history develops the cognitive intelligence of children and youngsters by inviting them to understand the complexities of the process of the past events. It is done by didactic means and assignments, like, watching movies, and participating in discussions, comparisons, role playing, mock trials, etc.²⁴

The pupils of history have to discover, with their teachers’ help, the logical core order of human life. That core consists of reasons, process and results in the sequence of time – past, present and future.

Yet, they have to encompass a theme as a whole. Therefore our curricula are based on chronological and thematic module.²⁵ Teaching the pupils to work according to such combined modules helps them to organize their own lives and face the complex postmodern problems in the present,²⁶ namely, they go through „history teaching therapy“²⁷ in order to develop an „historical conscience.“²⁸

My esteemed academic Prosecutor, please remember that the department of history’s curricula and textbooks in the Ministry of Education, consists of experts and the best aca-

demic talents. And, that all our history teachers are university graduates. At the same time, we know that many of the Israeli Jewish children, whose parents are not academics, also have the right to learn history without being confused by over smart dialectical exercises.²⁹

Prosecution: Objection! The confusion lies in the gap between the heritage and the facts of history!

The Judge: Overruled. There was a great deal of confusion of all kinds in the testimony! Proceed!

Defense: Thank you. By teaching history, we prepare our young generation to be patriotic soldiers and loyal citizens, and please my esteemed colleague, spare me this hypocritical face, because this is the truth and right of every nation!³⁰

The practical teaching of history in classrooms translates all these goals into pedagogical considerations and didactical means, respecting the rights of parents and their children while taking into account the age of the pupils, the convictions of their families, their backgrounds, and in Israel, unfortunately, also their geographical location. I have to remind you that pupils who live near the borders, in mixed cities, or in the settlements are vulnerable to terrorism and therefore highly sensitive. These differences explain how the concrete teaching of history differs from one place to another and from one school to another, despite the state policy.

Still, according to our reports, the classic Zionist, Jewish, democratic values are consistent in most of the teaching of our history education as the testimony of teachers and public polls prove.³¹ We proudly admit that the teaching of history has at its core tendency to preach – explicitly and implicitly, that is justified by our obligation to enhance the moral education against the evil influences of our time.

We cannot afford relativism and skepticism,³² or treating our children as „Tabula Rasa,“ because there are negative powers who aim to annihilate our nation building efforts. In the solid framework of the State curricula, we enhance the pupils’ cognitive and emotional intelligence according to the best psychological and historical research and experience.

We have listened to many examples of such endeavors presented to the court by our experts and witnesses, but let me offer one additional example...

Prosecution: Objection! This time he’s admitting he’s adding evidence in his closing. If counsel wants to be a witness, he should take the stand and be cross-examined.

Defense: Now, now. It’s just an example. It isn’t evidence.

The Judge: Please get to the point. You know you can’t add at this point of the proceeding.

Prosecution: As I was saying, when teaching about the Holocaust, we spare our pupils the full horror, while on the other hand, we challenge them to face the dilemma of the Judenrate (the Jewish councils in the Ghettos) and the Zonderkommando (the Jewish squads who were forced to collaborate with the Nazis in massacring Jews and ultimately were gassed)³³

We also spare them the feelings of guilt connected to the local conflict, but we teach them to accept responsibility towards all the Israelis, regardless of religion or other per-

suasion. But results are louder than any criticism; so please observe the nonviolent tent demonstrations of the Israeli middle class during the summer of 2011. More than 100,000 people pitched their tents in various the cities and asked for civil rights and social justice, while in London during the same time, people rioted, forcing 16,000 policemen to keep the public order. Neither one can forget the Middle Eastern countries where the Arabs have been massacring each other for the past several hundred years.³⁴ **Therefore, I do declare, clearly and proudly: The current teaching of history in the Israeli classroom is innocent!**

I seek a Verdict and Judgment in my favor. And now, I will allow my honorable Post-Zionist and Revisionist³⁵ Prosecutor do what she knows best to do: criticize... (*He sits down.*)

The Judge: Strike the sarcasm from the record. Thank you, counsel for the Defense for your proud conclusion. I now invite the learned Prosecutor to make her closing arguments.

Prosecution

Your honor, Defense attorney, members of the jury, I decline all the abusive definitions of my learned friend, and declare that I am the genuine speaker on behalf of the Jewish Israelis as a Jewish Zionist Democrat. Unfortunately, I also have to exclude the case of the Israeli Palestinians and the ultra-religious Jews of Israel, and hope that we shall have another trial to deal with the history teaching in these two interesting and problematic sectors of the Israeli society.

In spite of what the Defense would wish you to believe, we too are proud Zionist and democratic Jews, and exactly because of this, we must address this issue, with the claim that the current teaching of history in Israel shall destroy us! Therefore we are going to refute the defense arguments point by point, starting with the Declaration of Independence that includes the following obligations that the Defense preferred to omit and I prefer to quote:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL... will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

(Declaration of Independence – Friday 14th May 1948 – *Erev Shabbat 5th Iyar 5708*)

Your Honor and Members of the Jury, you can see that this declaration includes goals and values that are in constant contradiction and tension with each other and with reality.³⁶ Thus, we have to live with these contradictions, ambivalence, ambiguity, and tension among values and choices; this is the lot of our nation and so should be the teaching of history in the State of Israel.

With the present sophisticated level of communication, there is no point in covering or manipulating information; sooner or later the truth will get out, and false information

rendered to the pupils may lead to a total breakdown of trust, to indifference and even to withdrawal from the Jewish Israeli collective.

Is it possible to have coherence between Zionism, Judaism and human rights democracy? The Past and the present prove otherwise... For example, 20% non-Jewish citizens do not have equal rights and opportunities when compared to the Jewish majority who have prerogative rights in many legislative regulations, as well as in concrete life.³⁷ Therefore, I believe that the Jewish Israeli pupils have to be taught from the formal age on (middle school) how to live with unsolved and unpleasant problems, how to face them in a decent responsible way, and how to do their part to correct the wrongs. Thus, I claim that "History teaching therapy" should not be based on conflict resolution but rather on conflict mediation training!

We believe that the voluntary will of the people and the clever and human usage of opportunities has to replace the historicist or religious "Law of Redemption"³⁸ that either is the promise of the Lord to Abraham, or the essence of the Zionist ideology.

We too acknowledge the Anti-Semitic experience of the Jewish nation, but we demand that the teaching of history has to include more data about the 2,000 years of co-existence between Jews and gentiles in the Diaspora, which, by the way, explains the Jewish survival until the present time. This state of relations also explains why the majority of Jews and many of the Israelis, nowadays, prefer to live among gentiles outside Israel... By the same rule, the coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians in everyday life also has to be a greater part of teaching of history in order to change the existent narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.³⁹

As a normal nation with the same rights and obligations as other nations, we must not forget the "obligations" to ourselves – as a unique nation and we must not forget our obligation to be moral.

After the Holocaust, the Jews acquired a post trauma syndrome named "victimology", meaning, they feel eternally victimized and urged to survive at all costs. Because of our fear of annihilation and our need of constant self-defense we sometimes justify non-proportional retaliations and reactions, like the actions of the 101 squad of Arik Sharon in 1956, and other examples of "dirty arms" of the IDF, as my team presented into this respectful court.

My, learned Defense Counsel you certainly know that the lesson of the Kfar Kassem massacre isn't fully elaborated in the history textbooks especially when it comes to the court verdict and the punishment of the responsible officers.⁴⁰

Spectators: Boo, Boo, Israel Haters!

The Judge strikes his gavel: Be quite! If the audience will not hold its peace, I shall order the trial to continue within closed doors.

The bailiff ushers a shouting man with a camera outside the courtroom.

Prosecution: I also assert that we should be unique, unique by higher moral standards than our enemies have been, even in the present intractable conflict of survival.

We have to be proud of our intellectual gifts and cultivate them by critical thinking when approaching unsolved historical dilemmas. We can do this by letting our pupils experience the historian's laboratory and by inviting them to understand the past from the

perspective of the past, rather than from the present. In this way, the pupils will enhance their empathy towards the “Others” which means, anyone that isn’t like “Us.”⁴¹

Being proud of the “Zionist Renaissance” and the establishment of the State of Israel, we can afford to face our weakness by throwing light on our “black holes.” We must bravely face embarrassing facts of the past, in order to learn their lessons for the present and the future. Gaining individual and collective maturity is a long process that includes painful, self-revelation.⁴² This process slowly begins in childhood and evolves according to the cognitive and emotional stage of the learners. Training the pupils in technique of self-criticism includes a careful comparison between “Us” and the “Others”, against the background of the difference of circumstances, while remembering how the Jews were helpless in the Diaspora when all they could do was to survive...

We have to emphasize the “Threats” to democracy and human rights in complete obedience to authorities that already cost our nation six million victims in the Holocaust. When teaching this lesson, we must encourage disobedience when clearly the orders or laws are against humanity.⁴³

We too agree with the integration policy of education that rules the teaching of history in Israel but not at the price of blurring the past and the differences among the groups within the Jewish collective.

The rights of cultural pride belong to all the minorities but also to the majority!

This rule has to be maintained by including more of the Palestinian narrative,⁴⁴ and by teaching about the other religions, not in the middle schools as is done today but in the secondary schools, when the pupils are in their teens and more mature and able to participate in serious discussions.

Following this logic, the non-religious Jews have to be presented in religious and non-religious versions of history teaching as a proud group which has the freedom to not practice any tradition, and still be equal citizens.

And now let me address another important issue that was completely ignored by the learned Defense attorney. As we proved by the evidence and by cross examination of the witnesses and the experts, the teaching of history in Israel, from its beginning has excluded women, who constitute half the population. Women are the “Jews of human history”! While men are “We” and “Us,” women still are “They” and the “Others”!

Spectators: Mixed pro and con shouting.

Bailiff: Silence in the court room!

Prosecution: We know that whenever we raise this issue, we lose points, but this is exactly our point: The women’s struggle for rights started in the late nineteenth century and was the last to be acknowledged, after black men received their legal rights. The current, uncompleted process of equal rights for women is the biggest revolution of the modern period, resulting in social, economic, cultural and gender relations’ changes, yet it is still ignored by most of the history textbooks and curricula around the world.⁴⁵ This is also the situation in Israel, in spite of the fact that most of the history teachers and many of the authors of the curricula are women.⁴⁶ These female teachers teach “His-story,” while “Her-story” is ignored...

Please keep in mind that in Israel, many of the men are religious or traditional Jews and Moslems, who believe that God created females to be inferior. The majority of the Is-

raeli Jewish men, who are mobilized to the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) until the age of 45, are because of this military long termed experience quiet chauvinists, even if they do not admit it.

We are convinced that “her-story” has to be included in the “his-story” teaching, emphasizing the lives of women, their share in nation and society building, their struggle and their achievements.⁴⁷ Such discourse has to include the inequality that still exists in the world, especially in non-Western cultures, and the discrimination and abuse against Israeli women in the everyday life. We constantly wonder how each of our State curricula that starts with obligation to prepare the youngsters for the present and the future ignores the female half of the population, and the relations between the two halves...⁴⁸

Defense: In this way, we shall teach history seven hours a day, with no time left for science or languages! (*And laughs*)

Prosecution: I passionately agree that we should shorten the time allocated to teach some subjects. For example, less time has to be allocated to the teaching of wars! That will leave us enough time for the important issues! And when referring to wars, we should emphasize the horrible human price paid by the soldiers and citizens, rather than glorified victories and heroism.⁴⁹

(*The Prosecutor needs to overcome emotions, and when she does, she continues,*) We, unlike the honorable Defense attorney, do believe in the cognitive and emotional potential of our young generations and in our obligation to encourage them to be excellent, like our teachers in the past did for our ancestors.

We also claim that enlightenment is not a source or a manifestation of weakness but is a pure source of power. Please remember who won the Second World War, and who the present strong world protagonists are! The future belongs to the human free minds and not to the Gladiators!

Therefore, teaching of history, and mind you, not history education, has to be a science based on constant changing of “The Formal Truth” that enhances the critical thinking of our pupils and thus promises some hope for the advancement of ourselves and of human kind.

I do admit, many of these values already are included in the printed State curricula, but do they rule the textbooks and the concrete teaching in classrooms? The emphasis of patriotic and Jewish preaching as presented by the Jewish Israeli male power centers, over the cognitive critical thinking get stronger in secondary schools and even more so in the national religious State schools.⁵⁰ This phenomenon is reflected in the history textbooks that are confirmed and recommended by the Ministry of Education and which translate the doctrinaire messages into the text, proto text, and didactics.

Even more ironic, authors of textbooks, after preaching in various ways, and excluding any alternative data or explanations, often ask the pupils to express their “free opinions.”⁵¹

While in the past the manipulation of minds was openly practiced by the history textbooks, the new Israeli textbooks from the nineties on are “agents of soft indoctrination,”⁵² using mostly implicit intelligent devices in order to reach the same traditional goals, while the “Retro” millennium textbooks incline to return to the traditional values.⁵³

Heritage teaching is done in the State of Israel through most of the humanistic subjects in school, as well as by other cultural agents of soft Zionist education...

Middle and secondary schools pupils are at the right age to ask questions and to open windows for the unexpected, unpredictable, ambiguous and unresolved dilemmas. Playing in the class room is not enough, because the richest didactic devices can be used as efficient indoctrination tools, as the historical experience has taught us. The classroom assignments have to include comparison of contradictory primary and secondary sources and analysis of disputed historians' depictions, role playing of contradictory positions and mock trials. And then, and only then, will the authors of the textbooks and the teachers have a decent right to ask their pupils for their opinions.

Yes, we believe that children have the right to be invited into the laboratory of the historians and to be challenged with the complexity of their work that changes with time and opinion.

Peace of mind is not the ultimate purpose of history teaching, but Peace is!

If talking about results that speak louder than voice, please remember that in the poll of March 2010 that was done among Jewish Israeli pupils of religious and general State schools, 52 percent out of all the pupils declared that they would like to block Arabs from being elected to the Israeli Parliament, and 43 percent of these future citizens were of the opinion that the educational system does not prepare them to be good citizens in a democracy and that they deeply distrust the Israeli authorities.⁵⁴

I wouldn't boast about the demonstration of tents in summer 2011, my learned Counsel, because it is the strongest manifest of public disappointment of the Israeli education. These demonstrators learned in schools about the Zionist vision of a just society, and have served in the IDF, acquired a profession and worked hard, yet they can't raise families and make a decent living because of the „State's cruel and piggish capitalistic policy ” (their language) that encourages financiers on the people's account. I am pessimistic concerning the future of social reforms, because the Israeli „Spring” ended with despair and surrender...

But let me go back to our major argument that was proved by my team during this trial: we urgently need to reform the teaching of history in Israel! This is our only hope for a better and peaceful life in our State. Therefore, I declare: **The current teaching of history in Israeli in classrooms is guilty!**

Spectators shout in protest.

The Judge raises his voice: The Court thanks the learned Defense and Prosecution for their profound and passionate conclusions, and in three hours, the court will hear the Jury's verdict and I will render Judgment. The proceedings are closed. (*Strikes his gavel*) Court Dismissed!

Clerk court, sadly: Thus ends this mock trial, inviting all of us to be the jury and to freely decide on the verdict, while remembering Kant's famous Categorical imperative of moral behavior: "It must be obeyed by all – in all situations and circumstances."

Summary and conclusion

The format of this article does not allow more than two sides of the same coin, but because the present science proves that there are more dimensions to any issue, I would like to add a third side to the coin. As a conflict mediator, I know how such a task is unappreciated and unrewarded, but at the same time, how intriguing it is...

Both respected counsels use in different ways, in order to support their point of view, the declaration of the Independence of the state of Israel. Both do not lie; because this is exactly the weakness and the power of this declaration; it is built on triangle of contradictions, declaring a Democratic, Jewish and Zionist state. Each of these definitions, when achieved fully is contradictory to the other ones, and so are the detailed sub-goals of this formal credo. Both opponents in the trail are Zionists and the dispute between them is about the equilibrium among the three pillars of the state ideology and the proportion of commitment towards the other obligations.

The state C of the history of the Jewish nation is based on two historical laws, the positive power of "Zionist Redemption," and the negative power of anti-Semitism and Holocaust. The prosecutor rightly emphasizes the missing data in the history C and textbooks that describe co-existence between gentiles (including Palestinians) and Jews, and demands a positive attitude towards the "others".

But unfortunately attitude cannot be chosen freely, but should be dictated by reality, and therefore, and instead of negative or positive attitudes, as the two counsels represent, it is preferable to train the pupils to practice a realistic approach to life, weighing pros and cons in each situation without a preliminary one sided attitude.

Each nation has "black holes" in its narratives and history, as well as "black pages" in its history C and textbooks, but humans need to belong, and to be proud of their belonging. They also want to have a free choice based on the truth; therefore these two needs have to be granted to the pupils with careful consideration of timing and measure. Children have right to a joyful childhood, but when growing, they also have right to face reality without losing their identity and self-respect; this is a humanistic pedagogical approach to education that is based on democratic values. Therefore the young children may enjoy the national heritage and the narratives, (defense argument) but the teenagers should learn about the "black holes" and dark pages in their history, (prosecution argument) while avoiding guilt and adopting responsibility for the present and the future. Teachers have to start with „history education“ in the middle schools and continue with "history teaching" in the secondary schools. Both practices should strive to avoid raising predators or victims, but rather encourage realistic autonomous children and youngsters.

Versions of the "others" that should be included in the history C and textbooks do not refer only to the gentiles and the Palestinians, but, as very often ignored, also to women who are a half of the human population. The best way to achieve balanced history C and textbooks is to have representation of the two genders in the power centers of the Ministry of Education.

The third side of the disputed coin regarding this mock trial offers neither accusation nor apology, and avoids a decisive verdict, preferring an ambiguous flexible conclusion that is open to doubts and discussion. It must, however, insist on child centered approach,

while remembering that this child is not an orphan, but has an Israeli Democratic Jewish Zionist family.

Notes

- 1 This paper is based on Firer's experience as a history teacher and as a teacher trainer and textbooks researcher in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In order to avoid long bibliographical references and repetitions, Firer merely mentions her previous publications. "Mock trial" is a regular didactic device in teaching and training of all kinds. There is a rich didactic literature about mock trials, for ex. Andrews C.K – no date.
- 2 Firer, R. (1985) *The Agents of Zionist Education*. Also her later publications. (H)
- 3 Firer, R. (2011) *Agents of Soft Indoctrination*. A paper submitted to press.
- 4 Weinryb, E. (1987) *ibid*, chapters: The event and its description (Chap. 2) Explanation of actions (chap.6) The court of History (chap 8) The borders of objectivity in History (chap11) (H)
- 5 The witnesses on both sides include teachers and history teacher's trainers of middle and high schools, who work in classrooms and students who study history curriculum and textbooks. The advisors are: curricula experts, textbooks researchers, historians, and psychologists. (G)
- 6 Firer, R. (1985) *The Agents of Zionist Education*. Also her later publications. (H)
- 7 Firer, R. (2011) *Agents of Soft Indoctrination*. A paper submitted to press.
- 8 The complete references include primary sources (curricula) or secondary sources that aren't in Firer's previous publications; otherwise the note indicates Firers' previous publications: see list of bibliography (G)
- 9 It is still the core of history curricula and textbooks, in spite of the changes in time see Firer in Firer and Adwan (1997), and Firer (2003), and Mathias, (2003:32, 38-41).
- 10 Introductions to the History Curricula, (*ibid*, bib. List) Firers' publications, and Komem (2003) who states that he still is teaching history in the General secondary State school according to the classic Zionist ideology, *ibid*, 135.
- 11 "The Law of Redemption" (*Chok Hageula*) - (FR) in: Firer (1985) *Agents of the Zionist Education*. (*Sochnim ...*) (H). Ben Zion Dinur's influence on History Curricula, in Mathias (2003: 31).
- 12 "Zionist Renaissance" – (FR)
- 13 Israeli History State Curricula.
- 14 "The Threat" (FR)
- 15 In: Firers' publication on the Holocaust in history textbooks.
- 16 It is clearly defined in the introductions to the history curricula, for middle and secondary State schools, Religious and General.
- 17 Gelber, Y., (2009: 33)
- 18 Firer, R. (2011) *Agents of soft Indoctrination*, and Yogav, E. (2001)
- 19 Firer, R. in Firer and Adwan (1997) and Firer 2011 *Agents of Soft Indoctrination*
- 20 Firer's publication and Willis, K, et al., (2001: 218)
- 21 Ignoring the Holocaust in Palestinian textbooks: Adwan, S. in Firer and Adwan (1997) and Nadav Shragai *Total Denial* 22.07.11
- 22 Adwan, S. in: Firer and Adwan (1997) and other Firers' publications.
- 23 Gelber, Y. (2009: 3)
- 24 www.gov.il/tal/portal and www.edcuation.gov.il/history
- 25 *Ibid.*, State history curricula
- 26 On history teaching as device for past, present and future orientation, in Firer's publication, also in Will, K., et al., (2011: 228)
- 27 "History teaching therapy" (FR)
- 28 Will, K. et al., (2011: 217)

- 29 Gelber, Y. (2009: 3) is of opinion that students have to learn disciplined scientific history in the university while in schools they learn heritage of the past.
- 30 See the declarations of the United Nations.
- 31 Trabelsi-Chadad, T. (15.03.10):6, Kashti, O. (11.03.10.): 4. Their percents numbers slightly differ; hence included Trabelsi-Chadads' (ibid, polls of pupils' opinions) and Komem's testimony as an Israeli history teacher (2003)
- 32 Gelber, Y., (2009: 13)
- 33 Firer's publication about the Holocaust in Israeli history textbooks and her textbook (1984)
- 34 In all Israeli media channels and newspaper news and in: Haaretz (10.08.11) (H)
- 35 Firer and Adwan (1997, 1999, 2004), Podeh, E. (2010) and Gelber, Y. (2009) who refers to many New historians of the nineties and their supporters.
- 36 Firer, R. (1987), Democracy: Values... 1987. Firer, R. (1986), The Resistance Movement... – both supplementary textbooks. (H)
- 37 Law of Returning (1951), and the Israeli State regulations of lands etc: Firer, R. (1998), Ethnicity and Conflict.
- 38 "The Law of Redemption" (FR) (*Chok Hageula*) in Firer (1985) Agents/Siocnchim (H)
- 39 Firer in Firer and Adwan, (2004) Israeli chapter and conclusion.
- 40 Firer (2011) *Agents of Soft Indoctrination* and Firer's publication about the Holocaust.
- 41 Wils, et al., (2001: 230)
- 42 Oz (1998: 15)
- 43 Firer (2011) *Agents of Soft Indoctrination*
- 44 Komem (2003: 136-138) about the problems of teaching the Israeli Palestinian conflict in Classroom.
- 45 Clark (2005: 241)
- 46 State history Curricula: Almost no research was done in Israel about women in history textbooks, mainly because there is almost nothing in them... About it: Meler, Ts. (1991) and Avrahami-Eynat (1989).
- 47 Clark (2005: 257-260) ibid, the conclusion includes most of the subjects about women that have to be included in history teaching and history textbooks.
- 48 — a list of references about research concerning women in education (ibid, 261-265).
- 49 Firer (2002) *The Gordian knot*.
- 50 State History curriculum for secondary religious state schools.
- 51 In her publications, Firer claims that the didactics in history textbooks have to be part of the textbooks analysis.
- 52 Firer started to name textbooks "Agents" in 1985 – "Zionist Education..." and "Agents of Holocaust Lesson" – 1988, and lately: "Agents of Soft Indoctrination" (2011)
- 53 Firer in Firer and Adwan (2004) and Mathias, Y. (2003: 45, 51)
- 54 Trabelsi-Chadad, Tamar. (15.03.10): 6, Kashti, O., (11.03.10.): 4. Their percents numbers slightly differ; hence included Trabelsi-Chadads'.

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Notes

- This paper was prepared for the annual conference of The International Society for History Didactics, September, Basel Swiss, 2001 and was presented in this conference.
- In order to maintain the form of courtroom, the references in the text are numbered, detailed in the notes and referred to the list of bibliography.
- Most of the references or notes that are referred to both, Defense and Prosecution are indicated by (G) – General, otherwise the references or notes are specific to one of the advocates. All sources marked (H) are written in Hebrew and all the translation from Hebrew are by as well as Firers' new terms that are marked (FR)