

# COMMENT & ANALYSIS

## LETTERS

### ON LATVIA AND THE EU, A SPECIAL KIND OF BLINDNESS

► **Daniel Hannan** (*EU: real problem is not Latvia, October 26*) offers a master-class in defending the indefensible.

It was the universalist humanism of the Enlightenment that led to the emancipation of the Jews. The theory of national self-determination only supported Zionism from an antisemitic standpoint: the Jews should be expelled from Europe and made to live in their own country.

As for the claim that the Latvians only allied themselves with Germany in order to defend their country from the Red Army, let us consider Finland. The Finns too were threatened with invasion by the Soviets and allied with Germany. But unlike the rest of the Baltic states, Finnish Jews retained their full civil rights and even fought in the Finnish army under the command of Marshal Mannerheim. Just eight foreign Jews were handed to the Nazis by one antisemitic official.

Contrast this with the sickening eagerness with which Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania vied with each other to be the first to exterminate their Jews, an ambition that Latvia achieved with a 71 per cent success rate. They murdered 66,000 Jews out of a pre-war population of 93,000. In addition, 19,000 German Jews were deported to Latvia to be murdered there.

**Richard Cooper**

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► **My friend** and former colleague makes an excellent point in when he takes your correspondent Martin Bright to task for referring to that old chestnut that the Conservative party

is allied with Latvian antisemites in the European Parliament.

Mr Bright reports on your front page the welcome defeat of the campaign to boycott Israeli medicines. There is no mention, however, of the fact that Conservative MEPs voted overwhelmingly for that defeat and that with the exception of the courageous Baroness Ludford every Lib Dem and Labour MEP voted for the boycott. Would he have been so reticent had it been the other way round?

**David Sumberg**

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► **It takes** a special kind of blindness to defend the celebration by Latvian extreme nationalist politicians of the memory of the Nazi Waffen SS, which happens every March in Riga.

I attended the event this year as a witness to the memory of my relatives who were put to death by the SS and their willing collaborators in Latvia. I was made to feel unwelcome as a Jew from London wishing to honour the victims of Nazism. I have written to every Conservative MP asking why their party is in alliance with such people. Only one replied and now Daniel Hannan has defended this link and the commemoration of the Waffen SS. I have no sympathy for the communists who took over Latvia and Stalin was also a repulsive antisemite.

But what kind of Britain are we living in when elected officials from a major party can defend the Waffen SS and those who commemorate its evil?

**Monica Lowenberg**

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### SECURITY ON CAMPUS

► **As a student** at Edinburgh University, I was dismayed to see the protest against Ambassador Daniel Taub (*News, October 26*). Extremism, especially when it is aimed at silencing an opponent, is unacceptable. This is particularly true at a university an institution dedicated to academic and, by extension, political freedom.

We are aware that Israel is a somewhat troubled democracy. My fellow students and I recognise that a platform for supporters of the Palestinians is one aspect of free speech rights.

What is totally unacceptable, however, is the kind of political extremism — driven by dangerous and, sadly, very skilfully mobilised groups of radicals — that we saw in Edinburgh last week.

Many Jewish students feel intimidated and insecure here. This should not be the case in a modern university.

**Jacob Pearson**

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### DIZZY NOT A RASCAL

► **I refer** to the infelicitous language in which Geoffrey Alderman sums Benjamin Disraeli, namely that he was a "first class shyster" (*Comment, October 26*). May I draw readers' attention to a parliamentary resolution steered through by his long-term adversary, William Gladstone, in 1881.

"... the man who for seven years sustained the office of Prime Minister, the man who for nearly 30 years led, either in one House or the other, a great Party in this country, and the man who had so intertwined himself in the interests of the national heart, as was shown on the occasion of his illness, is a man for

