automatically contraindicated in patients whose pain is controlled with stable doses of morphine. It is obviously wise, however, to discourage driving when morphine is started or when the dose is increased in response to worsening pain.

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Patients with hydrocephalus should have regular eye checks

EDITOR,—Pat Tomlinson and I D Sugarman's paper is a reminder that patients with shunts for hydrocephalus may suffer complications at any age.¹ Ophthalmic complications are not specifically mentioned in their paper but are common and neglected.^{2,3} I recently saw a 15 year old patient who had been blinded as a result of such complications. Ophthalmic symptoms such as blurred vision and diplopia should be investigated promptly. Eye signs such as papilloedema and motility disorders may be the only objective clinical evidence of dysfunction of the shunt. Regular eye examinations from birth or diagnosis throughout life are as necessary in hydrocephalus as in diabetes or prematurity. I hope that all those who care for patients with hydrocephalus will review their practice.

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Torture and war

Medical associations should try to stop torture in Israel

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield is too mild in his criticism of the Israeli Medical Association.¹ Several undisputed facts do not permit silence on this issue by a member of the World Medical Association.

Torture is practised in Israel and is sanctioned by the state. The Landau Commission, set up by the Israeli government in 1987, allowed security personnel to use "non-violent psychological pressure and vigorous and continuous interrogation and a moderate degree of physical pressure" in the interrogation of suspects. Exactly which methods were permissible appeared in an annex of the commission's report, which was never made public. In November 1994 a cabinet committee suggested that even these restrictions on torture could be relaxed. The Human Rights Watch report from which Summerfield quotes describes in detail the methods used: "Chief methods include use of prolonged sleep deprivation, use of blindfolds, tight-fitting hoods, shackling or otherwise forcing detainees into body positions that grow increasingly painful, prolonged toilet and hygiene deprivation and verbal threats and insults. Many but not all are also beaten during rounds of questioning."² Several other reports including two from an Israeli human rights group,^{3,4} confirm such practices.

I am certain that, were there such evidence of torture in Britain, the BMA would feel an obligation to speak out. Not to do so would leave the profession morally bankrupt. However, Israeli doctors are implicated not only by their silence: according to Human Rights Watch, doctors regularly carry out rounds in Israeli prisons and detention centres, and some do not document evidence of torture after examining and treating patients.

The World Medical Association did not tolerate torture in South Africa and should not tolerate it in Israel. A country that increasingly plays an important part in the Western medical community officially sanctions torture, and its doctors at best observe in silence the results of such torture and at worst permit continued torture of individual detainees. Not only can the Israeli Medical Association no longer remain silent, but the World Medical Association and the BMA should endeavour to ensure that this cruelty is stopped.

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- 1 Summerfield D. Israeli Medical Association shirks "political aspects" of torture. *BMJ* 1995;311:755. (16 September.)
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- 4 Israeli Information Centre of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. *Torture during interrogation*. B'tselem: IICHR, 1994.

International congresses held in Israel should be boycotted

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield makes a valid point regarding doctors' complicity with torture in Israel.¹ Israeli law permits torture under the Landau Commission but limits its degree, in theory. One way of affecting the Israeli Medical Association would be for doctors to boycott the many international congresses held in Israel until the association ensures its members' adherence to international codes against torture.

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- 1 Summerfield D. Raising the dead: war, reparation, and the politics of memory. *BMJ* 1995;311:495-7. (19 August.)

Letter did not mention terrorists' activities in Israel

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield perverts the issue in labelling the Israeli Medical Association as the guilty party with regard to torture in Israel.¹ His letter makes no mention of the acts of terrorists. Israel is at war with terrorists that surround her and infiltrate to the centre of daily life. The terrorists choose sites such as a high street, bus station, or junction, where they can cause the maximum loss of life to Jews, Arabs, or tourists indiscriminately. (In the last words of Itzak Rabin, "we are at war to make peace.")

What service is Summerfield doing by labelling the Israeli Medical Association the guilty party when the perpetrators of the outrage to human rights are the terrorists? In which journal does the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture malign the terrorists? In which journal does that organisation proclaim loudly the rights of the innocent victims of terrorists? What is the purpose of aligned political comment in a medical journal?

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Nicaragua has been neglected by Western media

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield writes of "horrific attacks" experienced by Nicaraguan peasants at the hands of the Contra guerrillas, who were "sponsored by the United States."¹ He also writes of American foreign policy, which "declared the war in Nicaragua, whose hallmark was atrocity." It is estimated that this war left 12 000 people dead, 15 000 wounded, and 3000 homeless.

How is it that Ronald Reagan, who led the United States during all of this, is considered to have been a great leader, informed by Christian values and dedicated to freedom and democracy all over the world? If the above statements are true then his leadership was hypocritical and evil, and the tragedy in Nicaragua, similar to that in the former Yugoslavia, has been shamefully neglected by other world leaders and the Western media generally.

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- 1 Summerfield D. Raising the dead: war, reparation, and the politics of memory. *BMJ* 1995;311:495-7. (19 August.)
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Article omitted to mention victims of left wing revolutionary politics

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield's account of the tragic way in which the victims of political mass murder are conveniently forgotten is an important document rendered fascinating by the fact that all the villains of the past 80 years whom he mentions were right wing and mostly Western or backed by the West.¹ He lists 14. However, the millions of victims of those inspired by left wing revolutionary politics (for example, those killed in the former Soviet Union; by the Khmer Rouge; and, closer to home, by the Irish Republican Army) are not mentioned at all.

This forgetfulness is so much in the current liberal intellectual tradition, and it is so incorrect to point it out, that I hesitated to put pen to paper; but, having reread Summerfield's stirring words ("This denial, and the impunity of those who maintain it, must be challenged if survivors are to make sense of their losses and the social fabric is to mend"), I decided that I should. I look forward to a further article about the data—or, rather, the people—omitted.

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- 1 Summerfield D. Raising the dead: war, reparation, and the politics of memory. *BMJ* 1995;311:495-7. (19 August.)

Atrocities in eastern Europe were not mentioned

EDITOR,—Derek Summerfield concludes that "The struggle is to get the social order to own up to what is done to reduce human beings to dust, albeit loved dust, and to the uncared others who are not even that, merely names in the mouths of those who remember. This is a struggle without end but one that cannot be shirked."¹ But terror seized me when I realised that Summerfield has a devastating political blind side. His article makes no mention of the atrocities perpetrated by the Leninist and Stalinist communists of the 20th century in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and other parts of eastern Europe. So he too has the capacity to deny the undeniable. The editors of a factual, objective