

# *A letter on anti- zionism*



**Il Lato Cattivo  
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# Letter on anti-Zionism

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Dear comrades,

Let me give you my opinion about what happened around the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and forgive me if I am forced to dwell on this question. So-called anti-Zionism — with the alibi of staying in the concrete — changes more and more the present events into a metaphysical question. On the one hand, this is normal: it is characteristic of the “anti” to have an *absolute enemy*, compared to which the other enemies become relative enemies. At the moment it is Israel’s turn to be the target, and in my opinion it is necessary to distinguish oneself from that. It’s not the assault on the synagogues during the demonstrations of Saturday July 19th in Paris that ought determine this necessity, even if it makes it stronger in some measure. It is not necessary to exaggerate the importance of the uncontrolled behaviours that occurred; it is certain however that they are symptomatic of something — of a drift — whose possibility is consubstantial to anti-Zionism. The confusion between Jews, Zionism and Israel, the fluidity with which these different terms become interchangeable, if they do not appear in the public speeches and in the programmatic slogans, can nevertheless be noticed in the informal conversations that can be heard here and there in the demonstrations, and are on the other hand obvious enough. It is absolutely not the point to operate the slightest defence of the state of Israel — which would be merely absurd — but merely to replace the Israeli-Palestinian question *in history*, as the transformation of the enemy into absolute enemy sustains itself on myth and reproduces it. Similarly, the point is to escape from two equally unsustainable positions for a communist: on one side, the “solidarity with Palestinian resistance,” on the other side the proletarian internationalism as abstract principle. On this last point, I first want to say that what the anti-Zionists misunderstand is that — if some margins of pressure on the Israeli government exist — they lie on the side of those who live in Israel. The demonstrations that occurred in Israel against the slaughter in Gaza are encouraging, and forcefully more significant than those which occurred elsewhere; but they are in any case only few things, especially if we think that they rather spring from an impulse of moral indignation or from the affirmation of principles than from anything else, as it generally happens for the present pacifist movements; they are the most fertile field for the petty bourgeoisie with leftist

sympathies and a cultural level, with all their generous feelings (some can remember the great demonstrations in Italy against war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the flags for peace hanged from the windows... and how it all ended). Concretely, a general strike striking the Israeli economy would be necessary (or at least the menace of this) to provisionally make Israeli government draw back. On the other hand, it is not surprising that this does not happen. It's useless to launch general appeals to class struggle and solidarity among exploited peoples. The Israeli working class and the Palestinian working class can with difficulty unite in any common struggle, simply because they do not live in the same conditions. It is not a question of "class consciousness," rather an objective situation: we can be the best comrades in the world, but this changes nothing if your situation is objectively in your advantage. I quote a passage from the book by Théorie Communiste on Middle East that seems to me particularly appropriate to this subject:

It is an illusion to hope within a predictable future in any junction between the struggles of Israeli proletariat and the struggles of the Palestinian proletariat. The major changes of Israeli capital have aggravated the situation of Israeli proletariat and this worsening is deeply linked to the transformations of the management of the territories and to the use of the Palestinian workforce. The disappearance of historical Zionism in those transformations is equivalent to the weakening of all the enterprises of the public sector and of the sector in the hand of the Histadrut [General Organisation of Workers in the Land of Israel, Israel's organisation of trade unions]. Above all, the use of Palestinian workforce exposes the Israeli working class to the competition of the low wages of this workforce and of the still lower ones practised beyond the frontier in the surrounding Arab countries. A great deal of Jewish workers of the public sector today are employed under a fixed-term contract, mostly the young people, the women and the new immigrants. The rallying of precarious workers or the new "radical" little unions that appeared during strikes, like the ones in the railway (2000) have the greatest difficulties to get recognised by the Histadrut (Aufheben, "Behind the Twenty-First Century Intifada" No. 10, 2002). The worsening of the situation of the Israeli proletariat and the reduction of the Palestinian proletariat to a "fourth-world" condition belong in fact to the same mutations of Israeli capitalism, but this nevertheless does not provide in any way the conditions of the slightest "solidarity" between both proletariats, quite the reverse. For the Israeli proletarian, the Palestinian with low wage is a social danger, and more and more a physical one, for the Palestinian proletarian the advantages the Israeli can retain rest on his own exploitation, his increased relegation and the seize of the territories. (Théo Cosme, *Le Moyen-Orient, 1945-2002*, Senonevero, Marseille 2002, p. 259)

Thus, if we look closely, the way the thing are is that the movement against war that was the basis of the demonstrations in Israel has been in any case the most dignified thing, as far as it has been something in the frame of the present hodgepodge. Vice versa the *anti-Zionists* — if it were not for the troubles they to generate — seem almost tender for their

blessed ignorance of the things of this world. Particularly the “anti-capitalists” ones: moreover their problem — as collectors of anti-isms — is that having an absolute enemy means forcefully that one can have only one at a time ... and have to choose between capitalism and Israel, they usually choose Israel. They usually do so also for convenience, as it is easier to be simply against *individuals* than against the social relation that determines their social function and position. I said before that we must in any case replace the Israeli-Palestinian question in history. Then let us start from a banal fact. Let us consider the geographic map of the area and the different evolutions of the territories from the end of the Second World War until today: starting from a few settlements — mainly situated on the coast and in the north — out of which was constituted its proto-state in 1946, Israel has appropriated in 60 years almost the totality of historical Palestine. To the Palestinians, very few is left from what Gaza and the West Bank still represented in 1967 (these frontiers are claimed today by the Hamas). In this sense, the problem of determining the frontiers that would delimit a “legitimate” Israeli state is irrelevant, so trivially impossible it is to solve: the logic of the seizing of the territories has revealed itself inseparable from its existence as national state. From this undeniable fact, the anti-Zionists deduce the *illegitimate* character of Israeli state, defined by them as “Zionist” — as if this adjective already said everything per se. This implicitly means that some states have a right to exist, and other not. But to ask the question of the legitimacy of Israeli state compared to other states simply means to ignore how the nation-states constitute themselves as homogeneous areas. It would be enough to look at the history of the Italian state: internal colonisation promoted by the previous reign of Savoy, persecution of the “brigandage” in the South, Italianisation of Trentino-South Tyrol and Istria under fascism, centrifugal surges and “national liberation” movements in Sicily and Sardinia, etc.. What is then a legitimate state? And what is an illegitimate state? We will say the same about the so-called “right to the land.” Who has a “right” to the land? According to what may one argue that a given geographic area “belongs” to a given population? According to passed history? And first, who had settled there, who was living there? It is the accomplished fact that establishes the “right,” and that’s all... at least in the world as it exists today. It is absolutely vain to participate (or sustain) the controversy over “who came first.” In facts, any reasoning over this point must resort to juridical formalism. In the fact that somebody may drive me out of *my* home, the real problem lies in the fundamental question, in the fact that there is something mine and something *not mine*.... And in the fact that what is mine may arouse the lust of somebody else, insofar as to be ready to resort to the abuse of his power to seize it. With some luck and adequate economic and military means, I will perhaps to seize back my home. If I am less lucky, I will not succeed to do that. In any case, the essential of the whole thing is that it doesn’t contain a dynamic that would go beyond itself — beyond the resentments and

reciprocal accusations of suffered wrongs. The “reason” may be on my side or not, it is a conflict of typically military nature: action calls for reaction, and thus until the weakest is worn out. To come back to it and try to find in it something more, it is necessary that the concerned usurper represents the interests of the absolute enemy (the USA, pressure groups, or “Jewish finance”: we’ll come back to that). What’s more, it is simply stupid to contest — as the ridiculous [Roger] Garaudy does, following the ultra-orthodox Jews, in *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel* — the character of nation of Judaism, arguing that it is merely a religion: this only consists in opposing the idea to history, or to get lost in useless investigations that look back into the past since the dawn of time in order to affirm the authenticity, true or presumed, of one or other nationality. Similarly, to reproach to Israel — as, conversely, the Marxist professor Bertell Ollman does in his *Letter of Resignation from the Jewish People* — to have betrayed the universalist tradition of the Judaism of the diaspora, leads to make of this Judaism an essence which would be at safe from historical becoming. It is enough for us to know that everybody lives and relives his own past *according to his own present*. The experience of the present continuously selects and reworks the existing historical material. No national identity is produced *ex nihilo*; but the internal coherence and the times of incubation required are less important than one may think. As far as a given “feeling of national belonging” — for reasons we could consider as more or less good — appears in history and succeeds in consolidating itself, it becomes effective in reality. No nation is “legitimate” in itself, its legitimacy simply depends on its ability to unite, maintain and transform itself in history without disappearing. Exactly the way it happens for certain social movements that always have minority origins and a completely unpredictable future trajectory. The PKK — official embodiment of the Kurdish nationalist movement, previously “Stalinist” and today advocating a “democratic confederalism” — was constituted at the moment of its creation in the beginning of the seventies by a handful of students living in Ankara. To insist on the exceptional character of the denominational nature of the Israeli state, then, it is merely taking at face value what the Likud likes to tell about Israel.

To really be able to bring that question into focus, it is necessary first to leave a static vision of history, in which everyone always remains who and where he is. Man, at least in the origins, is a nomad, and the most banal demonstration of that he has spread throughout the whole earth, from Siberia to Easter Island; he was able to live and settle everywhere, as well in the Arctic (Inuit) as in the desert (Tuareg). The capitalist mode of production has integrated and reproduced in its specific way this propensity to displacement, mitigated by the different (but essentially agrarian) modes of production that succeeded to the “Neolithic revolution”: If we ideally take as starting point the 1848 revolutions, one estimates that the hundred years that followed have seen the unwilling displacement of 30 millions of people throughout all Europe. Just some examples: one

million Greeks of Anatolia returned to Greece to escape the Turkish power in 1919-1923; exchange of Turkish-Bulgarian (1913) and Greek-Bulgarian populations (1919); one million people in flight from Russia after the 1917 revolution; decree for the expulsion of the German people of the Sudetes (three million refugees) and of the Hungarian national in Czechoslovakia in 1945. The national state revealed itself as the most adequate administrative entity for the production and circulation of commodities. The most developed capitalist areas have imposed the state form to those, less developed, that almost or completely ignored it. If the frontiers of the present capitalist superpowers (the USA and Europe) can be considered as stable and definitive, it is impossible to say the same for the rest of the world, and the superpowers themselves may however sometimes provide some exceptions. Maybe the creation of new frontiers, of new nationalities, or the displacement / resettlement of entire populations are a new thing in history or belong to an henceforth bygone period? In that case, we should probably conclude that the breakup of Yugoslavia or the separation of Slovakia and the Czech Republic — just to speak of recent enough examples — never occurred. Let us think to the recent events in Ukraine as well.

As long as capital exists, the dynamic of the accumulation will keep on fragmenting some areas in order to unify others. What one agrees to call “national questions” does not belong to a particular historical phase of the capitalist mode of production: the capitalist mode of production changed just the appreciation that we can give on it. As regards the “dominated nations,” in the 20s, the third international advocated the subordination of the communists to the bourgeois national organisations. The idea was that in these areas — given the weakness of the capitalist development, the proletariat was too weak, and one had first of all to guarantee the national frame allowing his development, in quantitative terms also; the tendency of Gorter vigorously criticised this subordination, that already had led to disastrous results in Turkey (1919-1921: elimination of the communists by the Kemalists), as happened later in China (1925-1927: slaughter of the communists by the Kuomintang). Generally even in other places the results were in any case not very different from those in the case of Turkey and China. But more fundamentally, we must ask if the controversy between “Leninist alliance” and “autonomous action by the proletariat” is still relevant. In the context of the capitalist mode of production, a situation *pure* enough to exclude a priori that certain national or semi-national questions remain “unsolved” will *never* be reached (it is today the case for the Kanaks in New Caledonia, for the Indians in Mexico, etc....); very simply, either communist revolution will answer the question *on its own bases*, unifying mankind, destroying states and frontiers, eliminating every territorial segregation, or else the counter-revolution will do it in its own way, succeeding to satisfy the national claims, or organising the violent dislocation or extermination of the concerned population.

There is no particular theory of revolution any more, no stages to get across, no specific contradictions, no national conditions of the revolution. This absolutely does not mean uniformity, but all the differentiations are no more posited in a diachronic way, rather have become synchronic elements of a global system of the class struggle. The problem does not exist in terms of chronology any more. One must put an end to any exotic understanding of the class struggles in the “peripheries.” Exoticism, Samir Amin, autarky, Guevara and the *focos* preparing “state capitalism,” Lenin and the development of capital under proletarian direction, Vera Zasulich and the communal jump over the horrors of capitalism: all that is over. (Théo Cosme, *De la politique en Iran*, Senonevero, Marseille 2010, p. 119).

But Israel, one will say, has nothing to do with all that, because it is the result of a colonisation. This is not entirely correct. Israel is the product of a *national liberation movement*, that contained, because of the impossibility of establishing itself in its own geographic area — the historical Pale of Settlement — an element of ambiguity, and this element has finally prevailed:

The national content of emancipation was an outcome both of the nature of the tsarist state — a multinational, authoritarian, and anti-Semitic empire — and of the Jewish communities: a pariah condition characterised by segregation, discrimination, persecutions, and pogroms; territorial concentration in ghettos and in the shtetl; cultural and linguistic unity (Yiddish).

Of course, many Marxist Jewish intellectuals (unlike the Bund and socialist Zionists) rejected any and all national or Jewish cultural references. One need only recall Trotsky’s famous response to questioning by the Bundist Medem at the 1903 Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party: “I assume that you consider yourself either a Russian or a Jew?” “No,” replied Trotsky, “you are wrong. I am nothing but a Social Democrat.” In any event, whether Jewish identity was accepted or rejected, it was — at least after the terrible pogroms of 1881 — a national/cultural and not merely a religious identity. Unlike in Germany, there were very few Jews in the tsarist empire who thought of themselves merely as “Russian citizens of Jewish denomination.” (Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia*).

Maybe is it the first and only example of a movement inspired by a perspective of “emancipation” that gave rise to a system of oppression and exploitation? If it is that which scandalises, looking at the outcome of the revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then it would be better to satisfy with the existing order, like Bernard-Henri Lévy and other supporters of the anti-totalitarian ideology. Could it have been different?



The question in itself is pointless, but the answer would probably be negative. The Second World War left us with a legacy that is difficult to re-imagine. The settlement of the Jews in Palestine, already under way but of limited range before 1939-1945, experienced an incredible impulse after the war, and out of this process Israel was born. Why did they not instead scatter throughout the world? First for the same reason for which at all levels — from jail to city — still today, individuals gather in national or linguistic communities. The counter-revolution in Russia, after the revolution of 1917, had left unsolved the Yiddish national question (see, among others, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the partitioning of Poland), and the Nazi persecution activated it de facto for the integrated Jews of Central Europe. Considering the range of possibilities offered then to the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, it is obvious that there was not much choice as regards their destination: for the *displaced people* of Jewish origin, Palestine was — if not the only possible destination — by far the most secure. Did they have the “right” to settle there? No more no less than any “migrant” of nowadays (to whom the slogan: “Master in one’s own country!” is opposed). If one wants to wonder about the reason why this massive settlement took the characters of exclusion and land seizing, the answer will be only tautological: as far as the settlement accelerated the development of the specifically capitalist social relations in the concerned area, precisely these social relations have shaped the relations between the two populations. The Palestinians have not been the only ones to suffer the consequences: the normal stratification of the classes of a capitalist state took form by the integration of the non-European Jews who gradually benefited from the Law of Return [Israeli legislation, enacted 5 July 1950, that gives the right to live in Israel and to gain citizenship to Jews, and since 1970 to non-Jews with a Jewish grandparent, and their spouses]: the Jews from North Africa and Middle East; the Teimanim from Yemen or Oman; the 90,000 Beta Israel or Falasha from Ethiopia who came to Israel between 1984 and 1991, etc...., with the relative racist tensions one can imagine, after all not different — in their nature — from those that struck the *terroni* of Italy in the sixties or the migrant workers in China nowadays.

What would have been the fate of the Palestinian population without the Jewish settlement? Perhaps a less terrible future than the one it is subjected to in the present, but certainly not a happy one: a development of the “underdevelopment,” probably through to the extractive industry, as it was the case in the period of the “Trente glorieuses” (1945-1975) [post-World War II economic expansion, also known as the postwar economic boom, the long boom, or the Golden Age of Capitalism, translator’s note], for this part of the third world able to provide raw materials at low prices to the West; or else the national Pan-Arab way to socialism of Nasser & co., with the approval of USSR. But the capitalist mode of production is a *totality*, a system of communicating

vessels: good fortune for one is misfortune for the other, the plethora of capital means misery for the proletariat, and each “inclusion” produces new “exclusions.” This is the very reason for the possibility of reformism in a *national* framework, and its impossibility at a *global* scale; this is the basis of a revolutionary position that would not be of purely moral nature. This does not amount to a kind of indifferentism towards the most extreme horrors of capitalism (war, ethnic cleansing, etc...), but it allows to acquire the capacity to grasp their connections with the less violent aspects (selling and buying of the workforce, the commodity-form of the product), living behind the vision of the “good guys” against the “bad guys.”

The population of the Pale of Settlement was estimated to eleven million people before the Nazi persecutions. Beyond the number of deportees and the dead, one has to represent himself the proportions of the phenomenon. It is a verified historical fact that at the end of the Second World War the refugees from Western Europe were generally repatriated at the end of 1945, for those from Eastern Europe this was much more intricate or in fact not realised. This contributed to increase the appeal towards the settlement in Palestine. The displacement of this mass of people, in any case, whatever was their destination, took place in a world already “globalised” and strongly structured. It is well known that the Nazis (with the approval of Hitler in 1938) had considered the idea of transferring the European Jews to Madagascar, and that the Zionist movement had long debated over the English project of creation of a “Jewish national home” in Uganda. But whatever destination was aimed, Palestine, Madagascar or Uganda, the consequences would obviously not have been painless, as none of these three areas was a “land without people.” Thus, like — on a much reduced scale — the displacement of the people of the South Tyrol to Franche-Comté in eastern France, only considered but never realised, it would not have occurred without tensions. Like it or not, the famous “Jewish question” is in a very ordinary way another episode of the “national questions,” although in Western Europe the assimilation was undoubtedly more widespread. The fact that the state of Israel was created in historical Palestine and not in the Pale of Settlement, will have depended on the existing conditions at the end of the Second World War.

This war crowned, with a terrorism still more atrocious than the one during the First World War, the triumphant counter-revolution, making more impossible than ever to give to the Yiddish national question the solution of simple cultural and/or administrative autonomy, as it had been conceived for instance by the Bund (General Union of the Yiddish workers of Lithuania, Poland and Russia). In the general climate of *Union Sacrée* [the “sacred union” of France and Britain, 1914-1918] dominated by the national fronts. it is absurd to expect from the “Israelis” a behaviour different from the one which was prevailing at the time. Only in Italy, from 1943 on, was there a burst of class struggle,

quickly dissolved in the resistance patriotic front and in the normalisation before Marshall Plan. Without this exodus of people on the breadline (and without the structure of the kibbutz that allowed to take them massively in) the construction of Israeli state would have been impossible. It is not difficult to understand that the working class, apart from revolutionary periods, is a class not less conservative as the others. The proletariat cannot exist in the limbo, cannot entrench themselves behind a *cordon sanitaire*: when counter-revolution prevails, the proletarian take part to it. The Israeli proletarian are not and could not be an exception. Is that a good reason for setting aside the analysis in terms of class or for “repudiating” these proletarians? In what can we have faith then? In “people of good will”? In “free individuality”? Best of luck, then, for the future!

But then — here we are coming to the most painful point — why do some people expect *from them, only from them*, something different? If today a state was created for the Romanis in Transnistria or elsewhere, even to the detriment of the local population, who would dare to say that the Romanis (and afterwards their children, and their children’s children...) settled there are all assholes? The example could seem unlikely, but it cannot be excluded from the field of the possibilities because, as we already have seen — the displacement of entire populations towards territories that were foreign to them as regards culture and tradition is not a new fact in history: this is a reason why traditions and cultures are relentlessly done and undone. Moreover the present condition of the Romanis who most recently immigrated into Western Europe may to some extent give an idea of the miserable condition of the Yiddish proletariat in Eastern Europe between the two world wars: the condition of the lowest of the low.

In a letter to Ehrenfreund [March 21, 1890], Engels wrote:

Additionally, the anti-Semite presents the facts in an entirely false light. He doesn’t even know the Jews he decries, otherwise he would be aware that, thanks to anti-Semitism in eastern Europe, and to the Spanish Inquisition in Turkey, there are here in England and in America thousands upon thousands of *Jewish proletarians*; and it is precisely these Jewish workers who are the worst exploited and the most poverty-stricken. In England during the past twelve months we have had *three* strikes by Jewish workers. Are we then expected to engage in anti-Semitism in our struggle against capital?

If this is really about “the lowest of the low,” with what courage can one moralise about the behaviour of these people? Why does one expect from the Jewish survivors of the extermination to behave differently from the thousands of unfortunate English, Irish, or Dutch reduced to famine who emigrated to the USA and that contributed, actively or passively, in the expulsion of the American natives, forcing them to live in increasingly reduced strips of land, right to the famous “Indian reservation”? (We cannot escape here the analogy with Palestine). Why is something different expected from a population

reduced to the extreme of persecution, from the ghetto to the extermination (and we must not forget the deeds of the Warsaw insurrection<sup>1</sup>)? *Maybe because they are Jews.* Let us then call things by their name: anti-Judaism.

Some people justify the Hamas, putting forward the destitution and despair of the Palestinians; but they don't grant the same "extenuating circumstances" to the Jews settled in Palestine after 1945. As regards the national question, the discourse is the same: Palestinian question YES, Yiddish question NO. It is a logic of double standards, opposed to one another in a mirror-like way, the dominant position considering that a Jewish dead has more value than a Palestinian dead. As for us, we recognise as such "the lowest in the low" of *yesterday* and those of *today* as well. We won't moralise either about the rocket attacks, the kidnappings or the killing of colonists, neither about the suicide attacks by Al Quds and other similar groups. But we cannot forget that all these things exist; and that a rebalancing in the number of the dead — as the buffoon [Gianni] Vattimo<sup>2</sup> claims — is unlikely to change the lot of the Palestinians, and in fact mainly aims at obtaining the creation of a Palestinian mini-state. The nature of this kind of counter-violence consists in articulating the continuous interchange of clashes, truces, and negotiations, at times prevented and at times allowed by this counter-violence: its only possible result concerns its effective aim: the creation of a Palestinian state. This remote eventuality will at best preserve human lives, no more no less. But if the question is to save lives, what is the difference with Darfur, South-Sudan, Rwanda, and other "humanitarian emergencies"? The world is a big place. Everywhere, each day, people live, people die in a more or less atrocious way. At all times — and with different modalities depending on the historical mode of production: raid, war of conquest, colonialism, imperialism — human groups have confronted and killed each other for reasons that are in general linked, directly or indirectly, to appropriation or control of the goods and resources. The question is not to "turn this fact into a commonplace," but to avoid making absolute (placing it outside history) our horror in front of this reality, that — like any other moral fact — is an historical product and on the other hand is inseparable from the global expansion of the capitalist mode of production. The fact to take into account as something concerning us the lot of those who live thousands of kilometres from us (with the simple material possibility to be informed upon it) is due to that expansion. For the hunter-gatherer of the Paleolithic era, the notion of "mankind" only referred to the members of his group, and the homicide was the leading cause of death. The Bedouins of the Arabian peninsula and the Guayaki tribes of South America did not know the state but their whole existence was oriented to making war (see Pierre Clastres, *Archeology of Violence*, 1977).

As for the hegemony of Hamas and jihadism in general, we know all too well how religion can be the “sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions” (Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction*). This general affirmation however is valid in Palestine or in Italy, as anywhere else. In Near and Middle East, like in most Arab countries of the Mediterranean area, Islamism is not an ideology fallen from the sky to pervert the poor proletariat as “noble savage”; in all its variants and shades, this ideology is today the *political* expression — not definitive but nevertheless dominant — of the class struggle in this area, as soon as it goes beyond mere economic demands. If this appears as a “justification,” then the same is true for any attempt to make reality intelligible. But the problems faced by anti-Zionists are different. They know it is difficult to promote “solidarity with Palestinian resistance,” at least in Western countries, if “Palestinian resistance” concretely means Hamas and others similar organisations. So they are forced to continually brandish the memory of the *previous* political formation — namely, Arab nationalism. They mythicise it, and search for its residues, in order to make the present one (which is in fact the only one that really counts) more “presentable.” Yet one need only see the meagre result of 4.2% for the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] at the 2006 legislative elections to realise how hopeless this is.

This is a problem for politicians; and let us even say that moreover we do not have to be much nostalgic about it. In class struggle, exoticisms never produced anything good: for Andreas Baader for instance, the contradiction in the “imperialist metropole” was under the barrel of his gun. So the Turkish worker who got fleeced at Volkswagen but did not rebel “enough” was an “objective ally of imperialism,” whereas the doctor and great landowner (and leader of the PFLP as well) George Habash represented the vanguard of world revolution. Certainly they can bring up the famous “power relationship,” the violence of the repression, but this way they forbid themselves to get any *social* understanding of the past defeats. If defeat is imputed to military, technical, economic or communication superiority of the enemy, there can be no end to it, and identify the core of the problem with this superiority can only lead to militarism or to give up. Moreover one needs to dissipate this idyllic conception of class struggle which presupposes that there is only one front line: the global decomposition of the whole social capital into a multiplicity of particular capitals and of the proletariat into its fractions, means that the front lines are unlimited, that there is class struggle inside class struggle, and that the conflict inside proletariat are really something else than an occasional aberration.

Under the spur of the general restructuring of class relations from the seventies onwards, during the last forty years, capital development has made a clean sweep, and little or nothing was left from that story. After Second World War, the movement of support for the Third World was legitimated, among others, by the function of supplier of cheap raw

materials of this part of the world; but through the two “oil crises” in 1973-1974 and 1978-1980, the restructuration completely destabilised the previous situation: the price of crude increased in an unprecedented manner, and in Europe one began to speak of nuclear power stations. Therefore, more fundamentally, came successively the intoxication by oil rent in Middle East (that improved Hamas’ cash flow through intervention of Saudi Arabia), the end of Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamism. At the same time, even the economical and social structure of Israeli state completely changed. “Zionism,” strictly speaking, was the protection and safeguarding of “Jewish labor,” either for Israeli capital, against international competition, or for the working class against the Palestinian proletarians: it was in short a special case of the post-1945 “Fordist compromise,” of rooting in a given national state of a fraction of capital. Zionism implied that a “left-wing” character be given to state and civil society. This is what Likud gradually liquidated, and the radical resizing of the role of the kibbutz demonstrates that. Conversely, out of a logical deduction, one understands that the slow erosion of the Palestinian area goes hand in hand with a major use of the Arab workforce. Yet the definition of Israel as “Zionist state” resists, and even in this semantic quid-pro-quo manifests itself the tragic nature of the present situation. To let out words like “Zionist” or “lobby,” etc., only serves — consciously or not — to surround the existence of Israel with a halo of intrigues, mystery, conspiracy, and exceptional character, of which it is not difficult to catch the subliminal message: Israelis, *i.e. the Jews*, are not *like others*. While the only secret in this whole story is the open secret of capital: *competition*, which opposes “those who are at the top” as well as “those who are at the bottom.” What difference between the terrorist actions of the future Mossad immediately after World War II (the bomb attack at the British embassy in Rome in 1946, and many others) and the action of Black September in Monaco (1972), the hijacking of the Achille Lauro (1985), the bloody attacks in the airports of Fiumicino and Vienna (1985)? States are often the most terrorist as they still are in the phase of establishing themselves as such. As for the blessed “solidarity with the Palestinian people” — what is this, concretely? Its supporters, in most cases, limit themselves to a conceited and inoperative verbalism, considering that almost all the historical “left-wing” financial supports of the “Palestinian resistance” ended in disaster, from the USSR (main financial backer of the PFLP) to Saddam Hussein. What remains nowadays is only the voluntary work inside Occupied Territories or at a distance from them; a voluntary work that is certainly worthy of being respected, but the historical perspective and the recognition of the real significance of the possible “solidarity” at present show the unbridgeable distance existing between the heyday of the Arab nationalism and the present situation. When “solidarity” amounts to a purely verbal activity, it is legitimate to wonder in what the fact *to claim* “solidarity” with the Palestinians changes reality. Solidarity has become a question of self-

consciousness, a broad-minded attitude that entirely resolves itself to what the individual believes in his heart of hearts. We will at best have a few slogans in a demonstration, perhaps a leaflet, hurl two insults at a cop... and then everybody goes home. Splendors and miseries of militancy. In the meantime, however, war — conventional or asymmetrical — is waged with weapons, and the good question about them is: where do they come from? Who pays for them? At one time Katyusha rockets came with the “East wind.” Nowadays one must thank Syria and Iran for the Qassam. There was a time when one could believe Palestinian revolution would set on fire the Third World and, from there, the whole world. In fact, the lot of the Palestinians was decided somewhere else, and they served as cannon fodder within the framework of the balance of power of Cold War. Reality and myth of the “international solidarity.” With the end of the Eastern Bloc, revolution in Middle East came off the stage, it is now out of question to make a revolution but, at best, to avoid a slaughter. The most extremist (and stupid) expect something from Iran, this questionable “bulwark of anti-imperialism” (!); that is a bit like hoping that “Baffone will come.”<sup>3</sup> But we know that Baffone is dead without even packing his bags.

It is difficult nowadays to imagine any real, long-lasting “peace” in historical Palestine. It could become reality one day, it will always be more difficult to imagine that it happens in the world of capital. Anti-Zionists may like it or not, this peace will result neither from any “anti-imperialist front” (with the support of Iran) nor from a sort of magical chemistry that Palestinians, in the extremes conditions they live, would be able to invent; and this peace will never exist without an active involvement on its side of an important part of Israeli population, and mainly of its working class. Easy to answer this is like expecting a miracle. But — as we have seen — *history lasts a long time...* and we can only appreciate the social consequences of the crisis (and its future aggravation) and its future effects on the Israeli economy in the interim. Miracle or no, to describe “the Israelis” as monsters, and hold all of them equally responsible for what happens in the Gaza Strip and Occupied Territories — from which point of view of a moral superiority is it possible? No one knows. Who knows how these lion-hearted people would behave if they were born in Israel! — Frankly, I do not see the utility of this, except to exacerbate, if that is still possible, the already merely national or ethnic character of the conflict. Too much racketeering had the possibility to flourish at the expense of the poor crucified Palestinians — even just to sell some more keffiyehs. What is to be done then? Throw out pompous calls to revolution, claim “socialism or barbarism,” or “only one solution, revolution”? The minimum, I don’t even dare say of solidarity, but of respect for the Palestinian proletarians, *lowest of the low*, requires us first to be lucid and disillusioned about the present situation, not to consider them neither as idiots that are done get fooled by the Hamas nor as saints entrusted with the *proletarian Mandate of Heaven*.

We try to blow up, when the opportunity exists, through actions, speeches, writings, the anti-Zionist construction, the same way we try to blow up the anti-globalization movement (defence of national capital against globalised capital, or of productive capital against financial capital), pacifism (proclaiming capitalist peace against war), and all the views of an alternative management of capital. These views belong to the daily course of class struggle, and at the same time cannot *in any case* be simply put on the right track or *radicalised* (it would mean, in the present case, a “class-based” or “revolutionary” anti-Zionism, which is merely a contradiction in terms). Without falling back into the short-sighted illusion that one could put forward what in the jargon of the careerist politicians is called a *credible alternative*. Communism is not the product of a choice, it is an historical movement. It is with this approach that I have tried to face the question in these pages. Nevertheless henceforth — by dint of reasoning with bourgeois categories like “law,” “justice,” and “the people” — it is not only difficult to imagine a solution, but it has become almost impossible to talk sense on this subject.

(As an appendix to these considerations, I add a short reflection by B.L., going back to the 2009 bombing. It is outdated, but valid nonetheless.)

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# Silence on Gaza

B.L. (pseudonym)  
October 1, 2009

We have spoken a lot about Obama's election, we have spoken still more about the riots in Greece, but we don't say a word about the war in Gaza. Why?

Is it because it doesn't concern us? Because it is not interesting at all "from the point of view of revolution"? This may be said but I think we really feel that it is not true, that the importance of this return of the war in Palestine bothers us, or perhaps worse causes us anxiety. This new war causes us anxiety because the proletarians of Gaza are slaughtered and have no possibility to escape from the trap in which they are caught. They can but "choose" to die under the Israeli bombs or through fighting on Hamas' side. They even cannot abandon the battle, they are locked up in a firing range, they cannot revolt against their own side that keeps them as hostage. It is the absolute tragedy, there nothing to hope for. Obama lets Bush bear the responsibility of managing the problem. Only our national clown, Sarkozy, seizes the opportunity to make his ridiculous performance

As for us, we are terrified by this horror because we see in it something that could spread throughout the world thanks to the catastrophic economic crisis (still to come), the different capitalist splinter groups, state-controlled or not, really could pounce upon each other without any communist outcome opening up.

Pay attention, this is no analysis, all I think drives me to say that this catastrophe is impossible, that it negates the class contradiction, that Gaza is strictly not representative of the situation in the rest of the world; yet in its distinctiveness as a ghetto for supernumerary proletarians, Gaza is paradigmatic of the *en abyme*<sup>4</sup> restructuring of capital as well, and this is the reason why, basically, we do not dare to think of it, we avert our eyes, because we would see in it an inconceivable future.

[Thanks to J. for the translation and his notes]

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Jewish ghetto insurrection of April-May 1943, not to be mistaken with the “Warsaw commune” of August-October 1944, after the ghettoized Jews had already been slaughtered or deported.

<sup>2</sup> Italian philosopher and politician: on July 22, 2014, in response to the IDF military operation in Gaza against Hamas attacks on Israel, he said he would personally like to “shoot those bastard Zionists” and thinks Europeans should raise money “to buy Hamas some more rockets.”

<sup>3</sup> *Addivenni Baffone*: the man with a mustache must come. Popular expression used immediately after the Second World War in reference to Stalin and the possibility of the coming to power of communists in Italy.

<sup>4</sup> On the notion of *mise en abyme* in capital restructuring, see *Théorie Communiste*, issue 22, p. 86.



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