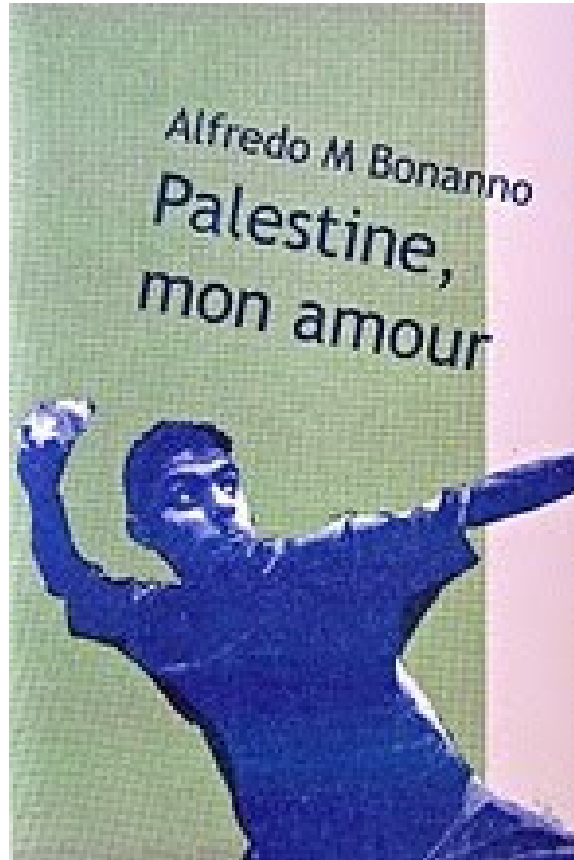


Palestine, mon amour

Alfredo M. Bonanno



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Introduction

No one can understand what is happening in the land of Palestine, not even those who have followed the sanguinary vicissitudes of the peoples who have lived down there for so long. They face each other with hatred and suspicion, not just men and women, children and old people, but the very dust of the roads and the mud that covers them on rainy days, the asphyxiating heat and the stench of the sultriness.

The 'official' terms of the controversy are well known. The Israelis chased the Palestinians off their land, but this happened so long ago that some of the people born in huts in the camps are now fifty years old. Ridiculous arguments between States have resulted in pieces of land being returned to the people who were driven away, but it is impossible to live in them. In Israel if you don't work you go hungry. The colons of the second Zionist wave got rich through the exploitation of a cheap Palestinian work force and the free use of fields in territories that should now constitute the new State of Palestine. But not only does all that fail to grasp the essence of the problem, it does not even begin to describe it. Perhaps it made sense at the time of the first popular insurrection of the people of the 'territories', that of the stones. Now things are moving towards an increasingly ferocious 'Lebanisation'.

Neither party wants to retreat as this would lead to internal conflict, a destructive civil war that would almost certainly give the adversary victory on a military level.

And so they continue to attack each other in a never-ending cycle. Each side uses the weapons they have at their disposal: the Palestinians blow themselves up with their own bombs; the Israelis bomb houses in the territories from planes. There are the pacification maps, the internal agreements, the UN guarantees and Bush's empty 'sorrow'.

The problem is developing at its own pace, one that can only be grasped by someone who has familiarity with such situations, and it is becoming chronic. Hatred becomes acute when one lives in conditions such as those of the Palestinians, with prospects like theirs, i.e., none at all. There is no hope for their children or for the future of the place where they were born. And it is not true that this hatred, so ferocious and incomprehensible to us, is nourished by integralist extremism. How is it that most of the young people who blow themselves up with their own bombs have completed their studies, have a degree or diploma – sometimes obtained abroad – are family people, have children. What they don't have is hope. They realize that there is nothing for them but a prospect of hatred of an enemy that imprisons, bombs and tortures. On the other side everyone lives in fear of being blown up as they go to work, dance in a disco, lie asleep in their beds. Here again, blind hatred that sees no alternative is pushing people to demand that the government use more force in the repression. Even the most illuminated of the Israeli labour party formed in Mapai in 1968, (one of the Zionist forces to support the first settlements) have kept quiet for fear of losing their electoral base. Many see the Likud (right wing party which means literally 'consolidation') as the only force capable of leading the country against the Palestinians.

To speak of peace under such conditions is just another way to wriggle out of things with clean hands and a dirty conscience.

Organised massacres of Palestinians such as those by the Christian-Maronites at Sabra and Chatila in September 1982, or (Black) September 1970 organised by King Hussein of Jordan which lasted until April 1971 resulting in 4,600 dead and 10,000 wounded, are still possible. However, if carried out by Israel or one of its armed intermediaries they would lead to a complete destabilisation of the area. As I write, Israel has attacked some presumed Palestinian posting in Syria; the present time is one of the worst.

There is no prospect of peace in sight. The ideal solution, at least as far as all those who have the freedom of peoples at heart can see, would be generalised insurrection. In other words, an intifada starting from the Israeli people that is capable of destroying the institutions that govern them and of proposing peace based on collaboration and mutual respect to the Palestinian people directly, without intermediaries. But for the time being this perspective is only a dream. We must prepare for the worst.

Alfredo M. Bonanno

Still now, with no title at all

There is one thing about the struggle of the Palestinian people that has touched and fascinated all those who have approached it: on the other side of the barricade are the Jews, the persecuted of all times.

There is nothing strange about this, the persecuted have often become persecutors. Just think of what happened to the early Christians in the space of three centuries after they gained power and systematically began to repress all dissonant voices. There have been many such cases of about turns throughout history. Today's prisons are built on the temples of the past. No political force in recent times has been able to resist throwing itself into ruthless repression as soon as it reached power, no matter how traveled its history. But the voice of reason is not enough for us to gain an understanding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Jews have always been at the centre of attention and given rise to either suspicion or sympathy, usually the former. Thrown out from wherever they happened to be as a consequence of insinuation and dreadful accusations, they always gained the sympathy of anyone with any feelings — anyone, that is, who is against pogroms, mass murder, the massacre of innocents and summary judgements based on impressions and hearsay. The mental rigidity of the Jews, their vision of life based on religious righteousness that sees the rest of the world as impure or sinful, has often put such sympathies to the test. But the enormity of the historical debt owed them, which in the second world war grew to the point of becoming a methodical procedure that surpassed anything that had ever been ever dreamed of till then, revived these sympathies and constituted a new force of international cohesion capable of supporting the case for Jewish settlements in Palestine.

Israel became a focus of international support for many reasons. The massacre in the Nazi concentration camps, the socialist and libertarian character of the early settlements, the theories of the first kibbutzim based on libertarian communism, the original peaceful cohabitation with the Arabs in response to the latter's traditional hospitality. Then interests emerged, particularly at the end of the Second World War. They were based on the world's division into two opposing blocks, with American interests on one side and Soviet ones on the other. It was a question of economic interest in a geographical area which was rich in oil fields, thereby attracting the attention of the great imperialist States.

The Israelis accepted their role as gendarme of the western project of world dominion, and began keeping an eye on the movements of the surrounding Arab States. The latter often fought each other about the management of the immense revenue from oil and became players on the international chessboard, at times supporting, at others contrasting, the opposition of the great States. It was the Zionist movement along with the great Jewish-American and international, but mainly American, lobbies that pushed the Jewish people along this road in the land of Israel. They lead to an extremism hitherto unequalled in the whole of political-religious history. The lobbies, which were capable of conditioning American politics, particularly during the long years of Republican power, forced the United States to push the small but fierce Israel into the role of policeman of the Middle East.

All this rekindled anti-Semitism at world level, leading to an indigestible collection of anti-Jewish theories. In this concentrate of stupidity we find such historical revisionism as the theory that the holocaust never existed, or that of Arab nationalists are incapable of considering Israeli people as possible brothers and pacific cohabitants of the same territory. For their part, the latter have survived a thousand years of persecution and massacres yet have not benefited from past experience. They have become hostages in the hands of a theocratic State, one of the worst kinds of organisation to emerge from the mind of man. Fear of being cast into the sea to take up the path of exile yet again has thrown them into the arms of internal and external meddlers: Zionist schemes at local and international level, and the strategies of US world dominion.

An evil crescendo has been set in motion that nothing other than a revolutionary process will be able to halt. No discussion is possible and anyone who has experienced the concrete and theoretical reality of the Jews, even for short spells, can confirm this. No theoretical proposal will ever be able to undo the mechanism of encirclement and fear. That situation has remained unchanged, even since the fall of the Berlin wall and the thaw that came about after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact at the end of the twentieth century. Arab nationalist claims in general and those of the Palestinians in particular cause too much fear, and there is no lack of those who support the facile but treacherous idea of 'let's throw them all into the sea' on both sides.

The experience of the Palestinian State, or of the 'Palestinian authorities' as some prefer to refer to it, also demonstrates this impossibility. They failed to propose cohabitation based on reciprocal respect along the lines of the libertarian communes, a sentiment that has not completely disappeared in a certain Israeli left. This corresponds in a slightly different way to the tradition of hospitality and freedom of the Arab peoples — in the first place the Palestinians. Instead they have taken the road mapped out by the politicians of the PLO, in particular Arafat, true killer of the Palestinian people's real desire for freedom and artificer of a phantom State fit only to guarantee the personal power of a little man afflicted with delusions of grandeur.

The dice has been thrown, based on the fear that has intensified in the Israeli field. An extension of the civil war in course right to the centres of Israeli power could push things beyond the present level of conflict. Each side is afraid of the other. The Israelis fear Palestinian demands that would threaten their privileges (cheap labour, houses expropriated from Arabs who were forced to leave, State benefits, etc.). The Palestinians fear the Israelis who want to get rid of them, and want to throw them off their land (and in large part already have done), forcing them into exile in the concentration camps of the Lebanon and Jordan. Fear is exacerbating the conditions of the conflict. Palestinian suicide bombers packed with dynamite blow themselves up in Israeli markets, buses and schools. The exalted Israeli religious Right Wing in power have shown that the weapons with which they intend to face 'cohabitation' with the Arab world — exploitation, control, repression, — are just as bad.

It is impossible to turn the clock back. Too many dead in each family, in each family group, in every sector of social life. Too much blood, too much pain. All that cannot be eliminated with a handshake, or some Camp David. In spite of the existence of the Israeli Left, yesterday in power, today in opposition, the most emarginated class of Israelis, the Sephardi (Jews originally from Africa therefore with a darker skin colour but still of Jewish religion), are taking refuge in extreme Right Wing positions rather than favouring talks and agreements based on equal rights with the Palestinians. They are afraid they will lose the right to stay in Israel and be forced back to the countries they came from, where most of them would meet certain death. So it is not difficult to understand why the most extreme members of the Jewish religious organisations are of Sephardic origin and constitute the most ferocious henchmen of the army and police employed in the repression.

On the other hand, there are the new Palestinian police — the politicians of the PLO. These ill-omened offshoots of the new State have taken up positions in the government of a people tormented by forty years of exile and persecution, and are putting power in all its forms into effect. They torture, kill, judge and sentence their own people without hesitation. Comrades in struggle who participated in extremely risky actions up until a few years ago have become judges, prison guards, policemen, army commanders, bodyguards, secret services agents. In the territories liberated by concession of the Israeli government, the PLO has become the repressive force of a State that has not yet reached the maximum of its governing capacity, but which has already embarked on the road of all States. The roles are reversing, power is renewing itself but the methods remain the same. But for the millions of Palestinians still in the camps, the permanent exiles who have had their land and identity taken from them, this way of doing things is called betrayal. Hence their fear of seeing themselves imprisoned in concentration camps for another half century, betrayed by their own representatives (something that is very painful, I can tell you), as well as being under the attack of Israeli raids and drawn into a political game which they do not understand and whose possible outcome they fail to see.

Once again the future is being conditioned by fear on both sides, pushing them blindly forward in a clash that is getting worse. The insurrection of the Palestinian people scares the politicians of Gaza and the West Bank. More than anything it scares Arafat, as he is unable to control it. It scares the Israeli government, but also scares the Israeli people, and this is the important thing. Seeing themselves under attack in their own homes where anyone likes to feel safe, they are appealing to their governors and asking for stricter controls and a more systematic repression. The circle is closing in.

It is not possible to make forecasts and anyway they could always be refuted by unforeseen events.

To abandon a people's dreams of freedom as they are being attacked and destroyed by a theocratic State leaves a bitter taste in one's mouth. Can so much blood, so much sacrifice, so many dead, all have been in vain? Were we fooled into choosing which side to support in our more or less radical intervention more or less in first person, once upon a time, and are we still deluding ourselves today? Can it be that the problem in finding the courage to attack the mechanism of the Israeli war (the Jews again, or a poor persecuted people subjected to the expansionist and military aims of a group of criminals in power?) is that it has been faced the wrong way? Have the efforts of the past only led to the shiny buttons of the new Palestinian police or the ferocious sneer of a Sephardi Jew screaming 'throw them all into the sea!?' I don't know.

This booklet does not attempt to give any answers. I thought it would be more interesting to simply take up the problem once again.

I have aired these doubts in my heart over the past ten years in which many of the following pieces were written, sometimes looking up at the night sky and singling out stars of times gone by one by one. Their light continues to shine unperturbed upon the woes of men.

Alfredo M. Bonanno
Catania, 17 December 1997

The crux of a problem that cannot be solved

Justifications of a theocratic State

When Great Britain began to address the Jews towards Palestine in 1917, you could already see in the declarations contained in a memorandum by Lord Balfour how the interests of international Zionism were far more important than the fate of '70,000 Arabs with all their desires and prejudices'.

That moment marked the beginning of the ongoing occupation of Palestinian land and the constitution of a 'national Jewish homeland', reconstructed on historic and religious traces. By 1935 the Jews were already 400,000 compared to 900,000 Arabs. When Israel as such was constituted in 1948, the clashes, persecution and mass exodus of the Arabs began. All Jewish immigrants were promised not only nationality, but also one of the houses abandoned by the Arabs in their flight.

The new repressive politic imposed by the State of Israel came to take the place of the preceding one of *havlagh* (limitation) and this needed moral justification, also in order to convince many of the Jews who still felt the Nazi repression on their skins.

This justification was found in the concept of *shoah* (catastrophe). Not only that suffered at the hands of the Nazis but also that which traverses the whole history of the Jewish people. In this way, the most recent catastrophe, the extermination by the Third Reich, was linked to the birth of the Israeli State: *shoah vetekumah* (catastrophe and rebirth).

Another myth was also put into circulation again, that of heroism (*vagevurah*) whose symbol was the insurrection of the Warsaw ghetto. It was used to justify rebellion against a new possible catastrophe (the return of the Arabs to their homes), and the concept of *shoah vegevurah*, catastrophe and heroism, emerged.

These elements came to be combined within the Zionist movement in many ways. Fed by extreme right wing propaganda and religious fanaticism, they resulted in the homicidal mixture that was to sweep away the egalitarian enthusiasm of a considerable part of the early immigrants in the land of Israel.

The Arab refusal

Once freed from the Turks, the Palestinian Arabs did not want to be dominated either by the English or the Zionist newcomers. But this refusal concerned (and still concerns) the management of their lives by a State, be it British or Israeli. They wanted to form a Palestinian community composed of the various Arab realities in the region. But they had nothing against the insertion of communities different to their own, as happened in 1920 with the Armenians who had escaped Turkish persecution. What they did not want, and do not want, was an Israeli (or British) State to dominate them.

For this reason the Palestinians were not opposed to the settlement of the Jews, at least not until the latter took the form of a Zionist political movement aimed at establishing the Israeli State. And the greater Arab opposition became, the more the Jewish State project became obvious as it emerged from behind the egalitarian theories of free federated agricultural communities.

Internal opposition

There has always been opposition within the Zionist movement, including a tendency that wants to constitute a kind of libertarian socialism in the Middle East, particularly in Israel, and this still exists today in some form or another. This tendency is against the constitution of the Jewish State. It originated from the idea of a possible collaboration between Arabs and Israelis, suggesting a clash that was more real than the abstract one based on nationalist opposition (and producer of such dire consequences). It was a question of making a distinction between the model of a collectivised, free society (at least in perspective) based on the productive structure of the kibbutzim, and the oppressive model of

society based on State capitalism of the Soviet kind. In fact a free, selfmanaged, anti-State producers' federation is still the only way that a solution to the problem in the Middle East could be reached.

Insufficient knowledge of the problem

Little is known about the Palestinian problem in Europe, or the Israeli one for that matter. Little is known of the many aspects of all the sectors involved in the political and social clash in course from Iran to the Lebanon, from Syria to Egypt; just as little is known about the two peoples facing each other in Palestine and Israel.

News about the Palestinians is always tainted with ideological prejudice. What we know has been supplied by official Palestinian representatives who talk and act like a State government, so are not very reliable.

The arrival of the Jews was undoubtedly a diplomatic and military operation, but it should also be pointed out that before the war the Palestinians were under Turkish domination so they were not totally against this arrival. At first it seemed it might help resist the domination led by the party of young Turks. Of course, that does not justify the behaviour of the Israeli State and its need for military expansion and violent occupation. But it does help us to understand the desire of the Palestinians to free themselves from all dominion, whatever that might be, yesterday the Turks, today Israel.

Today the common 'Semitic' element has been emphasized a great deal, but we must understand that this means little beyond the fact that these peoples are related linguistically. That is also negligible today, as modern Hebrew is pronounced with attenuated guttural sounds, therefore has become westernised. Those who pronounce it with the classical guttural forms (close to Arab), for example the Jews from the Yemen, are considered 'peasants' and backward.

Our knowledge of the Jews is also superficial. We know very little about Jewish culture in Italy. More attention is paid to Hebraism, but this is narrow and cultural more than anything, almost exclusively the work of great Jewish authors such as Heine, Roth, etc. or Freud, who have recently been rediscovered in this sense. The rest is hidden. The Hebrew religion has been repressed and locked up in sacred places. Now, as far as Jewishness is concerned, religion being inseparable from culture, it derives that the latter has also been repressed. We know very little about the relationship between religion and political power, the function of the rabbi, the core of Hebrew religion that claims so much space in the consciousness of the Israeli people. It is not by chance, for example, that the *Misnah* and the *Two Talmuds* have never been published in Italy.

The idea that we have of the Jew is therefore often that which has been provided by anti-Semitic iconography.

The equivocation of the occupation

One of the first and most successful Israeli military operations was called 'fait accompli' and, considering it in the light of what happened afterwards, it shows the mentality of the early pioneers clearly: men, women and children who had little to lose and much to gain. They felt (and some still feel), proud of the fact that they were willing to let themselves be massacred, yet, in reality they have now become the slaughterers. The horror of the passage from one side of this terrible barricade to the other doesn't even touch them.

It should be pointed out that the Israeli people have acquired a natural right to live undisturbed in their territory, no matter what their origins as a people or of the territory itself. This is one of the main points of the present analysis and, I think, of anyone struggling alongside the Palestinian people without for this becoming an enemy of the Israeli people. It is from the consolidation of such a natural right that we can consider an occupation that took place, en masse, around 1947, and differentiate it from that which took place later in the territories of West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli State propaganda tends to unite these two occupations, thus allowing the heirs of Zionism to adopt an attitude of founder fathers and continue to spread the equivocation of Eretz Israel. Present day Zionists, who had considered themselves relegated to nostalgia by history, now find themselves colonisers. What is the difference between the occupation of Jaffa and that of Hebron according to these people?

Apart from Zionist intentions (one part of official Zionism), to build the centralised State immediately it seems to me that there is a fundamental difference. The original occupations were determined more than anything by the arrival of the *Luftmensch*, wandering men forced during exile to do marginal work or take up badly paid professions, who had reached their 'promised land'. They could, in fact, have limited themselves to living alongside the Arabs, cultivating the land in communities and libertarian socialist collectives. In spite of all the problems related to the influx of a great

mass of foreigners, this was nevertheless an occupation of workers who, alone, dedicated themselves to working the land, then extended production to other sectors of human activity.

The occupation of Gaza the West Bank is quite different. The new occupiers do not have the excuse of their fathers' ideals, no matter how disputable that might have been. They were attracted by the prosaic seduction of large apartments at low prices only twenty minutes from Jerusalem or one hour from Tel Aviv, unlimited cheap labour (the inhabitants of the Arab ghettos) and the chance not to work or be *Chaluzim* (pioneers) any more but to become colonisers, exploiters of other people's work, that of poor people with no resources and no future.

The justification

All this is justified through recall to the situation of necessity. Ein Brera: we have no other choice! This ideology is now supported by the Israeli government. It is also shared by the left of that political formation, along with the ideology of pessimism, a fundamental aspect of Jewish culture which we do not understand because we are not familiar with it. It is a question of historical pessimism, of being convinced that a primordial curse weighs on the people of Israel, so no matter what they do they will suffer hostility on all sides and be left in complete isolation.

Of course, this ideology derives from the millenarian isolation of the Jews and the persecution they have suffered. But in reality it makes the politics of the Israeli State extremist and irresponsible, and makes the Israeli State itself even more dangerous than any other.

The economic situation

The State of Israel has sustained the highest military expenditure pro capita in the world for decades. This means a lot. Prices rise vertiginously every year, the balance of payments is billions of dollars in debt and in 1994 it was more than half the gross national product. The State budget nearly always equals the national product, when it does not go way beyond it. The State of Israel can only face its commitments thanks to foreign capital.

The inability to pay for its imports has made any autonomy of management impossible, hence the total dependence on the USA. Things were different before, but after the war of June 1967, and then again starting from that of October 1973, dependence increased. The inflation in 1977–1978 used up practically all the country's resources.

On the basis of its Zionist culture, Israel is obliged to give a homeland, as well as a basic standard of living (social security, medicine, etc.) to all those who go there as Jews. That carries a huge cost, quite out of proportion to its actual economic possibilities. Ideological motives dominate economic choices. The need to maintain the country's security is another reason why there are no strictly economic policies. Always on the brink of war, they cannot take economic measures that are too rigid and would reveal the class structure of Israeli society. This exists but must be kept under 'ideological control'. Military expenditure accounts for about 30 per cent of the whole of production, whereas for other industrialised countries this does not exceed 18 per cent in extreme cases. The army accounts for 15 per cent of the national product and 20 per cent of the work force. Every man between 22 and 55 years of age is obliged to do one month per year in the army reserve units, a practice which leads to incalculable damage in terms of industrial and productive costs.

As well as being helped by the United States, Israel receives funds from the Jewish Diaspora. It is estimated that these amount to about 500 million dollars a year. Then there are the payments of the international Israeli loan, which comes mainly from the United States.

Social differences

Although Israel is a theocratic State with very strong 'ideal' and ideological motivations, considerable internal divisions exist, based on class discrimination.

The main distinction is that between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. The former, also referred to as 'blacks', in comparison to the 'whites', are from Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Syria, the Yemen, etc. They suffer profound racial discrimination at the hands of the Ashkenazi Jews from the West, who feel strengthened above all by the fact that they suffered the catastrophe of the holocaust.

The Sephardis increased in number after being forced to flee their countries of origin following the exacerbation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of a culture that is profoundly different from the Western one, they were more inclined

towards the socialisation of production and the acceptance of communitarian values. But they arrived at a time when these values, which had existed for a long time in Israeli society, were rapidly being supplanted by the demands of militarisation and forced urbanisation. They were therefore implanted in the cities, underwent a rapid forced Westernisation and ended up also being discriminated against at a cultural and linguistic level.

They now constitute the poorest strata of Israeli society, and are the most extreme in their hatred of the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, from whom they fear retribution along the lines of the aggression they suffered in the countries they left behind. Their greatest fear is that if some agreement is reached with the Palestinians they might be sent back to their countries of origin where they no longer have any roots and would immediately be enclosed in concentration camps or massacred en masse. The dominant ideology being based on religion and mysticism, a social uprising of the advanced industrial kind would be unthinkable: mass demonstrations, clashes with the police, mobilizations, etc., are not like elsewhere. That does not mean that opposition does not exist within the present situation in the occupied territories.

There have also been various attempts in the field of clandestine structures, for example the Ma'atz which carried out sabotage to give echo to protest in the poorest areas. Illegal activities in the traditional sense of the term have also increased a great deal in recent years. The same can be said for petty crime and hooliganism in the stadiums, imitating the large metropolises.

One characteristic of the poor areas of the capital is precisely a sense of frustration and the feeling that life is meaningless, especially as far as the young are concerned.

Everything seems quite contradictory. That does not mean that it would be impossible to stimulate a mass struggle capable of taking up the original values of libertarian socialism once again. Perhaps it is necessary to take another look at the teachings of theoreticians of communitarian Hebraism such as Martin Buber.

A practical attitude

But in a situation of very hard struggle such as the Palestinian one, we cannot limit ourselves to proposing the books of Buber or Kropotkin as a solution to the problem. It is necessary to do more.

I think that the enemy number one, the main obstacle to overcome, is today the State of Israel. It is for this that it is indispensable to support the struggle of the Palestinian people.

I also think that a potential enemy of the Palestinian people and of the Israeli people, are the PLO and the Palestinian State in formation. For this I have never supported the PLO and their statist positions.

It is therefore necessary to be against both the Israeli State and the Palestinian one.

It is necessary to support the constitution of a federation of workers' communities, both Palestinian and Israeli, free to federate themselves as they wish, to give themselves programmes, to make their own organisational and productive choices, beyond the rough interference of the big States, in particular the USA.

Practical and ideal, as well as a productive and cultural collaboration is necessary, between the Palestinian people and the Israeli one, to put an end to a conflict of nation and race that has no reason to exist in that, in these lands, there is room for both people, with their differences of race, culture, religion and traditions.

It is necessary to be at the side of the Palestinian people, but also to be with the Israeli people, especially the most disinherited and poor of them, who an international politics of huge interests is pushing to reciprocal massacre.

[*I nodi di un problema senza soluzione*], published in *Provocazione* no.19, February 1989, pages 6-7 entitled 'Palestina']

A strange idea

There is a fairly widespread idea in circulation that tends to justify the repressive action of the Israelis, seeing it in the context of the whole movement of control and repression of the Palestinian people all over the Middle East.

The Palestinians are massacred a little by everybody, Arabs included, why should it only be the Israelis who should refuse to defend themselves and put an end to it?

This is a classic thesis, one that is used when one wants to push someone away from involvement in a precise struggle, in this case that against the Israeli military machine as it is being used against the Palestinians. In itself it could be said that this thesis could even be shared by the Mosad, without a shadow of argument.

In the cultural craze (that's a manner of speaking) of wanting to get to the bottom of things, it isn't realised that this thesis basically justifies the massacre in the same way as colonialism was once justified by saying that the 'savages' 'if they had been left to themselves, would have killed each other'. Even if this did, and still does, contain some elements of truth, it is used like a defence for colonialism and serves only to hide genocide and exploitation under an aura of false humanitarianism.

Some comrades who surprisingly support this thesis see rebellion anywhere except in the occupied territories. For them, the insurrection of a whole people against the daily massacre of young boys, women and children, against the destruction of their houses by the Israeli army, against torture, extermination camps, etc., is only a nationalist struggle, a way like any other to send the people to die for the homeland, therefore not in any way relevant in terms of revolution.

One could just tell these lovers of truth to 'go to hell' in no uncertain way, considering it pointless to touch on an argument that, as it is there before everybody's eyes, does not require to be spelt out in three letter words.

As far as I am concerned, in a couple of direct and I hope simple words, the situation is as follows. — There is a State (Israel) aggressive and militarist like many others but which wants to kill a whole people (the Palestinian one). There are politicians (Arafat etc.) who have presented themselves of their own will and set themselves up as representatives of this people with the sole aim of constituting a State which could quickly become just as militarist and aggressive as the first. A possible solution would be the dissolution of the Israeli State and the prevention of the birth of the Palestinian State, all parallel to the formation of free communes and other structures selfmanaged by Palestinians and Jews together all with a right to the land and, principally, reciprocal respect in the name of freedom.

This is certainly a simplistic and also utopian way to think, but I don't believe that, as anarchists and given the situation, one could come to support anything else.

To seek definitions and details in what is an extremely contradictory context, and, even more, to seek to find responsibility on both sides in order to lighten Israel's position is bad taste to say the least, in my opinion.

Let's put aside the 'cultural preoccupation' for a moment, and perhaps we will see things more clearly. The massacres that the Israelis are carrying out to perfection are there in front of our very eyes. Whoever tries to cover them up, to justify them or even only underestimate them, shares responsibility for the massacre. In the same way the revolt of a people on its knees is there before everybody's eyes.

Although the present and future enemies of the Palestinian and Israeli people are many, there can be no doubt that it's necessary to do something to help the revolt of the Palestinians against Israeli militarism. To do something means to move, to act here, immediately, everywhere, striking Israeli interests and not stand arguing until the last Palestinian is killed.

[*'Una strana tesi'*, published in *Provocazione* no. 16, September 1988, pages 6-7 entitled '*Non chiudiamo gli occhi*']

The Insurrectional Struggle in Palestine

What the Israeli State is doing in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank is quite in keeping with the logic of wars of conquest that soldiers learn in their training courses everywhere.

It would be quite normal for anarchists to unconditionally denounce what is happening, were it not that they find themselves in an area that is culturally strange to them.

If we were to talk about the situation in South Africa, for example, everything would be a foregone conclusion. But it is quite a different matter to denounce what the Israelis are doing. The reason is clear. The Jews suffered the project of extermination put into act by the Nazis, so by definition they deserve our sympathy.

No one is denying them that sympathy, which is also our own. Here it is not a question of the Jews but of the Israeli State and, naturally, those of its subjects who are lending themselves to the extermination of the Palestinian people that is taking place.

The fact that there is a popular insurrection in course in the territories and that at least one Palestinian is killed each day does not help to make the situation any clearer. We have simply got used to it. When we see the figures as a whole, things change.

During this last year [1988] 405 Palestinians were killed whereas a source of the Israeli ministry of defence talks of 392 killings. Just think, even taking the Israeli figures as good, it is a question of nearly one death a day. For the Palestinian wounded they are talking about 20,000, whereas the above mentioned ministry talks of 3,640.

At least ten wounded a day. On the other side, bearing in mind the data of the Israeli defence ministry, 11 Israelis have been killed, with 402 colons and 703 soldiers wounded. The figures speak for themselves.

To these figures should be added (according to Israeli sources) 20,000 arrests, 4,000 imprisoned without trial, 5,521 prisoners in concentration camps. 138 habitations destroyed by dynamite in reprisal, 32 expelled, 137 days of curfew in one year, with an uninterrupted period of 42 days, and this is only for 1988.

On the other hand, the insurrection has cost Israel 250 million dollars in additional military expenditure, 750 million dollars loss of the gross national income, 14 per cent less tourism, an overall loss of over 25 per cent of the national income.

The insurrection is putting Israel in serious difficulty. And beyond the strictly economic or political situation there is also, you might say, the question of image. Israel is having recourse to means and procedures that are damaging the sympathy and solidarity that the Jews had gained as a result of their suffering and repression at the hands of power over centuries. By becoming oppressors they have become 'nasty' and this means a lot today.

One day in December 1987 the revolt exploded after four Palestinian commuters were killed and seven wounded when their minibus was overturned by an Israeli heavy military vehicle. The streets filled with boys and youths. This is what came to be known as the Intifada. In the lead, on the barricades, were the *Shebab*, the boys born in the shanty towns and concentration camps under the military oppression of Israel after 1967. From that day onwards, from these first four dead, the insurrection has continued unabated.. [Seeing the situation now before going to press in 1998 thing haven't changed, the Intifada continues unabated.]

The means used by this insurrection are the classic ones that so many political know-alls had declared out of date, given that we are in the virtual post modern era. Revolt can only start off from what is available, in this case, stones. Then sabotage, using rudimentary, simple means, followed by the boycott of Israeli cigarettes and soft drinks, followed by civil disobedience and strikes.

For its part, the Israeli State is hitting back hard. The same goes for the colons who are shooting demonstrators and carrying out numerous acts of vandalism in the villages.

Defenceless Palestinians are beaten to death. Four boys from the village of Salim near Nablus were buried alive by Israeli soldiers. Poisonous gases are used regularly with the result that over 1,800 Palestinian women have been forced to have abortions. Water and electricity are cut off in the insurgent villages. The spontaneous demonstration that took place after the killing of Abu Jihad in Tunisia was stopped immediately by the Israelis: sixteen dead. The telephones in the territories are cut off. It is forbidden to cross the border. Petrol and diesel pumps are blocked. The olive harvest is blocked. Plastic bullets, already tested in Ireland by the English occupying army, have been introduced and are used regularly.

Over the past few months [1989] another subtle form of destruction has been discovered. Mysterious phosphorus devices in the form of chocolate bars or toys have been left lying around in the occupied areas by Israeli soldiers and colons in order to wound children. As soon as they are picked up the objects explode. There were five such cases of wounding in Nablus in the month of December alone . On November 10 [1988] 24 houses were razed to the ground by Jiftlik bulldozers in the Jordan valley after the inhabitants were invited to gather up their poor belongings in carts. One week earlier, fifteen blocks in Taibe were dynamited. The inhabitants were all deported.

It is like seeing an exact replica of the Warsaw ghetto. Often history repeats itself, even turned upside down.

For his part, Shamir has publicly declared that he intends to give 'new impetus' to the settlement of the colons in the occupied territories.

In spite of the evidence provided by these facts, there are still people, even anarchists, for whom any excuse is good enough to justify Israel's repressive action. It would be well for comrades to see things as they really are so that we can decide what needs to be done, here and now.

[*'Lotta insurrezionale in Palestina'*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 18, December 1988, page 3, entitled '*Repressione e lotta insurrezionale in Palestina*']

The Palestinians continue to die

The fact that Palestinian people continue to die every day is no longer news anywhere in the world.

A few lines are drowned in the sea of new problems, some of which, unfortunately, register massacres of even greater dimension in other parts of the world. Man's favourite sport continues to be that of killing and war.

Not being able to take an interest in everything that happens in the world, one often turns one's attention to a particular situation and tries to do something at the level of information if nothing else. That is, one tries to redress the damage caused by the misinformation of the press.

As far as the Palestinian question is concerned, we must emphasize the importance of an insurrectional struggle that is putting one of the strongest armies in the world in serious difficulty.

This obstinate will to freedom has been distorted by Zionist propaganda, which is natural. But it has also been misrepresented by the propaganda of all those who, although they say they are lovers of freedom and truth, do not realise that those facing armed tanks or who find themselves closed within a ghetto and submitted to continual bombardments, do not have much time to reflect on great principles of truth and freedom. In the first place, they must attack in order to survive. They must defend themselves because they are being killed. They cannot wait for the high priests of cultural research to find the way to explain the deeper reasons that lie behind the movement of the tanks.

Reports on the Palestinian problem have often been of this kind, articles aimed at taking a distance and pointing out reciprocal rights and wrongs aimed at diverting the possibility of a solidarity struggle here and now into the simple and simplistic depths of cultural discussion. Collaborationist and pacifying positions are not lacking, even in Palestine. Tepid rethinking that will do anything in order to leave things as they are and allow the Jews to widen their settlements even more and let the Palestinians carry on living in the ghettos.

But in the field of the real struggle the Palestinians continue to die, while on the other side, behind the insurmountable armour of their tanks, the persecuted of yesterday are applying the same methods as their old persecutors: destroy the houses of suspects, torture in the prisons and concentration camps, deport, kill in the streets, and so on.

How the Palestinians consider collaboration with the enemy is shown in the treatment reserved to those who collaborate with the Israeli army. In the space of a few days, at the end of August [1988], four were killed because they were informers in the pay of Israel. A few days later, a fifth was hacked to pieces with an axe. Drastic measures, certainly, but which give an idea of what these people are suffering.

When you get to certain levels, even feelings of pity and humanity begin to disappear.

[*'I Palestinesi continuano a morire'*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 16, September 1988, page 8]

Against the Israeli colonisers

A spontaneous revolt of Palestinian students and workers has broken out in the Gaza strip in the occupied territories [1987] against the Israeli colonisers. In particular it is addressed against the proprietors of the industries and the managers of the economy of occupation and, of course, the enemy army. In a short time barricades have been erected and stones thrown against the Israeli military and civilians.

Soldiers and civilians (the colonisers of the occupation) have responded with weapons, firing shots that were defined as intimidatory. The result: one Palestinian dead and two wounded. A student was killed when she was carrying out a road block against the Jewish residents in the area with another fifty girls from a women's college of Manfulati.

[*'Contro i coloni israeliani'*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 9 of November 1987, page 16 entitled *'A Gaza i Palestinesi insorgono contro i coloni israeli'*]

The horror of growing accustomed to horror

Growing accustomed to horror is far more striking than horror itself. Indignation quells and remains silent, and everything seems normal. This is the case of the repression against the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

One reason for this slow but constant habituation is the fact that the Palestinian revolt, that of the stones and improvised weapons 'is no longer news'.

Another is the acceptance, on more than one side, of the reasons for the conflict. Those on the side of the Palestinians are against those who are on the side of the Israelis. Many hope, sometimes in good faith, that things will work out in time and everything will resolve itself.

No matter how these 'things' come to an end and what solution is chosen, nothing in the world will be able eradicate the horror of the past few months [1989], the horror of martyr turned executioner, persecuted turned persecutor. No matter how clever the defenders of Israel are — and as we know these include a number of anarchists — we cannot forget the Palestinian baby killed by gas in the refugee camp of Khan Yunis by Israeli soldiers. We cannot forget the five year old child killed in Nablus by plastic bullets or the 14 year old killed a few days earlier while he was playing in front of his house, again shot by the Israeli occupying army. We cannot forget the colon death squads which go out at night and murder the young Palestinians considered responsible for the rebellion.

Under such conditions the only thing that does surprise us is the strange insistence on trying to cover up responsibilities. We can see how this happens at a political level, but we don't see how it can happen at the level of comrades who should show more sensitivity in their defence of the persecuted, leaving aside subtle distinctions in designating responsibility.

[*L'orrore dell'abitudine all'orrore*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 17, November 1988, page 4, entitled '*L'orrore*']

No to the Palestinian State!

The PLO have constituted a Palestinian State on the wave of the popular insurrection in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

Many undoubtedly see this as something positive, but we can only see it as a step backwards, a diversion from the direction that the Palestinian struggle has taken in recent months.

The PLO bureaucracy has intervened in the struggle with the complicity of the Islamic States who have high hopes for a Palestinian State in the Middle East. In this way a serious impediment has been put on the possibility of the struggle continuing to develop in an anti-State direction, the only direction that takes into consideration the needs of the Jewish people who have already settled in that area.

The presence of a Palestinian State, however unlikely that might seem today, could not fail to lead to diplomatic and internally reached agreements that would make any peaceful coexistence between the two communities (Palestinian and Israeli) impossible. Yet both of them have a right to live on their own land.

A Palestinian State could not fail to move in the direction of all States: that of military reinforcement, armed intervention, and the transformation of future diplomatic agreements into instruments of threat and retaliation.

The path recently trodden by the Jews is there to show just how easy it is to turn the exploited and oppressed into exploiters and oppressors by regimenting them into the service of the State.

The Palestinian people's liberation struggle over the past forty years has had its dark moments, but even during the worst retaliatory actions such as that at Lod airport, it has never lost the quality of a popular revolt. Of course, the organisation was also just around the corner in the past, but always in a way that was purely instrumental and which could be discarded at any time. It in no way conditioned anyone in the name of a precise legal code to be established with the agreement of all nations.

We have no idea what the nations of the world, with the USA in the lead, really could do for the Palestinian people who continue to be tortured and killed. They will certainly not be able to affect the internal problems of the Israeli State, due to the very international law that makes all the States of the world sovereign, if nothing else. We will find that Israel has the unquestionable 'right' to continue to oppress the Palestinian people, just as the latter will have the undeniable 'right' not to be oppressed, occupied, destroyed, killed, tortured, etc.. Each will have its own 'rights', the defence of which will come through the force of their own (and others) weapons. Everyone knows what state of affairs that could lead to.

The newly constituted State could turn out to be a terrible obstacle in the Palestinian people's long and difficult road to liberation, if for no other reason than because it is hard for those who suffer to understand such things. The constitution of an organisation such as a State is often seen as something positive. One feels stronger, one has contractual power with all the other nations of the world on an equal level. But is this not just a way to provide a semblance of negotiation, and in reality to continue oppression? What if Arafat's passion to become head of State is no more than a diplomatic way of getting rid of the problem?

No one can say that this is not what is in fact happening. After all, the applause that greeted the Palestinian State in embryo has come from all sides, from foreign diplomats to organisations of comrades who certainly do not move in ministerial circles. What is the cause of this cordiality of intent? In the first place, the fact that both ministers and authoritarian revolutionaries are on the same wavelength: the size of the organisation is what determines its strength, and from this 'strength' comes victory. This kind of thing, which we could never share, does not make us feel the joy that so many are expressing for the birth of the Palestinian State.

But there is more. In our opinion, the Palestinian State will become an optimal diplomatic interlocutor.

Pressure will be made through diplomatic channels. There will be an attempt to make Israel understand what it does not want to understand, closed as it is within its State logic. But what do all the other States of the world really care about the lot of five million Palestinians?

The same goes for the authoritarian revolutionaries. What alternative can they propose? Direct intervention against the Israeli State? Direct support for the Palestinian insurrection in the occupied territories? Of course not! Now that the State also exists for these latest pioneers of 'structure at any cost', there is a way for them to organise their support for this shadow of previous examples. And so all their problems will be solved.

We do not believe that the Algerian decision will improve the lot of the Palestinian people, be it real or not. The only reality we can turn our attention to and support is that of hundreds of young people who are resisting the Israeli tanks that occupy their land by throwing stones. This reality has nothing to do with diplomacy or the State.

[*No allo Stato Palestinese*, published in *Provocazione* no. 18, December 1988, pages 1-2]

After the horror, disgust

I don't like quoting material and listing all the details of the repression that the State puts into act to put a brake on the rebellion of the oppressed. This is a typically Anglo Saxon affectation of little use from the point of view of 'what is to be done'. This time, however, we feel we must make an exception. I think that a short list of the particularly atrocious means that are being used [1989] against the Palestinian insurrection in the occupied territories should throw any individual with a minimum of dignity into profound consternation.

Normal tear gas bombs such as those used in Italy are charged with chloroacetophenon, which is already dangerous at a certain concentration in closed areas. Those used in Palestine are charged with dichlorobezilidene, which is often lethal even in open areas if it reaches a concentration of 1K per 50 cubic metres. Bear in mind that children are most exposed to this danger, especially when they are in a state of malnutrition as many Palestinian children are.

The old tear gas canister of about two and a half kilos capacity has been replaced with the 606 Jumbo that uses four kilos of gas and by the 303 in rubber bullets which when fired bounce back spreading the gas and cannot be picked up. Now the Israeli army also has the 909 version that is fired up to 150 metres, uniting the effect of the gas to that of the kinetic impact of the bomb on the body of whoever it reaches. This being mainly a question of old people, women and children, it is easy to imagine the consequences.

Rubber bullets, already tested in Northern Ireland, are now being used regularly in Palestine, and over the past 22 months [June 1989] have caused over 30 dead. These are single balls of rubber that take the place of lead in 12 bore shotgun cartridges, that is 18mm calibre. Sometimes these rubber bullets have a metal interior, so are nearly always deadly at a distance of under 70 metres.

A machine of recent construction responds to the stones thrown by the Palestinian youths with other stones, shot in volleys in great quantities.

A contraption known as the 'washing machine' mounted on an armoured car throws out a spray of 200 litres of foam. This foam solidifies immediately, burying alive those struck by the jet.

Control reconnoitres are now carried out by radio controlled helicopters that can fly low without the risk that normal helicopters once ran of being struck down even by two well aimed stones.

A special ultra-light lookout plane has been designed to survey the countryside: a biplane costing just over 12 million. It flies at a speed of 180 km an hour and requires only 16 hours flight training.

Automatic pilot lookout planes are also used, i.e. radio-controlled air models upon which are mounted video cameras that send images to the operational centre. They move at a speed of about 75 km an hour and fly for not more than 25 minutes.

To these ultra-sophisticated means should be added the normal ones that went into action from the first moment of the clashes. One of the best equipped armies in the world is trying — moreover without succeeding — to crush a defenceless people who are rebelling by throwing stones. All the horrors of classical genocide have been used: mass deportation, concentration camps, indiscriminate massacre, destruction of individual houses or entire groups of houses, on the spot shootings, violence, rape, attacks on mosques, attacks on the Red Cross, prearranged massacres, the use of death squads made up of colons and plain clothes soldiers. The list could go on, but it would be a list *deja vu*.

Careful, dear comrades, at this time the historic conditions of all times are presenting themselves yet again, almost as though humanity, at least in the short term, (a few millennium), cannot escape its round of death. Many of those making historical distinctions today bring to mind the bourgeoisie who, before the Paris Commune of 1871, lined up behind Mazzini with his doubts then in the days of the massacre felt the need to support their thesis by coming out into the streets to gouge out the eyes of the dead communards with the points of their umbrellas. Just like those fine people living near Dachau at the time of the extermination of the Jews who presented an expose to the local authorities because the smoke from the 'factory' was killing the birds nesting in the surrounding trees. Just like those who are splitting hairs and talking of the 'positive aspects' of Nazism today.

The important thing to note, yet again, is that there is a time for in-depth examination and theory. But there is also a time when Minerva's bird must go to sleep, and that is the time for action and the destruction of the enemy.

[*Oltre l'orrore, lo schifo*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 21, June 1989, page 5]

Let's boycott Israeli products

Acts of solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people have been spreading recently. [1988]

The latest was that of the Coop council delegates in the Emilia and Veneto regions, who in a letter to the management on April 12, asked for the acquisition of Israeli products, grapefruit, avocados dates, to be suspended. The management, faithful to their market mentality, replied, 'To impose political choices and evaluations on the consumer through a preventive selection of products on sale would be a limitation of freedom of choice and expression (sic)'. Ridiculous. Even more ridiculous was the retraction of the factory council which, after a meeting with the management, withdrew its request for a boycott and, rather than pass on to more incisive forms of struggle, limited itself to handing out a leaflet asking the consumer not to buy the product. Basically, the firm's position was accepted.

Someone else decided to choose different methods. Anonymous telephone calls reached the editorial offices of various newspapers informing them that a number of Jaffa grapefruit had been poisoned in solidarity with the Palestinians in struggle. The news created considerable panic in many parts of Italy.

It seems however that it was only a threat, given that analyses of the grapefruit revealed no trace of poison.

Let us imagine what would happen if one were to start to attack the interests of the Israeli State more seriously, not only its products but also the companies that support them in some way, the travel agencies, etc.

[*Boicottiamo i prodotti israeliani* published in *ProvocAzione* no. 13, April 1988, page 1]

A Molotov in Turin

If one thing can be noted concerning the Molotov against the ‘Luxembourg’ bookshop in Turin, it is the total uniformity of reactions to it. It really gives us pleasure to see how town, regional and State authorities, no matter what side their parties are on, replied in unison to condemn the ‘vile gesture of intimidation and intolerance’. It also gives us pleasure to note how the various radical associations and extremists of every shade including the autonomists of the Turin collectives (we don’t know if it was a question of all of them) and *dulcis in fundo* the anarchists also joined this angelic choir. From what appears in the newspapers, because all that we know at the moment has been from the ‘well informed’ papers, the ‘Berneri’ [anarchist] group in Turin also seems to have felt the need to condemn the ‘resurgence of Nazi racism’. And this is plausible, if one bears in mind the content of the communiques of the group ‘L. Fabbri’ of Forli and some Milanese anarchist groups that we are reproducing in the note below. So much uniformity of intent is truly comforting. For authorities and ‘revolutionaries’ to shake hands is something that shows there is hope for the future.

We, on the contrary, have a few doubts. There are some things that we don’t know, and we admit that. Other things we know with certainty, so we will speak out and not keep quiet out of conformity or fear.

What we don’t know are the actual words of the communique. The fact that it was signed – if what the newspapers reported is true – with a new anarchist signature, ‘Gruppo (o Gruppi?) anarchici rivoluzionario’ [Revolutionary Anarchist Groups] (some papers speak of ‘revolutionary anarchists’) certainly made indispensable the accompaniment of even a brief sketch of analysis of the reasons behind the gesture – which exist and which we will talk about here. The idea of simply making a phone call using such a signature is the least credible part of the whole affair. We don’t know if the reference to the PLO (some speak of ‘long live the PLO’) is true or not, and if it is, then this would become another element of doubt. What anarchist would say such a thing? Can you believe that a comrade does not know that the PLO is a fully functioning government, (with its left and right) that manages a future State and directs intelligence operations that are among the most advanced in the Arab world? Of course not.

Given these admissions of ignorance, there are some things we do know. We know perfectly well that the struggle against the excessive power of Israel and its project to exterminate the Palestinian people (who have little to do with the PLO) is not ‘a fact’ that is only taking place in that far off land. That is something that concerns all of us, all, that is, who have the fate of man (and people) including the Israeli people (who have little to do with the interests of the Israeli State), at heart. And this leads some of us to want to intervene in deed, not only with more or less symbolic gestures or with a battle of declarations more or less condemning the fascists who dominate the Israeli State. We are filled with indignation by the attacks by the Israeli police and army on children, women and old people, a defenceless population struggling to survive armed with only stones from ghettos that are only a distant reminder of what was once their place of daily life, just as the comrades who drew up the above declaration certainly were. There, that indignation is at the basis of our positive consideration of the action. Yes, positive, even if we are the only ones to say so openly (because as far as we know many comrades have declared themselves to be personally in favour of the action). We are not afraid to admit that the destruction of a pro-Israeli bookshop does not upset many people in the face of such events.

Of course, we don’t know if these comrades are anarchists or not, or whether they are more or less aware of the history of anarchism and the reasons and theories of anarchists (many comrades, especially the very young ones, are anarchists before they even become aware of many of the historical and theoretical questions at the root of anarchist action). What we do know is that the objective under attack seems right to us. Whoever defends the interests of the Israeli State at the present time should be attacked, possibly with an opportune explanation of the reasons why. On the other hand, anyone who defends the interests of the Israeli people – which are undoubtedly also our own interests – at this delicate time, seeing them as no different to those of the Palestinian people, must be able to do so and be able to explain how, from a class point of view, these interests differ from those of the Israeli State. To simply exalt Jewish ‘culture’ and religion, elements that are at the basis of and perpetrate the existence of the State of Israel today, merely renders service to the assassins who are not only massacring the Palestinians but are also tyrannising and mystifying the Israeli people.

To get an idea of the climate in Turin we note that following the attack on the 'Luxembourg' bookshop police raids were carried out against the 'El Paso' squat. Moreover, some comrades were stopped that night while fly-posting about El Paso's video program, and taken to police station where they were held until 7am.

Here is the Forli text: 'Following the news of the attack on the 'Luxembourg' bookshop in Turin claimed by a so-called group of 'revolutionary anarchists', anarchist group 'Luigi Fabbri' of Forli feels it a moral duty to take a position against this attack and the claim that accompanied it. Against the attack, because they find it senseless and anti-libertarian to use this kind of violence against positions that are different and contrary to one's own. Against the claim, because it considers it is against the principles of anarchism to adhere to the militarist politics of the PLO. At the same time it expresses solidarity with the Palestinian people who presently find themselves oppressed by the militarism of the Israeli State. But such solidarity must not be confused with feelings of anti-Jewish racism or acts of unconditional violence against every manner of thinking that is different to our own. To words we respond with words, beyond any practice of censure and repression.'

Forli, 15 April 1988. Andrea Papi, for anarchist group 'Luigi Fabbri'.

Here is the Milan text: Following the attack carried out last night against the Luxembourg bookshop in Turin belonging to Angelo Pezzana, and considering that, according to the media, responsibility for the attack was claimed by a 'group of anarchists', the present Milan initiative sent Angelo Pezzana the following telegram. 'We express our solidarity in the face of the vile attack on the Luxembourg bookshop, yet another sign of anti-Semitism and intolerance against which anarchists have always fought beyond any ideological differences we have with you in the battle for the freedom of speech'.

Editorial group 'A Rivista Anarchica' Utopia Bookshop, Centro Studi Libertari, Anarchist circle 'Ponte della Ghisolfa'.

[*'Una Molotov a Torino'*, published in *ProvocAzione* no. 13, April 1988, page 5]

New Palestinian initiatives

A new form of attack has been used in the insurrection that has been going on for over seven months in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. As well as the persistence of clashes with the Israeli occupying army, more than 20 fires have been started against Israeli crops and woods. In spite of frequent ferocious controls by the Israeli colons, several hundred hectares have been destroyed. A seed oil factory and an irrigation plant have also been completely burnt out. Finally, a textile factory in Tel Aviv has been torched. All this began in the middle of June.

A few weeks before there were attacks against electricity plants and high voltage pylons. These attacks caused blackouts in the most important cities of Israel: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Nablus, Bethlehem and in the Gaza Strip itself.

For the nature lovers who get upset by news of forest fires and the destruction of innocent plants, we would like to point out that there is news from the Israeli side too. The Palestinians in revolt, armed with only stones and a few Molotovs, are now faced with toxic gas which, according to International Red Cross figures (an organism that is certainly not on the side of the Palestinians), has caused dozens of victims.

[*Nuove iniziative palestinesi*, published in ProvoCAzione no. 15, July 1988]

How one becomes those of yesterday

The vicissitudes of *Mein Kampf* continue to stupefy. Following the Bavarian Land's attempt to block the publication of Hitler's book in Denmark, it seems that in Israel the first translation in Yiddish by a publisher specialised in university texts is about to come out in Israel.

Young people should have first hand documentation, say the editors of Academon editions. And Hitler's text certainly supplies this documentation. Contrary to what those who deny the project to totally exterminate the Jews are now saying, the book tells of what the Nazis actually put into practice with detailed precision. But that could constitute interests that are too narrow and barely credible, especially when you take into account the fact that the Jewish managerial class is extremely learned and knows many languages, especially German. They could easily inform themselves without having recourse to a translation in Yiddish.

Another reason could be the need to respond to a demand for the 'book' at mass level. This demand is not limited to that of the cultured Ashkenazim in the Jewish State, but includes the more modest and exploited Sephardi class who constitute the mass pushing for the maintenance and development of wild colonisation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

In the extraordinary mixture of ideas that exists today, there is nothing strange about the fact that future readers of *Mein Kampf* will precisely be Jews, black ones at that.

[*'Come si diventa quelli di ieri'*, published in Canenero no. 16, February 24 1995]

Not Just Buttons

A police force is always a police force for the simple reason that a State, even one in tatters such as the Palestinian one, is always a State.

Now, for whoever in his time has struggled for the ideal of the liberation of the Palestinian people (each in his own small way may have given some contribution), the thing takes on a particular significance. To think that comrades in struggle, a struggle that once spread like an epidemic more or less everywhere in Europe and beyond, are now donning the shiny buttoned uniform, a bad imitation of the English cops, is quite indigestible.

But policemen do not just wear uniforms, they don't just polish their buttons; they control, repress, beat and on occasion shoot and kill without giving it a thought.

Gaza is not a large city, it has few tarmac roads and, as in so many other parts of the Arab world, those there are look like little village lanes. Arafat's policemen are now present in the area where the Israeli Shin Beth were once stationed. Not just policemen, but the court, the prison, and the secret services. All small, not very efficient, but it's the thought that counts.

What has happened to the Intifada?

It goes on, of course, against the bosses old and new. So boys and girls are arrested, taken to the multifunction building of Palestinian State repression, interrogated by condescending investigators and judged by improbable judges. They are also children, just a little more grown up, born in the concentration camps. What can they say under the illuminated strategic direction of the great Leader?

In the same way that it took us years to convince ourselves that the Israelis were torturers even though they had just come through the extermination camps, now goodness knows how long it will take to see that the Palestinians, comrades once upon a time, can become torturers today.

Reality evolves, and in evolving the masks men hide behind in order to recite their roles change. But often the role behind the mask also changes, without anyone noticing.

[*'Non solo bottoni'*, published in Canenero no. 20, March 24 1995, page 2]

The Palestinian Police

In Gaza the king is bare. The insurrection of stones and desperation is now turning towards the new Palestinian police force which has been armed by Arafat to maintain peace and order in the interests, in the first place of the Israeli bosses.

Policemen are always policemen. The old *fedayeen* are becoming aware of this to their cost. And along these dusty roads where many of us left our hearts, the cry is desperation as never before.

[*La polizia palestinese*, published in Canenero no. 5, November 24 1994, page 7]

From Marx to the Uri

Many things are changing in Palestine. Many others have stayed as they are. Poverty and hatred are rife as always, especially hatred of the occupying forces, that is of the soldiers of Israel still present in the Territories.

What could be more natural than to hate invaders? Only politicians who have sold out to the enemy and contracted the possibility of an internal government and a puppet of a State rather than the continuation of the struggle, could think differently. Many Palestinians, are not prepared to accept cohabitation based on the defence of the interests of the strongest.

That explains the spread of resistance, which presents itself almost uniformly under the insignia of Hamas, inside the same newborn State of Palestine. This is certainly the most consistent armed group of the present time. It is doted with considerable means, as became evident in the explosion a few days ago [1995] that blew up a whole arsenal.

There's nothing easier in that region than to find a young boy between twelve and sixteen, born and brought up in the poverty and violence of the concentration camps, who is disposed to listening to arguments against Arafat and his project of a free Palestine coexisting with a free Israel. Nothing could be easier than to push these boys to carry out a suicide bombing.

That is what those of the *Izz al-din al hassam, the armed wing of God*, who are not boys but religious fanatics, are preparing the former for – a holy death in the war against the infidels.

Twenty-five years ago, in conditions that were certainly not any better than those of the present time, the struggle of the Palestinians was based almost entirely upon a different kind of indoctrination, the Marxist one.

At that time intermediaries with long beards promised them help in the form of money and weapons; now Islamic priests are promising eternal life in a paradise full of Uri.

[*'Da Marx alle Uri'*, published in Canenero, no. 22, April 7 1995, page 2]

The Obvious Aspect of the Unthinkable

The foothills in the eastern part of Jerusalem permit a certain coolness which is often difficult to find elsewhere, down town and in the narrow streets of the centre. Naturally, it is the rich who live there.

The expansion towards the east is therefore that of the upper-class settlers. The poor Sephardi don't live on the hills. Now even the Palestinian residents don't live there any more. In fact the process of expropriation is widening further and further. Many of the Arab villages of the perimeter, especially in the northern and eastern outskirts, have been included in the urban belt by the mayor of the city and are considered to be an integral part of Jerusalem, so subject to expropriation. This procedure is often facilitated by accusing the original residents of belonging to, supporting or at least knowing, Palestinian extremists.

This is similar to a technique once used by the Nazis in Germany to throw Jews out of their property. The vast majority of Israelis (irony of the sort this hyper-conservative majority is not only composed of Ashkenazim but also, and I'd say mainly, of Sephardi, i.e. the poorest sector of the Jewish population) agree with this policy of confiscation and annexing. They are convinced that they will thus be able to put an end to the Palestinians' dream of considering Jerusalem their capital.

For his part, Moshe Zimmerman, head of the department of German studies at the Jewish university of Jerusalem, has declared that most of the Jewish boys who have grown up in Hebron in the West Bank, therefore in the ex-occupied territories now under Palestinian jurisdiction, are convinced that they belong to a superior race, in exactly the same way as the Hitler youth did.

The professor documented this information using research carried out on various songs and poetry that a number of children of Hebron composed in honour of Baruch Goldstein, author of the massacre at the tomb of the patriarchs some months ago. [1995]

Mosche Zimmerman, who recently edited the Hebrew edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, replied to those who accused him of favouring the spread of the Nazi ideology, that racism had already been spread among the Jews through Bible readings by the extremists of Zionism.

[*L'aspetto ovio dell'impensabile*, published in Canenero no. 25, May 5 1995, page 9.]

The Miracle of the Worse

The use of summary trials by the Palestinian judiciary that has begun to function in Gaza is now current. Torture and terrible prison conditions are also everyday facts that people cannot get used to. Everything seems to be turning out to be useful to maintaining the ghost of power that Arafat has found himself with. A shred of power which, like all power, always functions the same way: by imprisoning, torturing, killing.

I know that many will find this hard to believe. What is left of the revolution of their dreams? What about the sacrifices and so many dead? Was it all in vain?

Of course, for those who deluded themselves that the construction of a Palestinian State was the easiest way, or the lesser of two evils, to the liberation of the Palestinian people, the delusion must be a hard one. Not so for the present writer who, having had the possibility to deepen his knowledge of the composition of Arafat's leadership, has long been denouncing its conservative ideology and its practice of control and repression.

Dressed up in his uniform of 'guerrilla behind the lines', old Yasser is practically bare today. He has nothing left to put on the scales but the excessive stupidity of a few components of the Hamas. Unable to see how they will be able to do without Iran and the integriste Islamic international, they have continued with the same obtuseness throughout the decades in the same way as other Palestinian forces in the past who could not see how to do without Marxism (and also the help in weapons and money that came from the countries of the East) used to do.

He could take the road of increasingly ferocious repression. In this way Arafat would end up isolated from his own people and favour the development of integrisme, the other side of the coin being the sad fanatical end to any possibility of freedom and peace. Or he could become a more and more automated gendarme of the Israelis as they get him to do all their dirty work.

What would remain of Palestinian culture and the open, free mentality of a people who, not too long ago, welcomed the first settlements of the Jews in a friendly and hospitable way, inviting them to work together in cohabitation? This mentality and disposition of spirit still exists in Palestinian ideas and culture today, but for how long? The job done yesterday to destroy all cohabitation and impose their absolute dominion on their ancient hosts, is being continued by those who simply want to upturn this situation and impose their own absolute power.

Any battle between aspiring dominators passes over a mountain of corpses. In such cases the hangman is always at work.

The Reasons for Integrisme

When we acquired the ideology of progress in the eighteenth century we ended up with a substandard product: the illusion that this progress could only be the work of lay beliefs that had cast religion aside. In other words, the thinkers of the Enlightenment with Voltaire in the lead, believed that by eliminating religious faith war, hatred, persecution and massacre would also be reduced.

One could see a return to this premise, reinforced brainlessly, in the whole so-called culture of the left around the end of the sixties. It went from wild anticlericalism and atheism to a kind of dialogue with the progressive forces of Catholicism and Protestantism. This typical cultural illusion was the result of nationalist scientism. At the beginning of the sixties I pointed out that neither simple atheism or a anticlericalism are sufficient when they are no more than expressions of blind rationalism. It is necessary for man to evolve his refusal of God with his own personal responsibility and individual engagement in the struggle against authority. The State and God as Proudhon rightly said, go hand in hand and help each other. But this responsabilisation of the individual did not materialise and God was transferred from heaven to earth with all his baggage. He was denied in the name of science or reason, or even worse in the name of party or State. In some places religion was abolished by ministerial decree.

The progressive illusion presented this as a step forward in the ineluctable road of theoretical development. Better to have museums, libraries, swimming pools and conference rooms in place of churches. Better, without a doubt, because churches are not only places that impart teaching that is injurious to human dignity, but are also occasions for reinforcing the most authoritarian and repressive forces. Very well, but if religion were to be suppressed by ministerial decree in the name of automatic thinking and we were to see this as positive because it is moving in the direction of freedom, i.e. moving towards a future that cannot fail to be anarchist, then we are mistaken.

Unfortunately it is by no means certain that history is moving towards anarchy. Bovio's phrase should be seen within the positivist ideology of his time. The struggle against religion must be carried out along with a struggle against the State. This cannot be delegated to a new kind of Bismarckian 'kulturrekampf'. It would turn out to be a tragedy like the first. The feelings of the oppressed would easily find the way to religion intended as comfort of the humble, hope of a better life, at least in the beyond, and, enhanced with an aura of martyrdom, the task of priests (of every kind) would be simplified. Nothing better for the resurgence of integrismes, with all their consequences of rigid conditioning, people who see the madonna, mass demonstrations, etc.

That is why a struggle against God and the Church, atheism and the consequent anticlericalism, must always start off from a correct class viewpoint. It must start from an analysis of economic reality that cannot be considered as something extraneous to be delegated to history that necessarily moves in the direction of progress. Intellectuals have always made this unsubstantiated claim. They think that they can limit themselves to a specific atheist or anticlerical critique, while it is up to others to interest themselves in concrete revolutionary action. That demonstrates the poverty and cowardice of intellectuals and those who, not being intellectuals due to their superficial dilettante studies, let themselves be fascinated without understanding.

Barbarism is not a thing of the past, it does not belong to a museum of horrors that we have put behind us, it strides alongside us. It is not only resurgent integrisme, neofascism or anti-Semitism, but is the new world order. This barbarism is mainly based on a discrimination that is becoming more and more evident, not only between countries, but also between classes within each State. A blind belief in a science that is incapable of saving man and perhaps even the planet is the barbarism that has quietly contributed to the accumulation of atomic weapons and lethal gases with the same inventive capacity with which it has produced new medicines and diseases. Ideas that support an animistic subterranean mechanism that has been digging away on account of the poor and exploited throughout the course of history is also barbarism. These are beliefs that cannot check spreading integrisme. All the great masses, especially in the Islamic and eastern countries, but also in Italy, who are reaching a vision of the world economic situation following the political modifications of the past few months, could fall victim to their own hopes and other people's swindles. The Algerian lays, with their corresponding moderates in other Islamic countries, cannot confront this wave of integrisme with ideological chatter, they can only do it by improving people's economic conditions. Often this is not done because international interests and objective conditions prevent any possibility of it happening.

Religious integrisme is also developing in eastern countries following the changes that came about in the 'actual' communist States, something quite different to communism as we mean it, but that's another question. Here, the thrust of Wojtilian integrisme is pushing various local versions to reappear including, indirectly, the Islamic version and the ensuing nationalist tensions are of considerable importance. There is also an awakening in Italy of integriste Catholicism in local movements that could grow and eventually link up with the Catholic movements.

A possible increase in religious integrisme should not be underestimated. We must develop effective instruments of critique in order to avoid the determinist equivocation that has always ended up furthering the constitution of State dictatorships (fascist and communist), or that of a scientific rationalism which has brought the world to the present conditions of impoverishment and destruction. We are up against a rebirth of religion not only in mass manifestations which indicate a state of ill-being, but also a reinforcing of the power of the various Churches, with all the negative consequences that the latter are always capable of.

That is why it is always good to begin to struggle right away without waiting for someone else to do it in our place.

Behind the Ghost of Carpentras

Anti-Semitism has expressed itself in various ways, both theoretically and in deed throughout the centuries. It has been built into historical and philosophical reflection aimed at showing the reasons for the hatred of a people considered a non-people, and expressed in practices of annihilation, pogroms and genocide.

This irrational movement of fear and uncertainty concerning the Jews has taken two forms throughout history. The first, more ancient and articulate, is religious, the second, more schematic and recent, is racist. If the outcome of these two aberrations has often been identical, the starting points or the use of certain means of attack and destruction against the people of ancient Israel now spread all over the world, were not.

I know that there is a Catholic 'blood theory' that was developed immediately after the Spanish 'conquest' with the aim of unmasking, conversions to Catholicism that were considered instrumental. But, within the ambit of Christian theology this was always subordinated to the theory that supported the idea of the 'great coup', i.e. the killing of God. On the other hand, the racist thesis developed in more recent times put forward pseudo-scientific claims in order to justify the need to destroy the Jews. Not only Jews, as in the same thesis it was also considered necessary to reduce people who were not Jews but were considered inferior, like the Slav peoples, to subhuman status. It has been said that the Nazis unleashed the third world war with the invasion of Russia because of a clash between methods (for example the presence of political commissars in the army, mass elimination of prisoners, etc.) and aims, i.e. vast movements of peoples, submitting masses of people to a condition of slavery, etc.

But only the Catholic anti-Semitic tradition has reserved particular attention to Jewish cemeteries. Behind the macabre, pointless and stupid gesture of Carpentras stands the whole Catholic culture of the past two thousand years. The practice of disinterring the dead was normal for Catholicism, and was used in the case of heretics whose corpse was disinterred and impaled on a suitable stand with the aim of proceeding to its trial before the tribunals of the Inquisition. Often, as Saint John Chrisostomo himself solicits, this was necessary in order to get rid of the corpses of converted Jews from consecrated places. There was subsequently proof (with what means you can imagine) of the instrumentality of the abjuration, their confession having been aimed at avoiding persecution. In this case the disinterred corpses were thrown en masse into a common grave beyond the sacred land and covered with limestone. As far as I can remember such practices of disinterment are also supported in the terrible letters of Saint Girolamo, one of the worst fanatics of Christian and Catholic hagiographics, and in the far more calm and thoughtful writings of Saint Ambrose, teacher and charmer of Saint Augustine.

Without going too far back in time, there is documentation of a sad debate held during the Second Vatican Council, where the proposal to remove the prayer 'Pro perfidis judacis' from Friday mass was met with many objections and gave rise to a kind of organic treatment of modern Catholic anti-Semitism

What is a Jew?

It is not easy to answer this question, nor do these old reflections claim to do so. The question, precisely because it can be developed in many ways, turns out to be badly phrased, at least for the rational mentality that we all carry with us like a shopping bag.

It is easier to answer questions like: what does the Jew do? What is his religious, political, cultural, social, sexual behaviour like? Many have amused themselves by attempting to answer all these questions. Sociology is the science that has an answer for every stupid question.

Yet, deep down, there is still a certain uneasiness in many of us. Old and not so old reading matter, especially novels with personages from Rebecca to Rocambole are there to suggest a particular figure to us. We can almost see this figure, follow it in our mind's eye. The way this disquieting picture presents itself creates a certain apprehension. The Jew does not emerge very well from this sketch. For goodness sake, we are democratic, possibilist and anti-racist before anything else. We are also progressive. In a word, we are good people of the left, respectful of equality and ready to openly defend the oppressed with all our strength. Yet there is a subtle feeling of uneasiness inside us. The fact is that we understand why the Jew has always been degraded, humiliated, hunted down, killed. We understand, but we don't know how to explain it exactly.

There must be something about the Jew. That is the conclusion we come to. And it is this conviction, something obscure and never quite revealed in detail, that underlies anti-Semitism.

I don't hate Jews. I even find it hard to imagine how it was possible first to theorise, then put into practice, their systematic extermination. My blood runs cold when I come across some barely legible anti-Jewish piece of writing, yet I can't get rid of this uneasiness.

I know perfectly well that Jews are men like everyone else, that they share the same passions as the rest, make the same mistakes. There are rich and poor Jews like everyone else in the world, intelligent and stupid, according to how original chaos decided in the absolute lack of rules and predestination.

I know all that, but I don't feel comfortable all the same. Jews are mean. Come on, let's be serious! What kind of talk is that? I put it aside. There's no doubt that this is stupid nonsense, but I hear it around me repeatedly, on the tram, or in the emphatically democratic elaboration of gossip known as mass media. This generalisation strengthens my idea (who knows when I heard this about being mean for the first time), it must go back to my childhood. Jews are mean. For goodness sake! Enough of this rubbish. And yet, there's no bad joke anywhere that doesn't make reference to this. Comrades make no exception, except in cases where they gruffly raise their heads, unsmiling. They are just being politically correct, but that's another story. And the Scottish, and the Genovese? They are also mean. Who has not had such an experience in life? Nearly everyone, and nearly everyone will tell you that they have found, equally distributed, spendthrift Genovese and mean Genovese, and will laugh at the joke 'if a Genovese throws himself out of the window, follow him'. But nobody laughs if the same joke is made about a Jew. Here there is something that stops us.

It would be wrong to think that these preoccupations are unimportant. In fact, they are part of the weaponry of ridicule that has been put into effect for centuries by anti-Semitism, along with stories about a God-killing people and the Jews' hatred of the world that is not Jewish like themselves. There is no reasoning behind these statements, and on the other hand, no reasoning would ever be able to refute it entirely.

To say that the Jews are not a race is to say something so obvious as to be absolutely stupid. We can simply look at the heterogeneity of the components that make up Israel today to see that immediately. Yet not only anti-Semites but many people who do not have any specific ideas about Jews but are just generally suspicious of them, as always happens with those one doesn't know, consider them a separate race. Separate, that's the point.

Even the Jews themselves don't consider themselves a race, but they do indeed consider themselves to be something separate. Try to say that the Jews are the same as everybody else and you will see that. Although for some this is simply a banality, for others it is a gross mistake, and the Jews themselves are among them. In a word, the Jew does not consider himself to be like other people. First of all, before being a human being he is always a Jew: he is a Jewish human being.

This fact is linked to his Jewish religion and, in particular, to the peculiar force with which tradition is expressed in this religion. The main, profoundly comic, thesis of anti-Semitism is that a German Jew could never understand Goethe because he is extraneous to the Germanic spirit, or for the same reason a French Jew could never understand Racine. Yet exactly the opposite thesis seems to me to be more founded, that which says, here for the first time as far as I know, that anyone who is not Jewish cannot imagine the spirit of Hebraism.

Just because the Prussian anarchist revolutionary Rucker studied Yiddish to organise the London Jews does not mean to say that he understood the problem of Hebraism.

And so the thesis maintained by Sartre in his time that the Jew is a man whom others consider to be Jewish, is partly true.

Isolation, the ghettos, the exclusive attribute originally granted by the Christian church of being allowed, to deal in money, others' contempt, all that does not make up the Jew. This is just what anti-Semitism uses to build 'its' imaginary figure of the latter. The rest they do themselves, and it is this rest that we have to bear in mind.

They say that the Jew cannot constitute a religious unit because his story over 25 centuries has been studded with continual dissolutions. They say that instead of effective links, i.e. relationships that materialise in actual communities and not just in the fictitious solution of some political State or other, there have always been sentimental bonds between groups. At times these have been quite fantastic, ideal links. Compared to a strong religion like Christianity that was capable of facing the reforms and fractures with the East without losing its essence and strengthened itself both as a whole and as a political force, Hebraism has become more and more spiritual in an intimist religion with a strong symbolic force. This permits the life of political groupings around it, borrowing them from its own surly integrative totalitarianism.

These analyses are mainly mistaken. They are mistaken in that in the various Diaspora, from Babylonian captivity to Persian domination, up to the Roman conquest, then throughout history in various local historical situations, the Jews have always kept a separate identity. This identity has been saved almost exclusively due to the religious filter. According to some, western analyses with an evolved political viewpoint such as that of the perspicacious Machievelli, instead of weakening the various communities strengthened them, but in their own way. The original Christian movement had already made a radical distinction between Jewish migratory groups and those in Judea and the prevalence of an extremely intimist religious form, considered weak by the usual political analysts. This was so weak that it turns out to have been capable of going through the whole of the Middle Ages and conveying great wealth of ideas, art, experience of life, theological and mystic reflections, a heritage that permeates the whole of Hebraism in spite of migratory repartition.

Gradually tradition takes the place of national heritage as such. The German Jew felt German and was shocked by his radical enucleation from the social body carried out at the hands of the Nazis. But this feeling German belonged to a kind of separate, public sphere, and in more intimate, far stronger sphere he felt Jewish.

In fact, right from the first phase in the constitution of the Israeli State most Jews never felt a lack of an effective historical base. On the contrary, they experienced an immediate, uninterrupted link with the places of the promised land. They only grasped the sign of the return and the prophecy maintained, the great confirmation of how much this was an inevitable sign of God in the same way as the catastrophes of the Diaspora and the Holocaust were also signs of the particular relationship of God with his chosen people.

Here it is interesting to say something about the rationalist revolt that lasted from the middle of the last century to the early decades of this one. This is the *haskalah* (culture) movement. The clash between this movement of poets, musicians, mathematicians, scientists and historians and the supporters of the Jewish tradition was hard and led to publishing aimed at rationally examining events of everyday life. They also took their critique to within the walls of the ghettos, at times with a crude but effective realism. The thrust towards a better, more just, spiritually enriched world contrasted dramatically with crude descriptions of the grey reality of the ghetto made up of humiliation and a flattening of religious tradition. We can understand this contrast better through the satire of Jehudah Loeb Gordon, Joseph Pel and Ischq Ertel, who attack the superstitious and ridiculous sides of the cult. The review by Peres Smolenskin, "Ha-Shachar", "The Morning", sketches the panorama of the Russian Jewish ghettos and attacks not only aspects of religious fanaticism, but also the disturbing sides of their model of daily life. Yet this satire did not reach the crux of the question, it did not touch the presumed 'revelation' of the absolute God who leads Israel to victory. No critic ever dared push himself so far. Even the atheist writings of Roger Martin du Gard prefer to attack Christianity, particularly Catholicism, but never touch the Talmud. In the numerous anticlerical writings of the Jews the rabbi is never taken into consideration.

Already, with the intensification of the pogroms at the end of the last century, especially in Russia, this critical literary vein began to dampen its style. A re-evaluation of the traditional values of Hebraism began to take over, and it

is easy to understand why: in the face of repression and catastrophe the Jews find themselves united yet again, precisely in the Holocaust.

The heirs of the *haskalah* were thus the initiators of the *Hibbat Sion* Love of Zion movement which was to adopt an increasingly nationalist outlook. One of the main ideologues of Zionism is the Ukrainian Ahad ha'am (Asher Ginzberg) who in his book *Al Parashat Derakim* (At the Crossroads), founded Zionism in its spiritual and theoretical aspect. Being a continuation of critical rationalism this nationalist vein also includes a critique of Jewish daily life, even using a certain humour concerning the average Jew's way of thinking, underlining the tics and many of the paradoxical aspects that I mentioned earlier.

Unity continued to grow from strength to strength in the land of Palestine. Not just political unity, which perhaps did not correspond with the hopes of the early colonists, the only ones who deserve this name, but community-based, social and religious. This last point, which has never been fully examined by the so-called lay writers of the movement of the national rebirth, has now become absolutely prevalent.

It seems to me to be more exact to say that the Jew is he who considers himself Jewish and therefore acts and behaves on the basis of his Jewish consciousness. In this the religious motive has an essential, if not dominant, place. To reinforce his conviction of being Jewish is also, and this is not of a secondary importance, the behaviour of others who, in considering him such adopt certain attitudes towards him that give the original aspects the consolidation of a real social status.

To take the Jewish condition from the Jew, his life in that tradition, his feeling of belonging to an ideal and religious rather than national community even when he does not physically find himself in the State of Israel, would be to alienate him. And to do that could be just as disastrous an operation as that which attempts to reduce the differences between men in the name of a badly understood egalitarianism.

Equality is an idea based on justice, freedom and truth. Like all ideas which really are such and are not just the fruit of opinions put in motion by the game of daily information, it must continually be made one's own. There is no final definition, position to be taken, or programmatic declaration. In a word, there is nothing that can absolutely close him up in a formula that is valid once and for all. Nothing can make the Jew become equal to me. I am not Jewish, I lack that strong experience, that intimate connection with something that is other than the possible religious experiences that I have in my non Jewish world. And I cannot substitute this lack with the simple decision to read the texts of the Hasidim or the myths of the cabbalah. The exceptional fact, and I think that every Jew would agree with me, is that I am not Jewish.

The Kibbutz Movement

The kibbutz movement spread like wildfire with the increase in the arrival of Jews in the land of Palestine after the end of the second world war. What had begun as an experiment became a serious attempt to restructure society on the basis of linking up new organisational models. These models used theoretical and practical experiences of the past, but found themselves faced with quite a new problem due to the considerable dimensions that it was beginning to take.

In this way the communitarian village was born, productive communities proposing an integration of agriculture, industry and crafts. These communes united in a confederation, thereby overcoming the problem of isolation, one of the points considered by Kropotkin to be a reason for the non-functioning of communes.

A number of theoretical and practical experiences precede this communitarian village, but much was improvised by the colons who, at least in the beginning, also tried to make the Palestinian Arab people participate fully in their initiatives. Dreams abound in this early stage. Utopian fantasy also: a new society seems to be dawning, based on new family and personal relationships. A new human being, a new world perhaps, were the more or less declared objectives.

The first pioneers, the *Chaluzim*, had something of the sort in mind both in theory and in practice. But right from the start there was a contradiction in this network of free communities that wanted to extend over the whole territory. Even then it was possible to see the appearance of the national idea, the reconstitution of the Jewish State on a territorial and national basis, sowing the seeds of every future evil.

The fact that many of these *Chaluzim* had socialist aspirations is not as important as has often been maintained. The theories of Owen and King were also present along with those of Proudhon, Kropotkin and Landauer, who were far more important for this specific question. But that is not the point.

The *kwuza*, village communities, were thus destined to be absorbed by the State and to follow, albeit in a different way, the tragic destiny of the Spanish collectives. Kropotkin's theories on the Russian *mir* and *artel*, the reading of Marx's and his attempts to explain the functioning and destiny of the agricultural communities (important are the replies to the questions of Vera Zasulic), were not sufficient to resolve the problems posed by the new reality. State englobement became inevitable when the *kwuza* stopped creating new interests and producing a real communitarian life rich in problems but capable of finding solutions. By adapting to simply carrying out daily tasks the initial impulse gradually burnt itself out. As soon as the *Chaluziut* began to be self-satisfied, i.e. a little elite which claimed to be the original colonisers, defeat was not long in arriving.

This broke out with the increment of the crisis in the whole settlement in the land of Palestine. The country of the *aliya* the ascent, became the country of the enrichment of little groups with no ideals. Alongside the original *Chaluziut*, who still had a clear vision of their own socialist motivation, another incomplete *Chaluziut* gradually emerged that simply wanted a better standard of living in the land considered to be 'of their fathers'. The racist division between Ashkenazi and Sephardi became more and more evident and important as the arrival of black Jews increased. As the communities grew and differentiated themselves, they became more and more detached from their original ideals.

Not that these new arrivals did not fulfil their obligation to work. On the contrary, the Sephardim were often the most radical in their commitment made (also when they become policemen they are among the most rigid and adhere closest to the rules). But their main interest was their own survival, here and now, in the best possible way. They also had to avoid the risk of failure which would have forced them to return to their land of origin where only death awaited them. At first there were ideals of communitarian federalist socialism in many of these productive structures, let's say of a new stamp. These were coordinated nationally, saw the participation of the Palestinian Arabs and were without the presence of a State, but were soon to disappear.

We must not think that this condition only applies to the Kibbutzim; the *moschawim* industrial working colonies, found themselves in a similar situation. Many of them have abandoned their original, individualist composition. This is not in order to establish a deeper agreement with and become socially federated with other similar forms, but on the contrary so as to establish a direct relationship with and therefore direct subsidy from, the Israeli State.

Of all that went before, only the ashes remain.

[1986]

Communes, from experimentation to survival

Here at the end of the eighties there has been a move towards communes as an alternative lifestyle running parallel to increasing difficulties in the social struggle. The road to revolution seems to be blocked, with no victory of progressive and revolutionary forces over conservative State reaction in view. So these communes are not just considered ideal situations, they claim to satisfy fundamental personal and collective needs, or have ethnic and cultural motivation. In a word, they have become a point of reference for many, away from the traditional division between the personal and political.

It cannot be denied that behind these alternative desires there had been a growing need for diversity. As hopes for a profound change in the social structure disappeared, there was concern not to let oneself be submerged by rampant restructuring and spreading desistence. Consequently there has been a tendency to continue the struggle by respecting one's own basic needs.

Talking of the Comunidad del sur, Ruben Prieto says, 'These new societal formations organise social action to self-manage funds, production and consumption, as well as various services, or come together on the basis of particular needs. Through all this, in a way marginal (but at the same time opposed to dominant values and the power apparatus) ferment, one can see the emergence of a new credible and verifiable utopian discourse. In their most radical realisation, communes aim to promote individual identity and free organisational forms, a re-evaluation of autonomy, participation and creativity, and lack of faith in any project of development based on the technologies of capitalist development, with a strong accent on the culture of daily life, action from the base to the vertex and the particular to the general'. R. Prieto, 'La Comunidad del sur' in *Volontà* n. 3, 1989, p.56)

It is possible to draw very general principles from this passage that anyone could agree with precisely because they are not specific. Basically, what should characterise a commune that is separate from State interference should be its diversity, i.e. the diversity of its aims, not its simple existence as a commune separate from the rest of the social system. What we are saying might seem banal but it actually touches on the most important aspect of the problem. The question today is not so much whether to live in a commune or not, something that also has its difficult side — and its going against the prevailing model of normality. It means living in a different way, living one's life differently. It does not mean that one simply lives the same life as the slaves of capital at a different, often worse, pace, making individual efforts that often amount to super-exploitation under other names and ideologies.

I think that the problem of communes needs to be gone into in depth. For example, the next step could be to look at the problem from the outside. The commune is all very well, but for what? Now we are reaching the crux of the matter. A productive, agricultural or city commune, could become a survival community. By working at it this objective could more or less be achieved. But what objective exactly? The reproduction of oneself as a working animal, producer, that's all, only the other side of the ghetto. There must be an ideal in our motivation, something more than a mere call to struggle against the State and society. It is vital that this pulsion, this utopian thrust, be inherent in the communitarian dimension if we choose such an instrument. We must have chosen this instrument because through it we want to come out from society and upset others with our diversity — all others, even those who know nothing about communitarian organisation. But our diversity cannot simply be summed up in belonging to a commune because such an existence is nearly always so miserable as to incite pity rather than set an example. It must therefore be something else.

The following passage by Buenfil shows how far one is from the problem raised here: "The ecological society will necessarily be egalitarian and decentralised, not hierarchical. It is in this context that the project of new kinds of social groups, communes and communities, civil voluntary associations and networks of cooperatives exist. Up until now it was thought that it is best to carry out such experiments in the country. Instead we must start to conceive them in the cities, as collectives, consumers' and artisans' cooperatives, new tribes, bands, area associations, workers' councils, holistic schools and clinics. In this way it will be possible to build a parallel society that replaces the competitive nuclear, ecocide, militarised, super-industrialised and imperialist society pacifically (A. R. Buenfil, "I tempi delle comuni" in *Volontà* no. 3/1989, p. 108-109.)There, this passage being ideological, superficial, philosophically necessitated and stupidly mechanistic, it amounts to the most limited and insignificant that can be said on the subject at the present time.

All that not being possible, there being nothing to put peacefully in place of society, or the State that defends it militarily as though it were an old woman whose chair one was trying to steal. We are left with the question: what should the diversity of communitarian life consist of, given that it cannot simply be the commune itself, which is not diversity at all? The communes of the past century and their supporters were aware of this problem and addressed all their efforts in that direction. For example, free love became a problem within the problem, a utopia within the technical problem of keeping the community going.

[1989]

Untitled

I

Too much light that night. We needed the darkness of accomplice short-cuts, solitary paths, to lift one's hand, to find the courage to lift one's hand and make darkness in one's heart.

II

How quell the hatred if there is only them, other than the forgotten lies and weakness? Wondrously spellbound, move forward with trembling lantern, full of curiosity, learning, knowing. But it is the song of the frogs that takes me back into the mud, from where I have not moved for a long time, waiting, like the snake.

III

Recurring liturgies expand time in the ceremonial, awaiting the miracle that transforms steel into love. An idea of beauty, from the single drops of nitroglycerine. Silence. I put the pieces carefully back into the sheaths, it will be for another time.

IV

The black wing of the crow has glittered enough. Now that the light is coming I see the far off window clearly, a breach in the almost destroyed building. A shadow mourns the death of his friend, then he gets up and looks at the sun low on the horizon before dying in turn.

V

Too slow, she ended up sitting on the ground, adjusting the little dress over her infirm legs. It seemed she wasn't breathing, immobile amongst the fallen leaves of the high branches. The shadow hid the irrevocable tears.

VI

In the end we remained alone, waiting. We had to telephone, before it was too late. The other was silent, looking at the lighthouse not far away, the lighthouse of dreams, closed from all sides. High sunlit walls underlined the jarring lack of light. Life was dying in there; if life is hope there was none left in there. Only the logic of the torturers.

VII

Good causes are not recognised. If you look them carefully in the face, they are no longer good. They suffocate with justification that had not been requested, they beg to stay on the surface, not to push the knife in, or cry.

VIII

Backs to the wall, surrounded on all sides, at the bend in the road after the bridge, not a chance, and they are happy.

Postface

The two latest decisions of Netanyahu's Israeli government were to extend the Jews' settling from the East to places West of the city of Jerusalem occupied by the Arab Palestinians, and to continue to favour the settling of new colons in the occupied territories.

On the purely political level of international politics, these two decisions were resolved in net violation of the Oslo agreements, which does not surprise us in the least. There is not one agreement with the United States and the European Union, that Israel has not failed to comply with in its strategy of its own reinforcement and the destruction of the Palestinian people, and here we will make no particular note of it here.

But these two decisions, at a time when world political signals seemed to be advising Netanyahu to soften his falcon politics, lead us to understand, better than any theoretical discourse, what this government is about, what price the Israeli State is disposed to pay to keep true to its own military and religious programmes.

The only move that the powerful United States have managed to make (the Jewish lobby in that country remains strong and continues to condition this kind of decision) was that of bland dissent from this war politic, declaring themselves extraneous to it (at least in words) and suggesting to the European Union to do something to dissuade the Israelis from going ahead, without however taking too extreme measures such as an embargo like that put on Libya and Iraq.

In fact, at this moment The West Bank and Gaza are under a statute of dependence on Israel and, from the economic point of view, they have transformed themselves into an a bottomless pit that costs far more that what the collaborating European States, and Israel itself, on the financial level, should be disposed to paying.

But Israel cannot budge even a centimetre. Its whole politic, especially over the past few years, seems to the eyes of the so-called objective observer, to be suicide, and in fact it is, but it is not so for a Jew.

No need to comment on the mistake of thinking that things would be any different if in place of a right in Israel there was a left. It would be the same, perhaps in a less rigid way more fitting to the weak position of this anomalous State on the chessboard of international equilibrium.

That clears the chatter of those who consider possible an alternative to the Israeli situation, while leaving the unshakeable theocentric characteristics of this State standing. Off the two: either the theocentric Israeli State disappears, giving life to another federalist kind of formation that is open to the possibility of a communitarian cohabitation with the Arab Palestinians and eventually with other peoples, or the Jews will be moving towards a catastrophe once again.

But perhaps the *shoah* is precisely what they are waiting for, according to the forecasts of their profits. How can you disavow them?

Elephant Archives

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Palestine, mon amour

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