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Israeli state

**“To put on the same level the executioner and the victim, the coloniser and the colonised, is the key formula of international diplomacy - and the reason for its impotence”.**

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**This interview with anti-Zionist activist Michel Warschawski was conducted by Alain Pojolat and Alain Krivine and published in *L'Anticapitaliste*, weekly newspaper of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) on January 12 2017.**

**Netanyahu is likely to be charged with “abuse of confidence” in the affair of the “illegal presents” (worth tens of thousands of euros) which he is said to have received from businessmen... How is public opinion reacting?**

On this subject, as on everything else, public opinion is divided in two. There are on the one hand those who are shocked – but not surprised – by the degree of corruption of the political class, in particular the circle around the Prime Minister, and on the other hand a majority of the population that considers these affairs to be aimed at the delegitimisation, by those that they call “the élites” of a government elected by the people against the will of these élites. The media, the judicial system, and to a certain extent the police, are for the electorate of the far right the expression of these élites, and that is the reason for the decision by the Minister of Justice, Ayelet Shaked, to reform profoundly the judicial system so that it will “reflect more the will of the majority”.

It is not an exaggeration to say that we are in a period of transition of the political regime, to the detriment of both the rules of a parliamentary regime and public liberties, starting with those of the Palestinian minority in Israel and its elected representatives.

The increase in poverty is undeniable, with a third of Israeli children living under the poverty line. Having said that, the poverty of the majority does not mean, and this is certainly the case under capitalism, a bad economic situation. Compared to the European economies, Israel's is performing well: a rate of growth higher than most of the countries of the OCDE, a rate of unemployment that is under 4%, a balanced budget, the export of capital and advanced technology to the entire world – Israel is not experiencing a crisis, its economy is listed AAA by the international rating agencies. In neo-liberal capitalism, an economy that performs well is not in contradiction with an increase in the number of poor people, quite the contrary.

**On the international level, the situation is not brilliant. What can be the consequences of the vote of the UN Security Council on December 23, which for the first time in decades demanded a stop to colonisation?**

The vote by the Security Council against the colonisation of the West Bank is first of all a reflection of the frustration of the entire international community with Israel's intransigence, the arrogance of its leaders and their deafness to the widespread warnings of countries that have friendly relations with the Jewish state. The growing isolation of Israel on the international scene could be got round because of the unconditional support of US administrations, both Democrat and Republican.

The decision by Barack Obama not to use the right of veto is a first: although the UN General Assembly has adopted dozens of resolutions against Israel's colonial policy, it is the first time since 1983 that the Security Council has voted against Israel without coming up against the obstacle of the US veto. On the eve of his departure, Obama wanted to make Israel pay for the numerous humiliations that he had suffered at the hands of the Netanyahu governments. Let us remember however that in the face of these humiliations - including in front of the US Congress - Obama did not bear grudges: two months ago he signed a treaty of military cooperation worth 35 billion dollars over the next decade. Netanyahu's thanks were forced, and he did not hesitate to say that he was waiting impatiently for the victory of Donald Trump.

**On January 15 a conference for peace in the Middle East will be held in Paris. Israel will not take part in it. What outcome can it have?**

Initiated by France, the international conference for peace in the Middle East will have absolutely no outcome, and Israel has already announced that it will not take part in it, not being afraid thus to humiliate the French authorities. If Obama did not succeed in getting the Israeli government to move an inch, Jean-Marc Ayrault will not be the one to do it...

Having said that, the Paris conference can be another occasion to put the Israeli colonial state in the dock for its repeated violation of international law and the human rights of the Palestinians. Let us not dream: everything will be done to remain at what our Belgian comrades call "equidistance", sharing out responsibility between the "two parties" and never forgetting to denounce the so-called Palestinian violence; To put on the same level the executioner and the victim, the coloniser and the colonised, is the key formula of international diplomacy – and the reason for its impotence.

**Don't the internal difficulties and the complicated diplomatic context provide a new opportunity for the BDS campaign? Beyond that, what perspectives can that open out for solidarity with Palestine?**

The most important problem that is posed by international diplomacy concerning the Palestinian question is not so much the positions adopted – the resolution of the Security Council confirms it – as the refusal to translate these resolutions into effective means of pressure. The so-called international community leaves Israel with a status of impunity for its crimes.

It is in this context that the capital importance of the BDS campaign lies: if there was an "S", in other words if the international community used "sanctions" – as it has often done, whether against apartheid in South Africa or against the repression of democratic liberties in China – there would be no need for a "B" (boycott) or a "D" (disinvestment), and our battle for the rights of the Palestinians would be close to being won. It is the cowardice of the international community, and often even its collusion with the Israeli colonial regime, that demands the active mobilisation of societies, through the BDS campaign. And this campaign has taken, in ten years, considerable steps forward: from the boycott of "Jaffa" oranges to the disinvestment of Orange from its contract with its former Israeli partner, or the breaking of the partnership between the Dutch water company and Mekorot, the Israeli water company.

The popular pressure on governments to take strong diplomatic initiatives is important, even though it does not yet go beyond the stage of declarations. But to make Israel give way, much more is necessary, we need the implementation of concrete sanctions, in the economic and commercial, but also cultural, university and sporting domains. That is also a lesson from the experience of the South African people.

To conclude this interview, I would like to insist on the necessity to make, in France as well as elsewhere in Europe, a further effort to build the movement of solidarity with Palestine. The collapse, programmed by the neo-conservatives, of the Sykes-Picot order in the Middle East, has created a vacuum that is being filled by the new barbarians that Daesh represents. This regional reality has the effect of marginalising the Palestinian question. However, it remains the key, if not to the political reality of the region, at least to the possibility of a progressive solution of it. Although we cannot and must not reduce the problems of the world, whether in Aleppo or in Brussels, to the Palestinian question alone, it remains nevertheless the case that this question is still a running sore, which if it is not dealt with will continue to be a source not only of combats for justice, but also of them evolving in a barbaric terrorist direction.