

For the bad side of history

Translations of anti-war
and internationalist orientation

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Presentation of the revdef initiative

The translation initiative *revdef* was constituted around August of 2024 by individuals that participate in the Fabrika Yfanet squat or one of the groups that are part of the FY Squat Community. The creation of the initiative was triggered by a shared concern regarding the critical urgency of the war and its spreading, the rise of nationalism and the rise and dominance of anti-imperialist and national liberation ideologies in the public sphere. Furthermore, the war in Palestine and the massacre in Gaza have forced us to ask ourselves what constitutes internationalist practice today. We have undertaken a series of translations to serve as a starting point for a more structured discussion on a number of thorny issues. The texts we selected consist of anti-war and internationalist statements, analyses of the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as texts critical of the movement. A first draft of four of the translations was presented and discussed at two meetings in November 2024 in Thessaloniki. These texts can be found on the Fabrika Yfanet website (revdef, 2024).

After these meetings and the conclusion of a first cycle, we decided to complete this collection of texts with the translation of Walter Hanser's *Israel, Palästina und der Universalismus*, Sa'ed Atshan's *LGBTQ Palestinians and the Politics of the Ordinary*, and *Critical Theory and the Critique of Anti-Imperialism* by Marcel Stoetzler. The outcome of all these discussions is the publication at hand. Under normal circumstances, we would not need to point it out, but for some time now, nothing can be taken for granted: this publication does not seek to present "the position", but to serve as one contribution, among others, towards the development and strengthening of internationalist perspectives within the public sphere of the movement.

revdef, April 29, 2025

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Introduction by revdef

Feudalism also had its proletariat — serfdom, which contained all the germs of the bourgeoisie. Feudal production also had two antagonistic elements which are likewise designated by the name of the *good side* and the *bad side* of feudalism, irrespective of the fact that it is always the bad side that in the end triumphs over the good side. It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle.

—Karl Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*

Facing the merciless devastation that rages on in Gaza, where death and desolation run amok, one is forced to deal with the fact that voices attempting a wider reaching elucidation regarding the events seem to be destined to stay mute. The uncontested military superiority of the state of Israel determines beyond any doubt the balance of forces, and solidarity towards Palestine takes the form of a self-evident moral credo. As indignation, pain and grief take the lead, qualms regarding the absolute and non-critical support for the Palestinian cause are often regarded as undermining, while attempts at critical dialogue are considered treacherous. Going beyond this uneasy situation is a precondition for a substantial political reflection and for freeing oneself from dogmatic viewpoints. Especially when this uneasiness pertains not only to expressing oneself, but also to admitting one's own discomfort for a world that needs absolute certainties.

What kind of legacy will the radical movement in Greece bequeath if, beyond the hecatombs of Palestinians killed by IDF operations, it does not also acknowledge the twelve hundred victims of October 7 as its own dead? What sort of imaginary does a call for a “victory to the arms” of a misogynistic and theocratic formation like Hamas create? What does relativizing the sexualized and gendered violence that was unleashed on Israeli bodies mean for the queer and feminist movement? What does choosing sides between two opposing authoritarian structures purely in terms of their relation of power mean for the perspective of an anti-capitalist and anti-war movement? How could one even hint at the reactionary history of Thessaloniki again, if any stance against antisemitism is from now on by default conflated with aligning oneself with the state of Israel or with islamophobic viewpoints?

Radical movements, shaped as they are by social and class contradictions, continuously adjust their praxis to the concrete conjuncture. Staying active is not merely an ideological but also an existential necessity, since inactivity spells historical death. The ways movements adapt to changing circumstances reflect the ongoing struggle between radicalization and integration, and to a large degree determines their future. Conversely, stagnation or disillusionment is not merely a problem of low morale but an objective reflection of the balance of forces: defeats, institutional co-optation, state repression, or even historical moments when capitalist hegemony appears absolute, such as, perhaps, the present one. Under such conditions the sense of impasse intensifies and preexisting narratives of revolutionary prospects come to seem unrealistic.

Radicalism does not sprout forth out of social crises automatically. The ways subjects become active and act—either individually or collectively—when triggered by a crisis-laden social moment is the outcome of multiple factors. Certain aspects are foregrounded while others recede, some issues are prioritized and others sidelined, certain events are amplified and others silenced. It is a complex process that emerges from the dialectic between material conditions, conjuncture, ideology, contingency, interests and desires, a process that can lead to shifts and transformations without this being *de facto* good or bad. The crucial question that arises, however, is whether this transformation, under the historical weight of the present conjuncture, namely a war with thousands of dead, tortured and generalized devastation, results in a retreat in relation to content and to tools that, in prior moments, had been in use, and whether this retreat slides into a broader conservative or reactionary turn.

We recognize the scale of violence, pain and death. We are every bit as anguished, despairing, and enraged as the multitudes who shout “Free Palestine!”, all the more so when the murderous actions of the state of Israel and of the states that back it, Greece included, wreak havoc levelling everything they encounter on their path. Facing this conundrum many comrades regress to the ideas of good old Leninism. We remain intransigent and repeat: like every collision of nationalisms, the war raging in Palestine is a clash of bourgeois projects aimed at subjugating the exploited. Whatever the outcome, the blood-tax will once again be paid by the proletarians on both sides. We treat all the dead of this war as our own. Its first casualty

is the prospect of internationalist coexistence and common struggle between Palestinian and Israeli proletarians. And its greatest loss is the withering of every emancipatory horizon for the proletarian and queer refusals on both sides. The internationalist perspective does not advance by supporting or fostering nationalisms.

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The internationalist perspective, however, did not arise historically by drafting political programs in the abstract. What preceded was an unparalleled political bankruptcy of the organized global Left, an unprecedented capitulation of all forces that had dreamed of another world relative to the existing order, and an almost universal alignment of populations and political personnel of every stripe and type with the wartime restructuring of societies, on the stage of operations called “the Great War” and, later, by necessity, the *First World War*. The internationalist orientation, the horizon towards universalism, the battle cry of turning the war into a civil war, into a class confrontation, was a concern of tiny nuclei amid a general political collapse: “the internationalists could fit into two carriages,” Leon Trotsky remarked back in 1915. The internationalist perspective, not for a handful of hard-liners but for broad strata, emerged as a real historical force under the most abominable conditions, only after all other solutions had been tried and failed. It was forged in the trenches, under cross-fire, with no respite from the asphyxiating gases, breathing the stench of corpses, amid dismembered bodies, when hope of ending the horror had itself died. It is the historical moment when the barrels of the rifles swing one-hundred-and-eighty degrees and take aim at the officers; the moment when regimental badges are torn off, fronts collapse, and deserters return to the places they came from, now knowing who their true enemy really is. It is the moment when, behind the lines, the industrial war-machine breaks down, through strikes at the munition plants, and looting and sharing where rationed goods are distributed. These practices, and countless others in the same constellation, have been encoded as *revolutionary defeatism*. Truth being told, this explosion of 1916-1918 did not reappear on a comparable or greater scale in the wars that followed and scarred the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In the immediate period we are living through, moments such as the desertions on the Ukrainian fronts and in the ranks of Hezbollah, the torching of conscription offices in Russia, the draft resisters in Israel, the marches against Hamas, any attempt to flee any warzone whatsoever, all show that defeatism continues to leave its mark here and there —faint imprints on the historical continuum that still allow us a glimpse of hope. The major shifts in the organic composition of capital, including military capital, in the overall class composition of populations and in the characteristics of migratory flows are among the factors that lead us to think that, should revolutionary defeatism reappear as a social force in the twenty-first century, it will not take the form it had in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It is not the task of this or that groupuscule to define in advance the exact content and form of a defeatist program for the 21st century nor, even more absurdly, to carry it out. Instead, we search and track the traces of the internationalist perspective within the historical reality we are living, trying to shed light to their meaning and scope. We might even perhaps manage to set up some signposts for future internationalist use —signposts that will be, in any case, extremely hard to decipher amidst the torrential flood that today’s public sphere has become.¹

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A string of events and outcomes shows that our era is generating the historical conditions for a generalized eruption of war or, at the very least, for a wholesale re-ordering of societies as if they must brace themselves for that prospect. The international “drift to the right”, visible in the authoritarian turn of political systems and large sections of the population, cuts across the Western world and manifests in a number of transformations in every dimension of the social field. With the recently announced EU-wide rearmament programme, ReArm Europe, the fiscal rules that, until yesterday, were taboo for European political elites are relegated to second place. The Rearm

1. “The proletarians in uniform as well as without uniform in the Russian and Ukrainian regions who today turn their weapons against their military leaders, who desert from “their own” armies, who protest against “their own” States and who organize internationalist networks of solidarity with the deserters, are the concrete and current example of revolutionary defeatism. The example to be followed by the proletarians of the Middle East and other war-torn regions of the planet.” (Proletarios Hartos de Serlo, 2024).

Europe programme is coupled with a reopening of the debate on the character of military conscription in Northern Europe. Developments in the United States are redrawing the political and social map and dismantling a series of safeguards that were supposed to be self-evident gains of modern democracies. In the absence of better terms, we can only describe, provisionally, the emerging situation with a word borrowed from the past: *fascistization*. The rollback of the previous cycle of globalization into a more fragile equilibrium, marked by a crisis of U.S. hegemony and its frantic efforts to defend it, confirms the hypothesis that we are on the verge of a transition to a new cycle of capitalist regulation. Nothing guarantees that such a transition will be smooth; on the contrary, everything points to emerging historical deadlocks, whose resolution may well be violent. At the same time, attempts at an authoritarian reimposition of the gendered division of labour, the development of a biopower suited to the preparation of populations for war, new enclosures, and the acceleration of environmental destruction through the resurgent use of fossil fuels in the U.S. and extractivism worldwide complete the terrain in which we nevertheless must find our proper orientation and act.

The policies of the inter-state blocs of power interlock, through asynchronous feedback loops, with the shifts taking place at the level of society:

And like the weapons which must be produced for war, minds must be moulded for the same purpose. Our rulers want us to admire soldiers, glorify battlefield victories, wave national flags and be convinced that fighting for justice means supporting one side against the other in inter-imperialist conflicts, which all wars are today. Siding with the nation always means siding with the ruling class of the nation, the managers or would-be managers of its capital (Internationalist Perspective, 2023).

Populations groomed for war demand the apotheosis of masculinity and motherhood: a reactionary demand that emerged socially as a response to feminist and queer struggles and to the upheavals in gender arrangements they succeeded in bringing about. The response to the uprisings of the racialized populations in the United States was the regroupment of the white race, with the conviction that it alone can guarantee the stability of the country. What in other, more hopeful periods had been called the “era of riots”, resulted in states reorga-

nizing their police forces and the signing a new social contract with the class of owners so that every new insurgent phenomenon would be suppressed at its birth. Finally, the Arab Spring died amid the apotheosis of militarism.

Everything mentioned above should not be treated as a string of isolated incidents lined up next to each other. On the contrary, they form the continuous spectrum of the conjuncture. Moreover, their interconnection is not an aspect that is overlooked by the political elites; rather, it is a dimension they actively pursue. To give just one example, the Vice President of the United States, J. D. Vance, recently stated that a favourable trade agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom —one that would bypass the tariff deluge— hinges upon the repeal of legislation concerning LGBTQI rights and the reimposition of a gender binary with “biological” characteristics by the government of the United Kingdom, something that, evidently, would not displease a section of the domestic British ruling class (see Adamczeski, 2025; Carrell, 2025). We would find comical the fact that a supposedly innate aspect of “human nature” needs to be imposed by law, were this imposition not a dimension of the competition on the geopolitical chessboard and, at the same time, a significant facet of the authoritarian turn being enforced worldwide.

We return to the point from which we began: the slaughter in Gaza and everything that followed. A point of condensation for innumerable contradictions, it shows us that we indeed live in a world that contains many others. Yet none of them is free of barbarism. We are trying to orient ourselves within a reality in which there is no “right side” to be found. October 7 was an attack by the forces of the Palestinian Resistance under the hegemony of Hamas, an attack marked by antisemitic, nationalist and misogynist orientation, during which uniformed personnel and civilians, including migrant workers, were murdered indiscriminately. As a symbolic —but with all too real consequences— challenge to national sovereignty within the territory of a state, it was driven by specific aims and constituted, *de facto*, an armed, violent, bloody intervention in the diplomatic and geopolitical developments that had already begun, as we discuss more fully below. This attack did not occur in a vacuum. It took place against a prehistory of the nationalization of the social question and of the ongoing, systematic oppression carried out by the state of Israel. The Israeli government responded to the October 7 attack by escalating

to bombardment and military invasion, enacting an extreme racist dehumanization of the entire population by identifying it wholesale with Hamas. The result has been the total flattening of the Gaza Strip and the creation of a permanent, multilayered humanitarian crisis, part of a de facto project to rearrange the entire landscape through displacements that exhibit features of ethnic cleansing.

In the Western world these developments have brought both the surge of diffuse antisemitism and the instrumentalisation of the fight against antisemitism by Western governments, along with the spread of racist anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hatred as ideological alignment with NATO policies. On one side, the pro-Palestinian mobilisations have not been free of diffuse antisemitism, expressed through the silencing or minimising of Hamas's war crimes, the demonisation of Israel and of Israelis,² the portrayal of Palestinian society as monolithic —“Palestine”— or the uncritical enlistment in national-liberationist rhetoric and the glorification of militarized violence. On the other side, Western states have replied with repression, witch-hunts, slander and smear campaigns against antimilitarists and solidarity activists, casting themselves as the righteous arbiters of what is permissible and what is not. Germany committed the supreme outrage of repressing anti-war initiatives led by people of Jewish origin on its own territory. The United States went so far as to deport activists or to abduct organisers of solidarity actions for Palestine. We cannot fail to see that these measures are aimed at multiple targets. Every initiative that challenges the status quo is to be struck down. The state claims not only the monopoly of violence but also the monopoly of sensitivity.

We went through some of the events, moments and forms that the shape of domination takes, as it escalates before our eyes and permeates our praxis. These forces sometimes converge, sometimes

2. Demonisation which, when singles out the state of Israel from all the states of the world and deems that this particular state, by exception, is “artificial” and must be destroyed in the here and now, separately and prior to any universal overturning of the state-form as a dimension of a global abolition process of the wage-labour system and of national belonging in general, ceases to express merely *diffuse* antisemitism. Closely related to this is the logic that applies special criteria to investment flows originating from the state of Israel into the Greek territories, or, indeed, special criteria to Israeli tourists who have chosen Greece as a holiday destination.

clash with one another.³ What would a collective opposition that does not turn a blind eye to any of them look like, that does not try to weigh them in order to rank them, that does not deign to ally with one evil in order to fight another? What collective form can sensitivity take that mourns, indivisibly, all the victims of declared and undeclared wars, on all sides? It used to be said that those who make revolutions only halfway through end up digging their own graves. The same holds for those who oppose one form of domination while affirming so many others.

I.

The three translations presented in the first part, *Israel, Palästina und der Universalismus* by Walter Hanser, *Gaza: An Extreme Militarization of the Class War* by Emilio Minassian and *The 7th of October and its Consequences*, a statement co-signed by several groups active in Germany, address the Israel-Palestine war through different yet mutually complementary lenses. Although they diverge in methodology and the emphasis they place on specific aspects of the conflict, as well as in the context and the aims of the authors, they all constitute critical interventions that move beyond superficial or biased readings of the subject. All three texts stand against national narratives and reject an anti-imperialism that idealizes armed resistance and does not take into account its disciplining impact on social antagonism. Nevertheless, the texts focus on distinct aspects: the joint statement focuses on the intra-movement critique and the erosion of the political tools of the radical milieu. Hanser offers a historical analysis of the nation-building processes in Israel and Palestine, while Minassian focuses on the ways the war functions as a mechanism for managing the question of the class.

The first translated text that opens the volume at hand is an essay by Walter Hanser titled *Israel, Palestine and Universality (Israel, Palästina und der Universalismus)*, originally published in 2015 in the

3. “The working class, the vast majority of humankind, has nothing to win and everything to lose in war. It is always its main victim. National defense and national liberation means fighting and dying for the interests of one faction of the capitalist class against another. It means killing (and being killed by) other working-class people for the power and profit of the class that exploits and oppresses us” (An Internationalist Statement on Capitalism and War - Arezzo Meeting, 2024).

fourth issue of the journal *Kosmoprolet*, a journal edited by a number of anti-authoritarian communist groups from Germany (Hanser, 2015).⁴ Hanser writes eight years prior to the current flare-up of the war, approaching the national conflicts between Israel and Palestine from a historical standpoint and commenting on the twofold process by which social movements are inscribed into rival national projects. He describes how the Jewish workers' movement, which had originally socialist roots, slid into acceptance of the national-state framework. He criticises the simplistic view that sees Israelis exclusively as colonisers, without considering that large parts of the Jewish populations were driven to Palestine because of the violence of antisemitism in their countries of origin, and also refers to the resistance activity of the first Jewish inhabitants against the then British occupation. At the same time, he stresses the significance of building the Israeli state through "Jewish labour" and the exclusion of Palestinians, as well as the exploitation of the working class on both sides in a dual labour market under Israeli occupation. Parallel to this, Hanser underlines the absence of prospects for universal emancipation under the banner of Arab nationalism or political Islam, points to the emergence of the "Palestine cause" as a religious and political myth, and demonstrates the role of sacrifice and blood in the Palestinian struggle as foundational aspects of the process of founding a nation-state. Hanser concludes by assessing that the conflict cannot be properly analysed through the lens of a binary of oppressive and oppressed ethnicities. We are dealing with a historically complex competition in which both the Zionist and the Palestinian leadership direct militarised models of power and preside over bourgeois formations on a national-capitalist basis.

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Following is the interview that Emilio Minassian gave to the internet site *Le Serpent de Mer*, just two weeks after the atrocities of October 7 took place, inaugurating a new phase of generalized hostilities. Emilio Minassian is a doctoral student in political science at the Institut d'Études Politiques (IEP) in Aix-en-Provence. His research focuses on structures of power in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank. At the same time, he is a member of the publishing collective *Niet!*

4. Full References can be found at the end of the text.

and of the blog *Le serpent de mer*, both of which are devoted to critical social theory. Between 2004 and 2023 he spent extended periods in the West Bank, especially in refugee camps, organising workshops and conducting research. The interview in the French-language blog originally appeared under the title *Gaza: une militarisation extrême de la guerre de classe en Israël-Palestine* (Minassian, 2023a). Since then, two different English translations have appeared: the first, chronologically, on the website *Non Copy Riot* under the title *Even in capitalist garbage cans, there are social divisions* (Minassian, 2023b), followed by a publication in the journal *The Brooklyn Rail* titled *Gaza: An Extreme Militarization of the Class War* (Minassian, 2024). The Greek translation included in the present volume first appeared on 22 November 2023 on the Athens-based *Indymedia* (Minassian, 2023c).

Minassian's analysis takes its initial cue from a position that we regard as fundamental: *nowhere on earth does the land belong to the peoples; everywhere it belongs to the representatives of capital*. Forces that claim otherwise present the particular interests of the actual or would-be managers of capital as universal. For Minassian, the subordination of proletarian populations to capital is achieved through their violent nationalisation. A series of systems for devaluing nationalised labour power, intensified by the crisis, are converted into techniques for managing surplus populations in terms of thanatopolitics, a development that Minassian regards as both the prelude and the condensation of the way populations in similar positions tend to be managed across the globe within the protracted crisis environment. Israel absolves itself of the responsibility for reproducing these populations, a responsibility now taken over by forces such as Hamas, which recast social discontent in the vocabulary of nationalism and hatred toward the Jews.

Therefore, according to Minassian, the conflict does not concern two distinct national entities but two oppressed proletariats, each subordinated to different forms of power. He insists that Hamas functions as the local manager of Gaza's working class, in direct relation to Israeli capital, and that the intensification of militarisation serves not the interests of the proletarians but the reproduction of the dominant classes on both sides. Indeed, through this nationalisation of the social question "the distinct class interests are concealed and replaced by the interests of the 'people' and the general interests of the 'oppressed nation'" (Lipotak(tri)es tis Kapitalistikis Irinis [Desert-

ers of Capitalist Peace] 2025). From an internationalist standpoint, Minassian argues, condemnation of Hamas neither needs to nor can be confined to the question of whether it is a regressive, Islamist force. Undoubtedly Hamas possesses these characteristics, and that is not without significance; above all, however, it is a bourgeois mechanism for managing the proletariat that uses integration, repression, and outward-directed militarised aggression to rally the population around a state-building liberationist project. We are not witnessing an eternal recurrence of a conflict between two nations, nor a fatal embrace of two separate peoples condemned to mutual slaughter. What is taking place in Israel and Palestine is a form of class counter-offensive by the capitalist class against the proletariat, and this class attack cuts vertically through both nationalisms. Netanyahu's nationalism is complementary to Hamas's irredentism and to the national-liberationism of the dominant Palestinian bourgeois fraction: the hostilities are strategies for managing the social-class question. As far as we are concerned, when confronted with "two reactionary capitalist political forces such as the state of Israel and Hamas—and the imperialist blocs with which they are aligned— we choose no camp, since we discern in such a choice no path, not merely for emancipation, but even for the improvement of the lives of the Palestinian population, let alone of humanity as a whole" (Dialytiko, 2025, p. 17).

According to Minassian, October 7 was the point at which this condition of hatred and dependency exploded. Seen from the standpoint of Hamas, the October 7 massacre was a calculated gamble intended to elevate the political power of Hamas: its popularity inside Gaza was waning, its authority had been called into question, the Palestinian Territories were shrinking under relentless pressure of the settlers and the operations of the IDF, all the while Arab-Israeli agreements were looming on the horizon. These factors drove Hamas to launch the October 7 attack, fully aware that the reprisal would be merciless: Hamas deliberately sacrificed a portion of its subjects in exchange for the prospect of acquiring greater political gains.

The third translation of the publication is a statement issued by several groups from different cities in Germany, titled *The 7th of October and its Consequences (Der 7. Oktober und seine Folgen)*. This joint statement was published in June 2024 on the website maintained by the group Kritik und Praxis, in German and in an accompanying English translation (Basisgruppe Antifaschismus Bremen et al., 2024).

As a political intervention it is a rigorous critique of the Left which, as the authors note, often operates on the basis of reaction rather than analysis. It is a text of internal orientation, not in the sense that it is unavailable to the public, but in the sense that it is addressed first and foremost to the organised movement and criticises the way it reacted or failed to react to the events of October 7. Indeed, also within the Greek movement the question of the victims of October 7 is either completely silenced or reformulated in a way that dehumanises them entirely.⁵ The groups from Germany regard these reactions as stemming either from the petrified schemas of classical anti-imperialism and the defence of national-liberation movements that are for quite some time being regurgitated in one form or another, or from the reservoir of antisemitic explanatory patterns.

The statement denounces the slide of a large part of the radical Left into positions that essentially cover up or relativise the massacres committed by Hamas on October 7. It argues that automatically aligning oneself with every anti-imperialist project or every armed resistance is a gesture that narrows the possibilities of radical thought. The core claim of the text is that the Left, instead of confronting all forms of domination as such, has ended up attaching itself to national-liberation projects that history has shown to constitute new regimes of oppression. At the same time, the statement highlights and denounces the extreme instrumentalisation of “anti-antisemitism” now unfolding worldwide, an instrumentalisation that reaches the point of racist dehumanisation of the Palestinian population and the justification of the all-out assault launched by the Israeli army. This instrumentalisation is carried out first and foremost by the Netanyahu government,

5. Indeed, if one takes a look on the first statements issued in Greek about the events of October 7, say, in the narrow window of the first days, while the events were still fresh and before the full-scale, escalating Israeli military onslaught had begun, one will see that, from the extra-parliamentary Left to the anti-authoritarian and anarchist milieu, domestic revolutionary forces hailed the October 7 attack and called for solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, remaining silent about the atrocities that had been committed. Others, even cruder, spoke of a “victory for the arms of the Palestinian resistance”. Perhaps it was too early and there had been no time to read the findings of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or the available survivor testimonies. Yet the same pattern was repeated on the anniversary of October 7, a year later. Once again, by some miracle, any reflection on the events was missing, and the “revolutionary” October 7 attack was cheered ones more. This is not an anti-war movement, it is pro-war.

then by the governments of the Western world and by public opinion in sizeable sections of the core-country populations, and finally even by fragments of the “radical” movement, that go so far as to leave the Israeli state untouched and to applaud bombardments, displacements and actions that point towards ethnic cleansing. This racist instrumentalisation of “fighting antisemitism” is not confined to justifying the attack on the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank; it also targets migrant populations of Palestinian or broader Arab origin living in the Western world. In conclusion, the perspective proposed does not side with either camp. It recognises the aggressive character of the Israeli state and the atrocities it is committing in Gaza, yet it stresses that supporting Hamas, that is, a theocratic, authoritarian force that does not represent the interests of Palestinian proletarians, drives radical milieus into moral and political bankruptcy and into a deadly embrace with the plans of this or that bourgeois class.

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As a translation project we also consider, in agreement with the above texts, that bringing to the fore relations of exploitation and oppression is a basic condition for understanding the issues at hand, yet we do not fully identify with every particular analysis or argument they contain. We nevertheless believe they can help the radical local movement recognise the historical layers of the conflict and avoid clinging to abstract notions such as “resistance” and “solidarity”. The failure to recognise the internal contradictions of both state and non-state power structures, and the abandonment of a critical approach that examines rigorously all phenomena, can lead to the reproduction of narratives about “good” and “bad” states or “good” and “bad” nationalisms. Forces within the movement that line up uncritically behind armed movements or state formations have already forfeited their political autonomy and have been absorbed into nationalist and war-mongering schemas.

Returning to the texts, we see that Minassian states quite sharply that Hamas does not support grassroots resistance. It pursues its own interests. This means that support for an armed struggle must not be a given without examining the social relations it produces. Hanser points out that national projects devour social emancipation and the horizon of universality, showing that revolutionary possibili-

ties are suffocated when the main stake becomes the imposition and maintenance of a national identity. Likewise, the joint statement of communist and antifascist collectives warns that uncritical justification of violence leads to the moral devaluation of the Left, declaring that support for one side on the basis of who its opponent is does not constitute radical political analysis, but a reaction that incorporates superficial and fragile identifications.

We are living, in some way, in a time of mourning, frustration and despair. Mourning for the world that did not change, frustration for expectations that were betrayed, despair because the horizon of change is nowhere to be seen. This can lead either to melancholy, resignation and stagnation or to transformations and shifts. The aim of translating these three texts is, among other things, to remind us that historically, in such dynamic situations, the dominant narratives have often been reactionary ones tied to the state, to closed cultural identities and to national unity. As the movement tries not to isolate itself, or out of an honest wish to intervene and change something, it may accept narratives of national aspirations or adopt populist outlooks that push the discussion away from the critique that emancipates and radicalises.⁶ This tendency has appeared historically in many examples, from the nationalist turn taken by anti-imperialist movements to the workers Left that adopted racist rhetoric in the name of protecting the domestic labour market. Or again, from the xenophobic idealisation of locality and neighbourhood in movements against touristification to the technophobic fetishisation of nature and land in struggles against “green” capitalism, to speak in contemporary terms.

What is at stake is not merely the stance toward this particular war, but the very capacity of the local radical movement to keep alive the prospect of social subversion, instead of turning into an apologist for authoritarian structures and conservative voices that present themselves as anti-systemic or revolutionary, or even, in the darker

6. “In exile, I’ve met people from Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq—people who know this feeling well. People whose revolutions were ignored, whose pain was reinterpreted as Western propaganda. People who have been asked to justify their resistance, to prove that their desire for dignity isn’t a foreign import. The irony is unbearable: we fled censorship, only to find it disguised as solidarity. We fled ideological conformity, only to face a new kind—one wrapped in slogans, dripping with good intentions, but deaf to the realities we carry” (Shahabi, 2025).

prospect of wider war outbreaks, of turning into an alternative recruitment office for one or the other belligerent side.

II.

Every national state formation organises their subjects on a national basis and produces a people that corresponds to its territory. At the same time, it is obliged to present a concrete plan for reproducing the national society it has brought together, in the sense that securing the social reproduction is also a guarantee of the smooth reproduction of the form that holds this society together: the national state form of capital. Consequently, every national state formation also constitutes a modality of the gendered division of labour, the organisation of sexuality, the imposition of the family as a form of privatised labour and care, and heteronormativity as the dominant way of organising gender relations. This is not stated in an speculative manner but heuristically and logically, on the basis of the prior social experience of all nation-states within the capitalist mode of production, and on the basis of the very logic of reproducing the capitalist relation within the national state form: for a nation to be born, some must be persuaded to become its heroes and some must be disciplined into the role of the mother. The modern national state is inseparably linked to the imposition of gender dualism, the family form and heteronormativity.

The above observations do not apply exclusively to already existing nation-states, that is to national state formations that, through violence directed inward and outward, have long since managed to establish their existence as unquestioned. They also apply to nation-states whose territory is contested and to those still in the process of being born, to those fighting for their independence. In other words, they apply both to Israel and to Palestine. Following in the footsteps of established states, the state entities whose validity is questioned and the national liberation movements striving for independence must each forge a national plan for social reproduction. Such a plan of national rebirth includes biopower, governance, population management, organisation of the demographic question and the reproduction of the national population as such, allocation of gender roles, assignment of gendered functions, regulation of permitted sexual practices, prevention of sexual deviations. Every nationalism, regardless of whether it managed to form a universally accepted state entity, whether its

sovereignty over a territory is contested or whether its irredentist aspirations have not yet been realised, is called to sculpt a population into a nation. This process presupposes and promotes the imposition of patriarchy, heteronormativity and the family.

* * *

For the second part of the book we have translated an article by Rema Hammami dating from 1990, as we judged that it elaborates on the link between the nation state and patriarchy through analysing a specific historical period of the Palestinian national liberation struggle: the period beginning in the 1970s but intensifying after the First Intifada of 1987, which is marked by the gradual imposition of the hijab on the female population of Palestine by Hamas. Hammami's text first appeared in the summer 1990 issue of *Middle East Report* under the title *Women, the Hijab and the Intifada* (Hammami, 1990). It addresses the gradual rise of Hamas and religious fundamentalism in the 1990s and examines them through the imposition of the hijab on women in Gaza and its transformation into a national symbol. It records the resistance and reluctance of Palestinian women to don the hijab and recounts the imposition of the veil as a process of violence, public harassment and private humiliation, daily discipline and devaluation. Hammami denaturalises the religiosity of the Palestinian population, revealing the historical fact that the hijab was imposed by force on a female population in a society where secularisation tended to be the dominant form of social bond. Religiosity should not be seen as an inherent trait of the Arab world, nor a mark of the backwardness of Palestinian society, as Israeli state propaganda claims: it marks a specific turn taken by social antagonism after the defeat or decline of anti-imperialist left guerrilla movements and a specific strategy for managing class struggle.

At the same time, Hammami denounces the hesitation of the Left and other progressive political forces to confront the rise of religious resistance groups and their relegation of gender oppression to a secondary issue in the face of the shared goal of national liberation. What is particularly striking is that the author does not even bother directing criticism at Hamas, yet for reasons very different from those prevailing today. Within the context of the secular anti-imperialist struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, it was still taken for grant-

ed in the circles of the Maoist and Leninist Left to which Hammami belongs that Hamas is a far-right, ultra-conservative, fundamentalist religious organisation. Her opposition to Hamas is meant as a given. What Hammami finds hard to accept is the reluctance of the Palestinian Authority to openly confront the fundamentalists and to timely defend the freedoms that feminist struggles had won.

* * *

One of the slogans widely circulated within the international queer solidarity movement for Palestine is *There is no Pride in Genocide* (Al Qaws, 2024). This slogan has multiple meanings and multiple addressees. First, it has a specific significance through which it addresses both the international LGBTQI community and queer individuals from Palestine and Israel, calling for a boycott of any Pride parade held in Tel Aviv as long as the IDF operations in the Gaza Strip continue. Second, in a broader sense, the slogan denounces the way Israeli policy mobilises the narrative of Israeli society's tolerance toward sexual and gender diversity in order to attack the Palestinian population of Gaza and the West Bank.

Within the international solidarity movement with the Palestinian resistance there have emerged analytical tools that criticise the way Western states instrumentalise the tolerance they display toward sexual and gender diversity in order to justify anti-migrant measures, Islamophobic narratives and, in the case of Israel, expansionist policies. "Pinkwashing" is one such concept that highlights the instrumental use of tolerance for purposes other than the promotion of sexual diversity (Schulman, 2011). Equally useful is the category of "homonationalism", introduced by Jasbir Puar, referring to the way acceptance of diversity leads to the incorporation of gays and lesbians into the national body (Puar, 2007).

In the case of Israel, the narrative of acceptance enjoyed by gays and lesbians in Israeli society is mobilised in dominant national discourse as evidence of Israel's superiority and progressiveness compared with the supposed Islamic barbarism that surrounds it. In this way, a claim is made regarding Israel's moral high ground over neighbouring countries. Within this schema Palestinians appear as backward and conservative, religiously fanatical and intolerant, and it is through this representation that the aggression of Israeli nation-

alism against them is being justified. An example of outright cynicism during Israel's intervention in Gaza were the images of Israeli soldiers waving the rainbow flags of the LGBTQI community while conducting military operations in Gaza.

It is important to stress that, despite its openness toward LGBTQI people, Israeli society remains a heteronormative society in which social reproduction is entrusted to private households in the form of the nuclear family. The unequal gendered division of labour persists, homophobia is present since not every corner of Israeli territory is Tel Aviv, and straight sexuality is dominant. Respect for diversity is still a form of recognition and inclusion of gender and sexual diversity as *difference*. What is marginal becomes less marginalized, while, clearly, the incorporation does not embrace all queer bodies but only the more respectable among them. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that homonationalism and homonormativity were strategies of incorporation during the neoliberal era and there is no guarantee that the same strategy will continue to be applied in the era of rising far right governments and bigoted politics. Yet for the moment it remains true that the Israeli national state incorporates LGBTQI individuals into the national body through their visibility. Thus, queer contestation is absorbed into a national narrative and into the practices of homonationalism.

* * *

Beyond the above, the slogan *There is no Pride in Genocide* can also be read in a third way, as an internal normative declaration addressed to the Palestinian queer community, seeking to prescribe its response to Israeli attacks. Seen through this lens, the slogan can be read as an *interpellation* to Palestinian queer people not to proclaim their sexuality while the homeland is under threat: there can be no pride other than national pride. Gender liberation must wait for national liberation to come about. This reading is supported by the overall political stance of Palestinian LGBTQI organisations, which appears to essentially subordinate gender and sexual emancipation to the anti-colonial struggle. Palestinian LGBTQI organisations are not alone in this shift from grassroots groups defending gender and sexual diversity to organisations primarily of the Palestinian resistance. A similar logic underlies the solidarity expressed by the international queer move-

ment: at best, sexual liberation is appended to the Palestinian national liberation struggle, at worst it is postponed to a future and more favourable conjuncture.

The international solidarity movement for Palestine is forgetful of the fact that every nation is structurally heteronormative and all too easy overlooks the sexism, homophobia and transphobia that flourish in Palestinian society. Not under the Islamophobic illusion of an irredeemably conservative society, but in the same way that we recognise misogyny within the Greek social formation or institutionalised transphobia in the territory of the United States. If Israeli pink-washing assimilates the most respectable Israeli gays and lesbians into the national body through visibility and acceptance, the Palestinian national liberation struggle constitutes a corresponding attempt to incorporate Palestinian LGBTQI people into the Palestinian national body through invisibility and repression. Palestinian LGBTQI individuals must become mothers for the homeland and fighters for Hamas and, through their participation in the struggle for national liberation, be integrated into the national body of resisting Palestine, relinquishing or concealing their sexual freedoms. If homonationalism is for now the official national policy of the Israeli state, which does not fully align with an ineradicable homophobic reality in Israeli society, then the homophobic, heteronormative nationalism of Palestinian society is its dark mirror image: the mirrored, violent political attempt to assimilate Palestinian LGBTQI individuals into the patriotic struggle. In this version, by their erasure.

* * *

This reality that prevails within Palestinian society is revealed to us through the account by Sa'ed Atshan titled *LGBTQ Palestinians and the Politics of the Ordinary*. It is the first chapter of the book published in 2020 by Atshan under the general title *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*. Atshan's text interests us first because it focuses on the politics of everyday life. Through a wealth of documentation and oral narratives, the chapter brings out the importance of multiple daily, molecular resistances within Palestinian society that surround and make possible the action of organised collectives, yet often come into tension, if not open rupture, with the official policies adopted by these organisations.

More concretely, Atshan brings to light the underground current of resistance against heteronormativity and homophobia that runs through Palestinian society, and the violence with which heteronormativity and homophobia are enforced by social and political forces. He preserves voices within the Palestinian queer movement that do not fall in line behind the project of national liberation without resistance, insofar as this project silences the existence of Palestinian LGBTQI people and promotes masculinity. Atshan reveals that the Palestinian LGBTQI movement is not a single bloc, that there are voices that are uneasy with the primacy of national resistance, subjectivities suffocating under the anti-imperialist politics of the official queer organisations, networks of relations that reject the brutality of heteronormativity in Palestinian society yet refuse to ally with the murderous policy of the Israeli state, and internal critiques that oppose the way solidarity with the Palestinian people is articulated, while the persecution endured by LGBTQI people inside Palestine is left uncondemned.

* * *

Both Hammami's article and Atshan's chapter bring to light the antagonisms that run through the Palestinian national liberation struggle and expose the internal conflicts inside the Palestinian queer movement. This makes their contribution invaluable for understanding the internal repression imposed by the rival nationalisms. Therefore, we consider that they deepen our critical reflection on the controlling and disciplining dimension of national liberation movements, a reflection that is absent or rarely appears in solidarity movements with the Palestinian resistance. Yet the decision to include these two texts in the present volume was not straightforward and was made after extensive elaboration, since it required us to place some of our own political disagreements on the side. This is because both texts express a political outlook that does not coincide with our own orientation. Both texts are written from within a national liberation problematic and with the intention of defending a more tolerant nationalism; nevertheless we believe that the content of the texts destabilises the centrality of the national struggle by revealing the misalignment between national goals and queer and women's emancipation.

Hammami denounces the moderate stance with which the political leadership confronted the rise of religious fundamentalism, yet her critique remains inscribed within the problematic of anti-imperialism. Although she feels indignation by the imposition of the veil, she offers no explanation for the Palestinian Authority's reluctance to enter open confrontation with Hamas (Hammami, 1990). Possible explanations might invoke the treachery of the leadership or identify an amoral tacticalism that sacrifices women's emancipation on the altar of national unity. We consider these possible explanations unsatisfactory. What the idealist Hammami refuses to state is the bitter reality that national cohesion cannot exist without the devaluation of women and without fixing them in the sphere of reproduction. Unfortunately for her and for all the women of Palestine, the leaders of Hamas and, with slight delay, the leadership of the secular anti-imperialist Left did not take long to recognise this necessity.

Atshan disagrees with the patriotic turn of Al-Qaws⁷ and critiques the monothematic character of its agenda in favour of the Palestinian liberation struggle. He calls this stance "*radical purity*" (Atshan, 2020), seeking to criticise the nationally engaged positions adopted at the expense of everyday politics—we regard this as an improper use of terms, since nothing radical can be found in stances embedded in the bourgeois pursuit of national self-determination. He ascribes to an intersectional approach that gives equal weight to national and to gender and sexual oppression, instead of subordinating queer insubordination to the national cause. Atshan appears to assert relative autonomy for questions of gender and sexuality in relation to the national project, yet he does not avoid anchoring his argument to the national-liberation vision and the pursuit of a more inclusive patriotism. Despite his vivid recording of multiple moments of gendered and sexualised violence among co-nationals, he does not draw the conclusion that the link between heteronormativity and nationalism obeys a structural and functional necessity.

* * *

7. Al Qaws (Rainbow for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society), together with Aswat (Voices, the Arab Israeli feminist centre for gender and sexual freedoms) that is active in Haifa, are the two most prominent grassroots feminist and LGBTQI organisations for Palestinian populations in Israel and the West Bank.

It is not our intention to reprehend subjects whose decades-long political engagement has reached a dead-end after experiencing the aggression of nationalism in the flesh. Nor is it to point out what the correct analysis is, or to rectify possible ill-suited views. We are interested in fleshing out the contradictions of national discourse and the real antagonisms within national societies, not in lecturing subjects and collectivities. Individuals are called to conceptualise and live their existence in a world that is hostile to that very existence, using lenses that belong to this same world and under conditions they themselves have not chosen and that throttle all possibilities of escape. Decades of national rivalry on the soil of Israel-Palestine carry an irrefutable historicity, the weight of which creates suffocating conditions for any form of deviation from the national, gender and sexual norm. The moments in which national confrontation intensifies and hostilities break out are moments of maximum condensation of patriarchal and heteronormative violence on both opposing national camps. It is certain that the main impact of this two-front assault will be borne by proletarian and queer insubordinations, above all by Palestinian LGBTQI individuals. In this suffocating context it might be more honest to admit that the emancipatory moment for proletarian, feminist and queer refusals has already passed and that all that remains in the bleak present of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more bloodshed and more discipline. Such a pessimistic stance may not serve political activism or immediate political action. At least it registers with bitter clarity the thanatopolitics of the Israel state and of the Palestinian national resistances as what they truly are: the hammer and the anvil between which feminism and queer existence are crushed.

The slogan *There is no Pride in Genocide* brings to mind a completely different local slogan that is chanted at Pride events and has adorned the walls of our cities for more than a decade: *gays, trans, lesbians, priestesses of disgrace, we are proudly the shame of the nation*. Both slogans speak of LGBTQI pride. The first subordinates it to the cause of national liberation, the second highlights its corrosive character for every national formation. The first points a finger, the second celebrates insubordination. Perhaps here, in this proud, perverse opposition to the nation, lies the possibility of a different form of internationalism, a convergence of LGBTQI people from both sides of the wall. If the period of defeat of proletarian struggles did not discourage us, if the multiplication of interstate wars did not fill us with

despair, if the ominous silence of Palestinian queer people and the absence of anti-national analysis and activity on the part of the solidarity movement did not weigh on us, we would dare to exclaim: *Deviants of all countries, unite!*

III.

In moments of crisis, war, and widespread insecurity, those who are fortunate enough to have space for reflection may find it difficult to retrieve lines of thought developed in similar circumstances in the past, that attempted to overturn the certainties of the questions posed by the dominant public sphere and sought to develop a counter-practice. There is no guarantee that the outcome will be as expected. There were times when counter-logic became mass action and revolution, and other times when it staying in the form of writing, in the texts of collectives and theoretical currents, destined for possible future use.

Marcel Stoetzler, in the two texts we translated for the third part which complete the present volume, tries to reassemble the fragments of the communist tradition that, as constituent elements of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, resist barbarism. Marcel Stoetzler is senior lecturer at Bangor University, Wales. His research interests include critical theory as well as the theory and history of antisemitism. His first book, *The State, the Nation and the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany*, was published in 2008 and combines historical sociology with social theory (Stoetzler 2008). In 2014 he edited the collective volume *Antisemitism and the Constitution of Sociology* (Stoetzler 2014), while his most recent book is the collective volume *Critical Theory and the Critique of Antisemitism* (Stoetzler 2023). The essay *Critical Theory and the Critique of Anti-imperialism*, which opens Part 3 of the volume at hand, was included in the third volume of the encyclopaedic collective work *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory* (Stoetzler 2018), and the text *The Capitalism of Fools* was published in the third issue of the journal *Cured Quail* in the summer of 2024 (Stoetzler 2024).

* * *

The first text by Stoetzler presented here, *Critical Theory and the Critique of Anti-imperialism*, deals with the concept of imperialism in the

writings of the main figures of the Frankfurt School. A central argument that emerges from this inquiry is that imperialism was not treated by the Frankfurt School as the highest stage of capitalism but as an inherent dimension of it. The point of focus is therefore the capitalist relation rather than imperialist expansion. Stoetzler begins with the genealogy of the term imperialism, starting from Marx and examining its various uses and meanings in the first half of the twentieth century before proceeding to the Frankfurt School's elaboration of the term.

Imperialism does not appear as a central concept in the writings of the Frankfurt School's chief authors. Yet because no special characteristics are attributed to imperialism, the Frankfurt School's clear demarcation from the majority of the Left lay in the question of anti-imperialism. Leninist anti-imperialism was, in the eyes of Critical Theory, understood as a non-Marxist concept.

Yet Stoetzler's text is more than a bibliographical survey aimed at presenting an argument. Through the writings of the Frankfurt School the author launches an assault on anti-imperialist ideology. Anti-imperialism defines a discursive framework within which one set of nationalist claims is granted more validity than another that opposes it.⁸ The wars in Ukraine and Gaza provide clear examples. The discussion never turns to the two state-building projects or capitalist regulatory schemes themselves, seldom examines where or how better conditions for emancipatory movements might emerge, movements that could ultimately transcend capitalist social relations. Instead, anti-imperialist discourse treats the nationalism of the periphery in tactical terms or naturalises it, often accepting every element of it, including those explicitly opposed to human emancipation. Moreover, imperialism tends to be completely dehistoricised.

8. "No comrade who is against militarism, war, and capitalism should stand behind (or next to) bellicose 'anti-imperialist' banners with the Stalinist-Maoist slogan 'Let's bring the war to the rear of the Western metropolises', a slogan that aims to internationalize the anti-proletarian activities of Hamas and similar bourgeois, militaristic formations. [...] What all the bourgeois classes of the world (Palestinian, Jewish, Yemeni, Greek, etc.) aim to do is to prevent the development of a real anti-war movement at all costs. Working in the same direction, the anarchist-left wing of bourgeois ideology does not hesitate to distort even the concept of internationalism when it calls for international support for the armed operations that some of these bourgeois classes are waging against 'imperialism'" (Assembly against biopower & confinement, 2024).

For Stoetzler, one point of special interest is the dynamic of capitalism. He makes the claim that for both Marx and the Frankfurt School, imperialism is nothing more than a dynamic of capitalism, of the state-form and the nation-form. He completes this analysis with the argument that the contribution of capitalism is contradictory, since while it brings misery, exploitation and death, it also bears within it, *in potentia*, the seeds of human emancipation. Anti-imperialist ideology functions fetishistically, unable to approach the capital relation as a multidimensional yet indivisible unity, and simply turns against different aspects of it. It follows that the triumph of national liberation movements is always accompanied by a reimposition of the capitalist relation.

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The second text, *The Capitalism of Fools*, may at first reading strike the reader as somewhat strange. It is an experimental piece, shaped more like a cut-up work than a traditional analytical essay. The arguments follow a non-linear path and unfold just as the dialectic of the Enlightenment unfolds today. With a reflective spirit Stoetzler critically analyses the collapse of neoliberal management, yet he shows no leniency toward the totalitarianisms and authoritarian regimes that tend to succeed neoliberalism on a global scale. At the core of his critique, he places the category of the nation, which is revived on the lips of populist fascists but is also reinscribed within the movements that seek to oppose them through the logic of national liberation struggles. From this perspective he also approaches the massacres in Israel-Palestine, remaining, however, pessimistic regarding the prospect of transcending the category of the people toward a more liberatory community and toward a logic that abolishes divisions.

Yet Stoetzler's schema is not a closed one. His pessimism, in an era when the emancipatory vision retreats before the war cries of barbarity, resists despair as long as the spirit of the Enlightenment, through the guerrilla war it wages, keeps open the possibility of transcending what is given. In this sense this possibility functions as the connecting link between the two texts presented in the present collection.

Another central point in the analysis is that within capitalism, forms of domination can only be fought in the form they take today,

that is, the capitalist form, and not in some other supposedly “pure” form. The argument proceeds further by examining the race–culture relation and its variability. It then unfolds, taking up questions of law and nationalism, and ends by commenting on the situation around Palestine and the mass slaughter in Gaza.

Stoetzler closes his text with a stance that is pessimistic, perhaps even melancholic. It is hard to discern, in the current conjuncture, any orientation within which an emancipatory horizon might emerge. Polarisation seems to exist only at the geopolitical level, where the various power blocs are readying themselves for a final confrontation. The current stagflation and the limits encountered by capital accumulation will not last forever. Capital can exist only as movement, as self-valorising value. Every limit becomes a barrier that, in one way or another, must be overcome, even through an apocalyptic war. Such a scenario may appear to contain the possibility of transcending this world. Apocalypse is, after all, a constitutive part of every messianic vision. Communism, however, constitutes a break with the past exactly because it is a break with the messianic vision as such, and therefore cannot be contained in any project of national completion.

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During March 2025, after a brief lull in hostilities and the exchange of a number of hostages, the state of Israel resumed the bombardment of Gaza, unleashing a new wave of murderous attacks and marking the failure of peace negotiations. Yet this occurred as the Israeli army faced a large-scale crisis of legitimacy, confronted by the biggest wave of draft refusal in decades. According to a report in *972mag*, more than one hundred thousand Israelis appear to have failed to report for military service (*972 Magazine*, 2025). At the same time, as this foreword was being completed, it was reported that for at least two consecutive days marches took place in Beit Lahiya, a town in northern Gaza that had been the focus of heavy IDF bombardments, with hundreds of Palestinians taking part to protest against Hamas and the continuation of the war. The crowd chanted slogans such as “Hamas must go!”, “Hamas is terrorism!” and “We want to live in freedom!”, before being met with violent repression by Hamas security forces (Abuheweila et al., 2025, Bashir et al., 2025). Such open challenges to

Hamas had not been seen in public for years. Meanwhile, a general strike against the continuation of the war was organised in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and was widely attended (AFP, 2025).

We remain cautious, since we do not know the class composition of those who took part in these demonstrations. Moreover, it is clear that these mobilisations enjoy the support of Fatah, which, as a secular socialist organisation, remains inscribed within Palestinian anti-imperialism and participates in the Palestinian Authority that manages the fate of the Palestinian proletariat in the West Bank. Such protests do not offer an optimistic prospect of transcending the attachment of the Palestinian proletariat to the bourgeois politics of its managers. They do, however, suffice to show that Palestinian society is not monolithic and that a united Palestinian resistance exists only in the imagination of uncritical defenders of Palestinian nationalism. It remains to be seen whether these cracks will take on an internationalist character and whether from the rubble of Gaza an anti-national insubordination will emerge.

The rulers of this world quarrel with their would-be successors over who stands on the right side of history. Most bourgeois regimes side with the Western world, with Ukraine, with Israel. Their anti-imperialist opponents may stumble a little over Syria and Russia, yet they unreservedly line up behind the Palestinian national-liberation struggle. Both camps rush to cleanse one face of the present and call it the “right” one, to sanctify one side of history and call it “good”. Yet as Marx already knew in 1847, when he reproached the bourgeois economists —and Proudhon— for trying to separate the positive elements of feudalism from the negative, the bad side of history always imposes itself upon the good. Like a Möbius strip where one surface slips into its reverse, every concept turns into its opposite: the more stubbornly we defend the right side of history, the more easily we find ourselves suddenly on its obverse. Resistance to barbarism becomes a new barbarism. All the more so today, where the Möbius strip we call social reality seems to possess only a single, coarse surface. Since everyone now praises the good side of history, the task that remains for us is to map its dark side. We do not avert our gaze from what has been branded wrong, we tarry with the negative. If we favour a certain way of reading the translations that follow, we propose this: to read them as texts for the bad side of history.

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