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HomeLand
Anarchy and Joint Struggle in Palestine/Israel

I have for many years opposed Zionism as the dream of capitalist Jewry the world over for a Jewish state with all its trimmings … a Jewish state machinery to protect the privileges of the few against the many … [But] the fact that there are many non-Zionist communes in Palestine goes to prove that the Jewish workers who have helped the persecuted and hounded Jews have done so not because they are Zionists, but [so] that they might be left in peace in Palestine to take root and live their own lives.

—Emma Goldman, *Letter to Spain and the World* (London, 1938)

At the crossroads of imperial conflict since the days of Egypt and Assyria, and with a central place in the cultural legacies of the three Abrahamic religions, the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean remains a focal point in the spectacle of world politics and a microcosm for global trends. Just as the Oslo Agreements were touted as an emblem of the 'benevolent' face of globalisation in the 1990s, so does their collapse into renewed violence parallel the transformation, since September 11, of the globalisation project into barefaced imperialism. Today, the conflict in the region which I will be calling, interchangeably, Israel/Palestine and Palestine/Israel, is a linchpin of the Clash of Civilisations ideology – and, for the same reason, a unique acupuncture point for anarchist activity.

In this final chapter I want to offer some perspectives on the politics of Israel/Palestine, where the situation raises wider questions of anarchist approaches to national liberation, international solidarity, and collective identity based on place. For one thing, I want to look at the apparent contradiction between anarchists' commitment to support oppressed groups on the latter's own terms, and those terms being – in the Palestinian case – a new nation-state. First, though, I want to focus on the joint Palestinian-Israeli struggles in which anarchist participation is prominent – pointing to the unexpected ways in which issues such as paternalism, violence and burn-out

are played out in the region. Finally, I return to the broader debate on anarchism and nationalism, looking in particular at the idea of bioregionalism as an alternative form of local identity that may be more in tune with anarchist approaches.

ANARCHISM IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

In looking at the landscape of struggle in Palestine/Israel, it should be remembered that anarchist presence on the ground is relatively small. On a generous estimation, there are today up to 300 people in Israel who are politically active and who would not mind calling themselves anarchists – most of them Jewish women and men between the ages of 16–35. However, anarchism has been a continuous undercurrent in the politics of Israel/Palestine for decades. Although they were not connected to the Yiddish-speaking Jewish anarchists abroad, the earliest Kibbutz groups in the 1920s were organised on libertarian-communist principles and their members read Kropotkin and Tolstoy. While these communards were builders and farm labourers rather than strikers and street-fighters, and while they remained largely blind to their position as pawns in an imperialist project, their form of propaganda by deed remains relevant today (see Horrox 2007). Other local dissidents were more connected to the revolutionary workers' movement, and in 1936 a number of Jewish and Arab communists and anarchists went to fight in the Spanish Civil War. After the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel, many Yiddish-speaking anarchists arrived in the country, among them Aba Gordin and Yosef Luden who organised the 'Freedom Seekers' Association' and published the Yiddish anarchist review 'Problemen'.

After 1968, like elsewhere in the world, there was a revival of interest in anarchism. The anti-capitalist, anti-Zionist group Matzpen saw anarchist involvement, and the anarcho-pacifist Toma Schick ran the Israeli branch of War Resisters International. The movement received a major boost in the 1980s thanks to the punk scene and the growth in army refusal during the Lebanon war and the first Intifada. The first anarchist student cells and 'zines were created in this period. The contemporary Israeli anarchist movement fused together during the wave of anti-globalisation activism at the end of the 1990s, bringing together anti-capitalist, environmental, feminist, and animal rights agendas. There was a proliferation of protests and direct actions, Reclaim-the-Streets parties and Food not Bombs stalls. The Salon Mazal infoshop and Indymedia Israel were founded. Since

the beginning of the second Intifada, activities have focused on the occupation in Palestine, in particular against the building of the Apartheid Wall. Some anarchists have participated in Ta'ayush (Arab–Jewish Partnership), an initiative created shortly after the beginning of the second Intifada in October 2000. At its peak Ta'ayush had a large membership of Jews and Palestinian Arabs of Israeli citizenship, many of them students, who carried out solidarity actions in the occupied territories – bringing food to besieged cities and towns and defending farmers from settlers and soldiers as they worked their land. In 2003, the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative was founded, and the joint struggle with Palestinian villages in the West Bank continues intensively.

Among Palestinians there are a few kindred souls and many allies, but no organised anarchist movement. However, the last years have seen an alliance between Israeli and international activists and Palestinian communities renewing their own tradition of popular resistance and civil disobedience. The first Intifada (1987–89) was an uprising organised through popular committees and largely in detachment from the PLO leadership, and involved not only slingshots and Molotovs but also many non-violent actions such as mass demonstrations, general strikes, tax refusal, boycotts of Israeli products, political graffiti and the establishment of underground schools and grassroots mutual aid projects.

In addition to Israeli anarchists, many international anarchists have been present on the ground – primarily though the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a Palestinian-led coordination which began in summer 2001 and saw its peak in the next two years. The ISM mobilised European and North-American volunteers who arrived in the occupied territories to accompany non-violent Palestinian actions (Sandercock et al. 2004). The ISM became active before the height of the Israeli state's invasions and attacks on Palestinian population centres. Its actions included forming human chains to block soldiers from interfering while Palestinians tore down military roadblocks, held mass demonstrations, or collectively broke curfews to take children to school or tend their fields. Palestinian grassroots leaders were interested in this cooperation, in the first place because the presence of internationals would hopefully moderate the reactions of the soldiers, as well as in order to influence international public opinion. Interestingly, organisers estimate that up to a quarter of ISM volunteers have been Jewish.

As the violence escalated, the ISM was driven to focus more and more on accompaniment and human-shielding, while at the same time drawing world attention to the repression of Palestinians through the 'live' presence of international witnesses. For a while, what internationals did was dictated by when, where, and how the Israeli army would attack. During the spring 2002 invasions, ISM activists stayed in Palestinian homes facing demolition, rode with ambulances, escorted municipal workers to fix infrastructure, and delivered food and medicine to besieged communities. In what was the most widely broadcast drama of this phase, internationals were holed-up for weeks in the besieged Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem with residents, clergymen and armed militants. As the violence ebbed the ISM turned proactive again, with demonstrations to break curfews and an international day of action in summer 2002.

Now while the ISM and other, unaffiliated solidarity groups on the ground are not nominally anarchist, two clear connections to anarchism can nevertheless be made. First, in terms of the personnel, international solidarity activities in Palestine have seen a major and sustained presence of anarchists, who had earlier cut their teeth on anti-capitalist mobilisations and local grassroots organising in North America and Europe. Thus, while the ISM has included participants from a wide range of backgrounds, it also constitutes the foremost vehicle for on-the-ground involvement of international anarchists in Palestine. Second, and more substantially, the ISM prominently displays many features of anarchist political culture: lack of formal membership, policy and leadership; a decentralised organising model based on autonomous affinity groups, spokescouncils and consensus decision-making; and a strategic focus on short-term campaigns and creative tactics that stress direct action and grassroots empowerment. These affinities are evinced by a statement from ISM Canada (2002) on the need to move 'from an arrogant "saviour" model of activism, to a real "solidarity" model of activism', whose emphasis on direct action contains many keywords of anarchist political language:

> Solidarity means more than 'charity' work to ease our conscience. It must also do more than simply witness or document atrocities – though these tasks are also critical to our work. The ISM views solidarity as an imperative to actively engage in resistance to the Occupation, to take sides, to put our bodies on the line, and to use the relative privilege of our passports and, in some cases, colour – first and foremost, in ways that Palestinians actually request, but also in ways which help build trust and expand networks of mutual aid.

Thus, Western anarchists involved in direct action in Palestine (and in other regions, like West Papua or Colombia) often say that they deliberately participate in them as followers and supporters rather than as equals, let alone leaders. The ethos of the ISM and other solidarity groups stresses taking the lead from Palestinian community members or representatives, based on the principle that decision-making and control of actions should be in proportion to the degree to which one is affected by their potential outcome. As a result, a group of Canadian ISMers have been at pains to emphasise that 'internationals cannot behave as if they are coming to teach Palestinians anything about "peace" or "non-violence" or "morality" or "democracy", or anything else that many in the West typically (and arrogantly and mistakenly) view as the exclusive realm of Western activism and values' (ibid.). Similarly, Israeli anarchist Yossi Bar-Tal has argued that 'we're not working in Palestine to educate … We would never hand out leaflets in Arabic explaining what anarchism is and why you should join us, because this is not our way … we're not there to educate, because while they're being occupied by our state we have no reason to come there and preach' (Lakoff 2005).

The spring of 2003 marked a clear transition for direct action in Israel/Palestine, with the centre of gravity shifting from international volunteers in Palestinian cities to Israelis and internationals joining the popular non-violent resistance against the Segregation Barrier. The shift was accompanied by a crisis in the ISM, following a rapid succession of tragic events, notably the killing of two volunteers in Gaza. On March 16, American ISMer Rachel Corrie was crushed to death under an Israeli armoured bulldozer which she was trying to obstruct during a house demolition in Rafah. On April 11, British volunteer Tom Hurndall was shot in the head by an Israeli sniper in the same area and went into a coma, dying nine months later. While the killings raised international outcry, increased the ISM's profile and further highlighted the brutality of the occupation, they also underlined the immense risk accompanying solidarity activities in Palestine and caused many activists to think twice before going there.

This was followed by a concerted campaign of the Israeli state to associate the ISM with terrorism, justifying clampdowns on the organisation. On the night of March 27, during a period of curfew and military arrests in Jenin, a 23-year-old Palestinian named Shadi Sukiya had arrived at the ISM office in the city, soaking wet and shivering, and was given a change of clothes, a hot drink and a

blanket. Soon afterwards Israeli soldiers came in and arrested Sukiya, who they accused of being a senior member of the Islamic Jihad. The army also claimed that a pistol had been discovered in the office, but later retracted the allegation. On April 25, a public memorial service for Rachel Corrie organised by the ISM was attended by two young British Muslims, Asif Muhammad Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif. Five days later, the two carried out a suicide bombing at a restaurant in Tel-Aviv, killing three people. Despite the fact that in both cases contact had been minimal and ISM volunteers had no idea about the identity of their guests, the Israeli government used these events to publicly accuse the organisation of harbouring terrorists and proceeded to repress the organisation. On May 9 the army raided the ISM media office in Beit Sahour, seizing computer equipment, video tapes, CDs and files. Though unconfirmed, it is thought that among the materials seized was a comprehensive list of past and present ISM volunteers, including their addresses and passport numbers. This enabled the Israeli security apparatus to expand its 'blacklist' of unwelcome internationals, resulting in an increase of deportations and denials of entry into Israel in subsequent months. Put together, these events placed the ISM in crisis and seriously reduced the flow of internationals into Palestine – although some continue to arrive to this day.

In the same spring of 2003, Israelis who were cooperating on direct action with ISM affinity groups and with other internationals increasingly felt the need to give more visibility to their own resistance as Israelis, by creating an autonomous group working together with Palestinians and internationals. Meanwhile, the construction of the 'Segregation Barrier' or 'Apartheid Wall' on the western part of the occupied West Bank had now begun in earnest (for details on the barrier see PENGON 2003). After a few actions and demonstrations against the barrier in Israel and Palestine, a small group started to come together and build a trusted reputation of Israeli direct-action activists willing to struggle together with local Palestinians. In March 2003 the village of Mas'ha invited the group to build a protest camp on village land that was being confiscated by the route of the fence (96 per cent of Mas'ha's land was taken). The protest camp became a centre of struggle and information against the planned construction of the barrier in that area and in the whole West Bank. Over the four months of the camp more than a thousand internationals and Israelis came to learn about the situation and join the struggle.

During the camp the direct-action group began naming itself Anarchists Against Fences and Jews Against Ghettos. In English it is normally known as Anarchists Against the Wall (the double entendre only works in English). After the eviction of the Mas'ha camp in summer 2003 amid 90 arrests, anarchists continued to participate in many joint actions across the occupied territories. With up to 50 active participants at any given time, this rapidly shifting direct-action network has been present at demonstrations and actions on a weekly basis in villages such as Salem, Anin, Biddu, Beit Awwa, Budrus, Dir Balut, Beit Surik and Beit Likia, as well as with Palestinian communities imprisoned by walls in and around Jerusalem. In some of these actions, Palestinians and Israelis managed to tear down or cut through parts of the fence, or to break through gates along it. Since 2005, the group has mainly been active in the village of Bil'in, which has become a symbol of the joint struggle.

Actions inside Israel also take place constantly, and these often display anarchism's multi-issue platform, a conscious agenda of integrating diverse struggles. By creating networks that integrate the different movements and constituencies in which they are active, anarchists can facilitate recognition and mutual aid among different struggles. In Israel/Palestine, such activities strongly connect the occupation, widening economic inequality, the exploitation of foreign and domestic workers, the status of women, racism and ethnic discrimination, homophobia, pollution and consumerism.

One example of linking the struggle against the occupation to a different liberatory agenda is the activity of Kvisa Shkhora (Black Laundry) – a direct-action group of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and others against the occupation and for social justice. The group was created for the Pride Day parade in Tel-Aviv in 2001, a few months after the second Intifada began. Jamming the by-now depoliticised and commercialised celebration, about 250 radical queers in black joined the march under the banner 'No Pride in the Occupation'. Since then, the group has undertaken actions and outreach with a strongly anti-authoritarian orientation, which stress the connection between different forms of oppression. In recent years the radical queer community in Israel has grown in numbers and has become more strongly networked, including the organising of free public queer parties (the Queer'hana), often coinciding with official Pride Day events.

The Israeli radical queer movement has a dual role: on the one hand, promoting solidarity with Palestinians, as well as anti-capitalism and

antagonistic politics, in the mainstream LGBT community; and on the other hand, stressing queer liberation in the movement against the occupation. According to one member, while many activists did not initially understand the significance of queers demonstrating as queers against the occupation, 'after many actions and discussions our visibility is now accepted and welcome. This, I can't really say about our Palestinian partners, so in the territories we usually go back to the closet' (Ayalon 2004). The latter reality has also led the queer anarchists to make contacts and offer solidarity with Palestinian LGBTs, who find even less acceptance in their society than Israeli queers do.

Connections with queer anarchists worldwide were strengthened through the organising drive towards the ninth Queeruption event – a free, do-it-yourself radical queer gathering that took place in Tel-Aviv in summer 2006, coinciding with the scheduled World Pride events in Jerusalem. The latter, however, were actually cancelled – falling victim to the Second Lebanon War, which also broke out after weeks of homophobic incitement by ultra-orthodox Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders and the far right who formed an unholy alliance to oppose it. When the organisers of the World Pride parade called for a vigil against homophobia in lieu of the parade, Queeruption formed a significant chunk of the vigil and with flags from other countries waving, someone brought out a Lebanese flag and whole event started to become a spontaneous anti-war demo. The police immediately declared the vigil 'illegal' and all of a sudden we were surrounded by cops and being beaten. The mainstream gay community fled, and later totally condemned the actions of 'a small group of anarchists who had hijacked the event'.

Another important relationship we can mention here is that between animal liberation and anarchism. Globally the two movements clearly have shared attributes (a confrontational stance, use of direct action, extreme decentralisation, roots in the punk subculture). More recently, animal liberation groups such as SHAC have begun to target the corporate infrastructure of animal testing. While remaining a tactical choice, this also implies a deeper analysis of the connection between animal exploitation and other forms of domination – a direction explored in writing, with increasing intensity, in recent years (Dominick 1995, Anonymous8 1999, homefries 2004). Recent trends in state repression, including the narrowing of demonstration rights and legislation against economic sabotage, are beginning to generate meaningful solidarity and cooperation between the two movements,

and individual activists from the animal rights movement have recently been making deliberate contacts with anarchists, a process which is beginning to create interesting cross-fertilisations.

In Israel, the small size of the radical scene has created a very large overlap between the two movements. The most prominent example has been Ma'avak Ehad (One Struggle), an affinity group combining explicit anarchism and an animal liberation agenda, whose members are also very active in anti-occupation struggles. Again this combination of agendas is there with the explicit goal of 'highlighting the connection between all different forms of oppression, and hence also of the various struggles against them' (One Struggle 2002). The group's emphasis on animal liberation again creates a critical bridge: calling attention to animal rights within peace and social justice movements, and encouraging resistance to the occupation in the vegetarian and vegan community. By operating Food Not Bombs stalls, Israeli anarchists and animal liberationists create meaningful connections between poverty, militarism and animal exploitation, which are highly poignant in an Israeli context.

Another powerful combination of agendas to be mentioned is the activity of New Profile, a feminist organisation that challenges Israel's militarised social order. This organisation does educational work around the connections between militarism in Israeli society and patriarchy, inequalities and social violence, and acts to 'disseminate and realize feminist-democratic principles in Israeli education by changing a system that promotes unquestioning obedience and glorification of military service' (Aviram 2003). Activities in this area include debates in schools that promote critical, non-hierarchical thinking and workshops on consensus, conflict resolution and democratic process for groups. In its second role, New Profile is the most radical among the four Israeli refusenik groups, and the one through which many anarchists refusing military service have organised (though the group itself is not anarchist). New Profile campaigns for the right to conscientious objection, operates a network of support for refuseniks before, during and after jail, arranges seminars for youth who are still dwelling on whether or not to refuse or evade service, and campaigns to support and recognise the struggle of women refuseniks. The group's radical feminist and anti-militarist stance, besides being an important message to society, also creates a meaningful bridge between the feminist and refusenik movements, challenging the core narratives to which most refuseniks – predominantly mainstream left-Zionist males – continue to adhere.

Direct action in Palestine/Israel raises two special points regarding political violence. The first is connected to the debates around violence discussed in Chapter 4. Now the Israeli and international anarchists take only non-violent action in Palestine. This position of non-violence plays an entirely different role in Palestine than it does in, say, G8 countries. This is because it takes place against the backdrop of a highly *violent* conflict, in which armed struggle is the norm rather than the exception. At the same time, the ISM and others recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian armed resistance, not including targeting civilians (and so does international law, for that matter). Interestingly, the endorsement of a 'diversity of tactics' places anarchists in a more comfortable position in the landscape of struggle in Palestine/Israel than it would strict pacifists. By engaging in non-violent forms of action while not denouncing armed resistance, Israeli anarchists have, after their own fashion, also adopted a diversity of tactics position. Unlike strict pacifists, they can more comfortably accept non-violent alongside armed struggle – although in this case it is they who take the non-violent option. In Palestine, then, anarchists have been squarely on the non-violent side of the 'diversity of tactics' equation, counteracting the charge that this formula is merely a euphemism for violence (Lakey 2002). Non-violence has the further goal of giving visibility to the non-violent aspects of Palestinian struggle, with which Western audiences can more easily identify.

The second point to be made here regards the uncommon degree of state violence faced by the Israeli and international anarchists, and the resultant pervasiveness of post-traumatic stress and burn-out in their ranks. While obviously amounting to very little compared to the lethal brutality directed towards the Palestinian population, the frequency of Israeli anarchists' experiences of state repression is certainly considerable in comparison to those of their European and North American counterparts. Exposure to tear-gas and truncheon blows has become a matter of weekly regularity, compounded by the use of sound grenades, rubber-coated metal bullets and even live ammunition. In one case an Israeli protester was shot in the thigh with a live bullet and almost died of blood loss, while another was shot in the head by a rubber-coated metal bullet and was also in a critical condition. In addition, there have been uncounted minor injuries sustained at the hands of soldiers and border police during anti-wall demonstrations. The army has also been using demonstrations in the West Bank as an opportunity to test novel 'less lethal' weapons such as pepperballs (a small transparent red plastic ball

containing an extremely irritant powder) and the Tze'aka (Hebrew for 'scream') – a minute-long blast of deafening sound emanating from a vehicle-mounted device that causes nausea and imbalance (Rose 2006).

Beyond injuries, these experiences have led to widespread post-traumatic stress among the participants, a phenomenon which is beginning to be acknowledged and coped with in direct-action movements. In the wake of repression, people experience not only physical wounds but also anxiety, guilt, depression, irritability and feelings of alienation and isolation. Post-traumatic stress can also involve any of the following: disturbing thoughts, flashbacks and intrusive images, nightmares, panic attacks and hyper-vigilance; and physical effects including fatigue, elevated blood pressure, breathing and visual difficulties, menstrual changes and muscular tension. As a result of the accumulation of untreated stress, the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative has seen high degrees of burn-out and withdrawal from activity, creating a lack of continuity in the group. Only a handful of the founding participants remain active today, while new and younger activists join in and soon experience the same difficulties. Disturbingly, this dynamic has all too often been enhanced by the uncritical reproduction of an ethos of personal sacrifice, resilience and toughness, creating widespread reluctance to surface the psychological effects of regular exposure to repression for fear of being considered 'weak'. More recently, however, awareness of feelings is rising in the Israeli movement, and many people can more easily name what they are experiencing and feel safe to ask for support. Such developments will hopefully create a more sustainable movement and a space for the elaboration of longer-term agendas.

So much for the scene on the ground, and some of its primary issues. Now I would like to widen the debate, and approach the dilemmas anarchists confront in the course of solidarity with national liberation struggles, in particular ones that aim for establishing a new nation-state.

ANARCHISM, NATIONALISM AND NEW STATES

With the conflict in Palestine/Israel so high on the public agenda, and with significant anarchist involvement in Palestine solidarity campaigns, it is surprising that the scant polemical anarchist contributions on the topic remain, at best, irrelevant to the concrete experiences and dilemmas of movements in the region. At their

worst, they depart from anarchism all together. Thus the American Platformist Wayne Price (2002) descends into very crude terms when proclaiming:

> In the smoke and blood of Israel/Palestine these days, one point should be clear, that Israel is the oppressor and the Palestinian Arabs are the oppressed. Therefore anarchists, and all decent people, should be on the side of the Palestinians. Criticisms of their leaderships or their methods of fighting are all secondary; so is recognition that the Israeli Jews are also people and also have certain collective rights. The first step, always, is to stand with the oppressed as they fight for their freedom.

Asking all decent people to see someone else's humanity and collective rights as secondary to anything – whatever this is, this is not anarchism. Where does Price's side-taking leave the distinction between the Israeli government and Israeli citizens, or solidarity with Israelis who struggle against the occupation and social injustice? These Israelis are certainly not taking action because they are 'siding with the Palestinians', but rather out of a sense of responsibility and solidarity. For the anarchists among them, it is also clearly a struggle for self-liberation from a militaristic, racist, sexist and otherwise unequal society. Price's complete indifference to those who consciously intervene against the occupation and in multiple social conflicts within Israeli society rests on vast generalisations about how 'blind nationalism leads each nation to see itself and the other as a bloc'. However, people who live inside a conflict are hardly that naive – the author is only projecting his own, outsiders' black-and-white vision onto the conflict, and the side tagged as black is subject to crass and dehumanising language (see also Hobson, et al. 2001). Unfortunately, this kind of attitude has become a widespread phenomenon in the discourse of the European and American Palestine-solidarity movement and the broader left, representing what anarchist critics have been highlighting as a typically leftist form of Judeophobia or anti-Semitism (Austrian and Goldman 2003, Michaels 2004, Shot by both sides 2005).

Meanwhile, Price is so confident about having insight into the just and appropriate resolution that he permits himself to issue elaborate programs and demands, down to the finer details: unilateral Israeli withdrawal to 1967 lines, a Palestinian state and the right of return, ending up in 'some sort of "secular-democratic" or "binational" communal federation' with 'some sort of self-managed non-capitalist economy'. Meanwhile 'we must support the resistance of

the Palestinian people. They have the right to self-determination, that is, to choose their leaders, their programs, and their methods of struggle, whatever we think'.

A blank cheque, then, to suicide bombings and any present or future Palestinian elite. The statement's imperative tone also begs the question: to whom, precisely, are Price's 'we' supposed to be issuing such elaborate demands? To the Israeli state, backed perhaps by the potent threat of embassy occupations and boycotts on academics, oranges and software? Or maybe to the international community, or to the American state for that matter? In all cases this would be a 'politics of demand' which extends undue recognition and legitimation to state power through the act of demand itself – a strategy far removed from anarchism.

Myopia towards what is happening on the ground is also a problem for Ryan Chiang McCarthy (2002). Though taking issue with Price's failure to distinguish between peoples and their rulers, McCarthy's call for solidarity with libertarian forces on the ground is unfortunately extended only to struggles which fall within his prejudiced Syndicalist gaze: 'autonomous labor movements of Palestinian and Israeli workers ... A workers' movement that bypasses the narrow lines of struggle ... and fights for the unmediated demands of workers'. Besides being entirely detached from reality – the prospects for autonomous labour movements are as bleak in Israel/Palestine as they are in the rest of the developed world – such a workerist fetish is also directly harmful. It reproduces the invisibility of the many important struggles in Palestine/Israel that do not revolve around work, and in which most anarchists happen to be participating. Meanwhile, stubborn class reductionism demarcates no less narrow lines of struggle than the ones which it criticises, and does the protagonists violence by forcing their actions into artificial frameworks. Thus Palestinians and Israelis are first and foremost 'workers ... manipulated by their rulers to massacre one another'; army refusal is a 'sparkling act of class solidarity carried out across national lines' (most refuseniks are middle-class, and self-declared Zionists to boot); while 'the nationalist poison ... drives Palestinian proletarian youth to destroy themselves and Israeli fellow workers in suicide bombings'. This may still be anarchism, but it is of a fossilised variety that forces obsolete formulas of class struggle on a reality that is far removed from such orientations.

The root of the problem displayed by these writings is that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict introduces complexities that are not easily addressed from a traditional anarchist standpoint. The tension

between anarchists' anti-imperialist commitments on the one hand, and their traditionally wholesale rebuttal of the state and nationalism on the other, would seem to leave them at an impasse regarding the national liberation struggles of occupied peoples. The lack of fresh thinking on the issue creates a position from which, it would seem, one can only fall back on the one-size-fits-all formulae. In order to understand why this is so, let me now look at anarchist critiques of nationalism.

Prevalent in anarchist literature is a distinction between the 'artificial' nationalism constructed by the state on the one hand, and the 'natural' feeling of belonging to a group that has shared ethnic, linguistic and/or cultural characteristics. Michael Bakunin (1953: 1871: 324) argued that the fatherland ('patria') represents a 'manner of living and feeling' – that is, a local culture – which is 'always an incontestable result of a long historic development'. As such, the deep love of fatherland among the 'common people ... is a natural, real love'. However, the corruption of this love under statist institutions is what anarchists commonly rejected as nationalism – a primary loyalty to one's nation-state. On this reading, nationalism is a reactionary ideological device intended to create a false unity of identity and interest between antagonistic classes within a single country, pitting the oppressed working classes of different states against each other and averting their attention from the struggle against their real oppressors. Thus for Bakunin 'political patriotism, or love of the State, is not the faithful expression' of the common people's love for the fatherland, but rather an expression 'distorted by means of false abstraction, always for the benefit of an exploiting minority' (ibid.).

The most elaborate development of this theme was made by Gustav Landauer, who used the term 'folk' to refer to the type of organic local and cultural identity that is suppressed by state-sponsored nationalism and would return to prominence in a free society. He saw folk identity as a unique spirit (Geist) consisting of shared feelings, ideals, values, language and beliefs, which unifies individuals into a community (Landauer 1907). He also considered it possible to have several identities, seeing himself as a human being, a Jew, a German and a southern German. In his words,

> I am happy about every imponderable and ineffable thing that brings about exclusive bonds, unities, and also differentiations within humanity. If I want to transform patriotism then I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact

> of the nation ... but against the mixing up of the nation and the state, against the confusion of differentiation and opposition. (Landauer 1973/1910: 263)

Rudolf Rocker adopted Landauer's distinction in his book Nationalism and Culture, where a folk is defined as 'the natural result of social union, a mutual association of men brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living, a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and geographic environment' (Rocker 1937: 200–1). However, Rocker clarifies that it is only possible to speak of the folk, as an entity, in terms that are specific to a given location and time. This is because, over time, 'cultural reconstructions and social stimulation always occur when different peoples and races come into closer union. Every new culture is begun by such a fusion of different folk elements and takes its special shape from this' (346). What Rocker calls the 'nation', on the other hand, is the artificial idea of a unified community of interest, spirit or race created by the state. Thus, like Landauer and Bakunin, it was the primary loyalty to one's nation-state that Rocker condemned as 'nationalism'. At the same time, these writers expected that with the abolition of the state, a space would be opened for the self-determination and mutually fertilising development of local folk cultures.

These attitudes to nationalism, however, had as their primary reference point the European nationalisms associated with existing states. The issue of nationalism in the national liberation struggles of stateless peoples received far less attention from anarchists. Kropotkin, for one, saw national liberation movements positively, arguing that the removal of foreign domination was a precondition to broader social struggle (Grauer 1994). On the other hand, many anarchists have argued that national liberation agendas only obfuscate the social struggle, and end up creating new local elites that continue the same patterns of hierarchy and oppression.

This tension comes very strongly to the fore in the case of Israel/Palestine. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians want a state of their own alongside Israel. So how can anarchists reconcile their support for Palestinian liberation with their anti-statist principles? How can they promote the creation of yet another state in the name of 'national liberation'? The attempt to distance oneself from support for Palestinian statehood is what motivates McCarthy's workerist stance, as well as the British syndicalists of the Solidarity Federation who declare that 'we support the fight of the Palestinian people ... [and] stand with those Israelis who protest against the racist government

... What we cannot do is support the creation of yet another state in the name of "national liberation"' (Solidarity Federation 2002).

But there are two problems with such an attitude. First, it invites the charge of paternalism since it implies that anarchists are somehow better than Palestinians at discerning their real interests. Second, and more importantly, it leaves anarchists with nothing but empty declarations to the effect that 'we stand with and support all those who are being oppressed by those who have the power to do so' (ibid.), consigning anarchists to a position of irrelevance in the present tense. On the one hand, it is clear that the establishment of a capitalist Palestinian state through negotiations among existing and would-be governments would only mean the 'submission of the Intifada to a comprador Palestinian leadership that will serve Israel', as well as neo-liberal exploitation through initiatives like the Mediterranean Free Trade Area (Anarchist Communist Initiative 2004). On the other hand, by disengaging from concrete Palestinian demands for a state, the same Israeli anarchists are left with nothing to propose except 'an entirely different way of life and equality for all the inhabitants of the region ... a classless anarchist-communist society' (ibid.). This is all well and good, but what happens in the meantime?

While anarchists surely can do something more specific in solidarity with Palestinians than just saying that 'we need a revolution', any such action would appear to be hopelessly contaminated by statism. The fact that anarchists nevertheless engage in solidarity with Palestinian communities, internationally and on the ground, requires us to grip this particular bull by its horns. Here, I believe there are at least four coherent ways in which anarchists can deal with the dilemma of support for a Palestinian state.

The first and most straightforward response is to acknowledge that there is indeed a contradiction here, but to insist that in this given situation solidarity is important even if it comes at the price of inconsistency. Endorsement of Palestinian statehood by anarchists can be seen as a necessary pragmatic position. It does nobody any good to effectively say to the Palestinians, 'sorry, we'll let you remain non-citizens of a brutal occupation until after we're done abolishing capitalism'. A point to be made here is that states have a track record of hostility to stateless peoples, refugees and nomads. The Jews and the Palestinians are two among many examples of oppressed stateless peoples in the modern era. While many Jews were citizens (often second-class citizens) of European countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, an important precondition for the Holocaust

was the deprivation of Jews' citizenships, rendering them stateless. As a result, anarchists can recognise Palestinian statehood as the only viable way to alleviate their oppression in the short term. This amounts to a specific value judgement whereby anti-imperialist or even basic humanitarian concerns take precedence over an otherwise uncompromising anti-statism.

A second, different response argues that there is no contradiction at all in anarchist support for the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is simply because Palestinians are already living under a state – Israel – and that the formation of a new Palestinian state creates only a quantitative change and not a qualitative one. Anarchists object to the state as a general scheme of social relations – not to this or the other state, but to the principle behind them all. It is a misunderstanding to reduce this objection to quantitative terms; the number of states in the world adds or subtracts nothing from anarchists' assessment of how closely the world corresponds to their ideals. Having one single world state, for example, would be as problematic for anarchists as the present situation (if not more so), although the process of creating one would have abolished some 190 states. So from a purely anti-statist anarchist perspective, for Palestinians to live under a Palestinian state rather than an Israeli state would be, at worst, just as objectionable. A Palestinian state, no matter how capitalist, corrupt or pseudo-democratic, would in any event be less brutal than an occupying Israeli state.

A third response, informed by Kropotkin's view mentioned above, is that anarchists can support a Palestinian state as a strategic choice, a desirable stage in a longer-term struggle. No one can sincerely expect that the situation in Israel/Palestine will move from the present one to anarchy in one abrupt step. Hence, the establishment of a Palestinian state through a peace treaty with the Israeli state, although far from a real solution to social problems, may turn out to be a positive development on the way to more radical changes. The reduction of everyday violence on both sides could do a great deal to open up more political space for economic, feminist and environmental struggles, and would thus constitute a positive development from a strategic point of view. The establishment of a Palestinian state could form a bridgehead towards the flowering of myriad social struggles, in Israel and in whatever enclave-polity emerges under the Palestinian ruling elite. For anarchists, such a process could be a significant step forward in a longer-term strategy for the destruction of the Israeli, Palestinian, and all other states along with capitalism, patriarchy and so on.

A fourth and final response would be to alter the terms of discussion altogether, by arguing that whether or not anarchists support a Palestinian state is a moot point, and leads to a false debate. What exactly are anarchists supposed to do with their 'support'? If the debate is to resolve itself in a meaningful direction, then the ultimate question is whether anarchists can and should take action in support of a Palestinian state. But what could such action possibly be, short of declarations, petitions, demonstrations and other elements of the 'politics of demand' that anarchists seek to transcend? One can hardly establish a state through anarchist direct action, and the politicians who will eventually decide on creating a Palestinian state are not exactly asking anarchists their opinion. Seen in this light, debates about whether anarchists should give their short-term 'support' to a Palestinian state sound increasingly ridiculous, since the only merit of such discussion would be to come up with a common platform. On this view, anarchists may take action in solidarity with Palestinians (as well as Tibetans, West Papuans and Sahrawis for that matter) without reference to the question of statehood. The everyday acts of resistance that anarchists join and defend in Palestine – e.g. removing roadblocks or defending olive harvesters from attacks by Jewish settlers – are immediate steps to help preserve people's livelihoods and dignity, not a step towards statehood. Once viewed from a longer-term strategic perspective, anarchists' actions have worthwhile implications whether or not they are attached to a statist agenda of independence.

For one thing, Israelis taking direct action alongside Palestinians is a strong public message in itself. The majority of the public certainly views Israeli anarchists as misguided, naive youth at best and as traitors at worst. The latter response happens because the joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle transgresses the fundamental taboos put in place by Zionist militarism. Alongside the living example of non-violence and cooperation between the two peoples, the struggle forces Israeli spectators to confront their dark collective traumas. Israelis who demonstrate hand-in-hand with Palestinians are threatening because they are afraid neither of Arabs nor of the Second Holocaust that they are supposedly destined to perpetrate. Notice how everything comes out when the anarchists are vilified by other Israelis: the fear of annihilation, the enemy as a calculated murderer, and victims' guilt expatiated through the assertion of self-defence and just war as unexamined axioms. And this is threatening on a deeper level than

any hole in the fence – but then again, anarchists didn't get their reputation as trouble-makers for nothing.

ALTERNATIVES

In closing this chapter, I would like to take a more general look at the role of place-based identity and belonging in anarchist theory, and see whether any of it can apply to Israel/Palestine. While anarchists have traditionally rejected nationalism, the construction of the concept of the folk by writers such as Landauer and Rocker also has its limitations. For the idea of the folk assumes at least some degree of homogeneity, even if the term can be extended (as Rocker argues) to accommodate folk identities created by the mixing and fusion of cultures and population shifts over time. But in today's world it is questionable how useful this concept is. The idea of collective local identity based on shared culture, language and spirit is irrelevant in many regions of the world, where centuries of colonialism and immigration have created multicultural populations that share very little in these terms. Can anarchists endorse a different form of belonging that can address this situation while resonating with their broader political perspectives?

Here, the idea of bioregionalism presents itself as a promising alternative. Bioregionalism is an approach to local identity that has achieved much currency in the radical environmental movement, and is based not on ethnic or political divisions but on the natural and cultural properties of a place. A bioregion is commonly defined as a continuous geographic area with unique natural features in terms of terrain, climate, soil, watersheds, plants and animals, as well as the human settlements and cultures that have developed in response to these local conditions. A bioregion is thus also a terrain of consciousness, as can be seen in indigenous peoples' accounts of their connection to the land and in local knowledge and customs. As a result, the bioregionalist approach stresses an intimate relationship between people and their natural environment, promoting sustainability and local self-reliance instead of the alienated and monocultural lifestyles pervasive in modern industrial societies (Berg 1978, Andruss et al. 1990, Thayer 2003). According to Kirkpatrick Sale (1983),

> To become 'dwellers in the land' … to fully and honestly come to know the earth, the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand the place, the immediate, specific place, where we live … We must somehow

> live as close to it as possible, be in touch with its particular soils, its waters, its winds. We must learn its ways, its capacities, its limits. We must make its rhythms our patterns, its laws our guide, its fruits our bounty.

Since the early 1970s, bioregionalism has become the agenda of numerous organisations, communities, farmers, artists and writers. The Planet Drum Foundation in San Francisco was among the first pioneers of the bioregional approach, publishing literature on the application of place-based ideas to environmental practices, cultural expression and politics. Other early organisations were the Frisco Bay Mussel Group in northern California and the Ozark Area Community Congress on the Kansas–Missouri border. Currently there are hundreds of similar groups in North and South America, Europe, Japan, and Australia (Berg 2002). Since 1984, ten North American Bioregional Congresses have taken place in the US and Canada (see www.bioregional-congress.org), and there is even a popular 'BioRegional Quiz' (Charles et al. 1981), with questions like:

- Trace the water you drink from precipitation to tap.
- Name 5 edible plants in your region and their season(s) of availability.
- How long is the growing season where you live?
- Name five resident and five migratory birds in your area.
- What species have become extinct in your area?

As can be seen, the bioregional approach is mostly concerned with ecological awareness, environmental restoration, local self-reliance and similar agendas. However, it also poses a powerful alternative – at least potentially – to both nationalist and 'folkist' approaches to identity. An identity based on connection to a local area does not contain any essentialist factors – it does not stipulate anything about the content of the personal and collective identities that can flourish within and alongside it. The only requirement is that such identities should be genuinely local and that they cohere with sustainable relationships between people and the land. As a result, individuals and groups can experience bioregional belonging while still holding multiple personal and collective identities in terms of occupation, language, ethnicity, lifestyle, spirituality, cultural taste, gender, sexual preference and so on. Bioregionalism is thus in line with anarchist demands for self-realisation and for the celebration of multiple and shifting identities.

The strongly decentralist and devolutionist agendas of bioregionalism should also make it immediately attractive to anarchists. Bioregions do not recognise arbitrary political boundaries and are unsuitable for control from above. The organisation of social and economic life according to bioregional principles calls for a high degree of local autonomy, as eco-feminist Helen Forsey argues:

> Community people have a common urge to make their own decisions, control their own destinies, both as a group and as individuals … if control of decisions or resources is imposed from the outside, the balance and cycles of the community's life are likely to be disrupted or destroyed. Without implying isolation, there needs to be a degree of autonomy which will permit the community to grow and flourish in the context of its own ecofeminist values. (Forsey 1990: 84–5)

However, bioregional proposals do not imply a parochial and separatist attitude. Since bioregions do not have clear borders but flow and melt into each other, a bioregional model is more likely to promote an ethos of cooperation and mutual aid in the stewardship of regional environments, based on both commonality and diversity. Bioregionalism, in sum, offers a viable and attractive alternative to both nationalist and 'folkist' approaches to collective local identity, while strongly resonating with broader anarchist perspectives.

Can any of this be seriously applied to the situation in Palestine/Israel? The creation of a bioregional society is difficult enough as it is, since it requires a massive transformation in the way society is organised. After all, bioregionalism is incompatible not only with war and occupation but also with capitalism, racial and religious bigotry, consumerism, patriarchy and any number of other trenchant features of hierarchical society. Like anarchism itself, full-blown bioregionalism could only come about through some form of social revolution. But the prospects look especially bleak in a context like Israel/Palestine, where decades of occupation and armed conflict have left a heavy deposit of mutual fear and suspicion that would have to be overcome before the peaceable and gentle ideals of bioregionalism could come anywhere near realisation.

Amid the daily horrors of death and humiliation, and of mutual ignorance, fear and hatred on both sides, it is tempting to say something positive about the prospects for 'real peace' in the region. Perhaps the mould of 'constructive direct action' could be extended from building alternatives to capitalism to something like 'grassroots peacemaking' – projects that build community-to-community dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Is this not an attractive

idea? After all, even for dovish Israeli Jews the notion of peace is strongly associated with separation – 'us here, them there'. This is why the Israeli government calls it the 'separation' barrier – and most of the Israeli 'peace camp' would be satisfied if the separation were only to overlap with the Green Line. In contrast, couldn't direct dialogue and shared projects – ecological ones for example – go against the grain of separation, bypassing politicians to build peace from the bottom up?

There are already, in fact, numerous and sometimes well-funded initiatives for dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli children, shared exhibitions of Palestinian and Israeli artists and the 'Peace Team' of Israeli and Palestinian footballers that became famous for its miserable losses in friendly games against champion European clubs. Inside Israel, the network of organisations for Jewish–Arab 'coexistence' already lists over 100 organisations, from lobbying and advocacy groups through educational and artistic projects and on to local citizens' forums in mixed cities and regions.

Unfortunately, there are special complications that surround even the best-intentioned attempts of this kind. These are more serious than the fact that they can easily fall into the role of civil society initiatives which supplement rather than challenge basic political and social structures. The deeper problem, as seen by many Palestinian human rights groups and Israeli dissidents, is that such projects mask the realities of the region and present equality where there is none. In vain attempts to remain neutral, coexistence and dialogue projects end up using a language in which the situation seems to be a conflict between two peoples fighting over the same piece of land, and peace the result of a territorial compromise and safe face-to-face encounters between Palestinians and Israelis, especially youth. These coexistence initiatives, launched by Israeli NGOs and backed by international foundations, seem harmless at worst until we remember that this 'outstretched hand for peace' is coming from the citizens of the occupying power. However well-meaning, projects that aim to overcome mutual ignorance and suspicion and to heal collective traumas put the cart before the horse. They amount to a call for normalisation of relations between Palestinians and Israelis as if the occupation was already over. This is not only paternalistic, but also doomed to practical failure.

Can this Radical's Catch 22 be transcended? It would seem that the practice of joint struggle does offer an alternative to the quaint helplessness of coexistence projects. American-Israeli anarchist Bill

Templer (2003) tries to evoke one way out of the problem, in an article heavy with the catchwords of anti-capitalist language:

> Reinventing politics in Israel and Palestine means laying the groundwork now for a kind of Jewish-Palestinian Zapatismo, a grassroots effort to 'reclaim the commons'. This would mean moving towards direct democracy, a participatory economy and a genuine autonomy for the people; towards Martin Buber's vision of 'an organic commonwealth ... that is a community of communities'. We might call it the 'no-state solution'.

Templer's optimism for such a project rests on the perception of a widespread crisis of faith in 'neoliberal governmentality', making Israel/Palestine 'a microcosm of the pervasive vacuity of our received political imaginaries and the ruling elites that administer them ... [but which] offers a unique microlaboratory for experimenting with another kind of polity'. While acknowledging the inevitability of a two-state settlement in the short term, he traces elements which are already turning Palestine/Israel into 'an incubator for creating "dual power" over the middle term, "hollowing out" capitalist structures and top-down bureaucracies'.

Templer's speculations may involve more than a bit of wishful thinking, but the relevant point is that unlike coexistence and dialogue for the sake of it, joint struggle does not imply normalisation. This is because it is clearly infused with antagonism towards the commanding logic of both the Israeli state, and the Palestinian parties and militias who condemn any dealings with Israelis. So while the creation and fostering of spaces which facilitate mutual aid between Palestinians and Israelis is indeed required, only such spaces which are ones of rebellion and struggle can honestly stand up to the charge of false normalisation and 'coexistence'.

The joint struggle in the villages of the West Bank not only managed to crack the unquestioned consensus around the Segregation Barrier in the Israeli public. Far more significant cracks may have appeared in the intractable image of the conflict in the eyes of many Israelis. Israeli–Palestinian cooperation in militant but non-violent action is inherently powerful because it enacts a dramatic, 90-degree flip of perspective: the 'horizontal' imagery of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is displaced by the 'vertical' one of struggle between people and government. The Mas'ha camp was by itself an example of such a transformation. The encounter between Israelis and Palestinians engaging in a joint struggle against the construction of the segregation barrier in the village became a protracted face-

to-face encounter, where members of both communities could meet each other as individuals and create a genuine, if temporary, community with no illusions about the impossibility of ending the occupation through grassroots action alone. For both sides, joint struggle can be an intense experience of togetherness, which by extension could create a model for future efforts – as these quotes from a Palestinian and an Israeli participant demonstrate (Sha'labi and Medicks 2003):

> Nazeeh: We wanted to show that the Israeli people are not our enemies; to provide an opportunity for Israelis to cooperate with us as good neighbors and support our struggle ... Our camp showed that peace will not be built by walls and separation, but by cooperation and communication between the two peoples living in this land. At Mas'ha Camp we lived together, ate together, and talked together 24 hours a day for four months. Our fear was never from each other, but only from the Israeli soldiers and settlers.

> Oren: The young Israeli generation realizes that the world has changed. They saw the Berlin wall come down. They know that security behind walls is illusionary. Spending some time together in the camp, has proven to us all that real security lies in the acceptance of one another as equals, in respecting each other's right to live a full, free life ... [we struggle] to topple walls and barriers between peoples and nations, creating a world which speaks one language – the language of equal rights and freedom.

In contrast to both the logic of separation and harmless dialogue initiatives, joint resistance in Palestine/Israel remains an open arena for extending and pushing the boundaries of Israeli–Palestinian cooperation, in a struggle that despite its very imperfect conditions can still momentarily manifest the hope that Jews, Palestinians and others might one day live in this land together without classes, states or borders.