



Generation Palestine. Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, edited by Rich Wiles, Pluto, London 2013, 242 pp. L 14.99.

„Generation Palestine“ is about the Palestinian BDS campaign that tries to motivate companies and people around the world to boycott Israeli goods and withdraw investments as long as the Israeli government does not change its occupation policy, ends its violations of human rights of the Palestinian people and its disdain for international law. The Palestinian BDS is insofar unique because it is rights-based. This peaceful political campaign enjoys ample international support among small segments of civil society, which the list of authors demonstrates: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ronnie Kasrils, Ken Loach, Iain Banks,

Richard Falk, Ilan Pappé, David Randall and many others. All authors have a common concern that they think they can change the course of the Israeli government to give in to Palestinian demands.

The unique model of „Israeli Apartheid“, colonisation and military occupation that Israel imposes on the Palestinians, has made Palestine the moral cause of a generation. Yet, many people ask, why the Israeli government gets away with every aggression against its neighbors or the permanent punishment and disfranchisement of a whole people. „It is breathtaking how the Israeli government can thumb their noses at the international community with impunity“, writes South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his Foreword.

The BDS movement aligns itself with the successful form of protest practiced against the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Although not identical, there are some “remarkable parallels” with the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and against injustice. The freedom fighters in South Africa were slandered as „communists“, whereas the Palestinian resistance fighters and critics of the brutality of the Israeli army are labeled „anti-Semites“. The Apartheid regime collapsed after it had become a huge financial and political burden for the West. Whether the Palestinian BDS will lead to a similar result remains to be seen.

In the chapter „BDS in the historical context“ the editor of the „Palestine Chronicle“, Ramzy Baroud argues, that the Palestinians must win this battle because it is rooted in universally accepted values and principles and is grounded with the civil societies. For Raji Sourani, director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights in Gaza, BDS is rooted in the decade-old struggle for self-determination, the rule of law, and accountability. Other successful protest forms were the South African case, the US Civil Rights movement and India's struggle for freedom. Although the liberation struggles against colonization were all based on the right of self-determination, the question has to be answered, why the Palestinian liberation movement failed so miserably to achieve this goal and became, at the end, a “partner in peace” in this Zionist colonial enterprise.

The Palestinian civil society came finally to terms with the failure of a decades-long charade that was called „peace process“ and decided to take the future in their own hands. Relying on the help of Western heads of states to solve their conflict would mean, waiting the day until the cows come home. All activities, which expose the reality of the Israeli occupying regime, could help, like the establishment

of the “Israeli Apartheid Week” (IAW) in Canada and the Zionist smear campaign against it, which Hazem Jamjoum describes so insightfully. It would be a great success, if the authors dream would come true, “to send Israeli Apartheid to a museum”.

Omar Barghouti, a young Palestinian activist, co-founder of BDS and a PhD student at the University of Tel Aviv (!), argues that the Palestinian movement has finally arrived at its South African moment. It “presents a progressive, anti-racist, sophisticated, sustainable, moral and effective form of civil, non-violent resistance”. According to him, the BDS movement does not call for a lower or higher standard for Israel than for any other state committing similar crimes or violations of international law. Israel has to be taken off the “lofty pedestal” on which it has been placed by the same Western powers that sponsored its creation on the ruins of the Palestinian people.

With all my sympathy for the enthusiasm of the political demands of the BDS movement, the activists should not forget that Zionism as a colonial settler movement is hardly compatible with peace and can only survive through the creation of an external enemy in order to keep its population together. Success, like in the South African case, is not a foregone conclusion. Israel is not South Africa! There are neither the massive political consciences that carried the anti-Apartheid movement nor are there any hints that the Western political elites are inclined to withdraw their support from Israel.

The same realism is required, when it comes to the political demand of a “one-state solution” for Israel and Palestine. On this issue, there is a conference on May 10th coming up in Germany, which is organized by the „Palestine Committee Stuttgart“. Some of the contributors to „Generation Palestine“ will also give speeches. If this event and the book may reach a larger audience, it would promote the course of self-determination of the Palestinian people. Sadly enough, the visit of U. S. President Obama to Israel and the latest Israeli military aggression against Syria teach a totally different lesson. All signs point at war, not to reconciliation, not to speak of one state. The book shows to its readers how to assign the aggressor in the barriers through boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Ludwig Watzal

Published here¹.

¹ <http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.de/2013/05/generation-palestine.html>