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France

Thanks to the "Dieudonné affair" we will no longer confuse anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism

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"Behind anti-Zionism there hides anti-Semitism." Who has not heard or read this sentence, instilled with almost metronomic regularity in recent years by many devoted admirers of the State of Israel, with the aim of discrediting any criticism of Israeli policies? Indeed anyone who dared question the civil and military occupation of Palestine, the acts of violence committed by the Israeli army or, supreme abjection, the legitimacy of establishing and maintaining, in the heart of the Arab world, a "Jewish State" based on a racist conception of history and social relations, was suspected of anti-Semitism.

But thanks to the recent "Dieudonné affair", such accusations are no longer relevant. Things are now in fact clear, and this is perhaps the only positive element of the balance sheet of the tragic political sequence of events that we have just experienced. It will now be difficult to confuse anti-Zionism, understood as a political critique of the foundations, structures and policies of the State of Israel, and anti-Semitism, understood as hatred of Jews. It will now be difficult to imply that opposition to Zionism, a political position which is open to question but which is legitimate, conceals in reality a purely racist rejection of Jews as such.

"Anti-Zionism, a legitimate ideology"

Where does this certainty come from? From the tenor of the debate that has accompanied the "Dieudonné affair", and the clarification that it has made possible; from the motives put forward by those who wanted to ban the performance of *The Wall*; from the positions adopted by certain figures who claim to be combating anti-Semitism. Let us take as an illustration of this the following quotation from Alain Finkielkraut, whom we will not waste time, for the sake of brevity, in presenting to our readers [1]: "Anti-Zionism, even the most militant, even the most radical, seems to me a legitimate ideology. We have the right not only to criticize the policies of the State of Israel, but even to question the legitimacy of this state".

Amazing, is it not? For those familiar with Finkielkraut, especially those who remember that he accused the Israeli director Eyal Sivan of "Jewish anti-Semitism" after the film *Route 181* came out, will not fail to be surprised. But it is only fools who do not change their minds, right? Let us rejoice indeed because the "Dieudonné case" has opened the eyes of Alain Finkielkraut and many of his colleagues: "The anti-Zionism of Dieudonné has nothing to do [with anti-Zionism]. It is not geographical, since it bestows on those it calls Zionists the two attributes of omnipresence and omnipotence. This is not an opinion, it is a criminal ideology".

Here we find the core of the argument of those who have demanded a ban on Dieudonné's performances: the problem is not that he criticizes Israel (or even that he questions its legitimacy), but that he makes anti-Semitic statements and develops anti-Semitic arguments. You only have to watch the symptomatic indictment of Alain Jakubowicz of the LICRA [2] during Frederick TaddeÅ's programme, "This Evening (Or Never!)", broadcast on January 10, to be convinced of it: the incriminating declarations of Dieudonné are insults and abuse against Jews (or Jewish personalities), the minimization and trivialization of the Nazi genocide is emphasized, as are his contacts with characters like Soral and Faurisson [3]

But at no time is there mention of what Dieudonné might have to say about Israel or the Palestinians, in other words about Zionism, understood as the project of the establishment in Palestine of a "Jewish State", its creation, its structures, its development and its policies. This is an implicit recognition that a critical, even a radical evocation of Zionism, is not tantamount to anti-Semitism, it is not a crime and therefore cannot be condemned by a court. It is an

implicit recognition that therefore there is a qualitative difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, that it is contrary to intellectual rigour to seek to confuse the two, and that there must be an end to many bad kinds of criminal proceedings.

Obviously, some people, like the CRIF, Pascal Bruckner or the unspeakable Arno Klarsfeld, have tried once again to amalgamate Zionism and anti-Semitism [4]. That is in no way surprising on the part of this institution and these individuals who are in fact, like the most Zionists among the Zionists, the inverted reflection of Dieudonné and others, because they claim like them to essentialize Jews by systematically identifying them, in spite of what they might think, with a State of Israel that further defines itself, let us remember, as the "Jewish State." But the editorialists and political leaders who have transformed the "Dieudonné affair" into an affair of state have recognized, aloud or in murmured tones, that it was not the anti-Zionism (real or perceived) of Dieudonné that was in question. And some even went further, stating that the "Zionism" denounced by Dieudonné was a fantasized construction, far from the real Zionism, and that it was intended to conceal a stigmatization of Jews in general.

Dieudonné, an anti-Zionist?

The above opinion is shared, for very different reasons, by the author of these lines. People will remember, for example, this striking declaration by Dieudonné during an interview with the Iranian television channel *Sahar TV* in 2011: "Zionism killed Christ. It is Zionism that claims that Jesus was the son of a whore". Zionism, for Dieudonné and his cronies (I am thinking of Alain Soral and Yahia Gouasmi) is primarily Judaism. Zionism, for Dieudonné and his cronies, is then a transnational entity, vaguely defined, which dictates its policies to banks, Western governments and the media. Zionism, for Dieudonné and his cronies is the source of the economic, political and social crisis affecting people in the four corners of the earth. We are very far from Israel and the Palestinians. Is it therefore a coincidence that on the posters of the "Zionist List" presented in the 2009 European elections, we do not find the words "Israel" or "Palestine"? Is it a coincidence that in the 15 points of the programme of the "Anti-Zionist Party", allied with Dieudonné and Soral during those elections, we do not find the words "Israel" or "Palestine"?

Obviously not.

As we have been reminded by various organizations in solidarity with Palestine, Dieudonné and his clique do not serve the Palestinian struggle. In reality, Dieudonné and his clique are using the Palestinian struggle, which when it comes down to it they do not care a fig about, in order to occupy the political space vacated by the desertions and betrayals of the Left. They occupy it by exploiting very real social and political issues, reducing them to a struggle against an imaginary "Zionism", while abandoning the field of battle against the really existing Zionism, only referring to the Palestinian question when it is in the news. Furthermore the State of Israel is quite aware of this, and is much more concerned about the development of the international BDS (Boycott -Divestment - Sanctions) campaign than by the "dumplings" of Dieudonné and the monologues of Alain Soral.

Some people will obviously try (and are already trying) to use the "Dieudonné affair" to discredit all the organizations and individuals which affirm their solidarity with the Palestinians. But, paradoxically, the sequence of events that we have just experienced enables us to clarify things, and hence to combat this type of specious reasoning. Indeed, the political class, the vast majority of intellectuals and almost all editorialists have just (unintentionally) reminded us of this essential truth: anti-Zionism, understood as a political critique of the foundations, structures and policies of the State of Israel should not be confused with the superficial "anti-Zionism" of Dieudonné and his cronies, and cannot be amalgamated with anti-Semitism.

The fiercest critics of Dieudonné have ultimately, despite themselves, done a job of cleansing the public debate: they

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have given recognition to political criticism of the State of Israel and to genuine anti-Zionism, distinguishing them carefully from anti-Semitism. Will they continue on this path? Nothing is less certain. They will probably do not ask for the repeal of the Alliot-Marie circular, which criminalizes the boycott of Israel, a political campaign that has nothing to do with anti-Semitism. They will probably not demand that anti-Zionism, a legitimate political position, can now make its voice heard in the media during debates on Israel and the Palestinians.

Indeed, it is most likely that they have not realized, absorbed as they were by their crusade against Dieudonné, the service that they have just potentially rendered to all those who are sincerely convinced that the best service that can be rendered to the struggle against anti-Semitism is, in the last analysis, to combat a confusion that ultimately serves those who want to make all sorts of amalgamations.

But the breach has been opened.

Appendix 1: the official poster of the "anti-Zionist List"

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/png/Antisioniste2.png>]

Appendix 2: the programme of the "Anti- Zionist Party "

Political programme of the Anti-Zionist Party

1. Remove Zionist interference in the affairs of the nation.
2. Denounce all politicians who are apologists for Zionism.
3. Eradicate all forms of Zionism in the nation.
4. Prevent companies and institutions from contributing to the war effort of a foreign nation that does not respect international law.
5. Free our state, our government and our institutions from the domination and pressure of Zionist organizations.
6. Free the media, for a plurality of information to promote freedom of expression.
7. Promote the free expression of politics, culture, philosophy and religion and free them from Zionism.
8. Restore power to France and to the French people according to the new geopolitical and economic rules, on the major issues that engage the responsibility of the nation.
9. No longer involve France in wars of colonization and repatriate our armies stationed in Africa, Afghanistan and everywhere in the world.
10. Demand a referendum on any new engagement of France abroad.
11. Establish a bill to prohibit those with dual nationality from participating in wars without an explicit mandate from

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the nation.

12. Prohibit all militias, regardless of their religious denomination.
13. Initiate a national dialogue to raise awareness for a project of society that excludes any advocacy of Zionism.
14. Establish proportional representation so that all the components of society are represented.
15. Advocate the establishment of a society of justice, progress and tolerance.

[1] Alain Finkielkraut is a well-known French academic, a professor of philosophy and a fervid partisan of Zionism and of the State of Israel.

[2] LICRA is the French acronym for the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism, founded in Paris in 1927.

[3] Alain Soral is a French essayist and film director. Formerly on the left, and at one time a member of the French Communist Party, he evolved rightwards, being for a time a leading member of the National Front. He is among other things anti-Semitic. Robert Faurisson is a notorious Holocaust denier who is now close to Dieudonné.

[4] The CRIF is the French affiliate of the World Jewish Congress. It combats anti-Semitism but is also characterized by its support for Zionism and the State of Israel