

# Dan La Botz in *International Viewpoint*: A moral eunuch condemns Palestinian violence

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On the *International Viewpoint* website, Dan La Botz posted a repugnant article October 16 concerning the US-backed genocidal war of Israel against Gaza.

La Botz is a veteran state capitalist, who joined the Shachtmanite “Third Camp” International Socialists (IS) in the 1970s, and subsequently played a leading role in the fraudulent “reform caucus” Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which today is nothing more than a faction of the Teamsters bureaucracy.

La Botz is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and contributes to *International Viewpoint*, the publication of organizations that make up the remnants of the former Pabloite United Secretariat, and more generally, “the butt-ends” of global pseudo-leftism. La Botz is a typical representative of complacent, affluent upper-middle class ex-radicalism. He previously signed up for imperialist aggression in Libya and Syria and fervently supports the US and NATO powers’ arming of Ukraine in the current war.

La Botz brings his “Third Campism” to the current situation, piously ascribing blame to both the Zionist regime and Hamas for the violence in the Middle East.

The headline of the *International Viewpoint* article already says much: “Israel-Palestine War Roils U.S. Politics Top to Bottom.” The conflict has further *polarized* US politics, with both major political parties and the entire media establishment braying about Palestinian “savagery” and “evil” and pledging full support for Israel’s mass murder. On the other side, hundreds of thousands people of every ethnicity, particularly young people, have mobilized to oppose Biden and Israel and express support for the struggle of the oppressed Palestinians.

An introductory paragraph of La Botz’s piece argues “Hamas’s attack on Israel, including murdering civilians, now followed by Israel’s siege and bombardment of Gaza and the demand that over a million civilians immediately relocate, has electrified American politics from top to bottom. As politicians debate policy, thousands of Americans have poured into the street to support Israel or Palestine, as the left is divided over the issue.”

Using words such as “roil” and “electrify,” which mean nothing in this context, is simply a means of avoiding taking a stand with the anti-Israeli forces. One might as well be reading the *New York Times*.

La Botz’s starting point is not unequivocal support for an oppressed people, confronting a united front of imperialist powers armed to the teeth, but Hamas’s “murdering civilians,” which supposedly has “divided” the “left.” No genuinely socialist left would be divided over the Gaza conflict. La Botz has in mind the Democratic Party and its orbit, including the faction of the Democrats he belongs to, the DSA.

Nor is it true, as La Botz implies, that the “thousands” who have

“poured into the street” have been equally divided between supporters of the Zionist state and the Palestinians. Every major city, and many smaller ones, have witnessed a sincere, angry outpouring, including by thousands of Jewish protestors, directed against the Israeli massacres and more generally at the decades of brutal oppression of the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel itself.

Astonishingly, La Botz proceeds to criticize Congressperson Rashida Tlaib, Democrat from Michigan, from the *right*. He argues that Tlaib, “a Palestinian American, said ‘this heartbreaking cycle of violence will continue’ unless the funds are cut off, but *she did not criticize Hamas.*” [Emphasis added.] La Botz preferred the comments of Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez “from New York City, [who] was more cautious, criticizing Hamas’ attacks and urging ‘de-escalation’ by both sides.”

Ocasio-Cortez was not more cautious, she was prostrate before the pro-Zionist media and establishment lynch mob, denouncing pro-Palestinian demonstrations and suggesting that it “should not be so hard to shut down hatred and antisemitism where we see it,” repeating the great lie that support for the Palestinians is equivalent to racism and antisemitism. La Botz discreetly passes over in silence Ocasio-Cortez’s most outrageous comment, in regard to a New York City demonstration opposing the Israeli assault on Gaza, that the “bigotry and callousness expressed in Times Square on Sunday were unacceptable and harmful in this devastating moment.”

In fact, although “more cautiously,” La Botz slanders the pro-Palestinian demonstrations along the lines of Ocasio-Cortez, writing that some “protests have appeared to support Hamas, many declined to criticize Hamas, and at some there were not only anti-Zionist but also sometimes antisemitic slogans.”

Where? What is La Botz talking about? There may have been the odd antisemite at a protest, but no one has claimed, outside Fox News and the extreme right media, that this has dominated any mass demonstration. In fact, the Israeli onslaught has the full backing of the neo-fascist, antisemitic Alternative for Germany (AfD), the neo-Nazi-infested Zelensky regime and the fascists (and antisemites) who make up the bulk of the Republican Party in Congress.

Prominent actor John Cusack made a point of refuting such claims. On social media, Cusack observed about the protest march in Chicago: “I’ll tell you what I didn’t hear; I didn’t hear death to Israel, I didn’t hear death to Jews, I didn’t hear people celebrating the murders of Israeli civilians. What I DID hear is – we must free Palestine from a brutal occupation – people concerned for their loved ones, in a hell zone, stuck without food, water and power.”

La Botz is essentially fingering the protests on behalf of the Biden and Netanyahu governments and their propagandists and apologists.

La Botz's "even-handedness" in regard to oppressed and oppressor is typical of his milieu, and reactionary to the core. Pharisees, self-righteous hypocrites stand aside from such a conflict and pronounce a plague on both houses. Meanwhile, the mass killing continues. Neutrality is complicity with the oppressor.

Marxists criticize Hamas, not because of its military operation in southern Israel, but because of its bourgeois nationalist politics, its incapacity to unite Arab and Jewish workers against the Zionist state and the various venal regimes in the region.

The attack October 7 was a military action and an uprising by an oppressed people, not a terrorist attack. Increasingly, the ruling classes, shivering with fear, term every sign of determined opposition to their rule as an act of "terrorism."

Israeli civilians were killed in the fighting who had no responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinians. That tragedy is the fault of the Zionist regime and its Western backers, who have expelled, persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and murdered the Palestinians for decades.

Conditions in the Gaza Strip are unspeakable, a hell on earth, and the outrage that boiled up in this open air prison and found outlet October 7 was entirely legitimate. As we have noted, "those confined to such brutalizing conditions as exist in Gaza are not likely to 'break out' bearing flowers in their hands."

This has always been the attitude of Marxists to the revolt of the downtrodden.

Karl Marx led the way, pointing out in 1857, in response to the La Botzes of his day, who decried the cruelties inflicted by Indians in revolt against British rule, that "There is something in human history like retribution: and it is a rule of historical retribution that its instrument be forged not by the offended, but by the offender himself."

The picture is not always a pretty one, but colonial slavery and imperialism are not pretty phenomena. Writing about the slave revolt in Santo Domingo (Haiti), the French colony, in 1791, the Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James explained that the slaves "destroyed tirelessly. Like the peasants in the Jacquerie or the Luddite wreckers, they were seeking their salvation in the most obvious way, the destruction of what they knew was the cause of their sufferings; and if they destroyed much it was because they had suffered much. They knew that as long as these plantations stood, their lot would be to labour on them until they dropped. The only thing was to destroy them. From their masters they had known rape, torture, degradation, and, at the slightest provocation, death. They returned in kind." Precisely as Marx explained.

Now that the former slaves, wrote James in *The Black Jacobins*, "held power they did as they had been taught. In the frenzy of the first encounters they killed all, yet they spared the priests whom they feared and the surgeons who had been kind to them. They, whose women had undergone countless violations, violated all the women who fell into their hands, often on the bodies of their still bleeding husbands, fathers and brothers. 'Vengeance! Vengeance!' was their war-cry, and one of them carried a white child on a pike as a standard." Why was James not "more cautious" in his account, criticizing the slaves and urging "de-escalation"?

What about the so-called Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, when a largely peasant-based movement revolted against foreign colonial intervention? The "Boxers" murdered Christian missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians. Why doesn't Lenin speak "critically" of the uprising in his "War in China" essay from

December 1900?

He does ask what it was that "made the Chinese attack Europeans, what caused the rebellion which the British, French, Germans, Russians, Japanese, etc., are so zealously crushing? ... It is true the Chinese hate the Europeans, but which Europeans do they hate, and why? The Chinese do not hate the European peoples, they have never had any quarrel with them—they hate the European capitalists and the European governments obedient to them. How can the Chinese not hate those who have come to China solely for the sake of gain; who have utilized their vaunted civilization solely for the purpose of deception, plunder, and violence?"

In 1904, the Herero people rebelled against colonial rule in German South West Africa, killing more than 100 German and Boer settlers, men, women and children. In retaliation, the German military carried out an attempt at genocide, murdering tens of thousands of Herero "savages."

Rosa Luxemburg, some years later, described the events, arguing that the "crime" of the Hereros was that "they defended their land against foreign invaders." The "'civilized world' looked on passively as the same imperialism ordained the cruel destruction of ten thousand Herero tribesmen and filled the sands of the Kalahari with the mad shrieks and death rattles of men dying of thirst." Not a word of "criticism" of the killings that set off the massacre.

In *Their Morals and Ours*, Leon Trotsky brilliantly summed up the Marxist position versus the "moralizing Philistine," whose "favorite method is the lumping of reaction's conduct with that of revolution." Trotsky listed the "chief traits of the prophets of this type" as distance from "great historical movements, a hardened conservative mentality, smug narrowness, and a most primitive political cowardice. More than anything, moralists wish that history should leave them in peace with their petty books, little magazines, subscribers, common sense, and moral copy books."

Trotsky brought in the example of the American Civil War and its harshness. Lincoln's significance, he wrote, "lies in his not hesitating before the most severe means once they were found to be necessary in achieving a great historic aim posed by the development of a young nation."

Trotsky pointed out that the issue was not even "which of the warring camps caused or itself suffered the greatest number of victims. History has different yardsticks for the cruelty of the Northerners and the cruelty of the Southerners in the Civil War. A slave-owner who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning or violence breaks the chains—let not the contemptible eunuchs tell us that they are equals before a court of morality!"

La Botz is one of our contemporary moral eunuchs.



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