

Member of European Parliament accuses Israel of “genocide in Gaza and elsewhere”: Philosopher Gianni Vattimo

By Dr. Clemens Heni

Gianni Vattimo (born 1936) is a Member of European Parliament for the Liberal Democratic alliance (ALDE). He is a renowned Italian philosopher, a follower of both Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx. He is a self-declared gay-communist Catholic. He could be a minority rights activist, right? Europe has plenty of homophobic tendencies, and Iran hangs gay men on a regular basis.

Early in 2014, Vattimo co-edited a book on “Deconstructing Zionism. A Critique of Political Metaphysics,” published by Bloomsbury (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney). The book is dedicated to leading French philosopher Jacques Derrida, known for his anti-American agenda alongside with his friend Jürgen Habermas in 2003. They were the philosophical supporters of German-French anti-Bush-agitation at the time.

In his contribution to the book, Vattimo admits that his piece is a kind of autobiography: “How to become an anti-Zionist”. He writes about his generation, born around the Second World War, and raised with the idea that Jews deserved a state due to the Holocaust. For him the “myth” of “antifascist resistance” (against the Germans/Nazis) was accompanied and promoted by “American films” about Jews and Israel, which argued in favor of a Jewish state.

Vattimo starts his article with reference to anti-Israeli Ilan

Pappé and the encounter with what both call “Nakba” or Palestinian history. Around 1968 Vattimo was a socialist fan of Israeli kibbutzim, ignoring “Nakba” as he recalls. Following conspiracy theories, Vattimo writes about the “unbelievable official version” of the US Government of 9/11. Several thousand of potentially lethal missiles from Hamas launched into southern Israel are called “totally harmless missiles.” For him, Holocaust denier and propagandist of a “world without Zionism,” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was and is a hero, who dared to attack Israel, the Jews, and American power.

Vattimo writes:

“Better still: the entire Gaza affair contributed in a decisive way, more than any other aspect of Israeli politics, to the idea (I believe with great likelihood) that against the risk of a return of refugees, which would entail the end of the ‘Jewishness’ of the State of Israel, this situation might see no other solution than the progressive extermination of Palestinian Arabs.”

Gianni Vattimo is a loudspeaker for former Iranian President Ahmadinejad and says:

“As to the idea of making the state of Israel ‘disappear’ from the map – one of the usual themes of the Iranian ‘threat’ – its sense may not be completely unreasonable: it could, and ought, according to us, mean that the State of Israel becomes a secular, democratic, non-racist state, without walls and without discrimination among its citizens.”

Vattimo concludes:

“When Ahmadinejad invokes the end of the State of Israel, he merely expresses a demand that should be more explicitly shared by the democratic countries that instead consider him

an enemy."

For Vattimo, "memory of the Holocaust" "is imposed like a penalty". He then takes aim at "Nazi hunters" (!) like French philosopher and critique of Heideggerian antisemitism, Emmanuel Faye. Vattimo attacks "Anglo-Saxon" "mainstream thinking of the Atlantic, North American" region and is upset about Chilean philosopher Victor Farias, another critic of Heidegger, for his linking – for good reason – of "Heideggerianism and Iranian Islamic thought".

Gianni Vattimo's defamation of Israeli Jews culminates in the following sentence:

"The myth of 'two states for two peoples,' another aspect of the Zionist mythology, is all too clearly a way of protracting matters so that it does not appear to be an ongoing excuse by Western democracies to avoid their responsibilities, a way to give Israel the time to continue the genocide, in Gaza and elsewhere, and also to reinforce themselves militarily in every way, including the possession of atomic weapons."

To accuse Jews of committing "genocide" is the typical antisemitic projection of German and European guilt of the Shoah onto the Jews: as long as Jews today are seen as bad as Nazis, there is no reason to worry about guilt. He is a renowned philosopher but has not a clue about the word "genocide", the same holds for the word "decimation" (he uses this word as well) when it comes to Israeli policies towards today's Palestinians. The number of Palestinians is increasing, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

No surprise, then, that Vattimo and his co-editor Michael Marder, co-editor of the US journal *Telos*, included proponents of the "one state solution" like Duke University's Walter Mignolo, who was a fellow in sociology at the University of

Warwick a few years ago. He was invited by scholar in antisemitism Robert Fine and his colleague Gurminder Bhambra, a follower of “post-Orientalist” enemy of Israel Edward Said (1935–2003). Other authors in the Vattimo/Marder volume are Marc H. Ellis, a “liberation theologian”, “currently a visiting professor at the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica,” feminist Luce Irigaray, post-colonial and feminist scholar Ranjana Khanna (Duke University), political scientist Artemy Magun (European University at Saint-Petersburg), Christopher Wise, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Western Washington University in Bellingham, and Santiago Zabala, a Professor at the University of Barcelona (author of “Hermeneutic Communism,” 2011, co-authored with Gianni Vattimo).

Vattimo and Marder also included Judith Butler in this volume. Her well known anti-Israel article “Is Judaism Zionism?”, was published in a book on “The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere”, including articles by famous philosophers Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas in 2011, based on a huge event with some 1000 people attending at New York University in September 2009. Vattimo himself was honored in 2007 with a Festschrift, among the contributors were Charles Taylor, Umberto Eco, German philosophers Manfred Frank, Wolfgang Iser, Rüdiger Bubner and American philosophical superstar Richard Rorty (1931–2007).

This is just indicating that Gianni Vattimo is not an outsider at all.

Will any one of his fans criticize this volume about “Deconstructing Zionism?” For Vattimo, “anti-Zionism is synonymous with leftist world politics” – and he embraces it and promotes it via the European Parliament. I do not view Vattimo as a freak, despite his fantastical theories. Rather, he is dangerous, because he represents a highly antisemitic climate among the elites in the humanities, the social sciences and the cultural and political elites in Europe and

the Western world. At the EU Parliament, he is a member of ALDE – Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group – and a member of the Culture and Education Committee of the EU-Parliament. He was an ally of Venezuelan Hugo Chavez and in his contribution to the book he promotes Brazilian pro-Iranian policies:

“That Brazil’s president Lula was among the first ‘Western’ leaders to welcome Iran and Ahmadinejad has an emblematic value that goes far beyond the particular significance of his visit.”

The book “Deconstructing Zionism”, published in 2014 by Gianni Vattimo and Michael Marder, indicates that anti-Zionist antisemitism is on the rise. The ordinary tone of Vattimo also indicates that he has nothing to lose: he knows that the elites in Europe have no problem with his kind of left-wing antisemitism, framed as “left-wing world politics”. No one is shocked that he literally embraces Holocaust denier and antisemite Ahmadinejad and openly welcomes the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel. If you want to know anything about the European Parliament, about European philosophy, and European political culture, read this article by Gianni Vattimo. Heidegger would be proud of such an outspoken anti-American and antisemitic approach. Vattimo is very clear: the problem is not the “occupation,” the result of Israel’s victory in June 1967. The problem is 1948, Israel as a Jewish state! That is the anti-Zionist agenda of Judith Butler and her allies in a nutshell.

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