

## **“Wide spread indiscriminate violence against a population, has long term consequences in all spheres of life of this population, and that the Left should address this problem”**

Tuesday 11 June 2013, by [HELIE LUCAS Marieme](#) (Date first published: 10 June 2013).

**Comment on “Chickens Roost in Woolwich”, by Margaret Kimberley (about recent killings in the UK) [1].**

Margaret Kimberley draws our attention to war crimes committed by states: this is nothing new, as human rights organizations have been doing exactly this for decades and so did the Left whose focus, during the second half of the XX<sup>e</sup> century, was primarily the State wrong doings.

She also draws our attention to the dubious links that various countries' intelligence entertains with 'terrorists'. Mohamed Merah's case in France was a recent example of such links. Isn't this the old strategy of the police with gangsters and Mafiosi: trying to turn one of them into an informant?

One could say that applying to politicians a strategy designed for supposedly money-hungry robbers may be ineffective, as it misses an important point: the ideology behind the crime.

It seems to me that Kimberley's article does not bring any new analysis, especially if it is addressed to a Left audience which is well aware of state responsibility. But what it does, in fact, is to justify a crime in the name of another crime. Should we presume that this is the author's definition of justice?

If it is the case, it is a short sighted view: many countries in Africa still pay the price for decades of justified political violence against part of their population. Independences from colonial powers that were hard won through liberation struggles had a direct consequence on domestic violence and violence against children in decades that followed, as well as the ethnic cleansing that took place in so many parts of the continent.

My own research in my own country (Algeria) in the early eighties shows that some fathers 'punished' their young children, for incredibly minor offences, using some of the tortures that were used by the French paratroops against Algerians during the liberation struggle (including electricity). In the nineties, armed fundamentalist groups used torture, mutilation, cutting throats, burning alive, burying alive, beheading, gang rape, etc... against villagers they deemed '*kafir*' (unbelievers) because they did not share their definition of Islam. And in the early years of the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, ordinary men used just the same methods against women workers who migrated from Northern Algeria where they could find no jobs to Southern Algeria oil cities where there were jobs that allowed these women to earn their living and that of their families remained in the north: these women too were deemed *kafir* for not being 'guarded' by a male in their family and they faced similar tortures. All of those were widely used by the colonizer's army against the Algerian population during the liberation struggle.

Am I saying here that our liberation should not have been obtained through arms? No. Many other peaceful political solutions were proposed –unfortunately in vain – during the 132 years of colonisation, before the 1954 liberation war was launched and was successful, at last.

What I am saying –still a most unpopular truth, seen as not politically correct– is that any form of wide spread indiscriminate violence against a population, has long term consequences in all spheres of life of this population, and that the Left should address this problem. The real question is not what we do to the enemy when we accept or justify such methods as inevitable, but what we do to our countries, to ourselves, and to our children, for decades to come. The intergenerational transmission of trauma should be addressed by the Left, as a priority, if we want to stop the replication of violence in our countries.

The other problem the Left needs to address,- rather than leaving it to a xenophobic Far Right to promote its deadly analysis -, is the emergence of powerful armed non state actors. Failing to acknowledge that non state actors can be both victims of the state AND perpetrators of violations on a given population has lead the Left, unfortunately, to blindly supporting perpetrators of gross violations under the pretext of defending them as victims of the state. Moreover, failing to acknowledge the Far Right nature of some of the political movements that call for ‘terrorist’ actions against ‘the West’ is leading the Left to supporting Far Right movements in the name of anti-imperialism.

Being ‘against the State’, per se, cannot any longer be THE only criterion for being supported by progressive people. By so doing, the Left in Europe and North America not only promotes Far Right ideologies internationally, but it also abandons our progressive forces which fight on two fronts: against capitalist states and imperialism, and against our internal non state Far Right armed forces.

These are some of the issues I would have liked to see analyzed in an article on the Boston bombing in the USA, or the Woolwich killing in the UK, or the Merah killings in France – to name a few recent occurrences -, rather than this short sighted justification of such methods used to address state responsibility.

It leaves aside a major issue: what does it do to us, short term – preparing for a blood bath between two extreme rights - and long term – ingraining violence into society.

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### **Footnotes**

- [1] Pambazuka News, Issue 633, 6 June 2013:  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/87741>