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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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by AIDAN O'BRIEN
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Palestinian Rock vs Euro Thrash: Roger Waters vs Bono



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“Pigs rule the world”

– The key message in Roger Waters’ 2018 European Tour.

“I love [the EU elite]”

– The key part of a 2014 sycophantic speech Bono gave to Europe’s Center Right establishment (the folks who gave Europe war and austerity).

Listening to the politics of Roger Waters is rock and roll. The Pink Floyd genius is now the most prominent voice of the BDS movement that is defending Palestinian rights. At the moment, it feels like Waters is the only white man taking on the state of Israel (not forgetting the brilliance of Finkelstein). Indeed, considering the fact that Israel is the heart of Western geopolitics—the true target of Waters’ activism is the Western Empire itself. And he knows it.

In contrast, when listening to Bono pontificate, we hear bombers flying overhead. While Waters was in St. Petersburg this September, on tour, Bono was to be found in Paris, also on tour, but meeting up with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, as well. The U2 mediocrity claimed afterwards that he and “the bomber of Syria” were talking about Africa. It was the continuation of a discussion Bono began years ago with “the bombers of Iraq”—Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and George W. Bush.

Waters and Bono come from two different cultures: Waters from the 1960s and Bono from the 1980s. Pink Floyd’s debut album was released in 1967, while U2’s debut album saw the light in 1980. This is significant, because the bandleaders of both groups appear to have absorbed the politics of their formative years. Revolution in the case of Waters, and counterrevolution in the case of Bono. And the words of both today, respectively, continue to give expression to progress on the one hand, and regress on the other.

The culture wars between the 1960s and 1980s, between the culture of Che Guevara and the culture of Ronald Reagan, never went away. Beneath the current battle between populism and its elite critics, the undercurrents of class, imperialism and anti-imperialism are as strong as ever. And even millionaire musicians are pulled one way or the other.

In an interview with RT, in St. Petersburg, Roger Waters summed up in one word the culture of Che Guevara (the anti-imperialist culture) which he is perpetuating. That word is “empathy”. The ability to connect with another’s pain or suffering. And the will to fight to end this pain or suffering, basically sums up the attitude of Che and the “1960s”.

This attempt to understand the weak or vulnerable “other” motivates Waters’ support of the Palestinians today. In fact, “empathy” forces him to open up to Russia. In his RT interview, he tells us that during his concerts—in response to the anti-Russian psy-ops which distorts the West today—he asks his audience: “do you know that Russia sacrificed twenty million of its people, so that you can be free of Nazism?”

Bono doesn’t ask this question. Instead, during his current live shows, he wraps himself up in the flag of power. And shamelessly declares his love of the Empire that’s attacking

Russia, with sanctions and up close coups, and war games. The flag is that of the European Union. And the Empire is the iron fist that hides behind that flag: NATO.

Unlike Waters—who wants to connect with the biggest open prison in the world: Gaza—Bono goes out of his way to connect with the corporatist project that is the EU. Forget the weak and vulnerable, within the EU, being bombed by austerity, and being dragged into war after war – Bono’s main concern is defending the flag of the super state.

In a Europe dominated by corporations and their lobbyists: Bono’s words and actions are those of an ultra elitist. Listen to his EU-speak: ‘Well, U2 is kicking off its tour in Berlin this week, and we’ve just had one of our more provocative ideas: during the show we’re going to wave a big, bright, blue EU flag.....to some of us it has become a radical act.’

Bono ends this piece in a German newspaper with the usual delusion: ‘I feel privileged to have witnessed the longest stretch of peace and prosperity ever on the European continent.’

The fact that the EU itself has ended whatever “peace and prosperity” there was in Europe, completely undermines Bono’s sinister “blindness”. By imposing neoliberalism, bailouts, austerity and NATO’s wars (Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Russia) upon Europe, the EU has delegitimized itself. Is it therefore right for Bono to defend this state of affairs, or is it radically right wing?

In his interview with RT, Roger Waters says that there’s always a right and a wrong thing to do. In the context of Palestine, the boycott of Israel is the right thing to do. It is so because the boycott stands on the shoulders of history. Waters points to the 1948 declaration of universal human rights—which itself rests on every slave revolt in the past. Anything which aids this trajectory of humanity is righteousness for itself.

There’s no greater slave revolt today, than that of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. In fact it’s the lynchpin to the struggle for global justice. Today’s great crime against humanity is Western warmongering in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen). And the basis for this is the Western war against Palestine, which began in 1917. In short, the Western Empire today revolves around the repression of Palestine.

This, of course, means that Israel is not alone. Without the support of the USA and EU, Israel wouldn’t last a day. Israel works for the West. Therefore, to boycott Israel is to boycott the West and its reign of terror. This is where Bono comes in. His concern is not Africa but Western weakness. And his job is to prop it up.

Bono correctly discerns the weakness of the EU today. The European people are actually boycotting it. Their votes are saying no to the idea of 'the EU über alles'. They don't want another Roman Empire, another Charlemagne, another Holy Roman Empire, another Pax Romana in the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, they don't want another Third Reich. They don't want to make Europe Great Again. But Bono does.

And Roger Waters doesn't. He places humanity before the West. And is willing to abandon the West in order to achieve a better world. His music, therefore, is a universal act of resistance, whereas Bono's is a provincial act of imperialism. By holding up the flag of the EU, Bono is flying the flag of Israel and burning the flag of Palestine. In the language of Waters then: Bono is a Pig.

We, on the other hand, who boycott Israel and the EU are human. We're children of the 60s. We're sticks of dynamite in the Wall.