

Tel Aviv on the Seine Flushes Out the Slithery Creatures, Part 2



Checkpoint at the entrance to Tel Aviv sur Seine

photo by Jiro Mochizuki

Ah ha ha, I'm chortling. Or maybe it's better to imagine airy bell-like laughter, something silky and lacy. Ah ha ha, I'm laughing. The Big Bad Wolf said I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll... give an interview to a journalist. That was Gaza Beach today, a silly little flop. More journalists than BDSniks in their green Boycott Israel t-shirts. More riot policemen than petulant self-satisfied protestors in keffieh. The caliphators were not out in force.



Journalists cooling their heels at Gaza Beach

photo by Jiro Mochizuki

But let's begin at the beginning. Shortly before noon a parade of police cars passed by, sirens singing. That always electrifies the atmosphere. The cars took up positions around the Hôtel de Ville [city hall]. Dozens of CRS [riot police] were already in place, manning their stations. A long line of people waited patiently on the high road to go through the checkpoint and down the ramp to Tel Aviv on the Seine. Silent hecklers waited off to the side, making a fashion statement with their keffiehs and Gaza Beach Soccer t-shirts as if their presence were the eloquent expression of "international opinion." Euro-Palestine in person [<http://www.europalestine.com/>] had informed loyal followers that permission to demonstrate had been granted on the grounds that they not try to mingle with the Tel Aviv beachgoers. So

of course that's why a dozen of them had to stand there like "do me something."

A generous supply of press badges were waiting on a table. We signed up, got our badges, and took the fast track through baggage control. Then a short stretch under the bridge, with dozens of CRS lined up in the shadows next to the WCs, and here we are at the much maligned Tel Aviv on the Seine. We walk a bit further and come to the patch of sandy beach. Israeli music rings out, people are dancing, hips are gyrating, hands are clapping, the crowd is already dense. TV trucks look down from the bridge, cameramen are all over the place, microphones with logos are looking for something to record. One food truck (more about that later), an ice cream stand, and that's it. A pittance.



Dancing at Tel Aviv on the Seine

photo by Jiro Mochizuki

As if the whole thing had been nothing more than a stupid conversation! I may get more information in the coming days: was this the original plan, or was it scaled down in the face of fierce opposition (see Part 1)? Wasn't there something about beach games and what not? I can't even remember the details of what I'd read yesterday. Perhaps further on? We walked through a sort of covered passage. I spotted a keffieh-umbrella, some Palestinian flags. "I thought they weren't supposed to mingle?" In fact, we were on Gaza Beach! Without warning. No signs to indicate we were entering the territory occupied by the "Palestinian" contingent. A handful of activists were activating. Stringing up their huge banner. Always that same self-satisfied look. Journalists standing around waiting for something to happen. We got into a conversation with a Mediterranean looking young woman brandishing a Radio France Internationale mike. Remarked that we had entered the sector by mistake. There was no checkpoint but now we discover we can't go back to Tel Aviv, we have to

go up the stairs to the upper quai, make a long detour, and pass through the checkpoint again. "You know why? It's because there's no fear of an incursion from the Tel Aviv side. But the same is not true of this side." The fresh young raven-haired RFI journalist does not agree. "There's just as much chance of an attack from that side as this side," she says with a certainty that can only come from repeating what you are told and never thinking for yourself.



Gaza Beach right next to Tel Aviv

photo by Jiro Mochizuki

The police can't play around with that kind of nonsense. They protect from clear and present dangers. The bridge and the high road overlooking Gaza beach are open to the public. Bridges and the high road above the Zionist side were blocked... taking no chances on a wannabe Al Aqsa from which rocks might be cast down upon the festive crowd.

The weather has changed. After days and weeks of glorious sunshine that made Paris blossom like a woman in love, the sky was heavy today with thick white clouds. All the magic of Paris Plages had disappeared. I couldn't believe I had found it so charming. Nothing but a dreary road along the river, with a few tables and chairs squeezed against damp dark stone walls. And that sort-of-a- beach where young and not so young were dancing and putting some heart into it.

The food truck? The one and only food truck where the hungry lined up forever? What was the connection between Tel Aviv and the three young women with ashram accessories running "Epices & love" [peace & love, y'get it?]. The vegan craze? We sit on a narrow wooden bench chomping on a tasteless wrap filled with tasteless vegetables, that and nothing more. D. tells me what he saw in a kindergarten when he went into Gaza at the end of the '67 war: nothing on the walls but big drawings of the different ways of killing Jews.

When we left the Seine at about 3 PM there was still a long line of people waiting to cross the checkpoint into Tel Aviv beach. E. and I decided to walk down toward Châtelet and check out Gaza on the Seine. As before, we had to cross to the far side of the street as we passed the Zionist stretch where the music was still going strong. Finally we could cross over and look straight down at the handful of BDSers clustered around a haranguer telling them when the pharmacist offers a generic drug be sure to say no to TEVA. Hip hip hurrah, they holler, we don't want TEVA. Then, if I'm not mistaken, it's the leader of Euro-Palestine CAPJPO herself, Olivia Zémour who takes the mike. We voted for this Socialist mayor, she says, and now look what she's done. She honors the apartheid State of Israel that massacres the people of Gaza! These politicians, after they get into office, they do whatever they please. Right or Left, it's the same.

Did you hear that, monsieur Left? You curry their vote, bend over backward and worse, authorize their protests, twist the news to suit their views, and just when you think everybody is happy, you forget one day to absolutely totally and completely vilify Israel, and you've lost their vote.

Ah, but it doesn't matter says O. Zémour, because our movement is constantly gaining ground [as testified by the half a dozen people drinking in her words] and Israel is more and more isolated... To listen to her, you'd think it was half way wiped off the map already.



A different kind of poster on the Tel Aviv side

photo by Jiro Mochizuki

I walked down rue des Rosiers to get a breath of fresh air after all that pathetic spectacle. We don't need the city hall to give us a stingy smidgeon of Tel Aviv. This is the real thing. People lined up at the falafel joints for some real food! Sweet wholesome perfume of fresh baked cakes and bread.

An extra contingent of soldiers and police... in case, I suppose, an overflow from Gaza Beach might come storming in. But it wasn't that crowd today. The caliphators are on vacation in their homelands, or weren't mobilized for this event.

Prime time news on i24 this evening: French people on the real beach in the real Tel Aviv danced in front of the French embassy to show their solidarity with us over here. The rain started falling on Paris Plages at about 6 PM but nothing like the huge thunderstorm with hail and lightening that had been forecast. Another non sequitur.

It was all rather pitiful. The Mayor and her assistant holding out against vicious pressure while giving into it at the same time. The festive event falling short of reasonable expectations. Riot police, the gendarmerie, undercover agents, and domestic intelligence mobilized for a handful of agitators with big banners. Not enough troublemakers to spoil the party, not enough party to lift the spirits. No falafel, no sunshine.

And yet this whole affair was like a stumbling block that tripped up the long standing notion of the acceptable Israeli who has traded the blue & white Magen David flag for the universal rainbow of LGBT, decries the democratically elected government, detests the religious, the "colonists," and the army, pleads guilty when accused, cries "peace" when pinched, and parties until dawn.