

Impressum

Klaus Bung: Mille regretz: The Palestinian Woman on the Victoria Line

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The author, wearing a Palestinian scarf, meets a Palestinian woman on a London underground train. She, appreciating his support for the Palestinian cause, offers to share her packed Palestinian breakfast with him. He, even though aware of the deep meaning and kindness of such a gesture, stupidly and strangely confused, does not accept her offer. Initially he thought that he was talking simply to one of the many Muslims who sympathise with the Palestinian cause. When she eventually told him that she was actually a Palestinian herself, her offer of sharing became doubly significant and not accepting it therefore doubly awful, rude and stupid. But by now it was too late. Within a few minutes she had to get off the train and now all he can do is hope hope hope that when she visits his website and sees his e-mail address, and when she reads this story, she will accept the reasons for his mistake and his profound regrets and contact him so that they can share their love of, and concerns for, Palestine.

Klaus Bung: Mille regretz

The Palestinian Woman on the Victoria Line

It is Sunday, 17 August: last Sunday, between 9 and 10 a.m. Klaus is travelling to work on the Victoria Line, from Green Park to Finsbury Park. He is wearing his black business suit and a keffiyeh (Palestinian scarf). He is chewing a sweet snack.

A woman sitting opposite has noticed his keffiyeh and gives him a smile of recognition and approval. They exchange a few friendly words and gestures.

He gives her his calling card with links to his website and his articles on the Palestinian suffering, his protests against the crimes committed by the Misraeli invaders, and his e-mail address.

The train is noisy, talking is difficult. She comes over and sits next to him. Shows him her home-made breakfast pack, Palestinian flat-bread with olive condiment, wrapped in cellophane.

She invites him to share her breakfast, an unspeakably beautiful (and meaningful!) gesture, especially in the present circumstances. Most English people (and people from emotionally cold northern Europe) do not know it and do not practise the custom of sharing their travel food.

Klaus, who is not English, who has spent a lot of time in the Mediterranean and even far too short a spell in Palestine does know it and its significance. People who share their bread become "com-panions" (cum-panis) (Latin: cum = with, together; panis = bread).

And now kismet (fate) strikes. In spite of all his knowledge of Mediterranean customs, of his experience, of his love of Palestine, of the Palestinians and his profound sympathy with their endless suffering, with which he has been concerned for several decades, he does not instantly and gratefully accept her offer but starts mumbling excuses, thinks of the snack he has been chewing, says he is vegetarian (even though her food is vegetarian).

She points out that this food is vegetarian, she has prepared it herself, "I am Palestinian", she says.

Klaus, who was not aware of that, was not expecting that, is thunderstruck. His hearing is bad, his hearing aids do not work well, the train is noisy. Is she talking about somebody else who is Palestinian or was she talking about herself? He is thunderstruck not only because the revelation was unexpected but

also because meeting a Palestinian, in the flesh, here in London, is the greatest thing he could ever hope for.

He has to make sure that he has not misunderstood her.

He sits bolt upright and points his finger at her: "You mean you are Palestinian?!"

"Yes," she says, "I am Palestinian."

Now, if ever, Klaus should have accepted her offer of com-panion-ship. Should have made sure that she would contact him again. He could have asked her, in so many words: "Please, e-mail me" - she had his card and his e-mail address. But events were rushing too fast.

They had only a few tube stations on the train together. She had reached her destination, Highbury Corner?, and got up. They waved at each other, and he hoped that, even without being asked, she would use his e-mail address to contact him.

Perhaps she would like one or all of his articles and that would give her an incentive to send a message, if only to say Hello, and things could develop from there.

Well, would she?

Since then Klaus has spent many days and many a sleepless night, thinking about his faux pas and regretting it... Hoping that she would contact him to say that she approved of his writing.

Regretting that he, in effect, insulted her by finding excuses not to accept her offer of friendship, and having so misrepresented his full understanding of the value of what she was offering. **Will she consider him a typical European brute not deserving her friendship?**

But he has waited in vain, for seven days. She has not contacted him. His calling card and the website address were not enough. Or perhaps she has not yet visited his website and will do it later.

Now all he can hope for is that she will spot this article, recognise herself in it, realise that, by publishing this article, he is apologising for so stupidly, and rudely, declining her beautiful offer, and **hoping that she will now contact him by e-mail** so that they can "share bread together" on another occasion and perhaps talk about Palestine and its sad fate caused by White people, armed to their teeth and intent on subduing the non-White world, as they have been since 1492 (Columbus).

Klaus is a musician, so he knows and loves Josquin's stirring chanson "Mille regretz", and it is now playing in his mind over and over again, as he hopes and prays, and hopes and prays, that she will see this story, recognise herself in it, and contact him again, repeat her offer of "cum panis", so that he can make up

for being so foolish and slow in perceiving what was at stake on the Victoria Line train last Sunday.

MILLE REGRETZ

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| Original text, used by Josquin des Prez, 1450-1521 | In Modern French: |
| Mille regretz de vous abandonner Et d'eslonger vostre fache amoureuse, Jay si grand dueil et paine douloureuse, Quon me verra brief mes jours definir. | Mille regrets de vous abandonner et de m'éloigner de votre visage amoureux. J'ai si grand deuil et peine douloureuse qu'on verra vite mes jours prendre fin. |
| English Translation (Wikipedia): A thousand regrets at deserting you and leaving behind your loving face, I feel so much sadness and such painful distress, that it seems to me my days will soon dwindle away. | |
| https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkfVzCZ68_Q | |