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Gianluca Solera was born in 1966 on the shores of Lake Garda, Italy. He was among the co-founders of the first Italian Green political platform, in the City of Mantua. After his studies on urban and regional affairs in Venice, Paris and Berlin, he was political advisor to the Green Party in the European Parliament for ten years, as well as coordinator of the Spanish Green Party in Europe for two years. At the Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures, the most prestigious institution of Euro-Med Partnership,

Gianluca Solera

A mediterranean awakening

Places and voices of dignity and resistance

After the success of *Muri, lacrime e za'tar. Storie di vita e voci dalla Palestina* (Walls, Tears and Za'tar. Life stories and voices from Palestine), presented at almost 150 events all over Italy and abroad, translated into Arabic and adapted to a theater play, Gianluca Solera comes back in the bookshops with a book of emotions, places and struggles around the Mediterranean.

From Alexandria to Madrid, from Sidi Bouzid to Athens, the author reconstructs the geography of the revolutionary and protest movements which call "the system" into question.

Former advisor to the European Parliament and then Network Coordinator at the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures in Alexandria, Gianluca Solera had the privilege of closely following, day by day, most of those critical events, and of personally living the revolution in Egypt.

This book is a journey through the Mediterranean, a region that, after the Arab Spring, has re-established its central position in history, and where everything since then is changing both for them and for us. It is a narrative reportage about those who have taken the future in their own hands, challenging death and injustice. With the Arab uprisings and the social movements against crisis and austerity, this part of the world has become the pulse of change, where a new idea of civilization is being tested and challenged.

Who are their main characters? How do they move and operate? What are the hopes of the youth of this generation in turmoil? Why has the Mediterranean become the cradle of civil resistance? And how can one make sure that what has begun bears fruit? The book tries to answer these questions, talking about Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, but also about Tel Aviv, Thessaloniki, Zagreb and Rome. Along with the stories of those young people on the crest of this wave, their battles, victories and failures, the book explores their common roots and invites the reader to share the hopes of that future imagined in the squares of the Mediterranean cities as the beginning of a common social, cultural and political pathway. A pathway which is fairer, more honest, more democratic and more creative. In other words, more Mediterranean.

over the last eight years (2005-2012), he has built a network of 4,000 organisations from more than forty countries, which work together for dialogue, reconciliation and human, social and cultural cooperation between Europe, the Arab world, Israel and Turkey. With Nuovadimensione, he published *Walls, Tears and Za'tar*, which obtained a solid literary success and notable media coverage. He is collaborating with online magazines and has published several books and articles .

"His nickname is Black Eyes. He's 21 years old and signed up for the Free Army after the authorities lost their patience with kids like him who continued to demonstrate for freedom and the fall of the regime. 'Allah, Syria, freedom and enough!' – they sang paraphrasing the anthem of the Ba'th Party's brigades, 'Allah, Syria, Bashar and enough!'. He walks through the al-Mashhad neighbourhood with a pistol in his belt.

'I've lost ten of my best friends, six during peaceful demonstrations and four in battle,' he explains as we sit on the edge of the grey sidewalk in front of a building ripped apart by a cannon shot of the regime's forces. The nearby stores don't have enough chairs for any eventual guests even if the boy making Falafel - chickpea flour balls with sesame seeds - finds us a stool where to put our coffee.

'After forty years of oppression the people were ready

for anything. It was a matter of freeing your spirit, freeing your voice,' he adds. Then, all of a sudden: 'Boom!', a powerful artillery shot breaks into our conversation. A shiver goes down my spine while Black Eyes doesn't bat an eyelid: it's the rebels' cannon that is firing at regular intervals on a military target of the regime. 'As coordinators of the demonstrations, to contact the others we used Facebook pages under a false name. We'd send an invitation to somebody, and if he responded positively we'd verify his identity and include him in the network. Amongst coordinators we didn't know each other's real names.' Black Eyes defines himself as a natural poet, publishing his revolutionary verses on the Internet. He's someone who writes the slogans for the marches but is also an engineering student.

That's life. He wears his hair like a young Elvis Presley, but Elvis Presley didn't have black eyes."

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