

The Racism of the Intellectuals

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The importance of the vote for Marine Le Pen overwhelms and surprises. One looks for explanations. Political personnel here reach for their portable sociology: the France of the people at the bottom, of the wild provinces, of workers, of the under-educated, frightened by globalization, the decline of purchasing power, the destruction of territories, the presence at their doors of strange foreigners, wants to reply with nationalism and xenophobia.

Moreover, it is already this “outmoded” France that one accused of having voted no on the referendum on the project of a European constitution. One opposes it to the educated and modern urban middle classes, who bring all the social spice of our well-tempered democracy.

We say that this France of the lower orders is really, under the circumstances, the donkey of the fable, the bald and mangy “populist” from whom we get all the Le Penist evil. Strange, incidentally, this politico-mediatic spite against “populism.” Would the democratic power, of which we are so proud, be allergic to what the people care about [ce qu'on se soucie du peuple]? This is the opinion of the aforementioned people, in any case, and more and more so. To the question “Do political officials worry about what people like you think?,” the entirely negative response “not at all” has gone from 15% of the total in 1978 to 42% in 2010! As for the total of positive responses (“very much” or “some”), it has gone from 35% to 17% (we refer, for this statistical indication and others of very great interest, to the special issue of the journal *La Pensée* titled “Le peuple, la crise et la politique” and edited by Guy Michelat and Michel Simon). The relation between the people and the State is not composed of confidence, which is the least one can say.

Must we conclude that our State doesn't have the people that it deserves, and that the dark Le Penist vote attests to this popular inadequacy? It is necessary, then, in order to strengthen democracy, to change the people, as Brecht ironically proposed...

My thesis is that two other great guilty parties should be brought to the fore: the successive officials of the power of the State, from the left and the right likewise, and a non-negligible collection of intellectuals.

Definitely, it is not the poor of our provinces who have decided to limit as much as possible the elementary right of a worker of this country, whatever be his nationality of origin, to live here with his wife and children. It is a socialist minister, and all those of the right have then rushed into the breach. It is not an undereducated hick who proclaimed in 1983 that the workers of Renault – indeed mainly Algerians or Moroccans – were the *“immigrant workers (...) agitated by religious and political groups which are determined as a function of criteria having little to do with French social realities.”*

It is a socialist prime minister, of course to the great joy of his “enemies” on the right. Who has had the good sense to declare that Le Pen posed the true problems? An Alsatian militant of the Front national? No, it is a prime minister of François Mitterrand. It is not the under-developed [communities of] the interior who have created the detention centers in order to imprison, without any real right, those who one otherwise deprives of the possibility of acquiring legal residency papers.

And it is not exasperated suburbanites who have directed, throughout the world, that we will only issue people visas in dribs and drabs, while one establishes at the same time quotas of expulsions which must at all costs be realized by the police. The succession of restrictive laws attacking, under the pretext of foreignness, the liberty and equality of millions of people who live and work here, is not the work of raging “populists.”

At the controls [A la manoeuvre] of these legal crimes [forfaits légaux], one finds the State, very simply. One finds successive governments, beginning with François Mitterrand and without respite those following. In this area, and these are only two examples, the socialist Lionel Jospin made known on his arrival in power that it was not a question of abolishing the xenophobic laws of Charls Pasqua; the socialist François Hollande made known that he would not decide the regularizations of paper-less individuals otherwise under his presidency than under that of Nicolas Sarkozy. The continuity in this direction created no doubts. It is this obstinate encouragement of the State in villainy that fashions reactive and racialist opinion, and not the reverse.

I do not believe [this] to be suspected of ignoring that Nicolas Sarkozy and his clique were constantly in the breach of cultural racism, raising high the banner of the “superiority” of our precious western civilization and bringing to a vote an interminable succession of discriminatory laws of which the wickedness fills us with dismay.

But in the end, we cannot see that the left will rise up to oppose it with the force that called for such a reactionary fury. It has even very often made known that it “understood” this demand for “security,” and voted without scruples for flagrantly persecutory decisions, like those which aim to expel from public space such or such woman under the pretext that she covers her hair or wraps her body.

These candidates announce everywhere that they will lead a struggle without mercy, not so much against capitalist prevarications and the dictatorship of ascetic budgets as against workers without papers and recidivist minors, above all if they are blacks or Arabs. In this domain, right and left together have trampled all principles. This was and this is, for those who one deprives of papers, not the State of right, but the State of exception, the State of non-right. It is they who are in a state of insecurity, and not the rich nationals. If we had to, God forbid, resign ourselves to expelling people, it would be preferable that one choose our governors rather than the very respectable Moroccan or Malian workers.

And behind all this, of long standing, for more than twenty years, what does one find? Who are the glorious inventors of the “Islamic peril,” which according to them is going to disintegrate our beautiful Western and French society? Other than the intellectuals, who devote to this infamous task enflamed editorials, devious books, fixed “sociological inquests”? Is there a group of provincial retirees and workers in little de-industrialized towns who have patiently set up this business of the “conflict of civilizations,” of the defense of the “republican pact,” of threats to our magnificent “secularism,” of “feminist” outrage at the daily life of Arab women?

Is it not regrettable that one searches for those responsible only on the side of the extreme right – which indeed pulls the chestnuts from the fire – without ever laying bare the crushing responsibility of those, very often – they say – “of the left,” and more often professors of “philosophy” than cashiers in the supermarket, who have passionately held that the Arabs and the Blacks, notably the young, corrupted our educational system, perverted our suburbs, offended our liberties and outraged our women? Or that they are “*too numerous*” in our football teams? Exactly as one said formerly of the Jews and the “*wops*” [“*mètèques*”] that from them the eternal France was threatened with death.

There was, true, the appearance of fascist groupuscules claiming to represent Islam. But there were just as well fascist movements claiming to represent the West and the Kingdom of Christ. This did not prevent any intellectual Islamophobe from vaunting at every turn our

superior “Western” identity and from managing to lodge our admirable “Christian roots” in the cult of a secularism of which Marine Le Pen, becoming one of the most fervent followers of the cult, finally revealed what political wood stokes this fire [de quel bois politique il se chauffe].

In truth, it is the intellectuals who invented the anti-popular violence, singularly directed against the young of the great cities, which is the true secret of Islamophobia. And it is the governments, incapable of building a society of civil peace and justice, which have abandoned the foreigners, and primarily the Arab workers and their families, to the lions of [en pâture à] their disoriented and fearful electoral clientele. As usual, the idea, be it criminal, precedes the power, which in its turn fashions the opinion of which it has need. The intellectual, be he deplorable, precedes the minister, who constructs his followers.

The book, be it for the dustbin [à jeter], comes before the propagandistic image, which misleads instead of instructing. And thirty years of patient efforts in writing, invective and thoughtless electoral competition find their sinister recompense in the fatigued consciousness of the voting herd.

Shame on the successive governments which have all competed on the conjoint themes of security and the “immigrant problem,” in order that it not be too visible that they serve above all the interests of an economic oligarchy! Shame on the intellectuals of neo-racialism and of stupid nationalism, who have patiently covered the void left in the people by the temporary eclipse of the communist hypothesis with a coat of nonsense about the Islamic peril and the ruin of our “values!”

It is they who must today be held to account for the ascension of a rampant fascism the mental development of which they encouraged without respite.

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