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Contribution to the Critique of the Ultra-Left

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*Here and elsewhere, I have shown my interest in the small ultra-Left factions that have made a critique of anti-fascism one of their battle horses. When this tendency went as far as publishing **Historical Truth or Political Truth?** a work that supports Robert Faurisson and his affirmations of the nonexistence of the gas chambers,[1] I reviewed that work here in a, shall we say, unfavorable manner, but lukewarmly and in a benign tone.*

Manchette était un besogneux écrivain de polars... Mais attention, de polars de gauche. Ça changeait tout. Il était berluré, agoraphobe, un peu alcoolo. Là, dans cet article, il se donne la bonne étiquette politique. C'est bon pour le marketing. C'était il y a trente ans ! Ensuite il a disparu dans une crevasse... Son *Journal* est à mourir d'ennui. Pourquoi ces gros cons de débordistes new-yorkais ressortent cette petite chose malodorante aujourd'hui reste un profond mystère pour nous. Rien que la traduction du titre en dit long... aaargh.

Gas Alert! Contribution to the Critique of an Ultra-Sinister Ideology

by **Jean-Patrick Manchette**



Here and elsewhere, I have shown my interest in the small ultra-Left factions that have made a critique of anti-fascism one of their battle horses. When this tendency went as far as publishing *Historical Truth or Political Truth?* a work that supports Robert Faurisson and his affirmations of the nonexistence of the gas chambers,[1] I reviewed that work here in a, shall we say, unfavorable manner, but lukewarmly and in a benign tone.

Shortly after the attack on the rue Copernic,[2] this tendency published a text called *Our Kingdom is a Prison*, which was signed by a string of small Marxist and libertarian groups, and distributed it during anti-Nazi demonstrations. Reiterating the ultra-Left critique of anti-fascism, this tract more clearly than ever took up Faurisson's theses. Thus, it is no longer possible to speak of this tendency in a benign tone. It is not adequate to appeal, in a totalitarian tone [sur un ton concentrationnaire], to "isolate these sick and contagious

elements," as does a counter-text that I have refused to support. We must critique these elements from the ground up, because they have become delirious. In what follows, I will use the means at my disposal, which should be sufficient to deal with these pieces of shit.

On Science

Demanding a scientific debate about the existence of the gas chambers and the Nazis' desire for extermination, Faurisson and the "Faurissonists" speak out of both sides of their mouths. One side is the side of erudition. Even though you yourself have been deported; even though you have seen a functioning gas chamber; you only possess an individual's experience of the thing in question, which is weak and doesn't count for much in the face of a total study of the truly complete corpus [of evidence] undertaken by a "specialist in the critique of texts." If you, on the one hand, like most people, only know about Nazi genocide through the newspapers, five or six books, two or three films, a televised series and several private conversations, then even you are disarmed and disqualified in comparison to the university professor and his total corpus.

But, on the other hand -- and here the other side of the Faurissonists' mouth can be heard -- if you know the corpus in question, it is what mystifies you: if Nazi extermination is a myth, as Faurisson claims, then it is logical that the vast majority of the texts and testimonies in the corpus are fakes.

In both cases, on both sides of the question, it is a known fact that the ordinary person cannot form a [proper] opinion, because he or she is either deprived of information or duped by fake information. Only a specialist, Robert Faurisson, has access to all the information and can make selections from it. Only he knows the truth, because he alone (plus three or four others, who are in agreement with him) possess both all the information and the means of analyzing it. On the question of the [existence of the] gas chambers, and the questions that go along with it, a single attitude is scientifically necessary: have confidence in a specialist, because he knows, because he is a scholar.

Thus, when it comes to science -- despite the fact that modern revolutionary critique has shown that one should never trust any specialist -- the Faurissonist ultra-Left says, "except if the specialist in question is extraordinarily absurd." Miserable idiots!

On Anti-Fascism

Besides this methodical thoughtlessness,[3] the Faurissonist sects retain from the traditions of the Ultra-Left a critique of anti-fascism that had a great deal of interest in the past and still seems to have some today. Star[t]ing in the 1920s, the old ultra-Left had emphasized that fascism and anti-fascism were complementary consequences of the defeat of the proletariat. The old ultra-Left had justly seen in anti-fascism a frontism[4] in which the proletariat abandoned its own goals so as to support bourgeois democracy. The old ultra-Left had revealed the secret of anti-fascist politics, which, to prevent dictatorship, wanted to reinforce the State. It had noted the identity of the economic and social goals of the capitalist States of the time; and [the fact that] the democracies, Stalinism and the fascists had to reorganize the economy and the market (especially the market in labor) so as to resolve the crisis. To do this, they had to reorganize society, especially the workers, whose support they assured themselves of through force, in particular, the force of ideologies, which are "material forces" (Marx). In the end, the various but complementary frontist fakes [mystifications] efficaciously contributed to sending the workers off to war -- Proletarians of all countries, kill each other! -- and then maintaining order when the war ended.

Contemporary ultra-Leftist sects have conserved the old denunciation of anti-fascism as a frontist fake. In the absence of a visible Nazi movement from the French political scene, these sects only see straw men [épouvantails] in the few existing Nazi militants, and only see governmental provocations in the attacks. For these sects, the essence of neo-Nazism is its result: the anti-fascist holy union, the anti-fascist consensus that places proletarians behind counter-revolutionary organizations and unites antagonistic classes for the defense of bourgeois democracy. It matters little to these sects that this result is in fact not attained or that the only effectively real consensus is among the diverse leaders who have gone on television to general hilarity. By denouncing a result and a consensus that do not exist, the Faurissonist ultra-Left demonstrates a truly extra-lucid foresight and takes its place as the principal political force in the science-fiction[5] that is available on the market. Pauwels is fucked.[6]

On Terrorism

This doddering ultra-Left is still modern to the extent that it reads without understanding. It has recently read a major work by Gianfranco Sanguinetti called *On Terrorism and the State*. [7] It has reasonably deduced that the "strategy of tension," which had been used so much by the Italian State (and the German State, too, but differently), will be use[d] by the French State (this is quite probable). Thus, this ultra-Left has concluded, the bomb at the rue Copernic could only be an episode of this strategy, and nothing else. In such a case, the blunders of the leader of the French State, his Prime Minister and all their partisans, their slowness to react, their lack of preparation, and their obvious stupefaction bordering on pure stupidity were simple appearances that counted for nothing and did not contradict the notion that the bomb was placed there by the State. (In other back-room boutiques, the shrewdest Machiavellians supported the idea that the bombers were [tied to] Mitte[r]rand and the Israeli Mossad. Their proof : the rapid reaction of this Social Democratic leader.) And, although all this lacks good sense,[8] good sense isn't the thing that these gentlemen lack most.) [9]

Fascism understood with good sense

In the 1920s, Amedeo Bordiga, leader of the Italian Communist Left, whom the current, senile ultra-Left has taken up, maintained that fascism did not really exist, even though he personally had been thrown in prison by the fascists. He conceded that fascism had an organizational existence, but he denied that it had an ideological one. Fascism was merely an organizational moment of the bourgeoisie, but, because this bourgeoisie alternated, according to its needs, between democratic and authoritarian moments in its [continuous] domination, fascism was not a novelty, and Bordiga could thus conclude an article on fascism, written in 1921, in the following terms : "One cannot not win!" [10]

Today, the good sense of the senile ultra-Left says that nothing new has happened in the ideological domain since 1921, or even 1848. To the ultra-Left, ideology is only a mystification, just as appearances are only lies: fakes. Only the economic and social base has a history; only it truly evolves. Nazism, for example, had an organizational reality that served organizational goals (economic and social), but Nazi ideology was simply a purely false appearance. The unfortunate deaths of many Jews and [political] opponents in the Nazi camps did not at all result from Hitlerian ideology, which itself did not really exist; they were caused by the scarcity of food in Germany, a scarcity that the unfortunate pressure from the Allies had aggravated. Thus, the Jews and the other victims of the camps had been exterminated conjointly by fascism and anti-fascism; they apparently died because of a pure appearance;

and they were essentially killed by an instance of historical bad weather. This is what the senile Faurissonist ultra-Left advances.

On the manner in which notions appear

Modern revolutionary critique, which has not forgotten that "the anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the monkey" [Marx], has understood that fascism was the rudimentary prototype of the contemporary society of abundance that the situationists called the society of the spectacle.[11] The contemporary generalization of the spectacle of commodities (from potato chips to eccentric ideologies, from the pseudo-diversity of automobiles to the pseudo-diversity of politicians) is the key to the rudimentary spectacle constituted by fascism, which could only offer a few potatoes, a single people, a single leader, a single blood, a single ground (and a single automobile: the Volkswagen), etc.

Old Engels wrote to Franz Mehring: "We have especially placed the emphasis on political, legal and other ideological notions, and we have been obliged to do so, because actions that come from these notions derive from fundamental economic facts. But this means we tend to neglect the formal side -- the manner in which these notions appear -- in favor of their content." [12] With fascism, the revolutionary movement was in fact confronted by new political, legal and other ideological notions, and actions that came from these notions. From Otto Ruehle to Wilhelm Reich, a new critical discourse was carried out, but nevertheless it remained insufficient in theory when its movement was defeated in practice. Thirty years later [in 1968], the return of the revolution was announced by the reappearance of the critique that took up the old work by surpassing it. But the senile ultra-Left simply conserved what was old; it thus developed its backwardness. Tranquilly neglecting the "formal side," the senile ultra-Left repeated yet again that "anti-semitism (...) directly results from economic constraints" ("Auschwitz, or the Great Alibi," in *Programme communiste* #11, 1960; reprinted in brochure form by La Vieille Taupe in 1970; cited in an approving manner by *La Guerre sociale* #3, 1979).[13]

And so, when the critique of ideology became the central question of the completely spectacular (i.e., completely ideological) society, the senile ultra-Left abandoned this critique for "eternal history," which, right from the start, "still neglects the form in favor of the content" (Engels to Mehring, once again). The senile ultra-Left is fundamentally backwards.

On putrefaction

The return of the revolution has also rendered the counter-revolution visible. In France after 1968, the short-lived inflation in small groups of archeo-Bolsheviks (Trotskyists) and neo-Stalinists (Maoists) principally came from the resounding deflation of reformism (the French Communist Party, etc.). Current agitation and the multiplication of miniscule, senile ultra-Left groups likewise derives from the crumbling of "Leftism." (I have personally seen -- in a parish hall! -- an ultra-Left sect, of such Leninist stupidity that it was delighted to recruit so many militants, welcome with satisfaction lost souls who had -- my God! -- been disappointed by Lutte Ouvrière.

Faurissonist or not, the senile ultra-Left is not formidable because it follows its own drummer, decomposing further still into smaller and smaller sects, clinging to ideological singularities that are more and more aberrant and fragmentary. *Radizzare le gambe ai cani* [14] is [like] pissing in a violin: it is useless to discuss anything with this muddle. But it is also useless to call for a hunt for sorcerers or, at least, for a sanitary corridor, which is what the counter-text that I have refused to support calls for. Let the senile ultra-Left rot in its corner, since it can do nothing other than that.

On hilarity and precautions

These days, the modern State is weakening everywhere, despite its rich ideological panoply. Likewise, it has had recourse, in cases of emergency, not to sophisticated means but to crude, primitive means (real bullets instead of plastic bullets, racism instead of ethnology). It can also, on occasion, symmetrically bring back the "defense of the Republic" which (in the case of France) was last used by Debré (1961).[15] And if the modern State does so, the majority of people will rightly break out in laughter.

For greater safety, however, one must note that, just as one must never leave the critique of fascism to democrats, the critique of democracy must not be abandoned to cretins.

P. S. Next week we will resume our customary and peaceable filmological babble. Please excuse this interruption of the image.

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[1] Serge Thion, *Vérité Historique ou Vérité Politique: le dossier de l'affaire Faurisson: la question des chambres à gaz* (La Vieille Taupe, 1980).

[2] On 3 October 1980, a bomb in front of the synagogue on the rue Copernic in Paris killed four people and injured twenty others. Unclaimed at the time, this attack is still unsolved.

[3] Cf. Charles Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements*: "The philosophers thus have the bizarre right to forget the fundamental problems of every science; this is a methodical thoughtlessness because it is regularly brought to bear on primordial questions."

[4] Cf. The French Front populaire in 1936.

[5] English in original.

[6] Louis Pauwels (1920-1997) was a neo-conservative French publisher, author and journalist.

[7] *On Terrorism and the State* was first published in Italian in March 1979. It was translated into French by Jean-Francois Martos in January 1980. [*In fact, there were two different translations and editions in French.*]

[8] Cf. Michel Bounan, *The Logic of Terrorism* (2003).

[9] Detournement of Engels: "What all these gentleman lack is the dialectic."

[10] This essay was published in *Il comunista* on 17 November 1921. A translation of it into French can be found here.

[11] Cf. the "concentrated spectacle" in Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988): "in 1967 it [the society of the spectacle] had barely forty years behind it."

[12] Letter from Frederick Engels to Franz Mehring, July 14, 1893. Note the following alternate translation of this passage: "That is to say, we all laid, and were bound to lay, the main emphasis, in the first place, on the derivation of political, juridical and other ideological notions, and of actions arising through the medium of these notions, from basic economic facts. But in so doing we neglected the formal side -- the ways and means by which these notions, etc., come about -- for the sake of the content."

[13] In 1970, the Vieille Taupe group was centered around Pierre Gauillaume, and included, among others, Gilles Dauvé. In addition to reprinting the text in question, La Vieille Taupe

also published two books by Paul Rassinier. In 1979, *La Guerre sociale* was published by Dominique Blanc and Gilles Dauvé.

[14] Straightening a dog's legs. Italian in original.

[15] Michel Debré (1912-1996) was a Gaullist politician, and served as Prime Minister between 1959 and 1962.

<http://news.infoshop.org/article.php?story=2010manchette-ultra-left>