

France: National Identity

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Prologue

Call to order from one “nationalised” French citizen to a “native” one

Given its educational scope, and as a prologue to his article, the author dedicates Michel Sardou’s song entitled “They have petrol” 1 to his readers. The song is a miniature reproduction of the clichés and stereotypes prevalent in the French mentality and is the political lullaby of France’s contemporary political elect spanning the entire spectrum from the extreme right-wing of Jean-Marie Le Pen, to the centre right of Nicolas Sarkozy (President of the Republic) , the “sub-human” Socialist from Montpellier — Georges Freche, the “sardonic” Socialist from Evry — Manuel Valls — t centre left to the Communist Mayor of Montfermeil — Robert Hue — also known as the bulldozing destroyer of Moroccan-owned homes and property. The link to this song can be found at the end of the article.

François Maspero: “Getting rid of the mad European pride, which claims to rule the world”.

Frantz Fanon: “Come on comrades, it’s better to change sides... Let’s leave this Europe which hasn’t stopped talking about Mankind while annihilating it nearly everywhere it meets it... It’s been centuries that in the name of a so called spiritual adventure, it strangles almost all of humanity. Watch it today switching between atomic and spiritual.

The debate is cyclical, like a headlong rush, in its attempt to divert attention from the serious structural problems of France, the abysmal deficit of public finances 2; the failure and impunity of its elite, the decay of its social fabric, its docile press, consistency inter-partisan public debate, necrotic decision-making circles, as illustrated by the last French nuclear misadventure in Abu Dhabi where, at the end of December 2009 and despite Nicolas Sarkozy’s hype, France lost a USD 40 billion market to a US South Korean consortium.

The debate is cyclical on one single theme which takes on various shapes and forms from the veil, the burqa, the minarets, the “positive role played by colonization, as it rushes headlong in its attempt to bury the one true and fundamental fact – the historical debt owed to them for their defence of France’s independence – twice- owed in a single century, during the two world wars – a rarity in history – and for their contribution to ensuring the radiation of France influence throughout the world.

The salutary job of “dismantling” the founding myths of the Greatness of France, and a factual reading of the history of France is required first and foremost, so that national

identity can be founded on a honest and true understanding of the French history.

It must not be based on chauvinistic tendentious exaltation often inherent in such exercises, so that national unity can be consolidated by integrating the components that make up the national population, and not on the stigmatisation of the “metèques”³.

France will be offered up as a ridiculous spectacle to the rest of the world, and all in the name of the French “exception”, if we abdicate in the face of the proponents of the Anglosphere, shroud ourselves in splendid isolation, and totally blind-fold ourselves. The debate on national identity simply cannot be reduced to a narcissistic duel between France and itself. It must be about France’s own positioning within its natural sphere of influence, that of the French-speaking world – the “Francophonie”. Francophonie was the vehicle of its France’s radiance and influence in the world and was justification for its status as a great world power, and its permanent membership of the Security Council — a status France which would never would have dreamed of given its poor performance during the Second World War (1939-1945), but which it retained because of its overseas Empire, and the configuration of political blocks at the climax of the cold war.

Resentment is strong, and is in proportion to the level of usurpation. It is hoped that the 2010 celebration of the year of France in Africa, with the participation of African troops in the parade of the 14th of July, will be an opportunity to rehabilitate the image of the “Bougnoule”⁴ in the French imagination and recognition of the contribution of the rank and file cohorts to France’s greatness.

France’s “court” intellectuals need to understand that the French “exception” is a singularity which is translated in real terms into impunity; a specificity that is regarded as deceptive. France was the first country to have institutionalised terror as a mode of government, with Maximilien Robespierre, during the French Revolution (1794); the first country to have inaugurated aerial piracy, when in 1955, it diverted the plane carrying the historical heads of the Algerian independence movement (Ahmed Ben Bella, Mohamad Khider, Mohamad Boudiaf and Krim Belkacem), thereby setting the example for activists in the Third World in their struggle for independence.

Recurrence in that “singularity” is also a feature of the French exception: this Jacobean, egalitarian and equalising country also distinguishes itself by being the only nation to have formalised the “legal Gobino-Darwinism,” by codifying into law the “theory of racial inequality” — a codification operated with no discernment, in the promotion of segregation and not equality.

France, the “Nation of Human Rights” and modern legal compilations – the civil and penal code, is, in fact, the land of discriminatory legislation, the codification of the abomination, the country which, under the monarchy, drew up the “Black Code “of slavery, the” code of the indigenous ” under the republic, in Algeria, and applied it with the” ethnological exhibitions “, those ” human zoos” erected to indelibly engrave in the collective psyche of third world peoples the enduring idea of the inferiority of “coloured people” and, by extension, the superiority of the white race — as if white were not a colour, even if its proponents live it as immaculate, which, judging by the depravity of its history is far from the truth.

For the record, let it be remembered that the three major figures of the twentieth century known for their contribution to universal morality came from the colonised third world:

Mahatma Gandhi (India), Nelson Mandela (South Africa) and,], the West-Indian Aimé Césaire from Martinique (part of the “Francophonie”. All three were apostles of non-violence, an honour which must feel like a resounding blow to Western countries with their own shameful parade of Nazis, fascists, totalitarians and slave-traders. As painful as it may be to our national pride, we are compelled to recognise that France, as a reverse show, was the only major European country which participated in the both of major scourges of the West, in recent eras – the slave trade and the extermination of Jews. Great Britain only practiced in the slave trade, but did not partake in the extermination of the Jews. Germany, designed and implemented the “final solution” to the Jewish question, but which had no significant involvement in the slave trade.

Duty to truth cannot be a farce akin to “the sobs of the white man”, as chauvinistic analysis would suggest, but has to be an act of moral courage and public salubrity.

To err is human, but its repetition is diabolical. To prevent it, it is important to remember that French identity was once represented by Petain in Vichy; a regime with whom the overwhelming majority of the French identified, while, at the same time, that same regime was fiercely opposed by the “metics” of the Republic.

It is through the “positive role” embodied by people of the French colonies such as Dr. Albert Schweitzer in Lambaréné (Gabon), and the 955,491 over-seas French soldiers from the colonies who fought for France during the two world wars (1914-1918, 1939-1945), including the 113,000 “indigenous people of the Republic” who fell on the battlefield, sustainably washing the furrows of France with their “impure blood” that the honour and greatness of French identity is experienced and recognised. The 113,000 colonised natives who died for France; a number equivalent to the combined population of the towns of Dreux, Vitrolles and Orange– 3 former strongholds of the National Front (extreme right-wing political party). When their blood was being shed for France, the debate was not about the “tolerance threshold” and even less about DNA testing, or the charter of shame. In the defence of the nation, the blood of the “metics” was being spilt.

French identity is asserted in the concept of “the privilege of the ground of France”, which freed any slave as of the moment they set foot on it,; in the France — the land of asylum and not in that France of “Venus Hottentote” and of the “human zoos”.

French identity is symbolised in the France of Valmy and the Bridge of Arcole and not in that of the scuttled French fleet in Toulon or the punitive forwarding of Suez; in “Liberated France” [France Libre} and not the France of Sétif (Algeria) and Thiaroye (Senegal); in that France of republican values and not in the France of the cosmopolitan defectors who discredit political commitment; in the France of Jean Moulin – the police prefect of integrity and not the France of Maurice Papon – the other police prefect who collaborated and shamed his native country; in the France of the Manouchian group⁵ –those “parias of the red-poster” – and not the France of the Vichy collaborators, who aided and abetted Nazism; the France of the youthful and courageous Guy Moquet and not in his denouncer – the then Minister of Interior, and his henchmen from the French police force, providers and suppliers to German executioners; the France of General Jacques Paris of the Bollardiere,who embodied the conscience of the French army during the Algerian war (1956-1962) and not in the France of General Paul Aussarresses, the torturer of Algerian guerrillas; in the France of the mathematician, Maurice Audin, and not in the France of the luggage-carrying Francis Jeanson , or in the alms-giving Bernard Kouchner, that opportunistic supporter of African

dictators.

The spirit of French identity is enshrined in the words of Charles de Gaulle in his speech of the Phnom Penh and in the speech delivered by François Mitterrand in Dakar speech and not in the words of “Mr. Africa” – Nicolas Sarkozy – in his speech in Tunis on racial labour division between the French and the Arabs around the Mediterranean basin. (Nicolas Sarkozy *ibid.*)

The spirit of French identity is captured in the beautiful revolutionary language of Voltaire, Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Kateb Yacine, who embodied the radiance of and not in the degrading slang of Nadine Morano with her “Casse toi pauv’con” [Get lost, ass-h....] who humiliates France with her common language and abusive behavioural . “One Auvergnat is okay, but when there are too many, you can say hello to the damage” [declaration by Brice Hortefeux, Minister of the Interior at party congress in Autumn 2009 »

The spirit of French identity is found in the figure of Abbé Pierre, and not in that of Eric Besson and Brice Hortefeux, with his “one Auvergnat is okay, but when there are too many, hello to the damage” 6. – Brice Hortefeux – that new champion of the struggle against anti-Semitism; the same award winner of the radically pro-Israeli organisation — the Jewish Union of French Bosses (UPJF); representing a pathetic illustrative caricature of a perilous inversion of values, and a clear indicator of serious mental confusion.

French identity is represented by Yannick Noah (Roland Garros 1982), Zineddine Zidane (1998 Worldcup) and the “black, black, black, football team, laughing stock of Europe” (Alain Finkelkraut), but still the pride of France. It is not represented by the mythical and imaginary “pure white Blancos” of Manuel Valls, Socialist Mayor of the town of Evry.

In the current context, a public reading of the letter of Guy Moquet, the young communist resistant who was shot, may have an educational and therapeutic value, providing it were accompanied by the parallel denunciation of his tormentors — the French police who represent the power base of the current president of the Republic. Such a denunciation would have been perceived as an act of courage and responsibility instead of the operation of factual distortion, demagogical recuperation and monumental diversion which transpired.

It is from this perspective that the concept of national identity becomes very relative. For its own survival, national identity must be based on universal values, and not on immutable variables based on electoral considerations.

The debate would also be clearer if the confusion were not maintained at the highest level of government by the chief magistrate of France, who nominated an IDF reservist, Arno Klarsfeld, as Advisor during the war which brought about Israel’s destruction of Lebanon (July 2006) or by sending an officer of the American Jewish Committee, Valerie Hoffenberg, as France’s representative during the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

By a president who fantasises about “slaughtered sheep in the bathtubs” but who still regularly tries out the bathtubs in the Arab royal palaces, from Doha to Rabat, while at the same time enjoying Arab hospitality and taking the initiative to stigmatise a part of the French population for unacknowledged and base electoral motivations.

Such disparaging and humiliating utterances like “the sheep being slaughtered in the

bathtub” by Nicolas Sarkozy, and “the sounds and smells of immigrant families” so profusely uttered by Jacques Chirac dishonour the very politicians who express them and will remain an indelible stain on French political discourse. More importantly, they carry the danger of paving the way to fascist abuses in French political conduct.

French people of foreign origins are for the greatness of France and do not support its megalomania and its political stuntedness.

Don’t be deceived, with all due respect to living-room pen-pushers, France people with foreign origins are here to stay and are permanently embedded in the French political and social fabric of the nation; those citizens whose “positive role” has never been celebrated with solemnity.

They are here in France, not as their host country, but as their own chosen one and are determined to defend the edifying notion they have of France — the France that has much to give to the world. They are determined to defend its greatness and to resist the megalomania political stuntedness of some of the factors within it. They are determined to fight against all those who undermine the economy through irresponsible and corrupt management, who discredit politics through lowly collusion; those who spoil the image of France, by creating fictitious jobs and embezzling state revenue, fat personal accounts, insider trading and abuse of social property; again the gentlemen of the Taiwan, Clearstream and Angolagate frigates, Credit Lyonnais and the Compagnie Generale des Eaux, Elf Aquitaine and the EADS Executive Life and Pechiney American-Can, the Ile-de-France market, the HLM (public housing authorities) and the Paris HLM, the MNEF and Urba-Gracco.

They are ready to fight those who undermine the system of justice with cases such as the Outreau one, illegal wire-tapping, the selective sorting and the “charters of shame”. They are ready to stand up against those who castigate their own compatriots with derogatory terms such as “bougnoles”, “rat hunts”, “racaille” (scum) and “kocher”.

They are ready to stand up against the low-level tricksters of dirty government, small calculations, lawless areas, nominations of convenience and corrupt state-provided housing allocation; against a politicians who refuse to increase the minimum wage, while simultaneously exacerbating social antagonism and consolidating the wealth of the most affluent with a “tax shield” at the very time the banking system is in free-fall.

They are ready to resist politicians who block and freeze to a minimum the pensions of the French army veterans of foreign origin while increasing by 70 per cent the salaries of government ministers; and a society which floods insolvent managers with stock options and golden parachutes, like Vinci and Carrefour, who recycle their abuse of authority into honourable acts by getting promotions to the State Council – that temple of republican virtue — as a reward for services rendered in the diversion of justice; such was the case of the Jacques Toubon, the Minister of justice, who went down history as the most notorious helicopter interceptor in international legal history.

In sum, they are ready to stand up against the posture of disdain and irresponsibility, the strange concept of “the French rocket” which exempts the responsible party from any liability, through some sort of anti-democratic privilege derived from the proto-fascist ideology inherent to part of the French culture.

They are ready to stand against the criminalisation of politics – that situation so symptomatic of contemporary France, as illustrated by “The criminal records of the Republic” [Le casier judiciaire de la République] – an edifying evaluation in which there were nine hundred (900) prosecutions for corporate crimes, property crimes and crimes against individuals (including sex crimes) in the 1990s alone. It would have been duly expected that a “Zero tolerance” policy towards white-collar crimes would have been applied as a categorical imperative for the republican order and as a show-case of government exemplarity.

Ironically, France has never seemed more eager to glorify its past than at the present time. The commemoration calendar is full of commemorative events: the 2000th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis (1996), which marks the official conversion of the nation to Christianity; the 1500th anniversary of the proclamation of the Edict of Nantes (1598), ending the religious war between Catholics and Protestants; the Bicentenary of the French Revolution (1989); the 150th anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery (May 1998); Centennial of Emile Zola’s eloquent manifesto against political-religious segregation (“J’ accuse”, January 1998); the 60th anniversary of the liberation of France; the 50th anniversary of the 5th Republic, and last but not least the 40th anniversary of May 1968’s student revolt..... all this appears as though France were trying to compensate for its withdrawal within itself by drawing on its glorious past in the search for inspiration for the future.

Without wishing to participate in a guilt-ridden exercise of culpability, what is required now is a debate on the contribution made by French people of foreign origins in the liberation of France, and in the role they played in radiating French influence throughout the world. This might serve as a shield of social protection against possible future repetition of the kind of excesses of which France was guilty during its colonial and post-colonial history.

There is an eerie correlation between the memory loss associated with the “office crimes” of 1940-1944 and the regal impunity of the political-administrative class who controlled the financial scandals of the late 20th century; between the 1940 rout of the bureaucratic elite and ...the collapse of the contemporary regime of the INA dominated state-run administration – the “enarchy” (INA[6]).

“If France with 45 million inhabitants were even to open up wide enough to accept 25 million Muslim citizens, even mainly illiterate, on the basis of equal rights, it still wouldn’t be undertaking a more audacious step than the one taken by America when it refused to remain a small province of the Anglo-Saxon world”⁷. This was already predicted in 1955 by Claude Lévi-Strauss in a striking summary of the post-colonial problematic, in which the French society had been struggling for half a century (7)

Cartesian rationality, symbiotic transcendence of Athenian intelligence and Roman order, the quintessence of critical thinking, has, in its period of relaxation, engendered monstrosities. No country is sheltered from such abuses in the face of the huge upheavals of history. Ingratitude becomes the cardinal law of peoples for their survival. But the French exception so loudly acclaimed as a nation of greatness is antithetical in a culture of impunity and amnesia; a culture built on government dogma and, as such, is incompatible with the ethics of command and the requirements of exemplarity.

Let no-one see any interference or partisan electioneering in this article. Anyone concerned with the status of France, be it a “native” French citizen; one with foreign origins; or one by choice, it is imperative, as a measure of public safety and well-being, to engage in such

introspection and self-examination. It is essential to be vigorous in denouncing contemporary abuses to prevent painful future memory memories. History has taught us that the story of today is tomorrow's memory.

Article in french : [France: Identité nationale](#), 14 of January of 2010.

Translation : Elsa Kirby el Hachem

References

1 - The link to the song by Michel Sardou "Ils ont du pétrole" (They have petrol), a song which perfectly represents the French mentality:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzAYWSf6-1o>

2 - François Maspero is the son of Henri Maspero, the historian who died during deportation. He was a founding member of the Russell Tribunal for Palestine. In 1959, during the Algerian war, he set up a publishing house "Les Editions Maspero", actively committing to the Third World's fight for freedom, in order to "Beat the demented European pride which believes in ruling the world". In 1982, as a result of relentless harassment from the police force, François Maspero has to renounce to his publishing house. According to the historian Jean Yves Mollier, François Maspero had been convicted 17 times. He resigns in exchange of no compensation and sells his shares for a symbolic franc to the new purchasers. The texts on Palestine, Gaza, the occupied territories and Israel, can be found in a book entitled Transit & Co. Latest book published "Des Saisons au Bord de la Mer" Seuil 2009 collection "La Librairie du XXI ème siècle".

3 - Frantz Fanon, in "Les damnés de la Terre" Ed. La Découverte, 2002 - La Découverte poche 134 collections essays - preface by Jean-Paul Sartre 1961, Preface by Alice Cherki and afterword by Mohammad Harbi 2002.

Former member of the "forces françaises libres" (Free French Forces), he resigns from the French army to join the Algerian revolution. West-Indian (Martinique) psychiatrist, he is one of the founders of the current 'third-worldist' thinking. As a very committed thinker, he sought to analyse the psychological effects of colonisation on both the colonisers and the colonised. He joined the FLN in Tunis, working with the central press of the FLN, El Mujahid. In 1959, he is part of the Algerian delegation at the Pan-African Congress in Accra. Knowing he has leukaemia, he retreats to Washington to write his last book Les Damnés de la Terre (The Damned of the World). He dies on December the 6th, 1961 at 36 years old, a few months before the Algerian independence.

4 - By the end of 2009's third quarter, the public debt, according to the criteria set by the European Treaty of Maastricht, was evaluated at 1 457 billion Euros, approximately 75.8% of GDP.

5- One Auvergnat is okay, but when there are too many, you can say hello to the damage" [declaration by Brice Hortefeux, Minister of the Interior at party congress in Autumn 2009 »

6- ENA [Ecole Nationale d'Administration - a prestigious training school for high-level state officials and administrators from which many high-level government-officials graduate.

7- Claude Lévi-Strauss "Tristes Tropiques". The works of the French anthropologist was published in 1955.

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Journaliste-écrivain, ancien responsable du Monde arabo musulman au service diplomatique de l'AFP, puis conseiller du directeur général de RMC Moyen-Orient, responsable de l'information, membre du groupe consultatif de l'Institut Scandinave des Droits de l'Homme et de l'Association d'amitié euro-arabe. Auteur de "L'Arabie saoudite, un royaume des ténèbres" (Golias), "Du Bounoule au sauvageon, voyage dans l'imaginaire français" (Harmattan), "Hariri, de père en fils, hommes d'affaires, premiers ministres (Harmattan), "Les révolutions arabes et la malédiction de Camp David" (Bachari), "Média et Démocratie, la captation de l'imaginaire un enjeu du XXI^{ème} siècle (Golias). Depuis 2013, il est membre du groupe consultatif de l'Institut Scandinave des Droits de l'Homme (SIHR), dont le siège est à Genève et de l'Association d'amitié euro-arabe. Depuis 2014, il est consultant à l'Institut International pour la Paix, la Justice et les Droits de l'Homme (IIPJDH) dont le siège est à Genève. Depuis le 1er septembre 2014, il est Directeur du site Madaniya.

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