

# The Tyranny of Guilt

*An Essay on Western Masochism*



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Princeton and Oxford*

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CHAPTER ONE

*Guilt Peddlers*



Everyone is guilty with respect to everyone else,  
for everything, and I more than anyone.

—FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

*The Irremediable and Despondency*

The whole world hates us, and we deserve it: that is what most Europeans think, at least in Western Europe. Since 1945 our continent has been obsessed by torments of repentance. Ruminating on its past abominations—wars, religious persecutions, slavery, imperialism, fascism, communism—it views its history as nothing more than a long series of massacres and sackings that led to two world wars, that is, to an enthusiastic suicide. Unparalleled horrors, the industrialization of death on a grand scale in the Nazi and Soviet camps, the promotion of bloodthirsty clowns to the rank of mass idols, and the experience of radical evil transformed into bureaucratic routine: that is what we have achieved. And the greatest virtues—work, order, discipline—have been put to the most dreadful ends, science has been dishonored, culture mocked in all its pretensions, idealism disfigured. Europe, like a groggy boxer stunned by the blows he has absorbed, feels overcome by crimes that are too heavy to bear. There is no nation in the west or east of this little continental peninsula that does not have to examine its conscience, and whose history is not full of corpses, guard towers, tortures, and exactions. So many sublime works, lofty metaphysics, and subtle philosophies, all just to end up in civil wars, charnel houses, gas chambers, the Gulag. Europe has combined, in an unparalleled way, calculating thought with murder, constructing methodically and systematically a dehumanizing machine that reached its apogee in the twentieth century. A curse is hidden behind our civilization that corrupts its meaning

and mocks its grandeur. The highpoints of thought, music, art—all that useless and tragic luxury has as its corollary abysses of abjection.

In 1955, when Claude Lévi-Strauss discussed the Indians of Brazil in his *Tristes Tropiques*, he noted with consternation “the monstrous and incomprehensible cataclysm represented, for such a broad and innocent part of humanity, by the development of Western civilization.”<sup>1</sup> Today, countless travelers and theoreticians continue to bear witness to this feeling of repulsion. Forty years after Lévi-Strauss wrote these lines, the same view continues to be expressed: “Collectively, we have many faults that need to be pardoned,” the philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry observes. “We have to remember, in a critical way, the violence and humiliation we have inflicted on whole peoples on every continent in order to impose our own vision of humanity and civilization.”<sup>2</sup> A historian specializing in Algeria writes with dismay that “the French have never seen guilt as a constitutive part of their history.”<sup>3</sup> In a series of lectures delivered in 2005, Edgar Morin sees in a pacified Europe, and in it alone, the ferment of a potential barbarity: “We have to be capable of conceiving European barbarity in order to transcend it, because the worst is still possible. Amid the threatening wasteland of barbarity, we are for the moment in a relatively protected oasis. But we also know that we are living in historical, political, and

<sup>1</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 375.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Marc Ferry, *Les Puissances de l'expérience: essai sur l'identité contemporaine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Le Cerf, 1991), p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Stora, “Les Aveux les plus durs,” in Patrick Weil and Stéphane Dufoix, *L'Esclavage, la colonisation et après* (Paris: PUF, 2005), p. 591.

social conditions that make the worst conceivable, particularly in moments of paroxysm.”<sup>4</sup>

All Europeans should be convinced that Europe is the sick man of the planet, which it is infecting with its pestilence. To the question, “Who is to blame?” in the metaphorical sense of the term, the standard, spontaneous response is: “We are.” The West, that alliance between the Old and the New Worlds, is a machine without a soul or a captain that has put “humanity in its service.” Henceforth it lives in the age of the “revenge of the Crusaders” [*sic*] and seeks to export its “unbridled passions” everywhere.<sup>5</sup> There is no monstrosity in Africa, Asia, or the Near East for which it is not to blame:

The Third World is the outlet for passions unleashed by the chaotic play of uncontrolled competitions. At the origin of the mad bloodbaths in the Third World that spread horror in humble shacks and confirm us in the belief that the Other is a barbarian, we find the frustrations created by the West. Examples are legion: peaceful Cambodia plunged into an unprecedented genocide following American intervention, Iran deprived of Mossadegh’s bourgeois revolution by Anglo-American intervention, and the blind terrorism of the kidnappings, hijackings, and hostage-taking elicited by the nightmare of the Middle East.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Edgar Morin, *Culture et barbarie européennes* (Paris: Bayard, 2005), p. 92.

<sup>5</sup>Serge Latouche, *L’Occidentalisation du monde* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992; new ed., 2005), pp. 26, 27.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.



Extermination is “at the heart of European thought” (Sven Lindqvist), and its imperialism is “a biologically necessary process that leads, in accord with natural laws, to the inevitable elimination of inferior races.”<sup>7</sup> If the West “was probably able to produce computers only because somewhere people were dying of hunger and desires,”<sup>8</sup> the conclusion to be drawn is obvious: we have to resist its disintegrating power by all means at our disposal.

### *The Ideology That Stammers*

Europe against itself: anti-Occidentalism, as we know, is a European tradition that stretches from Montaigne to Sartre and instills relativism and doubt in a serene conscience sure that it is in the right. In the time of Las Casas, it took a certain audacity to denounce the barbarity of the conquistadors or the civilizing mission of the great powers during the period of empires. Nowadays all it takes to attack Europe is a bit of conformism. Thus, in 1925, in the middle of the war in the Moroccan Rif waged by Abd el-Krim’s rebel tribes against French and Spanish troops, Louis Aragon, then twenty-eight years old, gave a talk in Madrid before an audience of students that was as magnificent as it was crazy, vibrating with fury:

<sup>7</sup>Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminez toutes ces brutes. Lodyssée d’un homme au cœur de la nuit et les origines du génocide européen* (Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 1998). Original in Swedish (1992). Quoted in Géraldine Faes and Stephen Smith, *Noir et français* (Paris: Panama, 2006), pp. 324–25.

<sup>8</sup>Latouche, *L’Occidentalisation du monde*, p. 120.

We will overcome everything. And first of all we will destroy this civilization that you cherish, in which you are cast like fossils in schist.

Western world, you are condemned to death. We are the defeatists of Europe. . . . Let the Orient, your terror, finally answer your voice. We will awaken everywhere the germs of confusion and malaise. We are the agitators of the mind.

All barricades are good, all obstacles to our happiness are bad. Jews, come out of the ghettos. Let the people go hungry so that it finally experiences the taste of bread and anger. Move, thousand-armed India, great legendary Brahma. It's your turn, Egypt! And let drug dealers attack our terrified countries. . . . Arise, world! See how this earth is dry and good for all kinds of bonfires. You'd think it was straw.

Go ahead, laugh. We are those who will always hold out our hands to the enemy.<sup>9</sup>

Eighty years later the same idea is formulated insipidly, like a bailiff's report: delighted that resistance to our enterprise is sprouting up everywhere, the economist and philosopher Serge Latouche asserts that "the death of the West will not necessarily be the end of the world" but, on the contrary, "the condition for the blossoming of new worlds, of a new civilization, a new era."<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, challenge has deteriorated into an automatism, and

<sup>9</sup> *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 4, quoted in André Rezler, *L'Intellectuel contre l'Europe* (Paris: PUF, 1976), p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Latouche, *L'Occidentalisation du monde*, p. 158.

destructive jubilation has bogged down in frigid bureaucratic language.

In this regard, one cannot help having a strange feeling that we are witnessing a remake, as if the old saws from the 1960s were coming back to haunt us. But that overlooks a fundamental point: just as the communist idea is becoming seductive again as the memory of the Soviet Union becomes fainter, Third Worldism is flourishing again as Maoism, the Khmer Rouge, and the South American guerrillas are forgotten. It is precisely the failure of these concrete utopias that explains the resurgence of the doctrine, which has suddenly been freed from the need to correspond to reality. Ideologies never die, they metamorphose and are reborn in a new form just when they are thought buried forever: failure, far from serving as a drying-out cell, relaunches the drunkenness. The suffering face of the colonized person has been replaced by the suffering face of the decolonized person who over the past forty years has passed through a series of disenchantments and fiascos: the Great Helmsman and his seventy million dead, Pol Pot's general massacres, Vietnamese repression and the exodus of the boat people, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, the obscurantist madness of the Iranian mullahs, Cuban fascism, the Algerian civil war, the disarray of the various tropical socialist regimes, without mentioning corruption, impoverishment, waste, and nepotism.

For half a century, the heart of darkness has no longer been the epic of colonialism. It is independent Africa, "that cocktail of disasters," as Kofi Annan modestly called it in 2001: the murderous reign of the Red Negus, Mengistu;

the macabre buffoonery of an Idi Amin, Sekou Touré, or Bokassa; the madness of a Samuel Doe or a Charles Taylor in Liberia; in Sierra Leone, the blood diamonds of a Foday Sankho, who invented “short-sleeve” mutilation by cutting people’s arms off at the elbow, and “long-sleeve” mutilation by cutting their arms off at the shoulder; the use of child soldiers, killer kids who are beaten and drugged; detention camps; mass rapes; the endless conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the civil wars in Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, and Côte d’Ivoire; cannibalism in the Congo; crimes against humanity in Darfur; and, last but not least, the genocide in Rwanda and the Great Lakes war, with its three to four million victims since 1998. Decolonization was a great process of democratic equality: the former slaves achieved within a few years the same level of bestiality as their former masters. The only remarkable exceptions to this somber account are South Africa and Botswana, the small and large dragons of Asia, and the irruption of India and China, both of which have gone over to capitalism in a revenge taken by the thieves of fire on the earlier dominators.

What did the crowd of young people shout to Jacques Chirac in 2004, during the first visit by a French president to Algeria since decolonization? “Visas, visas.” A malicious wit might say: they drove us out and now they all want to come live with us! That does not cast doubt on the legitimacy of their independence, but it does explain this disturbing truth: Europe got over the loss of its colonies much more quickly than the colonies got over their loss of Europe. Since the latter has not sunk body

and soul in the convulsions of decolonization, giving the lie to those who connected its wealth with the pillaging of the Southern Hemisphere and unequal trade, all that remains is constantly to insist on its perversity. The globe henceforth constituting, thanks to the media, a glass house in which everyone is more or less aware of everyone else's condition, the disease of comparison accelerates the competition among peoples. The old dream of salvation by proletarian nations was temporarily suspended (even if we see it reconstituting itself in South America on an anti-imperialist front led by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez), there is a return to the rhetoric of recrimination, especially since the worldwide offensive of Islam, and the disarray of many immigrants lends this discourse a new legitimacy—a curious example of a Third Worldism that survived the disappearance of the Third World as an autonomous entity. The former, which evaporated in the 1980s, was a Third Worldism of projection, supporting regimes thought to incarnate the new revolutionary Eden. Its current avatar is a Third Worldism of introspection, turned against itself: we hate ourselves much more than we love others. The malaise, ceasing to be supported by a political project, gnaws away at Western consciousness from within. A change in scale, a narrowing of horizons.

### *The Self-Flagellants of the Western World*

In 1947 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, still a communist fellow-traveler, tried to understand the logic of the Moscow purge

trials that ten years earlier had led Stalin to eliminate his former companions, who had been renamed “enemies of the people.”<sup>11</sup> Even if they were innocent of the charges brought against them, these hard-core Bolsheviks confessed their sins, accusing themselves of imaginary crimes. They invented all kinds of betrayals of the proletariat and died with full confidence in the future of the revolution. Relatively speaking, the mentality of accusation still subsists in our reflex to spontaneously blame ourselves for the planet’s ills. The average European, whether male or female, is extremely sensitive, always ready to shoulder the blame for the poverty of Africa or Asia, to sorrow over the world’s problems, to assume responsibility for them, always ready to ask what Europeans can do for the South rather than asking what the South could do for itself.

By the evening of September 11, 2001, many Europeans, despite their obvious sympathy for the victims, were telling themselves that the Americans deserved what they got. The cream of the European intelligentsia immediately adopted that line with an abundance of rhetorical subtleties: the hijackers who had destroyed the World Trade Center towers were only the agents of a ruthless punishment. We saw two-bit Neros applauding this double attack and finding in it the execution of an immanent justice. Tit for tat, the re-establishment of a balance upset by an excessive dissymmetry—that was the interpretation offered by Jean Baudrillard in an utterly religious justification of this vengeance:

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanisme et terreur*, introduction by Claude Lefort (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1980).

When the situation is monopolized in this way by the world power, when one has to deal with this enormous condensation of all functions by technocratic machinery and the dominant way of thinking, how can one proceed except by a terrorist transfer of the situation? It is the system itself that has created the objective conditions of this brutal retaliation. By taking all the cards into its own hand, it forces the Other to change the rules of the game . . . terror against terror, there is no longer any ideology behind all that.

But the terrorist attacks on March 11, 2004, in Madrid (200 dead) proved that Europeans had also internalized the crime: the decision of Zapatero's new left-wing government to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq (fulfilling a previous commitment) made it seem that he was yielding to the demands of the bombers and that the carnage in the Atocha train station was caused by Madrid's involvement, in alliance with Washington, in the second Gulf War (whereas terrorist cells continued their attacks long after the withdrawal, arguing that the Muslims lost Andalusia in the fifteenth century). Let us recall that in Madrid a million citizens protested, with not a single cry of hatred against Arabs, limiting themselves to booing José Aznar, who had drawn them into Iraq against their will and had wrongly accused the Basque separatist organization ETA of having planted the bombs. Today the massacre is still attributed to the leader of the populist Right, who has been elevated to the status of a convenient scapegoat, which

makes it possible to avoid looking into the real causes. The bombs that exploded in London on July 7, 2005, killing almost sixty people, have also given rise to a whole rhetoric of expiation. The following day, the headline in *Le Parisien*, which is not particularly known for being left-wing, read: “Al-Qaeda Punishes London” (the paper later apologized for using this phrase). The mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, a committed Leftist known for his hostility to Israel, condemned the attacks but soon afterward explained that the Arab countries have to be left alone, perhaps forgetting that most of the terrorists were British subjects of Pakistani origin:

The suicide attacks would probably not have happened had Western powers left Arab nations free to decide their own affairs after World War I. I think you’ve just had 80 years of Western intervention into predominantly Arab lands because of the Western need for oil. . . . If at the end of the First World War we had done what we promised the Arabs, which was to let them be free and have their own governments, and kept out of Arab affairs, and just bought their oil, rather than feeling we had to control the flow of oil, I suspect this wouldn’t have arisen.<sup>12</sup>

Reversing the burden of proof, making civilians torn apart by steel and fire guilty in spite of themselves, is what the British writer John Le Carré also achieves. Regretting that in Great Britain, as in the United States, there is in

<sup>12</sup> *Le Monde*, July 21, 2005.



practice “no parliamentary opposition” [*sic*], he sees the sources of terrorism in frustrations and humiliations, both past and present:

When communities have been exploited for a long time, this creates in them a desire for revenge, no matter how psychotic or mistaken it may be. To understand what produces this psychosis that leads people to want to “kill, kill, kill,” it suffices to observe these communities.<sup>13</sup>

A French sociologist, Farhad Khosrokhavar, explains the attacks as the result of the humiliation of the Arab-Muslim world in general “because of the creation of Israel, because of the feeling that Islam has become the religion of the oppressed.”<sup>14</sup> Interviewed by the French Press Agency on July 13, 2005, another sociologist, François Burgat, confirms this analysis: without the impression of injustice felt by the Arab masses with regard to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the perception of a double standard in the way Israel and Iraq are treated politically, such events would never have occurred.

It is clear that if tomorrow terrorists should blow up the Parisian Metro, topple the Eiffel Tower, or destroy Notre Dame, we would hear the same argument. Sensitive people on both the Left and the Right would urge us to blame ourselves: we have been attacked, so we are guilty, whereas our attackers are in reality poor wretches protesting against our insolent wealth, our way of life, our

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Monde*, July 17, 2005.

predatory economy. Spontaneously, our judgment of ourselves grants that our adversaries are right. After each explosion, there is a flood of panicked efforts to explain it that invokes all the problems of the world simultaneously, so eager are we to put our motivations into the mouths of the jihadists, even if we disapprove of their methods. And to counteract their terrifying silence, we speak for them, we tell them what to say. “Who are our enemies?” Dominique de Villepin asks. “The world’s wounds are many. Out of habit, weakness, fear, it is tempting to mix everything up in a stubborn struggle against a diabolical adversary.”<sup>15</sup> But we don’t choose our enemies in accord with our wishes or our convictions; it is they who designate us as enemies, strike us when they wish, and seek our destruction. Whence the feeling of a certain schizophrenia in old Europe: alongside the United States, we are fighting a terrorism whose importance we never cease to deny or minimize. For some, this constitutes a kind of “intellectual fraud” that will put us under Washington’s control.<sup>16</sup> For others, such as the Spanish prime minister José Luis Zapatero, we have to push euphemism to the point of refusing to name the danger: “I never speak of Islamist terrorism, but only of international terrorism. We cannot lump together under one name hundreds of millions of people and a religion that, like all religions in the history of humanity, includes an element of religious fanaticism.”<sup>17</sup> Entirely committed to denial, our leaders thus ask Europe

<sup>15</sup> Dominique de Villepin, *Le Requin et la Mouette* (Paris: Plon, 2004), p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> Pascal Boniface, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 18, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Interview in *Le Monde*, June 29, 2004.

to attack the roots of the problem, which are “injustice, resentment, and frustration” (Dominique de Villepin). It is not a matter of fighting but rather of “trying to understand” the other, because “knowing is fundamental” and “the use of force leads nowhere” (Mario Soares).

But these interpretive schemes suffer from a major problem: they confuse pretexts with causes. It is true that when existing pathologies find no outlet, terrorism grafts itself onto them and overdetermines them. However, its ultimate motivation is fanatics’ hostility to the principle of an open society in which formal equality is recognized for everyone. It is our existence as such that is intolerable for them. But this observation is intolerable for us: in order to remain within the bounds of reason and to nourish the idea that “even the enemies of reason . . . must be, in some fashion, reasonable” (Paul Berman), we must at all costs provide arguments for the killers, even if in doing so we seem to justify their acts.

Just as there are those within radical Islamism who preach hate, so there are preachers of hate within our democracies, especially among the intellectual elites, and their proselytizing is no less intense. To hear them tell it, we are far from being innocent because we allow, through a simple effect of power relationships, hunger, AIDS, inadequate medical care to exist. Speaking of September 11, Jacques Derrida explained:

Does terrorism necessarily involve death? Can’t one terrorize without killing? And then is killing necessarily something active? Can’t “letting people

die” not wanting to know that one is letting people die (hundreds of millions of people dying of hunger, AIDS, inadequate health care, etc.) be part of a “more or less” conscious and deliberate terrorist strategy? We are wrong to suppose too easily that all terrorism is voluntary, conscious, organized, deliberate, intentionally calculated: there are historical or political situations in which terror operates, so to speak, by itself, through the simple effect of an apparatus, through established power relationships, without anyone, any conscious subject, any person, being consciously aware of it or taking responsibility for it. All situations of structural social or national oppression produce a terror that is never natural (and which is therefore organized, institutional) and on which they depend without those who benefit from them ever having to organize terrorist acts or be called terrorists.<sup>18</sup>

You’ve read that correctly: we’re all potential terrorists; to one degree or another, we sow death the way Monsieur Jourdain spoke prose, without knowing it! To be sure, after finishing his implacable argument, Derrida ended up declaring his preference for democracy. Nonetheless, by revealing our manifold unconscious complicity with horror, he has proven that crime is our most widely shared characteristic. Moreover, certain films have popularized the image of those decent families, those peaceful little

<sup>18</sup> Giovanna Borradori, *Le Concept du 11 septembre. Dialogues avec Jacques Derrida et Jürgen Habermas* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), pp. 162–63.

towns, that hide a terrible secret, an evil being. Suspicion gnaws at our most idyllic landscapes. Where we think we see an opposition with the fundamentalists, we must recognize an equivalence. Instead of being stupidly scandalized by explosions, let us begin by questioning ourselves, dissecting ourselves without respecting any taboo. Haven't we, after all, been asking for it, in a way? Beneath the appearance of a complex analysis, we find here the typical evangelical posture: self-accusation, public castigation. As good heirs of the Bible, we think that a great misfortune necessarily follows a great infraction. In this respect the intellectual caste, in our world, is the penitential class par excellence, continuing the role of the clergy under the Old Regime. We have to call its members what they are: officials of original sin. Obsessed with their desire to dismantle appearances, they never cease to insist on our naïveté. You think there's a radical opposition between the United States and Al-Qaeda? How childish—they're accomplices. What is terrorism, after all? A simple settling of accounts between rogue states, including America, since there's no real difference between them:

There seems to be a powerful rationalization going on, consciously or unconsciously calculated. It consists in accusing and campaigning against so-called Rogue States, which in fact care little about international law. This rationalization is maneuvered by hegemonic states, starting with the United States, which was early and properly shown (Chomsky was not the only one to do so) to have long behaved as

“Rogue States.” Moreover, every sovereign state is virtually and a priori capable of abusing its power and transgressing international law just like a Rogue State. There is a rogue element in every state.<sup>19</sup>

### *A Thirst for Punishment*

Poor Europe: today as before, a stench of carrion rises from it, its past adheres to its present like a leprous mold. Whatever it does turns back on it in the form of a symptom of its disease. Take, for example, the waiting zones where foreigners without papers and asylum seekers are held. These are certainly not comparable to Nazi camps. Within our democratic societies they nonetheless share certain basic traits that define the paradigm of the concentration camp, that is, according to Giorgio Agamben, “a space that opens when the exception starts to become the rule. . . . they are places not governed by law.”<sup>20</sup> After that, how can we be surprised when we are struck by heaven’s thunderbolt, the wrath of Allah’s madmen? How can we dare to judge the various barbarities that are ravaging humanity, when we have shown an “unparalleled savagery” in history?<sup>21</sup> We are paying for an ancient stain, we

<sup>19</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Voyous* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), pp. 214–15.

<sup>20</sup> Enzo Traverso, *Le passé, modes d'emploi* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2005), p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> Mariella Villasante Cervello, “La Négritude: une forme de racisme héritée de la colonisation française?” in Marc Ferro, *Le livre noir du colonialisme, XVIe–XXe siècle: de l'extermination à la repentance* (Paris: Hachette, 2004), p. 1018.

are retroactively responsible for the horrors committed by our ancestors or by other people. We can well say with the Psalmist: “O God, cleanse me of sins I do not perceive and forgive me those of others.” Once again, let us admire the talent with which guilt is re-created, reinvented by the class of philosophers. We Europeans are born with a burden of vices and ugliness that mark us like stigmata, for we have to recognize that the white man has sown grief and ruin wherever he has gone. *For him, to exist is first of all to excuse himself.* Ferocity is white, as a lawyer of Colombian origin, Rosa Amelia Plumelle-Uribe, puts it in the title of her book, white and not black or red: the white man is genetically determined to kill, massacre, rape; he has split himself off from the rest of humanity in order to enslave it. He can’t help it. His skin color is not only a matter of pigmentation but a moral defect, an inexpiable stain, as Professor Louis Sala-Molins explains in the preface to Plumelle-Uribe’s work. He denounces the “wheeling-dealing voraciousness . . . of the white-American nations of Christianity” and sees every white venture as “an uninterrupted spiral of horror.”<sup>22</sup>

What is the West, after all? The very figure of Satan, whose evil presence corrupts everything because it “has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere” and occupies the head “of a warrior in Papua, a loin-cloth seller in Cotonou, and an imam in Qom” as well as that of

<sup>22</sup>Rosa Amelia Plumelle-Uribe, *La Férocité blanche, des non-Blancs aux non-Aryens, ces génocides occultés de 1492 à nos jours* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), preface by Louis Sala-Molins, pp. 9ff.

a speculator on the London Stock Exchange or a worker in the Renault factory.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, anyone who speaks up for it is not respectable (*fréquentable*).<sup>24</sup> It is a dizzying panorama: using the West as an explanation makes it possible to account for the totality of the real. The Euro-American is simultaneously cursed and indispensable: thanks to him, everything becomes clear, evil acquires a face, the dirty rat is universally designated. Biological, political, metaphysical guilt. And since we no longer believe in the kingdom of salvation, since Asia, Africa, and Latin America have (temporarily) ceased to be lands of redemption, nothing remains for us but to continue the execration ad nauseam.

<sup>23</sup> Latouche, *L'Occidentalisation du monde*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>24</sup> According to a professor in Quebec interviewed by Antoine Robitaille, “For some people, saying that one is a Westerner, acknowledging a kind of pride in belonging to that group, is practically equivalent to admitting that one is a criminal. It is to participate in a civilization that not long ago still thought it *was* the civilization, which colonized other peoples, ran a slave trade, and today . . . prospers as the result of an absolutely inequitable trade and, in addition, its way of life is leading toward an ecological apocalypse.” Antoine Robitaille, “Le Choc des cultures, Peut-on se dire occidental et fier de l’être?” *Le Devoir* (Montreal), May 26, 2006.



### *Islamism or Mutual Deception*

“Today, confronted by the threat to Civilization, there is a response: revolutionary Islam! Only men and women armed with a total faith in the founding values of truth, justice, and fraternity will be prepared to lead the combat and deliver humanity from the empire of mendacity.”<sup>25</sup> These remarks by the terrorist Carlos illustrate one of the most astonishing phenomena of recent years: the fusion between the atheist far Left and religious radicalism. In 1982 the Iranian philosopher Daryus Shayegan provided the best theoretical account of the collision between historical reason and atemporal revolution, “the ideologization of tradition,” the overlapping of two incompatible orders such as we find it incarnated in the twentieth-century Shiite thinker Ali Shariati, who imposes Marxist categories on a prophetic cycle, working in spite of himself toward a secularization of Islam.<sup>26</sup> Islamism was conceived chiefly by the British Trotskyites of the Socialist Workers’ Party: noting that the religion of the Prophet, although reactionary, is a factor of upheaval and not of passivity at the heart of our societies, they promote a reasonable *entrisme*, tactical, temporary alliances with Islam.<sup>27</sup> A certain revolutionary fringe’s hope that Islam might become the spearhead of a new insurrection in the name of the oppressed is not without ulterior motives on both sides: Trotskyites, supporters of alternative forms of

<sup>25</sup> Ilich Ramirez Sánchez, a.k.a. Carlos, *L’Islam révolutionnaire* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 2003), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Daryus Shayegan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une révolution religieuse?* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982; new ed. with new preface, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Entrism is an old tactic used by communists and especially Trotskyites to infiltrate workers’ or owners’ organizations and gradually influence them.

globalism, and adherents to Third Worldism are using the Islamists as a battering ram against free-market capitalism. The hatred of the market is worth a few compromises regarding fundamental rights, and especially that of the equality between men and women. The fundamentalists, disguised as friends of tolerance, are dissimulating and using the Left to advance their interests under the mask of a progressive rhetoric. There is a twofold deception here: one side supports the Islamic veil or polygamy in the name of the struggle against racism and neocolonialism. The other side pretends to be attacking globalization in order to impose its version of religious faith. Two currents of thought form temporary alliances against a common enemy: it is not hard to predict which one will crush the other once its objectives have been achieved. The Leftist intransigence that refuses any compromise with bourgeois society and cannot castigate too severely “little white men” actively collaborates with the most reactionary elements in the Muslim religion. But if the far Left courts this totalitarian theocracy so assiduously, it is perhaps less a matter of opportunism than of a real affinity. The far Left has never gotten over communism and once again demonstrates that its true passion is not freedom, but slavery in the name of justice.

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