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## Holy Europe

THE INTRIGUING THING about the *trompe l'oeuil* Euro referendum is the No that lies beyond the official No; beyond political reason. This is the No that resists. There must be something very dangerous about it to have mobilized all the authorities so determinedly behind the Yes. Such defensive panic is a sure sign of a corpse in the wardrobe.

This No is clearly an instinctive reaction to the ultimatum that the referendum has been from the start. A reaction to the complacent coalition around an infallible, universal Holy Europe. A reaction to the Yes as a categorical imperative whose backers did not dream for a moment that it might be seen as a challenge, and a challenge to be met. It does not therefore say No to Europe, it says No to the unquestionable Yes.

There is always something galling about the arrogance of a victory assumed *a priori*, whatever the reasons. The outcome has been decided in advance, and all that is sought is a consensus. 'Say Yes to Yes': this now commonplace formula conceals a dreadful mystification. Yes no longer means yes to Europe, or even yes to Chirac, or to the neo-liberal order. It means yes to Yes, to the consensual order; it is no longer an answer, but the content of the question itself.

Our Europositivity is being put to the test. And by a reflex of both pride and self-defence, the unconditional Yes spontaneously calls forth an equally unconditional No. The real puzzle is why there has not been an even bigger, more violent reaction against this mindless yes-ism.

The No reflex does not require political consciousness. It is an automatic return of fire against the coalition of all those who are on the side of universal good, while the rest are relegated to the twilight of History. What the forces of Good failed to anticipate was the perverse effects of their own declared superiority. They underestimated that unconscious lucidity which tells us that those who say they are right are not. Since Maastricht and the 2003 elections, political correctness—whether of the right or of the left—has not wanted to know about this silent dissidence.

This No from the depths should not be seen as 'work of the negative', or of critical thought. It is a pure and simple challenge to a hegemonic principle imposed from on high, to which the will of peoples is a matter of indifference, if not an obstacle to be cleared.

For this Europe as simulation, to which all must adapt, this faithful replica of the world power system, populations are merely manipulable masses to be deployed as alibis for the project. The authorities are quite right to be wary of referenda and of every direct expression of a political will which, given the chance of genuine representation, might turn out badly for them. Parliaments are normally charged with laundering the operation and ratifying Europe on the quiet.

But we are well-accustomed to this embezzlement of public opinion. Not so long ago the Iraq War took place thanks to an international coalition of all the powers against massive and spectacular expression of the will of all the peoples. Europe is being constructed on exactly the same model. I am surprised that the No camp has not made more use of this striking example, this *grande première* of total contempt for the voice of the people.

All this goes far beyond the referendum. It signifies the breakdown of the principle of representation, inasmuch as the representative institutions no longer function in the 'democratic' direction—from the people and the citizens towards the authorities—but in reverse: from the authorities down, by means of a booby-trapped consultation and the circular game of questions and answers, where the question only answers Yes to itself.

The breakdown of democracy, then. And if the electoral system, already sapped by abstention, has to be saved at all costs (even before voting Yes, the categorical imperative is to vote), it is precisely because it functions as the opposite of real representation, with the forced induction of decisions taken 'in the name of the people' even when, secretly, the people think the opposite.

Having failed to invent another set of rules for the game, Europe has no other solution than to distend and aggrandize itself through a series of annexations, mirroring the superpower. Behind the refusal of this 'there-is-no-alternative' Europe lies the presentiment of a more serious annihilation than that threatened by the market and the supranational institutions: the liquidation of all real representation; after which Europe's peoples will find themselves irrevocably consigned to the role of extras, requested to supply a rubber stamp from time to time.

Whatever the result, this referendum is no more than an episode, as Europe itself is only one more episode among others on the road to a greater loss of collective sovereignty. Beyond the figure of the passive or manipulated voter stands that of the hostage-citizen, taken captive by the ruling powers; in other words, a democratic form of state terror.