

INTRODUCTION TO ERIC HAZAN

Amid the intellectual murkiness of the European scene, a few bright flames are burning: as witness the work of Eric Hazan. Founder-director of Editions La Fabrique, since 1998 he has published a steady stream of radical and imaginative works, notably translations of dissident Israeli and Palestinian writings. Over the last six years he has produced four books of his own, among them L'Invention de Paris (2002), Chronique de la guerre civile (2004) and Changement de Propriétaire: La guerre civile continue (2007)—extracts from which are reproduced below.

Hazan was born in Paris in 1936, and trained as a medical student. Briefly a young Communist militant, he broke with the Party in 1956—not over Hungary, but Algeria: a PCF that disavowed its Arab comrades, and expelled militants arrested for supporting the FLN, was no longer the Party of the Resistance. Hazan joined a trickle of doctors in counter-flow to the mass exodus of French professionals from Algeria in 1962, working as village medic. In 1970 he helped form the Franco-Palestinian Medical Association and served as a volunteer doctor in a refugee camp outside Beirut. The shift to publishing came in 1983, when he took over his father's art house, Editions Hazan; forced into a deal with Hachette 15 years later, he broke free to set up La Fabrique.

A rare figure in France to speak out in trenchant terms—'a duty as a Jew'—against the overwhelming official consensus on the Middle East, Hazan has eloquently analysed the ways in which traditional French antisemitism, inadmissible after the collaboration with Nazism, has been 'delegated' to the descendants of the colonized, while traditional French racism has found new expression in attacking the latter for a media-inflated judeophobia.

In his work, the metaphor of a 'world civil war', its frontlines everywhere, also takes concrete form in the state coercion of the banlieue, the slums, the imperial warzones. His writings assemble collages—fragments of time, scenes from the street—in an attempt to recompose the totality which the operations of the liberal-democratic media work to disperse. Hazan has described his programme as putting Rancière's notion of 'the equality of anyone with anyone' into practice. The views of a singular internationalist, informed by a broad historical culture.

ERIC HAZAN

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Sarkozy's First Hundred Days

SUNDAY 6 MAY. The election results are in.¹ It will soon be night. I cross the Place de la République on my bike. The *grands boulevards* are deserted. There is no one to be seen in Rue d'Enghien, where Sarkozy's campaign headquarters are located; the street is closed off by metal barriers and a thin line of police. But in front of Le Mauri 7, a café in the Faubourg Saint-Denis at the corner of Passage Brady, the local Kurds are discussing the Turkish football championships on the pavement. The line of riot police vans on Boulevard de Bonne Nouvelle stretches as far as Rue d'Hauteville.

The only notable human presence on Boulevard Haussmann is that of two homeless people sleeping in front of the Chapelle Expiatoire, but when I reach Saint-Augustin there is suddenly a crowd. Sarkozy's supporters are emerging from the Salle Gaveau and making their way to Place de la Concorde: hundreds of school students, and college kids in blue T-shirts, with balloons, flags, blue and green banners. Car horns are honking, people on the pavements applauding. The special issue of *L'Express* (headline: 'Le Président') is already in every hand—did they print an alternative cover or were they so sure of the result? The youth of the rich quarters, out to celebrate the triumph of the party of order and authority, are flooding into Boulevard Malesherbes.

Place de la Concorde: technicians are busy installing the lighting and sound for the big concert. On the other side of the Seine, a thin police

line is guarding the Palais Bourbon, and blocking the entrance to Boulevard Saint-Germain in a desultory fashion. Outside Socialist Party headquarters in Rue de Solférino, boys and girls from the Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes are trying to put on a brave face—as white, clean and well brought-up as their counterparts on the other side. In a few weeks, all these healthy young people will be watching the same tennis championships at Roland-Garros.

Not even a cat in the Latin Quarter, not even police vans, a sign of the decline that has struck this district, where so many seditious movements had their origin. At the junction of Boulevard Henri IV, completely deserted, police are blocking cars from access to the Place de la Bastille. There, perched on the plinth of the column, some girls have lit fireworks that cast a pleasant red glow over the square, along with clouds of smoke. The crowd is a mix of all kinds of costumes, skin colours, hairstyles, stickers and flags. Their anger is joyful and infectious. A blonde tourist is deciphering the inscription on the column, and stumbles over ‘*qui combattirent*’. Someone translates it for her: ‘who fought, fought’.

A procession forms, aiming to head in the direction of Belleville, but all roads out of the square are blocked by helmeted CRS with shields, truncheons and tear-gas guns. At the entrance to Boulevard Richard-Lenoir the first street signs are torn up, the first cobblestones thrown, then the first tear-gas grenades. The confrontation is getting serious, and I make my exit through a side street, Rue Jean Beausire, as nothing would be more stupid than to be hemmed in with my bike when the CRS charge to clear the square.

This evening one can still see the division of Paris between east and west that has marked all battles in the city since the days of June 1848.

7 May

There was something odd about Sarkozy’s slogan: ‘Together, everything becomes possible’. Why the un-euphonious ‘becomes’, and not simply ‘everything is possible’? No doubt a turncoat from the left, someone like Jacques Attali or Max Gallo, had pointed out to the UMP faithful that the formula had already been taken: it was the title of an article by Marceau

¹ [In the May 2007 French presidential elections, Nicolas Sarkozy won 19 million votes to Ségolène Royal’s 16.8 million, on a turnout of 84 per cent.]

Pivert published in *Le Populaire* on 27 May 1936, the last words of which were: 'Everything is possible, and at full speed. We are at a moment that will certainly not return so quickly on the clock of history. So, as everything is possible, straight ahead, comrades!' To quote Jaurès or Blum is one thing, but to take over the words of the revolutionary left would be something else again.²

In the collection of illustrious men that Sarkozy cites on all his appearances, there are scarcely any from the right—nor women either, in fact, except Joan of Arc. Careful to hymn the glorious sons of each region—Lamartine and St Bernard de Clairvaux in Burgundy, Mirabeau in Provence—in Metz Sarkozy found himself evoking Barrès, who campaigned in Lorraine under the slogan 'Against the foreigners'. A brief mention, this, as his friends in the CRIF might well not have appreciated hearing him praise the leader of the anti-Dreyfusards.³ But no mention at all of Guizot, Thiers, Mac-Mahon, Tardieu or Laval, and the reason is clear. The very word 'right' only reappeared quite recently in the vocabulary of these politicians. After the Liberation, the leaders of the right were either in prison, in a few cases shot, or had fled abroad. I well remember how under the Fourth Republic there was only one party and leader that explicitly acknowledged being on the right. After the return of de Gaulle, his followers defended themselves against this very charge, in the face of all evidence, and there was even a sad little group of left Gaullists. It was only in the late 1970s, with the generation of Edouard Balladur and Raymond Barre, that the word 'right' could be uttered again without a blush, and 'right-wing values' publicly evoked.

The high electoral turnout is being presented as a victory for representative democracy. According to François Fillon, who it is generally assumed will be the new prime minister, it is 'the gate through which we can escape from the crisis of confidence that has cramped our country for such a long time'. For François Baroin, Minister of the Interior, 'this impressive mobilization proves the vigour of our democracy and the republican values that we share' (*Le Monde*, 8 May). Everyone pretends not to see that the turnout is due to the exceptional conjunction of two fears: on the one hand, fear of Sarkozy, who is only too clearly preparing

² [Marceau Pivert (1895–1958): leader of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), he attacked Blum's capitulations in 1936. *L'Humanité* responded with an editorial: 'No! Everything is not possible!']

³ [CRIF: Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France.]

to ‘punish the poor’, and on the other, fear of the poor on the part of all those afraid of losing what they have—pensioners, shopkeepers, petty officials, farmers—and who, like the proverbial Gribouille, choose to plunge rather than carry on waiting for they don’t know what.

8 May

A lot has been said about ‘resistance’ since Sunday evening, but I am sceptical that this is the right word. For the French, Resistance is always with a capital R, one of those great words drawn from History and stamped on the present situation, an activist language that spares the need for reflection. The same is true of ‘fascism’: but Sarkozy and his entourage are not fascists, and their reign will be more like that of Berlusconi than any kind of neo-Doriotism.⁴ The President of all the French dining at Fouquet’s on the night of his election, taking a private jet the next day to go and ‘refresh’ himself on a yacht lent by Vincent Bolloré: you can see where the style comes from.

No more people than usual at the gathering of Education Without Borders this evening. Two or three hundred people occupy the bottom of Rue de Belleville, with a good mix of the quarter’s many nationalities, and several Chinese, which is something new. At these meetings, held on the first Tuesday of every month, people discuss the latest raids on the homeless and debate the best way to oppose the next ones, without speeches or too much amplification. Leaflets are distributed between the pushchairs. You might think this is more sentimental-humanitarian than political, but it may also be a good way for local people to learn ways to refuse submission.

9 May

Silvio Berlusconi announces (*Libération*): ‘Nicolas Sarkozy has taken me as a political model’. When he was in office, Berlusconi declared that ‘many Italians are happy to have a prime minister able to use his own planes and cars, and receive state guests in palaces that belong to him’.

There seems to be some emergency about ‘renovating’ and modernizing the Socialist Party. Everyone knows what’s involved in renovating a

⁴ [Jacques Doriot (1898–1945): founder of the fascist Parti Populaire Français in 1936.]

ruined barn or updating a packet of washing powder, but doing this for a party is rather less clear. In an editorial in *Libération* (8 May), Laurent Joffrin shows the lengths to which such nonsense can go: 'Change everything! The programme is seductive but unclear . . . Should we move right or left? That's too simple an alternative. What we need is a deep rethink of all values and programmes'. Michel Noblecourt, a *Le Monde* columnist, believes (9 May) that Jospin's example should serve as inspiration, as he 'undertook, at three key conventions, a revision of the ideological software' (this image of software has recently invaded political journalism). For Henri Weber, European deputy and national secretary of the Socialist Party (writing in the same paper), 'the party has to improve and systematize its use of the Internet for communications, its internal training, and its political and ideological action'.

The first problem, and by no means the least, is to wipe out the past, the old 'political culture' that now requires renovation. Since 1981 (we can charitably avoid going back to the SFIO) we have had the austerity turn of 1983, privatizations, deregulation of financial markets, the Maastricht Treaty, the law on civil security, stock options: these are all 'fundamentals' (to use the current expression) that we owe to the Socialists, so concerned still about modernization. Hence a second difficulty: how to be credible when pretending not to be what one actually is? When Dominique Strauss-Kahn declares himself available to steer the party to social-democracy, or Henri Weber writes that the PS must become 'a modern reformist party', are they trying to make us believe that the PS is a Marxist party of revolution? How can they pretend to want to become a reformist party now, when they have always been one since the Tours congress of 1920?

Liberalism; democracy. The supposed triumph of 'democracy' after the implosion of barracks communism was accompanied by a gradual dissolution of the sense of this word, which has come to denote indifferently both the collapse of thinking and the programmed consumption of cultural goods and organic products: the democratization of philosophy via philosophy cafés and *Philosophie* magazine, the democratization of smoked salmon via promotions at Carrefour. And when the people suddenly express their will, with the fever and excess that are standard features of such upsurges, the most convinced of democrats hasten to repress this catastrophic democratic eruption. It is this 'hatred of democracy',

as Jacques Rancière puts it,⁵ that explains Sarkozy's delirious outburst at Bercy on 30 April, his determination to 'liquidate the spirit of May 68'.

By its fundamental ambiguity, the word 'liberal' has served from its very origins as an ideal element of camouflage. The first French liberals, under the Restoration in the 1820s, already formed an opposition group in the Chamber of Deputies, which included both financiers—the banker Laffitte was only the most famous of these—and theorists of a parliamentary regime that respected freedoms, such as Benjamin Constant and the heroes of *Le Globe*, the liberal newspaper that later became the organ of the Saint-Simonians. The great divide in liberalism between the stock exchange and the Collège de France has persisted for nearly two centuries, with immense benefits for capitalist legitimacy. Emblematic partnerships in this double liberal language would include the philosopher Alain and the Tardieu–Laval combination before the Second World War, Raymond Aron and Antoine Pinay in the 1950s, more recently François Furet and Bernard Tapie, or Pierre Rosanvallon and Vincent Bolloré with his yacht.

10 May

Poor Alain Finkielkraut! Once again he's failed to understand. For him (*Le Monde*), 'you can't appeal to Michelet, Péguy and Malraux, and at the same time wallow in the bad taste of some jet-set or showbiz celebrity. You can't pronounce odes to the impartial state and at the same time begin your mandate by accepting the expensive favours of a business tycoon.' Yes, you can. Those who saw the Malta jaunt as a political gaffe missed the point: it was intentional, it was the deliberate display of a new 'managerial' style, 'without taboos or complexes', as they like to put it.

11 May

Meeting in Mulhouse on the theme 'Forty years of Occupation in Palestine'. The organizing collective is very mixed: men and women of all ages, Muslims close to Tariq Ramadan, Jews of varying opinions, and 'innocent French people', as Raymond Barre liked to say. Some forty or so individuals—not bad in a town that voted more than 60 per cent for Sarkozy—happy to be together, but demoralized. It is true that to wail

⁵ [*Hatred of Democracy*, London and New York 2007.]

indefinitely over the misfortunes of Palestine, with no other perspective than to demand a Palestinian state which everyone knows can only be a disaster, is enough to make anyone feel discouraged. The idea of a single state (an expression I prefer to 'binational state', as there are already more than enough nations) provokes the genuine discussion that it always does (discussion rather than formal debate; speeches are interrupted, questions interjected from either side of the hall, laughter, no attempt to dominate).

But there already is a prefiguration of this single state, in miniature and displaced: the Boulevard de Belleville between the *métro* stations Belleville and Couronnes. From Rue de Belleville to Rue Bisson is the land of Tunisian Jews: the poor cafés where old men spend the day playing cards and quarrelling in Arabic, the great Michkenot Yacov synagogue, decorated—if you can call it that—with a wall of *trompe l'oeil* paving stones, restaurants certified by the Beth-Din, where fish is served Tunis style, and posters advertise holidays for next to nothing in Netanya or Eilat. The other side of Rue Bisson, which serves as a kind of 'green line', you could be in Algeria. Arab signs on the shops replace Hebrew, no women are to be seen in the cafés, elderly workers discuss endlessly while warming themselves in the sun, the newspaper kiosk by the Couronnes *métro* is kept by a veiled woman, and on the pavement you come across offers of used irons and packets of outdated electric batteries.

But if Rue Bisson marks a boundary, this is not a sealed border. The two populations mingle constantly—not in the cafés, which remain ethnically separate for the most part, but in the shops, on the pavements, in the big market held on the Boulevard's central island on Tuesdays and Fridays. Some people claim that the quarter gets tense when 'events' happen over there, in Israel–Palestine. I have never seen anything of the kind, not even during Israel's invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006. This is the single state, its inhabitants living alongside each other, not melding but certainly conscious of each other, not necessarily fond of each other but with a sense of shared humanity. Its capital is the great crossroads of *métro* Belleville: an international capital, with Chinese, Africans, French and many others, between La Vielleuse—a café which has kept the same name since the day when Vallès fired on the Versaillais from the first-floor windows—and Le Président, the largest Chinese restaurant in Paris.

13 May

Today is the anniversary of the start of the 1958 coup d'état that brought Charles de Gaulle back to power. No one mentions this story today; it's an original sin whose effects still echo, the myth of the man of providence who will break with the old and start anew. Forgotten, the plot hatched by the general's entourage in spring 1958—Jacques Foccart, Olivier Guichard, Jacques Soustelle, Michel Debré—to put pressure on poor René Coty, President of the Republic, and force him to send for de Gaulle. The French generals in Algiers send a message via Coty's designated prime minister, Pierre Pflimlin: resign, make way for de Gaulle—the only guarantor in their eyes of *Algérie française*. On 13 May, the day that Pflimlin was to be voted in by the Assembly, shock brigades were ready to attack the Palais Bourbon, led by the chiefs of the far right: Maître Biaggi, Alain Griotteray, Yves Gignac, head of the 'Anciens d'Indo', the Sidos brothers, the Jeune Nation movement. In Algiers, the governor-general's palace is stormed by the crowd. In Paris, while the investiture debate is taking place in the Assembly, General Massu sends Coty a telegram: 'Informing you creation of a civil and military Committee of Public Safety in Algiers chaired by myself, General Massu . . .' The same night, General Salan, commander-in-chief in Algeria, also sends a telegram, stressing the 'urgent necessity to appeal to a national arbiter'. On 15 May, from the balcony of the Algiers Forum, Salan ends his speech crying 'Vive de Gaulle!' The same evening the famous declaration is broadcast: 'I hold myself ready to assume the powers of the Republic . . .' Paris is in disarray, and after several days in the course of which the cowardice of the politicians is amply displayed, de Gaulle is voted in by the Assembly on 1 June, with the support of nearly half the Socialists.

This shady affair, which should have ended with its authors in prison and the rebel generals being shot, has been whitewashed from history. It casts more than a shadow on the personality of de Gaulle, of whom it is impermissible to say anything but good. No doubt a certain comfort can be found in the connivance between politicians and journalists of all sides. This occultation of the coup d'état, moreover, fits in with the cloud of forgetfulness that strangely shrouds the 1960s—from the state broadcasting network ORTF, whose abject submission has been completely forgotten, to the destruction of working-class Paris decreed by Georges Pompidou.

15 *May*

The leaders of the main trade union confederations are received by Sarkozy, in the interests of a 'social dialogue'. La Riposte, a Communist organization, circulates a text on the Internet:

To quote Bernard Thibault, general secretary of the CGT, 'Naturally the trade unions are interlocutors who require dialogue and negotiation. I expect Nicolas Sarkozy to make clear the ways in which he intends at least to conduct a discussion, and at best to negotiate over a certain number of subjects.' What kind of false naivety is it for the CGT to claim—and it's the same, if not worse, with the other confederations—that he will have to judge the government's actions 'one at a time'? Don't we already know what Sarkozy intends? Instead of giving advice to the enemy on the way in which he should attack us, the responsibility of a trade-union leadership worthy of this name is to make all workers clearly understand what is awaiting them, to mobilize them, to prepare their defence by putting the whole trade-union movement on a war footing. Those who've not already understood this should find another occupation than that of top union official.

17 *May*

'Despite Ségolène Royal's approach to the centre, and Nicolas Sarkozy's opening to the left, the first secretary of the PS continues to maintain the cleavage between right and left' (*Le Figaro*, 16 May). There has often been talk of 'cleavage' during this campaign, both to deplore that it still exists, to regret that it is not more marked, and to rejoice that it is finally at an end. Opinions vary as to the origin of the word: some see it as deriving from the Greek *klinein*, 'to lean', others from the Flemish *klieven*, a technical term of Antwerp diamond-cutters in the seventeenth century. Derivative meanings often involve the living body: surgeons talk of the direction of cleavage within an organ (between two lobes of a lung, for example), psychoanalysts of a cleavage in the ego, embryologists of a cleavage in the blastoderm. In all cases, the term is used only for a division *within a single structure*. Between two distinct and opposed human groups there can be a more or less violent confrontation, but not a cleavage. In the present context, the word thus sounds rather like an involuntary admission, a way of recognizing that those who profess to speak in the name of others, those who see to the distribution of wealth and position, those who argue on television but socialize in the corridors, form a homogeneous group. During the French Revolution, the time when right and left

first became political terms, it was not a cleavage that separated the two sides—unless this referred to the effect of the guillotine.

It is almost certain that Bernard Kouchner will be Foreign Minister. The most remarkable thing about this is not the news itself, but rather the surprise and even indignation that it arouses in some people. Their reaction is illogical. Kouchner is one of the inventors of humanitarian intervention, the contemporary version of old-fashioned charity, with the same good conscience, the same satisfaction drawn from other people's distress—but not just any distress. The good poor for the Comtesse de Ségur were those who held out their hands at the church door and didn't take to drink; the good victims of hunger and bombardment today are those who are neither fundamentalists nor terrorists, and so legitimate candidates for democratic asceticism. Kouchner's co-inventor of the duty of humanitarian intervention in the early 1990s was the late lamented Jean-François Revel, author of, among other works, *The Anti-American Obsession*. Thanks to them, human rights have more often than not been defended by surgical air strikes and cluster bombs.

Kouchner was listed by *Time* magazine in 2004 as one of the 'hundred most influential people in the world', for having 'supported US intervention in Iraq in the name of human rights'. In 2002, at the request of Total, he agreed to write a report to decide whether the company was guilty or not of having forced villagers to work for nothing on a gas pipeline in Myanmar, with the support of the country's army. Though Kouchner acquitted the company of this charge, Total agreed to pay 10,000 euros each to several hundred people subjected to forced labour, as the price of avoiding international opprobrium. It is high time that Kouchner, now sixty-seven, should land a job with international prestige. His connection with Sarkozy was made via the good offices of Bernard Tapie, ex-minister and ex-convict. It is quite natural that Kouchner should join the very core of the French media-political oligarchy, where he will undoubtedly bring a dose of the picturesque. 'If he's not loyal to his friends, how will he be loyal to his ideas?' asked the present head of Médecins du Monde. It seems a pointless question.

22 May

The feeling of déjà-vu that I've felt since the election results is suddenly explained: the enthronement of Sarkozy is a remake of Giscard's

installation in power. I consult the issues of *L'Express* and *Le Monde* from May–June 1974. Only 12 per cent of the electorate abstained from voting, and Giscard set the tone in his first victory declaration: ‘You will not be disappointed: change is what I shall bring about, with you. Today marks the start of a new era in French politics, an era of rejuvenation and change.’ And the next day’s *L'Express* had the headline: ‘Giscard: 100 Days to Change Everything’.

The said change was to make itself apparent in the presidential style: Giscard wanted to make the handover ceremony ‘less stilted’. He arrived at the Elysée on foot, and ‘the head of state received the insignia of the grand cross of the Légion d’Honneur in a business suit rather than formal wear. The guests were dressed similarly. M. André Chamson presented the President of the Republic with the collar of the order, but instead of placing it round his neck, he simply put it in a box.’ *Le Monde*’s daily report noted that ‘each Fifth Republic will have had its own style. Giscard’s will be marked by a pullover’. The new style ‘was also apparent in the late morning [of 1 June] when M. Giscard d’Estaing, at the controls of a helicopter, touched down at Sainte-Preuve (Aisne), where M. Poniatowski, who has a property there, was celebrating the marriage of his son Bruno—also the President’s godson—with Mlle Alix de Montal, daughter of a lieutenant-colonel in the 2nd Tank Division’.

With Giscard as with Sarkozy, commentators liked to stress the precocious onset of his presidential vocation. *L'Express* wrote: ‘It was in 1962, with his friend Michel Poniatowski, that Valéry Giscard d’Estaing put together the strategy that took him to the Elysée.’ And further on: ‘None of his close associates ever really doubted that he would follow a dazzling trajectory’. Once installed in office, Giscard and his ‘immediate entourage’ (as the later expression has it) were not slow to assert that it was the president who governed: ‘It is I who will conduct the change.’ Presenting the new government, *Le Monde*’s headline ran: ‘A parliamentary presidency’:

‘Monarchy’ gives way to *vedettariat* [‘star-ocracy’]. Political life is entirely dependent on the initiatives of the elected president . . . This is a new approach to government. Undoubtedly one more suited to the expectations of an industrial, modern, young and developed society. A new kind of presidency, in the sense of a ‘personal’ and ‘individualized’ government by the president.

And in *L'Express*: 'Now it's all clear. M. Giscard d'Estaing will deal with everything. Rather than the Prime Minister, M. Chirac will be as the first of his ministers.'

Likewise, the 1974 change also involved an opening to the left. Giscard in his day already proclaimed: 'I hope to have with me people from the non-Communist left'. In the new team, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber was given the ministry for reforms. Françoise Giroud, who had supported Mitterrand, was appointed secretary of state for women. A young president, marked out from the start for a presidential career, and intent on pressing through changes himself, and fast; who brings a relaxed style to the presidential role, is sporty, assembles a streamlined ministry of fifteen members and surrounds himself with a small, crack team, and does not hesitate to suborn new allies from his left . . . One instance where Marx's misremembering of Hegel sadly doesn't apply: here the first time round was already farce.

25 May

Rachida Dati: that someone so young and lacking in 'political' experience has been chosen as Minister of Justice and Garde des Sceaux, traditionally number two in the government, clearly shows how that particular tradition is dead. The idea was that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior acted as two sides of the scale. On the one side, a moral authority guaranteeing the celebrated 'state of law', on the other, a weapon against crime. This fiction, increasingly under threat since Mitterrand's second term, fell to pieces in 2002, when Dominique Perben became Minister of Justice in Raffarin's government. The law pushed through by Perben and Sarkozy effectively ended the separation of powers by transforming the public prosecutor's magistrates into police helpers; made every 'previous agreement to commit an offence' an act of organized crime; broadened the notion of 'organized gang' to include collective assistance to undocumented foreigners, and so on.

Dati is a protégé of Albin Chalandon, Minister of Justice from 1986 to 1988 in the Chirac government. In his view, 'the stronger the National Front grows, the less dangerous it will be'; 'since [its leaders] seek a place in government, they have to remain republicans' (*Le Figaro*, 20 April 1998). Chalandon says he's 'bowled over' by Dati: 'She's not afraid of anything, she's got no complexes, nothing stops her. The only comparison

you can make is with the new president of the Republic' (*Le Monde*, 23 May). Sarkozy might well have created a super-ministry of control and repression by merging Justice and Interior together and entrusting his female double not just with the scales of justice, but also the water-cannons and the files on illegal immigrants. Perhaps the opportunity will arise one day.

In the meantime, Mme Dati is in a position, thanks to her name and her neat appearance, to push through the villainous laws on reducing the age of responsibility for criminal offences to sixteen, and setting statutory penalties for recidivists. Sarkozy is counting on her to improve his relations with 'young people in the *banlieues*'. Their parents may remember how, during the Algerian war, the most dangerous enemies of the liberation forces were not the parachutists of the Foreign Legion but rather those Algerians recruited by the French army—before it ignominiously abandoned them on its departure.

5 June

While the major trade union confederations are waiting to judge the government's actions 'one at a time', an unexpected rebellion is taking place elsewhere. Two magistrates' associations have criticized the laws announced by Rachida Dati, which are going to stuff still fuller prisons already at bursting point. The planned legislation is harsher than Sarkozy had announced during his campaign; he spoke at the time against multiple re-offenders, but now the minimum penalties are to be applied from the first case of recidivism.

One of the unions representing Air France pilots, Alter, has officially asked its managing director to revise company policy regarding expulsions. 'There have been a number of incidents on Air France planes connected with the expulsion of foreign nationals from French territory. The brutal methods employed by the police to force these particular passengers to travel against their will are incompatible with good order and healthy conditions on board.'

6 June

In an interview published in today's *Figaro*, Sarkozy says 'I want' eleven times, but his vigorous proposals are interspersed with a strange number

of denials: 'I will not let anyone [distort my project]', 'I did not want [to play a trick]', 'I am not closed', 'I shall not abandon [gender parity]', 'I never used [the word "pause"]', 'I have not changed my mind [about Turkey]'. The whole character is shown here: arrogance and doubt, brutality and anxiety.

Yesterday, in the lawcourt at Metz, a woman who had just been told by the judge responsible for children that her separation from her three-year-old son would be extended for a further year took a butcher's knife out of her bag and plunged it into the magistrate's stomach. According to this morning's papers and radio, she was 'socially inadequate', 'homeless and with a drug problem', afflicted with a 'mental and social inability to look after her children' (*Libération*—the other media all use the same phrases). What do they know? Have they even spoken to her? Or are they just repeating the police report and the statements of the prosecuting lawyers?

In 1933, when Violette Nozières, aged eighteen, was tried for the murder of her incestuous father, the Surrealist group published a homage to this fine parricide. With a cover by Man Ray, this contained eight poems (André Breton, René Char, Paul Eluard, Maurice Henry, E. L. T. Mesens, César Moro, Benjamin Péret and Gui Rosey) and eight illustrations (Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, Victor Brauner, René Magritte, Marcel Jean, Hans Arp and Alberto Giacometti). The Péret poem ended:

And all those who piss with their pen in the newspapers
 the black sniffers-out of corpses
 the professional murderers with their white truncheons
 all the fathers dressed in red to condemn
 or in black to pretend they defend
 all set themselves on her the first flowering chestnut tree
 the first signal of the spring that will sweep away their
 muddy winter.

What group, what poets, what people of any kind will take on the defence of Fathia, accused of 'attempted murder with premeditation on the person of a magistrate in the exercise of his functions', a crime punishable with life imprisonment?

9 June

The old Algerian workers who spend their days on the benches of Boulevard de Belleville, the Africans taking the air at the door of the Sonacotra hostel on Rue Fontaine au Roi, are all considered 'immigrants', a term defining them in relation to the country where they have ended up, in relation to 'us'. Before arriving, however, they left, and are therefore *exiles*, yet this is not how we talk about them. Perhaps the implicit assumption is that the suffering of exile is a noble suffering, reserved for spirits who are potentially capable of sublimating it in creative work. For an Algerian living in France, the status of immigrant suffices—in other words, the status of an object, whether of police attention or solicitude; to be a subject speaking of exile, he or she would have to have written books or at least composed songs.

As the legislative elections approach there's a nice face on the posters at last: young Amar Bellal, Communist candidate in the xxth arrondissement. You might almost vote just to please him. You might almost have pity on poor Mme Buffet, the PCF presidential candidate, and what she must feel when she enters the Party building on the Place du Colonel Fabien: they haven't had the heart to hang a single banner from the railings.

How did the Party end up like this, so that everyone today thinks PC stands for 'personal computer' and no longer 'Parti Communiste'? It has often been said that the two stages of its unravelling were Mitterrand's manoeuvres in the Union of the Left around 1980, then, ten years later, the collapse of barracks communism in the East. No doubt this is part of the truth, but it is not sufficient explanation. These two blows only precipitated the agony of a great body that had been sick for a long time already.

Without going back to biblical times—the Nazi–Soviet pact, the surrender of weapons by the *maquis* after Liberation—one of the great moments of the Party's descent into the depths was, to my mind, the Algerian war: the Republican Front of 1956, which the Communists saw as a 'remake' of the Popular Front; the voting of special civil and military powers to Guy Mollet, permitting him to send reinforcements to Algeria and intensify repression. The Party went on to forbid its members to help the Algerians directly in their struggle (which led to serious tensions with the

Algerian Communist Party, whose activists included Maurice Audin).⁶ It condemned refusal to obey orders and desertion, basing itself on a saying of Lenin's that you had to go to all wars, even imperialist ones. When members of the Party were arrested for their involvement in FLN support networks (the Jeanson network in particular; Jeanson was Sartre's secretary), not only were they not defended, they were actually expelled. The PCF took a stand against the Manifesto of 121, a key moment in the shift in French public opinion. The dead at *métro* Charonne, whose memory it celebrates today, were parading in an orderly and disciplined fashion when they were crushed by Papon's police at the station entrance.

It was the Algerian war, therefore, that revealed a whingeing legalism of the PCF leadership that would show itself still more clearly at the time of the Gaullist coup d'état in 1958. On the night of 13 May 1958, the PCF Political Bureau launched an appeal to the people: 'A fascist coup has taken place in Algiers. In Paris itself, seditious gangs have tried to link up with the plot hatched in Algiers against the Republic. The Political Bureau calls on working people to demonstrate without delay the mass rejection that is needed to nip these seditious tendencies in the bud. It calls on them to gather immediately in every workplace, and *express in the most varied forms* [my italics] their will to defend the Republic. Fascism will not pass.' The mass rejection was demonstrated, but the Party again paraded quietly. The elections that followed (constitutional referendum in October 1958, legislative elections in November) were its first disaster; its vote fell from 20 to 14 per cent.

Ten years later, on the edge of the abyss, the Party took a great step forward. In May 1968 it sought every means to stifle a movement that it had neither launched nor foreseen, and could not manage to control. Boomed in the student assemblies, the Communists did their utmost to take things in hand in the striking factories, and keep the rebellious working-class youth from linking up with the students.

For the last thirty years, the Party has been an ever more transparent phantom, less and less audible. Its posters are written in a whimpering tone, culminating in the last election campaign with 'Live better, it's possible', and 'Decent housing, you have a right to it'. It is high time

⁶ [Maurice Audin (1932–57): mathematician at University of Algiers, CP militant; captured in Battle of Algiers, presumed to have been tortured and killed by the French army.]

for it to disappear, as the last avatar of the Italian Communist Party did three months ago, when it scuttled itself by merger with the Christian Democrats in a social-democratic formation, the final ‘historic compromise’. Putting to sleep this vestige of the French Communist Party will at last permit the unambiguous resumption of the finest name in politics: communism.

13 June

On the cover of the June issue of *Tribune Juive*, the pleasant if rather carnivorous smile of Rachida Dati, under the headline ‘What difference between the Jews and myself?’ I am not at all clear what ‘the Jews’ means here, and the easy banalities of the interview do not offer any answer. Let us accept that the Minister of Justice is referring to the Jewish ‘community’ and its leaders, those who write in *Tribune Juive*, those who elect delegates to the CRIF, and those who, like Ivan Levaï in the editorial of this very issue, find that ‘Kouchner and Sarkozy have the look of a couple, for better or worse’. In this case, Mme Dati is right: nothing indeed divides her from Jews like this. In France especially, there have always been Jews who choose to side with the rulers, even during the War, when the Vichy government focused its persecution on Jews who were foreigners or recently naturalized—‘Jews without a homeland who have descended on our country in the last fifteen years’, as Admiral Darlan put it. The General Union of Jews in France (UGIF) saw to it that French Jews were spared—before its own leaders were themselves dispatched to Auschwitz.

In Belleville, plaques remember the names of other Jews, dead in combat, shot or deported for resistance activities. These Jews were recent immigrants from the East, Poland especially. They were workers, often former Bundists. They spoke bad French, with a Yiddish accent. Many of them belonged to MOI, the Organization of Immigrant Workers, led (and despised) by the Communist Party. Some of them were members of LICIA, the International League Against Anti-Semitism founded by Bernard Lazare in the days of the Dreyfus affair, of which today’s pathetic descendant, LICRA (International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism), is only a caricature. Those Jews are dead, and I shall not venture to speak in their name. But we might well believe that they would scarcely have appreciated the ambient neo-Pétainism of which Mme Dati is one of the finest scions.

21 June

Yesterday evening, a little after seven, identity check at the bottom of Rue de Belleville. The police entered a café, Le Celtic, and took away a number of people, including a young Chinese woman who had been in France for eight years and was going to marry a Frenchman in a few days' time. 'They did the same at the grocer's just down from my bar,' says the owner of Le Celtic. A crowd gathered in the street; the police were forced to call up reinforcements and throw tear-gas grenades to clear them.

How to explain the fact that these raids are now being made on the Chinese population of Belleville, who previously had been largely spared? It's because the police have targets to meet, in precise numbers: 25,000 removals in 2007. And finding Chinese illegals in Belleville is like fishing in an aquarium. At the end of 1943, after the Italians capitulated, the German army took over the former Italian zone of occupied France—more or less, the left bank of the Rhône. There were a number of Jews there (my family and I among them) who had taken refuge after the Germans had invaded the bulk of the 'free' zone a year before. We were there because the Italian army took no action against Jews in France. But now under German occupation, in 1943–44, the work of the Gestapo and the French police in the towns of the Côte d'Azur was simplicity itself: they needed only descend on any hotel and were sure to find Jewish families to round up. A different aquarium, and different fish, but the same principle of surrender.

30 June

Joseph Roth relates in *The Radetzky March* the decay and fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire over three generations. The Sarkozy march will certainly last less long, but one can already detect a rather different rhythm from the music of Johann Strauss that gave its name to Roth's book: it's a rhythm of two steps forward (by the underlings) followed by one step back (correction by the President). Humanitarian military corridors will be established in Darfur, two Transall planes will be sent to Chad; a 'social VAT' will be established—but no, that's for later, and only if it doesn't affect purchasing power. The most prestigious universities will be sold to the private sector—but no, they'll all be sold. The latest news: Xavier Darcos, Minister of National Education, announces the shedding of 10,000 jobs for the autumn of 2008. We can bet that

the step back will only be delayed until the President finds the best way to disavow his minister.

1 July

Big demonstration of illegal immigrants and those supporting them. At the Belleville *métro*, the procession coming down from the Place des Fêtes meets up with the one starting from Gambetta. Chinese, Africans, anarchists, people from Education Without Frontiers, simple friends: a noisy mixture, with many women in boubous, either veiled or in the latest Belleville fashion, and lots of children. At the head, a sound truck blasting out African music that gets people dancing in the street. Security is provided by Africans who twist about laughing. The song goes: ‘The sans-papiers are in the street/ Sarkozy’s in his armchair/ The dossiers are in the drawers/ We’ve had enough, we’ve had enough.’ The local schools march behind their banners. A few sad old activists sell papers of organizations no one has heard of. A couple of tricolour sashes, one the Socialist deputy for the xxth arrondissement, and the other a parliamentarian I don’t know, in shirt sleeves—odd effect, the sash against the striped shirt.

This is neither an insurrectional demonstration nor a trade-union walk in slippers; it’s a form of action that I think is new, based on the pleasure of all those marching here, to the sound of this joyful music—the pleasure of being *together*. I have sometimes made fun of that word, repeated ad nauseam as it is in order to conjure away the isolation in which we are submerged. This afternoon however it had a real meaning, along with a disturbance of public order—no small thing—that you can call emotion.

2 July

Le Monde mentions yesterday’s demonstration only in a piece of five lines devoted to Brice Hortefeux, who presents himself as the ‘minister for legal immigrants’.⁷ The principle ‘is expulsion. But the reality also means studying each case individually.’ In *Libération*, some scribbler quotes those ‘responsible’ for the demonstration without a single line or word on what took place in the street.

⁷ [Hortefeux was named Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Cooperative Development in May 2007.]

Impossible to open a paper or switch on the radio without falling on an exhortation to refund, renew, reconstruct the 'left' (for ease of reading, I'll stop putting this word in quotes when referring to the PS; let's say that these are now implicit). All these articles and proposals have certain common features: each dispenses its lessons without explaining where these are coming from, except for a 'we' designed to suggest that the speaker is not really involved him- or herself. The proposals remain vague, and limited to the typical manoeuvres of a party apparatus. But what strikes a correct note is the expression of impending emergency, even a kind of disarray.

Social democracy is in fact dead: that great agent of consensus, the main rampart against civil war; dead across the whole world, or nearly so. In Germany, the country where it was born, it was dismantled by the Schroeder system. In Italy, where indeed it never really existed, all that remains after the Berlusconi era is debris. In Israel, the Labour party is no longer anything but an appendage that serves to buttress the far right. In the United States, Hillary Clinton is pulling the Democratic party towards positions more reactionary than those of the moderate Republicans. The main cause of this decrepitude is the same on all sides: 'economic constraints' have shattered the left panoply of social-democracy. And for right-wing policies the electors of all countries logically prefer right-wing leaders: Sarkozy, Merkel, and tomorrow Netanyahu and the return of Berlusconi.

In France, the Socialist Party leaders are disturbed to find themselves distanced from the centres where positions are allotted and rewards distributed. Some of them have gone over, bag and baggage, to the other camp. Others are convinced that their return to power requires a transformation like that which Blair imposed on the UK Labour Party. Royal said as much in the course of her campaign, and Strauss-Kahn doesn't have anything different in mind. What is lacking is simply a convincing expression, a decisive abandonment of the social trimmings, a renunciation that can be clearly proclaimed. This is what is meant by the renovation/refoundation of the Socialist Party.

If the wall of social democracy has collapsed, it is imperative to construct a new one. But to build a new wall behind which consensus can be re-established, an effective ideological cement is needed—at least in France, a country where 'pragmatism' isn't sufficiently seductive. That

is the role played by intellectuals of varied provenance, from the Collège de France to *Nouvel Observateur*, from *Esprit* to the op-ed pages in *Le Monde* and *Libération*. Apart from a few turncoats, these intellectuals do not trust the right to maintain the existing order. They think the Sarkozy fashion will pass, and fear all kinds of upsurges in its wake. They are therefore working on a new body of doctrine that will be distinguishable from the neo-liberal vulgate, but will demonstrate in scientific fashion the sadly inevitable character of the market economy, free competition and the unrestricted movement of capital and brains.

François Furet, for whom the French Revolution only put an end to something that no longer existed, established the Fondation Saint-Simon which, for the first time in France, brought together on American lines politicians, academics, media pundits and industrialists, to work on a 'project of modernization'. The general secretary of the Fondation before its dissolution was Pierre Rosanvallon, who in 2002 founded a new study group, the 'Republic of Ideas', of which he is president. Its vice-president is Olivier Mongin (*Esprit*) and its treasurer the former boss of Crédit Lyonnais, Jean Peyrelevade. The Republic of Ideas organized a big forum in Grenoble in May 2006, in association with Solidarités Actives (an organization led by Martin Hirsch, whom Sarkozy has appointed as his high commissioner to combat poverty). Its objective was to 'develop a new social critique [my italics], to be deployed simultaneously in three directions: to analyse the characteristic tensions of contemporary capitalism, to examine the changes in democracy, and to understand the cultural revolutions under way'.

It is essential for a club like this that the 'critical' dimension should be as evident as possible, as the point is to provide intellectual tools to plaster up a centre-left that should not look entirely like the right. The books published by the Republic of Ideas have challenging titles: *Le Capitalisme d'héritiers*, *Le Ghetto français*, *Les Désordres du travail*, *L'Insécurité sociale*. But inside, despite the invariable dithyrambs of *Le Monde*, *Télérama* and *Nouvel Observateur*, their proposals are drawn from Raymond Aron, the most bastardized disciples of Pierre Bourdieu, and a flat American-style economism. For these champions of political philosophy, these intellectuals seeking to shore up the established order, there is always the same difficulty to navigate: how to make people believe that their aim is to change everything, when what they want is precisely for nothing to change.

5 July

Two passengers on a Paris to Bamako flight, Marie-Françoise Durupt and Youssouf Soumounou, appeared before the Bobigny court on 2 July, charged with having, 'at Roissy, on 28 April 2007, directly provoked M. Diakite Ibrahima and M. Fofona Samba, who were being expelled from the country, to rebel by way of shouting and public address, with the aim of violently resisting persons vested with public authority, offences under article I.433-10, para. 1 of the penal code, and penalized under that article' (*L'Humanité*, 3 July).

The chief of police, Michel Gaudin, confided to *Figaro* (4 July): 'The capital must urgently make up its backwardness in terms of video surveillance . . . The last count showed 30,800 cameras, both public and private, only half the number that London has.'

Lamine Dieng, a young man of twenty-five, arrested on 17 June at Ménilmontant, died in the police van taking him to the station. The autopsy was quick to reach a verdict of death by cardiac arrest, following a drug overdose—though those who know the man maintain that he did not take drugs. The family has launched a complaint, and a committee has been formed to find out the truth. Weeks later, Le Monte-en-l'Air bookshop in the Rue des Panoyaux received a visit from the police, who forced them to take down from their window a poster announcing the first meeting of this support committee; the reason given was that 'this kind of thing undermines the police'.

8 July

'Five intellectuals at the Elysée', runs the *Le Monde* headline. Sarkozy has invited for dinner Héléne Carrère d'Encausse of the Académie Française, André Glucksmann, Max Gallo (also of the Académie Française), Claude Lanzmann and Eric Marty (though you might have thought he was too ashamed after the Taguieff debate to walk out alone on the street—no doubt he came in Lanzmann's baggage).⁸

⁸ [Pierre-André Taguieff: leading proponent of the view that a 'new anti-Semitism' is abroad, especially among the Left and critics of Israel; at a conference organized by Taguieff in late May 2007, Marty attacked Alain Badiou for 'objective anti-Semitism'. Many of the conference participants protested in solidarity with Badiou.]

Two remarks on this invitation. The first bears on the word ‘intellectual’. I am acquainted with historians, philosophers, biologists, sociologists and poets; I also know booksellers, plumbers, beekeepers, teachers, waitresses and even journalists. But in its current usage, the term ‘intellectual’ has come to denote men (and a few women) who have acquired the right to express their opinion publicly on any subject they like, politics in particular. The expression ‘media intellectual’ has become a pleonasm: the man or woman who does not have columns open to them in the major daily or weekly papers, is not regularly invited onto *France Culture* and never seen on television, cannot be considered an ‘intellectual’.

The second is the reason for this dinner. If Sarkozy were simply trying to cast off the image of an uncultured parvenu, he could easily have invited guests who were younger, more fashionable, and indeed, more talented. I believe the point is rather to pay homage to a group of French neocons, selected from those who have worked for years to fashion the hegemonic ideology of today. Flag-waving patriotism (Gallo), contempt for immigrants (Carrère d’Encausse), armed export of democracy (Glucksmann), the equation of criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism (Lanzmann, Marty), hatred of Islam (all of them): it’s the thinking of the new right that is invited to the Elysée.

9 July

Much hullabaloo in the last few days about ‘opening’, in other words fishing for Socialists—the last trawl having brought in Strauss-Kahn, boosted by Sarkozy as the next head of the IMF. Following on the noisy announcement that Lang and Védrine are set to join government commissions, this manoeuvre alarms the Socialist Party, who wax indignant.

But turning their coat in this way is inscribed in the very history of the ps. On 10 July 1940, when what remained of the French National Assembly met in the Grand Casino at Vichy to vote Laval’s proposal to give full power to Pétain, 36 of the Socialist deputies voted against, 6 abstained, and 90 voted for, pronouncing the end of the Third Republic and the establishment of an authoritarian regime. A number of Socialists went further down the line, in opting for Nazi collaboration: Paul Faure, former number two in the party; Charles Spinasse, Minister of the Economy and then Budget Minister in the Popular Front government, who championed collaboration ‘on the basis of equality’, a new Europe, and a ‘free

association of socialist states'; René Belin, deputy general-secretary of the CGT, whom Pétain appointed Minister of Labour; Georges Albertini, former secretary-general of the Young Socialists, who became second-in-command of the Rassemblement National Populaire, the pro-fascist party of Marcel Déat.

Nearer our own time, when de Gaulle took power in 1958, I remember taking part in a huge united left demonstration, on 28 May: from Place de la République to Place de la Nation, Socialists at the head, to show the people's determined opposition to the coup d'état. Then on 1 June, 42 Socialist deputies out of 91 voted for de Gaulle, assuring him of a majority, and Guy Mollet, first secretary of the SFIO, joined the new government as Minister of State. Admittedly, the genuflections of the Socialists on the occasion of Sarkozy's accession to the presidency can hardly be compared with these dramatic events. But it goes without saying that, for a party where the main object of its leaders is to win power, such reversals are perfectly normal when this goal seems distant and even problematic.

11 July

A researcher at the Ecole d'Economie in Paris, Camille Landais, has studied income trends in France from 1998 to 2005 (*Le Monde*). For the lower 90 per cent of households, some 55 million people, the increase is 'below 5 per cent'. On the other hand, 'for the richest 1 per cent [around 600,000 people], declared income has risen by 19 per cent; for the richest 0.1 per cent [60,000 people] it has risen by 32 per cent, and for the richest 0.01 per cent—ie, some 6,000 people—by nearly 43 per cent'.

3 August

According to the Elysée spokesperson, no connection should be seen between Sarkozy's intervention to achieve the release of the Bulgarian nurses and the EADS arms sale to Libya. Public credulity, however, has its limits, and the Socialist Party along with the majority of newspapers are demanding that the government give evidence of transparency in this business.

The appearance of 'transparency' in the political and media vocabulary goes back to the mid 1980s, with Gorbachev's *glasnost*. Its proliferation

today reveals something of the twisted relationship between politics and truth in France. Through a transparent medium, such as a clean window, what you see may actually be a mock-up, a masquerade. A transparent person is not necessarily a good person; he or she may be an utter scoundrel, as long as they respect the due procedures.

It makes little sense to demand transparency: the appointment of committees of inquiry, mediators, observers, high authorities of all kinds; what we need to demand is the truth. But that would run against one of the basic postulates of the postmodern thinking that guides the champions of 'pragmatism' and inspires their speeches, in which the word 'concretely' appears in every other sentence. According to this postulate, truth is a relative notion, a matter of interpretations between which it is impossible to decide, each of them casting a distorted reflection on the others. The naive person who runs after the truth is rather like the Orson Welles character in the labyrinth of mirrors at the end of *The Lady from Shanghai*, firing his pistol at people who are not where they seem.

What is called 'public opinion' in France now seems satisfied with hearing certain people demand transparency and others promising it, having long ago said goodbye to truth in matters of politics. The way in which everyone makes free with the truth corresponds well with the varied arrangements of our rulers. 'Transparency' is simply the name of one such arrangement; perhaps the most cunning of all.

Translated by David Fernbach