

Interview with P.-A. Taguieff by Giulio Meotti, published in the daily *Il Foglio* (Italy) on November 6, 2023, about his book *The New Opium of the Progressives. Radical Anti-Zionism and Islamo-Palestinism*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. "Tracts", 2023.

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Giulio Meotti for "Il Foglio": How is it possible that Western elites justify, trivialize and minimize the massacres of Hamas?

Pierre-André Taguieff: A part of the Western elites, located on the left and calling themselves "progressive", have converted to the political religion based on the cult of the Palestinian-victim and the criminalization of the Jew as domineering. Their ideological reflexes dictate that they defend the supposedly "dominated" against the supposedly "dominant". "Progressive" elites have long internalized the evidence revolving around the "dominant/dominated" opposition. The inversion of victimhood that this conversion implies is reflected in the Nazification of the "Zionists" and more broadly of the Jews. The message is that the Jewish-Zionists are the new Nazis, while the Palestinians are the new Jews. The instrumentalization and distortion of anti-racism thus consists in giving it the face of anti-Zionism, based on the image of the Palestinian as the victim of a fantasized "Zionism".

To understand the passionate and mythical springs of the inversion of victimhood, we must go back to the Middle Ages in Christian Europe, around the middle of the twelfth century, when the first accusations of ritual murder were launched against the Jews, who were hunted down, persecuted and murdered for it. The myth of the Jew as the "murderer of non-Jewish children" was later integrated into the anti-Jewish culture of the Muslim world, becoming a major theme of accusation against "Zionists," who were criminalized as "murderers of Palestinian children." Let us recall that in March 2012, in Toulouse, the Islamo-terrorist Mohamed Merah, by killing Jewish children, declared that he wanted to "avenge the Palestinian children". In the latest Gaza war, triggered by Hamas' murderous jihadist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the theme of the murder of Palestinian children by the IDF was immediately reactivated by Palestinian propaganda and its relays around the world.

In the discourse of the revolutionary or radical left, after the fall of the Soviet empire, the "proletarian cause" and the "people's cause" gave way to the "Palestinian cause", a new "universal cause" in that it fused the theme of the courageous "resistance" of a minority to a supposedly "colonial" state, Israel, and that of the pious denunciation of "Islamophobia". A cardinal sin attributed to all those who did not rally to the flag of Islamo-Palestinism. The cultural strategists of anti-Zionism, in all its forms, have never ceased to feed and exploit the imaginary and rhetoric of victimhood, around the figure of the Palestinian-victim, which has gradually become that of the Muslim-victim. This big amalgam of victims has made it possible to articulate radical anti-Zionism and the "fight against Islamophobia" within a revolutionary-style political mythology.

Giulio Meotti for "Il Foglio": How is woke (LGBT, gender, decolonial, Black Lives Matters, etc.) allied to this barbarism?

PAT: It is the application of the interpretation offered by anti-colonialism and anti-racism to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has led to the wokization of interpretations of the conflict. There has been, mainly on the left, a focus of indignation, previously ideologized by Palestinian propaganda, on accusations of "massacre," "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide," alleged criminal acts committed by the IDF in its legitimate response to Hamas' bloody attacks. This demonizing accusation of Israel is part of the demonological treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This globalized Gnostic anti-Zionism, which functions as a method of salvation and a promise of redemption – destroying Israel to save humanity – is at the heart of the new Judeophobia, this hatred of Jews that has adopted the language of anti-Zionist hatred.

It is in left-wing opinion that the legacy of many more or less recycled anti-Jewish prejudices is most visible today: the exploitative, domineering, manipulative and social parasitic Jew. Considered as polymorphous executioners, Jews can thus be accused of making victims of various categories: the exploited, the dominated, the manipulated and the parasitized. Added to this is the figure of the ritual murderous Jew, which is supposed to be reborn in that of the Israeli soldier who bombs the Gaza Strip. And the victims here are Palestinians perceived primarily as Muslims. Hence the accusation of "Islamophobia".

In this context, where Israel has been accused of being an "apartheid state", the anti-racist struggle has once again turned against the Jews. These distortions of anti-racism began in the 1960s, when Soviet propaganda, relayed by that of the O. L.P., disseminated the equation "Zionism = racism". The aim was to turn the accusation of racism against the Jews by setting up the Palestinians as the representatives of the victim par excellence. Since then, the pseudo-anti-racist militancy of the radical left has sought out and found, even invented, other general victimized categories – immigrants, Muslims, "blacks," "Arabs," "undocumented," etc. The Jewish victims of the Holocaust were to disappear from the picture of victimhood, replaced by the Palestinian victims of the Nakba. This is a sleight of hand, because the Nazi genocide of European Jews during World War II had nothing to do with the exodus of part of the Palestinian population at the time of the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war.

Giulio Meotti for "Il Foglio": Are the pro-Hamas rallies in Europe also a sign of Islamization and demographic changes in our cities?

PAT: Since the mega-pogrom of October 7, the proliferation of pro-Hamas demonstrations, disguised as pro-Palestinian demonstrations, testifies to the formation, in every Western democratic society, of a counter-society that is fundamentally hostile to the global society and not simply in a state of secession – a phenomenon usually called "communitarianism", "separatism", "ghettoization", etc. This counter-society is formed from an immigrant population of Islamic culture, a significant part of which has not integrated into Western democratic societies, does not recognize itself in their values and perceives the West as the enemy that must be fought. The figure of the absolute enemy includes the State of Israel and Western civilization. The counter-society now imagines the revolution on the jihadist model, involving armed struggle. It is, therefore, more precisely a counter-society with two faces: Islamist and ultra-leftist, it being understood that the radical left, rallied to decolonialism as well as to ecofeminism, are now wokised.

In the early 2000s, the alliance of Islamists and radical leftists was baptized and conceptualized by me as "Islamism-leftism". Its representatives are recognizable in particular by the fact that they erect "Islamophobia", "anti-immigrant xenophobia" and "Zionism" as the main figures of racism in contemporary Western societies. Therefore, to be anti-racist is to be anti-Islamophobic, pro-immigrant (or "immigrationist") and anti-Zionist at the same time. The Islamophilia presupposed by this ideological posture often takes the form of "Islamismophilia", especially in interpretations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that imply seeing Islamo-terrorist movements, such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad, as legitimate representatives of the Palestinian "resistance" against the "colonialism" and "racism" of the State of Israel. More generally, it is a question of "resisting" the forces or states that are supposed to embody "colonialism", "racism" and "imperialism", namely the Western nations and Israel, or, in the slogan language of the Islamists, the "American-Zionist axis" or the "Jewish-Crusader alliance". This is why Islamism-leftists are doomed to turn into "Islamism-leftists".

Giulio Meotti for "Il Foglio": What is at stake in this battle of civilization? not just Israel...

PAT: The enemy designated by the leaders and ideologues of these heterogeneous neo-revolutionary counter-societies is not simply the West – a fantasized West, the principle of Evil – but the Westernization of the world. This is the new absolute enemy, with many faces, like the devil: the West denounced as intrinsically racist, Islamophobic, imperialist (or expansionist) and colonialist, even genocidal. This type of anti-Western counter-society can be seen in many other European nations as well as in North America. The seduction it exerts comes from the fact that it arises in societies that claim to be multicultural or multi-ethnic, thus offering the enemies of the West a powerful legitimacy argument: Western civilization does not exist or no longer exists, since there is only cultural diversity and cultural or civilizational hybridizations. The crossing, mixing and mixing of civilizations would have caused civilizations to disappear in the global melting pot. It would therefore be false, even dangerous, to assert that there are civilizational identities in the age of globalization of trade and mixture. To do so would be to sink into the new cardinal sin defined by the social sciences: essentialism. The paradox of radical anti-Westernism shared by Islamists and neo-leftists, i.e. members – active or not – of the Islamism-leftist camp, consists in the simultaneous assertion of two contradictory theses: on the one hand, the thesis that Western civilization does not exist, and, on the other hand, the thesis that the West is toxic, predatory and domineering, and therefore embodies a threat to all peoples.

In the years following the First World War, faced with the spectacle of mass slaughter and ruin, a great debate pitted the prophets of the decadence or decline of the West against those who called for the defense of the West. This debate was about the fate of Western civilization, which was supposed to be surrounded by threats, temporarily weakened, or entering its twilight or final phase. The vision of the end of the Western world then took on the colour of the obvious and became the major theme of a mythical story. In some respects, we can consider that this intellectual and political debate has re-established itself today at the center of Westerners' questions about themselves, bringing back the question of the civilizational identity of the West, and more particularly of the modern West, addressed through its crises and malaises, in which the pathologies of identity have played a major role.

But the passionate and politico-cultural context is no longer the same: it is characterized today by the articulation between a hatred of the West that has become globalized and a hatred of the self that has taken hold in the Western world. A hatred fueled by envy and resentment in the first case, a hatred envenomed by shame and guilt in the second. Loss of self-confidence is a symptom of decadence. In his essay on "murderous religions" published in 2006, the Israeli historian Elie Barnavi, referring to the Islamist threat, did not hesitate to state lucidly: "A civilization that loses confidence in itself to the point of losing the will to defend itself, begins its decadence." As for self-hatred, it prepares the ground for betrayal: many Westerners have joined the camp of the West's enemies, or are preparing to do so.

Hatred of the West can be referred to by the neologism "hesperophobia" – but, semantically, the expression "hesperomisia" would be better formed, since it refers to "hatred" (*misos*) rather than fear (*phóbos*). It is an ontological hatred that we find today spreading, especially in the Muslim world under Islamist influence. A paradoxical hatred, since it took off long after the dismantling of Europe's colonial empires. But hesperophobia is also present in Russia, China and in the populations of Western countries, especially in the circles of the new woke far left, which wants to put an end to the heritage of Western civilization that it never ceases to demonize.

Observable especially among young people fascinated by violence and radical commitments, the Islamization of radicalism is a process of which political and cultural Islamo-leftism is one of the products, the other being the transition to jihad. Islamization plays the role of a powerful mode of legitimizing a desire for a total break with the Western world, which has become an object of hatred. By insisting on the Ummah as a community of supranational belonging, in accordance with the Islamic tradition, the ideologues of political Islam seek to delegitimize national affiliations outside the "realm of submission to God" (*Dar al-Islam*). This Islamic disqualification of national sentiment constitutes an ideological point of convergence with the leftist left, which, faithful to its internationalist tradition, demonizes patriotism as much as nationalism.

What must be avoided at all costs is the formation of powerful and dynamic counter-societies within our Western democratic societies that often tend to blind themselves to threats that come from themselves, especially when they sharpen the feeling of guilt that works on them. A refuge of freedom and the demand for rationality in spite of its suicidal temptations and bursts of arrogance, Western civilization deserves to be defended against its enemies and false friends. Let's just say that we have to defend the West in spite of everything, and now in spite of it.

Source: Il Foglio

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