

# Oiseau-tempête

10 francs



Oiseau-tempête is animated by individuals brought together by their desire to overcome resignation and develop its critique. This journal does not aim to formulate a project of global subversion, or even to represent its diverse expressions. To the contrary, it aims, by the free play of passions, reflexions and exchanges, to favor the convergence of individuals who have no intention of bowing down. To this aim, it contributes to the critique of society through the fragmentary one of dominant cultural productions : books, films, exhibitions, advertisings, etc.

## « FACING HISTORY »

The Georges Pompidou center presented, from december 1996 to april 1997, a thematic exhibit titled : « Face à l'histoire (1933-1996), l'artiste moderne face à l'évènement historique : engagement, témoignage, vision. » A few words on this exhibit.

### History as conception of the world

It is in the XIXth century that history in France individualized itself as autonomous science, from the point where it began to be taught at university, to produce teachers, to have students. It formed itself around the methodic school, also called historizing history, which was the historical school of the third Republic, which is to say it dominated until the fourties. Its statement was to impose a scientific research rid of any philosophical and litterary preoccupation, leaning on «methods» and «tools», and to aspire to the objectivity of the scientific gaze on historical reality. But its social function was to impose, as soon as 1870, the values of a bourgeoisie whose hold on power was stil weak against the values of the monarchy, the church, but also the worker's movement (erase the impact of the Paris Commune), to instill, from the first school classes, the French Revolution as a historical event constitutive of the (bourgeois) republic, the respect of the institutions, secularism, patriotism, nationalism and, very quickly, colonialism. In short, all that makes up the charm of the bourgeoisie. The historizing history was, in the first place, a history of princes, generals, battles, wars, victories, and dates. An heroic and epic history, which emphasized greats men and great events. We need to wait until the end of the thirties, with the école des Annales (Braudel, Bloch, Febvre) for a more refined conception of history to emerge, which happens to take a good portion of its methods from the marxist analysis, and which will become the historical



Henri et Léna - Barthélémy Schwartz - 1990

school of the fourth and fifth Republics. «It has not been easy to vanquish the resistances, will write the historian Georges Dubi, to make people admit that the history of mentalities imposed itself, a little later that anthropologists could teach a lot to historians, and that the Marxian strain of thought was to be prolonged, not repudiated. We were whipped constantly by all these challenges that were coming from marxism and structuralism, neighbouring sciences. We had to question everything, shuffle the cards and start the game over..» [1] The historical gaze, with the école des Annales, concerns itself less with the sphere of political representation than with the economy and social organisation, less with that political event than with the long historical, economic and social duration : «We can do, and we do, the history of everything : of climate, material life, techniques, the economy, social classes, rites, festivities, art, institutions, political life, political parties, armament, wars, religions, feelings (love), emotions (fear), sensibility, perceptions (smells), seas, deserts, etc.» (Antoine Prost) [2]. With the école des Annales and its successions, the domain of history stretched to the entirety of human activity. To keep fulfilling its social function, it adapted to the complexity of modern capitalism, which during the same period expanded to the whole planet and all of human activity.

The «Face à l'histoire» exhibit doesn't concern itself with this «new» history. Its purpose, as it usually is for the great monumental and themed exhibits of the last twenty years of mixed economy art (subsidised by the State, banks, and industrials), is first and foremost to educate the public through art, by means of, here, a crude conception of history. The commissioners of this exhibit present, as Lionel Richard wrote, a conception of the world [3], expressed by two main ideas. On one hand, in the face of fascist aggression, the «citizens» must all be united in order to defend (liberal) democracy. On the other hand, the mediatization of the real world can only be the real representation of the world. The first part covers the period of capitalism in crisis from the thirties to the last war, the second the period of mixed economy capitalism, from the post-war period to this day.

### **The thirties and the war.**

The historizing history revisited, presented here, is not an history of the crises and ideologies of exclusion and social reaction that marked the liberal democracy in the thirties. Here we won't find the famous « Better Hitler than bolshevism » of the french bourgeoisie at the time of the Popular Front [4] . It does not seek to explain what was the genesis of fascism's rise in Europe, nor to remind that the transformation of France from the liberal third Republic in the Vichy régime was made possible, for example, thanks to a simple vote in the national assembly of elected representatives giving full powers to Pétain. Here, the capitalism in crisis from the thirties doesn't explain fascism or the war. In one word, in this exhibit, the crisis simply isn't history. Liberal democracy is presented as an ideal and abstract democracy, fascism as a sudden and unexplained irruption of « barbary » in the polite world of « democracy ».

If the crisis is not a historical subject, the critique of capitalism in crisis by radical artists, situated inside liberal democracies like France, does not enter in the field of art facing history. Which is why artists and photographers from this period, who have tried to show through their work the social and material misery caused by this crisis, such as Walter Evans, whose photographs of american workers chased away by the crisis still managed to be well known, are excluded from all representations. If surrealism is largely represented in the part dedicated to the thirties, it is by its paintings, considered here as a symptom of the distress of artists in the face of fascism. It is of course absent as a vanguard radical artistic movement. Its greatest fault, for the commissaries, is to have committed itself to social revolution and against capitalism, be it in its liberal democratic, fascist crisis or russian state capitalist forms. For « Face à l'histoire », against the barbarism of both fascism and stalinism, there was no hope at the time except for unconditional defense of bourgeois democracy. Excluded as well of any representation in this exhibit, Frans Masereel, whose fault is to

have preferred critique in images (engravings on wood) of liberal democracy in crisis. « His "Histoires sans paroles", wrote Michel Ragon in a preface of L'Idée, hard to find today, drawn political journalism of sorts, somehow had such success in Germany, before nazism, that some of its popular editions reached well over a hundred thousand copies. » [5]

To avoid muddying such a well painted picture, whose figures are essentially composed of consensual artists, united around the ideal democracy, who reacted in their painting against fascist barbarism, the commissaries of the exhibit, in their infinite kindness, abstained from explaining to us the repressive and social politics of said democracy. Fearing, no doubt, that the public of « face à l'histoire » might skip school and discover astonishing parallels between the politics of social, juridical and cultural repression of yesterday and those of today.

This rewriting of history for the purpose of popular education today, in the context of capitalism in crisis again, we obviously find in the media discourse as well. A journalist of « Libération » for example, dealing with another exhibit dedicated to the thirties[6] as well, at the museum of modern art of Paris, can write pedantly : « By grounding their research on dreams and the fantastic, Yves Tanguy, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst and their companions have developed a register which sometimes seems to turn its back both to the worries of the time and to the experimentations of their contemporaries. The recourse to onirism and to the virtues of the unconscious props them up on a fleeting line of which we see quite well now that it could not durably respond to the radicality of the stakes. » The message is clear : against fascist and stalinist

barbarism, there was, at the time, no salvation except for the unconditional defense of bourgeois democracy. It is of course, a message from the cultural structures to the address of those they regulate today.



Masque Djokwe - Congo ●

However, language is capricious. What we think we have to say is never exactly what we ended up expressing. It is so that sometimes, by ways completely unexpected, the real history of the thirties appears briefly in this exhibit. We can find, in the room of totalitarian fascist and stalinist art, a painting of nazi militant artist Franz Radziwill « The Demons » (1933-1934), as an example of nazi art. But looking closely, we also find a second painting by this artist, « Brême's complaint » (1946), this time in the room dedicated to post-war art in the federal republic of Germany. Without any particular mention. It is obviously a slip-up : given that the point of the exhibit is not to show the continuity of german capitalism, under the nazi régime and the federal republic after the war, nor to insist on the lack of haste by the german bourgeoisie to proceed to the denazification of the repressive and judicial supervisory personnel of the german state.

## **Paris-Match and Life as vision of the world**

The second part of « Face à l'histoire » covers the years after the war to this day and deals in fact with this art subventionned by the state, banks and industrials that makes up our artistic landscape since more than thirty years, and its relations with « history ». If, in the first part, the commissaries have worked to instill in us that, in the face of fascist barbarism, we all need to stay united around the ideal democracy, they proceed in the second part to an explicit revalorisation of the media discourse of our time : if we were to listen to them, in an ideal democracy, even medias seem like red riding hood. The historical support used as documentation is, here, essentially composed of magazines of the time (« Paris-Match », « Life » ... ) and of television broadcasts. The choice of represented artists goes in the same direction of a positive redefinition of the social role of the media : they're mostly artists who focus on media documentation (articles, press photos) as sources of representation of reality, which they assimilate to a real representation of a world that they see as spectators and over which they claim to have no influence. And so, « the narrative figuration, explains a sign about the painter Erro, works towards taking in account contradictory informations, journalistic false noises which make up the event. It proceeds by galaxies of images, without moral or political judgement. » The painter Rancillac tries, unlike others, to « paint the world that flees terrifyingly fast, without him. Without us. » As for the painter Vostell, by using in media pictures in his works, says another sign, « He declares that he is searching to soak himself "in the authentic traces of history". »

The great monumental thematic exhibits thus are exercises in history rewriting, whose social function is firstly to educate the masses through art. If the media proceeds by communicating in real time the supposed signification of historical events, exhibits like « Face à l'histoire » do so retroactively. But as long as you replace what was put upside down, you can see clearly that mixed economy artists, exhibits commissaries and journalists work essentially towards producing a vision of the world (which the later usually express through means of a tele-vision of the world). A world view which assuredly, is not ours.

**Barthélémy Schwartz**

1. Georges Duby, « Entretiens », « Le Monde », 26 janvier 1993.
2. Antoine Prost, « Douze leçons sur l'histoire », Seul, 1996.
3. Lionel Richard, « Les peintres contemporains face à l'histoire », « Le Monde diplomatique », décembre 1996.
4. See Grégoire Madjarian, « Conflits, pouvoirs et société à la Libération », 10/18 1980, Notably the first chapter where the author mentions « the undisguised admiration of the french bourgeoisie towards a régime that – after the régime of Italy – had given the example of a barrage against bolshevism » and « The interested indulgence of the bourgeois classes towards the initiatives of a nazi Germany that appeared as a champion of the capitalist social order in Europe. » (p,19)
5. Preface by Michel Ragon, « L'Idée », Frans Masereel, Nautilus éd., Paris, 1984.
6. « Années trente en Europe (1929-1939) : le temps menaçant », Modern art museum of Paris, until april 15 1997.



## NOTICE TO ADEPTS OF WORK



In the glorification of work, I see the same afterthought as in the praises addressed to impersonal acts : that is, the fear of what is individual. Essentially, these days, we feel at the sight of work - we still target under that name the harsh labor from morning to evening - that such work constitutes the best police, that it holds everyone with a bridle and aims to hinder the development of reason, desires, the taste of independance. Because it consumes an extraordinary quantity of nervous strenght and diverts it from reflexion, reverie, worries, love and hatred, it constantly present petty aims to the view and ensures easy and regular satisfactions. Thus the societies in which we work hard will have more security. And these days we love security like a supreme divinity

Friedrich Nietzsche

Flora Tristan à Cnossos - Guy Girard - 1993

# **THE NATION-STATE AND NATIONALISM**

At the end of this century, it is difficult to ignore the surge in nationalist demands. Nationalism seems to have become the mass ideology the most widely shared in the world. Every state is now recognized as a nation even when they obviously do not conform to the model of nation-state they claim to embody. Nothing indicates that the multiplication of nationalisms and states will stop in the near future. It is not the least of the paradoxes of the times in which we live : more than ever capitalism tend to free itself from the limits that hinder it, in particular the limits formed by borders. But the crisis of the nation-state model which comes along with the affirmation of the supranational character of capitalism, far from eroding the foundations of nationalism rather seems to have consolidated them. At the same time, the nationalism of today, on many accounts, isn't a simple renewal of yesterday's nationalism. To defy the poisoned calls of the nationalists, whatever stage costume they might take on, we cannot satisfy ourselves with the banalities of a basic critique. It is necessary to think for ourselves about the unprecedented situation in which we are. In that sense, Hobsbawm's study, « Nations et nationalisms depuis 1780 »[1] is one of a few rare books which might give us indications. Even though it flirts sometimes too much with the conceptions of historical materialism's adepts - for him, centralised states like the URSS at least had the merit of containing the separatist tendencies - he is far from limiting himself to their sclerosed ramblings on this cursed question. Here, we chose to bring out a few trails, essentials to our own reflexion.

## **The upside-down world of nationalist ideology**

Hobsbawm's merit is to have overthrown the nationalist perspective. To nationalists, nations are entities, if not immutables, at least universals, which express the generic needs of human beings to be associated and identified to historically stable communities. It flows from there that it would be possible to give general definitions of the national phenomenon, common to any phase of human history. The nation could be defined by objective criteria (territory language, culture or even economy ...) and even by subjective criteria (the consciousness of sharing some identitarian values, the will to realize them ... -). In short, for nationalists, the nation is definable a priori and the formation of the nation state simply sanctions a posteriori the popular aspiration to constitute the nation. Hobsbawm shows that it is actually not the case. The term nation by itself is antediluvian but its meaning has evolved through history. There is nothing in common between, for example, the scholar's state of the Sorbonne during the Renaissance in the XVIth century, expression synonymous to corporation, and the nation that appeared, at the time of the XVIIIth century's revolutions. In reality, nations are recent historical phenomena. The real world of nations has nothing to do with the upside-down world of the nationalists. The actual history shows that, as a general rule, nations are shaped by states and the nationalists, not the opposite. In history, the emergence of the state preceded that of the nation, but the notion of nation-state, more recent, shows the intimate liaison between the two. Dissociated from the state, the nation loses all consistency no matter what the so-called revolutionary nationalists might try to prove the opposite. From the historical character of the national phenomenon it flows that the famous criterias are subjected to almost constant revisions. In reality, in every crisis that the history of nations goes through, it is the reason of the state that imposes its restrictions.

## **The nation-state and the jacobins**

The nation, in the modern sense of the word, appeared for the first time during the period of the French Revolution. It is there that was thought up and implemented the Jacobin bourgeois conception of the nation-state, in particular concerning the notions of territory and borders. For the Jacobins, the definition of the nation was tied to that of the state, the territorial state, undivided and indivisible. It hinged on the sovereignty of the people, which was supposed to have ripped the power from the hands of the sovereign individual, the monarch, to exercise it through the means of delegates at the Convention. The criteria for nationalité was then citizenship. Hobsbawm highlights with reason that the conception which some sections of the sans-culottes had of the nation went a little beyond the Jacobin definition. Because the revolutionaries of the sections were hostile to the bourgeois as well as to the aristocrats, hoarders of feudal goods, speculators on the army supplies, etc. They considered themselves as the tip of the spear of the European revolution and aspirant to spread it beyond the borders. The Jacobins, however, inherited the centralisation of the state, well underway under the monarchy that defined the state as the territorial entity, limited by borders which already didn't cover the domains of the aristocracy anymore. They finalized the centralizing work of the monarchy and made the nation-state the somewhat generic community, as opposed to the antique communities which were then seen as hindrances on the realization of citizenship. In their mind, the social pact rested on the adhesion by presumably emancipated individuals, the citizens, to the values of the republican state. Later on, for foreigners, obtaining the French nationality was possible, but only through the assimilation of those same values. The cultural, linguistic, economic, etc criterias which went on to become more important were already there at the time of the Jacobins. The lack of homogeneity between citizens, in all domains of their non-political lives, could only undermine, on the long-term, the strength of the central state? But they were subordinated to the political criteria : the citizenship.

## **The nation and liberal economy**

Nevertheless, even in France, for the bourgeoisie of the late XVIII century, the stranglehold on the state power was merely a prelude to the consolidation of the strength that was theirs : the economy. From the dawn of industrialization, the apostles of political economy, in England, did not take national phenomena into account. To the most dogmatic of them, the mere existence of territories limited by state borders was antagonistic to free competition, primordial condition of the free accumulation of capital. In their mind, the territory upon which capital operated was the global market in the process of forming itself, battlefield of particular capitals. Nevertheless, they were forced to recognize that the accumulation of capital, as a concrete phenomenon and not an abstract idea, was performed from determined poles, roughly from the nation-states taking form in Europe. In the end, none of them denied the advantages that states and their colonies could bring, advantages inherited from mercantil wars fought between the European monarchies for the control of the global market. The centralizing states constituted as many warm greenhouses under which capital could proliferate on the condition that it would stimulate accumulation through appropriate measures. Even the most fanatical advocates of free exchange never intended to destroy the economical functions of states. Thus the birth of the national economy as a concept to take into account the existence of states. Hobsbawm is right to claim that, in developed areas of capitalism, the constitution of nations that hinged upon the combination of national state-economy was one of the essentials phenomena of the XIXth century. But the nation was recognized as a viable entity on the condition that it stays compatible with progress, the progress of the accumulation and centralization of capital. At the time, the liberal principle of nationalities was not unconditional. It excluded many areas not yet touched by capitalism and, particularly in Europe, regions which were already an integral part of centralized states.

## Nation and culture

It is not well known that the cultural, linguistic and racial criteria for nationality only appeared quite late and only became decisive in Europe during the second half of the XIXth century. Hobsbawm highlights that the identification of nationality to language originally only mattered for literate people who, like in the split-up Germany of before the Reich, had only their literary language in common, main vector of diffusion of any culture that could pretend to be national, language which then helped them to invest the State apparatus. In a general manner, languages, which would later reach the status of national languages, could only play a very modest role in the formation of the national consciousness of the illiterate, barely out of the Middle-Age in



La guerre du Golfe - Johann Humyn Being - 1991

the major part of Europe. The same goes for culture. It is certain that nationalists, to get the approval of the populations they were courting, tried harder and harder to speculate on traditions, customs, languages, religions, etc... with which they might identify sometimes. From there the nationalist myth of the community of culture, religious included, stable and even foreign to the intermixing of populations and cultures. Somewhat pre-established, it only had to wait for favorable conditions to appear in the open under the forme of the national State. Hobsbawm also reminds that, amongst the main inventors of cultural and linguistic nationalism, some came from the marxist

school confronted to the problem of nationalities in the empire of Austria-Hungary in full decomposition by the end of the XIXth century. But there generally wasn't any continuity between the heterogeneous factors of popular protonationalism, as he calls it, and those, homogeneous, proper to the nation-state. In reality, national languages were half artificial creations, which sometimes only had distant relations with the vernacular languages they claimed to represent and standardise. Their diffusion was unthinkable without the generalisation of mass instruction, in short, without the intervention of the state. It is following that, when homogeneity of language and culture under the auspices of the state started to become effective, that they became central criteria to the definition of the nation.

### **Nationalism as a mass phenomenon**

For Hobsbawm, there is no intention to deny that nationalism, along the period from the Commune to the Great War, might have, little by little, asserted itself as a mass phenomenon, in Europe first then elsewhere. The growth of the basis of nationalism, in particular the cultural, linguistic and racial variant, was evidently tied to the modification of the class structure of society. The industrialisation of the European states, national or multinational, was dislocating what was left of earlier society, accelerating the depopulation of the countryside and growth of the city, giving rise to migrations and population mixing without precedent, etc. In Europe, from the end of the XIXth century, nationalism appeared more and more as the reaction of the pauperized rural middle strata, threatened with extinction, as well as the urban middle strata destabilized by the Great Depression of the end of the last century. Such groups were terrorized by the rise of the dangerous classes and were looking for scapegoats for their misfortune : foreigners sometimes assimilated to dangerous revolutionaries. Nationalism found refuge in the arms of the monarchists, clericals and racists who all joined together in their hatred of revolution. But the dangerous classes, in particular the working class, weren't indifferent to the call of nationalism. Hobsbawm signals one of the main paradoxes of the time. The working class was, of course, hostile to the bourgeoisie. But it demanded to be recognized as an integral part of the state as well. Workers aspired to benefit from their status as citizens. However, the very idea of citizenship was tied to that of nationality, particularly in France. The democratization could thus help states resolving their problems in the acquisition of legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens, including when they were contesting them. In order to be republican, nationalism was no less nationalism. The contradiction exploded when, as soon as the war was declared, the same workers who had firmly fought the bourgeoisie on occasion were taken by a patriotic fervor to defend their respective homeland. During the beginning, at least.

### **Wilsonism and the principle of nationalities.**

According to Hobsbawl, the First World War and the peace of Versailles constituted decisive steps in the history of nationalism. First off, the days after Versailles gave the occasion to apply the principle of nationalities defined by Wilson, principle incidentally shared by Lenin and the heirs of Marxism-Leninism. The wilsonian principle didn't differ from the liberal principle in essence. It demanded that state borders and national, cultural and linguistic borders matched as well. But he gave up the notion of threshold : whatever their size, communities, thus defined as potential nations, had to have the possibility to form the territorial state of their choice, with the help of which they would exercise their sovereignty. Hobsbawm remarked with finesse that wilsonian autodetermination only aggravated the situation. In Europe, it was only put in place with the agreement of the victorious states, generally as buffer states against revolutionary pushes from the East. But given the imbrication of communities and their dispersion on non-connected territories, the principle of territorial matching between state and nation could only be achieved through intercommunal violence, sometimes pushed to paroxysm, associated with that of the state. Realized, the nationalism of European national minorities appeared as reactionary than that of the multinational states of which they used to be part of. Then, the days after Versailles revealed the

extension of the influence zone of nationalism to colonies. All those who claimed to act in the name of oppressed people in the colonial empires spoke as nationalists. Hobsbawm shows that they adopted the language of the oppressor states they claimed to fight. In reality, the future leaders aimed to form states from the colonized areas. The territories they represented as potential national entities, according to Wilsonian criteria, or even marxist-leninist, were recent creations of the colonial conquest, in particular the partitioning of the world between the colonizing states of Europe, to the notable exception of China as well as a few other antedeluvians Asian states. The colonial areas could not be identified to the territorial model of the nation-state. The nationalist elites, educated in the occidental way, were themselves half conscious of this since, as Hobsbawm reminds us, they deplored the indifference, hostility even, to the national idea by the populations that were the target of their propaganda. They attributed their failure to the politics of the colonizers which used the millennial tribalism of the colonized people. But the relative success of « divide and conquer » proved that the attachment of diverse populations did not yet go to the national communities imagined by the elites but rather to the multiple forms of traditional communities. Nevertheless, with the penetration of capitalism in the colonies and the simultaneous decomposition of such communities, reactions, sometimes insurrectional, against foreign oppressors and the local compradors began to appear. Nationalists now had the possibility to use the potential for revolt as long as they modified somewhat their programme and their language. It became necessary for them to hold into account the confused aspirations of the populations if they wished to make them play the role of cannon fodder to the national ideal.

### **Marxism-Leninism and radical nationalism**

For Hobsbawm, the apparent victory of the Russian Revolution was decisive to the course of nationalism. The participation of the URSS and the parties subservient to it during the Second World War, presented as a war of liberation against fascism, the assimilation of fascism to a betrayal of the nation, particularly in France, etc. were accelerating the reunion of nationalism and marxism-leninism. Nationalists that aspired to create independent states could not fail to see as their favoured allies the so-called socialist states, which claimed to be the defenders of all nations oppressed by imperialist states. Even in Europe, separatists came to the point where they adopted marxist-leninist ideology which contrasted with their genealogy, marked by their association with clericalism,



Il y avait chez lui quelque chose d'hollywoodien et de dérisoire - Barthélémy Schwartz - 1990

royalism and even fascism. It allowed them to give up their old costumes for those of nationalist revolutionaries, more apt to captivate the attention of disoriented populations in the sense that it allowed them to combine national and social liberation. Even those who were not subordinated to Moscow appeared so on the stage of struggle against imperialism, in particular against american hegemony, even though in reality they never really desired anything else than the adaptation of the nation-state model to the local conditions in which they operated. What followed evidently proved it. Decolonization, even when it wasn't realized with the blessing of colonial states but through a string of aborted revolts, such as in Algeria, showed what was the real meaning of their revolutionary phraseology : take the state power and attempt to build it on a local scale, on the basis of nationalization of key economic sectors, something quite close in principle to the european model of national economy. In most cases, such measures did not even allow to improve the situation of the concerned populations and to escape the tutoring of the global market. For the rest, such as states created through decolonization were sitting on mosaics of cultural, linguistic and ancestral religious communities, inheriting all of their contradictions, in particular their struggle between clan leaders to gain a monopoly on power, without mentioning the multiple frictions between states tied to the correction of colonial borders.

### Nationalism today

At the dawn of the third millenium, marked by the implosion of the soviet state and its satellites, it seems strange that Hobsbawm would insist on the decline of nationalism. It is because, in the face of the multiplication of states with a national pretention and the exacerbation of national hatred, he wants to highlight the dead end that the nation-state model constitutes. The nation, which always seems like something very tangible, actually became quite abstract. Identification to the national representation is more and more imaginary and no one, whether simple citizen or head of state, is able to explain what national belonging actually means, if not the exclusion of others. The nation-state and nationalism are in crisis, particularly in their wilsonian and marxist-leninist versions. Crises half-hearthedly admitted by the nationalist leaders abandoning, little by little, the previous references, the national state-economy couple in particular, to speculate on more or less successful identifications to ethnicity, culture, language, religion or even race. Because given the catastrophic and unprecedented mutations of global capitalism, the traditional components of nationalism which favored the identification of their population to their state, especially the economic component, were losing all their strengths even if they didn't disappear completely. Globalisation accelerated capital, with social structures disaggregating and transforming rapidly in the background, allowing it to transgress the limits of national states. It even favored the multiplication of minuscule states, even city-states like Singapour, which were poles of accumulation and circulation of capital. Following that, there isn't much left from the nationalist programme except for very vague references to communities and traditions more or less made up and sometimes the illusion of being able to reconnect with the pre-



**Armée - Grandville - 1842**

wilsonian model. This is what distinguishes religious fundamentalists from secular nationalists. The fundamentalisms of today have the wind in their sails as ideologies of substitution to the bankruptcy of the myth of progress, including the marxist-leninist version of emancipatory progress. Fundamentalists claim to go back to the fixed values of mythical origins, in principle at least. They claim to give precise answers to the nerve-wracking questions of the time. But, as Hobsbawm indicates, today, the very absence of a precise programme from the diverse versions of nationalism play in their favor. To the point that, even in Europe, any local, regional or even sectorial revendication against that central state's bureaucracy is likely to take on the national costume, preferably in its cultural and linguistic version. In reality, nationalism is the catalyst of more profound phenomenons. It is continuously fueled by the disorientation of populations, traumatized and sometimes cornered into simple survival by the catastrophic evolution of capitalism on a global scale, atomized and uprooted, looking for cues to give a sense to their lives or at least make it more bearable. There, the ancient familial or tribal relations can play an identification role even though, in reality, they've been ravaged and absorbed by the economy for a long time, even serving as the basis to the constitution of mafias as seen in separatists groups in the soviet ex-empire. National identification, national fundamentalism even, whatever delirious justifications it may conjure up, including religious ones, thus serves an essential function in designating scapegoats, the foreigners who, as foreigners, are dangerous ennemis and which, in our era heiress to the frenzied industrialization of the Glorious Thirties, camp even in the heart of the european states. Thus the common base of the various nationalism of today : xenophobia. Because of this, states have little trouble persecuting foreigners, chasing them, closing their borders, etc. even though, with the acceleration of globalisation, they are losing large parts of their traditional functions.

## France and nationalism

We cannot conclude this brief approach without addressing the situation to which we are confronted in France, situation which Hobsbawm barely touches on. Today in France, it is in good taste, in the face of rising fascist-like xenophobia, with its specific racist connotations, to equate nationalism and fascism. To fight against xenophobia, sanctioned and aggravated by the actions of the state, which accentuates antagonisms between the presumed nationals and presumed foreigners, we would need to affirm the intangibility of the democratic principles. Such is the creed of the spectacular opposition to the fascist menace, fascism which it reduces in an obtuse way to the party of Le Pen (TN : the « Front National », far right political party, led by members of the Le Pen family then and now as of 2018). But that would be forgetting, or pretending to forget, that those notorious universal values of citizenship, including on matters of assimilation, are rally singular, characteristic features of the nation-state as it formed in France during recent history. They are national values. It is also forgetting that their realisation as always been very flexible, subordinated in priority to the necessities of the national economy and the will of the state. They have thus always been very restrictives, to the exception of brief periods in history like the Glorious Thirties, where national capital need foreign workforce from the colonies. Brandishing the tattered flag of the so-called universal republic against this and that party, this and that leader, even a demagogue as Le Pen, who claims to represent the values of the republic as well, is at best to understand nothing of the nation-state and the origins of contemporary nationalism, at worst to share the same fundamental values. As proof, you only need to see the influence of this demagogue's ideas not only amongst peasants and merchants, usual basis of ultranationalism in France, but in what's left of workers as well. The working class community, which formed itself with the industrialization of the country, is in the process of disintegrating on the back of a crisis of work tied to the relative deindustrialization. However, in France, class values, despite the potential for revolt that they might still symbolize, have been tied for a long time to the values of the nation-state, protector of national industry. There, the themes on national decadence find some echo, because they match the idea that workers have of their own decadence as an essential factor in the valorisation of national capital. There is no great wall of China between the defense of the national economy and that of the nation

today, just as there was none yesterday between socialism that is national and national-socialism. The apostles of democracy, sometimes found in militancy with revolutionary pretensions, pretend to not understand the genealogy of fascism as a massphenomenon. They even denounce sometimes the ultranationalist party of Le Pen as that of betrayal of the republican traditions of France and seek to reheat the putrefied ideology of national resistance to fascism. They could not make a better confession that the democracy-nation couple is inseparable, unveiling the bases upon which they intend to direct and frame the spectacle of resistance on its knees against the rise of fascism. Moreover, in the face of the autoritarism of the state-power, those who are disappointed by centralization in the peripheral regions are somewhat sensible to the siren calls of the autonomists, or even the separatists. The desertification caused by the centralization of the economy, especially in the domain of culture, would be the exclusive responsibility of the central power. Given the standardization of survival, more and more atomized, desperate and devoid of meaning, the need to find marks and reconnect with sociability goes through the valorization of purported particular cultures which, usually, are presented as remains of popular traditions restrained by the state. And the people who take refuge in those traditions are ready to forget how exclusionary, limited and autoritary they were. The naive partisans of the separatist leaders swear that it's only a matter of culture to them, nothing more. But in this case, the culture is the pursuit of politics by other means. The apologia of cultural differences appears as one of the essential means to mobilize them behind such leaders who aspire to conquer power, including through violent means, in their respective areas of regional influence and, of course, to make business within the framework of Europe. State-power, loyal to the jacobin tradition, is irritated by such nationalist gesticulations. At the same time, it is willing to relieve some pressureon , or even give free rein to nationalist mafia as can be seen in Corse for example. Nowadays, cultural relativism stretches even to the immigrant communities from the thirld world. Without denying the factors of solidarity that they may still posess, we cannot turn a blind eye to their stubborn aspects, particularly their patriarchal type of hierarchy, upon which lean the nationalists, from the last marxist-leninists to the muslim fundamentalists. In France, they appear as shelter values because the state-power, in virtue of the jacobin principle of individual assimilation, persecutes them as such. But to make them poles of radical resistance to the state is quite the stretch !

In France just as elsewhere, nationalism is less than ever capable to bring solutions to the fundamental questions that the catastrophic evolution of contemporary society rises. As a general rule, it diverts individuals, even those who are a bit revolted by the condition which is made theirs, from the essential : the struggle against capitalism. It gives them illusions on the possibility of bettering their survival on the condition that they accept to be identified to the various national communities offered on the market of ideology, presented in a mystified and nostalgic way as just as many palpable traces of precapitalist sociability. In reality, such communities, under the leadership of nationalists leaders, dominate them, use them and, in the end, robs them of their liberty. We are in support of individuals taking the path of community, which as previously existed in the history of humanity, including in recent history in Europe, through the fights against capital and the state. In that sense, today just as yesterday, revolted individuals start from nothing to realize their objectives and dreams. But the conquest of liberty, both individual and collective liberty, remains the primordial condition of regained sociaiblity. Where liberty is missing, community loses all meaning. It is synonymous with domination.

**André Dréan**

1 -Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque des histoires, 1992.



Fourier à Brocéliande - Guy Girard - 1993



## **FACE TO FACE**

Facing history : art cultivates this face to face, contemplates its own alienation, mirrors general alienation, tramples... Does it act ? Does it seize history just like the real, to unsettle the conventional image and multiply alternative approaches, beyond sensible perspectives, until it lifts the veil of the events and illuminates, at the heart of the chosen moment, the presence of utopia ? The cause of modern art, whether it was or not the cause of human emancipation, what is left of it now that contemporary art only shows grotesque renunciations of the promethean projects of those of whom it claims to be the heir ? Of course, the exhibit being held since last winter at the Georges Pompidou center, dedicated to the ties between art and history from 1933 to 1996, is not made to allow such questions to be raised. To the contrary, through a selection of pieces and various documents along a chronological path, we are told repeatedly that art aims to nothing more than to hold an honorable place in the just fight of bourgeois democracy against all forms of totalitarianism. We are in the best of all worlds. Even if barbarians shake dangerously its foundations. Because, among those who aspired to bring down society, there were the fascists, the nazis and the stalinists, the dominant ideology trumpets everywhere that any attempt to end the bourgeois order, any other project of society ends up inevitably in totalitarianism. Chorus repeated a thousand times which, for example, throws to theoubliettes the libertarian communism realized during the spanish revolution. Chorus repeated today by all these journalists commenting on the albanian situation, which probably preludes to larger movements of revolt. This one, like the chatter of the mind in the concert of states, could only bring disorder, chaos and anarchy.

Three scarecrows for the bourgeois order, formidably animated on the scene of modern mythology by the avant-garde, dada and surrealism. We do not get tired of exhibiting, with calculated nostalgia, the scandalous lucidity. Neither forgetting its lessons in the deadening echoes of the cultural and economic supremacy of the United States peddled since 1945 of action-painting in pop-art, minimal art in post-modernism, until the revolt and desire which found the creating art are entirely deprived of sense, and as senseless as the narcissism and pushiness with which contemporary artists can be recognized. Art, like the experience of freedom in a world where freedom is liberalism, now there is an improper idea ! There have been dreamers : we lend them willingly the nightmare of having known more than the newspaper of the time. But there is also a place for the newspapers, which become the only consciousness of the events. As soon as the artists, disappointed to be unable to understand the world beyond the stalinist lie, boast themselves to be no more or less alienated than the « common man », they measure themselves to no other horizon than the mystifying one of the daily newspaper. Its haunting presence becomes the only gage of reality, the only model. In the labyrinth of this exhibit, it is the minotaur, belching the fateful dates. The visitor is thus invited to an initiation to the misery of the world, to the cynically estheticized acceptance - as the artists seem to be mumbling more than they are protesting, with the distinct voice of the mediatic logorrhea - of the spectacle of it to which can be resumed the so-called contemporary art of today.

From 1933, rise of Hitler to power, to 1996 - what the hell happened in 1996 ? of a purely event-driven story, or its morose palinodes, goes along slowly. Modern, modernist, modernized when its artists think they're compensating their lack of imagination by imitating not their competitors, but the world of work. We lose ourselves on representations of the real, not open to its possibilities anymore but enclosing itself in identification to some fetish of submission. The

ambition that was to capture the visions of desire and becoming sees itself, the day after the liberation, oriented towards the production of a propaganda for the state and the capitalist economy, towards the acceleration of its imaginary models that are the engineer and the pioneer. Equal to those, we take the mythical posture to brush great paintings, to produce en masse images in which is reflected the scrappy consciousness of those for whom art doesn't have for object to reveal more consciousness anymore. This sweats boredom and brainwashing, and in this pursued indifferenciation between art and sordid life, no piece of art can set itself apart from that image representing I don't know which american politician, signed Andy Warhol, which reconciles in the same servility the wordly portrait and the election poster. To the chronology of a purely factual history, arranged along a succession of bloidy seasons without showing the least bit of the irrational contradictions of capitalism, a chronological lecture of art since 1933 responds, aiming to coincide every social or political event with this or that blooming of an artistic movement. Outstanding operation in order to bring back the old debates on engaged art. That way we don't have to talk about the rest, especially poetry which won't « rythm the action » anymore but rather « be at the forefront ». We prefer to concern ourselves with the guarnish, to embellish history, or the fatalist idea to which it is reduced by those who do not want people to be master of their own fate. Sometimes, the decoration tears and what is shown is not so much the history which « falls outside like snow » than our reasons to not lose hope to the end of days.

But this exhibit is there to convince us that art, if it wishes to work over time, has retrospective as the only safe perspective. At then end of it, the manichean choice between the barbaric adventure and trust in the era. He who does not have revolt as his compass comes out of the last room as bewildered as if someone had just announced the end of history to him. No logic can be discerned under the events of which contemporary artists manage the illustration. Such art, from 1933 to 1996, was able to store in the attic its utopian challenges, its promethean project, to desire to see no further than the retinas of a journalist. Always late on the current events it enunciates, he would be satisfied to be their privileged commentator and to make us experience first-hand how the mass media becomes the ultimate ready-made.

**Guy Girard**



Rêve nucléaire ●

The dissuasion strategy of the blocks era, which the media called cold war, created a sinister nuclear heritage. However, given the consensus, today's dominant discourse tries to reassure us with nuclear disarmament even though it is almost impossible to realize, especially for the states which are nearing the economic precipice. In parallel, the establishment of the private nuclear as one of the most viable and profitable energy source intensified. If it is urgent to apprehend in a concrete way the threat that is the nucleocrat lobby, how, amongst other things, do we measure the fallout that unfolds in the heart of living organisms. The work of Jay Gould, "the enemy within", presented in the recent article from « The Nation », late 1996, of which we give some excerpts, allows us to see for ourselves this irreversible degradation. It is clear that the obscurantism shown by science and medicine allied to triumphant capital cannot hide forever the risks taken by the population living near the nuclear centrals and test sites. « The enemy within » shows very well the link between low intensity radiation and immuno-deficiency, or how science and medicine in general have a world view which oscillates between decay and desperate tinkering. This dichotomy of the absurd strikes with its deadly power because the essence of its operating is to put lives at stake. Such works give us the data which contributes to denounce and maybe jam the general atomization, both in the literal and figurative sense. Although we have to express some reservations about the remedies suggested by scientists, even those who are not subordinated, who measure today the damage caused by technical and scientific activies, sustained and sometimes detected for a long time.

Karl

## FALLOUT FROM THE COLD WAR

Fought in the context of experimentations, premeditated explosions and unplanned nuclear accidents, many unreported and still kept secret, the cold war did not need to become warm in order to leave behind it traces of ruin, devastation and tears. The most lasting legacy of these years of ruinous military insanity could very well be global waves of immunodeficiency epidemics. (...)

Although environmentalists around the world recognize the importance of our interdependent global relationships and the tragic costs of the nuclear age, in fact, almost every word Gould writes is challenged. The official media even neglected to consider the long-term consequences of the legacy left by our idealized weaponry while the veil of secrecy and distortion of basic data remained draped around nuclear energy and low-intensity radiation. Remember ! When Ten Dixy Lee Ray was appointed by officials to chair the Atomic Energy Commission, she reassured the anxious mothers: « It's good for you, clean and cheap. Trust me on this! » ( ... )

In some settings, there is great resistance to Gould's analyses that relate examples of cancer, AIDS and low infant weights to various industrial poisons and pesticides, especially when combined with nuclear pollution. His most controversial idea is that men and women born during the nuclear age, especially during years of atmospheric testing and accidental emissions or explosions, are the most at risk because their hormonal and immune system were the more attacked. (...)

In 1945, the nuclear weapons complex at Hanford, Washington, which produced plutonium for the first generation of atomic bombs, released radioactive iodine into the atmosphere, which rivalled the magnitude of what was rejected at Chernobyl in 1986, the nuclear accident recognized as the worst in human history. Between Hanford and Chernobyl, the planet has suffered decades of

fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests, equivalent to forty thousand bombs of the type Hiroshima. Impact on hormonal systems and immune system of more than eighty million « baby boomers » was, according to Gould, immediate and long-lasting. ( ... )

Gould and his associates in the Radiation and Public Health Project, non-profit association based in New York, are monitoring health effects that result not only from nuclear tests and accidents, but also light drizzle, stealth leaks and fumes and almost imperceptible emanations from low intensity radiation. Using data from the National Cancer Institute, Centres for the Control of State Departments for Health and tumour registration, among other sources, Gould provides documents relating to the impact of radiation on residents of the « nuclear counties »), the one thousand three hundred nineteen counties close to either one of the sixty civil and military reactors installed in the United States. The result is alarming: the cases of cancer, AIDS, birth defects, chronic fatigue syndromes appear. more frequently in irradiated areas than anywhere else. Compared to all the others counties in the country, fifty-five of the sixty nuclear sites he was studying had rates of breast cancer significantly elevated, rates that couldn't be explained by chance or genetic factors.(...)

Gould's previous book « The Mortal deception: low-intensity radiation, high intensity concealment », written in collaboration with Benjamin Goldman, translated into Japanese and Russian, has been very well used by the anti-nuclear activists. He contributed to the closure of the dangerous Trojan and Yankee Rowe reactors in Oregon and Massachusetts. « The Enemy Within » is a new call to action. He explains the causes of the disaster that many of us, living in Long Island's East End, have become aware of: here, almost every family has known tragedies.(...)

Gould amply demonstrates the reasons for this. Twelve miles north of the shores of Long Island Sound, there are three Millstone reactors, currently closed. They are waiting for their review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a result of countless security breaches that have long been undeclared. In the heart of Suffolk, two small reactors in Brookhaven's national laboratory have been discharging radioactive iodine, strontium and tritium into the air and into the river, the Peconic, for 40 to 50 years. In Suffolk, women have experienced a 40% increase in breast cancer since 1950. We never needed to suffer nuclear war to be bombed by nuclear fallout...)

By demonstrating the connection between radioactivity and immunodeficiencies, « The Enemy Within » can help us plant stakes in the heart of the nuclear industry. To the extent that the consequence of nuclear power is the extinction of life, we must change the course of history. Gould and his associates in the Radiation and Public Health Project provide us with the evidence we need to decide: the time has come to choose life.

**Blanche Wiesen Cook**

