

# Liberal Nightmare Washes up on Canada's Shores

*An old book offers insight into a new problem*

by Ian Hunter

As I write, three boatloads of illegal alien refugees are ashore on Canada's West Coast — the latest unmarked ship carrying human cargo arriving yesterday. The people aboard have been shepherded ashore, put up in gymnasiums, fed, and in due course released into Charterland where none can be deported without a right of appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. Of course, such appeals take years, by which time most will have disappeared.

But it is not what passes for Canada's immigration laws that I lament here; no doubt Canada is the laughing stock of the world and no doubt many nice Canadians prefer it that way instead of appearing other than nice. Rather, this human tragedy interests me because it recalls to mind a brilliant and

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prophetic book I read (with great difficulty, as I shall explain) exactly 20 years ago. The book, called *The Camp of the Saints*, and its author, Jean Raspail, won the French Prix Goncourt.

Let me begin at the beginning. Prior to 1970, Jean Raspail had written a travel book, a book of short stories and two unmemorable novels. When *The Camp of the Saints* appeared in France it touched off a storm of controversy. Germaine Bree said it was "...the Brave New World of the Seventies"; Jean Anouilh called it "...a haunting book of irresistible force and calm logic"; but, in hindsight, it was Max Lerner who hit closest when he wrote: "A stream of violent controversy will swirl around this book, since it takes on a whole cluster of polemical issues — overpopulation, race, the Third World and the character of liberal thought and sentiment. Jean Raspail doesn't speak for me, especially since I don't share his views on race and don't believe the Apocalypse is here. But I am glad he has grappled with the issues and given me several nights of absorbed reading."

*The Camp of the Saints* envisages a future when racial violence has become a way of life in American cities, when upwards of a million black and brown

Commonwealth citizens demand the right to emigrate to England and when millions of unarmed Chinese begin to filter across the border that divides them from Russia. But the real focus is on the Indian subcontinent where hundreds of thousands of hungry men, women and children, with nothing to lose but their lives, swarm aboard ships in the harbor of Calcutta.

As the refugee fleet sets out, leaving a wake of corpses from those pressed over the sides by the sheer crush of numbers, another ship behind the first and another behind it, it begins to dawn on the leadership of the affluent West that the flotsam and jetsam of humanity are on the move; in search of food and opportunity, and they are actually coming here. As the Last Chance Armada arrives closer, liberal bromides are no longer a substitute for action. But what action? The title of the book, incidentally, derives from the Book of the Apocalypse: "And they gathered together for the battle — the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the Earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city." (Revelation, Ch. 20)

In November, 1975, the reputable U.S. publishing house Charles Scribner's Sons brought out

an English translation. The first reviews I saw (in *National Review* and *The Alternative*) hailed the book as a major literary event, a haunting, prophetic vision of the future. But then Paul Gray in *TIME* magazine started a chorus of condemnation of the novel as "racist." Mr. Gray wrote: "Before the book is called 'courageous' or 'provocative,' a small distinction should be made. The portrait of racial enmity is one matter. The exacerbation of it is quite another."

From then on, strange things began to happen. I searched bookstores in London and Toronto, but could never find a copy. One usually reliable bookseller order me a copy, but it never turned up. In London, England, I tried Foyles, which then laid claim to being the world's largest bookstore. Yes, they knew of *The Camp of the Saints*. No, they did not have a copy. No, they could not order a copy. No, they could not explain why. The same experience was repeated at London's two other pre-eminent bookstores, Dillon's and Hatchard's.

Public libraries were equally unavailing. I checked with John Wiley, Scribner's Canadian distributor: No, there were no copies in Canada. No, there had not been a paperback edition. No, I could not order a copy. Finally, a journalist, now dead, to whom I related my search, came up with a review copy that he passed on to me in a brown, unmarked envelope.

Mr. Raspail imagined the vanguard of the refugee armada making for France. The crux of the

novel is the French government's response. What can they do? Are the boatloads of suffering humanity to be considered as enemies or refugees? Can a Western government committed to decades of human rights rhetoric formulate

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***Are the boatloads of suffering humanity to be considered as enemies or refugees?"***

***Can a Western government committed to decades of human rights rhetoric formulate any effective response?"***

any effective response? Mr. Raspail doubts it. Instead the government sets up inter-ministerial committees, issues ponderous communiques and broadcasts bulletins to its citizens in bureaucratese that serve to anaesthetize the population ("Government sources note with dismay the mass exodus of population and appeal for calm in the face of unforeseen developments..." and so on). Civilization ending not with a bang, but a whimper.

Whether or not the book is racist (the subtitle is "A chilling novel about the end of the white world")

I do not presume to say. That it was deliberately suppressed, I cannot prove. I understand the book may now be available from Internet booksellers.

What I can say is *The Camp of the Saints* portrays events that begin almost as tectonic movements in regions and countries far away, then hit home with an impact like a force of nature, an earthquake, say, or a tidal wave. An impersonal tragedy that wears a human face. Above all the book is a biting, cruelly funny portrait of the liberal mind all adither when forced to confront reality. It is as harrowing and unforgettable a book as I have read. And it seems to be coming to pass on the nightly news.

Recent events entitle Jean Raspail to say, with Kipling, "I saw the sunset ere most men saw the dawn." **TSC**

*[The Camp of the Saints is published by The Social Contract Press and can be ordered by calling 1-800-352-4843.]*