

Jean Raspail on the Friendly Responses He Has Received From the Powerful

An excerpt from the new introduction of the latest French edition

Since its appearance, [*Camp of the Saints*] has been abundantly read, and not by just anybody! When it is reprinted, I address complimentary copies with personal dedications to various well-known personalities, mostly political, on the left as well as the right. Many have responded: a few lines, sometimes more. Some have been simple thank-you notes; others go more or less into the substance of the work, with strong reservations or measured approval, but all reflect a general tone which in no way corresponds to the vituperative laws [against “incitement to racial hatred”] they have voted for with both hands.

It is on the left that this contradiction reveals itself in the most surprising way. To judge by their flagship papers—*Le Monde diplomatique* eventually published a long evisceration of *Camp of the Saints*—these are people who should execrate me, crush me beneath their silent contempt. Not at all! They respond courteously, starting with François Mitterrand. They made that effort. They did not feel offended at all that I sent them such a book, even with a personal dedication! If they disagree, they say so clearly, but end with “cordially” (Lionel Jospin) or “with my faithful remembrance” (Jean-Pierre Chevènement).... Some letters are warm and enter into a substantial meditation on the substance [of the book] well beyond the usual habits and reflexes of prevailing thinking.

From the testimonies I have just evoked, it is obvious that all these people—on the left as well as the right, I emphasize—who participate or have participated in the government of the country or opinion-making, practice a double language: one public and proclaimed, the other personal and hidden, as if they have a double conscience, the one they wave like a flag and the one which hides in the underbrush of unmentionable thoughts, which they only express in small groups of trusted friends, if then.... I do not frequent the corridors of power, but I have happened to converse privately about the theme [of my novel] with this or that minister or ex-minister, this or that Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff, this or that advisor to a president or other, and whose sharp, clear statements, free of illusion, are a world away from their official behavior and the measures and decisions it is their duty to take.

It seems only fair to recognize, as an attenuating circumstance, that if they were to take a stand that went against the grain of the media and showbiz mob, they would be signing their own condemnation to civil death. ■

