

The novel *The Camp of the Saints* by Jean Raspail (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973) continues on its controversial course. Most recently it provided the theme for the cover article in the December 1994 *Atlantic Monthly*. To help our readers better understand the author's perspective, **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT** asked advisory board member Gerda Bikales to translate from the French Raspail's preface to the third (1985) edition of his novel.

The Camp of the Saints

By Jean Raspail

Published for the first time in 1973, *Camp of the Saints* is a novel that anticipates a situation which seems plausible today and foresees a threat that no longer seems unbelievable to anyone: it describes the peaceful invasion of France, and then of the West, by a third world burgeoned into multitudes. At all levels—global consciousness, governments, societies, and especially every person within himself—the question is asked belatedly: what's to be done?

What's to be done, since no one would wish to renounce his own human dignity by acquiescing to racism? What's to be done since, simultaneously, all persons and all nations have the sacred right to preserve their differences and identities, in the name of their own future and their own past?

Our world was shaped within an extraordinary variety of cultures and races, that could only develop to their ultimate and singular perfection through a necessary segregation. The confrontations that flow (and have always flowed) from this, are not racist, nor even racial. They are simply part of the permanent flow of opposing forces that shape the history of the world. The weak fade and disappear, the strong multiply and triumph.

For example, since the time of the Crusades and the great land and sea discoveries, and up to the colonial period and its last-ditch battles, Western expansionism responded to diverse motivations—ethical, political, or economic—but racism had no part and played no role in it, except perhaps in the soul of evil people. The relative strength of forces was in our favor, that's all. That these were applied most often at the expense of other races—though some were thereby saved from their state of mortal torpor—was merely a consequence of our appetite for conquest and was not driven by or a cover for ideology. Now that the relationship between the forces has been diametrically reversed, and our ancient West—tragically now in a minority status on this earth—retreats behind its dismantled fortifications while it already loses the battles on its own soil, it begins to behold, in astonishment, the dull roar of the huge tide that threatens to engulf it. One must remember the saying on ancient solar calendars: "It is later than you think..." The above reference did not come from my pen. It was written by Thierry Maulier, in connection with *Camp of the Saints*, as it happens. Forgive me for citing yet

another, by Professor Jeffrey Hart of Dartmouth, a literary historian and a famous American columnist: "Raspail is not writing about race, he is writing about civilization..."

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After all, *Camp of the Saints* is a symbolic book, a sort of prophecy, dramatized rather brutally by means of shipboards, at the rhythm of inspiration. For if any book came to me through inspiration, I confess that it was precisely this one. Where the devil would I otherwise have drawn the courage to write it? I came out of these eighteen months of work unrecognizable, judging by the photograph on the back of the jacket of the first edition in 1973: my face exhausted, older by ten years than my age today, and with the look of someone tormented by too many visions. And yet, my true character came through in this book, precisely in the coarse humor found in it, derisory humor, the comical under the tragic, a certain amount of clowning as an antidote to the apocalypse. I have always maintained that in spite of its subject matter *Camp of the Saints* is not a sad book and I am grateful to some, notably to Jean Dutour, who have understood that exactly: "That West of ours having become a buffoon, its final tragedy could well be a joke. That is why this terrible book is basically so funny..."

But, to go back to the action in *Camp of the Saints*—if it is a symbol, it doesn't arise from any utopia; it *no longer* arises from any utopia. If it is a prophecy, we live its beginnings today. Simply, in *Camp of the Saints*, it is treated as a classic tragedy, according to the literary principles of unity of time, place and action: everything takes place within three days along the shores of Southern France, and it is there that the destiny of white people is sealed. Though the action was then already well developed along the lines described in *Camp of the Saints* (boat people, the

radicalization of the North African community and of other foreign groups in France, the strong psychological impact of human rights organizations, the inflamed evangelism of the religious leadership, a hypocritical purity of consciences, refusal to look the truth in the face, etc.) in actuality the unraveling will not take place in three days but, almost certainly, after many convulsions, during the first decades of the third millennium, barely the time of one or two generations. When one knows what constitutes a generation in our old European lands—a rump-generation in the image of a rump-family and a rump-nation—the heart constricts in anticipation, and is overwhelmed by discouragement. It's enough to go back to the scary demographic predictions for the next thirty years, and those I will cite are the most favorable ones: encircled by seven billion people, only seven hundred million of them white, hardly a third of them in our little Europe, and those no longer in bloom but quite old. They face a vanguard of four hundred million North Africans and Muslims, fifty percent of them less than twenty years old, those on the opposite shores of the Mediterranean arriving ahead of the rest of the world! Can one imagine for a second, in the name of whatever ostrich-like blindness, that such a disequilibrium can endure?

At this juncture, the moment has arrived to explain why, in *Camp of the Saints*, it is human masses coming from the far-away Ganges rather than the shores of the Mediterranean that overwhelm the South of France. There are several reasons for this. One pertains to prudence on my part, and especially to my refusal to enter the false debate about racism and anti-racism in French daily life, as well as my revulsion at describing the racial tensions already discernible (but for the moment not fit for discussion) for fear of exacerbating them. To be sure, a mighty vanguard is already here, and expresses its intention to stay even as it refuses to assimilate; in twenty years they will make up thirty percent—strongly motivated foreigners, in the bosom of a people that once was French. It's a sign, but it is only one sign. One could stop there. One could even engage in some skirmishes, all the while ignoring, or pretending to ignore that the real danger is not only here, that it is elsewhere, that it is yet to come, and that by its very size it will be of a different order. For I am convinced that at the global level things will unleash as at a billiard game, where the balls start moving one after the other following an initial shove, which can start up in this or that immense reservoir of misery and multitudes, such as the one over there, alongside the Ganges. It will probably not happen as I have described it, for the *Camp of the Saints* is only a parable, but in the end the result will not be any different, though perhaps in a form more diffused and therefore *seemingly* more tolerable. The Roman empire did not die any differently, though, it's true, more slowly, whereas this time we can expect a more sudden

conflagration. It is said that history does not repeat itself. That's very foolish. The history of our planet is made up of successive voids and of the ruins that others have strewn about as they each had their turn, and that some have at times regenerated.

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For the West is empty, even if it has not yet become really aware of it. An extraordinarily inventive civilization, surely the only one capable of meeting the challenges of the third millennium, the West has no soul left. At every level—nations, races, cultures, as well as individuals—it is always the soul that wins the decisive battles. It is only the soul that forms the weave of gold and brass from which the shields that save the strong are fashioned. I can hardly discern any soul in us. Looking, for example, at my own country, France, I often get the impression, as in a bad dream dreamt wide-awake, that many Frenchmen of true lineage are no longer anything but hermit-clams that live in shells abandoned by the representatives of a species, now disappeared, that was known as "French" and which did not forecast, through some unknown genetic mystery, the one that at century's end has wrapped itself in this name. They are content to just endure. Mechanically, they ensure their survival from week to week, ever more feebly. Under the flag of an illusory internal solidarity and security, they are no longer in solidarity with anything, or even cognizant of anything that would constitute the essential commonalities of a people. In the area of the practical and materialistic, which alone can still light a spark of interest in their eyes, they form a nation of petty bourgeois which, in the name of the riches it inherited and is less and less deserving of, rewards itself—and continues to reward itself in the middle of crisis—with millions of domestic servants: immigrants. Ah! How they will shudder! The domestics have innumerable relatives on this side and beyond the seas, a single starving family that populates all the earth. A global Spartacus... To cite but one example from hundreds, the population of Nigeria, in Africa, has close to seventy million inhabitants which it is incapable of feeding even while it spends more than fifty percent of its oil income to buy food. At the dawn of the third millennium, there will be a hundred million Nigerians and the oil will be gone.

But the petty bourgeois, deaf and blind, continues to play the buffoon without knowing it. Still miraculously comfortable in his lush fields, he cries out while glancing toward his nearest neighbor: "Make the

rich pay!" Does he know, does he finally know that it is he who is the rich one, and that the cry for justice, that cry of all revolutions, projected by millions of voices, is rising soon against him, and only against him. That's the whole theme of *Camp of the Saints*.

So, what to do?

I am a novelist. I have no theory, no system nor ideology to propose or defend. It just seems to me that we are facing a unique alternative: either learn the resigned courage of being poor or find again the inflexible courage to be rich. In both cases, so-called Christian charity will prove itself powerless. The times will be cruel.

— J. R.

Garret Hardin on *The Camp of the Saints*

From an essay, "Discriminating Altruisms" (1982), in *The Immigration Dilemma: Avoiding the Tragedy of the Commons* (Washington, D.C., Federation for American Immigration Reform, 1995).

Universalism is attractive in large part because the ideal is used as a weapon to beat off the restraints necessarily imposed on individuals by family, tribe and nation.... Universalism is unattainable, and individualism is not enough—not in a competitive world where a larger group has the edge over smaller ones....

Many concerned people today find this conclusion hard to swallow. Patriotism, war, nuclear holocaust, destruction of civilization—this chain of ideas has led many to believe that patriotism must be expunged to save civilization. The establishment of One World is seen as a way to dismantle the armaments of nations. But promiscuous universalism would destroy the world too, though in a different way: in T.S. Eliot's prescient formula, "not with a bang, but a whimper."

The whimper has begun, but so far as I know only one literary man has noticed the form it is taking, the French writer Jean Raspail in his novel *The Camp of the Saints*. His argument is only implicit (as a good fiction writer's should be), but it is easy to translate it into explicit stages. The logical steps in the developing disaster are these: (1) by virtue of their craft, opinion makers worship the ideal of promiscuous sharing: for them patriotism is unthinkable; (2) "to each according to his needs" means that when immigrants from a poor country knock at the door of a rich country they must be admitted; (3) the process of moving from poor to rich will continue until wealth is equalized everywhere; (4) but since there is no group limitation on individual freedom to breed it is not so much that wealth will be equalized as it is poverty, thus plunging everyone into the Malthusian depths.