

The Enduring Value of Jean Raspail's Classic Novel

New Camp of the Saints edition's added content includes Big Other

L.F. MARES

Americans conscious of immigration-related issues have been acquainted with *The Camp of the Saints* ever since Jean Raspail's classic novel of mass migration reached these shores in the 1970s, but anno Domini 2018 brings a substantial addition to it to readers in the United States. The new sixth U.S. edition from the Social Contract Press now contains the first English-language printing of the author's most recent foreword, far lengthier than the ones he wrote in 1973 and 1985. Nearly 7 percent as long as the text of the novel itself, the new preface has been appearing in the book's French printings since 2011 under a section title of its own: *Big Other*, two English words Raspail chose in coining a name for a key element of what the West is up against.

Beyond alluding to the entity known worldwide from Orwell's *1984*, Raspail writes of a pervasive presence of a different sort: a collective that consists of native-born Westerners with a shared anti-Western consciousness. He distinguishes that group from the Other (*l'Autre*), the non-Western arrivals who are pouring into the Occident chiefly out of material motives. *Big Other* is the millions of home-grown Westerners who have allied themselves with the Other and are using open borders to pursue a transformative agenda.

Big Other is the sinewed component of the force that Raspail referred to more broadly in the novel as "the beast." Midway through the new preface he spells out the exact nature of Big Other succinctly: the entire phalanx of those native-born French (and Westerners of any land) whose goal is the submergence of their own people and culture in a bottomless sea of non-Western influx.

Raspail confesses to finding the motives of many in that phalanx perplexing, though he clearly sees them as falling into two types: naïve idealists of a humanist bent, and then the more ill-motivated faction, the self-loathing nihilists who bear an intense animus against the West and yearn to destroy it with no real interest in what comes afterward.



Jean Raspail

His multifaceted new preface has a wide panorama and covers a lot of ground before he ever gets down to vivisectioning Big Other. (About which, more in a moment.) He recounts the novel's inception and how its initially disappointing sales later grew through word of mouth from devoted readers until becoming a steady stream that continues to the present day. He addresses the controversy that has attended this often jarring book, and acknowledges that some parts of the

L.F. Mares translated the Big Other foreword for the new edition of The Camp of the Saints.

narrative are over the top if taken in isolation from the rest of the story. Relating how he was widely flayed by the French intelligentsia when the book debuted, he tells about a TV appearance that blew up in his face when future *Académie française* member Max Gallo let him have it with both barrels. (Years later, after ever more of the novel's hypothesis was borne out by events, that same Max Gallo — among other intellectuals including Bernard Clavel and Jacques Benoist-Méchin — credited Raspail with having the gift of prophecy.) Discussing the repressive changes in French law since 1973 that would make *The Camp of the Saints* impossible to publish in France if it were written today, he explains that it continues to be printed there only because the legislative acts that added teeth to the 1972 Pleven law were not retroactive to works that came out before those measures' passage.

In addition to the *Big Other* foreword, the new U.S. edition continues to present his two earlier prefaces as well, and carries considerable supplemental material by and about Raspail. The book in total is at an all-time high in content, which makes the issuing of this sixth stateside edition a good occasion to reveal something not many people have known: for more than 30 years already, Americans have been getting a more complete novel than readers in France. In French printings a number of segments from the first edition, including the entire 14th chapter that appears in the American book, are no longer found. Consequently in France the story today has only 50 chapters, not 51.

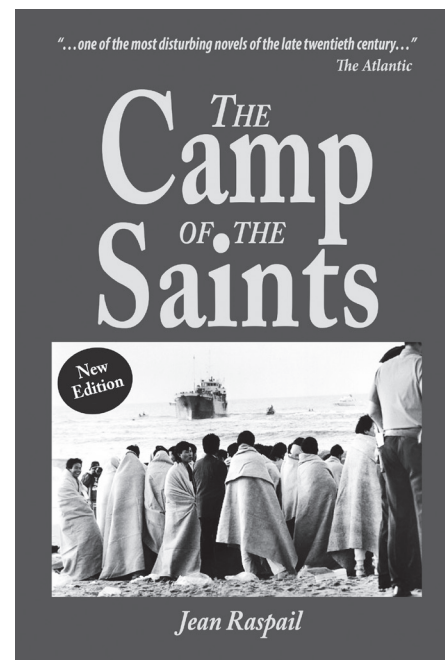
Sizeable sections of U.S. chapters 17 and 42 likewise no longer appear in the later French printings. Suspicion over the impetus for alterations falls on a chilling effect from those legal restrictions cited by Raspail, yet most of what was cut is rather innocuous and wouldn't have run afoul of those laws in any case. Whatever stimulus the shadow of the Pleven law might have brought, in any event a light re-edit took place, with editors in France making a minor condensation, and tinkering with the general content while they were at it. (There's reason to believe they did this on the quiet, but the exact details are now shrouded in the mist of time.) Among numerous smaller differences supporting the theory of a general re-edit, one of the more curious is that the American text puts the span since the restoring of the Fontgembarr abbey at three years, while the same sentence found in the later French version gives the number as *vingt* (20), a change nothing necessitated. Tweaks of that sort don't relate to the Pleven law.

At any rate, French readers aren't seriously affected by missing out on the chapter about the Russian border, and the book in France remains fundamentally true to the original. An annex in the 2011 Paris edition lists some 300 lines that lawyers advised would be grist

for at least 87 counts for prosecution if the book were being newly published in the 21st century. Those lines still appear in French printings today, thanks to the subsequent legal changes' not having *ex post facto* effect.

In France the book has never been subjected to prosecutorial action. Raspail's 2004 essay in *Le Figaro* "The Fatherland betrayed by the Republic," in contrast did become the target of a court challenge, but the complaint was eventually tossed out. (The supplements in the new U.S. edition include a text of that essay also.)

On this side of the pond, the American book remains pristinely complete, thanks to the First Amendment, plus fortuitous timing. When Norman Shapiro did his superb English translation for New York's Charles Scribner & Sons in the 1970s, it was the novel's first printing outside of France. The subsequent shifts in the French text ended up being duplicated in countries where the book wasn't translated until later. For example, in Germany the Hohenrain translation from the mid-1980s reflects the edits made by then in France, and likewise consists of only 50 chapters.



Exactly what spurred the French re-edit, then, remains cloudy, but the potential for political problems from the legal code likely played a part. The book is short on friends among leftists, whose typifying antics it captures with spot-on accuracy. (Rather better than those of the oncoming migrants, actually.) Even then, it's fair to say it's never been a book for the faint of heart. Much criticism has been directed toward this novel, mostly by anti-Westerners who abhor its whole thesis in the first place, but even pro-Western readers can find elements in it unsettling. This is one book that has something in it to dismay everybody. Raspail him-

self, in the *Big Other* foreword, agrees the story contains a lot that's harsh, but counsels that you have to keep it in perspective and bear in mind the context.

Although usually characterized as a book about immigration, the story is more exactly about *mass migration*, a different though related phenomenon. Raspail's genius was to examine the cumulative effects of ill-managed immigration by compressing years of it into a tight ball, a massive influx of aliens all at once, funneled into a single spot, inviting themselves in with utter disregard for France's immigration laws, and for any other aspect of their impact on their destination as well. From there he envisioned how the West would respond when confronted with mass migration no longer advancing gradually like the hour hand of a clock, but suddenly glaringly visible, an unarmed invasion on the Côte d'Azur, with sextuple the number hitting the beach as the Allies flung ashore in Normandy.

The result is stunning. From the beginning of the armada's journey, the latter-day West responds with its trademark modern befuddlement, a multinational circus of self-injury, and governmental paralysis. Weeks of manic game-playing finally give way to panic. When the landfall of the Ganges ships looms, reality sets in. The coastal population flees north in wild disorder, every man for himself, against a countercurrent of all manner of nihilists and anarchists filtering south for a sort of anomic welcome party *qua* death-to-the-West jamboree and looting spree. In real life a French government would more likely have attempted, amid the usual humanitarian posing, a better-planned cordon that becomes a gigantic (and no doubt ultimately disastrous) refugee camp, instead of the novel's dichotomy of either opening fire or surrendering, but the book is fiction, and it takes fictional turns.

Some of those turns would make almost any reader wince, regardless of his outlook. The novel's severity stems from its author's realization of a truth the latter-day West resists facing: Mass migration, when it involves the flooding of another people's territory, is a low-grade form of war. That might not be the average migrant's intent, but it's the combined effect, and it has serious negative ramifications for the people who are ceding their terrain and watching demographic realities turn against them. Ask the Sioux.

The Camp of the Saints thus takes place in a setting of war, albeit unconventional war, but still with war's quintessential aspects: fifth columns, invasion, occupation, collaborators, colonization, and the subjugation or submergence of the vanquished. The West's last defenders in the Village fully realize there's a war on, and they react with typical wartime Us vs. Them attitudes when their backs are against the wall.

The author's own awareness that he was writing

a futurist tale about a slow-motion war — the prelude to which his country was already in, if it didn't change course — similarly resulted in some percussive narrative strokes. The portrayal of how the Ganges horde conduct themselves aboard ship at times seems almost as appalling as the Mau Mau tribal rituals in Robert Ruark's ammoniac novel *Something of Value*. It's hyperbole to be sure, but a fictional device aimed to dispel any notion that being overrun by this bunch is acceptable. Given that it's sensationalist fiction, it doesn't glare so much when compared with the British propaganda campaign that churned out fake atrocity stories of German soldiers tossing Belgian babies into the air and catching them on their bayonets in World War I, as well as the first Bush administration's "Nayirah story" 75 years later, which painted Iraqi troops as rampaging berserkers who tore through the nurseries in Kuwaiti hospitals, pitching babies out of their incubators. American WWI poster art depicting the "Huns" as simian monsters was another repugnant wartime touch.

In the new foreword, Raspail says that in fiction the only sanction on creative license should be that of one's audience. In non-fiction writings he has given balanced thought to the moral quandary in which the West finds itself. The questions have no neat answer.



Besides all three forewords, the new sixth American edition also carries an afterword Raspail wrote in 1982, among the further supplemental material. Together they provide a time-lapse look into the development of his views at various intervals. His pessimism tapers slightly as the decades go by. The largest glimmer of hope arises in his more recent remarks, where he takes note of signs of a nascent spiritual revival in the West.

The novel is as much about the West's spiritual crisis as about mass migration. Raspail has always recognized that the latter-day West's problem at bottom has been a malady of the spirit. Hand in hand with decades of religious decline in the 20th century, the collapse of many Westerners' belief in the value of their civilization has brought on the suicidalism the novel so vividly depicts. The effects jut out in the headlines every day.

The suicidalists who can be found aiding and abetting the non-Western influx at every turn, Raspail calls Big Other. A key area in his examination of them is how pro- and anti-Westerners divide on the too often unrecognized distinction between France and the French Republic. On that point, the new preface incorporates some of the thoughts he expressed in that 2004 *Figaro* essay. Noting how the French anti-Westerners have a different set of values, what he wrote in *Le Figaro* was this:

Even if I can bring myself to credit them with a degree of sincerity, I have trouble accepting the idea that these are my countrymen. I feel the word *traitors* poking up, but there's another explanation: They confuse France with the Republic. Heaven knows you can use "republican values" to mean anything you want, but that's not the way it works when you talk about France. France is above all a country of flesh and blood. The Republic, on the other hand, is nothing but a form of government, to them synonymous with ideology, ideology with a capital "I," ideology of major proportions. It seems to me, essentially, that they're betraying the former for the latter.

There he put his finger on it: What appeals to anti-Western Frenchmen about the country they're living in isn't the blood-and-soil nation itself, but only the universalism of the present-day government, which subserves a set of idealistic political abstractions that suit the Left's purposes. In contrast, pro-Western Frenchmen feel most deeply connected to France's hallowed ground and its historical people (whose defining qualities are a matter on which Raspail cites de Gaulle), and consider the government's primary mission to be the defending of that people and their territory. This sets up a situation in which the two main groups in the country hold mutually exclusive orders of priorities in what they expect governance to do. Indeed, these two orders of priorities are not only mutually exclusive, they're actually mutually annihilatory. A definitive victory by either one means the end of the other side's operating conditions.

Those "orders of priorities" amount to *loyalties*, which leads back to Raspail's consideration of the word *traitors* for the faction who are working to scuttle France. On that, it's worth noting that the matter of treason can hinge on one's perspective. In the case of the pro- and anti-Western French, each is in effect a gang of renegades relative to its opposite number. Humanist Frenchmen whose primary allegiance is to abstract "republican values" that undermine France are *ipso facto* traitors to the historical nation and its people, while those same humanists (invariably globalists and "citizens of the world" through and through) view pro-Western Frenchmen essentially as enemies of the human species.

Those two sets of loyalties are in chasmic and irreconcilable conflict, meaning that the groups who hold them are incompatible with each other inside the same borders. Functionally they're two different peoples, and to borrow terms from U.S. history, it's self-evident that they don't belong under the same government with each other. That is to say, they don't belong inside the same polity, especially under conditions of demo-

cratic-style governance, which pits them against each other directly in the public arena. The two need to be in separate countries, because where the pursuit of happiness is concerned, each would be far happier without the other's presence fouling up the way they want to arrange their fundamental affairs.

An exact parallel exists in the United States: Of the two large factions, one — call this group the Americans, for we need to recognize the distinction — holds primary loyalties to the historical American civilization that existed even before the Declaration of Independence formalized that *de facto* nation's existence. The other large faction — call them the USAns* — gives their primary loyalties to a utopian set of abstract political propositions that they claim are the essence of the USA. (The Proposition Nation crowd would of course — some out of fuzzy thinking, and some out of disingenuousness in an attempt to exploit sentimental word associations — state that their propositions are "the essence of America," but that's a misappropriation of the term, owing to a holdover from the days when America and the USA actually did more or less correspond. The USA has since diverged from America, and the misuse of these words as if they were still interchangeable is a constant aggravating factor in the incoherency of the national dialogue, now more like the national shouting match, between two awakening nationalities roughly reflected in the famous post-2016 demographic map showing Trumpland and the Clinton Archipelago.)

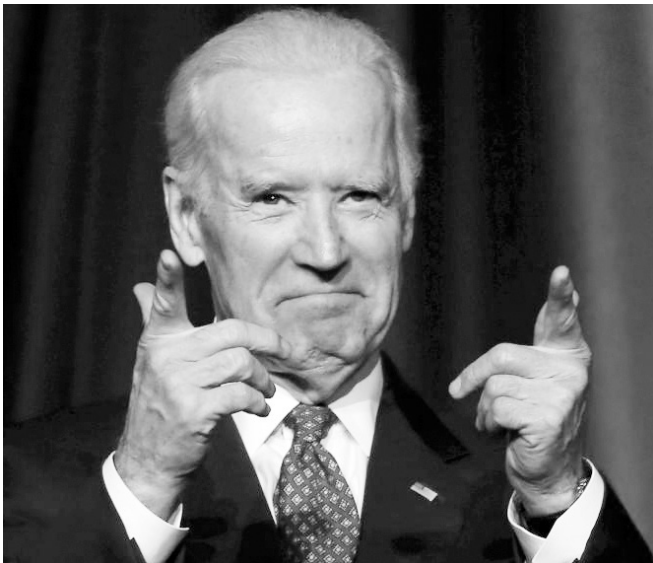
Exactly as Raspail describes in France, the Left in the U.S. is entirely about ideology, in their case the systematizing of humanist idealism. Abstract propositions hold great allure for idealists because in contrast to the stubborn realities of human nature, when it comes to ideology the sky's the limit. Ideology is a blank check that empowers dreamers to do anything they want in pursuit of their perfect world. It also provides moral cover for the consistent failures that result from an unrealistic assessment of mortals' potential for perfectibility, because in the absence of good results, visionaries take credit for their intentions. Their fallback position is always that their program didn't fail, it just wasn't *implemented* properly, and thus We Must Try Harder ... redouble our efforts ... think in the long term ... "the big picture," etc.

As for prime examples of Big Other, the Paris politicians Raspail mentions who undermine the French population's resistance to its own submergence will be unfamiliar to Americans, but the latter-day USA is teeming with its own equivalents of Laurent Fabius. To pick but one: former Vice President Joe Biden. When it comes to dispensing the purple kool-aid to Americans,

*four syllables pronounced *USA-əns*

Suicide Joe doesn't take a back seat to anybody. Dishing up the usual clichés and wishful assertions of U.S. exceptionalism, in 2015 Biden gushed that the USA has an advantage “unlike any other country in the world,” and that that’s “an unrelenting stream of immigration. Non-stop. Non-stop. Folks like me, who are Caucasian of European descent, for the first time, in 2017, we’ll be in an absolute minority in the United States of America. Absolute minority. Fewer than 50 percent of the people in America, from then and on, will be white European stock. That’s not a bad thing. That’s a source of our strength.... It’s not merely that we’re a melting pot, but we’re *proud* to be a melting pot.... [I]nclusion counts. Let me say that again: Inclusion counts. Inclusion counts.... And the wave still continues. It’s not going to stop. Nor should we want it to stop. As a matter of fact, it’s one of the things I think we can be most proud of.”*

Channeled through the vice president of the USA, that was the voice of Big Other.



Former Vice President Joseph Biden

Americans listening to Biden’s repetitive chant about how lucky, lucky, lucky they are to be submerging in a sea of non-Western migration are entitled to wonder this: If sinking below 50 percent of the population is such a blessing, then *at just exactly what percentage does submergence become not so beneficial anymore?*

*opening remarks to the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, Feb. 17, 2015, viewable at around the 10½-minute mark in C-Span’s coverage:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?324394-2/vice-president-joe-biden-remarks-extremism-terrorism>

30 percent? 20? 10, 9, 8, 7, 6? At what point does submergence become drowning? And are we even allowed ever to ask that question, without Big Other’s smear-bund accusing us of “hate” and all the rest of it? After all, dropping below 50 percent of the population didn’t work out so well for the American Indians (whom no one denounced as “haters” or “racists” for exhibiting resistance to the high number of aliens who were flooding in on them), nor for anyone else in the history of this planet. Predictably enough, the lower their percentage fell, the more their world was turned upside down, with severe negative impacts on their way of life, and even on their elementary physical survival.

Undoubtedly, pro-alien collaborators to whom one posed that question would simply dismiss it out of hand with the glib assertion that *this* time things are going to be different, i.e., “everything’s gonna work out fine,” as a delusive humanist ballad from 1970 intoned. Then they’d hurry to cut off any further discussion.

One asks oneself whether Caucasian USAs who utter statements as fatuous as Biden’s really believe what they’re saying, or whether they just mouth such things reflexively, from habit, because they know the media and the rest of Big Other’s organs will smother them with kisses for it, but would flay them for saying anything to the contrary? Raspail observes that not all of those who strike poses of all-embracing humanitarianism actually feel that way in their hearts. He tells of personal conversations with high officials who talk one way when the cameras and microphones are on, yet voice much more realistic views in private. In any case, whatever be their motives, the effect is the same: constant reinforcement of the pro-alien mindset, which enjoys undying appeal among idealists for the self-gratification they get out of endless virtue-signaling through high-sounding bombast about compassion and liberality and global social justice, while the importation of aliens functions as an instrument for bringing down the curtain on the West.

Given Raspail’s age, 93 now, the long new *Big Other* preface will likely stand as his parting shot in major comments on his best-known work. In his remarks he takes note of some ways in which his projection was not dead-center, notably his underestimation of the Islamic component. The portrayal of the West’s reaction to its own inundation, however, remains as accurate as ever. There the book struck on something of world-historical importance. As Max Gallo eventually conceded, *The Camp of the Saints* is indeed a substantially prophetic book. *Big Other* is its author’s reflections four decades on. ■