

‘The Camp of the Saints’ Revisited

Modern critics have justified the message of a 1973 novel on mass immigration

K.C. McALPIN

Since Donald Trump’s election as president, an obscure 1973 novel by French author Jean Raspail, *The Camp of the Saints*, has attracted more media attention, often bordering on the hysterical, than at any time since it was published over four decades ago. Why would an aging work of fiction attract such a sudden burst of attention?

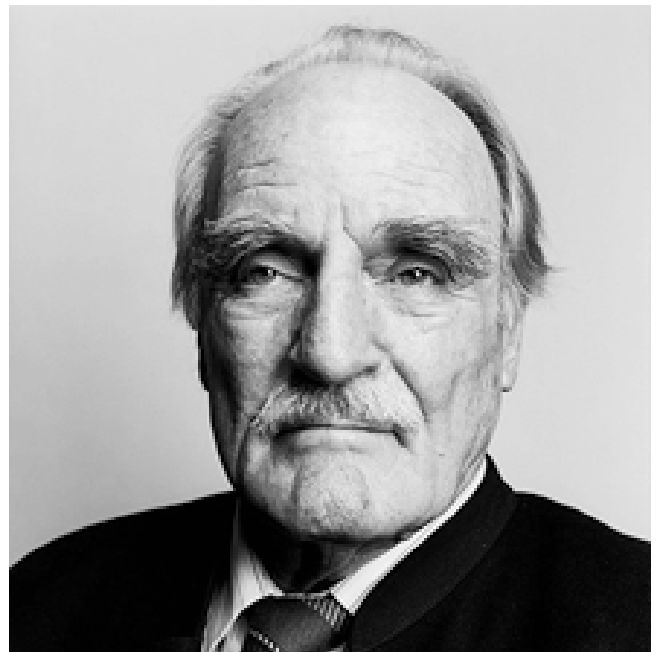
For one thing, the book imagines a massive invasion of Western Europe by Third World immigrants that almost exactly predicted the massive wave of Middle Eastern and African refugees and economic migrants that swarmed into Europe over the past two years. That theme, and the fact that the mass migration amplified the popularity of Donald Trump’s tough stance on illegal immigration during the campaign, is enough to give left-ist elites a case of the vapors.

Adding to their fury, populist leaders in Europe and the U.S. have praised the book. When the Syrian refugee crisis began, Marine Le Pen said, “I invited the French to read, or read again, *The Camp of the Saints*, by Jean Raspail, because the images of cargo ships throwing hundreds of migrants — that’s *The Camp of the Saints*.” And liberal lightning rod and Trump advisor Steve Bannon has repeatedly cited the book, describing an “almost *Camp of the Saints*-type invasion into Central and then Western and Northern Europe.”

Predictably, in an effort to smear nationalist leaders like Le Pen and Bannon, left-wing journalists have tried to portray the book as a racist screed. Matt Taibbi wrote in *Rolling Stone* that the book was “so dumb it makes *The Turner Diaries* seem like *Huck Finn*.” *The Intercept* called it “a cornerstone of the utmost fringes of white racism.” The book has recently been described as “really racist” (*The Week*), “staggeringly racist” (*Slate*), “unbelievably racist” (*Bustle*), “violently racist” (*Politico*), and “rabidly racist” (*Huffington Post*).

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In the interest of full disclosure, The Social Contract Press — a project of US Inc., where I work — has published an English translation of the novel since 1994. Back then, US Inc.’s founder, John Tanton, called Raspail “twenty years ahead of his time,” and predicted “history will judge him more kindly than have some of his contemporaries.” Forty-four years and tens of millions of migrants later, refugees and changing demographics are widely viewed as an existential threat to Europe’s historic identity. But while more and more people recognize Raspail’s amazing foresight, establishment liberal opinion attempts to demonize and distort the book’s message more egregiously than ever.



Jean Raspail

In their December 1994 *Atlantic Monthly* cover article, “Must It Be the Rest Against the West?” Yale history professor Paul Kennedy and his then-Ph.D. student (and current Columbia professor) Matthew Connelly described the book as “one of the most disturbing novels of the late twentieth century.” They took its message seriously and argued it “will take more than talk to prove the prophet wrong.”

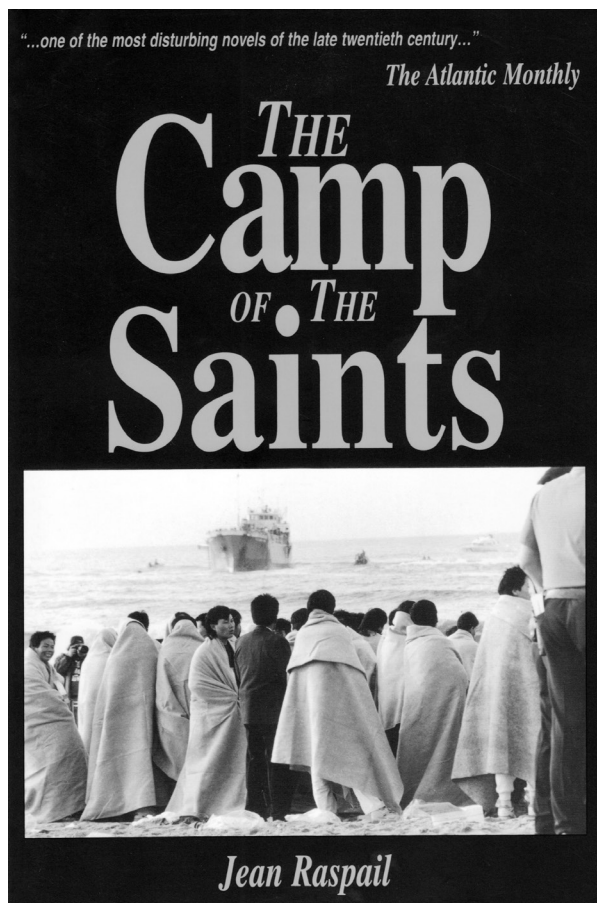
The Camp of the Saints is not racist, but Raspail mocked those who believed that racism “practiced by whites — heinous and inexcusable, whatever its motives — and that practiced by blacks — quite justified, whatever its excesses” should be able to morally blackmail Europeans to replace their historic population. In the years since its publication, academics have repeatedly redefined racism and come up with concepts like “white privilege” and “intersectionality” to justify this double standard.

Virtually every recent hit piece claims that the book dehumanized refugees through its rhetoric. Raspail indeed described refugees as “wretched creatures” who were “starting to rot,” but he did so to emphasize their desperation and poor state, not to insult them. After all, Emma Lazarus’s paean to immigration on the Statue of Liberty non-ironically described immigrants

as “wretched refuse.” Admittedly, some of his imagery is exaggerated, but every dystopian novel uses hyperbole to make a point.

And *The Camp of the Saints*’ point was not to dehumanize the Third World, but to criticize Western liberals who were “righteous in their loathing of anything and everything that smacked of present-day Western society, and boundless in their love of whatever might destroy it.”

Raspail identified journalists as among the worst perpetrators of this suicidal ethos. He wrote how through “constant bludgeoning by the press ... the notion of self-defense ... was nipped in the bud.” By responding to legitimate concerns about mass immigration that Raspail raised in his book with monotonous and uninformed smears, *The Camp of the Saints* critics simply show that history is proving him right. ■



THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS

By Jean Raspail

The Social Contract Press

quality softcover, 316pp., \$13.50

“The nations are rising from the four corners of the earth,’ Raspail has the man say, ‘and their number is like the sand of the sea. They will march up over the broad earth and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city...’ Raspail is particularly effective here in capturing the platitudes of official announcements, the voices of ordinary people, the tone of statements by concerned bishops, and so on. The book also seems realistic in its recounting of the crumbling away of resolve by French sailors and soldiers when they are given the order to repel physically — to shoot or torpedo — this armada of helpless yet menacing people. It would be much easier, clearly, to confront a military foe, such as a Warsaw Pact nation. The fifty-one (short) chapters are skillfully arranged so that the reader’s attention is switched back and forth, within a two-month time frame, between the anxious debates in Paris and events attending the slow and grisly voyage of the Calcutta masses. The denouement, with the French population fleeing their southern regions and army units deserting in droves, is especially dramatic.”

—*The Atlantic Monthly*

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