

France: Zemmour as a morbid symptom

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Far-right French pundit-turned-politician Eric Zemmour has recently surged in presidential polls, sparking speculation about the upcoming election. Ugo Palheta urges against such hasty analyses, reflecting instead on the broader trends in French politics which Zemmour's rise exemplifies

Benefiting from huge media coverage, the far right and a mainstream right drifting towards it now seem to have a new champion for the presidential election next spring in the person of Éric Zemmour. If it is not certain that his rise in the polls will continue or be confirmed, we must nevertheless take the specific threat he represents seriously and try to understand what his success expresses.

Faced with Éric Zemmour's rise in the polls, some on the left are inclined to think this is just a media bubble and bide their time, waiting or hoping it will explode on its own. Alternatively, it could be seen as yet another manifestation of the 'Pétainist transcendental' that Alain Badiou analysed: a 'historical form of popular consciousness in our tired old country, when the silent sense of a crisis or danger, leads people to succumb to the proposals of an adventurer who promises them protection and the restoration of the old order.' The problem is that this characterisation developed by the philosopher in relation to Sarkozy could be applied to many people who present themselves as saviours - Macron as well as Zemmour or Le Pen. So it does not help us grasp the specific meaning of the resistible - at least at this stage - rise of Éric Zemmour.

My own point of view is that this expresses some major trends in French politics. These pre-existed Zemmour, and are not about to disappear (as some people imagine that the advance of the far right was stopped by the poor showing of the FN/RN in the last regional elections). We have to face up to these, whatever happens with his likely candidacy in the next election. The transformation (under way) of Zemmour's media capital into political capital, however, poses new problems and creates new threats - as we shall see. The success he is currently experiencing is a reminder, in the specific context of the France, of dynamics we have seen at work in recent years in other countries, in particular the United States and Brazil, where grotesque and dangerous figures (Trump and Bolsonaro) have managed to shake up parties of the right and come to power through the electoral process.

The aim here, then, is to provide some keys for reading 'Zemmourism', it being understood that - contrary to his 'great man' claims and what his worshippers imagine - it is not in his personality, his mind or his talent that one must look for the source of the polling success we currently observe. On the contrary, the nullity of his character brings us back, in a way, to the enigma that Marx sought to shed light on in his *Eighteenth Brumaire*: how can such a mediocre being occupy the front of the media stage and shake up the political game in one of the world's leading capitalist powers? The hypothesis defended here is that Zemmour is only the personal name of a process of fascisation and, as such, must first be interrogated as a symptom - a 'morbid symptom', in Gramsci's expression.

1. Media enslaved to the logic of profit

The most obvious aspect of the problem is that Zemmour is a media construct. This does not just date from the creation of the Bolloré empire, which has made the ideologue – despite two convictions for incitement to racial hatred – its main attraction on the 24-hour ‘news’ channel CNews.

It should be remembered that, long before Zemmour started on CNews, he was launched nearly twenty years ago on ITélé (the forerunner of CNews), in a daily debate with Christophe Barbier that could have been highly confrontational, and then especially by Laurent Ruquier, who played the role of Dr Frankenstein when he made Zemmour the pivot of his prime-time programme ‘On n’est pas couché’. Ruquier may well regret having contributed to the creation of the ‘Zemmour phenomenon’; he does not question the reasons why he and the show’s producer (Catherine Barma) chose Zemmour and kept him on the air for several years, i.e. the logic of ‘buzz’ and ratings at all costs, and therefore of profit (pocketed by both Barma’s production company and Ruquier in the form of huge salaries).

The creation of this media character can even be traced back to the publication of *Le Premier Sexe*, a masculinist manifesto for which Zemmour plundered certain ‘ideas’ developed before him by the neo-fascist ideologue Alain Soral, notably concerning the ‘feminisation of society’ and the ‘devirilisation of men’. In this book, he asserted the congenital inferiority of women and the necessary domination of men (secretly desired by women, according to the saloon-bar psychoanalysis developed by Zemmour and Soral).

In all likelihood, the publication of this book was deliberately calibrated by Zemmour for a wide media response, with its obvious excesses and provocations. In the early 2000s, Zemmour was still a rather obscure political journalist at *Le Figaro*, but in his quest for rapid social ascent he skilfully played the media game – as Gérard Noiriel has shown [1] – and became what is known as ‘good media fodder’: divisive, of course, but you don’t get something for nothing.

The main point about Zemmour as a media construct has been made by Pauline Perrenot on *Acrimed*. [2] But it goes further: Zemmour is an expression of the almost total annihilation of public debate at a time when so-called ‘debate’ programmes have mushroomed yet the conditions for genuine rational and pluralist debate are never (or almost never) met. If many editorialists and politicians can loudly exclaim that Zemmour represents an elevation of the public debate, it is because this has fallen so low that a few vague historical references (which, moreover, are more a matter of the ‘national novel’ than of history proper), a few generally false statistics, and a few quotations learnt by heart, are enough to make a pedant into a ‘great intellectual’.

There are long-standing trends here: certainly, the weakness of political and ideological pluralism in both the private media (all in the hands of billionaires) and the public media; but also the fact that editocrats and media intellectuals (BHL, Finkielkraut, Comte-Sponville, etc.), in other words intellectuals who owe their entire fame to the media and not to any work that has won recognition in the intellectual field, define the intellectual agenda (what needs to be debated) and are called upon in the media to tell the ‘truth’ about the transformations of French society, largely marginalising genuine researchers and intellectual journals.

It should also be noted that the ‘Zemmour phenomenon’ explodes the illusion that web media and social networks have made the so-called traditional media (TV and radio in particular) obsolete, and that we do not need their radical transformation. Zemmour is a pure product of these traditional media (*Le Figaro* and RTL in particular), and we can see from his example that a large part of what is promoted, shared and discussed on social networks or web media comes from television and radio programmes, with the ‘new media’ (already not so new any more) playing a role of sounding board in this.

Finally, it should be stressed that not only do the polls at this stage essentially measure the media exposure of candidates (or, in Zemmour's case, of someone who has not yet declared himself a candidate), they constitute a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: Zemmour's omnipresence in the media makes his poll ratings rise, and in return this rise makes his political success a tangible possibility, making him progress further in the polls and justifying a still greater presence in the media (especially as this rise can make him appear as a 'useful vote' for the 'patriotic camp', i.e. the far right old and new). In any case, the mainstream media bear the maximum responsibility here.

2. An alternative for the bourgeoisie

Zemmour is not just a media and polling artefact; he also represents a possible alternative for certain sections of the bourgeoisie. The bosses do not like uncertainty, and they never put all their eggs in one basket. In the US, the capitalist class finances - usually according to the specific interests of its various fractions - both the Republican and the Democratic parties (Clinton and Biden even received more money than Trump). Similarly, in Germany in the 1930s, German capitalists financed all right-wing and far-right parties, including the Nazis.

Now, in the state of crisis of political representation that France is experiencing, which involves a rupture of the link between representatives and represented, manifested by the disappearance of political parties that were solidly implanted in society, such as the Socialist Party, the Gaullist right or the Communist Party, the propertied classes are trying to ensure, by all means necessary, that there is a variety of agents capable of defending the social order and favouring the accumulation of capital. This can be done by promoting the emergence of figures who undeniably belong to the propertied classes and defend their interests, but whose reputation is not tainted by membership of discredited parties.

Macron is obviously one such agent, and we know how, in 2016-17, he benefited from the mobilisation of the media and the capitalist class, without which he would have had no chance of winning. Over the course of his mandate, moreover, he has displayed himself ever more clearly as the political embodiment of the party of Order, in particular by ferociously repressing social movements (the Gilets Jaunes especially). This has involved a far-reaching transforming of his electorate, attracting to him segments of the traditional right (who had voted for Fillon) while retaining the more right-wing segments of the former PS electorate. It has worked so far, and there is no indication, at the moment, that his gamble will be lost in 2022.

The problem is that by uniting, in Frédéric Lordon's expression, the 'uninhibited right' (of Gérard Darmanin and Jean-Michel Blanquer) and the 'inhibited right' of Gérard Collomb, François de Rugy or Manuel Valls, Macron has abolished the left/right alternation that had been so successful for the French bourgeoisie since 1981 in imposing neoliberal policies and removing any perspective of rupture, in a country that is nevertheless marked by broad social protests and a strong aspiration to maintain the social gains of the post-war period.

And, even if the bourgeoisie fundamentally has nothing to fear from the FN/RN (Marine Le Pen has never stopped giving pledges of good economic behaviour to attract the LR electorate: reduction of the national debt, no exit from the euro, no increase in the minimum wage, etc.), the big French bosses have never considered the FN/RN as a serious candidate, still less as 'their party'. For Bolloré and other sectors of the propertied class (Zemmour has ever more support from the big bosses), this is an opportunity to promote an alternative to Macron who is not associated with the name Le Pen (considered too toxic, and therefore more likely to provoke mobilisations, thus uncertainty, etc.), even if the former is certainly still the preference of the majority of the French capitalist class.

From this point of view, Zemmour is doing everything he can to promote an offensive bourgeois

policy no different from what LREM and LR are proposing: raising the retirement age, lowering taxes on corporate profits, lowering employers' contributions, etc. The other part of his 'social' policy, which is not yet clear, will certainly concern immigrants, since Zemmour already says he will finance these tax cuts by depriving these of all social assistance, abolishing their medical support, etc., which is in no way different from what the FN/RN is proposing. A fusion of neo-liberalism and neo-fascism, in short.

3. The rise of conspiratorial racism

It has often been said, over the last twenty years, that racist speech has become commonplace in the mainstream media and among political 'leaders'. This seems undeniable: the authoritarian, xenophobic and racist obsessions of the far right, around insecurity, Islam and immigration, have taken on a media and political role in the last two decades that they did not have before, particularly focusing on the question of so-called 'sensitive' neighbourhoods, with the right hammering out their neocolonial rhetoric of 'reconquest' (republican, we are told), if not actually that of the Crusades.

The novelty of the last five years is the appearance in the mainstream media - 24-hour 'news' channels and commercial radio stations - of a swarm of far-right pseudo-journalists (from *Valeurs actuelles*, *Causeur*, *L'Incorrect*, etc.) and the quasi-permanent presence of FN/RN spokespersons alongside old veterans of the reactionary and racist right (Rioufol, Thérard, etc.) who, in contact with this young guard, are becoming increasingly radicalised themselves. This is true of Bolloré's channels but is by no means limited to them; you need only think of BFM or LCI, or Alexander Devecchio's arrival on France Inter.

This obvious trivialisation of authoritarian and racist discourse, promoted by the state when ministers go to war against 'migratory subversion', 'separatism' or 'Islamism', when a minister for the interior justifies a law targeting Muslims by referring to anti-Semitic remarks made by Napoleon in 1806, or when a president of the Republic gives an exclusive interview to *Valeurs actuelles* (recently condemned by the courts for racist abuse), is compounded by a radicalisation of which Zemmour is both the vector and the product. Two examples will suffice.

In the 1980s and 1990s, denunciation of so-called 'anti-white racism' was solely the work of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the FN. From the 2000s onwards, certain ideologists - around Jacques Julliard, Pierre-André Taguieff and Alain Finkielkraut - have been spreading the idea that, alongside other forms of racism (anti-Semitism, anti-Arab racism, etc.), there is such a thing as 'anti-white racism'. It seems that we have entered a new stage: 'anti-white racism' as a form of racism among others (which already made no more sense than talking about anti-male sexism) has been succeeded by the idea that we live in an 'anti-white racist and communitarian regime, an inverted apartheid' (the words of Michel Onfray). [3]

The other example, connected to the previous one, is that of Islamophobia. While some people began in the 1990s and early 2000s to denounce Islam and Muslims - as many ideologues and politicians still do - on the pretext that they threaten 'living together' through their 'communitarianism' or 'separatism', we have now seen the development of a much more aggressive version of Islamophobia, according to which Muslims aspire to subjugate French society, to destroy the Republic, France or the West (take your pick), to dissolve national or civilisational identity, etc.

This discourse, once confined to the margins (i.e. the far right), has become so commonplace that a writer so central to the French literary field as Michel Houellebecq was able to write a successful book about it (*Submission*), which is considered salutary and visionary by Islamophobes of all stripes (in France and elsewhere).

Let's remember that this book imagined the victory of a Muslim candidate in the 2022 presidential election, and the subsequent transformation of France into an Islamic Republic. That was a strange prediction, given that a whole media and publishing industry of Islamophobia has developed over the last twenty years in France and that the main presidential candidates of both right and far right have recently been constantly outbidding each other on this issue. The book sold almost 350,000 copies within a month, topping the sales charts in France and Germany as well as Italy (where Fallaci's violently racist books had already sold several million copies).

These myths of an Islamic plot to subjugate Europe are not new. The far right has been feeding on them since the 1970s: from Jean Raspail's *Camp des saints* (a favourite book of Marine Le Pen), defending a preventive genocide against non-whites suspected of wanting to commit a 'white genocide', to Renaud Camus and his 'great replacement'. Despite their differences, they function in a similar way and play an analogous role to the anti-Semitic mythologies of the 'world Jewish conspiracy'. They are in fact two varieties of conspiratorial racism. [4]

In an important book published recently, [5] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi has clearly shown the function of this form of racism: to avoid 'civil war', the 'disintegration of the French nation', the 'destruction of Western civilisation' or 'white genocide' (depending on the variant chosen by the particular far-right tendency), it is necessary to use the strongest means possible, to break with 'so-called human rights' (i.e. by dehumanising certain populations considered to be a threat) and call into question the rule of law: not only stopping all forms of immigration from the global South (abolishing once and for all the right to asylum in respect of certain countries and populations, abrogating the right to family reunification, etc.), refusing to grant rights to migrants who are here (amplifying what has already been going on for years), but also to 'clean up the estates' (an expression Zemmour has used several times) and engage in 'remigration' (i.e. mass deportation).

It is no coincidence that Zemmour could explicitly envisage the deportation of millions of Muslims. When an Italian journalist asked him in 2014 if this is what he was suggesting, he replied: 'I know it's unrealistic, but history is surprising. Who would have said in 1940 that a million pieds-noirs, twenty years later, would have left Algeria to return to France?' But this is in no way surprising, since Zemmour considers migrants from the global South as thieves, rapists and murderers. And let's not pretend that Marine Le Pen wouldn't go as far, since she could say at a meeting in 2012: 'How many Mohamed Merahs are there in the boats and planes that arrive in France every day full of immigrants? How many Mohamed Merahs among the children of these non-assimilated immigrants?'

It is important to be as clear as possible on this point: the political victory of this conspiratorial racism would potentially take us far beyond the systemic discrimination that Muslims in France already suffer, even beyond the institutionalisation of this discrimination. What lies at the end of the road is a vast operation of ethnic cleansing (which the history of the 20th century has abundantly shown could take the form of not only mass deportation but also genocidal massacre), as well as an all-out repression of the social and political left (in all its components, from the most radical to the most moderate), and of anti-racist, feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, insofar as all these, according to the neo-fascists, constitute a 'foreigners' party', complicit in the destruction of France, of the West, of whites, but also of men.

The attacks committed by far-right militants - in particular those of Breivik in 2011 against socialist youth activists in Norway and of Tarrant in 2019 against Muslims in New Zealand (which in each case resulted in dozens of deaths), as well as the far-right attacks regularly foiled in France in recent years - clearly illustrate where the paranoid and racist catastrophism fostered by Islamophobic conspiracy theory is leading, and what its logical targets are.

4. An anti-egalitarian ideological backlash

People sometimes comfort themselves by imagining that Zemmour and his ilk only represent the last gasp of an old world in the process of perishing. That follows from a naive progressivism according to which humanity necessarily moves – even in a somewhat chaotic way – towards greater equality and respect for fundamental human rights.

This is, in fact, the view of Zemmour and his supporters, who see themselves as resisting immense forces and the steamroller of an ideology threatening to break down traditional values and inherited identities. However, it is enough to compare the very small presence of anti-racist activists or intellectuals in the mainstream media with the growing presence of far-right ideologues to see how grotesque this narrative is. This political current exhibits a constant tendency to exaggerate the power of its adversary, to better justify an extremist policy of restoration or, to be more precise, of counter-revolution.

The fact remains that there is clearly an element of truth here: Zemmour does appear in France as the most aggressive version of a reaction to defend privileges, particularly those of gender and race, against the rise of feminist and anti-racist ideas and movements. For example, it is hard not to notice how the intensification of media and political Islamophobia over the last two years followed the largest demonstration – numerically and politically – against racism in France in the last twenty years, specifically racism targeting Muslims, on 10 November 2019.

Insofar as this demonstration had been called not only by Muslim organisations and organisations defending Muslims, but also by most of the social and political left, the response of the political authorities and the far right was to weaken the autonomous pole spearheaded by the Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (this was done by the dissolution of this organisation at the end of 2020 without any serious justification) and to disqualify a left that had (finally!) decided to participate in a mobilisation against Islamophobia, dragging it through the mud with accusations of communitarianism and anti-Semitism, complicity with terrorism, etc. [6]

Similarly, it is not contradictory to note both an advance of the feminist movement and ideas, marked in France by the success of demonstrations against sexist and sexual violence, as well as large book sales for feminist publications, and the attraction aroused by an ideologue whose staunch masculinism is well known. Here, again, Zemmour is the embodiment of an anti-egalitarian backlash that has accompanied the fourth feminist wave like a shadow: by denouncing a so-called 'tyranny of minorities', the aim of him and his compeers is to conceal the persistence of structures of male domination while silencing once and for all movements that destabilise the hetero-patriarchal order.

Reactionary forces have not stood idly by in the face of powerful feminist mobilisations worldwide or the huge global movement against racist police violence. And we should not consider the culture war they are waging as just a historical blip: it is aimed at annihilation and will only end if it is stopped. Do we need to remind ourselves that, in the case of both anti-Semitism and white supremacy, it was following democratic conquests, precisely in a logic of backlash and resentment, that some of the most violently racist and reactionary ideologies and movements were born and developed (in particular, the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and the *völkisch* movement in Germany, of which the Nazis were a continuation)?

The politics that Zemmour seeks to popularise is not just about denouncing the anti-racist and feminist theories (and practices) developed over the past decades. In his sights is the very idea of equality and fundamental human rights. It is no coincidence that Zemmour regularly quotes one of the main counter-revolutionary ideologues of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Joseph de Maistre, in particular to justify his rejection of any form of universalism in favour of an ethnic

nationalism ('I am like Joseph de Maistre, I don't know man in general, I have only met Italians, French, English, etc.').

Zemmour is therefore not only obsessed with May '68, the fetish that former president Nicolas Sarkozy so often waved around, but also with 1789 and the French Revolution, which he sees as the origin of French decline. This obsession places him fully and undeniably in the whole anti-Enlightenment tradition, identified very well by the historian of fascism Zeev Sternhell, which targets both the abstract universalism proper to bourgeois modernity and liberal democracy and the revolutionary humanism championed since the 19th century by the workers' movement in all its components, as well as by most anti-colonial liberation movements.

Need we recall that this point of convergence between the fascist and the traditionalist far right was summed up by Goebbels a few months after the Nazis came to power, when he claimed that the Nazis had 'erased 1789 from history'?

5. The mainstream right's drift to extremism

Much has been said over the last twenty years, since the rise of Sarkozy in the early 2000s, that racist speech has become mainstreamed. But it cannot be said that this was entirely new: Jacques Chirac was elected president of the Republic (in 1995) only a few years after having sounded off at a meeting - to great laughter - about the 'noise and smell' of immigrant families. Similarly, a former president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - could, in 1991, equate immigration with an 'invasion' and propose to replace the 'right of soil' for the acquisition of French nationality with the 'right of blood'.

But it is true that Sarkozy's call for the right to 'drop its hang-ups' has led it to go further, and has been heard by its troops and its omnipresent editorialists. Although Chirac was elected by setting himself up as a bulwark against the far right, the latter's 'ideas' and language have deeply infused the right since 2002, the year that marked Sarkozy's arrival at the front of the political and media scene.

The left has become accustomed to treat this man, just sentenced to a year in prison for the illegal financing of his 2012 campaign, with irony or contempt. However, we must insist on the fact that Sarkozy was the main actor in this extremist trend, and we cannot understand the Zemmourisation of the right in all its shades (including Macronism, with the authority of the president himself), without Sarkozy's actions during the ten years of political life when he was permanently at the centre of attention (between 2002 and 2012). Before Macron went down this road, Sarkozy was the main introducer in France of a neo-liberal authoritarian populism broadly similar to Thatcherism (as brilliantly analysed by Stuart Hall).

It is important to emphasise this, because Zemmour's rise seems to be breaking down the last obstacles to a political and electoral synthesis between a mainstream right drifting towards extremism and a far right with which most of the barons of the right (and at least part of its electorate) were still reluctant to form an alliance. If Zemmour establishes himself permanently ahead of LR and FN/RN in the polls, he has every chance of winning support from these two organisations, and being able in a possible second round to accumulate the votes of their respective voters. It's not just that opportunism is structural among people whose profession is politics; it's also that the ground has been prepared by an ideological drift of the right over two decades, which brings us back to Sarkozysm. [7]

If media philosophers can call for live ammunition to be fired at the Gilets Jaunes or confess that they would more readily vote for Marine Le Pen than for Jean-Luc Mélenchon (which is not surprising for anyone with any knowledge of the absolute bankruptcy of a large part of the

intelligentsia during the interwar period), if a spokesman for LR can quietly assert that whites are undergoing 'ethnic cleansing' in working-class and immigrant neighbourhoods, and if right-wing parliamentarians can call for the dissolution of UNEF, [8] it is hard to see what could lead the right not to offer itself body and soul – that is, organisationally and ideologically – to Zemmour.

So let's not delude ourselves: in a nightmare scenario that saw Zemmour elected, he would have no trouble forming a government composed of grandees of the right and gathering a parliamentary majority. Again, this should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the history of fascist governments in the 20th century, as they always started off with more ministers from the mainstream right than the far right.

It is true that an electoral victory does not allow everything and that opposition from important sectors of the state can lead such governments to compromise their programme or their putschist ambitions (think of Trump's attempts to stay in power). The presence of a neo-fascist at the head of the state does not necessarily give him or her the political means to fascise the state, as the example of Bolsonaro – at least for now – shows. Nevertheless, what has been going on in the repressive apparatuses for several years – the seditious initiatives of the police unions, the impunity for police crimes, as well as military figures calling for confronting the '*banlieue* hordes' to prevent the 'disintegration of France' – signal that significant parts of the state are willing to go much further in an ultra-authoritarian direction and the institutionalization of racism.

Ignoring Zemmour is unfortunately not an option for anti-capitalists and social movements. If he is indeed the product of at least two decades of political and ideological transformation, and largely a monster created by the dominant media, he is now a central actor of fascisation, which we must imperatively fight as such. Nevertheless, as in the case of Trump or Le Pen, the slogan 'everything but Zemmour' is a dead end.

We'll come back to some political avenues for confronting the danger in a future article, but let's say from the outset that neo-fascism cannot be defeated without the development of bastions of anti-fascist resistance in the social body, without the unity of emancipation movements around achievable tactical objectives, allowing for victories (even partial ones) and renewed confidence in the collective struggle, without political anti-racism permeating common sense and militant practices much more than it does today, and without the emergence of a left alternative capable of engaging in a political break with authoritarian neo-liberalism. The bar is high, but do we have any choice but to take up the challenge?

Ugo Palheta is the author of numerous articles for *Contretemps*, the book *La Possibilité du fascisme* (La Découverte, 2018) and, most recently with Ludivine Bantigny, *Face à la menace fasciste* (Textuel, 2021).

Translated by **David Fernbach**

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P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] https://www.editionsladeouverte.fr/le_venin_dans_la_plume-9782348045721

[2] <https://www.acrimed.org/Zemmour-un-artefact-mediatique-a-la-Une>

[3] It should be noted that, in the mainstream media, any consistent criticism of the systemic racism suffered by non-European immigrants and their descendants is instantly accused of developing 'victim thinking', or even of succumbing to a form of 'reverse racism'. Other words have also emerged which have more or less the same meaning in the mouths of those who use them, and above all the same function (prohibiting any debate about systemic racism): 'indigenism', 'decolonialism', 'intersectionalism', 'wokism'.

[4] These two conspiracy theories are actually intertwined by certain ideologues and neo-fascist movements, who imagine it is the Jews, through figures such as George Soros, that are behind the 'great replacement' or 'white genocide' (particularly through the defence of migrants' rights). However, in the most popular narratives of the far right (but also in part of the mainstream media), Jews and the fight against anti-Semitism are generally used to support the myth of the global domination of Islam, which is seen as an evil, intangible and oppressive essence, inherently anti-Semitic and fundamentally intolerant.

[5] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi. *Antisémitisme et islamophobie. Une histoire croisée* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2021).

[6] While the left is so frequently accused of complacency with anti-Semitism, it is striking that Zemmour can be so hyped in the media while at the same time constantly deploying a negationist rhetoric that absolves Vichy, and in particular Pétain, of their responsibility in the deportation of tens of thousands of Jews (not to mention his defence of the anti-Semitic ideologue Maurras and many other statements).

[7] Gaullism has not had any substance for a long time: it exists only in a ghostly way, as an empty reference, and there is no real reason to regret it. Nevertheless, it may seem ironic that the heirs of this movement, born in the fight against Pétainist collaboration, should be so attracted to an ideologue who has made the defence of Pétain a cardinal element of his 'thought'. It takes all the reformulation of the presence of millions of Muslims as 'occupation' (or even as 'reverse colonisation') to imagine this policy as in some kind of continuity with de Gaulle's appeal of 18 June 1940.

[8] The student union UNEF has refused to fall in line with the government's ban on meetings reserved for racial minorities. - Trans.