

COMFORTABLE DISOBEDIENCE



AND



PAINFUL RESISTANCE



preface

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THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT

WHAT IS STILL GOING WRONG

« THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT UNDOUBTEDLY EXISTS, BUT IT IS STILL IN A LATENT STATE. THE TASK OF INTELLECTUALS IS TO TRANSFORM THIS LATENT FORCE INTO A DYNAMIC FORCE. » (Stefan Zweig) THIS IS INDEED EOE'S AMBITION

"FIVE YEARS AFTER THE ASSAULT ON CHARLIE, THE DANGER TO CREATORS IS LESS CENSORSHIP THAN SELF-CENSORSHIP."

Michel Guerrin, Le Monde

What has become of freedom of expression and creation, five years after the massacre that affected the editorial staff of "Charlie Hebdo"? For Michel Guerrin, editor-in-chief of "Le Monde", the nasty signs are multiplying. What remains of the spirit of "Je suis Charlie" which, five years ago, after the massacre that struck the satirical newspaper, welded nearly 4 million people together in the streets of France? Not much of it. The weekly satiric magazine has become a bunker, its new address is secret and several of its staff members live under protection. Charlie Hebdo's director, Riss, and so many others speak of a receding freedom of expression and creation. Support for a libertarian spirit is waning, especially among young people across Europe.

The New York Times set the tone in 2019 when the US daily decided to eradicate the problem: political cartoons hurt? So let us delete them. A bad sign because cartoons are a remarkable barometer of freedom. It is also a sign of a vertiginous shift at work in our Western democracies.

The danger for creators is less censorship than self-censorship.

PUTTING "PROBLEM" DEBATES ASIDE.

In her column of January 7, Charline Vanhoenacker, a Belgian female humorist put herself in the shoes of a cartoonist faced with the obsession with identity:



"I need to avoid religion, politics, sex, the handicapped, vegans... Let alone sex among religious disabled people, I won't tell you. »

Many museum and theatre creators and managers, as well as book publishers, concede that they avoid subjects that make them angry, while universities dismiss "problem" personalities and debates.

*A jubilant novel, *Mechanics of the Fall* (ed. Liana Levi, 2019), by the American Seth Greenland, depicts this new climate. If you wish to know where the America of orthodox cosmopolitan right-thinking' and communities is heading, with social networks as weapons, read this book.*

It's a novel that is full of irony, where creators indulge in self-censorship. Seth Greenland, on September 6, 2019, on France Inter: "In the United States today, the good minds of culture (les bien pensants) say that artists are only allowed to create within their culture of origin. So when I started writing this book, I said: fuck you, I have the right to write what I want. »

Greenland regrets that "nuance is dead". He doesn't take sides in his novel. Each character has his own logic. Each tries to stay correct in a complex choreography. In control. Except that between control and self-censorship the border is fragile. Michel Guerri

"POLITICAL CARTOONS ARE A BAROMETER OF FREEDOM; A SIGN OF THE DIZZYING SHIFT AT WORK IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES. » Michel Guerrin

This vertiginously topical sentence needs to be meditated at length, in the local pub as well as in the silence of our studies. It says a lot about the cowardice of today's men and women, including young Europeans.

Of all the forms of censorship, self-censorship is certainly the most pernicious, the most harmful, the one that is poisoning us, European citizens, self-proclaimed democrats at the beginning of the 21st century, the one that is succeeding the century of misfortune.

We are not, however, taking any great risk by proclaiming in our dying democracies that *the king is naked*, and it so happens that he is naked more often than the king himself. Except that Plantu, the famous French cartoonist does not go around without several bodyguards.



It is not at all the same for those daring angry young Russian men and women who, in the streets of Moscow, confront Putin's riot policemen with their bare hands, demanding more freedom, democracy, less oppression and censorship, and who risk decades in prison. Their names are Jegor Schukow (21), or Ljubow Sobol (31) and they are part of a new generation: the "fearless and blameless" Putin generation as Christian Esch depicts them in his brilliant Spiegel article *Proteste in Russland Generation furchtlos*

Zhukov embodies the recklessness of today's Russian youth. This fearlessness has led to the draconian sanctions that the regime plans to impose on him and his comrades-in-arms.

The student Yegor Zhukov, an intrepid and juvenile Russian caught in the maelstrom of a repressive apparatus has become a symbol, that of resistance to arbitrary action. Police punishments have only one purpose: to teach fear to a new generation of rebellious demonstrators.

Jegor Zhukov runs a rather intellectual and libertarian student blog on YouTube - "the state is useless it restricts individual freedom" - followed by 100,000 subscribers who are enthusiastic about non-violence.

Muscovites are outraged that this model student, calm, peaceful, coming from an honorable family, is regarded by the Russian nomenklatura as the enemy of the state. But where is this country that dares to put such a profile behind bars going?

Calling such a man a public enemy is a strong signal," says Valeriya Kassamara, his professor of political economy and vice-rector of the Higher School of Economics (HSE). She has stood as guarantor for him in court.

As a scientist, Kassamara has researched what distinguishes the Zhukov generation from her own: "The members of the Putin generation, as they call themselves, are not afraid of anything. They grew up in the calmest period Russia has ever known, protected by their parents. They were not afraid when they were in the police van after the forbidden rallies. Those of my generation would have thought : *"If I'm arrested, I'll lose my place at the university, I won't get a job, my whole life will be ruined."*

Zhukov on his blog: *"We must not let fear prevail now."*



The demonstrations in Moscow and YouTube have made Lyubov Sobol, a 31-year-old lawyer, the most famous female opposition figure in Russia. Her stubborn fight against the Putin system commands respect. This summer, Sobol staged one of the largest demonstrations ever held against the President in power for the last 20 years.

The posters of his supporters read: "*You can't ban love*". "It so happens that *Lyubov* means *love* in Russian; justice is Sobol's main objective, who is aware *that she can be jailed at any time*. And if she were to stand for election, the pressure would increase even more. Would the Putin generation have lessons to give to our western climate generation?"

DOESN'T ALL THIS HULLABALOO STRANGELY REMIND US OF MAY '68?

1. With the protest of a student and libertarian youth who was demanding the departure of a General de Gaulle worn out by ten years in power; "*Charlot ten years is enough*".
2. With German youth demonstrating in the streets of Berlin against the visit of the Schah of Iran, this illiberal tyrant supported by America.
3. With a Prague spring that saw young students taking to the streets to demand "socialism with a human face" from the Soviet occupier.
4. With American youths on campuses confronting the GIs to protest their forced enlistment in the Vietnam War.

Since 1830 student youth have always and everywhere been on the barricades for freedom, progress and against censorship which is immensely refreshing.

Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen, very gracious proclaimed sovereign of the European continent, do you hear Greta, Anuna, Carola, Olga and Ljubow, these new Antigons and so many other young men and women sounding the alarm?

Don't they embody precisely that European spirit for which Romain Rolland and his friend Zweig were already fighting in the thirties?

The European spirit undoubtedly exists, but it is still in a latent state. We have the same certainty of this as the astronomer who sees in his telescope a star



whose presence has been revealed to him by his calculations. Although the European spirit has not yet manifested itself, we know with mathematical certainty that it exists.

The task of intellectuals is to transform this latent force into a dynamic force.

They will have to try to paralyze the opposing forces that oppose it. First of all nationalism, which should be in Europe and has long been a historically classified phenomenon.

We must not miss any opportunity to point out that while nationalism, which reflects the existence of privileges, exists and cannot be denied as such, it is, in the order of values, inferior to the Europe we must achieve.

(Stefan Zweig *The European Spirit in Exile* 4 July 1936 p. 36)

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There is undoubtedly a great challenge facing European youth – including the Russian young- in the face of the *resistible* rise of populist nationalism.

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This concrete utopia does indeed exist, it has been thought about and deeply reflected upon in the last two decades, it has a very advanced program and sophisticated technological structure and it has a name: it is the educational platform Eyes of Eyes of Europe, a virtual Erasmus for our teenagers which combines the assets of Voice of America, The Open University, Arte, Euronews and new modern pedagogies.

MARC GUIOT

Brussels,

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