

Comment from Michael C H Jones

The 'Left' has always been under siege in Europe since at least 1914 when the vaunted Workers Solidarity against the imperial ambitions of the governments behind the ruling royal houses in Germany, Russia, Austria and United Kingdom to name the most hideous quickly collapsed into the slaughter fields of irrationality of the First World War, the subsequent Great Depression and the truly first global war of 1939-45.

The Right, especially its Conservative wing, and more recently in the West the fundamentalist Christian/Jewish Alliance hardening since 1945, has essentially been for either maintaining vested interests or returning to their dreams of a past era - the Monarchists in Australia are a classic example of an ethnic people standing still when the 'mother country' has well and truly changed.

The Left on the other hand has always been multicultural in its diversity at best and hopelessly divided at worst. The European Left has never been the Asian Left at one revolutionary extreme or the American Left with its all its 'armchair' qualities on the other. Even in the late 1960s the Communist Left was shattered into many factions whether Russian, Trotskyite, Chinese, Yugoslavian, Italian, Cuban, Vietnamese or variants thereof. In Australia during the 1970s the Communist Party voted to wind itself up like any other bankrupt company/organisation. The Chinese Communist Party on the other hand ideologically reinvented itself with the development of the theory of the Socialist Market and joined the US inspired WTO, something the Soviet Comrades would never have dared to do.

Western media journalists and particularly turncoat politicians and academics have been making a nice little earner from rehashed articles over my lifetime about the so-called demise of the Left - god forbid that it should ever happen. Set up false straws whether the Left under 'siege' or the Left 'rampant' and frighten the horses/masses. Ideology is dead and the unregulated market will find its equilibrium for a world of milk and honey. Everything is being nationalised and the Economy is in free-fall to disaster. Of course elements of the totalitarian/authoritarian Left love this sort of argument as they can claim credit for activities that don't and never have existed. There are careers and money to be made.

Which brings me to the alleged comments of Mr Simone and his new book - for decades now there has been a Speakers Book Promotion Circuit throughout the English speaking world to cultivate. Death of Ideology has been recycled to death of the Left - Sartre and Camus amongst others are soon to be revisited/exhumed/polished off. Throw the baby out with the bathwater.

The Left including Liberalism has always been about Ideas simply because the Left addresses Problems and seeks Solutions. It is not a 'stand-still' phenomenon. It is futuristic and humanitarian in essence despite its often self-serving and neurotic members/champions. And grappling realistically with life's fundamental issues is not a straight forward prestigious well paid series of academic lectures or TV programmes. And again believe it or not the Left comprises human beings with all their foibles and hardening of the arteries regarding Thinking.

In this context there has been a reluctance by the Left to systematically address the question of Immigration whether in Europe, the USA and even Australia. But this does not mean a roll-over to the hysteria generated by media barons and radio shock jocks. If part of the problem is the "rise of what he describes as the "sweet monster", a consumption-driven and entertainment-obsessed society in which unbridled egotism reigns and compassion for the less fortunate is considered an expensive luxury" then how does supporting the Right by penalising Muslim refugees or abandoning the Palestinians resolve the Policy challenge? Ban the burqas by all means but don't continue to impoverish/starve the children.

I have always worried about linguistic professors and essayists, whether Italian or US. Good people regularly do bad things in the name of a just cause - and it has nothing to do with being Right or Left on the political spectrum. However they ought to know, which should be a restraint on their own "ideological hypocrisy", of the long traditions of Christian and Libertarian Socialism in Europe and elsewhere in the world, indeed Bolshevism was an aberration in many ways spered by Protestant unregulated Capitalism from the late 18th century. Tarring the Left with Stalin-ism is as silly as branding the Right as Nazis.

But papers have to be sold, TV programmes produced, books sold and speaking circuits maintained. And I admit after almost 50 years of Keeping the Faith I too am about to sell out.