Term Paper for Module A 2005

Who are 'we' and who are 'they'? Discuss and show how the issue of forced migration is underwritten in the process of identity formation.

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By culture sociologists broadly mean 'the way of life of a group' and by identity they mean 'knowing who you are'. Identity can be defined as the characteristics of thinking, reflection and self perception that are held by people in society. In 'knowing the self' people not only find out similarities with others but also the differences with others. Thus 'similarities' and 'differences' are the two equally important aspects of identity. Sociologists also view that as identity is formed by how one understands self and others and vice versa, it is a product of agreement and disagreement, it is negotiable. Identity is never static. It undergoes changes with changing situations. Therefore, it is a never-ending process of becoming, a never complete quality of individual, community or society. In any social enquiry identity formation becomes an important variable as it indicates the relationship of individual to the wider group, the degree of freedom and self-consciousness an individual has in dealing with others and the amount of control the wider social frame-work has over individual or group.

The twentieth century has witnessed several events of the breaking up of nations, fragmentation of states in different parts of world and consequently an almost unpredictable redistribution of population, leading to socio-economic and political unrest. This has resulted in large scale cross-border migration. Fragmentation of states often results in massive cross-border movements e.g. population movement between India-Pakistan, India-Bangladesh, Breaking up of Yugoslavia or former Soviet Union also produced the same result; re-unification of states may also give rise to cross-border movement as happened during the unification of East and West Germany; wars, famines and environmental crisis throughout Africa has led to substantial cross-border movement; cross-border migration may also be caused by demographic and economic compulsions e.g. movement of Nepalese from densely populated Nepal to different parts of India; migratory movement across the border may also arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonization, political influence, trade or cultural ties e.g. between U.S.A and Mexico or between India and Sri Lanka; political unrest and civil war led to considerable population movement from Afghanistan to Pakistan. In most of the examples cited above, cross-border movement can be categorized in the group of forced displacement. Almost in each case people are compelled to leave their homeland because of fear, persecution and insecurity, all are essential attributes of forced migration.

Forced displacement of people is of a great concern of recent scholarly discussion. Though its emergence as a research field is comparatively new, almost every nation, state and race has a long history of uprooted humanity. Such type of population movement usually appears in a form of human disaster as it destroys the social, economic and psychological stability of the individual or community involved in the process. There are countless number of events of uprootment and dispersion across the world – the Jews, the Palestine Arabs, the Vietnamese, in Africa, in Yugoslavia and Soviet Union and everyday the list becomes longer. Forced displacement of population in many other parts of world especially in South Asia e.g. Burmese refugees to Bangladesh, Afghan refugees to Pakistan, flight of Srilankan Tamils to India are the illustration of a nexus between political turmoil, ethnic conflict and massive movement of stranded people 'walking into an unknown and uncertain future'. Economic depression, environmental hazards add to the situation greater momentum. Edward Said has therefore, aptly remarked "Ours is the age of the refugee, the displaced persons, mass immigration".

The present essay is based on the theme of forced migration and the determination of 'we' and 'they'. The discussion should start from the basic question – what are the criteria to determine the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders'? Ambiguity regarding national identity complicates the discussion. Three factors are important in this regard – culture, space and time; which factor is more important is yet to decide. The concept of nation-state is footed on the idea of cultural and political unity. In many countries ethnic homogeneity defined in terms of common language, culture, traditions and history is considered as the basis of nation-state. This unity has often been fictious but provided powerful national myth. Most importantly, gaining citizenship doesn't necessarily end all the controversies. Even a legal citizen of a state may remain outsider to the main stream of population e.g. the Anglo Indians and Parsis in India. "Whereas a socially cohesive group once defined its territory, in time the politically bounded territory came to define the people; there was a transference in emphasis from group to territory". Space implies a geographical area with both physical and cultural qualities which means that a space is consisted of its distinct physiographical features in association with a unique culture, tradition and emotion attached to the place. Space supports every individual as a container and therefore, the social groups are also characterized and influenced by the surrounding place. Time works as osmosis process by facilitating exchange between the groups staying in proximity for years. Therefore second or third generation migrants are better assimilated part of the society than the first generation migrant.

In respect to forced migration, the question of identity crisis becomes a more complicated issue. To which place or state do the displaced people belong to – is a question which does not follow any linear argument and thus often remain unsolved and unanswered. The denial of identity may also lead to forced displacement. The vulnerable group in any country at any time is considered as the excluded and marginalized. The refugees from CHT had to flee from their own land as their religious and cultural identity was different from the Islamic identity and therefore, they were the victim of state's discriminatory attitude. When international borders are drawn without the consideration of common people's perception, emotions and sentiments, a fluid place is evolved where the mental map of the common people does not match the political reality. The mass displacement which accompanies the formation of new states is not only the result of violence or fear but also the fragmented national identity. Migration begins in search of a desired home. Forced displacement is always associated with a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity especially in the initial years of hardship which provokes a kind of confused identity

among migrants; they suffer from lack of confidence to change their fortune. This makes the displaced people too weak to demand for any legal right, care or protection. The more is degree of insecurity and uncertainty in the country of domicile the more will be the vulnerability of the displaced group. This results in a broken identity that prevents the migrants to find a protected space for them. A myth of homeland and uncertainty about national identity has created a class of moving people in the post-colonized era in Indian sub-continent e.g the Bihari Mohajirs who are living in diaspora since the partition. Partition has created a group of people which is well assimilated in the host community but still carries a nostalgic memory of the home in other country they had to leave for various reasons. Migrants feel a strong territorial attachment with the lost home long after the migration. This provokes the sense of being a "people with historic roots outside the time and space of host country". But the "de-territorialized' people are not allowed to go back to their *desh* as they would be alien in their forefathers land. "This is because 'indigenous' is defined as being internal or external to political boundaries of the nation-state as opposed to a cultural definition of the indigenous. The narrow conceptual boundaries of the nation-state therefore, give rise to a kind of cultural hegemony where groups are excluded or marginalized". Another aspect of this identity problem becomes explicit while deciding the 'insider' or 'outsider'. In case of Bengalis with origin in Bangladesh, the 'insider' 'outsider' question becomes a fun of time factor. The people who came before 50 years consider themselves as locals. For them people who came before 20 years are migrants or outsiders. But the people who came before 20 years think themselves as locals and for them migrants are those who came yesterday. Acceptance or rejection of the migrant people as the part of receiving society also depends upon caste, religion etc. Thus there is always a problem of reference period and reference group.

Why is it necessary to determine the identity of the displaced people- to know who is the insider and who is the outsider? The status of migrants depends upon their identity. From institutional perspective, unless it is determined whether the displaced people will be treated as aliens, refugees, citizens, half-citizen or illegal migrants, it is impossible to determine the right of the displaced people and the responsibility of the state to provide them care and shelter or to deport them to the proper place. The question must be answered in order to break the jeopardy of the double tragedy that the displaced people are often accepted neither in the country of domicile nor in the country from where they had to exit.

What is needed to be done? The point should be made clear that identity of moving people not only depends upon the legal or constitutional recognition by the state or political power (though that is the most crucial part), this is also equally important to see among whom and where the displaced people have to start their new course of life. Therefore, while rehabilitating the displaced people, the history and culture of the community should not be forgotten. Most importantly, the classical theories of nation-state, citizenship and migration seem to be inadequate in explaining the needs of the situation and context of movement in the present world. Discussion should go beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Who are 'we' and who are 'they'? Discuss and show how the issue of forced migration is underwritten in the process of identity formation.
Markus Mervola

Introduction
First of all, what is forced migration? As the term suggests, it is usually used to refer to situations in which persons are forced to migrate due to various reasons, be they the violent conflict, economic deprivation, environmental disaster or the acts of other people and so on. Often the term "forced migration" is deployed in social science and political commentaries in order to point out that many migrants are kind of victims of certain circumstances and hence forced to recourse themselves on the move.

There is of course no simple way to determine how the "force" becomes "real". One could always argue that in many situations an individual could have stayed where he or she desires, and hence has not been "forced" to move. As Peter Penz notes, "it is easy to view much of migration that is induced by development or environmental degradation as voluntary, since much of the time there is a considerable element of choice as to whether to move or to put up with deteriorating conditions" (Penz). The reason why legal authorities in various countries has been hesitant to make "forced migration" as an official category is that by doing this states may be compelled to broaden the definition of refugee. This view is supported by Pradip Kumar Bose who correctly points out that

The statistics shows that vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers belong to third world countries and this development is linked intimately with changes in world economy, which challenges the theory of globalizing world. This also points out that contemporary international refugee law is marginal to the protection of most persons coerced to migrate. (Kumar Bose.)

Given that the topic of forced migration is extremely complex one, there is no one general way to think how it is underwritten in the process of identity formation. But certainly in many occasions forced migration is truly embedded in the makings of exclusive political communities and identity formations. As Bandita Sijapati observes:

Movement of people from one place to another resulting largely because of religious and racial intolerance and violence is a phenomenon rooted in our history. Refugees, forced migrants and other categories of uprooted people, have been forced into exile and deported by authorities in an endeavour to ensure conformity and religious or cultural homogeneity. (Sijapati.)

In Europe, it is commonplace to locate the issue of forced migration into Europe's own "peripheries", such Balkan, or to some Third World countries. It is seldom noticed that the EU, for example, is a significant generator of forced migration itself – not only because it has played a central role in restructuring world economy which puts people on the move, but in much more

immediate sense. Every year about 350.000 people are deported from the EU. Though it would not perhaps make any sense to regard all these deportees as forced migrants by virtue that they have become objects of deportation, it is still justified to argue that forced deportations that are now an everyday feature of "the European Union as an area of freedom, security and justice" (hereafter "the Area") directly also causes forced migration. An example for this is a fairly recent decision of Dutch Parliament to deport nearly 30.000 "failed" asylum seekers from whose many had settled into Dutch society during the years of their stay.

Analysis of forced deportation as practice of governing must be of important interest for those who think the phenomenon of forced migration is an issue of ethical concern. Indeed, it has generated some scholarly interest (e.g. Walters 2002). What follows below is an analysis of who the issue of forced deportation as a form of forced migration is underwritten in the process of identity formation in the EU. The analysis pretends to be a kind of critical legal philosophy, and hence it is limited in those terms.

On forced deportation
After he was put under deportation order by British authorities, Mustafa Kadir, a failed Iraqi asylum-seeker, went on hunger strike and refused to be sent back to his homeland because fearing a "certain death" (*The Times* August 29, 2005). Why is it that the British authorities claim to be obliged to deport him? The Home Office answer is indeed a diluted one: "It is important for the integrity of our asylum system that any individual who is found not to be in need of international protection should be expected to leave Britain…" (ibid.). The EU at large provides a similar kind of rationale for, what it calls, Common EU Return Policy:

The credibility and integrity of the legal immigration and asylum policies are at stake unless there is a Community return policy on illegal residents. Moreover, all efforts to fight illegal immigration are questionable, if those who manage to overcome these measures succeed finally to maintain their illegal residence. (European Commission 2003, 8.)

The technical language employing the concepts of "integrity" and "credibility" does not get us very far. Most importantly, it does not account anything about the inherent racism embedded in common EU policies on immigration and asylum: some people are forced to leave whereas some people are permitted to stay in the Area. Once we "interrogate" further why the deportation takes place and, particularly, why it is practiced in strikingly discriminatory fashion, we would most probably given a following answer: "It is part and parcel of the discretionary power of every state to decide upon who it allows to enter its own territory." (A Bill of the Finnish Government for amending the alien law). In other words, as legal theorists would put it, states are conceived to have *a sovereign right to include and exclude* – within a tenuous limits of international humanitarian law, we may add.

Let us contemplate briefly contemplate now, what is actually happening in an act of forced deportation. It is important to see that at issue is not only an exclusion from a political community. The states (or state-like legal communities) have a whole set of other means to exclude individuals from rights and benefits provided by a legal community. Deportation is simply a technique by which a person is taken from a place to another by force. In addition to exclusion from a political community, at issue in deportation is also a *territorial exclusion*.

We can entertain an idea that in the legal communities, such as territorial states, based on "rule of law", the practices of territorial exclusion are coeval with the notion "illegal alien". It is only by virtue of this legal construct of "illegal alien" that territorial exclusions can take place. This suggests then that legal community such as the EU is not only concerned with who belongs to it or does not. It is also concerned with *excluding territorially*. Hence, territory is not just a piece of land; beside with its geographical dimension territory has its normative dimension to the extent that a presence of a person within a particular territory could be deemed along the lines of legality/illegality.

The illegalisation of an individual, for example an immigrant, – which as such is a precondition for forced deportation – presupposes a, what I call here, "normativisation" of territory. Thus in order to gain a thorough understanding of the practice of forced deportation it is fundamental to get a grasp of the process of normativisation of territory. This means that we must take now a little theoretical detour.

Law, Community and Territory
It can be suggested that the "normativisation" of territory is a condition for any legal- political community: legal community cannot come into being unless it does a claim to a territorial unity.[1] Let us start with unpacking first this argument that *legal political community is perforce bounded in space*.

For a legal political community territory appears not as piece of land but as a *common* place shared by legal members and residents of a community. Hence territory is conceived as a place in which certain *commonalities* can become realisable. Furthermore, claims to commonalities play an important role in organising the social relationships within the particular community. For Hannah Arendt these relationships function further as a medium by which a sense of common place can become constructed: "kinds of relationships, based on a common language, religion, a common history, customs, and laws…constitute the space wherein the different members of a group relate to and have intercourse with each other" (Arendt 1963, 263).

This is not to say that these common things are pre-given, unalterable or inevitably exclusionary. Indeed, I think, commonalities are always politically constructed. The point here is just to emphasise two things. Firstly, community is imaginable only by reference to certain commonalities. Only by a claim to something common it is possible to come into terms with what it means to be inside and outside of a community. The second conclusion derives from the first: legal

community arises once certain commonalities are given a legal expression. Thus law presents certain commonalities as legally protected common values. This leap from the notion of commonalities to common values is justified on the grounds that once law stands up for defending something it claims to be common, it inevitably presents this defending of "something" as being valuable from the common point of view. But what does it take to give a legal protection for selection of values? This question cannot be answered unless we first contemplate what it takes to make a common value as realisable. Arendt's discussion of "freedom" is a good starting point:

Freedom, where it existed as a tangible reality, has always been spatially limited. This is especially clear for the greatest and most elementary of all negative liberties, the freedom of movement; the borders of national territory or the walls of the city-state comprehended and protected a space in which men could move freely . . . What is true for freedom of movement is, to a large extent, valid for freedom in general. (Arendt 1963, 275.)

In other words, whichever way we understand freedom, whether we like to define it negatively as a freedom from restrictions, or positively as freedom to belong to a political community, which for Arendt is a condition for equality, it can only become realisable within a certain place. Freedom must be produced, and its production must accompany a production of a bounded space. Arendt's recourse to status of stateless people is illustrative in this context. Insofar as the primary condition for realisation of any human rights is that a person belong to a political community, a stateless person become politically and legally death to the extent that it is out of place. Thus his or her voice is unheard and acts invisible: "The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a *place* in the world which makes opinion significant and actions effective." (Arendt 1950, 296). Though physically in a place, stateless person is at the same time doomed into a non-place in which freedom is perennially unrealisable.

What is true for boundedness of freedom is true for boundedness of other values too, such as "security" and "justice". Legal philosopher Hans Lindahl (2004a) suggests that collective attempt of the EU to create "the area of freedom, security and justice" is indeed an attempt to produce a space for certain values becoming realisable. He points out that the creation of the Area can be conceived as a *constitutive moment* by which the EU closes off a space into territory, into place of its "own". Lindahl sketches out how and why creation of the Area is to be interpreted as an act of by which the EU closes itself off into a legal community. Consider, for instance, the passage from the Treaty establishing European Union that says that European Union bounds member states "to facilitate the free movement of persons, while ensuring the safety and security of their peoples, by establishing an area of freedom, security and justice". What is so interesting in this Treaty is that legal power closes off a space into the territory – into the Area that is *common* place of the EU. For our purposes it is important to see how the constitution of a legal political community involves a "normativisation" of a territory: in a moment of constitution legal power gives an expression to territory. It claims to protect a selection of values within a certain space, within the Area in case of the EU.

Remember now Arendt's contention that all sorts of commonalities play fundamental role in constituting socio-political space. Indeed, in the case of the EU, the self-closure of the EU into a political legal community is justified by referring to certain commonalities. In order to demonstrate this, we cite a Commission Communication clarifying what "the Area" is:

The concept [of an area of freedom, security and justice] enshrines at European Union level the essence of what *we* derive from *our* democratic *traditions* and what *we* understand by the rule of law. The *common values* underlying the objective of an area of freedom, security and justice are indeed longstanding principles of the modern democracies of the European Union. (European Commission 1998. Italics added)

Thus freedom, security and justice are selected as legally protected values on the basis that they are held to be common values shared by all member states. Once the EU "offers" its citizens (and legal residents) the Area it means that the EU forged a place in which the triad of values becomes realisable. It is insisted that, for example, freedom to be realised at all, "an area" must be secured in which the citizens of the member states can live "in a law-abiding environment [i.e. justice]…with the knowledge that public authorities are using everything in their individual and collective power . . . to combat and contain [i.e. security] those who seek to deny or abuse that freedom" (European Commission 1998). Against what the EU protects these values? The answer hinges at the above quotation: against "freedom-abusers", for example; against some people, that is.

(Forced) Migration and European Identity
So far so good as there is nothing extraordinarily surprising here: law protects the legal subjects of a political community, for example, against the convicted law-breakers by penalising or imprisoning etc. However, the EU has set itself a task to protect freedom, security and justice by means of border control and in the field of asylum and immigration, including the practice of forced deportation:

The Union shall set itself [the objective]…to maintain and develop the Union as an area of freedom, security and justice, in which the free movements of persons is assured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.

Thus the foundational documents of the EU maintain that the values of freedom, security and justice are endangered by international migration. It is indeed discourses on dangers (see Huysmans 2000; Bigo 2002) that are providing a political rationale for all those sundry techniques of territorial control that many commentators consider constituting a "Fortress Europe". Thus what happens here is that law constitutes immigrants into potential "freedom-abusers" whose influx will risks freedom, security and justice as becoming a "tangible reality" within the Area. Of course, there is no clear cut criterion on how to measure who is a potential "freedom abuser" and eligible to enter the EU territory. As studies on the common EU

(Schengen) visa policy indicates (Bigo and Guild 2005), the decisions concerning who is allowed to enter the EU territory are based on – not very sophisticated – technique of profiling. An unemployed, economically poor applicant from the so called Third World countries, for example, is profiled into a risk and hence his or her legal entry into the EU is near impossible.

The point here is that at issue in territorial control of the EU is granting or prohibiting a border-crossing of a person into the Area. There are certain legally founded rules that are meant to govern the decision-making of authorities concerning allowing or denying the access of foreigners into the Area. The role of law here is to "emplace" human behaviour: it tells where an individual ought to be; whether she or he *should* be "inside" or "outside" of the Area. It is only when there is a legal place in place that the law can organise human behaviour in accordance with the values chosen as being worth of legal protection. This to say, as Lindahl (2004a) neatly puts it, "legal power can only emplace persons by claiming to be itself emplaced". But how in earth it can happen that legal power becomes emplaced at the first place? The foregoing analysis suggested that legal power in case of the EU has been emplaced on the basis of common values that the peoples of Europe are sharing. This account ends up being disturbingly circular: the peoples of Europe have contracted to close themselves off into a single legal community with a common territory (the Area) after having contracted that they are sharing something common (van Roermund 2003). In other words, this kind of social contract standpoint must assume as if the unity that becomes into being by the self-constitution of a legal community was already there. I am not saying that a sociological unity of some sort would be non-existent before legal community. The unity of European identity, however, is a political construction; it must always be put politically into place (literally and metaphorically) in order that it can organise social relations. As van Roermund puts it:

This process of setting the self of a first-person plural [i.e. we] is at the bottom of politics. To exercise (any form of) power with an appeal to a first-person plural that is for itself a unity (under construction) is to exercise political power. It always cuts across an infinite number of 'people'. It installs a difference between 'the population' (people who happen to be live in each other's neighbourhood) and 'the people' (people uniting under a common identity)… (van Roermund 2003, 248).

Since a common unified identity is always a contingent political construction, there is nothing else above or beyond the legal community that would attests its foundations than the very act by which a legal community is constituted. Thus the moment of the act upon which legal community closes itself off is itself extra-legal; it is beyond the scope of legal order and hence unfounded. This "unfounded" founding political moment is, at least for a flashing moment, then, characterised with absolute violence: "Where violence rules absolutely, not only laws…but everything and everybody must fall silent." (Arendt 1963, 9). Here, one may recognise reasoning close to a notorious German thinker Carl Schmitt who argued that constitution of socio-political order of every political community is always built upon a primordial act of land appropriation: "all subsequent regulations…are either a continuation of the original basis or a disintegration of and departure from the constitutive act of land appropriation…". For Schmitt, a one time Fascist thinker, a "nation" was still a kind of really existing primordial unity which provided a basis for primordial act of "violent land appropriation" and a self-closure of a legal community.

Fortunately, we mustn't follow Schmitt all the way down once we subscribe into view that there is no primordial unity of identity but it is always a political construction. I think we have already insinuated this possibility when noting that the unity which becomes constituted in the very moment of self-constitution of a community presupposes a pre-existent unity. In this sense the moment of appropriating the land appears in fact to be also a moment of re-taking it. The territory the EU claims to be its own place is something that it claims naturally belonging to it by virtue that it was a common place by virtue a shared values. What has existed for a long prior to the constitutional moment in space and in time, so claim the founding legal documents, are peoples of "Europe" that are united by virtue of the shared values and traditions. The EU claims to give a legal expression for an aged old spatio-temporal unity of European peoples:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a society of pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination. (Draft Constitution).

According to Union's self-image, the self-closure of the EU, and all the inclusions and exclusions it gives rise to, have already been, determined at some non-specified point at the dawn history when "Europe" appeared as a distinguished place by virtue of the presence of primordial European identity based on common values and traditions. Seeing from this perspective, then, EU's claim to territorial unity in terms of "freedom, security and justice" is made on the grounds that the EU was already a common place. Hence the EU "appropriates the land", and for that matter appropriates a "right" to include and exclude, by appealing to some prior moment of inclusion and exclusion, which, in turn, dates back to the allegedly original cut that separated "Europe" from rest of the world and thus gave rise to the unity of European identity (Lindahl 2004a).

The unity of European identity is certainly a political construction; it is something that neither the authorities of the EU nor anyone else has a direct access to (Lindahl 2004a). The unity of European identity is represented by the area of freedom, security and justice to the extent that the Area is built upon it. European identity is a spatio-temporal continuity only in representation. Once European identity is radicalised in this way, we can see that there is no primordial European identity which would give any transcendental "right" for the EU to include and exclude.

Let us finally return to forced deportation as a form of forced migration. Each forced deportation case, like each border crossing and each visa or residence permit application, involves a decision of a individual legal authority. Since there is no primordial unity of European identity, these decisions are neither informed by nor stemming from any real European identity. Rather, these decisions are just *performances* of European identity that reconstitute, more or less violently, the EU as a legal community. Each decisions on forced deportation then establishes what it takes to be inside of community of, for example, "freedom", "security" and "justice" and what it takes to be outside of it. Ultimately, then, the issue of forced deportation as a

form of forced migration is underwritten in very strong way in the process of identity formation of the EU. As result, for some people the area of freedom security and justice appears as an area of servitude, insecurity and injustice (see Lindahl 2004a).

What this little seemingly cynical essay of mine hopefully illuminates is, however, that since there is nothing primordial in European identity, it should be perfectly possible to play out the European identity less exclusive and less violent way. Europe is not one, but many. It does not appear any determined way and hence it is perfectly possible to perform the European identity other ways than forcing people to migrate out of the EU member states by means of deportations.

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[1] Notice that there is nothing such to draw from current discussion that a bounded territory would be a precondition for community sui generis.

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Show how racism at times is linked to nationalism, majoritarianism, and discriminations of various kinds thereby producing forced displacement of people – both within the borders of the country and across the borders.
Trijita Gonsalves

This essay will focus on the problem of racism and xenophobia manifested through anti-Semitism in France. Through this essay, an attempt has been made to show how racism is linked to nationalism, and discriminations of various kinds thereby producing or trying to produce forced displacement of people. France has been taken up here because I felt that it would be particularly interesting to focus on this country, especially since it is the country in Europe with the widest manifestation of anti-Jews feelings within the past few years.

[I have also chosen France as my area of study as I have done a 'diplome superieur' in the French language where my special paper was – 'The immigration problem in France'. I have consulted a few magazines and articles in the French language like Le Monde, Figaro, Sciences Humaines, Le Nouvel Observateur etc from the Internet and the Alliance Francaise Library, Beckbagan, Kolkata]

The problem of anti-Semitism is very much present in France today. There are many Jewish immigrants who reside in France today – some assimilated, others regarded as aliens. Their presence, however is a reality no one can deny. One might refer to them as a drop in the ocean compared to the disorder present in the rest of the world. However, this drop in the ocean is presented as a tidal wave or an insupportable movement, which is used to feed xenophobia and racism.

These Jewish immigrants have been forced to come to Europe, either permanently or for a few years. Most of the time they work here, sometimes raise children here, consume here and certain amongst them work within their community helping to develop their immediate environment. It is inadmissible that these people, some of whom have lived in France for several years, should be excluded from all that constitutes citizenship, living in permanent fear of being expelled from the country, being denied elementary rights and being subject to the actions of all sorts of criminals: illegal employers, disreputable landlords, pimps, etc.

To understand the truth behind anti –Semitism and the hatred in the minds of a section of the French people towards the Jews, we begin with an understanding of what is anti- Semitism.

Anti – Semitism and its historical background

For nearly 4,000 years, the Jewish people have been subject to prejudice, persecution and murder on religious, economic, political, and social grounds. This hostility towards Jews, which continues into the twenty-first century, is usually called Anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism is a form of racism. According to Pierre-Andre Taguieff, racism or racist thinking is built on the premise of the fixedness of the "essence" or "nature" that every human being possesses because of his "birth", or because he belongs to an origin asserted as a prime or determining origin. The unity of humanity has broken down and fragmented into "essential categories" between which there are, as a rule, neither doors, nor windows nor bridges. Racism works as a method of separation. It separates and differentiates before classifying into a hierarchical order. It thus creates people who can be "integrated" and others who cannot be "integrated".

Thus, we see that at the root of racism lies what can be regarded as the greatest enemy of tolerance: the fear of what appears different or strange. Today, it is mainly the people of the Islamic world who have become the proponents of anti-Semitism; in the last century, the Nazis sought to bring about the genocide of the Jewish people while in previous centuries, the Church attempted to eliminate the Jews through conversion, persecution and murder.

The adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire by Constantine in the fourth century and the later establishment of Catholicism and Protestantism as state religions throughout Europe, inevitably left the Jews in a position of dissenters.

Anti-Semitic policies have generally sought to push Jews to the margins of society. Such marginalizations have been accomplished in various ways including: discriminatory restrictions on religious observance, on political participation, vocation, education, residence, attire, and other denials of human rights.

An interesting thing to note is that anti-Semitism has developed on religious, political or economic grounds over decades.

Religious anti-Semitism originated in Christianity. Church theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries articulated an utterly degraded view of the Jews. Saint Augustine declared: 'The continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection marked by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death.' {In some of the books in the New Testament in the Bible, Jesus Christ has been portrayed as condemning the Jewish priests and elders in the synagogues as hypocrites for misleading common people. Since the times of the Bible, Jews are not looked at kindly among ordinary Christians, as the Jewish elders and priests were responsible for putting Jesus Christ to death on the Cross.} In the centuries following the establishment of Christianity in Europe, Church doctrine characterised Jews as murderers of Jesus.

Religious anti-Semitism found expression in political action against Jews ranging from civil disabilities and disqualification, special taxes and ghettoization ("cleansing" or "purifying" society of its "undesirable" elements, keeping certain categories of the population at a distance, preventing them from gaining a certain social status or entering a certain profession) to deportation and extermination.

The Jews have also been discriminated against politically from time immemorial. This also has a Biblical reference. Political discrimination against the Jews has commonly been predicated on the notion of the Jew as a 'wandering' community, a people without a land or nation. In the Books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament in the Bible, it is said that the Jews wandered for about 40 years before reaching the Promised Land shown by God or Jehovah.

It is thus not surprising to note that the threat and reality of expulsion of the Jews have been ever-present throughout the centuries. The practice began in earnest in Europe at the end of the thirteenth century when, in 1290, Jews were expelled from England and, in 1306, from France. Expulsions continued throughout the years.

At the time of the French Revolution, the Jewish minority was highly stratified: a small group of former Marranos enjoyed a high level of culture and wealth and, being well integrated, increasingly resented the special status and limitations imposed on them. However, most Jews in the eastern part of the country were very poor and subject to a virulent popular antisemitism. In 1791-2 French Jews were emancipated.

The nineteenth century brought new trends in antisemitism: the identification of the Jews with the harshness of industrial society and xenophobic reactions towards Jews coming from abroad (mainly from Germany and, at the end of the century, from the Russian empire). An additional problem was the distrust of assimilated Jews.

The 1930s saw a wave of antisemitism nourished by the mass immigration of Jews from the East at a time of economic crisis, the fears aroused by the rise of a socialist government (led by a Jew, Léon Blum) in 1936 and Nazi propaganda. The war-time Vichy government introduced anti-Jewish legislation and co-operated with the occupying Germans in identifying and arresting Jews. Some 74,000 Jews who were deported from France died in the concentration camps.

Here, we find an instance of not only forced displacement of Jews from France but also a disaster of worse proportions. Not only did they get no help from any institution or government, but also the miserable conditions in the refugee camps led to their deaths. Thus, they left behind a sad tale of racism and xenophobia leading to horrifying deaths. [In July 1995, President Jacques Chirac acknowledged that France was responsible for the deportation of thousands of Jews to concentration camps.]

In France, especially and all over Europe in general, the Jews are regarded as incapable of being assimilated, alien, and a threat to the majority culture. Jews were also economically exploited.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism in France
While official anti-Semitism is rare today, unofficial anti-Semitism has survived. It is most commonly characterised by vandalism against Jewish institutions, verbal violence, but also more deadly attacks such as the 1982 bombing of the Goldenberg Kosher restaurant in Paris.

According to the latest figures by CNCDH (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme), there were three reported incidents of violence against Jews in 1997 compared to one in 1996. Eighty acts of antisemitic behaviour, intimidation or public abuse were reported, representing little variation over the last three years. As in previous years, most antisemitic acts were committed in the region of Île-de-France (59 per cent).

In France, the resurgence of anti-Semitism is characterized by increasingly frequent attacks of Jewish institutions such as synagogues, schools, cemeteries, buses, kosher shops, restaurants as well as Jewish homes.

Two synagogues in Nice were daubed with antisemitic graffiti in August 1997, and the Deloye synagogue in Paris was vandalized in October; although police suspected a group of neo-Nazi skinheads who were seen chanting and making Nazi salutes in the vicinity of the synagogue, no arrests were made. Other targets for antisemitic vandalism in 1997 included synagogues in Évry, Venissieux, Villeurbanne and Athis-Mons, and a Jewish school in Créteil.

In July 1998 about fifty gravestones were desecrated and vandalized in the Jewish cemetery in the FN-controlled town of Orange.

Discriminations against the Jews were also seen in educational institutions. In March 1997 twenty-one Paris school directors alerted the board of education that their schools were being sent antisemitic and Holocaust-denial propaganda. In April 1998 students at the University of Lyons protested the presence, within the university, of the Institut d'Etudes Indo-Européennes (Institute for Indo-European Studies) which they described as an *'ideological laboratory for the Front Nationale'.*

In the cultural sphere also, we find traces of anti-Semitism amongst some of the French, thereby highlighting their intolerance of this community and forcing them either to be fearful for their lives and safety all the time or to pack their bags and leave. In February 1997 the FN mayor of Toulon, Jean-Marie Le Chevallier, dismissed Gérard Paquet from his post as director of the Châteauvallon Théâtre national de la danse et de l'image, and applied to have the theatre disbanded. Paquet had declared his opposition to the FN after the party criticized him for providing a forum for multi-ethnic projects such as Jewish writing and Afro-Caribbean music.

Another interesting aspect of anti-Semitism can be the denial of the Holocaust among the French. This seems an interesting tactic / technique to give the impression that the Holocaust was feigned and fake; that the Jews referred to it to evoke sympathy and concern. However, the Gayssot law passed in July 1990 makes it an offence to 'bring into question one or more crimes against humanity as defined in article 8 of the International Military Tribunal in the London accords of 8 May 1946'. This includes questioning, doubting or trivializing the Holocaust. Despite efforts by the authorities to enforce the law, however, there were ten incidents of Holocaust denial in 1997 recorded by the CNCDH.

In May 1997 the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA, Supreme Council for Audio-visuals) issued a warning to Radio Courtoisie for broadcasting Holocaust-denial material (see Publications and media). During its programme Libre journal, a guest interviewee, Pierre de Villemret, had expressed doubts about the existence of the gas chambers. Three teachers were suspended from their posts in 1997 for 'teaching Holocaust denial', including the director of studies at the Institut d'études politiques in Toulouse in February and a history teacher in Montoir-de-Bretagne in June. In June 1997, a humanities teacher in Nantes, Michel Adams, was suspended from René-Guy-Cadou College after questioning, during a lecture to students given by a former deportee, whether the deportation of Jews to concentration camps really occurred. In December 1997 Le Pen provoked outrage when he repeated his 1987 remark that the crematoria in the Nazi death camps were 'a detail of history'.

The Internet plays a vital role in the modern world in propagating hatred towards 'the other'. The Internet continues to provide, as it has since the early 1990s, a protected site for French antisemitic and Holocaust-denying propaganda, advertisements for Nazi memorabilia and banned literature. In June 1997 judicial proceedings were initiated by the Union des étudiants juifs de France (UEJF, Union of Jewish Students in France) against the presence of racist material on the Internet.

The Paris branch of the far-right bookshop l'Æncre (which also has a branch in Toulon) continues to sell antisemitic and Holocaust-denial works despite a court ruling in May 1996 that it stop disseminating racist materials). The UEJF notified a commercial tribunal that the bookshop was offering works such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, How to Recognize a Jew by George Montandon and Le Péril Juif (The Jewish Danger) by Marcel Jouhandeau.

The other principal far-right bookshops in Paris are La Joyeuse Garde, La Librairie française, La Librairie Saint-Nicolas and La Librairie du Savoir (in the affluent fifth arrondissement); La Librairie Dobrée continues to operate in Nantes. The most significant mail-order distributor of far-right material continues to be Diffusion de la pensée française (DPF, Dissemination of French Thought) run by Jean Auguy.

A subscription radio station, Radio-Courtoisie (Radio Civility) - which has been broadcasting for ten years via five transmitters in Normandy - is, according to its director Jean Ferré, devoted to 'defence of the French language and culture' and supports 'patriotic sentiment and French nationalism'. The station's most extreme presenter, Serge de Beketch, introduces his programme as follows: 'Welcome to Radio-Courtoisie, the free radio of the real French-speaking nation.' Beketch describes himself openly on the air as 'racist, anti-democratic and anti-liberal'. In November 1996 he declared: 'in France in 1943 the Jews were not treated as badly as the FN is today'.

Thus, it is clear that the members of the Jewish community have been affected by a strong feeling of abandonment; figures show that immigration from France to Israel has doubled last year with 2, 566 Jews reported to have left France to go to Israel, allegedly as a consequence of the hostility. This shows the close linkage between racism and discrimination, thereby producing forced displacement of the Jews from France.

Discrimination against foreigners…
This section attempts to focus on the various ways in which the French Governments at times and political parties have discriminated against foreigners, a majority of which are Jews thereby leading to their forced displacement.

In February 1997 a proposed immigration law, introduced by the former interior minister, Jean-Louis Debré, was criticized as being a sop to the Front Nationale (FN). One particularly objectionable clause required that French citizens inform the local town hall of the departure date of any foreign visitors. In protest, a campaign of civil disobedience was initiated by French filmmakers and later widened to include writers, doctors, lawyers, musicians and artists; the European Parliament also criticized the bill. Demonstrations against it led to violent confrontations with riot police. The clause was dropped from the bill as approved by the national assembly on 27 February, and replaced by one that requires foreign guests themselves to report their departure date and shifts the responsibility for monitoring foreign visitors from locally elected mayors to government-appointed prefects.

Thus, we see that there was not much change in the situation. The clauses of the above mentioned law by itself speaks volumes about the attitudes of the government and its discriminatory policies. Though the bill was amended, the fact remains that the French government and some sections of people were leaving no stone unturned to create miserable conditions for the immigrants, forcing them to leave the country.

In legislative bodies in France, attempts have been made to pursue policies which discriminate against the foreigners, thereby making life difficult for them and forcing their displacement elsewhere. In January 1998 the Vitrolles municipal council approved a racially discriminatory one-off subsidy of FF 5,000 (US$890) for children born to at least one French or European parent, making couples without European nationality, including immigrants, ineligible.

In April/May 1998 a by-election was held in Toulon. It left the FN temporarily without representation in the national parliament. In July 1998 however the French constitutional court declared the result invalid on the grounds that a television programme screened on polling day in Toulon, urging voters to 'block' the FN, amounted to 'electoral propaganda'. Thus, we see a manipulation of election results to vote a party to power that supported racism and xenophobia and was in the words of Jacques Chirac, 'a danger to democracy.'

The French national newspaper Le Monde, on 2 July 1998 carried out a survey on a sample of 1,040 persons between 24 November and 6 December 1997. It divided respondents into three groups (leaving to one side the 9 per cent who were too unsure of their opinions to be categorized). The first group (nearly one in five at 18 per cent) comprises those who describe themselves as 'very racist' and who are in complete, or nearly complete, agreement with lepéniste {those subscribing to Jean-Marie Le Pen} ideas: they no longer feel 'at home' in present-day France, they think there are too many Arabs and Blacks in the country, that immigrants come to France to collect welfare benefits, that it is hardly, if at all, necessary to fight racism, and that most immigrants are too different to be integrated into French society.

The second group (40 per cent) includes those described as 'tempted by racism': they are likely to share many opinions with the first group but they describe themselves as only 'slightly' (as opposed to 'very') racist and they do not support lepénisme. The third group (33 per cent) is described as 'anti-racist': it includes those who reject out of hand the ideas held by the first group.

Some of the particular results are worth noting: 73 per cent believe that many immigrants come to France to collect welfare benefits; 67 per cent think that the health of a democracy can be judged on its ability to integrate 'others'; 68 per cent think that foreign workers are no different to other workers; 54 per cent believe that the presence of immigrants is a source of cultural enrichment. Thus, we find that the French society is composed of heterogeneous peoples, with differing opinions on the issues of racism and xenophobia.

Role of the Front Nationale (The National Front)
The FN is France's most powerful party on the far right. Founded twenty-five years ago, it is a grouping of disparate strands: royalist, fundamentalist Catholic, Pétainist, antisemitic and ex-colonialist. In addition to its already complex ideological profile, the FN has recently begun to exploit fears that national culture and economic identity will be overwhelmed by the European Union; according to the FN, it is Jews and Freemasons who promote European integration. The FN continues to claim that its policies are primarily designed to rid politics of corruption and strengthen law and order, a claim that shifts attention from its traditional racist and anti-immigrant policies, which are still evident despite sometimes being conveyed by euphemism. In addition, there is hardly a special interest group for which the party has not established a FN-linked association or trade union. These include: organizations of Paris transport workers, prison officers, railway workers, teachers,

farmers and hunters; associations for council housing tenants and pensioners; and so-called 'circles' for business people. FN-linked police and prison workers' associations are especially strong.

Revelations about the FN's security organization, Département protection et sécurité DPS, (Protection and Security Department), were published in the mainstream daily Libération in mid-November 1997 in an interview with an unnamed former DPS member. The ex-DPS man described how members often carry weapons, and told of 'special missions' - undertaken by 'shock groups' composed mainly of former military personnel - to infiltrate anti-FN demonstrations and attack leaders of anti-fascist organizations and journalists unsympathetic to the FN.

The Front Nationale has also been indoctrinating the minds of the French youth with racist feelings and sentiments from the tender age of eight. One of the most effective products of the party's diversification has been its youth wing, the Front national de la jeunesse (FNJ, National Front for Youth), run by Le Pen's son-in-law, Samuel Maréchal (see also Czech Republic). With the active support of 12,000 members, it claims to be the biggest youth movement in French politics. The FNJ has two feeder movements for youngsters, starting at the age of eight with the Cadets de France, a nationalist scouts and guides movement.

The FN's traditional May Day march in Paris attracted over 8,000 followers in 1997, and more than 12,000 in 1998. The parade is traditionally led by a Joan of Arc figure supported by guards on horseback, and Le Pen lays flowers at the Joan of Arc statue. The crowds wave tricolors and chant 'France for the French'. This is an indication of the strong anti-racist feelings in the minds of the French people which in turn leads to their discriminatory attitudes towards foreigners in general and Jews and Muslims in particular.

Other far-right parties
There have been other far-right parties in France that have displayed racist attitudes and used nationalist sentiments to wreak havoc on foreigners in general and Jews in particular.

Restauration nationale (RN, National Restoration), is a monarchist movement that considers Jews, Protestants and Freemasons 'anti-French', and continues to operate with a membership of a few dozen militants.

Nouvelle résistance (NR, New Resistance), was founded in 1991 when its leader, Christian Bouchet, broke away from the Troisième Voie (TV, Third Way), formerly the principal proponent of so-called national revolution on the French far right.

The Nouvelle Droite (New Right) is one of the shadowy far right networks that act as disseminators of ideological material.

The Groupement de Recherches et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne (GRECE, Research and Study Group for European Civilization,) is a racist think-tank which attempts to introduce far-right ideas into the intellectual mainstream.

L'Oeuvre française, founded in 1968 and led by Pierre Sidos, is marked by a Catholic supremacist ideology shot through with anti-semitism and a bitter hostility to European union.

There are more than 300 far-right publications in France espousing the views of neo-Nazis, Catholic nationalists, monarchists and Holocaust deniers, including in particular Minute, National-Hebdo, Rivarol, Monde et Vie, L'Action française and Présent.

A number of religious far-right groups exist in France, including: Chrétienté-Solidarité (Christianity-Solidarity); Contre-réforme catholique (Catholic Counter-Reform), headed by Father Georges de Nantes; Fraternité sacerdotale St Pie X (Sacred Brotherhood of St Pius X,) - established in 1970 by the late Monsignor Lefèbvre and led by the father superior of France, Father Benoît de Jorna - and its militant wing, Renaissance catholique, headed by Jean-Pierre Maugendre; Union nationale pour l'Europe chrétienne (UNEC, National Union for Christian Europe), which includes among its sponsors Martine Lehideux, a FN member of the European Parliament; and the Chevaliers de Notre Dame (Knights of Notre Dame), a Christian fundamentalist group that helped convicted war criminal Paul Touvier to escape justice.

The Scenario today...
Since the end of the 19th century, racism has manifested itself predominantly in the form of nationalism. It appears first in conventional xenophobic nationalism targeting the neighboring country as a priority, and then in modern-day ethno-nationalism, which rejects minorities and "immigrants" regarded as dangerous for the identity or homogeneity of the dominant people, or for internal order, or even for the sovereignty of the nation state.

Even 60 years after the end of the Second World War, racially motivated discrimination is a constant companion of France. Extreme right-wing groups and parties are spreading their ideology of hatred against foreigners, migrants, people of minority groups and everyone who is 'different' in their eyes. But also structural racism is still a problem. Minorities and migrants face discrimination in employment, housing and education. In everyday life people of 'coloured' skin are confronted with offensive behaviour and disrespect.

With over 5 million Muslims and 650, 000 Jews, France hosts both the biggest Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe which makes the country very vulnerable to various manifestations of racism arising either between the two communities or from Nationalists movements as well as neo-Nazi groups.

In the 1980s, both the rise of nationalist movements such as the Front Nationale led by Jean Marie LePen, and the Middle East conflict resulted in anti-Semitic acts against the French Jewish community. In October 1980, for instance, a bomb

exploded in a famous Paris synagogue on a Friday night, killing four Jews leaving religious service. In 1990, there was a new peak of anti-Semitic violence in the wake of the desecration by members of the extreme right (skinhead) of the Jewish cemetery of Carpentras. {However, later on, a French court described the desecration as 'stemming from a primitive and violent anti-semitism so relentless that it pursued individuals beyond death'.}

Since 1991, (the Gulf War), anti-Semitism had been in net decline; in October 2000 however, France became the setting for an unprecedented rise of anti-Semitic incidents, allegedly triggered by the beginning of the second Intifada.

According to a report by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, among Western democracies, in the single month of October 2000, the highest numbers of anti-Semitic attacks were perpetrated in France According to one of the main organization of French Jewry, the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF), hundreds of anti-Semitic incidents have been reported since October 2000 and have continued at a high level since then.

In recent years however, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in France originates in what can be termed the sociological frustration of the French North African Moslem identity; some of them express their identification with the Palestinian Islamic terrorism and Bin Laden. The post September 11th US-led war against terror has created an immediate sympathy for Al-Qaeda especially among young, socially marginalized Moslems in France. In many cases the perpetrators of anti-Semitism also smeared graffiti in praise of Bin Laden such as 'Long Live Bin Laden. Thus we see that the manifestations of anti-Semitism in France is triggered by political events abroad, reflecting into French society, which is particularly vulnerable due to the presence of different religious communities.

As a result, a climate of fear and insecurity has developed in France, leading in April 2002 to the victory in the first round of the presidential election of the leader of the National Front - Jean-Marie Le Pen. This has led to further hatred and violence, leading to a larger part of the population feeling insecure and being tempted to vote for nationalist parties who mostly put forward racist and discriminatory ideas such as sending back immigrants to their country of origin.

A colonialism of a different strand
At the end of June 1997 the FN mayor of Vitrolles, Catherine Mégret, went on trial, accused of inciting racial hatred in a newspaper interview. Three anti-racist associations and more than 700 private citizens had complained following her interview with the German daily Berliner Zeitung (reprinted in Le Monde, 26 February 1997), in which she called immigrants 'colonizers'. She said that Blacks were genetically different to Whites, and that benefits for immigrants should be withdrawn and given to French people. In September 1997 Mégret was given a three-month suspended prison sentence and fined FF50,000 (US$8,880), a sentence upheld on appeal in March 1998.

But the fact that the immigrants are regarded as 'colonizers' by a section of the French people is interesting. We may call it a new type of neo-colonialism (a neo-neocolonialism), where the danger comes neither from the colonial masters (as in colonialism) nor the Multi-national Corporations in an age of globalization(as in neo-colonialism), but from people who were basically harmless in a country but were perceived as threatening due to the fact that they have always been the 'other' – a category to be despised and hated or feared. Here, we also find a slight role reversal; while the earlier colonizers were the masters of society, the rich, influential people, these immigrant colonizers are in most cases poor and deprived, coming to the "colonies" because they had nowhere else to go. The host populations fear these immigrants as they may seize their jobs, intrude into their workplaces, build homes, start living and pose threats to their culture. Probably, this is the reason why we find parties like the Front Nationale (FN) doing everything possible to discriminate against the immigrants, make their lives miserable and if possible, force them to leave.

The fight back....
In the course of the 1980s and 90s, French-style anti-racism was redefined by a battle on two fronts: on the one hand, the battle against the political far right {dominated by Jean Marie Le Pen} and, on the other, a movement to help "immigrants" or certain categories of "foreigners" (originating outside Europe), who were seen as real or virtual victims of "racism".

It is not always easy to fight against racism and xenophobia. This is probably because the duel is, almost always an unbalanced one – on one side is the state with all its machinery and commanding the allegiance of its 'citizens' against the 'aliens', on the other hand are the foreigners, almost always living in perpetual fear of being subjugated. Thus, in most cases, strong racist feelings bordering on nationalism and majoritarianism lead governments to enact policies discriminating against foreigners. But, sometimes, there are protests organized by the victims of racism with the support of the citizens of a country. In France also, of late, there have been sporadic cases of protests against racist attitudes.

There were large-scale protests throughout 1997 in response to the bill put forward by Jean-Louis Debré in February to tighten immigration procedures in order to stem illegal immigration. A petition signed by fifty-nine filmmakers called for a campaign of civil disobedience against this 'inhuman and unacceptable' law, which led to demonstrations by 100,000 artists, intellectuals and immigrants in Paris

In February 1997 a large anti-racist march in Toulon, organized by the Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme (LICRA, International League against Racism and Antisemitism), was held to protest the cultural and social policies of FN mayor Jean-Marie Le Chevallier. The marchers condemned the presence of far-right material in public libraries, the suspension of subsidies for immigrants in Marignane, Orange and Toulon, and the re-introduction of pork on school menus in Marignane, thus discriminating against Jews and Muslims. Over 1,000 actors, singers and authors demonstrated against Le Chevallier's sacking of Gérard Paquet from the Châteauvallon Théâtre national de la danse et de l'image.

In March 1997, during the annual book fair at the Salon du livre in Paris, anti-racist campaigners demolished stalls of racist and xenophobic books that were sponsored by the FN. Members of Ras l'Front (Get Rid of the Front) smashed the booth of the Société anonyme National-Hebdo (Anonymous Society for the National Weekly), and drove its exhibitors out of the building. Following this episode a movement to ban all far-right publishers and authors from book fairs is gaining momentum.

In April 1997 postmen in Montpellier refused to deliver the far-right magazine Le Journal de la colère (The Magazine of Anger) despite a contract agreed by post office officials to distribute 16,000 free copies. Edited by Gabriel Favier, the publication defends the FN and argues for the expulsion of immigrants. A spokesman for the postal workers' union said: 'What is written here incites racism and xenophobia.'

An anti-fascist book fair in Gardanne in November 1997 attracted almost 60,000 visitors. The fair was organized by Cap 250 and Ras l'Front. The attending director of cultural affairs for the region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Jean Jacques Boin, denounced 'the numerous irregularities in the management of libraries, mainly executed by people adhering to fascist ideologies'. The president of the Association des bibliothécaires de France (Association of Libraries in France) added that the FN was using libraries as 'instruments of ideological control by censoring lists of proposed book acquisitions'.

In June 1997 Lionel Jospin, the newly elected prime minister, ordered local authorities to accelerate the granting of residence papers to immigrants who complied with conditions established by the CNCDH. These conditions provide faster immigration procedures for families well integrated into society, spouses of immigrants with legal status, children born in France and their parents, students, patients receiving medical care and refugees who would be in danger if sent home. In the ensuing year, 80,000 illegal immigrants (sans papiers) were granted residence permits while 70,000 were refused the right of abode. In June 1998 the latter were awaiting deportation.

The centenary, in January 1998, of the publication of Emile Zola's incendiary 'J'Accuse' article, written in defence of the unjustly incarcerated Jewish military officer Alfred Dreyfus, was commemorated by a ceremony at the Panthéon, a conference at the Sorbonne, an exhibition at the national library and a re-enactment of Zola's libel trial organized by the Ligue des droits de l'homme. In an open letter to the descendants of Dreyfus and Zola, President Chirac apologized in the name of France for the Dreyfus affair, 'a dark spot, unworthy of our country and its history'.

Anti-FN demonstrations organized by anti-fascist organizations, left-wing parties, trade unions, collections of artists and intellectuals and others regularly accompany the public appearances of the FN's leading lights, and regularly protest the objectionable measures implemented in FN-controlled towns and regions. New anti-FN organizations and campaigns are continually being formed. About 5,000 gathered in Rouen in February 1998 to protest Bruno Mégret's visit to the Norman capital; the socialist mayor Yvon Robert draped the town hall with a banner containing Martin Luther King's words: 'Let us learn to live together like brothers or we will die together like fools.' In the same month another 5,000 gathered in Avignon to protest a visit by Le Pen. On 1 March 5,000 participated in an 'anti-fascist carnival' in Nantes organized to protest the arrival there of the FN leader. That same weekend several thousand participated in a demonstration in Saint-Étienne to oppose a visit by Bruno Mégret, and hundreds joined a counter-demonstration against the FN in Marseilles. In April and May 1998 hundreds of thousands participated in anti-FN demonstrations throughout the country following the regional and departmental elections at the end of March 1998.

In March 2005,to highlight the problem of racism, several French NGOs joined the European-wide Action Week Against Racism.

A high-level panel meeting in Paris, on the occasion of the "International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination" was organised by ECRI. Representatives of many NGOs took part in this public presentation on use of racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic arguments in political discourse and role of politicians in combating racism.

"Cities Against Racism" was the title of the tenth student festival against racism organised by UNESCO - UN Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation and the Association 'Festival Against Racism and the National Students Union of France'. During the festival the students defined concrete proposals for a 'Student Appeal to Fight Against Racism in Cities', which later was presented to municipal officials, who signed the appeal at the closing of the festival.

In Paris, the sixth international film festival against exclusion and for tolerance took place, organised by UNESCO.

However, in spite of agitations and initial successes in some areas, the problem of anti-Semitism continues. This is probably because the fear and suspicion of the 'other' will remain as long as mankind remains on the face of the earth.

Role of international events...
The World Cup Football (June-July 1998) lent a ray of hope amidst hopelessness in combating racism and hatred towards foreigners. The victory of France's 'rainbow' soccer team - composed of players of European, African, Arab, Caribbean and New Caledonian origin - in the World Cup held in France in June-July 1998 brought a dramatic surge of public support for multiculturalism, and an equally welcome moment of embarrassment for the FN. The star player, Zinedine Zidane - born in Marseilles to poor Algerian immigrants - became a national hero. The multiracial team was fêted by President Chirac, who praised 'this tricolour and multicolour team that has provided such a beautiful image of France and its humanity'. The team's coach Aimé Jacquet was awarded the Legion d'honneur and congratulated for his longstanding resistance to pressure from the FN to exclude players with immigrant origins.

In mid-July 1998, in the wake of the French World Cup victory, former interior minister and the author of tough anti-immigrant legislation, Charles Pasqua, came out in favour of granting residency to the 70,000 illegal immigrants awaiting expulsion. In a statement Pasqua reminded French citizens of the contributions immigrants had made to the country, and said that a strong France was a generous France.

Conclusion

According to Pierre Andre Taguieff (Philosopher, political scientist and historian, Director of Research at the CNRS and Senior Lecturer at the IEP in Paris)

"It follows that the combat against racism must be polymorphous and must be fought on several fronts: intellectual struggle, education, action on the social and economic causes, legal sanctions and political action. In matters of anti-racism, as elsewhere, the absolute weapon does not exist."

The situation in France shows that, while the value of anti-discrimination laws cannot be questioned, in the case of racism, a purely right-based approach fails to treat the problem at its roots. In France, significant social change is also required: in particular, there is a pressing need to work towards putting an end to what is often called by commentators and by the media 'la crise des banlieues' (the suburbs crisis), resulting in the marginalization and lack of integration of the North-African Muslim immigrants. Arguably, this situation creates among young Muslims a sense of failure and frustration, which makes them more prone to turn to various forms of religious fundamentalism and delinquency. It can be suggested that an educational approach is also needed in order to free people from ignorance, which too often results in the expression of various forms of racism.

French public schools should play a greater role in teaching respect for others and respect for the law; this could be achieved by devoting more time to the teaching of civics. France's last report to the ICERD points to the new school curricula which came into effect at the beginning of the school year in 1995. It places special emphasis on the diffusion of democratic values and provides for the teaching of civics and human rights.

Moreover, sanctions need to be applied within the education system for lack of respect towards teachers; too often in France, teachers, especially those working in sensitive areas, find themselves the victim of their students and cannot perform their job properly because they work in fear.

In conclusion, we can say that the threat of racism is still present and if governments turn a blind eye on its various manifestations and fail to prosecute and punish those found guilty of such offences, it could have some very serious consequences on the French republican values and on human rights. As Kenneth Jacobson in his article, 'Escalating Anti-Semitic Violence in Europe' pointed out, 'we cannot outlaw hate but we can rally nations around a credo of tolerance. We can promote and reward morally responsible action from government leaders and punish failures.'

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