

Well-ordered secularism ...

The period of debate that is beginning in the framework of the next Villeurbanne congress of the Socialist Party will probably provoke multiple, productive and very intelligent contributions to imagine and set to music the "social-ecology", a new doxa of the phraseology of the democratic left.

Yet social-ecology is not a sufficiently differentiating notion to allow the French to appreciate a political will that would lead them towards new forms of commitment. Indeed, being social when one is socialist is a minimalist postulate, as for ecology, who does not claim it today, including the National Gathering?

Since we are in the context of a congress, our responsibility is to open the fundamental debates and to set the terms of what identifies us and distinguishes us from our opponents and/or competitors.

This is the case with a major subject that has long been the symbol of the confrontation between left and right and that has federated those who have fought to defend the Republic: secularism.

For many of us, this was one of the main reasons for our commitment. During our past congresses, it was enough for Jean POPEREN to approach this subject with his oratory talent, for the militants to give him a standing ovation, going beyond the currents of thought, an obvious sign of a unanimously shared conviction. The issue of the years 1981-1984 was then the debate secular school / private school. Don't we have the feeling that today, the subject of secularism is even more fundamental, because it no longer concerns only teaching but simply the organization of our society?

And yet the secular project no longer seems to be part of our internal political exchanges. There can be only two reasons for this distressing observation:

- Either the socialists consider secularism to be an acquired subject, then if it is, they will have to demonstrate it,
- Either to exchange on this theme is problematic for them and, in this case, we must understand why and verify if we are still in phase with this republican value which is the backbone of our socialist history.

The current political situation obliges us to set out to reconquer words and ideas and compels us to reappropriate secularism as we did, recently, with those republican symbols that are the flag and the Marseillaise that we had negligently abandoned to others.

For too long a part of the left has put aside the secular struggle in favor of social struggles and then societal demands. At the same time the right and the extreme right have hijacked secular values to use them, in a discriminatory manner, against a part of French society.

Others, the extreme left and some environmentalists, have sowed unrest by shifting the social struggle to ethnic and/or identity-based demands.

This has only been possible because part of the Republican Left has strayed from its ideals or forgotten the historical foundations of universalism, secularism, rationalism and enlightenment. We know that the enemies of secularism are radicalism, obscurantism, fanaticism and tyranny. To fight these evils we must appeal to reason, culture, intelligence, education, but also to the political will to impose ourselves in this quasi-existential debate. Our Left must recover the meaning of this debate of ideas, considering it a priority, preferring it to tactical or electoral positioning.

It is regrettable that on the subject of secularism, as on that of Europe, two of our essential commitments among so many others, we have not been able to deliver the founding speeches as the current President of the Republic has done, thus obliging us to position ourselves as a reaction and not as a force of proposal on our own ideological terrain!

Let us stop, as soon as it is a question of debating problems that concern the majority of French people, of engaging in false invectives, of denouncing right-wing aberrations, of launching trials for ideological deviationism or of letting doubt hang over the real intentions of the whistleblowers! Those who would refuse to allow this ethical confrontation to take place would make the bed of both the extreme right but also of a radical extreme left and other indigenists who have found in France Insoumise a complacent spokesman.

Let us convey to citizens the conviction that we are aware of the difficulties of their daily reality, that we are clear-sighted about the problems they face and that we want to solve them alongside them. But we still need to use the right words and have the right answers. The best way to show that we understand is to ask ourselves the questions that challenge us in order to identify them, analyze them, and perhaps find the avenues of reflection that will allow us to be clear once again with secularism, the absolute principle of the French left.

For this, let us seek the causes of evil and look at reality with lucidity:

- Are we aware that beyond intellectual postures there is a problem of religious radicalism in our country?
- Are we aware that a part of the population living in France is exempt from the common rules of secularism that govern our country?
- Are we aware that some people reject the laws of the Republic in favor of the precepts of their membership, putting faith before the law?
- Are we aware that, in some parts of the school environment, teaching republican is contested,
- Are we aware that some foreign countries, through their local associations and thanks to their subsidies, have a right of oversight over the life of some of our neighborhoods?
- Are we aware that some territories of our Republic are on the verge of splitting up?

If the answers to these questions are yes, then let's act!

The left, which would refuse to tackle these subjects serenely but seriously, would transmit two kinds of disastrous messages to our fellow citizens: "*we know but are powerless and we have given up*" or "*we are, in fact, accomplices because we have temporarily negotiated a certain tranquility with communities*"!

Let us be sure that if we do not take these subjects of society into our own hands with the firm will to treat them according to our humanist and republican values, with the obsession of balancing freedom, security and secularism, two possibilities will open up:

- The extreme right could be a recourse and would violently enter into confrontation with its brutal methods and deleterious choices,
- The revolutionary and/or indigenist extreme left would supplant us and its lax, even disconnected choices would lead to a popular reaction that would demand order and authority.

Thus the loop would be closed since, as we know, the extremes are always on the short scale.

Then social-ecology why not, but not just any ecology or with just any ecologists! **Our electoral alliances will say what we are! There can only be a united Left if secularism is the undisputed foundation of it.**

Secularism is not radical or moderate. It is self-sufficient in itself and does not need any further qualification. It calms consciences, orders public life and guarantees individual liberties because it is addressed to all citizens. On the other hand, abusing the flaws of our democratic system, many radicalized preachers advocate hatred, using their religion to separate, terrorize and murder.

Our constitutional and legislative texts contain all the elements to enable their firm application. Political will, electoral courage and republican determination are the best supports for secularism. It is up to us to prove that we are its faithful guarantors.

If we think that enslavement of all kinds has always dragged human beings down, we must take the secular ideal in hand very firmly, and if we are truly determined to make it triumph, then let us demonstrate that **well-ordered secularism begins with the socialists!**

Laurent AZOULAI

Section of Villejuif

Val de Marne Federation

President of the National Commission of Conflicts

François REBSAMEN

Dijon section

Côte d'Or Federation

Mayor of Dijon

President of the FNESR (National Federation of Socialist and Republican Elected Officials)