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No case illustrates as clearly the unavoidable mix of science and ideology in population debates as the recent quarrel within the hallowed walls of the French *Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques* (INED). Since May 1990, an institute with an unparalleled reputation in demographic research has been convulsed by a conflict over the alleged political and ideological character of its approach to population questions.

The challenge came from within. Hervé le Bras, a former editor of the INED scientific journal *Population* and a director of research in the institute, launched a campaign in the press, radio, and in book form against what he took to be the pronatalist bias of French demography in general, and of its leading institution, INED, in particular. The reactions were swift and personal. Technical exchanges gave way to insult. While Le Bras obstinately refused to resign from an institution he believed to be infused with an ideology he found repugnant, he was condemned by his colleagues, removed from the editorial board of *Population* and rebuked by the scientific committee of INED. It was a journalists' field-day, with cartoons and editorials in the Parisian mass circulation press.

Where else in the world would demography be front-page news? In this paper, we attempt to discuss *'l'affaire INED'* in the context of the long-term French concern about *denatalité* or a decline in the birthrate. While the special flavor of this Gallic argument is undeniable, this episode raises issues central to our understanding of population politics in recent years.

1. France versus Sweden

The occasion for the outbreak of 'l'affaire INED' was a seemingly harmless article published by the institute's director, Gerard Calot, in an information paper it circulates regularly to inform political and academic circles of demographic trends. The article compared recent trends in French and Swedish fertility, and showed that while period (annual) fertility rates in France were lower than those in Sweden in the late 1980s, cohort fertility rates -- describing the reproductive behaviour of women throughout their fertile years -- of French women born in the 1950s were actually higher than those

in Sweden. And what is more, although period fertility rates were at the 1.8 level in France, and therefore below the notional replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, the cohort rate had actually arrived at the replacement level in the mid-1970s and had stayed there subsequently. The conclusions Calot derived were the following: first, French fertility was higher than Swedish fertility; secondly, the recent recovery of fertility rates was attributable to deferred births to women over age 25 in both cases; and thirdly, this stabilization, following a period of fertility decline, was due to family policy in both countries, based on pronatalist objectives in France and social objectives in Sweden.[1]

It is hard to believe that a learned and sober discussion of recondite statistics would occasion a public brawl among scholars of the same respected institution, but that is precisely what happened. Le Bras reports that he first learned of Calot's article in early May 1990 from a colleague, the historian André Burguiére. Burguiére had been approached by a Parisian journalist, Josette Alia of the *Nouvel Observateur*, a prominent French weekly. She had been given Calot's article in proof, had been surprised by its claim that French fertility had reached replacement levels, and had consulted academic friends to make sure she had understood what was a technical discussion. Burguiére asked Le Bras if it was true that French fertility had reached the 2.1 level. Le Bras said that it was news to him, and that even if Calot had said it was so, it was as unlikely as redating the opening of the French revolution to 14 September 1790. To the journalist, Le Bras reiterated his scepticism: what had moved were not fertility rates, but rather the way they were measured. Upon receipt of the article, Le Bras noted, his incredulity grew. He noted that Calot expressed some doubts that the period rate, until then almost always used to generate alarm about low fertility, might be misleading.[2] If so, then decades of alarmism about low fertility might also be based on 'misleading' data. Le Bras wrote later that at that moment he realized that he had found for the first time in 20 years 'a monumental error' of French pronatalists, an error enabling him to break the hold

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[1] G. Calot, 'Fecondité du moment, fecondité des generations. Comparaisons franco-suedoises', *Populations & Societes*, 245, 1990.

[2] The word Calot used in French is *'trompeur'*; Calot, 'Fecondité du moment', p. 2.

pronatalist ideology held over the French demographic profession. 'The beast has come out of the forest', Le Bras mused, and a true crusader, out he stepped to slay it.[3]

The 'beast', as he put it, was pronatalism (*natalisme*), a belief in the value of high fertility and of policy measures to achieve it. This ideology, according to Le Bras, was so pervasive that it infused every corner of French demographic research, and served as an article of faith which had been impossible to challenge. To demystify pronatalism, first he had to strip away the mask of scientific neutrality and detachment which INED cherished.

For Le Bras, the way to do so was through provocation and polemic. In a tradition as old as the French revolution, he merged cautious criticism, invective, exaggeration, and insult in an attempt to make people question a key assumption of French political culture. He spoke on radio and addressed the popular press. He inspired parliamentary questions, and treated his colleagues at INED with utter contempt for the niceties of academic exchange.

Not surprisingly, they returned the compliment. They attributed personal, self-aggrandizing, motives to Le Bras,[4] professional disappointments,[5] a regrettable thirst for media coverage,[6] a loss of touch with reality,[7] and a taste for disinformation and defamation.[8] INED demographers met repeatedly, and vigorously reaffirmed their scientific integrity and independence from political influence.[9] They condemned Le

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[3] Hervé le Bras, *Marianne et les Lapins. L'obsession demographique* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1991), pp. 24-6.

[4] Calot in an interview with the *France Soir*, 5 May 1990.

[5] Gerard-François Dumont, in an interview in *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 22 May 1990.

[6] Jacques Dupaquier in an interview with *Figaro*, 6 May 1990.

[7] Gerard-François Dumont, in an interview in *Figaro*, 6 May 1990.

[8] Communiqué of 'Les syndicats CFDT et CGT de l'INED repondent à Elisabeth Badinter', 17 May 1990.

[9] Communiqué a l'Agence France-Presse, 11 May 1990, from Department Heads of INED.

Bras's attempt to portray them as agents of a deliberate plot to mislead the French people about the true nature of French population movements.[10]

Le Bras's reputation as a social scientist is based on sophisticated publications in the field of historical demography and social geography.[11] He was fortunate enough to have a second academic position in Paris, at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, the highly respected graduate faculty of social sciences. Even though he was severely reprimanded by INED, and stripped of some formal positions, he was able to remain both within the institution and outside it. Le Bras was not without support from some colleagues, who defended his right to be a maverick. While Calot and other members of INED wanted to condemn him root and branch, other members of the scientific committee overseeing INED's work urged a more cautious line.

The press, some of Le Bras's enemies, and later Le Bras himself, made sure that the affair would continue. The chastising of Le Bras by his colleagues in INED was hardly unexpected, given the ferocity of his criticism and the embarrassment his broadsides brought to a publicly-funded institution. But to some of his supporters, notably the prominent feminist writer Elisabeth Badinter, his treatment by INED smacked of the style of a 'Moscow trial'.[12] Instead of favoring open debate, they preferred silencing a critic by removing him from positions of responsibility within INED. Nothing of the sort had occurred, she observed, when other members of INED joined in right-wing campaigns against immigration, or associated with the National Front.[13] As Badinter provocatively put it, 'Does the National Front want to infiltrate INED to lead it back to its original goals, as the Fondation Alexis Carrel for the study of human problems, created by Petain?' In other words, was Le Bras being punished for exposing

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[10] Communique signed by Patrick Festy, Henri Leriod, Therese Locoh, France Mesle, Francisco Muñoz-Pérez, Benoit Riandey, dated 10 May 1990.

[11] H. Le Bras, *L'invention de la France* (Paris: Hachette. 1981); *Populations* (Paris: Hachette, 1986); *Les Trois France* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1987).

[12] Elisabeth Badinter, 'Les ambiguités de l'INED', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 17 May 1990.

[13] Andre Langaney, 'Reponse aux offusqués de l'INED', *L'Express, 7-13 June 1990.*

an extreme right-wing plot to manipulate the leading demographic institution in France?[14] These charges were unsubstantiated, and helped further poison the atmosphere of discussion about the issues Le Bras raised.

These comments provide some indication of the speed with which this dispute about the birth rate became personally acrimonious and politically heated. To the weekly *L'Express*, it was a war of 'Christian demographers versus social demographers'.[15] To the more irreverent *Canard Enchainé*, it was a cacophony of 'Baby babadoum'.[16] Such attention is the nightmare of most public institutions, and was bound to shake INED to its foundations.

Through his public utterances and writings, Le Bras had managed to attack root and branch a powerful public institution which he had served for more than a decade, to impute political motives and ideological blinkers to its director, and to call into question the scientific value of the painstaking statistical and interpretive work in many fields of demography which dozens of his colleagues at INED had produced over the last decade. He wanted a confrontation, and that is precisely what he got.

At a heated and lengthy meeting of the scientific committee of INED on 15 June 1990, the criticisms made by Le Bras were aired. A substantial report written by the distinguished demographer Roland Pressat was distributed. It refuted all of Le Bras's accusations about INED's supposed selective reporting of fertility trends. Le Bras was not present during the initial discussion, but was handed a copy of the article. An hour later, he was invited in to explain his position. He maintained that his quarrel was not with INED but with French pronatalism. His criticism was that INED played a 'mediating role' in conditioning opinion to think along pronatalist lines. In particular he objected to the use of the concept of 'the replacement of generations', which by definition left out migration as a factor in population growth. He objected to the fact that

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[14] Sophie Coignard and Marie-Thérése Guichard, 'INED: recit d'une mauvaise fievre', *Le Point*, 28 May 1990.

[15] Gerard Badou and Jacqueline Remy, 'Chrétiens-demographes contre sociaux-demographes', *L'Express*, 11 May 1990.

[16] 'Baby babadoum', *Le Canard Enchainé*, 9 May 1990.

a full debate on these matters did not take place; instead of confronting him directly, the director of INED went on the air instead. What was at stake, he insisted, was his freedom of expression as a researcher.

After his departure, the scientific committee of INED reached a compromise. They did not condemn Le Bras by name, but deplored the fact that a technical discussion had degenerated into a non-scientific debate. Above all, they reaffirmed that INED was 'a public establishment, both scientific and technological' which 'had always diffused regularly and commented objectively in its diverse publications on the different indicators of the evolution of French fertility'.[17] A committee of three wise men, internationally respected demographers, outside of INED, was nominated to clarify the technical issues of period versus cohort fertility. Their anodyne report was written, filed, unread, and that, many at INED hoped, would be the end of that.[18]

They were wrong. Only in Paris could this imbroglio have taken place. It has all the flavor of the war of intellectuals which appears to be a regular necessity in the hothouse atmosphere of the French capital. But to understand this extraordinary quarrel, it is necessary to step outside the pettiness of cafe politics. First we present Le Bras's case about French pronatalism; then we try to place it in the context of French political culture, and finally, we attempt to evaluate its repercussions for our overall theme of the interaction of scientific and ideological elements in population debate today.

2. Pronatalism and the 'truth' about the birth rate

The morning broadcast of Radio Europe 1 on 4 May 1990 was the moment when hostilities opened. An interview with Hervé Le Bras began with the interviewer, T.G. Burgeon (and not Le Bras) offering these provocative remarks:

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[17] 'Avis du conseil scienfitique de l'INED', 21 June 1990.

[18] The three men chosen were Massimo Livi-Bacci of the University of Florence, Jean-Claude Chasteland, former director of the Population Division of the United Nations, and Henri Caussinus, professor of statistics at the University of Toulouse.

BOURGEON:

If I were to tell you that the French have enough children, that the population is replacing itself and has done so since the war, you would laugh. Long ago demographers have assured us that the opposite is true.

Well, they lied and they admit it. INED affirms in effect in its review *Population and Society* that the birth rate has never been threatened. One of the greatest French experts, Hervé Le Bras, makes his 'mea culpa' and admits that the alarmist discourse has taken a serious blow.

LE BRAS:

This fear of a weak birthrate and population decline has accentuated the fear of the foreigner. For certain politicians, the fact that there was a demographic decline, and some believed this to be so, meant that we were going to be invaded.

But the contrary was true, Le Bras noted, since 'by itself and without migration, the French population was growing and would continue to grow'.[19] So much for the fear of depopulation and the 'alien wave'.

These were fighting words, and cleverly, Le Bras left the worst of all to the journalist. Le Bras did not say that INED had lied; he merely passed over the statement when the interviewer made it. On reflection, he thought the use of the word 'lie' was a tactical mistake; the term was a little strong, but, he insisted, 'true enough'.[20] In subsequent interviews, he rejected the idea that INED had lied, but insisted that the institution's pronatalist bias affected its choice of indices and interpretation of data about fertility. Whenever possible, INED relied on data which raised the alarm about low fertility.

In the case of Calot's article on France and Sweden, though, the opposite was true. When it suited his purpose, Le Bras suggested, Calot shifted attention from the period rate (below replacement) to the cohort rate (higher, and at the magical 2.1 level). He

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[19] Transcript of Europe 1, Le 4 Mai 1990 Edition de 8H00, from INED dossier 'Turbulences sur la demographie', presented to the authors by Gerard Calot, July 1990.

[20] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 60.

did so to show that the nation's investment in its future through family allowances and other supports of childbearing families was paying off.

According to Le Bras, the 'pronatalist bias' of French demography, as practised by INED, contained the following elements: an undue emphasis on the negative consequences of low fertility, especially with respect to the ageing of populations; a preference for indigenous growth as opposed to in-migration; and an (unproved) assertion that family policy increased fertility.

These ideological positions were corrosive, according to Le Bras, because they formed a quasi-religious doctrine, which until now no one had had the courage to challenge. As received truth, these views were pernicious because they predisposed INED demographers to collect and analyze data which confirmed their prejudices. If they were innocent of lying, they were guilty of bad science.

This was harsh enough, but after a brief lull in hostilities in early 1991, encouraged in the interest of science by the Minister of Research, and supported by the administrative council of INED itself,[21] Le Bras decided to resume the attack by producing his own version of *'L'affaire INED'*. Entitled *Marianne et les Lapins. L'obsession demographique*, he launched a broadside against the institutional and intellectual origins of the French pronatalist consensus.

First, he analyzed the character of INED; then its origins. To Le Bras, INED, a large concrete building in southern Paris, was a 'bunker', a structure appropriate for what he describes as an authoritarian institution. Through close liaison with the press, through isolation from other disciplines, through domination of research in France, through denigration of foreign currents of thought on fertility, and through strong bureaucratic support within the French government, INED, according to Le Bras, exercises a form of thought control on the way population issues are discussed in France.

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[21] 'INED: recit d'une mauvaise fievre', p. 109. See also the open letter to Le Bras of 15 November 1991, signed by nine INED researchers, accusing him of ignoring attempts at cooling down the debate and of deliberate aggression and provocation'. The signatories are Gerard Ballard, Jean-Noel Biraben, André Chaventre, Jean-Claude Chesnais, Daniel Courgeau, Patrick Festy, Jacqueline Hecht, Henri Leridon, Michel Levy, Benoit Riandey, Georges Tapinos, and Jacques Vallin.

That monopoly is explicitly committed to the maintenance of a pronatalist consensus, and any voice raised against it will be silenced through subtle and not so subtle ways.[22] So much for the objectivity of demography, which, for Le Bras, is a chimera in INED. It is, he argues, a narrow school of social engineering, committed to a political objective while claiming the mantle of disinterested science.

We will return below to the merits and distortions of this portrait, but to appreciate the full force of Le Bras's assault on the French population consensus, we must turn to the historical part of his argument. The origins of INED's authoritarian outlook, he argues, lie in its early history.

INED was a post-1945 creation, but bore the marks of earlier initiatives in the field of social biology. The most important was the Fondation Carrel, established in 1942 for the purpose of 'safeguarding, improving and developing the French population in all its activities'. While remote from the sinister sides of the Vichy regime, Carrel's institute reflected an anti-democratic authoritarianism imbedded in the field of social biology at the time. It aimed, Le Bras argues, at the domination of the technician over the scientist, and at the domination of both over the people. In 1946, the foundation was transformed into INED, with the same aim and personnel. In Le Bras's view, both were agencies of *dirigisme* and social engineering.[23]

The ideology of this organization, and of the social formation it reflects, according to Le Bras, is pronatalism. Over the years, the historical pedigree of this set of ideas has been obscured, but with the recrudescence of extreme right-wing groups, especially the National Front, the links between the past and present of INED have emerged. From the 1940s to today we see 'pronatalist panic, fear of invasion, familial ideology, anti-parliamentarianism, anxious nationalism'.[24] It is not surprising, Le Bras argues,

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[22] Le Bras, *Marianne*, pp. 41-55.

[23] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 237.

[24] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 238.

that INED detests the idea of its proximity with the extreme right, 'because in reality, they are close on several points'.[25]

Those points of contact are, Le Bras insists, an obsession with the 'graying of France; a tendency to dwell on fears of invasion, this time by North Africans; a preference for women as mothers rather than as active citizens outside the home; and an unqualified commitment to pointing out the dangers of low fertility and the merits of policies aimed at raising the birth rate. It is for these reasons that Le Bras concluded that INED was 'the successor and legatee of the Fondation Carrel.[26]

Le Bras's argument is straightforward. He believes that INED has been an important carrier of the pronatalist message. This is the reason for the force of his polemic. It was precisely because of its implicit yet unacknowledged ideology that INED, in his view, had to be exposed as lacking in scientific detachment and objectivity. Instead of advancing science, Le Bras charged, it fostered an 'ideological nuisance' full of dangers:

> It [pronatalism] infests discussions about pensions, it masks the role of productivity, it devalues immigrants when the opposite is urgent. Pronatalism has withdrawn from the republican arena and has moved closer and closer to the extreme right.[27]

For this reason, pronatalism had to be stripped of its scientific patina and exposed as the conservative ideology that it is.

3. Pronatalism and French political culture

The faults of Le Bras's indictment of INED are multiple. First, the analysis of the continuities between the work of the Fondation Carrel and INED are unconvincing.

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[25] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 238.

[26] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 240.

[27] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 247.

There is a very similar case on the other side of the English Channel, but one which shows that origins and outcomes are not necessarily linked. Professional demography in Britain also came in part out of eugenics. The Population Investigation Committee, affiliated to the London School of Economics, was (and is) sponsored financially in part by the British Eugenics Society, whose aims in the 1930s were very similar to those of the Fondation Carrel. But funding never set the agenda of the Population Investigation Committee, or its journal *Population Studies*. This organization was the pioneer in the teaching of demography in Britain, and its director David Glass held a virtual monopoly on the subject. His close control of teaching and research over four decades deeply affected the development of demography in Britain. But, despite the historical parallels, in Britain pronatalism has neither dominated demographic debates nor formed an intellectual consensus, either among experts or within the population at large.[28]

What gives pronatalism its force in France is, therefore, not the existence of INED, but rather its appeal as a touchstone of French national identity. Le Bras is right to emphasize the nationalist assumptions of much of French demography. Calot is a pronatalist, but so are most patriotic Frenchmen and women. And so were their fathers and mothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers before them. Pronatalism is a language through which French people express their Frenchness. INED did not invent it, and their arcane publications have little force in its genesis or dissemination.

Here is a second fault in Le Bras's analysis. He tries to expose one source of this political language in the workings of a demographic research institute, but INED is simply too frail a reed to bear the weight he has placed on it. We must go back well before the Vichy regime of 1940-44 to understand the French preoccupation with pronatalism. First, there are the special features of French demography to consider. Then, we must recognize the particular character of French nationalism, which has been the bedrock on which pronatalism rests.

As Le Bras himself shows, INED was born at precisely the moment of the most spectacular revival of the birth rate in modern French history. Indeed in the half-century

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[28] I am grateful to Tony Wrigley, of All Souls College, Oxford, for helpful comments on this point.

1945-90, France registered the most substantial rate of aggregate growth at any time since 1700.[29] But this development ran counter to two centuries of experience and explanation, which linked slow rates of population growth and declining fertility with economic and political decline. Old attitudes die hard, especially when they provide a convenient explanation for failures in political or social life, the origins of which lay well outside the demographic regime.

France was indeed the pioneer in the history of controlled fertility. Starting in the eighteenth century, and continuing in the nineteenth century, French population patterns diverged from those of her European neighbors. In 1700, the French population was larger than that of Britain or the host of German states. Two centuries later, that demographic primacy had been lost. Given sluggish rates of aggregate population growth, attributable to the early onset of fertility decline in nineteenth-century France, and given the relative decline in her political and economic power vis-a-vis Germany and Britain over the same period, it is hardly surprising that many French politicians and demographers found in fertility trends the supposed key to the eclipse of French preeminence in European affairs. Once installed, this political language linking *denatalité* (or population decline, defined in a host of ways) with decline of every other kind, matured into a hallmark of French political culture.

French politics has a long tradition of vitriolic conflicts over political and social issues. But one area in which little overt division has occurred is that of pronatalism and family policy. From the early twentieth century, learned bodies and political groups have contributed to the ongoing struggle to increase public awareness of the dangers of low fertility. This was not solely a reflection of Catholic opinion. Liberals and socialists contributed to the consensus, both in political forums and in the arts. Those few activists supporting abortion were marginalized, and subject to prosecution.

The difference between rhetoric and reproductive behavior has rarely been clearer than in the case of French demographic history. One reason for the longevity of the pronatalist tradition is that French fertility decade after decade refused to respond to it.

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[29] Le Bras, *Marianne*, p. 68.

It is for this reason that it is best to understand the multiple campaigns against *denatalité* primarily as reflecting a cultural code expressing vague nationalism rather than personal commitments.

Even when fertility rates rose after 1940, pronatalist ideas retained their rhetorical force. They remain pervasive to this day. Even now, a host of time-honoured sentiments lie behind the pronatalist consensus: a belief in the unique virtues of French civilization, a pride in its language and culture which is expressed in a wish for the expansion of the francophone world, an intense attachment to the landscape of France. INED alone, or even in league with a dozen such bodies, could not have created or sustained this cluster of nationalist ideas. They are too deeply ingrained in the political culture of France to be reduced to the language of technocratic or ideological manipulation.

To understand the hold this set of ideas has on French political and social thinking, it is necessary as well to appreciate some of the special features of French nationalism. From the French Revolution, the republican regime has been both intensely nationalist and committed to a universalist 'civilizing' mission. It brought republican ideas to the Low Countries and the German states; it threatened the hegemony of monarchical powers, supported the United States against Britain, and left a legacy of freethinking which has survived to this day.

On the right, there appeared a demographic indictment of the Revolution, the very individualism of which was taken as a solvent of family ties. Herein lies one of the sources of the French preoccupation with the 'disappearance' of the family, a *cri de coeur* developed by conservatives as part of the rhetoric of reaction, but extending as well to other more liberal groups.

The widespread character of worry about the family was a reflection of demographic realities. The decline of French fertility, in a country still overwhelmingly rural in 1870, was an undeniable fact. In the countryside, French men and women were committed to family continuity and family pride, but they were also determined to avoid downward social mobility due to morcelization of the land among a large number of siblings. This paradox presented the bedrock upon which pronatalism rested: it was an

ideology for the nation, but not a prescription for the rural family. It pointed to what France should do, but not, as it were, what we or our neighbours could or would do. This is why pronatalism spanned the political spectrum, but had no effect whatsoever on fertility rates through the period of French fertility decline.[30]

Pronatalism has served other purposes too. The French Third Republic was born after the catastrophic defeat by Germany in the war of 1870-71. The Republican regime that emerged from the debacle was weak, and it presided over a deeply divided nation. Religious divisions cut across class conflict, and both complicated rows over the relationship between the army and the state. What better way to paper over these divisions and present the illusion of a united nation than the development of an ideology of the French nation as a family, the growth and well-being of which was the interest and the pride of all.

The military implications of pronatalism were never far removed from the public gaze. Conscription was the rule in late nineteenth-century France, and the greater numbers and military strength of Germany presented a constant reproach to and reminder of French inferiority. The ultimate victory of France and the Allies in the 1914-18 war did not change the obsession with numbers. On the contrary; the terrible bloodletting of the Great War, in which 1,300,000 French soldiers lost their lives, presented further reason to advocate a rise in the birth rate as a national necessity.

This position has been as much a touchstone of left-wing opinion in France as of right or Catholic opinion. And again, this is so for dense historical reasons. The *levee en masse* of the French revolution is a symbol of Republican militancy. In the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 it was the revolutionary *communards* of Paris who wanted to continue the war; the right were the defeatists. And with a brief hiatus during the Dreyfus affair of the turn of the century, patriotism in France has been as much a left as a right-wing article of faith. After the second debacle of 1940, when the Third Republic fell and was replaced by the collaborationist Vichy regime, socialists and communists played a central role in the Resistance to the Nazis and their allies.

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[30] I am grateful to Antoine Prost for helpful comments on this point.

Left-wing patriotism was, therefore, a powerful force at precisely the moment that INED was formed.

The creation of that institution was much more an expression of the special and enduring features of French nationalism, stated in demographic form, than a reflection of the sinister features of Vichy France. Vichy simply took over the pronatalism of the Third Republic and passed it on to the new regime over which De Gaulle presided after the Second World War.

One of the key agents of continuity in family policy between the 1930s and the post Second World War period is the economist Alfred Sauvy. The author of many books on demography, nearly all of which proclaim the dangers of low French fertility, he is the real *bête noire* of Le Bras. And rightly so, for Sauvy's liberal pronatalism is inscribed in the 1939 Code de la famille, in numerous learned studies, in many editorial columns in *Le Monde* and other newspapers, and in much of the public profile and policy papers of the institution where he worked actively until his death last year at the age of 91.[31] Behind INED and Calot today, stands the legacy of Sauvy, and not Alexis Carrel or any right-wing cabal.

INED is a public institution, charged with both engaging in scientific research and analysis, and of informing the French government of the nature and consequences of demographic trends. Living in the public realm and with public funding, it must take note of political trends and broader political currents, of which nationalism -- especially given the pace of European integration -- is not the least important. But this is not to say that INED cuts its cloth to suit its master; rather it shares a language of national pride with the French political elite and the majority of the population.

Le Bras apparently believes that nationalism and science can be strictly separated, at least with respect to demography. If it were possible, which is doubtful in general, it

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[31] Sauvy's life and work are ripe for a biography. For his pronatalism at the time of the inception of INED, see his *Richesse et Population* (Paris: Payot, 1943); *Des Francais pour la France* (with R. Debre) (Paris: Gallimard, 1946).

would require in this case a major break with central features of French political culture, formed over more than a century.

A third flaw in Le Bras's assault on INED is to claim that Calot and others distort the evidence to suit their prior commitment to pronatalism. But this charge credits them with a degree of Machiavellian subtlety which does not bear close scrutiny. Calot's Franco-Swedish comparison which precipitated 'l'affaire INED' is a case in point. The dispute with Le Bras is about which of two fertility measures to use: a cohort rate, which bears the weight of the past; or a period rate, which is a snapshot of reproductive behaviour at one point in time. Le Bras accuses Calot of choosing a rate that suits his ideological purpose: the period rate is below the notional replacement level of 2.1, so that will do for some purposes; the cohort rate is at the 2.1 level, so that will do for others. But the use of different indicators is hardly a slight of hand, a conjuring trick of a technocratic manipulator of public or political opinion. Fertility is notoriously difficult to measure; the utility of any given indicator is entirely a function of the questions to which it is supposed to provide the rudiments of an answer.

As it happens, Calot used a cohort measure to show that French fertility levels were 'less bad' than those of other European countries and that this French relative advantage was due to French family policy. Both of these assertions are suspect. Le Bras is certainly correct that the first statement reflects Calot's support for pronatalism, a view which he has never hidden. It is an ideological, not a demographic, assertion, pure and simple. It is also true that the second statement is made entirely without supporting evidence. If anything, the best available research shows that family allowances have a minuscule effect on fertility rates.[32] Otherwise how to understand the rough similarity of British fertility rates, without the aid of a substantial programme of family allowances, and French fertility rates, supposedly buoyed up by a host of pronatalist measures? Calot's assertion once again is ideological, not scientific. It is a reflection of his considered opinion, not an outcome of dishonesty, bad faith or statistical manipulation.

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[32] O. Eckart, 'Effets et limites des aides financiéres aux familles: une experience et un modele', *Population*, ii, 1986.

On this particular point, the conspiracy is in the eye of the beholder, a reflection of Le Bras's view that ideology and demographic science can and should be separated.

What is surprising is not that INED and its director are pronatalist, but that Le Bras believes that they can operate outside the political culture of which the institution and its personnel form a part. He notes that the idea for the book came to him during his participation in one of the initial meetings of a World Institute of Science, an organization built on the efforts of Russian scientists to obliterate their crippled past. An admirable idea, but one which flies in the face of the recrudescence of nationalism in the former Soviet Union, as in most other parts of the world. Furthermore, internationalism is as much an ideology as is nationalism; whether internationalism would produce a 'value-free' demographic science is a matter of opinion. Doubts must remain.

French pronatalism is nationalism in demographic form. To destroy pronatalism in the French context, one must strip it of its links with a nationalist heritage shared by left and right alike. And shared by demographers as much as by the proverbial man in the street, little concerned with the squabbles of Parisian statisticians and their arcane calculations.

A fourth flaw in Le Bras's argument relates to the method of his argument and its lack of even-handedness. If his purpose is utopian, his methods also suffer from many of the faults of the polemicist. One of them is selective presentation of evidence. On one such point we can speak with some authority. Le Bras cites as a case of the intellectual closure of the world of INED the example of the failure of efforts to translate into French our book, *The Fear of Population Decline*. Le Bras's treatment is both true and incomplete. It is true that a contract for translation of this book was signed and later negated by the publisher, Presses Universitaires de France. It is true that the reasons for the failure of the project are puzzling (no translater appeared to be available), and that it is possible that its cautious message about population decline offended some French scholars. But what Le Bras fails to note is that Gerard Calot himself agreed to write a preface for the French translation of the book, and that other scholars in INED took pains to try to bring the book out in French. They failed, but not because INED refuses to hear divergent views, especially those of foreign scholars. INED has been a gracious

host to generations of foreign scholars, whose views, to our knowledge, have never been scrutinized before hospitality has been offered and accepted.

Le Bras is surely wrong as well to see the hand of Vichy in the work of the current generation of INED researchers. The institution is a house of many mansions. The series of learned monographs, or *cahiers*, include seminal work in social and economic demography. Much research is done in INED which has nothing to do with fertility. And among the range of scholars it employs, some suffered deeply in the war years; to accuse them of intellectual or political affinity to fascist ideas, then or now, is both unwise and untrue. Most are French nationalists; but then so are the vast majority of their compatriots.

4. Migration and French National Identity

Despite these flaws, though, there is one area in which Le Bras's position is strong. He notes the difference between populationism -- a belief in population growth whatever the source -- and pronatalism -- a belief in indigenous growth. The exaggerated emphasis on the need to raise the birth rate, found both in INED writings and elsewhere, describes an implicit consensus that the best way for France to grow is through its own native sons and daughters rather than through in-migration.[33] At a time when the National Front has sponsored a quasi-racist campaign against immigrants, especially North African immigrants, the pronatalist preference for the native born is, therefore, not politically neutral. As elsewhere, it is the coincidence of below-replacement fertility and large-scale in-migration of different ethnic and social groups which makes population politics in France an explosive issue.

In 1985, this problem was thoroughly aired after the appearance of a provocative article in *Figaro-Magazine* entitled 'Will we still be French in 30 years?' To rub in the point, this 'dossier on immigration' had a colour photograph of Marianne, the

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[33] Le Bras, *Marianne*, pp.79, 106, 170-83, 187, 190, 194.

traditional symbol of the Republic, wearing a *chadour*, the Moslem woman's veil.[34] The authors of the article were Jean Raspail, a novelist, and Gerard Francois Dumont, a self-styled demographer and president of the Institute of Demographic Policy. Their purpose was to describe the future facing French children should nothing radical be done to alter French demographic movements and immigration policy. This dire future, the authors claimed, was obscured by the indifference of France's political leadership. What they didn't want to see was the inevitable swamping of the native-born by the 'ENE', 'non-European foreigners' living in France.[35] The only answer, the authors claimed, 'other than the spectacular and rapid increase in French births, would be the immediate, radical and final end to immigration, linked to a massive return of resident immigrants.'[36]

Part of the problem, Raspail and Dumont claimed, was that official statistics were 'false', in that they seriously underestimated the number of 'ENE' living in France. This error, of the order of 15 to 20 percent, occurred both for 'political reasons' and because inadequate account was taken of clandestine immigration.[37]

Once a true statistical picture was formulated, it was obvious that the nation was changing colour and character:

> In 2015, if nothing is done to reverse the current trend, France will not longer be a nation in the sense Renan intended ('the memory of great things which we did together...'). She will not longer merit her name. She will be no more than a geographic space.[38]

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[34] J. Raspail, with the collaboration of Gerard Francois Dumont, 'Serons-nous encore Francais dans 30 ans?', *Figaro-Magazine*, 26 October 1985. (This article is cited hereafter as R-D Figaro).

[35] *R-D Figaro*, p. 125.

[36] *R-D Figaro*, p. 126.

[37] *R-D Figaro*, p. 128.

[38] *R-D Figaro*, p. 129.

Reactions to this sensationalist expose were swift and predictable. The Socialist Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, denounced the article in the National Assembly and in other meetings as an incitement to racial hatred and segregation. Three other ministers charged that it was 'false, provocative and racist'. 'A virus more dangerous than AIDS', was one left-wing characterization of the racism of the *Figaro* article.[39] On the centre-right, there was cautious criticsm, mixed with some anxiety over the electoral appeal of this nativist message to the extremist National Front.[40]

The leader of the National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, benefited from the publicity, and continued to profit from the nativist sentiment such arguments aroused. In 1987, he simply noted 'There's nothing wrong with the birth rate, except that we're not the ones who are making the babies'. The royal 'we' was unmistakably white.[41]

None of these poses or principals was unanticipated. But for our purposes, what is interesting is the role played by INED in the controversy. It was *'Au dessus de la melée'* or above the battle, dismissive of amateur demographers pretending to comment on subjects best left to the professionals.

Michele Tribalat, an expert on international immigration, demolished the assumptions upon which the *Figaro* projections were based.[42] And Hervé Le Bras was withering in his criticism of the preposterous nonsense which the Dumont-Raspail article passed off as demographic analysis.[43] Although Dumont and Raspail answered their critics, and tried to maintain their standing as 'scientific observers',[44] the disdain of

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[39] Arlette Laguiller, 'Le racisme, un virus plus dangereux que le SIDA', *Lutte Ouvriere*, 2 November 1985.

[40] 'France doit refuser la segregation', *Le Monde*, 28 October 1985.

[41] 'Births', *International Herald Tribune*, 31 August 1987.

[42] Michele Trebalat, '"On a faith menti les statistiques"' *Quotidien de Paris*, 29 October 1985.

[43] Hervé Le Bras, 'Immigration: les chiffres fous de *<Figaro-Mag>*', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 7 November 1985.

[44] J. Raspail, 'Le "Figaro-Magazine" et la controverse sur l'immigration', *Figaro-Magazine*, 2 November 1985; Gerard-Francois Dumont, '"Contester nos chiffres, c'est réfuser de prévoir', *Figaro-Magazine*, 2 Nov 1985; 'Notre reponse au gouvernement', *Figaro-Magazine*, 9 November 1985.

INED and other demographers was decisive. The article, and the furore it stirred up, faded into the obscurity they deserved.

In this imbroglio, the standing of INED was clear: it was a professional institute, employing dispassionate observers of sociological trends. It offered a vital point of reference when anyone tried to pass off political argument as scientific evidence. It was, in short, a neutral and necessary part of the information-gathering processes of government.

Five years later, in May 1990, it was this very neutrality which Le Bras challenged, and the authority built up over 40 years which his accusations of pronatalist bias threatened to undermine. Is it surprising that in opening a debate about French fertility, he wound up alienating most of his colleagues, who were shocked at his charges, and remain determined to reassert their scientific authority? It is unclear whether they will be able to do so.

In one respect, the damage to INED is unfortunate. The affair has obscured the fundamental contributions many of its past and present members have made to demography. But it is also true that Le Bras has done a service, perhaps a rough service, by bringing the pronatalist assumptions of much of French demography and of population debates as a whole out into the open. He is robustly an *engagé scholar*, ironically guilty of some of the same sins as his enemies, since he advances one set of political ideas, of a liberal internationalist kind, open to mass immigration, committed to the rights of women, and combats another set with different aims and values. If any one instance of debate about population proved the impossibility of ideological neutrality or strict scientific detachment, it is the case of *Marianne and the rabbits*, a dramatic saga full of villains and heroes, likely to run and run for the foreseeable future.