

# “The caste”? Left and far right share the same vocabulary

“The caste” is one of those widely used words that, like “bobos<sup>1</sup>” (French version of “bourgeois bohemians” in English but with a larger meaning), is used by everyone from journalists to politicians to the “average citizen”. Its meaning is never seriously defined by those who use it (with the exception of historians or anthropologists specializing in India or the Mayas), and it is therefore so vague that it can mean anything, i.e., nothing at all. It generally expresses contempt or even hatred for a given group, even if sometimes, for some people who regret the reign of French aristocracy, it may have expressed their admiration. Historically, in political struggles in France, it has had a negative connotation among monarchists, anti-Semites and the far right, left and far left. Its current systematic use by Marine Le Pen (leader of the Far Right Rassemblement National, former Front National) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (leader of a split from the Socialist Party on a national-populist line, the Parti de Gauche/Les Insoumis/France Insoumise), for the past few years, gives me the opportunity to present a little anthology, or rather a blooper book, for more than a century, hoping that this will definitively discourage you from using this term without rigorously defining it. Don't reinforce the culture war of the far right by using its vocabulary!

Jean-Luc Mélenchon declared he wants to “sweep away the caste that has seized power” and “the small caste of the all-powerful who have everything”. He wants to “put an end to the regime of the caste” and chase away “the caste that governs the European Union” because “a privileged caste, linked to the richest, believes it can escape the democratic rules and equality between citizens”. But is he the first or the only one to use this language? A little research on the Net shows that this is an old French political tradition, in which officially opposed currents commune in the most total confusion.

Thus, in 1895, the far-right anti-Semitic nationalist writer Barrès already denounced “the caste that today possesses” everything, just as the Boulangist nationalist Alfred Naquet criticized “the parliamentary caste” at the same time.

The anti-Semite Vacher de Lapouge gave, for once, a positive meaning to this word on the far right, since he regretted, in 1894, that “there are no longer any elements in France capable of reconstituting an aristocratic caste based on the combination of wealth and intelligence and capable of reproducing itself” .

In the 1920s, Urbain Gohier, a fanatical anti-Semite, attacked both the “militarist caste” and the “half-caste, half-breed Jews on the boards of Jewish or Judaizing banks and companies ».

In 1923, Karl Kautsky, the “pope of international social democracy” until 1914, wrote: “The mental race traits of the Jews are said to be of such nature as to constitute a profound and impassable gulf between them and all other races. On examination, this information resolves itself into the fact that the great mass of the Jews has constituted for two thousand years an exclusive, hereditary caste of urban merchants, financiers, intellectuals, including some artisans, and has developed, by practice and accumulation from generation to generation, more and more of the traits peculiar to all these strata, as opposed to the peasant masses of the rest of the population.”

In his remarks on “French ethnicity” (1935), the pseudo race “theorist” George Montandon considered that “The French revolution and the era of democratization that followed would thus be, in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “From the denunciation of the “petit bourgeois” to the denunciation of the “bobos”: how the left takes up the vocabulary of the far right” (in French) <http://nfnf.eu/spip.php?article243>

short, a revenge of the native element on **the dominant caste**, originally non-native, of greater stature in any case, more or less blond, more or less dolichocephalic”...

The Jewish socialist city councilor Georges Hirsch attacked “**the caste of the 200 families**” in December 1935.

An anonymous journalist from *L'Eclair* in October 1940 commented on the Statute of the Jews by attacking the “*special **caste** interests*” of “*Jewish elements*.”

Lucien Rebatet, a collaborationist and profascist writer, railed in *Les Décombres* against “**the castes** most imbued with an illusory superiority, the most locked up in fallacious abstractions: the Finance Inspectorate, the Polytechnique School, the Council of State”; “*the merchant brutality of **the caste***” and, as a good anti-Semite, “***the caste of the most insolently domineering Jews***.”

The pro-Nazi and antisemitic writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline saw the Jews as a “*submissive **caste***”.

At the 17th « Bleu-Blanc-Rouge » party of the National Front in 1997, the far right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen vituperated the “*political-media **caste***”.

A far-left blog more recently denounced the “**caste**” of Jews under the Occupation “*who at no time could admit that they were being fooled and that they would have to share the common fate of immigrant Jews who were complete strangers to them*” and, as the icing on the cake of stupidity, considered that to hold the French state responsible for the anti-Semitic persecutions under Vichy is... “racist” !!!!

Marine Le Pen referred to “*candidates of **the caste***” during a meeting in Bordeaux on January 23, 2012 and declared “*I am the only opposition to **the caste***” in February 2012.

Robert Ménard, Far Right mayor, repeatedly attacks the “*small media-political **caste***” in September 2016 and then the “*political **caste***” in a letter supporting Donald Trump. Just as Jérôme Bourbon the director of *Rivarol*, an anti-Semitic publication, referred to “***the media-political caste in the service of globalism***.”

On the holocaust denier website “Radio Islam”, Georges Theil, of the National Front, pays tribute to the infamous French holocaust denier Robert Faurisson in these terms: “*Revisionism of the Second World War is also, by the very fact, a formidable indictment of **the caste** which took power after the Second World War, in order to set up financial exploitation and psychological terror*”. And on Mediapart, a famous leftwing so-called alternative media, a certain Xipetotec writes: “*Holocaust denial is the work of a small **caste of intellectuals** who were driven by ideological motivations*”.

Alain de Benoist, a far right intellectual, in the monthly magazine *Eléments*, denounced “**the political caste**” while promoting a meeting between Robert Ménard and François Bousquet, editor-in-chief of *Eléments* and co-founder of the far-right bookshop La Nouvelle Librairie.

Michel Onfray denounced: “**the economic caste** which has power in Europe but also beyond it”, “**the caste of political professionals**” and “*a **caste** which, after having seized power with, at the very least, the help of state propaganda, intends to keep it for itself in order to carry out its business without the people, in spite of the people, and even, often, against the people*”.

In 2018 so-called “alternative” network Mediapart published some pages of a book written by Laurent Mauduit, under the title of “**La caste**: enquête sur cette noblesse d'Etat qui a choisi le camp de l'aristocratie d'argent”. And this term is regularly used in the articles of Mediapart network with the collaboration of François Ruffin (Parti de Gauche MP), Denis Robert (journalist), Gérard Streiff (novelist), Noël Mamère, a Green politician, (“**caste contempt**”), Aurélie Filipetti, a Left MP and writer, (“**the super caste**”) and a plethora of anonymous people in their blogs who repeat this silly word like parrots.

Guillaume Peltier, ex-Front National who joined Les Républicains (mainstream Rightwing party), denounced “**the caste that governs us**” (June 2021). The “repentant” ex-trader Anice Lajnef wrote he wanted to fight “**the financial caste**”. He dialogued with Etienne Chouard (a national populist agitator)

and has a blog on Mediapart where he presents himself as a “whistleblower”, the new label used to “moralise” capitalism.

Isabelle Saporta is a journalist with *Marianne* (originally a “left” nationalist weekly going more and more to the right and helping anti-Muslim racists) and then BFM-TV (a gutter TV network). She is a friend of Cédric Villani (rightwing candidate as mayor of Paris) and a contributor to Michel Onfray's magazine *Front Populaire* (Onfray is today a national populist philosopher with an important audience). She promoted her book (*Rendez-nous la France*) by launching jabs at “the caste that is paralysing the country”.

The Trotskyist weekly *Lutte ouvrière* denounced “**the caste of good watchdogs of the bourgeoisie**”.

In an inflammatory text full of untruths, the journalist René Naba defended the anti-Semitic stand-up comedian Dieudonné and attacked “*the influential American Jewish lobby*” and “*Raphael Glucksman [a liberal Jewish politician], enthroned as a 'philosopher' by the journalistic caste*”.

Julien Salingue, an “anti-Zionist” academic of the Trotskyist NPA, sees in Juan Branco, a rightwing populist writer and lawyer, a “*traitor to his caste*” (?!), that “*first circle of the French oligarchy, obsessed with its own self-reproduction as a dominant caste and thirsty for power and money*”.

The far right-wing weekly *Valeurs actuelles* asks i “Is there a caste justice?” and concludes “*a member of the the caste 'seen on TV' is, by predestination or media election, exonerated in advance*” about a scandal concerning famous footballers who used the services of prostitutes.

Michel Pinçon and Monique Pinçon, famous leftwing sociologists with a very limited understanding of capitalism, entitled one of their articles in the left-Gaullist-no-global monthly *Le Monde diplomatique* “La caste au pouvoir” (**The caste in Power**) and objected to “*the monopolization of power by a caste*”.

In May 2018, Eric Ciotti, Right wing mayor and MP, recommended reading an editorial by Eric Zemmour, a Jewish racist and nationalist journalist, because he denounced a “*technocratic caste cut off from the people who govern France*”. The same Eric Zemmour, speaking of the negative reactions of the “*Europeanist left*” to Emmanuel Todd's book *Who is Charlie*, declared : “*Of course, the caste is up in arms.*”

Philippe Poutou, presidential candidate for the Trotskyist NPA, expressed his opposition to the “*corrupt political caste*”.

Communist Party leader Fabien Roussel attacked “*the financial caste*” over the cost of vaccines.

Jean-Paul Betbeze, a university teacher and blogger who worked for 23 years in the banking and financial sector, believes that there is an “*economic caste (the rich, the Medef)*” and “*ideological caste (ENA, Bercy...)*”

In short, the left and far left use a vocabulary historically mostly used by the far right in its political propaganda, and “forget” the essential: social classes and relations of production.

But is this really new... or even just amazing?

Y.C., *Ni patrie ni frontières*, August 31, 2021