

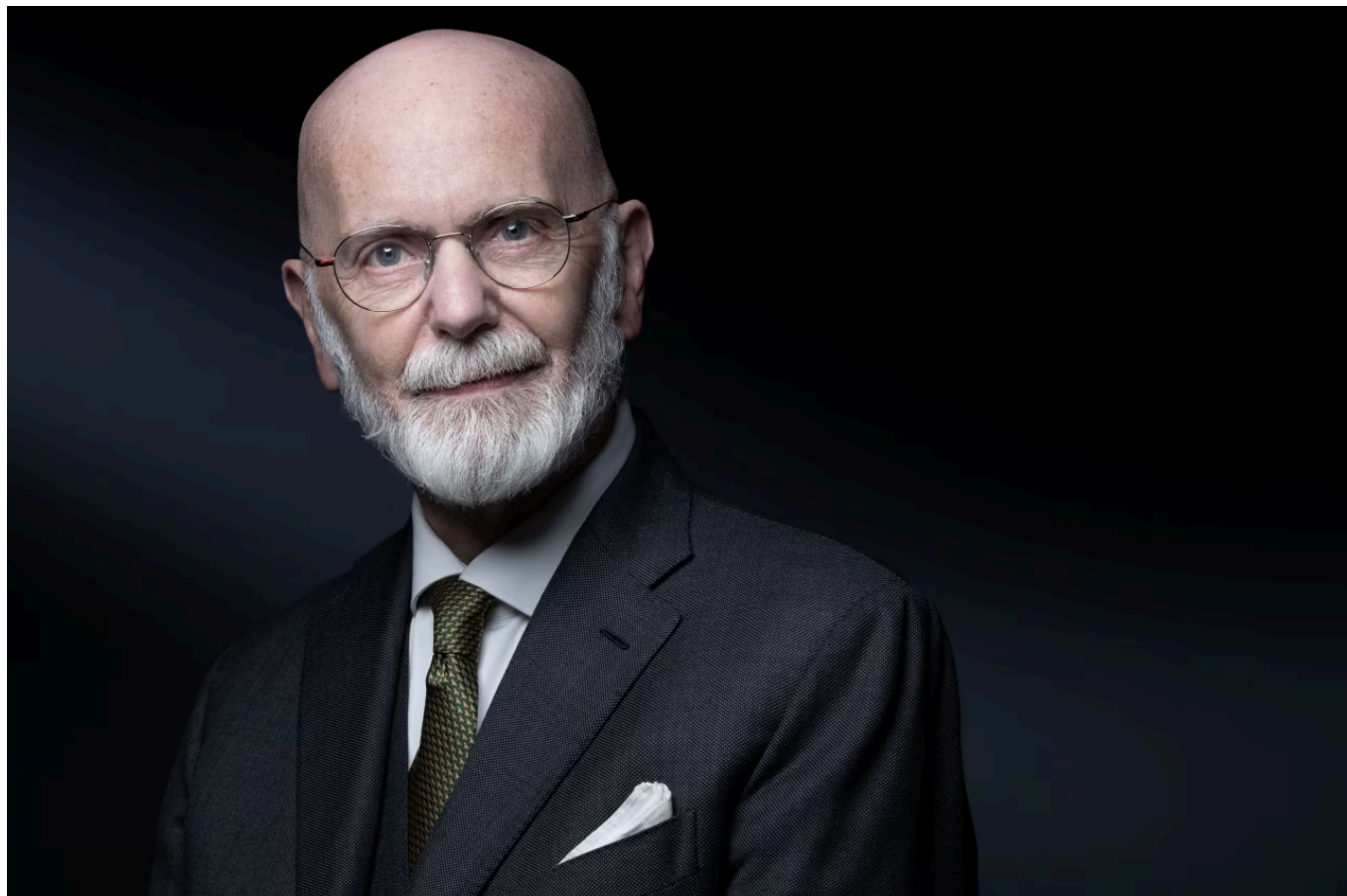
Who's Afraid of Renaud Camus?

Dominic Green

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The U.K. bans a French novelist from visiting for disputing the wisdom of mass immigration.



French writer Renaud Camus in Paris, Dec. 9, 2021.

London

Renaud Camus may be the most important living thinker no one has heard of. He's certainly the most misunderstood. Mr. Camus, 78, is author of "Le Grand Remplacement" (2011), which describes how decades of mass migration have altered his native France. He warns that Europe's current trajectory will, within a couple of generations, lead to the eclipse of its native peoples, their cultures and even Christianity.

Last week Britain's Home Office refused to allow Mr. Camus into the country because his presence wouldn't be "conducive to the public good." Add the Home Office to those who misunderstand Mr. Camus. Or do they understand him all too well?

We shouldn't confuse Mr. Camus's "Great Replacement" with the "Great Replacement Theory" publicized by Tucker Carlson and other tribunes of half-truth on the right. Mr. Camus doesn't allude to shadowy elites in the paranoid style or claim that Europe's left-liberal parties opened the gates to secure electoral dominance.

Mr. Camus is an erstwhile member of France's Socialist Party. He sees mass immigration as a product of globalism and capitalism, which regard people as interchangeable cogs and ignore the salience of culture. Western Europe's governments expected mass immigration to boost their economies. Instead, it produced welfare dependency, crime, terrorism and a sectarian power struggle that has permanently altered European life. The only conspiracy Mr. Camus sees in Europe's tragedy is a conspiracy of silence about what he called the "disaster"—the mass immigration of Muslims, Arabs and Africans with adverse social consequences that no one wants to admit, let alone address.

Mr. Camus writes with expansive rhetoric and broad brush strokes. If he were entirely wrong, Europe's voters wouldn't be swinging sharply right, and Mr. Camus's most significant translation into English would remain "Tricks," a fictionalized account of gay tourism in the 1970s. "Le Grand Remplacement" and several other of his essays have been translated into English. Read "Enemy of the Disaster," and it's clear that banning him from England would be akin to the U.S. refusing entry to Roger Scruton (1944-2020), another philosophical essayist who was called a racist for being too quick to state the obvious.

Mr. Camus's entry into England as a legal visitor is at the government's discretion, which the Home Office uses politically—managing communal tensions by placating a restive minority and suppressing the majority's dissent. While Islamist preachers come and go, in 2009 the Dutch politician Geert Wilders was refused entry because, the Home Office said, his presence would provoke "interfaith violence." Mr. Camus seems to have received a similar proscription.

In February, Vice President JD Vance upbraided Prime Minister Keir Starmer for "infringements on free speech" in Britain. Mr. Starmer insisted he was "very proud" of the state of Britain's free speech. Mr. Vance was right, and Mr. Starmer should be ashamed. The U.K. prime minister maligns critics of immigration and Islamism as "far right," and his Labour government is committed to defining "Islamophobia" in law. Should Mr. Starmer get his way, England would effectively grant unique privileges to a minority religion and make the state the partner of antidemocratic activists seeking formal restrictions on lawful speech.

A similar, informal struggle is visible in Europe's public spaces, where mass Muslim prayer in the streets upends a founding liberal principle, the division between private faith and the public sphere. This year, London's Labour mayor, Sadiq Khan, lit up the city for Ramadan. A few weeks later came another novelty in the struggle for public precedence, marking Good Friday with a Passion Play in Trafalgar Square.

Meanwhile, attacks on Jews, synagogues and Jewish schools are at record levels, and even Labour no longer blames the far right. All this looks less like diversity in action than a symbolic —sometimes real—battle over public space and cultural norms. It is producing radical changes that override the values of the democratic majority.

Mr. Camus has committed the error of noticing all this. If that makes him an enemy of the British state, it is because the state created the disaster. Labour and the Conservatives discredited themselves by pursuing policies of mass immigration and multiculturalism for three decades. The Home Office managed, or rather mismanaged, the immigration system and generated chaos. While Nigel Farage's anti-immigration, pro-law-and-order Reform UK Party now leads some polls, more-volatile nationalist impulses are rising. Mr. Camus was invited to Britain by the Homeland Party, a fringe party of neofascist origins which advocates mass deportations of illegal immigrants and foreign-born criminals.

The mood in England today is eerie. The government can't govern. The police menace law-abiding people for speaking their minds. The borders are open. The country feels as if it is one Islamist bombing away from eruption. Mr. Camus is the least of the government's problems, yet his presence would have exposed the greatest of them.

The British state survived Marx and Engels plotting world revolution in London for three decades. If Mr. Camus addressing a tiny party in a private room threatens the peace, then the peace, and the pact between government and people, is already broken.

Mr. Green is a Journal contributor and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society.