

No Flowers for Robert Faurisson

by Michael Curtis



Robert Faurisson

One the giants of French literature, Chateaubriand, denounced silence in the face of evil. When in the abjectness of silence, one no longer hears the chains of a slave or the voice of the denouncers, when everyone trembles before the tyrant, the historian appears. Unfortunately however, historians may be assassins of memory and one professional notorious falsifier of history that few will mourn has now disappeared.

Robert Faurisson, born in a suburb 15 miles from London of French father and Scottish mother, a dual citizen of both countries, died aged 89 on October 21, 2018 in his home in the symbolically appropriate city of Vichy where he lived.

Faurisson was a notorious hater of Jews who defended obnoxious ideas, a fountain of evil. Educated in France, he became professor at the Sorbonne until 1973 and then professor of French literature at the University of Lyon until 1991. He

will hardly be remembered for his knowledge of 19th century French poetry which he taught. Concerned with nationalist politics in France, he became a public figure first for his extreme advocacy of colonialism especially in Algeria, so intense that he was thought to be a member of the extreme OAS, and then as a defender of Marshal Philippe Petain and the Vichy regime.

But his infamous place in French history results from his role as antisemitic propagandist, a Holocaust denier who propounded the falsity that insistence on Nazi gas chambers was the biggest lie of the 20th century. Faurisson is unlikely to be remembered for any contributions to French literature, but he will remain as a star of historical negativism, and his prominent role as Holocaust denier, justifying lies and fabrications. In 1980 he informed the world of the lie of the existence of gas chambers and of the myth of the genocide of Jews, explaining that these "falsehoods," opened the way to gigantic political and financial fraud of which the principal beneficiaries are the State of Israel and International Zionism. There were, he assured fellow historians, no gas chambers. Jews who were deported died of disease and malnutrition. One of his persistent views was that the *Diary of Anne Frank* was a hoax. In 1981 he was convicted by the French court of inciting hatred and racial discrimination, and for his views that the reports of the Holocaust were grossly exaggerated.

Of course Faurisson was not alone in his historical and political fantasies but he was the most prominent and influential of French negators. He was associated with the Institute for Historical Review, defended Ernest Zundel, German publisher of material inciting hatred of Jews, and the pseudo-scientific Leuchter Report of 1988 denying mass killings at Nazi extermination camps. He approved the statement by the despicable Darquier de Pellepoix, former Commissioner for Jewish Affairs in Vichy, that only lice were

gassed in Auschwitz.

Faurisson followed in the footsteps of Holocaust deniers and then became the leading figure for others. Maurice Bardeche; Paul Rassinier; Roger Garaudy, once a brave war time resistance fighter and communist author, then converted to Islam and became a Holocaust denier; Henri Rocques, who asserted the Holocaust was a wartime lie, artfully maintained by the International Zionist lobby; Jean- Claude Pressac, chemist and pharmacist who for a time denied some concentration camps were extermination camps; Jean-Marie Le Pen founder of the National Front, protector of Vichy collaborators, and author of the remark that the Holocaust was a "detail of history."

Faurisson may be remembered by his friends and associates. One is the antisemitic comedian Dieudonne M'Bala M'Bala whom he embraced on the stage, and one of whose assistants gave him in 2008 an award while dressed in a striped concentration camp uniform with a yellow star. Faurisson was honored in 2012 by the then president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by an award for "courage, strength, and force," in contesting the Holocaust.

Faurisson can claim fame as the first Frenchman to be legally convicted of Holocaust denial. At the time, Le Pen defended Faurisson as a symbol of the free speech that has been criminalized in France. The state, Le Pen said, went to great lengths to silence Faurisson. This event was the result of the prosecution of Faurisson for defiance of the Gayssot Law of July 13, 1990. The law made it an offence to contest the existence or size of crimes against humanity as defined in the London Charter 1945 on the basis of which the Nuremberg trials were held, 1945-6.

The Gayssot Law was a response to the development of "revisionism" by writers who challenged the existence of the Shoah, a not so subtle form of contemporary antisemitism which previously could not be prosecuted. The Law dealt with the

assertion that the myth of the gas chambers was a dishonest fabrication (une gredinerie) endorsed by the victorious powers in Nuremberg trials which were a sham, a "mascarade," sinister and dishonorable. The Law was based on the right to be free from incitement to racism or antisemitism. Faurisson, a forger of history, dismissed from academia in 1991, was rightfully convicted by the French court of inciting hatred and racial discrimination.

In a curious, still controversial, statement Noam Chomsky wrote a preface for one of Faurisson's writings. Chomsky said he had nothing to say about the work of Faurisson or his critics, or about the topics they address, concerning which he had no special knowledge. However, the charges that Faurisson was a rabid antisemite and fanatical pro Nazi had no bearing whatsoever on the legitimacy of the defense of his civil rights. Chomsky could find no evidence to support the conclusion that Faurisson was antisemitic or neo-Nazi, rather "relatively a political liberal of some sort."

By coincidence on October 4, 2018 French culture minister Francoise Nyssen announced an award to memorialize Ilan Halimi, the first Jew to be killed in a hate crime after World War II. Halimi, a 23 year old mobile phone salesman, had been abducted, tortured and killed in 2006. The murder is depicted in a movie, *24 Days*.

The intellectual and legal problem concerning Faurisson and like minded individuals continues. The argument is made that the expression "genocide" is no longer appropriate for what happened, new evaluations are needed of rigid canons of memory which we have been taught to regard as eternal. According to this line of argument, we must abandon the concept of a Nazi systematic extermination policy planned from the outset; it was a gradualization imposed by war which itself exercised the violent antisemitism of Hitler and his entourage.

This specious argument, derivative from Faurisson's work and

influence, must be rejected as should be historical revisionism. The only praiseworthy remark that can be made of Faurisson and his ilk, is they did truth an involuntary service by making Shoah one of the best known events in modern history. The concept of revisionism should be buried with him.