



Lyautey, a reference as far as the eye can see...

military-Earth thinking notebook

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The Cahiers regularly devote some of their lines to Marshal Lyautey. In this year which marks the 90th anniversary of his official departure from Morocco, it seemed important to us to remember who this man was, a military leader, a political figure, a philosopher, who counted and still counts many admirers, but also many detractors. This homage will be paid through a series of articles for which our thanks go particularly to the Fondation Maréchal Lyautey and its president, Colonel (H) Pierre Geoffroy.[1].

1] The vice-president of the association is General de Lapresle, a member of Minerva.

At first glance, classifying Hubert Lyautey (1854-1934), Marshal of France and academician, among the humanists may satisfy those who only refer to usual standards. However, this man of genius, often elusive, refused, and rightly so, to allow himself to be trapped in clichés. There are many reasons why he is not only a symbol, but also a reference point for the men and women of our time, both by his example and by his visions as far as the eye can see, far beyond the horizon masked by a permanent and carefully measured "smoking".

Seeing the fanaticism with which the "forces of evil" are bent on destroying everything, there can no longer be any doubt about the interest of the "forces of evil" in the destruction of the world. to refer to a true statesman and to draw ideas and energy from his words and deeds. And the urgency is growing stronger by the day, for the more time passes, the further we move away from the indispensable landmarks of our culture. If we do not react, these landmarks will eventually become invisible and disappear. The inevitable evolution of society could be a justification if it was going in the right direction. Today, however, freedom is insidiously confused with permissiveness, willpower with wilfulness, incivility with crime, tolerance with resignation.

All things considered, the cornerstone of a society in which it is good to live is respect, all respect, starting with respect for oneself, respect for others and their convictions, but respect that does not confuse tolerance and relativism, the scourge that everything will end up being equal.

Around respect must be articulated a good number of virtues which it is up to the family and the school to inculcate, with the help of every unmanipulated structure contributing to the physical, moral and spiritual formation of young people, and then to cultivate in an often difficult environment; this requires effort. The suppression, instead of the modernization which has become necessary, of national service has not helped. The role of national service in social interaction, moral, civic, patriotic and sometimes professional training, the sense of duty and the taste for effort have been ignored or ignored.

It is precisely efforts of all kinds that our society refuses. It favours the easy way out, the laissez-faire, the laissez-vivre which, as the saying goes, leads to all sorts of vices. At the end of the road, there is anarchy, if not favoured by those who dream of dictatorship.

Lyautey, for his part, burst onto the public scene in 1891, with the publication in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of the famous article entitled "Du rôle social de l'officier dans le service universel". He bluntly delivered the fruit of his reflections and experience, which had the effect of a bombshell. It is explosive in many ways.

He attacks the practices in progress in his milieu, the army, and proposes progress marked by humanism; he extends his subject, which defines the bases of a management with a human face, to "It transgresses the rules of the "Great Mute"; it forces reactions and positions to be taken by both military personnel and civilians. Moreover, his words are not the short-lived ramblings of an "intellectual", but the advice of a man in the field who combines action with words.

In any case, for Lyautey, this is a turning point in his career and in his life. A forerunner in communication, his networks will develop and promote the dissemination of his ideas. Without neglecting his fierce enmities, the persistent noise made around this article allowed him to meet new people and make loyal friends. Thus, he met Paul Desjardins, a teacher of letters from the Normandie region who invited him to participate in the creation of the "Union pour l'action morale" (Union for Moral Action), which took place on January 11, 1892, when a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and professions met.

1) The program of the "Union pour l'action morale" was defined in a manifesto drafted by a committee of five writers, including Lyautey and Desjardins. It is entitled "Notre raison d'être", and Lyautey will always carry it with him: "Our spirit is a spirit of solidarity, justice, freedom, and respect for the human person. No matter how diverse our beliefs may be, no matter how dissimilar our backgrounds, we all share the conviction that it is a positive duty for man to devote himself and to act. We therefore believe that all ways of life are not equal, we fight against moral nihilism, whatever its name, we believe in the necessity, in the effectiveness of effort. We are convinced that in our crumbling society divisions are more factitious and less irreducible than they appear, and that in a common search for social peace and national unity, men of good faith, free from all sectarian and partisan spirit, can meet.

The programme of our attempt is this: to create a Centre where we can pool our good wills, coordinate our means of action and help each other in our work, dissipate through rapprochement what between us is nothing but misunderstandings and react against this abnormal state where every man and every work seems to be enclosed in a confession, a profession, a party. The fact of joining our meeting does not imply anything other than the recognition of these principles and the consent to this program. Everyone under his sole responsibility continues to act in his own environment, but with a zeal increased by the feeling of our co-operation. We firmly believe that our attempt responds to a present need, moreover we consider it a duty, that is to say that difficulties cannot free us from it".

Let us imagine that this document is the subject of a text study in our schools. What an outcry from a large number of those who teach and those who practise what Lyautey calls "moral nihilism"! This prospect alone should encourage "men of good will" to unite to defend our fundamental values.

To this end, throughout his career, Lyautey has never failed in his speeches and writings to develop the main ideas contained in this text, and to mix them with his own. In his speeches and writings, Lyautey has never failed to develop the main ideas contained in this text, and even to spread them by means of punchy formulas - real "tweets" before their time - struck at the corner of common sense. In order to keep up with current events, it would be appropriate to tweet what was said by those who were constantly searching for the "common denominator" that unites people: "To find this common denominator is to find the common reasons for living and acting, to find what brings people together and eliminate what divides them.

This is the opposite of any method which consists in seeking out, stirring up and even creating subjects of discord and taking advantage of the dissension, or even the hatred generated and maintained. Instead of the aggressive formula "divide and rule", Lyautey substitutes and advocates a formula that respects the general interest: "Seek what unites and flee what divides". In the same vein, with his experience and sense of continuity, he appeals to his detractors and friends alike with a rule of common sense: "To live, for societies as well as for people, is to preserve and to react. Meditate on these vigorous words that politics has distorted and polluted, and say to yourselves that to preserve is to oppose destroying and to react, never to give up. That's the way I think we should be conservative and reactionary!"

1] There are three captains (Hubert Lyautey, Antonin de Margerie and Georges de Miré), two academics, a pastor, a priest, a publisher, an industrialist, a sociologist, a writer and an artist.

Colonel (er) Pierre GEOFFROY carried out several campaigns, first as a volunteer in Indochina (1953-1954) and then in Algeria (1955-1962), where he served as an officer in the Algerian Affairs. Upon his retirement in 1981, he began a second career in several fields, creating a consulting firm, serving as a municipal councillor, chairing various organizations and founding, among others, the Association Nationale Maréchal Lyautey and the Foundation of the same name to which, as president, he devoted much time and energy. He has written numerous articles on the marshal.

The Colonel is a Knight of the Legion of Honour, Commander of the National Order of Merit, Officer of the Moroccan Order of Ouissam Alaouite, but also a Knight of the Academic Palms.

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