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# THE LEBOVICI AFFAIR

THE TIMES FRIDAY MARCH 9 1984

## Murder of famous film producer baffles Paris

From Diana Geddes  
Paris

Mystery continues to surround the death of Gerard Lebovici, one of France's foremost film producers, whose body was found on Wednesday, with four bullet wounds in the back of his head, in an underground parking lot in the Avenue Foch in Paris.

M Lebovici, who was 51, was also known as a great impresario, and in 1981 ran the Artmedia casting agency, which was associated with many of the best-known names in the French film industry, including Jean-Paul Belmondo, Gerard Depardieu, Catherine Deneuve, and Jeanne Moreau.

But despite the glamorous "showbiz" side of his life, he remained a reserved, secretive man, who hated the limelight, was hardly ever photographed in public and almost never gave interviews. "Champ Libre", a small publishing house dealing in off-beat marginal books, which he ran with his wife, was known for its total lack of any press service.

It was Champ Libre that published the autobiography by Jacques Mesrine, one of France's most notorious mass murderers, who was shot dead by the police in 1979. A new edition of the book, entitled *The Death Instinct*, had just been brought out to coincide with the opening in Paris last month of



Mystery murder: M Lebovici with Catherine Deneuve during the presentation of the Cesar award in 1982.

a controversial, semi-documentary film on Mesrine's life.

At present, however, the police are discounting suggestions of any link between M Lebovici's death and the Mesrine affair. There was a

telephone call to M Lebovici on Monday evening shortly before he left his office off the Avenue Kleber at 6.35 pm, never to be seen alive again. Because of that call he cancelled a meeting fixed for 7pm.

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THE APPARENT TRUTH ABOUT THE ASSASSINATION  
OF GERARD LEOVICI

"The cuckoo has sung  
On the dry branch  
They have killed Shuhaj  
And times are hard."

Popular song in  
honour of the bandit  
Nikola Shuhaj.

For a long time the ruling elites have neutralised the press by means of the press itself, the State has turned journalist, and those who believe, believing newspapers, that they speak their own language are speaking, in effect, the language of the State. In short, for a long time even the semblance of a free press has ceased to exist.

In these conditions one need not be astonished that the articles that have appeared recently in the press in connection with the assassination of Gérard Lebovici, have, at first, entertained the reader with very diversified explanations, to the complete exclusion, (which is a remarkable fact), of the political explanation, and then, secondly, brought up this view, which was ignored to begin with, -but this time to travesty it totally.

It is a particularly foul and grotesque lie to write as the Lamys and Babronskis do in France-Soir of the 9th of March 1984 that "he (Gérard Lebovici) did not hide his sympathies for the Baader gang and the red brigades". It is a second one just as foul to speak afterwards of "a sympathiser of the red brigades called Gianfranco Sanguinetti". But Lamy and Babronski set the tone.

An unsigned article in the Journal du Dimanche (11th of March 1984) formulates the following interesting question: "And is the crime a political one? The investigators do not rule it out". But this is at once answered by taking up the lie begun in France-Soir: "If a political crime has taken place, it can only emanate from those fringe groups to whom Lebovici could have promised aid and assistance as he had done at the time for certain Italian fringe groups close to the red brigades". Lamy and Babronski set the tune.

Philippe Lemoine, preferring, for his part, to introduce a slight variation to this foetid music suggests that the murder of Gérard Lebovici could indeed find its solution on the side of Palestinian terrorism (VSD, 15th of March 1984). But, of course, this "leader" -it is the word that this berk uses - of the S.I.\* who has "participated in the Palestinian movement Black September" has never existed anywhere else than in his mercenary imagination.

In order to explain that the assassination of Gérard Lebovici is "linked to terrorism" (such rigour in the terms!), Carole Barjon constructs, in Le Nouvel Observateur (16th of March 1984), a particularly clumsy set of fictions. She writes that Gerard Lebovici "could have been in touch with a certain Jean-Louis Baudet", the police suspecting, according to it, this Baudet to be "the guru" of the brigadists who have taken refuge in Paris and to help them "to prepare new offensives in Italy". "Could have been in touch", one must admire the scarcely banal value of this conditional.

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\* S.I.: Situationist International. (T.N.)

The newspaper Minute (17th of March 1984), a bit more despicable than the others, fabricates, in addition to the false description of terrorism, that of the crypto-stalinism of Debord and Lebovici. Why not, whilst one is at it, of Boris Souvarine and of Ante Ciliga published by Champ-libre! (I)

There is no need to waste one's time refuting these lies and other calumnies one by one. It is enough to make short work of all these ignominies by referring to the Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of "The Society of the Spectacle" written by Debord and published by Lebovici, from which the thesis of the manipulation of the red brigade by the secret services of the Italian State was taken up by Gianfranco Sanguinetti in On Terrorism and the State.

It is more important to understand that there is neither rhyme nor reason in these improbable fables. This is hardly difficult. They raise the question of the political assassination of Gérard Lebovici only to answer it in false terms, that is to say in the long run in order to falsify it better. The technique behind this collection of bewildering lies is simple and always the same. Contrary to all appearances of truth, they begin by representing Gérard Lebovici as having been partly linked to terrorism, and they end by drawing the conclusion that his assassination is nothing but a settling of old scores between a terrorist, or a partisan of terrorism, and other terrorists.

Secondly, at a time when (one can surmise it without great risk of being contradicted) the non-political explanations will have collapsed, like so many houses of cards, one after the other up to the last, as they have already started to at this moment then this political version -but a lying one- of the assassination, which journalists have put their entire miserable monthly waged talent to or paid as penny-a-liner to attempt to give countenance to, will remain opportunely the only one in the shop-window.

It would in fact be the case if this question had to remain set under the false spotlights of spectacular information. But it will not be so, we are going to set it in its true light.

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(I)

"And then after ten years of oblivion, this unexpected madness of terrorism occurs. The outrages of the red Brigades and of the Baader's, death exalted into a political system. Destruction, in a word, ruins so often called for. And the mad dog killers who require gurus, who require patrons, who require thinkers, ideologues, revolutionary justifications. It is in this dance of death that the Lebovicis, the Debords, the Feltrinellis, the Goldmanns, the Sanguinettis and so many others find their rhythm.

For the benefit of whom? Who pulls the strings of these blood-stained jumping-jacks?

One imagines the enjoyment of a Lebovici when coming out of an ideological debate with an adherent of Action directe and thinker of the red Brigades, he ended the day at Maxim's between his friend Badinter, Minister of Justice and Montand, his accomplice at poker tables. But can one imagine the laughter of "Mohamed Mohamedovitch" who holds this jumping-jack with airs of a puppet-master?

All this life of derision, lies and appearances. All this, who would have known it, who could have even only imagined it? Who could have believed Lebo to be the subject of a file taking up an entire filing cabinet at the DST? \* Who would have guessed, behind the implacable swashbuckler of stalinism that Debord is, a man with a Soviet bank account between his teeth? Who would have had the idea of being interested in the other forgotten Situationists, in these frequenters of the hidden side of Lebovici, one of whom joined the armed struggle next to Yasser Arafat, Soviet General of the Palestinian army, another of whom has been arrested in nationalist China for spying? Who would have believed that these young people, whose revolt was sympathetic in that it anathematized also stalinism, would be spotted fifteen years later, by means of an investigation about an assassination, for what they have always been: agents of subversion and destabilisation at the service of Soviet imperialism."

We are not afraid to affirm straight away that, firstly, Gerard Lebovici was not assassinated by one sole killer, -as the greater part of the press, taking up without discussing them the false clues put out by the police, has declared; secondly the police will never nab these killers, no more than it did for the killers of Goldmann (there should be no mistake about what we are saying, we ask nothing from the State, its police and its justice).

The newspapers have set up the political hypothesis of the assassination of Gerard Lebovici proceeding from an imaginary terrorist activity of the latter. Really setting up this hypothesis is, inversely, to start from the real subversive activity of Gerard Lebovici. This is well-known. It was pursued at Champ-libre. And since, as we declare, political crime there was, it is therefore in connection with Champ-libre that the key to this assassination will be found; more precisely, either in connection with this activity in general, or in one particular part of this activity.

If the very existence of Champ-libre Editions constitutes the motive, the murder of Gerard Lebovici then is the deed of killers acting on behalf of one or other ruling sphere.

Nothing could be less certain, because one would have to think that one particular sphere had come to the point of resenting the activity of Champ-libre in general as an immediate danger and that the assassination would suffice to exorcise it. These rulers would be quite naive to still believe they could stop subversive thought by doing away with its publisher, or else, then, quite lacking with foresight for having allowed this same subversive thought to be distributed for fifteen years, and then suddenly fall into a panic at their own flightiness.

Therefore it remains to situate the motive in a particular point of Champ-libre's activity. If it is true that in war each of the adversaries lays down the law for the other, out of which results a reciprocal action which, in so far as a concept, must go to extremes, what publication could have been resented as an act of war to the point of provoking, in return, the murder of Gerard Lebovici?

Jacques Mesrine waged war against this society and its police. The Death Instinct constituted in some manner his declaration of war. His insubordination and his courage represented a permanent challenge and insult to the guardians of the existing order.

Thus one will see a minister of justice, concerned about the "honour of the police", obtain, by the expedient of a law, specially conceived for this usage, and with a retroactive effect, from the first publisher of The Death Instinct that he withdraws the book from sale and deprives the author the author of his rights.

As for Jacques Mesrine, this rebel whose freedom made the existence of a police look scandalous and scarcely credible, by ridiculising it and scoffing at it constantly, this police was duty bound to open the shooting, with the courage that one knows it has, without the customary warnings.

Quite recently in May 1983 a certain Debongrain, a neo-nazi who goes under the assumed name of Xavier Raufier and who writes in the review Contrepoint since the editorship has been taken over by le Club de l'Horloge, has set himself up, in his book On Social Violence published by Alesia Editions, as a technician of counter-revolution. It is thus he recommends in the first instance the use of soft methods, namely to shift the aggressivity of the blousons noirs\*\* and other insurgents

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\*DST: Direction de la surveillance du territoire, this police is in charge of State security within the French territory. (T.N.)

\*\*Blousons noirs. Young proletarian rebels. Sociologists, social workers and other turds call them "young delinquents".(T.N.)

to the plane of social success. After having started this absurd idea, from which all material basis is notably absent and which serves solely to mask his veritable purpose, this same Raufer-Debongrain unveils himself and drops his programme in all its brutality: it is a matter of wearing down unhesitatingly "those who cannot be co-opted and necessarily there will be some" by "selective repression", which "could be all the more solid as one will not be running the risk anymore of throwing out the baby with the bathwater". And he goes on to say that one must smash the junction between the revolt which manifests itself under a criminal aspect and the strongly Situationist minds who consider "Jacques Mesrine as the archetype of the social rebel".

The simple fact that a Raufer programme exists shows, to anyone that can see, to what extent Jacques Mesrine constitutes the emblematic figure of the present moment of class struggle, loved in the dangerous classes and hated by the ruling spheres. There are many indications that these latter have decided upon preventing, by all means possible, a positive image of Jacques Mesrine developing in the collective memory, in the same way as those, in other times, of Stenka Razine, or Mandrin.

To republish Jacques Mesrine's book was to renew his declaration of war. To make an attempt against the "honour of the police" was to assume a "formidable honour".

Jacques Mesrine's war was that of Gérard Lebovici, Situationist publisher.\*

Paris, March 21st, 1984  
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March 26th, 1984.

Translated from the French,  
in London, April 25th, 1984.

\*On April 9th 1984, Champ-libre Editions announced in a communique that they will be called from now on: Editions Gérard Lebovici, so that what took place at night in an underground parking lot is not forgotten. (T.N.)

NB: The identity of Xavier Raufer is Alain Beauregard not Debongrain. Beauregard is a member of the right-wing clubs (GRECE and Club de l'Horloge). Note added on the 26th of October 1984.

NB: The identity of Xavier Raufer is Christian de Bongain. (note added on the 5th of March 1987).



Tunier  
19.3.84

## PARIS DIARY

by Frank Johnson

### Murder most French

A dark Frenchman in black tie who appeared in the newspapers, and on the cover of last week's *Paris Match*, as escort to the actress Catherine Deneuve, differed in two aspects from previous holders of that coveted office. He was not described as about to become her next husband, and shortly before the photographs appeared, he had been murdered.

The late Raymond Heppenstall, the British novelist and critic, writing in the preface to one of his indispensable books on French murder, answered the charge that he might have been giving the impression that the French were a peculiarly criminal nation. "As a matter of statistical fact," he said, writing in 1972, "They are, on average, rather more than twice as murderous as ourselves, not only in bright rooms and dark lanes but in their cars on the road, but I try to avoid saying that." Yet there is a common propensity to murder in all countries, Heppenstall concedes. Closer examination of national differences in the practice of murder often showed those differences "to be temporary, local and confined to a single class." He nonetheless adds that "during *La Belle Epoque* there were upper class French crimes one could not have imagined in any part of the United Kingdom or the United States."

The man depicted at Mme Deneuve's side was Gerard Lebovici, "*L'eminence grise du cinéma Française*" (*Le Monde*). He was a publisher and a raiser of money for films which latter capacity explains his business connection with Mme Deneuve. He was thus a member of the only class now widely accepted in France as being upper: the class made up of people who appear, or cause others to appear, on the large or small screen, although in any well-conducted murder of the *Belle Epoque*, he would not, so to speak, have been seen dead.

But in the old days, as now, it was not possible to have a more upper class area of Paris in which to be discovered dead than the Avenue Foch, and it was there that M Lebovici was found shot at the wheel in an enclosed car park (four bullets). Squads of those philosophi-

cal, resigned picturesque Paris detectives, so many of whom seem to be midgets, arrived on the scene and puffed on their gaulloises. In due course, they found in the deceased's pocket a piece of paper on which was written a time, presumably of a rendezvous and a first name (François), presumably not that of the President of the republic. There the clues have

ended.

To a France as bored as nearly everyone else by the Common Market budget matter, and as pathetically grateful as nearly everyone else to Mr Hart for enlivening what promised to be a dire American presidential year, the clueless corpse in the Avenue Foch has become essential. Furthermore, M Lebovici seems to have been unlovable, which makes people enjoy the mystery with a good conscience. The first book he published celebrated the pre-war bandit known as Pierrot le Fou, once the subject of an important "new wave" film and, Heppenstall informs me, a bad lot in reality.

Lately, he published *The Death Instinct*, the memoirs of the most famous recent bandit, the late Jacques Mesrine. M Lebovici wrote the preface to the new edition. ("It is a redoubtable honour to be the publisher of Jacques Mesrine.") He helped finance the film of the book. So hardly anyone believes he was killed by real gangsters (too obvious). One theory is that he was killed, less glamorously, by makers of clandestine video cassettes about whom he had been complaining for damaging his legitimate business. Gambling debts? A possibility. Like many a *belle époque* figure, he is reported to have enjoyed seedy gaming tables.

There is an ideological aspect. Under the influence of May, 1968, he became a radical Leftist, and financed once-fashionable publications (the romanticising of criminals was a late 1960s early 1970s phenomenon, it will be remembered). Very much a man of his time and class, then. But tastes change. Some of today's fashionable publications have hooted him to his grave, implying that he died by the values by which he lived. For today's Paris fashion is right wing.

A murder case that has touched on Pierrot le Fou, Mme Deneuve, the Avenue Foch, and ideology among the Parisian intelligentsia is a very French murder and, in an age menaced by that of the tedium of the Brussels summit and by the still-possible candidacy of Mr Walter Mondale, the French are duly grateful.