The Last Taboo

By Philip Carmel*

In depressing late-1970’s Britain, one of life’s little pleasures was watching the young West Bromwich Albion football team with Laurie Cunningham running down the flanks, Cyrille Regis popping in the goals and Remi Moses kicking lumps out of opposing midfielders.

West Brom were different than other clubs. Maybe they weren’t flashier or more skilled than some teams but the club did open up a view to most of the British public that there were indeed, and should be, black players contributing to the beautiful game in England.

There is still racism in football, in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, and it may well be that British football fans and their teams still have a way to go with regard to the participation of black players and coaches in the game. But we have still come a long way.

I well remember the whistling when black players touched the ball and I remember the bananas too. In parts of Europe, this is apparently not just a part of the past but also part of the present. It’s been a long road but West Brom were there to help us rev up the engine.

At least until last Saturday. Not what Nicolas Anelka did on the pitch but what he, his manager and subsequently his club, did in its aftermath. And of course, the deafening silence of UEFA and FIFA.

It’s difficult to ignore his ubiquitous presence on French social media but most people in Britain and many in the rest of Europe now know a lot more about Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala and his Quenelle than they did a week ago. They know he has multiple convictions as a serial inciter of racial hatred. They know how he hangs about with Jean-Marie Le Pen and assorted fascists and how Holocaust deniers like Faurisson are feted at his stag shows and presented prizes by people dressed as Jewish concentration camp inmates. And they now also know that Nicolas Anelka is a good mate of his.

They know too that the Quenelle is a way to stick two fingers up at the establishment, an establishment whose strings are pulled perhaps by an American-Israeli axis, or controlled by Jewish personalities, medieval Jewish streets, Nazi death camps and Jewish schools.

My guess is that the president of UEFA and former captain of the French national side Michel Platini reads French newspapers or watches French television from time to time, so he presumably knows about Dieudonné and the Quenelle.

For Dieudonné has absolutely democratised anti-Semitism. A group of kids on holiday, lads out for a drink, bored soldiers guarding a synagogue, anybody can have a go at something Jewish by just moving one arm cross-wards towards the opposite shoulder and the other stiffly downwards. Your arm hurts, no problem, Dieudonné has a solution for that too. You can hold up a pineapple to show your displeasure at what he calls “Shoah pornography”.

It’s a privilege that’s even been extended to ageing international footballers on the infrequent occasions they can play and score. Looking for an outlet for such a gesture? What better place than in front of tens of thousands of spectators and a few million others watching on television. It looks a bit like a Nazi salute? So much the better. Why be so squeamish? You can honour major Holocaust
deniers in Paris and in Tehran, refer to gas chambers in an aside about a Jewish journalist, say Jews control international banking and the French government, get yourself photographed quenelling at Auschwitz and in front of the Jewish school in Toulouse where three children and a teacher were gunned down by a terrorist. Why should we even care about a symbol that is an inversion of a Nazi salute? How ridiculously petty.

Nonetheless, it does need to be made very clear that while one is out there making Nazi-like symbols, honouring major Holocaust deniers, saying the Jews control the world, working with Le Pen, linking Jewish schools, mediaeval Jewish streets, Holocaust memorials, Auschwitz, slave trading, gas chambers, international banking, Iran and of course, Jews, one is not, absolutely not, never in a million years, an anti-Semite.

Rather, one is asserting one’s legitimate anti-establishment credentials, opposing the policies of that little Zionist statelet in the Middle East or campaigning against the evils of global capitalism. Sometimes, there isn’t even any need to be guided by such lofty principles. A gesture of solidarity with a friend will also allow you pretty much carte blanche in these areas.

People write under the line in comment pieces in online newspapers that of course Dieudonné isn’t an anti-Semite, he’s just anti-Zionist. Give it a couple of days, they’ll write it above the line, too. All the things that until now have defined anti-Semitism – picking on Jews, denying the Holocaust, saying they control the world, all these terribly constraining and difficult demands of political correctness are no longer taboo. Only one taboo remains.

The supreme irony of all this is that the last taboo is to actually be an anti-Semite. Nicolas Anelka assures us he is not an anti-Semite and so does his manager who has been assured by the player. Then the club informs us in a statement that “certain quarters” may have been offended. It’s those pesky Jews again. There’s obviously no need to apologise to these certain quarters because, obviously, nobody had the slightest intention of being anti-Semitic here.

And anyway, why should people care whether or not they are defined as anti-Semitic when the word has been emptied of any meaning?

Doing or saying things anti-Semitic used to be the preserve of nutty extremists, skinheads, Nazi wunderlusters. Today, anybody can say or do anything, anytime, anywhere that’s anti-Semitic. That is Dieudonné’s contribution to French society and now spread internationally by Nicolas Anelka. Ultimately, they can do it because of the last taboo, because they are not, not ever, perish the thought, anti-Semites.

When truth is lies and good is bad, at the end of the day, a totally amoral society has been created, one that allows people to say and do whatever they want, when they want, how they want. That is the Dieudonné phenomenon. Nice kids on holiday, young people out for a drink, soldiers having a laugh outside a synagogue, a footballer scoring a goal, anybody has the absolute right to target Jews – as long as – of course – you say loud and clear: “BUT I’m not an anti-Semite”.

The question is what other aspects of Jew hatred are left to permit for these non-anti-Semites.

In 1940, virtually the whole of a democratically-elected French National Assembly voted absolute powers to Philippe Pétain to create Vichy France. Many forget this was the same National Assembly elected at the zenith of the Popular Front. Emptying a pernicious ideology of any meaning and its words of any sense cleanses and legitimises it. Ten years of Dieudonné in France have seen millions copying him and awaiting his latest pronouncements. That’s not liberalism or protecting freedom of
speech. This is contempt and anarchy. Democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect are the
antidotes. Time for Europe to use them.

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