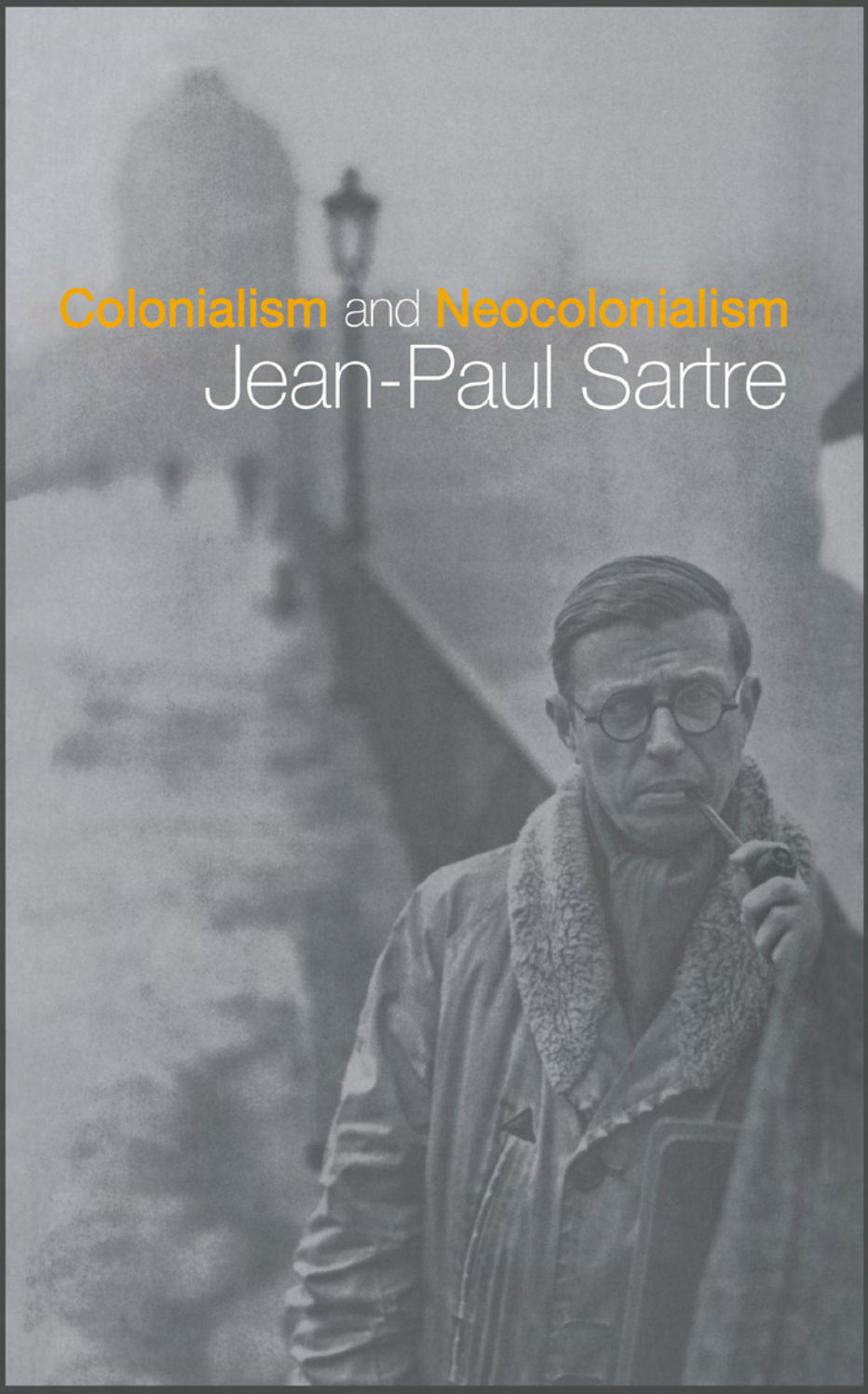
Colonialism and Neocolonialism

Jean-Paul Sartre



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Colonialism and Neocolonialism

First published in French in 1964, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* is a classic critique of French policies in Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s and inspired much subsequent writing on colonialism, post-colonialism, politics and literature. It had an important impact on the conduct of the Algerian war itself, and the break-up of the French colonial empire cannot be understood without reference to this key text. Sartre highlights key issues in the political debate at a time when colonial empires were crumbling. He analyses the discourses of colonialism and argues for the necessity of decolonization.

C*olonialism and Neocolonialism* is also famous for its controversial call for the use of violence in achieving political ends. It includes Sartre's celebrated preface to Fanon's classic *The Wretched of the Earth*. *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* has had a profound impact on French intellectual life, inspiring many other infuential French thinkers and critics of colonialism, such as Albert Memmi, François Lyotard and Frantz Fanon.

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Jean-Paul Sartre

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Preface by Robert J. C. Young	viii
Introduction: Remembering Sartre by Azzedine Haddour	xx
From One China to Another	1
Colonialism is a System	9
Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*	20
You Are Wonderful	24
We Are All Murderers	29
A Victory	31
The Pretender	39
The Constitution of Contempt	45
The Frogs Who Demand a King	50
The Analysis of the Referendum	65
The Sleepwalkers	72
The Wretched of the Earth	75
The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba	87

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Azzedine Haddour
Steve Brewer
Terry McWilliams

Preface

Sartre: the 'African Philosopher'

Robert J. C. Young

I

The English translation of Sartre's writings on colonialism and neocolonialism represents an important moment for both Sartre studies and postcolonial theory. With the striking exceptions of Lamouchi (1996) and Mudimbe (1988, 1994), few accounts of Sartre's work have grasped the significance of black cultures and anti-colonial struggles in his life and thinking. At the same time, while postcolonial theory customarily traces its overt intellectual and political origins through more recent theoretical developments back to Fanon, Memmi, Du Bois, Gramsci and Marx, the historical as well as the theoretical significance of Sartre's role and infuence remains undervalued and unexamined.

Although some commentators routinely claim an unbridgeable divide between postcolonialism and the anti-colonial movements, Sartre represents a major theoretical pivot between them, undoing any easy differentiation and demonstrating the basis for their common political inheritances. Along with Marx, Sartre constituted one of the major philosophical influences on Francophone anticolonial thinkers and activists, and through them on postcolonial theory. Sartre stands out as the Western Marxist who was most conspicuously involved in the politics of the anti-colonial movements, both in terms of a developing preoccupation with resistance to colonialism in his work and in his own personal political activism. In these essays, Sartre's powerful example as an intellectual who was politically engaged at every level comes across in the combination of theoretical analyses, newspaper articles written in the immediacy of the political moment, and historical critiques.

Sartre was extensively concerned with colonial and 'Third-World' issues from 1948 onwards, from his first engagements with racism and negritude, to the triumph of revolutionary China in 1949, the colonial wars in Indo-China, Morocco and Algeria, the Cuban Revolution, American imperialism in the war in Vietnam, the Arab–Israeli conflict, as well as French immigration policies (Lamouchi 1996). The implications of his involvement can only be fully addressed in the wider context of his other writings in these areas: the famous Preface ('Black Orpheus') to Senghor's collection, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948), the chapter on colonial violence in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), the appendix on the position of African-Americans in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1983), and the many occasional writings and interviews on the Vietnam War which, once Algeria had succeeded in winning independence, became his major political preoccupation (see, for example, Sartre and Dedijer 1970). Sartre, an active political campaigner, increasingly began to integrate these issues into the preoccupations of his own work.

The writings collected in this volume illustrate Sartre's developing response to colonialism: moving from the ethical to the political, from a preoccupation with individual freedom to intellectual and political commitment, and the moral demand for an assumption of responsibility for each individual's role in history. The essays demonstrate successively how he reformulated and sharpened the politics of negritude in Senghor, sketched out the limitations of colonial discourse and stereotypes *vis-à-vis* China, articulated the psychology of colonialism in Memmi (itself a nuanced response to his own Manichaean account of the colonial divide, subsequently developed by Fanon), articulated the power dynamics of neo- and postcolonialism in his analysis of the political role of Patrice Lumumba, and brutally confronted the French reading public with Fanon's revolutionary discourse of liberation by emphasizing the epistemological revolution that was taking place at the same time.

These essays therefore bring out a number of important factors both for Sartre himself and for postcolonial critique, beginning with the political background to Fanon and other activist anti-colonial writers, particularly with respect to the war in Algeria (Sartre's newspaper articles here should be read alongside those of Fanon in the FLN newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, collected in *Toward the African Revolution* (1964)). The essays also provide evidence of Sartre's political commitment as an intellectual, his radical placing of anticolonial struggle at the centre of the political agenda as a part of his commitment as a Marxist (particularly evident here in his analysis of the basis of colonialism in Algeria). Sartre foregrounds the way in which Marxism is a flexible body of ideas that requires theoretical elaboration and adaptation to specific circumstances, as well as renewal and theoretical input from new contexts and locations. Finally, these essays demonstrate Sartre's early recognition that the anti-colonial movements were not narrowly political campaigns but developed their own cultural and political positions through the elaboration of a revolutionary 'tricontinental' epistemology. [1]

II

At a theoretical level, Sartre's influence on black Francophone intellectuals was in certain respects greatest from the period before his political radicalization. The development of what Merleau-Ponty

1 I use the term 'tricontinental' here, in preference to the term 'Third World', with reference to the articulation of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements at the first Conference of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America at Havana in 1966, known popularly as the 'Tricontinental'. The Tricontinental marked the initiation of a global alliance of those from the three continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America against imperialism, signalling a common commitment to social and political transformation. Postcolonialism, I suggest, as a body of tricontinental counter-knowledge positioned against Eurocentric discourses, would also better be called 'Tricontinentalism' (Young 2001).

called Sartre's 'ultra-Bolshevism' occurred relatively late in his career, and there is comparatively little in the early work, focused on the necessity of freedom, to suggest his later increasing preoccupation with social injustice at a global level. In *Being and*

Nothingness (1943), Sartre rejects Marx's argument that consciousness is determined by the world, proposing instead freedom as the central characteristic of the condition of being human. Sartre rewrites Descartes's cogito as 'I am my choices' and 'I am my freedom'. Being human, for Sartre, is not constituted by any static, pre-existing essence; rather the essence of being human is dynamic, formed by the choices made by the individual. The individual, consequently, is not fixed but in a constant state of self-transformation and self-production, playing an active part within the masses as a conscious collection of individuals who make history. In certain respects, Sartre thus anticipates the performative basis of today's identity politics by several decades – except that for Sartre politics begins rather than ends with identity.

While anti-colonial intellectuals in metropolitan Paris were attracted by the anti-colonial and anti-racist stance of the Communist Party from the 1920s onwards, Sartre's position was also to prove engaging to those at the forefront of the later negritude movement who were trying to rework dominant conceptions of African and Caribbean identity and develop their own politico-cultural consciousness. Recalling Marx's remark in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that 'men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted' (Marx 1973:146), Sartre denied that individuals had to be wholly determined by circumstance, economic or historical, suggesting rather that they possessed a responsibility for themselves and their way of being in the world which in certain ways was always chosen. The possibility of agency, of authenticity, of choice and freedom, formulated during the adverse circumstances of the war during the German Occupation, was immediately attractive to radical intellectuals from the French colonies since it was easily transferable to their own situation of resistance to colonial domination.

Sartre was the first philosopher who responded to his historical experiences of the war by reformulating his political and philosophical position. He became more and more preoccupied with the question of abusive power relations and the iniquity of the French resisting the Germans, but then, having been liberated by the Allies, themselves subsequently inflicting the same oppressive treatment upon those in their colonies who were also fighting for liberation, a hypocrisy first made evident in the indiscriminate bombing of the Muslim town Sétif in Algeria in 1945 just after VE day.

III

Sartre thus came to his anti-colonialism through ethics rather than politics. During the war, he developed analyses of torture and antiSemitism. He worked towards uncovering the basis of racism, trying to understand it phenomenologically at the individual level rather than as an ideology. How does ideology work in and through the individual? What makes the racist a racist? How can the torturer torture? What choices has he made? What is the experience of racism for those oppressed by it? Sartre was unusual not only in approaching racism in terms of its phenomenology, but also in associating it directly with the practice and ideology of the colonial system in which the system determines the language, the stereotypical formulas, of each particular individual colonist (Sartre 1976a:

300).

In *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946), Sartre sought to understand the dynamics of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. The basic premise of Sartre's text was taken from Richard Wright's observation that 'There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is only a white problem': 'Contrary to widespread opinion', Sartre responded, 'it is not the Jewish character that provokes anti-Semitism but, rather, … it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew' – Fanon would add that 'it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence' (Sartre 1995:152, 143; Fanon 1965:30). As a result, Sartre characterized anti-Semitism as 'a form of Manichaeism' in which the anti-Semite splits the people of the world into good and evil: 'Between these two principles no reconciliation is conceivable; one of them must triumph and the other be annihilated' (Sartre 1995:40–1). He, and subsequently Fanon, then adapted this schema from the European racialist environment to the colonial situation.

While Sartre focuses on the racism of anti-Semitism, his analysis is applicable, by inference, to all colonial ideologies supported by racism. The war showed him that life was not simply a series of existential choices against circumstance: that the domination of power turns the subject into an object: in this situation, freedom is constituted by taking responsibility to transform oneself back into an agent. According to Sartre, a refusal to accept that freedom, which for Sartre defines man, reduces the individual to a state of inauthenticity. In the situation of anti-Semitism, as Sartre acknowledges, the choice of freedom and assuming the responsibility of authenticity requires considerable courage. Where the individual is defined as subhuman on account of racism, one understandable reaction is to aspire to the group from which he or she is excluded ('thus the Jew remains the stranger, the intruder, the unassimilated at the very heart of our society' (Sartre 1995:83)). For Sartre, however, this would be to live in a situation of inauthenticity: for the Jew, authenticity 'is to live to the full his condition as a Jew; inauthenticity is to deny it or attempt to escape from it' (Sartre 1995:91). This alternative for the persecuted subject, to live in a state of authenticity or inauthenticity, was to inspire Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). For Fanon, the colonial subject is not only denied his or her freedom and reduced to an object; he or she is unable to be fully human at an individual level: colonial oppression works at the level of psychology as well as in material form. If existence precedes essence, as Sartre argued, then the essence of the colonized subject aspiring to a 'white mask' is one of inauthenticity and bad faith. Sartre's section in *Being and Nothingness* entitled 'The Look', one of the most acute analyses he ever wrote, was a particular inspiration for Fanon – and subsequently for Lacan in his account of the Gaze, as well as the many discussions of various looks and gazes that followed in European feminist and film theory. Fanon's genius was to recognize the implicit gender and class position in Sartre's account of how, at a phenomenological level, the individual experiences the Other as an object. Soon, the looker finds himself looked at in turn and becomes conscious of himself as an object, or rather of seeing himself seen as an object: '*I am no longer master of the situation*' (Sartre 1958:263–8). In Sartre's account of how a lack of self-worth is mediated by the look of the Other, Fanon recognized an insight into the mechanics of how colonialism was able to produce a sense of inferiority in colonial subjects, of the psychopathology by which the colonized individual was led to experience him or herself at one remove as an object. The look turns the subject into an object: 'I

want you to feel, as I, the sensation of being seen. For the white man has enjoyed for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen' (Sartre 1976a: 7). The colonial subject constantly oscillates between the two states, internalizing the colonial ideology of inferiority and being less than fully human – until he, or she, assumes responsibility and chooses authenticity and freedom. It is for this reason that *Black Skin, White Masks* is a liberationist text.

Sartre's Hegelian training enabled him to recognize that power was a dialectical phenomenon, that torturer and tortured, racist and victim, colonizer and colonized, the empowered and disempowered, were locked in a symbiotic relation in which the first could not escape the consequences of his relations with the second. The split between colonizer and colonized, internalized by Fanon to provide the kind of Manichaean schizo-culture so forcefully analysed at the beginning of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), is drawn directly from Sartre's model in which colonizer and colonized are 'similarly strangled by the colonial *apparatus*, that heavy machine' (Sartre 1964:51). Caught up in that system, transformed into an oppressor or torturer, the colonizing subject also finds himself in a condition of ontological ambivalence: 'both the organiser and the victim',as Fanon put it, 'of a system that has choked him and reduced him to silence' (Sartre 1976a: 724; Fanon 1980:10).

IV

Sartre's insight that the Manichaean system of racism and colonization, apparently dividing colonizer from colonized, in fact generates dynamic mutual mental relations between colonizer and colonized which bind them in the colonial drama, was further elaborated by Albert Memmi in his demonstration that the dialectic also involved what Hegel had called the 'excluded middle': the spectral presence of the liminal, subaltern figures who slip between the two dominant antithetical categories. Sartre's response was to emphasize the dialectical aspect of his own account, suggesting that Memmi saw a situation where he also saw a system. Sartre stressed the systematic role that racism plays, so that the economic divisions of the colony are an effect of institutionalized racism: the white man is rich because he is white. This racial hierarchy, Sartre argued, the major ideological pivot of colonial ideology, worked by relegating colonial subjects to the status of subhuman. From this point of view, the constitutional liberation movements of the nationalist parties were based on nothing more, and nothing less, than the demand that colonized peoples be given human rights, or, as Fanon puts it, 'a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle "one man, one vote"' (Fanon 1965:47). Western humanism and rights discourse, Sartre argues, had worked by excluding a majority of the world's population from the category of the human. The new humanism of Fanon, Guevara and Castro, and the anti-humanism of Althusser, were essentially founded on the same colonial problematic: that the racism of colonialism was degrading colonial (or semi-colonized) subjects to the category of the subhuman. What was required, therefore, was either to do away with the concept of humanism altogether, or, more positively, to

articulate a new anti-racist humanism, which would be inclusive rather than exclusive, and which would be the product of those who formed the majority of its new totality. This was the basis for the emphasis, at the end of *The Wretched of the Earth* and in Che Guevara's magnificent 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' (1965) alike, on the necessity of the creation of a 'new man'. 'Let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. … We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force' (Guevara 1997:211–13).

Che Guevara, according to Hilda Gadea, was 'an avid Sartre admirer [and] an adept of existentialism' (Gadea 1973:36). In their debates about Sartre's work, they discussed not only his existentialism but also his presentation of racial problems in *The Respectful Prostitute* (1946). The slogan of the Cuban revolution – 'the revolution is a *praxis* which forges its ideas in action' – was itself fundamentally Sartrean in conception. The symbiotic and symbolic alliance between the two men was instantiated when they met during Sartre's visit to Cuba in 1960 – at midnight in the National Bank of Cuba, of which Guevara was at that time the director (Sartre 1961:148, 98). Sartre was deeply moved by the energy, intelligence and informal human warmth of the Cuban revolutionaries, remarking of Guevara, 'This Guevara had been made by the war. It had stamped its own intransigence on him. The revolution had given him his sense of urgency, his speed' (Sartre 1961:60). It was in Cuba that Sartre witnessed, according to Simone de Beauvoir, 'happiness that had been attained by violence': there Sartre 'realised the truth of what Fanon was saying: it is only in violence that the oppressed can attain their human status' (de Beauvoir 1968:503, 606). According to Sartre, Fanon and Guevara, it was through revolution that the oppressed could attain their own humanity as well as their freedom. 'At the level of individuals', wrote Fanon, 'violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction' (Fanon 1965:73). Sartre, who began by abhorring violence on ethical grounds, ended by advocating it as the only necessary counter-response by those subjected to it. This was a choice that, as for Nkrumah or Kaunda, was the product of historical necessity arising from the liberation wars in settler colonies, or against imperial domination, rather than a rejection of ethics as such. The corollary of this historical engagement was to emerge in Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* where he interpolates the violence of colonialism and anti-colonial response at a philosophical and historical level: colonialism, in this analysis, consisted of a process in which uncontrolled violence was gradually transformed to a controlled violence, asserting a legitimacy of rule, as in Algeria (Sartre 1976a: 727).

Sartre's unremitting public support for the FLN and their objectives in Algeria, expressed in the Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* and elsewhere, was at the time an indictable offence. Despite himself requesting it, he escaped prosecution by the government, but the colonists tried to ensure that he paid the price. In January 1962, a bomb planted by the OAS destined for his apartment went off in the rue Bonaparte; it was placed by mistake on the floor above, where the apartment was totally wrecked (Horne 1977:503). Apart from his foundational analysis in 'Colonialism Is a System', Sartre's articles on Algeria are very much products of engaged moments in the violent history of the war. They bring out the radical position which he, unlike the vast majority of the

population in France, had adopted. His antagonistic relations with the Communist Party after the war were the result in the first place of his dislike and distrust of Stalinism but also of his disagreement with the Communist Party line on the French colonies, particularly Algeria. When the Algerian war began, Sartre was, with Lyotard and Castoriadis' Trotskyist group, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, one of the few advocates of independence for Algeria opposed to an *Algérie française*. When it achieved independence in 1962, the FLN immediately banned the Communist Party.

V

Sartre's Marxism was also radically different from the official contemporary version represented by the Communist Party. Between 1952 and 1954, he published a long critique of the Communist Party written from the position of a Marxist committed to the needs and rights of workers and ordinary people rather than the autocratic rule of the party (Sartre 1968). Sartre's profound relation to postcolonial theory begins with his important demonstration of the possibility of bringing Marxism into a productive, new relation with different systems, forms of thought and experience. This is because in doing so, Sartre showed himself closest among European Marxists to the contemporary models of socialism that were being developed in China, Africa, and Latin America. Although Marxism had been elaborated in new forms directed towards what was known as 'the East' since Sultan-Galiev became director of the Central Bureau of the Muslim Organizations of the Russian Communist Party, known as the Musburo, in 1919, it was the victory of Mao Tse-tung in China in 1949 which for the first time signalled a communist, anti-colonial (China was a 'semi-colony') revolution in the Third World, and the establishment of a specifically Third World or tricontinental form of Marxism. The Marxism of the anticolonial movements developed into very different forms from those of European Marxism (official and unofficial), articulating the universal principles of Marxism to local, vernacular conditions, particularly the needs of the peasantry, whether it be Mao Tse-Tung in China, the African socialism of the Senghors, Cabral and Nyerere, or the transculturation of Marxism to the conditions of Latin America by Mariátegui and Guevara.

Sartre's 'Colonialism is a System' constitutes a thorough analysis of the mechanics of colonial economics that shows him fully immersed in the perspective developed by Marx, who argued that colonialism presented capitalism in naked form, stripped of the decorous clothing of European bourgeois society (Marx 1973:324). Colonialism, Sartre was to add, also operates in a different temporality from Western capitalism, in the time of its secondary system; Fanon in turn would point to differences of temporality within the colonial domain, a 'time-lag' between the cosmopolitan modernity of the nationalist leaders and the peasantry (Sartre 1991:401; Fanon 1965:87). Sartre shows a remarkable understanding of contemporary 'Third-World' differences of perspectives and need, in his emphasis on the questions of land and the agrarian problem, of the appropriation of land and resettlement, and, particularly, of landlessness, which have been central to the problems of many colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the same time, despite the specificity of its historical and economic analysis of Algerian colonialism, Sartre's

essay is remarkable in emphasizing the systematic basis of colonialism. In generalizing his account of Algeria through the claim of his title, Sartre did not mean that there was a single colonial system everywhere and at all times, but rather that colonialism represented a deliberate and systematic form of exploitation that could be analysed as such. Fanon took this a stage further, so that Sartre's Manichaean system provided the fundamental model for his much more abstract account of colonialism and anti-colonial resistance in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon, as Homi Bhabha has observed, 'rarely historicises the colonial experience' (Bhabha 1986: xiii). This was a deliberate political strategy: it was the abstracted universalism of Fanon's analysis that enabled *The Wretched of the Earth* to become, in Stuart Hall's words, 'the Bible of decolonisation'.

VI

By combining his pursuit of ontology with one of violent resistance to power, dominant and exploitative, Sartre set up the dialectical basis for anti-colonial struggle, followed by Fanon, which was characterized by the coincidence of systematic and existential accounts. Just as *The Wretched of the Earth* begins with a general account of the colonial world but ends with the particularity of case histories of individual patients who had suffered psychological traumas during the Algerian War of Independence, so Sartre's emphasis on the systematic basis of colonialism was not made at the expense of his earlier affirmation of the significance and authenticity of individual subjective experience, and of its value as a determinant of political action. The conflictual dialectic of subject and object in Sartre's phenomenology formed the theoretical basis for his Marxism which started out not from the determining material conditions of the world but from the subject as agent, acting his or her choices out in the conditions of history. The *Critique of Dialectical Reason* represents Sartre's attempt to resolve this dialectic, to combine his ethics of individual freedom, of responsibility and authenticity with the larger processes of history. In the section entitled 'Racism and Colonialism as Praxis and Process', the inspiration for the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre was the first (and last) European Marxist theorist to develop a theory of history in which colonialism, and the endemic violence of the colonial regime, was a major component, and which gave a significant role to anti-colonial resistance (Young 1990). Sartre's account of historical determinism remains unique in the way in which he combined subjectivity, the consciousness of acting as an historical agent, with the totality of determining historical processes. As Fredric Jameson describes it, such a conjuncture in Sartre involves not 'a reconciliation of contraries, but rather … a kind of unified field theory in which two wholly different ontological phenomena can share a common set of equations and be expressed in a single linguistic or terminological system' (Jameson 1971:208). This constitutes an accurate description not only of Sartre, but also of Fanon's work, and through him of postcolonial theory in general. Deeply drawn to Sartre by the latter's public commitment to anticolonial politics, Fanon was also attracted to Sartre's position at a more philosophical level because of its existentialist articulation of objective materialist history with the subjective experience of its operations. It is through Sartre and Fanon that postcolonial theory acts out its distinctive combination of anti-colonial

Marxism and the charting of psychological effects and modes of resistance. It shares a common dialectic of equations, operating as a disjunctive ontological synthesis.

Through Fanon, postcolonial theory thus draws on the very domain of Marxist theory that the whole theoretical drive of French Marxism since the 1960s was concerned to refute: Sartrean exis-tentialism. While these structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical manoeuvres were being carried out, anti-colonial theory was at the same time being developed through a transposition of Sartre's Marxist humanism, and his theoretically incompatible alliance of Marxism and subjectivity, of human *praxis* as the source of meaning and political action. Since the Althusserian attack on Sartre, so rigorously and effectively deployed with respect to his Hegelianism, only anti- and postcolonial theory have continued to bring together this impossible but necessary articulation of the right to subjectivity with assimilation into the objectivity of history. The necessary, disjunctive relation between the two, or, put differently, between the universal and the local, was to coincide with the basis for African socialism in its most elaborate theorization in the work of Léopold Senghor.

VII

While Lévi-Strauss's and Althusser's critiques of Sartre made the effective openings that enabled the later postcolonial deconstruction of the ethnocentric premises of European philosophy, it was Sartre's work, particularly of the 1940s, that was most influential on postwar French anti-colonial intellectuals. Sartre exerted a powerful pressure on the black Francophone writers who came to Paris in the 1940s and 1950s, in particular, Césaire, Fanon, and Memmi. In Paris they also encountered the work of other Francophone African writers, particularly Senghor and Diop, who, operating within the orbit of the Pan-African movement, had developed the reaffirmation of black culture in the form of *Négritude*. As a result, Francophone African writing became something of a synthesis of the philosophy of negritude with Sartrean existentialism. This was broadly the position of the great journal of African consciousness founded by Alioune Diop in 1947, *Présence africaine*, of whose editorial board Sartre was a member (Mudimbe 1992). It was *Présence africaine* that organized the legendary First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne in September 1956. Sartre worked closely with Senghor, Fanon, and Memmi, writing prefaces to what in all cases became their most famous books. Sartre's prefaces read like a chronicle of the successive positions adopted by Francophone African anti-colonialists: from the concern with the revolutionary expression of repressed cultures and subjectivities in Senghor's anthology, to an identification with the violence endorsed in Fanon's treatise on colonial revolution, to the consequential problems of neocolonial interference by Western interests suffered by Lumumba after independence in the face of his own aspirations for a just and humane free society in the Congo.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon cites Sartre's remark in 'Black Orpheus' that it is 'no coincidence that the most ardent poets of negritude are at the same time the most militant Marxists' (Fanon 1986:133). Negritude, which developed out of the context of a militant metropolitan diasporic anti-colonial radicalism, utilized any and all available

sources to formulate its cultural redefinition which would enable African colonized subjects to transform themselves from the object status of abject deculturalization to which they had been reduced. No more than for Sartre, the essence of blackness that they pursued was not conceived of as a prior entity in existence but as the product of life-choices: Africanism, negritude, like anti-colonialism, were the products of situational engagement. Negritude, wrote Sartre in 'Black Orpheus', is 'an act more than … a disposition' (Sartre 1976b: 42). Sartre's famous preface to Senghor's anthology of 1948 has received more attention than any other of his writings in this sphere. His complex account of the dialectic of white and black worlds, and his affirmation of 'the ultimate unity which will draw together all the oppressed in the same combat' in the colonies, was highly influential on Fanon (Sartre 1976b: 15). *Black Skin, White Masks* in its own way constitutes an analysis of the colonial thinking that negritude was trying to break away from, while *The Wretched of the Earth* provides the basis for the renewal of selfhood through the reversal of anti-colonial violence which, according to Fanon, enables accession to human status. In both, Fanon was pursuing the possibility of a new ontology and epistemology of liberation.

In *The Invention of Africa*, V. N. Mudimbe describes Sartre as 'an African Philosopher', not merely on account of his wide influence on African intellectuals, nor even on account of the fact that 'by rejecting both the colonial rationale and the set of culturally eternal values as bases for society, [Sartre, in *Black Orpheus*] posited philosophically a relativist perspective for African social studies' (Mudimbe 1988:83, 86). For Mudimbe, Sartre symbolically became a 'Negro philosopher' because it was Sartre who recognized the complexity of African epistemological roots. Sartre was one of the few European intellectuals to recognize in Senghor, Fanon, Memmi and others that, together with the anti-colonial movements, the pursuit of political liberation had been accompanied by the development of new forms of knowledge, a counter-modernity set against that of the West. In his Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre thus emphasized Fanon's tricontinental perspective not only as a revolutionary liberationist doctrine but also as fundamentally a new epistemology.

In the complex history of the liberation movements, one thing is clear, namely that at a political and intellectual level, the work of the tricontinental political-intellectuals typically involved a syncretic transformation of available radical discourses, above all Marxism, through its conjunction with the specificities of different geographical, political, cultural and historical conditions. At the same time, anti-colonial activists were also concerned to develop new kinds of knowledge, of anthropology, history, literature, politics, generating a counter-modernity that cannot be separated from the knowledge that has more recently been developed in the academy, which has been characterized as 'postcolonial'. The cosmopolitan, international structure of the anti-colonial movements helped to construct a formation of intellectual and cultural resistance, a huge production of philosophical and cultural knowledge, that flourished alongside anti-colonial political practice and the material forms of resistance, from strikes to insurrections. Postcolonial theory is fundamentally the product of that anti-colonial, anti-eurocentric political knowledge and experience and its construction of a tricontinental modernity. Postcolonialism represents a name for the intrusion of this radically different epistemology into the academy, the institutional site of knowledge, globally dominated,

hitherto, by the knowledge criteria and positionality of the West. Sartre's example as an intellectual committed to social and political transformation on a global scale, suggests that while much of the role of post-colonialism as an academic practice has been to challenge the basis of established, eurocentric knowledge in the cultural sphere, it must also continue to work in the spirit of the anti-colonial movements by further developing its radical political edge, forging links between its engaged intellectual activism and specific, often local political practices designed to end oppression and enforce social justice.

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Introduction

Remembering Sartre

Azzedine Haddour

I

Sartre wrote this book as a series of essays at a time when colonial empires were crumbling. His project is twofold: to analyse the discourses of colonialism and neocolonialism and to argue for the necessity of decolonization. Sartre delineates a number of what he calls 'situations' in which he intervenes to critique the nefarious effects of these two discourses respectively on the colonized and the Third World. First, in his review of Cartier-Bresson's photographs of China, he announces the end of the picturesque. Secondly, he criticizes the political structures of an old colonial France governed by an ideology constructed in the nineteenth century, structures that perpetuated political instability and demanded urgent modernization. Thirdly, he rallies behind an incendiary Third-Worldism, engaging with the writings and political thought of Memmi, Fanon and Lumumba. Let us first deal with the specificities of each of the essays before re-situating Sartre within the field of postcolonial studies.

Sartre wrote 'From One China to Another' as a preface to Cartier-Bresson's work. [1] Borne out of war, the picturesque, Sartre reminds us, cannot comprehend difference. Sartre prefigures the arguments of Roland Barthes in 'Myth Today' and Edward Said in *Orientalism*, i.e., the fabricated quality of the mythic idea and its orientalizing intent. Sartre writes: '[The photographers] seek out a Chinese who looks more Chinese than the others; in the end they find one. They make him adopt a typically Chinese pose and surround him with *chinoiseries*. What have they captured on film? *One* Chinaman? No … the Idea of what is Chinese' (this volume, p. 18). Taken at high speed, Cartier-Bresson's snapshots cannot indulge in 'gossip' and do not even have the time to be superficial. In Sartre's view, the Chinese photographed by Cartier-Bresson do not look Chinese enough. Sartre thanks him for his 'nominalism' (this volume, p. 19), for demystifying the picturesque that takes refuge in the convention of language and hides behind mythic concepts. The photography of Cartier-Bresson, Sartre concludes, 'announces the end of tourism. It gently teaches us, without useless pathos, that poverty has lost its picturesque quality and will never recover it.'

'Colonialism is a System' was originally given as a speech at Wagram on 27 January 1956. [2] Sartre, who was in favour of peace, protested against France's policy of pacification during the Algerian war. He warned against the mystification of neocolonialism and undertook a detailed analysis of French colonialism in Algeria, a system put in place in the nineteenth century, supported and maintained by liberal ideology. The theory of imperialism, Sartre contends, was not formulated by Lenin but by the liberal ideologue Jules Ferry.

Sartre elaborates on the systemic violence of colonialism in his preface to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. [3] He is careful to differentiate between the subjects of ideology and of colonialism, between the insidious function of the former and naked systemic violence of colonial oppression. He captures the terms of the dialectics of having and being thus: 'Colonialism denies *human rights* to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force, therefore, as Marx would say, in a state of "sub-humanity"'. Racism is inscribed in the events themselves, in the institutions, in the nature of the exchanges and the production. The political and social statuses reinforce one another: since the natives are subhuman, the Declaration of Human Rights does not apply to them; conversely, since they have no rights, they are abandoned without protection to the inhuman forces of nature, to the "iron laws" of economics' (this volume, p. 50). He reiterates the crux of his argument in 'Colonialism is a System'; he elaborates on the dialectical relationship involving the oppressor and oppressed first discussed in his *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *Black Orpheus*: 'A pitiless reciprocity binds the colonizers to the colonized, their product and their destiny' (p. 53). He presents the colonizers and their victims both as 'strangled by the colonial *apparatus*, that heavy machine constructed at the end of the Second Empire, under the Third Republic, and which, after giving every satisfaction to the colonizers, is turning against them' (p. 49) to crush them. He thanks Memmi for reminding us in his book that colonialism carries the seeds of its own destruction. What Memmi has shown forcefully, argues Sartre, is that the logic of colonialism would lead not only to the self-destruction of the system, but to the affirmation of the colonized 'national selfhood'.

L*e Monde* approached Sartre to comment on the testimonies of the mobilized reservists that exposed the issue of torture in Algeria. Sartre wrote an article entitled 'An Enterprise of Demoralization'. The article was regarded as an incitement to violence and was rejected by *Le Monde*. Sartre published it in *Les Temps Modernes* with a new title parodying Jean Nohain's popular radio programme. Nohain used to present a needy family and, with the self-congratulatory 'You are Wonderful', urge his audience to help them out. The donations heaped upon this needy family expressed a 'moment of national generosity. To the rhythm of Jean Nohain's weekly miracles, France kept on dreaming and unwittingly sliding towards the age of consumerism.' [4] This 'moment' was nothing but a myth. Sartre's parody serves to demystify the rhetoric of national generosity which Nohain came to embody by exposing the lies and conceit of the media and cowardice of the French people for not facing up to the reality of France's hideous politics. 'The newspapers court us', Sartre writes, 'they want to make us believe that we are good. When the radio or the television ask us for a five-franc piece, they call their programmes: "You are Wonderful"; that is enough to make us run from the Porte de Saint-Ouen to the Porte d'Italie at midnight. But we are not wonderful. No more than we are naive. The illusory community of decent people is quite simply that of the readers of *France-Soir*. If we refuse to investigate the French truth ourselves, when we are capable of piling up our old mattresses on top of our 4CVs and throwing them at the feet of some Jean Nohain, it is because we are afraid. Afraid of seeing our true faces naked' (this volume, p. 58). Sartre provides similar insights to those of Barthes in *Mythologies*: myth works to de-politicize its signifiers; it hides the truth. 'Concealing, deceiving and lying,' Sartre points out, 'are a duty for those who inform France' (pp. 55–6). What is concealed is the fact

that the 'French soldiers are massacring at random in the streets of Algiers before the hardened eyes of the European population'. Jean Nohain kept congratulating his enchanted audience with: 'You are Wonderful'; Sartre retorted: 'We are all Murderers'. [5]

After the *coup de force* of 13 May 1958, de Gaulle announced that he was willing to return to power. In 'The Constitution of Contempt', Sartre denounces as blackmail the referendum which gave de Gaulle special powers to change the constitution. He advised the voters to say 'non', just as he would urge them to vote 'non' in the 1961 referendum on the issue of linking Algeria's auto-determination with the condition of setting up provisional institutions to mediate between the FLN and the *ultras*. Sartre perceives in the return to power of de Gaulle the spectre of Bonapartism jeopardizing France's democratic institutions. In 'The Pretender', [6] 'The Constitution of Contempt', [7] 'The Frogs who Demand a King', [8] 'The Analysis of the Referendum' [9] and 'The Sleepwalkers', [10] Sartre voices this concern. He also warns that the fascist *ultras*, whose *coup de force* brought de Gaulle back to power, might hold the reins of his governance.

A decade after the end of Second World War, the once victimized France swapped positions with the Nazis and Fascists, the perpetrators of torture.'A Victory' [11] appeared in *L'Express*, on 6 March 1958; it was written as a response to Henri Alleg's *La Question* which had been published on 17 February 1958 by Les Éditions de Minuit. In his book, Alleg talks about his experience as a victim of torture. The French Government seized this issue of *L'Express*, and banned Alleg's book. Sartre denounces torture and elaborates on the dialectics of the victim and the perpetrator. As Contact and Rybalka rightly point out, twentieth-century ethics could no longer eschew the question of torture and Sartre's intervention is crucial in this respect. [12]

In terms which evoke Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre describes the perpetrators of torture as 'sadists bent over wrecks of human flesh' (this volume, p.68), who know nothing about their victims but only 'their cries, their wounds and their suffering'. Like the colonial system which creates both the colonizer and the colonized as two protagonists involved in the colonial drama, torture produces the victim and the perpetrator. 'In this business, the individual does not count; a kind of stray, anonymous hatred, a radical hatred of man takes hold of both torturers and victims, degrading them together and each by the other. Torture is this hatred, set up as a system, and creating its own instruments' (this volume, p. 71). Sartre warns that torture has become a semi-clandestine institution undermining the premises of the democratic principles of French society. In Sartre's critique, the victim and perpetrator of torture interact dialectically to constitute the speculum which reflects the ugly image of France. In *Torture: Cancer of Democracy*, Pierre Vidal-Naquet conjures up this image thus: 'France made general use of the practices of torture, summary execution, and large-scale deportation. It is also known that many of these habits have overflowed into France itself.' [13] The Algerian War, with its excess of violence, undermined not only the political institutions of the Fourth Republic, but also the Declaration of Human Rights upon which French democracy and government rested. Tacitly as well as consciously, such violence affected the political unconscious of the French in general, and of a generation of thinkers and philosophers in the period between the 1950s and 1970s, who became preoccupied with issues of power, discourse, ethics and difference.

In Sartre's view, *The Wretched of the Earth* represents 'the moment of the boomerang,

the third stage of violence': a returning violence that comes back to hit its perpetrators. [14] He examines this moment in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. According to him, the colonial situation produced the native and the colonialist as a couple implicated in the same violence. Sartre argues that colonial violence was never static: it had to 'change in order to remain the same'. [15] This violence to which the natives were subjected was experienced consequently as a process, determined by the expropriation of the colonized, the pulverization of their social structures, and their exclusion from the colonizing social institutions. The process of super-exploitation of the natives was produced by a petrified ideology and maintained by force. Their objective condition – i.e., their chronic malnutrition, their galloping demographic growth, their under-employment, famine, diseases, etc. – was a 'controlled process'. [16] In order to overcome their objective condition, Sartre argues, the colonized must confront the total negation to which they are subjected by another negation, violence with violence. [17] The violence involving colonizer and colonized was nothing but the reciprocal interiorization of a single oppression, that of the colonizer. Sartre makes it clear that there is a fundamental difference between the gratuitous violence of the colonizer and that of the colonized which 'is not an absurd storm, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even an effect of resentment' (this volume, p. 147–8). In Sartre's view the volence of the colonized 'is no less than man reconstructing himself '. Critics hasten to attack Sartre's incendiary language but overlook the fact that violence was generated by colonial Europe which, propelled by this violence, is now reaching 'a mad and uncontrollable speed' and 'heading toward the abyss'.

In 'The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba', [18] Sartre engages with the political problems of Third-World countries and more specifically with Africa's thwarted decolonization. He shows that in the case of the Belgian Congo retreating colonialism was soon replaced by rapacious imperialism. He explains that the colonial administration urged the Belgian government to grant independence to the Congo in order to swap the colonial regime for neocolonialism. Through education and the division of labour it had introduced, colonialism managed to create and stratify social classes which would serve its interests. The problem of Lumumba resides in the fact that he did not suspect that 'the imperialist governments and the large companies, confronted with the colonial crisis, had decided to liquidate the classic forms of oppression and the detrimental ossified structures that had developed during the course of the preceding century. He was unaware that the old mother countries wished to entrust nominal power to "natives" who would govern, more or less consciously, according to colonial interests; he was unaware that the accomplices or straw men had already been chosen in Europe, that they all belonged to the class recruited and trained by the Administration, to the petty bourgeoisie of employees and civil servants, to *his own class*. This ignorance was to be his downfall' (this volume, p. 175). Lumumba brought his own class to power and set about governing against its interests. Reiterating Fanon's critique of the pitfall of bourgeois nationalism, Sartre shows how the assassination of Lumumba sealed an unholy alliance between the black bourgeoisie and imperialism. Sartre writes: 'the dead Lumumba ceased to be a person and became Africa in its entirety, with its unitary will, the multiplicity of its social and political systems, its divisions, its disagreements, its power and its impotence: he was not, nor could he be, the hero of pan-Africanism: he was its

martyr' (this volume, p. 200). Sartre presents the Congo as a symbol hypostatizing the destiny of Africa: 'neocolonial countries were deciphering the mystification which had released them from all their chains except over-exploitation'.

II

Although overlooked by critics in postcolonial studies, Sartre's contribution to the debate on colonialism is of great importance. The seminal work of this cultural critic and political philosopher of the twentieth century informed the debate around decolonization, and played a vital role in the emergence of major critics such as Césaire, Fanon and Memmi. His work, in fact, provides insights without which it is difficult to grasp the specific historical and cultural circumstances under which these critics were working. Arguably, his interventions in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *Black Orpheus* established a critical terrain for the studies of these critics. What emerges from these two key texts is the inextricable link between ethics and politics in his critiques of anti-Semitism, racism and colonialism. His engagement with the colonial politics of the Fourth Republic in the 1950s, his two prefaces to Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* contained in this book, as well as his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, marked the fissuring of the grand narrative of Western Humanism and anticipated its deconstruction.

So, the following questions impose themselves on us: why has Sartre been largely excluded from the agenda of postcolonial criticism, and even when he was invoked, why was it more often than not with the intention of revoking his contribution? Why were his interventions in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* consigned to oblivion? What were the causes which effected this neglect and forgetting of Sartre? And why translate and remember Sartre now at this moment? To attempt an answer to these questions, I need first to examine Sartre's interventions in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *Black Orpheus*. Though these two interventions emerge from two distinct 'situations', they shed some light on this book and could help to reposition Sartre in the field of postcolonial criticism.

Sartre wrote *Anti-Semite and Jew* to expose the complicity of France in the Nazi project. His aim was to grasp the discourses which produced and reproduced anti-Semitism and which perpetrated and perpetuated genocide. He adumbrates the portraits of four major protagonists involved in the drama of anti-Semitism: the anti-Semite, the democrat, the inauthentic and the authentic Jew. The anti-Semite constructs the Jew. The democrat loves the Jew as a human being but annihilates the Jew in his/her specificities as a Jew. The inauthentic Jew reproduces either the anti-Semitism of the anti-Semite or the humanist and universalizing rhetoric of the democrat that wipes out the very difference defining the Jewishness of the Jew. In other words, the inauthentic Jew either reproduces him/herself through the gaze of the anti-Semite that ghettoizes and prevents the integration of the Jew or seeks to assimilate him/herself into a cultural universe that denies the difference of the Jew. Inauthenticity is the outcome of a situation that perpetrates racism and the objective murder of the Jew. The authentic Jew accepts his/her situation as a Jew and does not seek 'avenues of flight' [19] or attempt to overcome this situation by constructing a Jewish state.

'In spite of Sartre's goal to defend Jewish "plight"', Kritzman remarks, 'his focusing on Jewish characteristics, and on Jewishness as a socially constructed way of being, led him to formulate a negatively conceived essentialism on what he termed the "Jewish question"'.' [20] Kritzman intimates that the Sartrean model, which is predicated upon a dialectical relation between the anti-Semite and Jew, between self and Other, between sameness and difference, constructs Jewishness as 'the result of the gaze of the anti-Semite'. [21] The Sartrean situation, according to Kritzman, 'produces a sense of difference derived from the petrifying order of the same'. [22] He levels the charge against Sartre of constructing 'the "Jew" [as] both the sight (the vision) and the site (the *locus*) of the anti-Semite's existence. Within this framework, the "Jew"' becomes the repository of absolute hatred.' Kritzman conflates the gaze of the anti-Semite with Sartre's analyses of the discourse of anti-Semitism which scapegoats and excludes the Jew. Kritzman is wrong to suggest that Sartre (or at least his model of analysis) 'overdetermines Jewish subjectivity and makes it the effect of the anti-Semite's visual prowess'. [23] Kritzman attributes to Sartre the object of his critique: anti-Semitism. Two problems marred the intervention of Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*: Sartre is accused of voiding Jewishness as a category of its historical and religious content; his Zionism is a thorny issue.

In *Black Orpheus*, Sartre enlarges upon the key crucial ideas in his *Anti-Semite and Jew*: that the gaze of the white creates the Negro, and that these two protagonists are involved in a situation which perpetrates the racism of the former *vis-à-vis* the latter. According to Sartre, belonging to a given society is bound up with what he calls 'the untranslatable elocution of its language' which hypostatizes its specific traits. [24] Because of the diasporic character, the disciples of *Négritude* have to write their 'gospel in French'. [25] French was the only medium available to them through which they could communicate. By adopting the French language, these writers found themselves in the paradoxical situation of espousing the very culture that they were bent on rejecting. [26] As Sartre points out, they speak in order to destroy the language in which the oppressor is present: their main project is to 'de-gallicize' its signifiers. [27] He describes the poetry of *Négritude* as a sort of 'auto-holocaust': the 'conflagration' of the language. Arguably, Sartre anticipates deconstruction. He argues that the moment they overthrow a language consecrating the priority of white over black, not only do they overturn the hierarchical coupling of this binary and all the conceptual oppositions which perpetrate the rhetoric of difference, but they poeticize this language. [28] Sartre warns that this poetry is racial, written not for the white, replicating in its struggle the impetus of white racism. Unlike the other oppressed minorities in white societies, whether these represent a class interest or an ethic group, the black cannot deny that he or she is black. That is to say, the black cannot lose him/herself in an 'abstract uncolored humanity'. [29] They are no 'avenues of escape' for the Negro who is 'held to authenticity'. [30] Because the white has thus far deprecated the blackness of the Negro, *Négritude* is the only avenue open to the Negro for freedom. *Négritude* is the Negro's consciousness of race and the Negro's coming to terms with his/her situation as black. Sartre perceives the mythopoetics of *Négritude* as a necessary step in a dialectical movement which will bring white and black together in a classless society. In his terms,

> Negritude appears as the weak stage of a dialectical progression: the theoretical

> and practical affirmation of white supremacy is the thesis; the position of Negritude as antithetical value is the moment of the negativity. But this negative moment is not sufficient in itself and the blacks who employ it well know it; they know that it serves to prepare the way for the synthesis or the realization of the human society without racism. Thus Negritude is dedicated to its own destruction, it is passage and objective, means and not the ultimate goal. [31]

In response to this, Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: 'When I read that page, I felt I had been robbed of my last chance. I said to my friends, "The generation of the younger black poets had just suffered a blow that can never be forgiven." Help had been sought from a friend of the coloured peoples, and that friend had found no better response than to point out the relativity of what they were doing.' [32] In Fanon's view, *Black Orpheus* 'is a date in the intellectualization of the *experience* of being black'. According to Fanon, Sartre presents the poetry of *Négritude* as the source of revolutionary politics, but blocks this source of its poetic spring by abstracting the experience of being black. Fanon argues that 'black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes'. [33] Negro consciousness must not therefore be seen as a negative term in a dialectical schema, as a lack; it is not the potential of something, but it is wholly what it is. In the concluding section of his book, however, Fanon comes round to Sartre's way of thinking that negritude is the only means to overcome the differences of race, but that this anti-racist racism cannot be an end in itself. Fanon clearly realizes the dangers of its totalizing and racialized language and therefore refuses to 'derive [his] basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color'. [34]

Sartre envisaged the solution to the problem of racism in a Marxist eschatology: a classless society. I speculate that the absence of Sartre from the postcolonial agenda can be attributed to his tendency to reduce the colonial problematic to a notion of class struggle and to seek to resolve this problematic in a Marxist eschatology. One of the consequences of this solution in existential-humanist Marxism is the perceived reduction of difference to a negative concept: the voided character of the Jew and the negativity of *Négritude*. As we shall see, this would leave Sartre open to the accusation of being ethnocentric. Clearly what is at stake is his Marxism.

III

When Sartre moved to the Left in 1952, at the pinnacle of the Cold War, most French intellectuals distanced themselves from the PCF. As F. Dosse points out, the *Rassemblement Démocratique* which brought together prominent intellectuals such as André Breton, Albert Camus and Sartre disintegrated. [35] After the publication of *L'Homme révolté*, Sartre became embroiled with Camus in a controversy. In the summer of 1952, Merleau-Ponty left *Les Temps Modernes*, and in 1955 in *Les Aventures de la dialectique*, he dismisses Sartre's politics as Bolshevistic. These two controversies signalled a change in the attitude of French intellectuals towards communism and political commitment. The political ground shifted: Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault emerged to challenge Sartreanism. To echo Dosse, the eclipse of Sartre

was the outcome of a new configuration in the French intellectual field: the decline of social sciences gave rise to structuralism as a new science, which questioned the validity of existential humanism as the philosophy of the subject. Even though he subscribed to the ethics and politics of Sartreanism, Roland Barthes was to detach himself from Sartre after the publication of *Mythologies*. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, he played a key role in promoting structuralism. With the effacement of 'humanism' as the subject of critical investigation, this new science studied formal rules, codes and structures. To quote Bernard Pingaud: 'We can no longer talk about consciousness or about the subject, but about rules, about codes, about systems. We do not say anymore that man makes sense, but that meaning constructs man. We are no longer existentialist, but structuralist'. [36] Althusser attempted to re-think Marxism in scientific, i.e. structuralist, terms by removing it from the clutches of humanism. Foucault perceived existential humanism as the medievalism of our age; he dismissed Sartre as a nineteenth-century thinker. Lévi-Strauss levelled the charge of ethnocentrism against Sartre, because he defined Man in dialectical terms that restrict history to the West as a historical community; the rest of humanity is excluded from this historical totality. [37]

It is true that Sartre attempted to humanize Marxism's economism. [38] However, Sartre, in his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, denounces the collusion of humanism with European colonialism. He writes: 'Let us quit this Europe which talks incessantly about Man while massacring him wherever it meets him, on every corner of its own streets, in every corner of the world. For centuries … in the name of a supposed "spiritual adventure", it has been suffocating almost the whole of humanity' (this volume, p. 137). He reveals 'the strip-tease of our humanism' by exposing the ideology of the Enlightenment thus: 'What empty chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honour, country and who knows what else? That did not prevent us from holding forth at the same time in racist language: filthy nigger, filthy Jew, filthy North Africans. Enlightened, liberal and sensitive souls – in short neocolonialists – claimed to be shocked by this inconsistency; that is an error or bad faith. Nothing is more consistent, among us, than racist humanism, since Europeans have only been able to make themselves human beings by creating slaves and monsters' (this volume, p. 151). What Sartre announces in his preface is the breakdown of the project of the Enlightenment that served Europe's colonial adventure and led to the over-exploitation and dehumanization of the colonized people. Young is right to point out:'It was the recognition of this use of the human as a highly politicized category which led to the sustained critique of "Man" by a broad range of post-war thinkers in the movement known as "anti-humanism".' [39] No doubt this movement overshadowed Sartre's contribution. To give a response to the question why he is eclipsed in the postcolonial agenda, one could argue that Sartre was perceived as the epitome of the very humanism that he condemns in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth.* This movement announced the breakdown of grand narratives of legitimation and evoked in the 1950s what Derrida calls 'the eschatological themes of the "end of history", of "the end of Marxism", of "the end of man", of the "last man" and so forth'. [40] However, by jettisoning the notion of the 'subject' to focus on structures of power and signification, this movement eschewed the colonial problematic which was at the core of Sartre's work. The fact that postcolonial studies flourished in Anglo-American circles is significant in this respect. Postcolonial France repressed its colonial past and the trauma

of the Algerian War. In this process of repression, one must seek not only the forgetting of Sartre but the symptom of the decentring of the subject.

The Algerian War had an impact on political institutions of mainland France, and the process of decolonization influenced the cultural climate and intellectual life of postcolonial France. As Young succinctly puts it: 'If so-called "so-called poststructuralism" is the product of a single historical moment, then that moment is probably not May 1968 but rather the Algerian War of Independence – no doubt itself both a symptom and a product. In this respect it is significant that Sartre, Althusser, Derrida and Lyotard, among others, were either born in Algeria or personally involved with the events of the war.' [41]

After its defeat and the German occupation during the Second World War, France lost its grandeur on the stage of international politics. In addition to the shame of collaboration, France, left chewing over its defeat, was liberated by the Allies who won the war, and it was hailed 'as [a] victor out of kindness and tolerated as a poor relation among the Big Five' (this volume, p. 101). The 1950s ushered in the age of consumerism and opened to the French the road to modernity. However, what emerges from Sartre's commentaries is that France was caught in an impasse. The premises upon which French democracy was built were being sapped by the Algerian War; the Fourth Republic was in its death throes; French economic and political structures, shaped in the nineteenth century by a colonial ideology, were breaking down and in need of urgent reform; the political instability which led to the demise of the Third Republic came to dominate the life of the Fourth Republic; the French empire was crumbling.

Contemporary French thinkers and philosophers experienced this tumultuous period of decolonization and the processes of modernization which ensued. One is tempted to argue that the debate surrounding the problem of modernity and postmodernity has less to do with the decentring of the Cartesian subject than with the political realities of postcolonial France. In the same vein, one could argue that the radical politics of this period gave rise to a heightened consciousness and produced a generation of thinkers and philosophers attentive to issues of power. Although they never represented a homogenous trend, the central issues which dominated their theorizing were power, discourse and subjectivity. What is pertinent to note is that these thinkers dealt with such issues at the level of theory and eschewed the politics of colonial and post-colonial France. Their engagement with politics was either purely theoretical or limited to philosophical exegesis. Sartre, here, offers insights into this politics.

Notes

1 H. Cartier-Bresson and J. P. Sartre, *D'une Chine à l'autre*, Paris, Robert Delpire, 1954.

2 J. P. Sartre, *Les Temps Modernes*, 123, March–April 1956.

3 Sartre reviewed Albert Memmi's book, *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur* in *Les Temps Modernes*, 137–138, July-August 1957. This review reappeared as 'Préface' to the 1966 edition of *Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur*, published by J. J. Pauvert.

4 A. Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: a Life*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987, p. 364.
5 Ibid., p. 364 and p. 372. In 'We Are All Murderers', published in *Les Temps Modernes*, 145, March 1958, Sartre denounces French justice and the bombing of the Sakiet.
6 *L'Express*, 362, 22 May 1958.
7 *L'Express*, 378, 11 September 1958.
8 *L'Express*, 380, 25 September 1958.
9 *L'Express*, 499, 4 January 1961.
10 *Les Temps Modernes*, 191, April 1962.
11 *L'Express*, 350, 6 March 1958.
12 M. Contact and M. Rybalka, *Les Écrits de Sartre*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970, pp. 316–17.
13 P. Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1963, p. 15.
14 In her biography *Sartre: A Life*, Cohen-Solal relates that 'Some time before this first meeting with Sartre, Fanon had sent an intense and eager letter to his editor [François Maspero], in which Sartre's name once again played a notoriously symbolic role. "The state of my health having improved slightly," Fanon wrote to Maspero from Tunis, on 7 April 1961, "I have decided to write something after all. I must say that I was asked insistently to do so by our own people. … Trusting that you'll satisfy my request, I would like to ask you to speed up the publication of this book: we need it in Algeria and Africa. … Ask Sartre to write a preface' (p. 433). Sartre's 'Préface' to *The Wretched of the Earth* appeared in the 'Cahiers libres' edition, Maspero, 1961.
15 J. P. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, London, NLB, 1976, p. 719.
16 Ibid., pp. 722–723.
17 Ibid., p. 733.
18 First published with the title 'Lumumba et le néo-colonialisme', the preface to *Discours de Lumumba*, Présence africaine, 1963.
19 J. P. Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, New York, Schocken Books, 1995, p. 93.
20 Lawrence D. Kritzman, 'Critical Reflections: Self-Portraiture and the Presentation of Jewish Identity in French', in *Auschwitz and After*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995, p. 99.
21 Ibid., p. 99.
22 Ibid., p. 101.
23 Ibid., p. 100.
24 J. P. Sartre, *Black Orpheus*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 22.
25 Ibid., p. 22.
26 Ibid., p. 23.
27 Ibid., p. 26.
28 Ibid., p. 27.
29 Ibid., p. 15.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., pp. 59–60.
32 F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London, Pluto, 1993, p. 134.

33 Ibid., p. 135.
34 Ibid., p. 226.
35 F. Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme (le champ du signe, 1945–1966)*, Paris, La Découverte, 1991, p. 19.
36 Cited in ibid., p. 396.
37 R. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 43.
38 Ibid., p. 121.
39 Ibid.
40 J. Derrida, 'Spectres of Marx', *New Left Review*, 205 (1994), p. 33.
41 R. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West*, p.1.

From One China to Another *

The picturesque has its origins in war and a refusal to understand the enemy: our enlightenment about Asia actually came to us first from irritated missionaries and from soldiers. Later came travellers – traders and tourists – who are soldiers that have cooled off. Pillaging is called shopping, and rape is practised onerously in specialized shops. But the basic attitude has not changed: the natives are killed less frequently but they are scorned collectively, which is the civilized form of massacre; the aristocratic pleasure of counting the *differences* is savoured. 'I cut my hair, he plaits his; I use a fork, he uses chopsticks; I write with a goose quill, he draws characters with a paintbrush; I have ideas which are straight, and his are bent: have you noticed that he is horrified by movement in a straight line, that he is only happy if everything goes sideways?' This is called the game of anomalies: if you find another one, if you discover another reason for not understanding, you will be given a prize for sensitivity in your own country. You must not be surprised if those who in this way reconstruct those who resemble them, like a mosaic of irreducible differences, then wonder how anyone can be Chinese.

As a child, I was a victim of the picturesque: everything had been done to make the Chinese intimidating. I was told about rotten

* Preface to *D'une Chine à l'autre*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Jean-Paul Sartre, Paris, Editions Robert Delpire, 1954.

eggs – the Chinese were rather partial to these – of men sawn between two planks of wood, of piping and discordant music. In the world which surrounded me, among all the things and creatures, there were some which were referred to as Chinese. They were tiny and terrible, slipped between your fingers, attacked from behind, burst out suddenly in a ridiculous din, shadows sliding like fishes along the glass of an aquarium, dim lanterns, incredible and futile refinements, ingenious tortures, jingling hats. There was also the Chinese soul, which I was simply told was inscrutable. 'The Orientals, you see …' The Negroes did not worry me; I had been taught that they were good dogs. With them, we were still among mammals. But the Asians frightened me, like those crabs in the rice fields which dart between two rows, like those locusts which descend on the great plains and devastate everything. We are lords of the fishes, lions, rats and monkeys; the Chinese are superior arthropods, they rule over the arthropods.

Then came Michaux who was the first to show the Chinese without a soul or a shell, China without lotus or Loti.

A quarter of a century later, Cartier-Bresson's album completes the demystification.

There are photographers who encourage war because they produce literature.

They seek out a Chinese who looks more Chinese than the others; in the end they find one. They make him adopt a typically Chinese pose and surround him with chinoiseries. What have they captured on film? *One* Chinaman? No … the Idea of what is Chinese.

Cartier-Bresson's photographs never gossip. They *are not* ideas; they give us ideas. Without doing so deliberately. His Chinese are disconcerting: most of them never look quite Chinese enough. Being a witty individual, the tourist asks himself how they manage to recognize each other. Personally, having looked through the album, I ask myself rather how we could confuse them, and classify them all under the same rubric. The idea of what is Chinese recedes and pales: it is no longer any more than a convenient label. What remain are human beings who resemble each other *in that they are human beings* – living presences of flesh and blood who have not yet been given their *appellation contrôlée*. We must be grateful to Cartier-Bresson for his nominalism.

The picturesque takes refuge in words. If I present this old eunuch to you in words, what exoticism! He lives in the monastery, with other eunuchs. He carefully preserves his 'jewels' in a jar. At the time when the Empress Tseu-hi, the yellow Agrippina, was still only a concubine, on certain evenings he would undress her, wrap her in a purple shawl and carry her in his arms to the imperial bed: naked empress, *Agrippine* concubine – it rhymes – purple shawl, all these words light each other up with their fire. What is missing is all that can be *made visible*, reality. Now open the album. What do you see first of all? A life which is coming apart, an old man. It is not his incidental castration, but universal old age which gives him that wrinkled, waxen face; it is old age and not China that has tanned his skin. He looks like a woman? Perhaps, but this is because the difference between the sexes tends to fade with age. He looks down sanctimoniously, slyly, and holds out his hand to grab the bank note shown to him by a cheerful, blasé interpreter. Where are the lights of the Imperial Court? Where are the empresses of yesteryear? So he is a eunuch: but what more could he do, at his age, if he were not? The picturesque is wiped away, farewell *European* poetry; what remains is the material truth, the poverty and greed of an old parasite of the fallen regime.

This peasant is having lunch. He has come to the town to sell the produce of his land. At this moment he is eating rice soup, in the open air, in the midst of the townsfolk who ignore him, with the voracity of country people: famished, weary, solitary, he has brothers, at this very moment, in all the world's large farming towns, from the Greek who drives his sheep along the boulevards of Athens to the *Chleuh*, who has come down from his mountains and is wandering through the streets of Marrakech. Here we have other peasants: hunger has brought them down to Peking and there they have stayed. What can they do in a capital without industry, when craft skills require a long apprenticeship? They will ride bicycle taxis. We have scarcely glanced at them, but these vehicles look familiar to us: we had our own during the Occupation. It is true that they seemed less filthy; that is because we put our filth elsewhere. And poverty is the best-distributed thing in the world: we are not short of wretched people. It is true that we are no longer in the habit of harnessing them to carriages to make them pull the rich. But have they, for all that, ceased to be our beasts of burden? We now harness them to machines.

And who are the people who have themselves pulled along like this? Fine gentlemen in felt hats and long robes, the very men who at the moment are leafing through books on the shelves of a second-hand bookseller, and who are delighted that they are able to read. Do you laugh at their robes? Then you must laugh at our priests. At their hats? Then laugh at yourself. The uniform of the elite over there is a felt hat and a robe; in our country it is the suit. In any case, what is laughable, about them and about us, is that there

are elites – gentlemen who are the only ones who know how to read or count and who carry on their backs the mark of their superiority.

Images, when they are materialistic, bring men together; that is to say when they begin at the beginning: with bodies, with needs, with work. To hell with rotten eggs and sharks' fins: you say that these are exotic foods because almost 40 million French people do not know what they even taste like? Then these foods are even more exotic in China since 400 million Chinese – or almost – have never eaten them. Four hundred million Chinese who are hungry – just like daily paid Italian labourers, who exhaust themselves at work, like French peasants – exploited by the Chiang Kai-shek family, as 75 per cent of Westerners are by the great feudal lords of capitalism. Apart from that, of course, we do not speak their language and do not have their customs: but there is always time to talk about differences. What separates has to be learned; what unites can be seen in an instant. This man coming towards us, you will know immediately whether you see him *first* as a German, a Chinese, a Jew, or first as a man. And you will decide what you are on deciding what he is. Consider this coolie as a Chinese grasshopper, and you immediately become a French frog. By getting your models to pose, you will give them time to become other: other than you; other than people; other than themselves. The 'pose' produces the elite and the pariahs, the generals and the Papuans, the Breton-looking Bretons, the Chinese-looking Chinese, and the ladies bountiful: the ideal. Cartier-Bresson's snapshots catch people at high speed without giving them time to be superficial. At a hundredth of a second we are all the same, all of us at the heart of our human condition.

Of this immense agricultural empire, we are shown only the towns: the communists are masters of the countryside. But each photograph reveals to us the ills of a backward economy: craft industry, over-population, poverty. 'The Chinese people', said Michaux, 'are born craft-workers … Whatever can be improvised, the Chinese have made it.' And it is true: look at the traders, their malicious and patient faces; watch their hands, nimble hands, never still, rolling two walnuts together, like Greek hands telling their amber beads; they are made for patching things up and for thieving: 'Ruse in China is in no way linked to Evil but is linked to everything; virtue is the best scam.' Of course they are all schemers, all craft-workers, artists, deceitful. But if you think that they owe their shrewdness to the colour of their skin, to the shape of their brains, or to their diet, I ask you: out of a Chinese and Neapolitan, who is more ingenious, who is more resourceful? Naples against Peking: a Chinese versus a Chinese and a half. A draw is the likely result. In Naples they will pull the trick on you of the supposedly stolen fake Parkers, the watches that really have been stolen, and are illegally on sale; and the meters which have been tampered with. If you buy your tobacco from the street dealers, God knows what you will be smoking. But look at the trader who is selling cigarettes under the protective gaze of a Chiang Kai-shek and two Sun Yatsens: his eyes are heavy, his lips droop; he seems too simple-minded to be dishonest: and yet, he has opened all the packets he has on display, he has emptied the cigarettes and filled them with rubbish which he has hidden at each end with a pinch of tobacco. Industrious owing to the lack of industry, they all spend their time repairing, strengthening, containing, tying together. They fill in holes, stop walls and roofs from falling, and then, between one disaster and the next, sit on the edge of the pavement and keep an eye out for the rich while working out

complicated plans for getting a few coins out of them. Their ingenuity, their good-humoured dishonesty, are explained by their poverty and the absence of machines.

Crowds of Asia. We must be thankful to Cartier-Bresson for not having hit on the idea of showing us the swarming crowds. Because they do not swarm about, or very little; they organize themselves. Of course they invade everything, destroy everything: those old women taking little steps forward, with little bows, little smiles, are old servants, the mother goddesses of crowds. If one of them shyly enters the house of a rich man, to visit a servant, her niece or cousin, suddenly they are all inexplicably there, swarming; the house is too small to contain them, the walls collapse. These innumerable visitors are particularly feared by the Americans.

But no one has the right to confuse this swarming with a plague of locusts. Chinese crowds are organized: they fill up the pavements and spill onto the road, but they each immediately make themselves a space while, at the same time, *acknowledging* that of their neighbour. See those hairdressers: they all have their living space, and no one dreams of contesting it. It is because this loose-knit crowd bleeds when it contracts. In Shanghai, the government brings gold to the market, the buyers queue: there is a sudden condensing of the crowd. The result is seven dead and several broken legs. In China each person in the crowd must live at a respectful distance from the others, and the famous Chinese politeness is above all a vital measure in order to avoid suffocation. Cartier-Bresson everywhere makes us sense this ghostly swarming, fragmented in minute constellations, this subtle but omnipresent threat of death. For me, who likes crowds as I like the sea, these Chinese multitudes seem neither terrible nor even foreign. They kill, but bury the dead within their midst and drink up the blood as blotting paper soaks up ink: gone without a trace. Our crowds are more angry, more cruel. When they disperse, they leave their dead behind them, and the abandoned pavements are smeared with red; that is the only difference.

In the early years of this century, tourists were great lovers of poverty. Captain Carpeaux, son of the sculptor Carpeaux, lamented in 1911 that a Chinese Haussman had constructed boulevards through the imperial city: ‘Alas, what have they done to the main street in Peking, so picturesque, so lively, so delightfully dirty and full of potholes? Where are all the extraordinary hawkers next to their tiny displays of mysterious, nameless things? Everything has been driven out, taken away, knocked down, levelled; the great broken hundred-year-old flagstones have gone along with the filthy, curious little traders.’

Filthy, delightfully dirty, extraordinary: that is after all what men in the grip of poverty become. And people actually complain about that?

Blessed be cold and hunger for having dictated so many comical inventions and crazy discoveries. And what is more, the poor are a conservative lot; they keep old furniture, old clothes, old tools, unable to replace them. People used to go looking for the traditions of ancient China in their hovels. What splendour in those royal rags, not forgetting the ravishing arabesques traced in dirt on young necks. Have we changed so much? We no longer go visiting the poor in their homes. It might even be said that we avoid them. It is because they go too far; for quite a long time now, they have embarrassed the rich.

Imagine Barrès in Peking.Why not? It would be 1908; he would be walking back slowly from a hospitable house and planning to write a ‘Chinese Bérénice’. Suddenly, he

stops and looks at a bundle of material at his feet. In China, you know, when a child dies, it is wrapped in a red sheet and abandoned during the night in a corner. In the morning, the refuse carts take it off to the communal grave. And there is Barrès, quite moved. How could he fail to be moved by this quaint custom? And what pure artistic pleasure he takes looking at these little scarlet marks, which, lively and bright, set off the grey of the dawn. Nearby someone has left a dead cat. A dead cat, a dead kid: two little souls, two little ripples. Barrès brings them together in the same funeral orison and then moves on to more distinguished comparisons. At that same hour perhaps, wrapped in purple silk, the beautiful, warm body of a concubine is being carried to the imperial bed. A small warm body, a small cold body; on each of them, the same bloodstain. And there we are: blood, voluptuousness, death. Lucky Barrès; he in turn died, taking to the grave the secret of a clear conscience. We, however, have seen children die like rats in the bombing raids or the Nazi concentration camps; when, against a splendid backdrop of red earth and palm trees, we are shown flies eating the eyes of new-born babies, we look away with a guilty conscience. Try and explain that! One day, in a back-street of Naples, the stable door of a dark cavern opened; on a huge double bed a tiny, lost, six-month-old baby was lying; it appeared made-up, its face wrinkled like a piece of cloth. It could easily have been mistaken for the 90-year-old cardinal who had said mass at Saint Peter's on the previous Sunday. The baby was dead. Seeing this indiscreetly displayed Neapolitan death once was enough for me. I feel incapable of appreciating fully the poetic shrouds of the poor Chinese babies; I look through them and make out a wrinkled face, too young even to be childlike. We must have become insensitive: the thought of evoking the silk shawl, the silky skin of the beautiful Tseu-hi does not cross our minds. We content ourselves with thinking that we must prevent children from dying. And before this murdered infant, rejected waste of the Kuomintang, we wish for the victory of the Eighth Army. This album is an announcement; it announces the end of tourism. It gently teaches us, without useless pathos, that poverty has lost its picturesque quality and will never recover it.

Poverty is there, however, unbearable and discreet. On every page it manifests itself, in three elementary actions: carrying, scavenging, pilfering.

In all the capitals of poverty, the poor carry bundles. They always keep them close by. When they sit down, they place them by their side and watch over them. What do they put in them? Everything: wood gathered in a park, hastily, crusts of bread, bits of wire pulled off a fence, scraps of cloth. If the bundle is too heavy, they drag it along, in wheelbarrows or handcarts. Poverty always seems to be doing a moonlight flit. In Peking, Shanghai, Nanking everyone is pulling or pushing: here men are straining to make their cart go forward; there they are on a bridge; the road climbs; they must struggle twice as hard; there are urchins about, always ready to help for a hand-out. Like the unemployed man in *Deux Sous d'Espoir* who positions himself halfway up a hill and pulls the carriage horses by the bridle. The tall building in the background is a lighthouse. At the top of the lighthouse is the eye of the West; its revolving gaze sweeps across China. The top three levels have been reserved for foreign press correspondents. How high up they are! Much too high to see what is happening down below. They dance high in the sky with their wives and mistresses. Meanwhile, at ground level, the porters push their carts and Chiang Kai-shek is being defeated by the communist armies. The Americans see neither the little flat dwellings of China nor the armed peasants nor the porters. Yet the porters have only

to look up to see the lighthouse of America.

In all the capitals of poverty, people scavenge. They scavenge in the soil and the subsoil; they gather round refuse bins; they slip right into the rubble: 'What others throw away is mine; what is no longer of any use to them is good enough for me.' On waste ground near Peking, the rubbish piles up. This is the refuse of the poor; they have sifted through everything, they have already rummaged through their own rubbish; they have only left, reluctantly, what is uneatable, unusable, unspeakable, revolting. And yet the flock is there. On all fours. They will scavenge all day, every day.

In all the capitals of poverty, there is pilfering. Is it stealing? No, just picking things up. These bales of cotton have just been unloaded. If they stay an hour longer on the dock, they will disappear. No sooner have they been put down than the crowd rushes forward and surrounds them. Everyone attempts to pull off a handful of cotton. Many handfuls of cotton, gathered day after day – that makes an item of clothing. I recognize the look on the women's faces, I have seen it in Marseilles, in Algiers, in London, in the streets of Berlin; it is serious, quick and hounded, anguish mingles with greed. You have to grab before you are grabbed. When the bales have been loaded onto a lorry, the kids will run after it with outstretched hands. Meanwhile, in Nanking, there is shooting in the streets. Alone in the middle of a boulevard, a man is bent over an armchair which is ripped open; he wants to get its stuffing. If he does not get hit right between the eyes by one of the bullets whistling around his ears, he will have gathered enough fuel for one hour of just one winter's day.

Every day the poor people dig, scavenge and gather. Every day the artisans repeat their traditional movements. At every dawn, officers do their exercises in the gardens of the Forbidden City, while ageing ghosts drift through the palaces. Every morning Peking reconstructs its appearance of the previous day, the previous week, the previous millennium. In our country, industry is destroying all the old frameworks; but over there, why should they change? Cartier-Bresson has photographed eternity.

Fragile eternity; it is a tune played over and over again. To stop it, you would have to smash the record. And indeed it is going to be smashed. History is at the city gates; from day to day, in the rice fields, in the mountains, and on the plains, it is being made. One more day and then another one: it will be over; the old record will be smashed to pieces. These timeless snapshots are precisely dated; they fix forever the last moments of the Eternal.

Between the circular time of old China and the irreversible time of new China, there is an intermediate phase, a gelatinous duration equally distant from History and repetition: the time of *waiting*. The city has undone the sheaf of its millions of daily gestures: no longer does anyone file, or carve, or scrape, or trim, or adjust, or burnish. Abandoning their small living spaces, their ceremonies, their neighbours, people go and crowd together, in shapeless masses, in front of stations, on the docks. Houses empty. And the workshops. And the markets. In outlying locations, crowds gather, compact together, coagulate; their fine structures are crushed. Heavy, dense pictures replace the airy photos of old Peking. Waiting. Whenever they do not take control of History, the masses experience great events as periods of endless waiting. The masses of Peking and Shanghai are not making History; they are subjected to it. As are, moreover, the police who watch them, the soldiers who move among them, who return from the front, who

never stop returning and who never go, the mandarins who take flight, and the generals who flee. Those who are making History have never seen the great imperial cities; they only know the mountains and the fields; in the fields and in the mountains, the destiny of China has been decided. For the first time, a capital awaits the pleasure of the country. History will appear in the form of a procession of peasants. Townspeople think of the country as an inert space which links the towns and which is crossed and devastated by armies until, in the towns, they have decided to make peace. But suddenly it reveals itself: it is living flesh, muscle; within this muscle, the towns are lodged like grains of urate.Yet the crowds are not afraid. Up there, the eye of America is spinning round in panic. But on the ground they have known for a long time that the communists have won. The rich curse Chiang Kai-shek as much as Mao Tse-tung. The peasants want to go back home: since everything is in the hands of the communists, they might as well go and meet them in the villages as in the towns. The workers and the poor begin to hope; the thousand individual waits of the time of Repetition have come together and fused in a single hope. The rest of the population march in processions and pray for peace: for any peace. It is a way of killing time. Before joining the bonzes and burning paper wands, they make the most of the opportunity to put their personal affairs in order. They go and rub the nose of an idol, for their own benefit; infertile girls press their stomachs against the stomachs of statues; after the ceremony, in the large pharmacy near the temple, people will be buying dried pellets which restore ardour to listless husbands and which warm the feet of wives.

As long as the authorities remain at their post, the crowd stays under pressure. The police surround it and contain it; but, unlike ours, they rarely strike: this policeman is getting impatient because they are hemming him in too tightly. He lifts his leg: is he going to kick out? No, he stamps in a puddle; having been splashed, the people will step back. But the gentlemen of the Kuomintang will not stay in place; they go off. There are a thousand left; a hundred left. Soon there will be none. The gentlemen who cannot leave, yellow men and white men, are pale with fear. During the period of transition, the base instincts of the population will be let loose: there will be pillaging, rape and murder. As a result the bourgeois of Shanghai pray for the communists to come; any kind of order rather than the fury of the people.

This time it is all over. The important people have left, the last policeman has disappeared; the bourgeoisie and the populace alone remain in the city. Will there be pillaging or not? Admirable crowds – when they no longer felt the weight of the burden that was crushing them, they hesitated for a moment and then, little by little, became decompressed; great masses return to a gaseous state. Look at the photographs; everybody has started to run. Where are they going? Pillaging? Not even that; they have entered the fine, abandoned houses and have scavenged, just as, only yesterday, they scavenged in the piles of rubbish. What have they taken? Practically nothing: the floorboards to make a fire. All is calm; let them come now, the peasants from the north: they will find an orderly city.

Remember June 1940, and those funereal giants who raced across a deserted Paris in their lorries and their tanks? Now, that was picturesque: not much voluptuousness, but blood and death, and a lot of pomp. The Germans wanted a ceremonious victory. That is what they had, and the handsome SS officers, standing on camouflaged vehicles, looked

like priests, like executioners, like martyrs, like Martians, like anything except men. Now open the album. Children and youths are massed along the path of the victors; they are amused, curious; calm, they cross their arms and watch. Where is the victory? Where is the terror? Here is the first communist soldier seen in Shanghai since the beginning of the civil war. He is a little man with a dark, handsome face, who is carrying his equipment on the end of a stick, like our old soldiers when they came back from the war. This exhausted little man, these young spectators: you might think that you were at the finish of a running race. Turn the page and now look at the soldiers of the Eighth Army from behind, beneath their sunshades, lost on one of Shanghai's main avenues. Have these peasants taken the city, or will the city take them? They sit down. On the road or on the pavement, at the very spot where, only the day before, a seated crowd awaited them. That crowd has stood up and pushed up against them, dominating them with its size and looking at them. Usually, victors hide in order to rest; but it appears that these men are not interested in intimidating. Yet they are the ones who defeated the Kuomintang troops, armed by the Americans, they are the ones who held the Japanese army in check. They seem crushed by the tall buildings which surround them. The war is over; the peace must be won. The photos express wonderfully the solitude and the anguish of these peasants in the heart of a magnificent and rotting city. Behind their blinds, the gentlemen take heart: 'We will lead them by the nose.'

It did not take very long for those gentlemen to change their minds. But that is another story, one that Cartier-Bresson does not tell us. Let us thank him for being able to show us the most human of victories, the only one that we can love without reservation.

Colonialism is a System *

I would like to put you on your guard against what might be called ‘neocolonialist mystification’.

Neocolonialists think that there are some good colonists and some very wicked ones, and that it is the fault of the latter that the situation of the colonies has deteriorated.

This mystification consists of the following: you are taken around Algeria, you are obligingly shown the extreme poverty of the people, which is dreadful, you are told about the humiliation the Muslims suffer at the hands of the wicked colonists. And then, when you are really outraged, they add: ‘that is why the best Algerians have taken up arms; they couldn’t take any more.’ If they go about this in the right way, you will return home convinced:

First, that the Algerian problem is *first of all* economic. It is a question of providing, by means of judicious reforms, food for nine million people.

Second, next, that the problem is *social*: the numbers of schools and doctors must be greatly increased.

Third, that the problem is, finally, *psychological*: you remember De Man and his ‘inferiority complex’ of the working class. He had

* *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 123, March–April 1956. Speech made at a rally ‘for peace in Algeria’.

discovered at the same time the key to the ‘native character’: maltreated, malnourished, illiterate, the Algerian has an inferiority complex with regard to his masters. It is by acting upon these three factors that he will be reassured: if he eats enough to satisfy his hunger, if he has work and can read, he will no longer suffer the shame of being a sub-human and we will rediscover that old Franco-Muslim fraternity.

But above all let us not bring *politics* into this. Politics is abstract: what is the use of voting if you are dying of hunger? Those who come and talk to us about free elections, about a Constituent Assembly, about Algerian independence, are agitators or troublemakers who only cloud the issue.

That is the argument. To that the leaders of the FLN have replied: ‘even if we were happy under French bayonets, we would fight’. They are right. And indeed one must go further than them: under French bayonets, they can only be unhappy. It is true that the majority of the Algerians live in intolerable poverty; but it is also true that the necessary reforms can be implemented neither by the good colonists nor by France herself, as long as she intends to maintain her sovereignty in Algeria. These reforms will be the business of the Algerian people themselves, when they have won their freedom.

The fact is that colonization is neither a series of chance occurrences nor the statistical result of thousands of individual undertakings. It is a system which was put in place around the middle of the nineteenth century, began to bear fruit in about 1880, started to decline after the First World War, and is today turning against the colonizing nation.

That is what I would like to show you about Algeria, which is, alas, the clearest and most legible example of the colonial system. I would like to show you the rigour of the colonial system, its internal necessity, how it was bound to lead us exactly where we are now, and how the purest of intentions, if conceived within this infernal circle, is corrupted at once.

For it is not true that there are some good *colons* [1] and others who are wicked. There are *colons* and that is it.

When we have understood that, we will understand why the Algerians are right to attack, *first of all politically*, this economic, social and political system and why their liberation, and also *that of France*, can only be achieved through the shattering of colonization.

The system did not put itself in place on its own. In truth neither the July monarchy nor the Second Republic really knew what to do with conquered Algeria.

They thought about turning it into a settlement colony. Bugeaud conceived of a 'Roman style' colonization. Huge estates would have been given to the demobilized soldiers of the Army in Africa. His proposal was not taken up.

They wanted to channel to Africa the overflow of the European countries, the poorest peasants of France and Spain; for this 'rabble' a few villages were created around Algiers, Constantine and Oran. Most of them were decimated by disease.

After 1848 they tried to settle – it would be better to say 'add' – unemployed workers whose presence worried the 'forces of law and order'. Out of 20,000 labourers transported to Algeria, the majority perished from fever and cholera; the survivors managed to get themselves repatriated.

In this form the colonial enterprise remained hesitant. It took more definite shape during the Second Empire, as a result of industrial and commercial expansion. One after the other, the great colonial companies were created:

1863: *Société de Crédit Foncier et de Banque* (Banking and Land Credit Society);

1865: *Société Marseillaise de Crédit* (Marseilles Credit Society);

1 Note: I do not consider as colonists either the minor public officials or the European workers who are at the same time innocent victims and beneficiaries of the system.

Compagnie des Minerais de fer de Mokta (Mokta Iron Ore Company);

Société Générale des Transports maritimes à vapeur (General Maritime Steam Transport Society).

This time it was capitalism itself that became colonialist. Jules Ferry would become the theoretician of this new colonialism:

> It is in the interest of France, which has always been awash with capital and has exported it to foreign countries in considerable quantities, to consider the colonial question from this angle. For countries like ours which, by the very nature of their industry, are destined to be great exporters, this question is

> precisely one of outlets … Where there is political predominance, there is also predominance in products, economic predominance.

So you see, it was not Lenin who first defined colonial imperialism; it was Jules Ferry, that 'great figure' of the Third Republic.

And you also see that this minister is in agreement with the *fellagha* [2] of 1956: he proclaimed 'politics first!' which they were to take up against the colonists three-quarters of a century later.

First of all overcome resistance, smash the framework, subdue, terrorize. Only then will the economic system be put in place.

And what does this consist of? The creation of industries in the conquered country? Not at all; the capital with which France 'is awash' will not be invested in under-developed countries; the returns would be uncertain, the profits would be too long in coming; everything would have to be built, equipped. And, even if that could be done, what would be the point in creating competition for production in France? Ferry is very clear: capital will not leave France, it will simply be invested in new industries which will sell their manufactured products to the colonized country. The immediate result

2 Freedom fighter, member of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN).

was the establishment of the Customs Union (1884). This Union still exists: it ensures that France's industry, handicapped in the international market by prices that are too high, has a monopoly over the Algerian market.

But *to whom then* did this new industry expect to sell its products? The Algerians? Impossible: where would they have got the money from to pay? The concomitant of this colonial imperialism is that spending power has to be created in the colonies. And, of course, it is the colonists who will benefit from all the advantages and who will be turned into potential buyers. The colonist is above all an artificial consumer, created overseas from nothing by a capitalism which is seeking new markets.

As early as 1900, Peyerimhoff stressed this new feature of 'official' colonization: 'Directly or not, the property of the colonist has come to him gratis from the State or he has seen concessions granted around him on a daily basis. Before his eyes the government has made sacrifices for individual interests considerably greater than those it would consent to in older fully developed countries.'

Here the second side of the colonial diptych appears clearly: in order to be a buyer, the colonist must be a seller. To whom will he sell? To the people of mainland France. And what can he sell without an industry? Food products and raw materials. This time, under the aegis of Minister Ferry and the theoretician Leroy-Beaulieu, colonial status is established.

And what are the 'sacrifices' that the State makes to the colonist, to this man, the darling of gods and exporters? The answer is simple: it sacrifices the property of the Muslims to him.

Because it so happens that, in fact, the natural produce of the colonized country grows on the land and that this land belongs to the 'indigenous' population. In certain thinly populated regions, with large uncultivated areas, the theft of land is less apparent: what

you see is military occupation, forced labour. But in Algeria, when the French troops arrived, *all the good land was cultivated*. The so-called development thus relied upon a plundering of the inhabitants that continued for a century. The story of Algeria is the progressive concentration of European land ownership at the expense of Algerian ownership.

And any method was acceptable.

At the beginning the slightest stir of resistance was used as an excuse to confiscate or sequestrate. Bugeaud would say: 'The land must be good; it is of little importance to whom it belongs.'

The revolt of 1871 was very useful; hundreds of thousands of hectares were taken from the vanquished.

But there was a chance that would not be enough. So we decided to give a handsome present to the Muslims; we gave them our civil code.

And why all this generosity? Because tribal property was usually collective and we wanted to fragment it to allow land speculators to buy it back bit by bit.

In 1873, investigating commissioners were given the task of turning the large common estates into a jigsaw puzzle of individual properties. With each inheritance they made *shares* which were given to everyone concerned. Some of these shares were fictitious. In the *douar* of Harrar, the investigating commissioner found 55 beneficiaries for 8 hectares.

It sufficed to corrupt one of these beneficiaries and he would demand a share-out. The long and confusing French procedure ruined all the co-owners; the traders in European goods then bought the whole lot from them for peanuts.

It is true that in our own regions we have seen poor peasants, ruined by the concentration of land and mechanization, sell their fields and join the urban proletariat. But at least this inexorable law of capitalism was not accompanied by theft in the strict sense of the term. Here, with premeditation, with cynicism, they imposed a foreign code on the Muslims because they knew that this code could not apply to them and that it could have no other effect than to destroy the internal structures of Algerian society. If the operation has continued in the twentieth century with the blind necessity of a law of economics, it is because the French State had brutally and artificially created the conditions of capitalist liberalism in an agricultural and feudal country. That has not stopped speakers in the National Assembly, quite recently, from vaunting the forced adoption of our legal code by Algeria as 'one of the benefits of French civilization'.

Here are the results of the operation:

In 1850, the colonists' territory was 115,000 hectares. In 1900, it was 1,600,000; in 1950, it was 2,703,000.

Today, 2,703,000 hectares belong to European owners; the French State owns 11 million in the form of 'State-owned land'; 7 million hectares have been left to the Algerians. In short, it has taken just a century to dispossess them of two-thirds of their land. The concentration law, moreover, partly went against the small colonists. Today, 6,000 landowners have a gross agricultural revenue of more than 12 million francs; some of them reach 1,000 million. The colonial system is in place: the French State gives Arab land to the colonists in order to create for them a purchasing power which allows French industrialists to sell them their products; the colonists sell the fruits of this stolen land in the markets of France.

From that point on, the system feeds itself; it runs smoothly; we shall follow all its consequences and see it become more and more rigorous.

First, in Frenchifying and dividing up the property, the structure of the old tribal society was broken without putting anything in its place. This destruction of the framework was systematically encouraged: first because it suppressed the forces of resistance and replaced collective strength with a handful of individuals; next because it created labour (at least as long as farming was not mechanized). This labour force alone offsets the transport costs, it alone maintains the profit margins of the colonial companies in the face of economies in France where production costs keep going down. Thus colonization has turned the Algerian population into an immense agricultural proletariat. It has been said of the Algerians that they are the same men as in 1830 and work the same land; only instead of owning it, they are the slaves of those who own it.

Second, if, at least, the initial theft was not of the *colonial* type, it could perhaps be hoped that mechanized agricultural production would allow the Algerians themselves to buy the produce of their land more cheaply. But the Algerians are not, nor can they be, the colonists' customers. The colonist must export to pay for his imports: he produces for the French market. The logic of the system makes him sacrifice the needs of the native population to those of the French in France.

Between 1927 and 1932, wine-growing increased by 173,000 hectares, more than half of which was taken from the Muslims. However, Muslims do not drink wine. On this land that was stolen from them they grew cereals for the Algerian market. This time it was not only the land that was taken from them; by planting vines there, the Algerian population was deprived of its staple food. Half a million hectares, taken from the best land and entirely devoted to wine-growing, were reduced to unproductiveness and as good as wiped out for the Muslim masses.

And what about citrus fruits, found in all Muslim grocers' shops? Do you think that the *fellahs* eat oranges for dessert?

Consequently, the production of cereals retreats year after year towards the pre-Saharan south. People have been found, of course, to prove that this was a benefit provided by France. If the crops move south, it is because our engineers have irrigated the country up to the edge of the desert. Such lies can deceive the credulous or indifferent inhabitants of France, but the *fellah* knows full well that the south is not irrigated. If he is obliged to live there, it is quite simply because he was driven out of the north by France, his benefactor; the good land is on the plain, around the towns; the desert has been left to the colonized.

The result has been a continual deterioration of the situation: the growing of cereals has not increased for 70 years. During this time the Algerian population has trebled. And if we want to count this high birthrate among the benefits from France, let us remember that it is the poorest populations that have the highest birthrates. Will we ask the Algerians to thank our country for allowing their children to be born into poverty, to live as slaves and to die of hunger? For those who might doubt the truth of this, here are the official figures:

in 1871, there were 500 kilos of grain for each inhabitant;
in 1901, 400 kilos;

in 1940, 250 kilos;
in 1945, 200 kilos.

At the same time the effect of the shrinking of individual properties was to remove the livestock routes and toll rights. In the pre-Saharan south, to which the Muslim cattle farmers are restricted, livestock is more or less stable. In the north, it has disappeared.

Before 1914, Algeria had 9 million head of livestock. In 1950, it had only 4 million.

Today agricultural production is estimated as follows:

the Muslims produce 48 billion francs' worth;
the Europeans produce 92 billion francs' worth.

Nine million men provide one-third of the agricultural produce. And let us not forget that only this third can be consumed by them; the rest goes to France. They are therefore obliged, with their primitive tools and their poor land, to feed themselves. From the Muslims' share – reducing their consumption of cereals to 200 kilos per person – 29 billion francs' worth has to be subtracted for their own use. Translated into family budgets, that means it is impossible – for most families – to limit their spending on food. Food takes up all their money; there is nothing left for clothing, housing, buying seed or tools.

And the only reason for this increasing pauperization is that the wonderful colonial agriculture has settled like a canker at the very heart of the country and eats away at everything.

Third, concentration of land ownership leads to the mechanization of agriculture. Mainland France is delighted to sell its tractors to the colonists. While the productivity of the Muslims, restricted to the poor land, has fallen by a fifth, that of the colonists increases day by day for their profit alone: vineyards of 1 to 3 hectares, where modernization of growing methods is difficult or even impossible, produce 44 hectolitres per hectare. Vineyards of more than 100 hectares produce 60 hectolitres per hectare.

Now mechanization engenders technology-driven unemployment: agricultural labourers are replaced by machines. This would be of considerable but limited importance if Algeria had any industry. But the colonial system denies it any. The unemployed flock to the towns where they are occupied for a few days doing public works, and then they stay there, for want of knowing where else to go: this desperate underclass increases year after year. In 1953, there were just 143,000 salaried employees officially registered as having worked for more than 90 days, that is to say one day in four. Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigour of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then, with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive; you finish up taking from the natives their very right to work. All that is left for the Algerians to do, *in their own land*, at a time of great prosperity, is to die of starvation.

Do those here in France who dare to complain that Algerians take the jobs of French workers know that 80 per cent of them send half of their wages to their family, and that a million and a half people who have remained in the *douars* live exclusively on the money sent to them by these 400,000 voluntary exiles? And this also is an inescapable consequence of the system; the Algerians are obliged to seek in France the jobs that

France denies them in Algeria.

For 90 per cent of Algerians, colonial exploitation is methodical and rigorous: expelled from their lands, restricted to unproductive soil, obliged to work for derisory wages, the fear of unemployment discourages their revolts; strikers fear that blacklegs might be recruited from among the unemployed. As a result the colonist is king: he grants none of the things that pressure from the masses has managed to extract from bosses in France: no wage indexation, no collective agreements, no family allowances, no canteens, no workers' housing. Four walls of dried mud, some bread, some figs, ten hours of work a day: here the wages are plainly the minimum necessary to recuperate the strength to work.

That is the picture. Can we at least find some compensation for this poverty systematically created by European usurpers in those benefits which are termed not directly measurable, public works and improvement schemes, sanitation, education? If we had this consolation, perhaps we could maintain some hope. Perhaps some judiciously chosen reforms … But no, the system is pitiless. Since France, from the very first day, has dispossessed and driven back the Algerians, since she has treated them like a bloc that cannot be integrated, the whole French project in Algeria has been carried out for the profit of the colonists.

I will not even mention the aerodromes and the ports. Are these of any use to the *fellah* except for going to die of hunger and cold in the poorest quarters of Paris?

But what about the roads? They connect the large towns to the European-owned estates and the militarized zones. Only they were not built to enable the Algerians to be reached in their homes. The proof?

In the night of 8 to 9 September 1954, an earthquake ravaged Orléansville and the Bas-Chélif region. The newspapers reported 39 European dead, and 1,370 French Muslims. Now, among the dead, 400 were only *discovered* three days after the disaster. Some *douars* only received emergency aid six days later. The excuse of the rescue teams is a condemnation of the French operation: 'What do you expect? They were too far away from the roads!'

Well, hygiene at least? Public health?

Following the Orléansville earthquake, the government wanted to investigate the state of the *douars*. Those chosen, at random, were 30 or 40 kilometres from the town and were visited *only twice a year* by the doctor in charge of medical assistance.

As for our famous culture, who knows whether the Algerians were very keen to acquire it? But what is certain is that we denied it to them. I will not go so far as to say that we were as cynical as in that southern state of the USA where a law, maintained until the beginning of the nineteenth century, prohibited people from teaching black slaves to read – *offenders would be fined*. But we did want to make our 'Muslim brothers' a population of illiterates. Still today 80 per cent of Algerians are illiterate. It would not be so bad if we had just forbidden them the use of our own language. But a necessary aspect of the colonial system is that it attempts to bar the colonized people from the road of history; as nationalist claims, in Europe, have always been founded on linguistic unity, the Muslims were denied the use of their own language. Since 1830, the Arabic language has been considered as a foreign language in Algeria; it is still spoken, but it hardly survives as a written language. And that is not all: to keep the Arabs fragmented, the

French administration confiscated their religion; it recruited leaders of the Islamic religion among creatures in its pay. It has maintained the most base superstitions, because they disunite. The separation of Church and State is a republican privilege, a luxury which is right for France. In Algeria, the French Republic cannot allow itself to be republican. It maintains the cultural ignorance and the beliefs of the feudal system, but suppresses the structures and customs which permit a living feudal system to be, *despite everything*, a human society; it imposes an individualistic and liberal legal code in order to ruin the frameworks and the development of the Algerian community, but it maintains kinglets who derive their power solely from it and who govern on its behalf. In a word, it *fabricates* 'natives' by a double movement which separates them from their archaic community by giving them or maintaining in them, *in the solitude of liberal individualism*, a mentality whose archaism can only be perpetuated in relation to the archaism of the society. It creates *masses* but prevents them from becoming a conscious proletariat by mystifying them with the caricature of their own ideology.

It is here that I return to our interlocutor from the beginning, to our tender-hearted realist who suggested massive reforms to us, saying: 'The economy first!' I reply to him: 'Yes, the *fellah* is dying of hunger, yes, he lacks everything: land, work and education; yes, he is afflicted with illness; yes, the present state of Algeria is comparable to the worst poverty of the Far East. And yet it is impossible to begin with economic transformations because the poverty and the despair of the Algerians are the direct and necessary effect of colonialism, and we will never remove them as long as colonialism lasts. That is what *all* aware Algerians know. And they are all in agreement with these words of a Muslim who said: "One step forward, two steps back. That is colonial reform."'

It is because the system by its very nature effortlessly destroys all attempts at development; it can only maintain itself by becoming harder and more inhuman each day.

Let us suppose that mainland France proposes a reform. Three scenarios are possible:

First, the reform turns automatically to the advantage of the colonist, and the colonist *alone*.

To increase the yield of the land, dams and a whole irrigation system were constructed. But as you know, water can only feed the land in the valleys. Now, these lands have always been the best in Algeria, and the Europeans have taken them over. The text of the Martin law acknowledges that three-quarters of the irrigated land belongs to the colonists. Just try and irrigate the pre-Saharan south!

Second, it is denatured in such a way that it is rendered ineffective.

The status of Algeria is monstrous in itself. Did the French government expect to mystify the Muslim population by granting the two-college Assembly? What is certain is that it was not even given the opportunity to bring this mystification to its conclusion. The colonists did not even want to give the natives the chance to be mystified. Even that was too much for them; they found it simpler to rig the elections publicly. And, from their point of view, they were absolutely right. When you murder people, it is better to gag them first. This is colonialism, which they embody, turning against neocolonialism to rid it of its dangerous consequences.

Third, it is left dormant with the complicity of the administration.

The provision of the Martin law, in compensation for the added value given to their

land by irrigation, was that the colonists would cede some parcels of land to the State. The State would have *sold* these parcels to Algerians who would have been allowed 25 years to pay off their debts. So you see, it was a modest reform; it was quite simply a question of selling back to a few chosen natives a tiny part of the land that had been stolen from their parents. The colonists would not lose a penny.

But for them it is not about not losing; they must always get more. Accustomed for a hundred years to the 'sacrifices' that mainland France has made *for them*, they could not accept that such sacrifices might benefit the natives. Result: the Martin law was put on ice.

You will understand the attitude of the colonists if you consider the fate they reserved for the 'agricultural offices for the technical training of Muslim peasants'. This institution, created on paper and in Paris, had no other aim than to improve slightly the productivity of the *fellah*: just enough to prevent him from dying of hunger. But the neocolonialists of mainland France did not realize that it went directly against the system: for Algerian labour to be abundant, the *fellah* had to continue to produce little and for high prices. If technical training became widespread, would the agricultural labourers not become more scarce, more demanding? Would there not be the threat of competition from Muslim landowners? And then, above all, education, whatever it may be and wherever it may come from, is an instrument of emancipation. The French right-wing governments are so aware of this that they refuse to educate our own peasants, in France. So spreading technical know-how among the natives is surely not the thing to do! Unwelcome and attacked everywhere – insidiously in Algeria, violently in Morocco – the offices remain inoperative.

On that basis all reforms are ineffective. In particular, they cost a lot. They are too expensive for mainland France, and the *colons* in Algeria have neither the means nor the will to finance them. To provide schooling for everybody – a reform often proposed – would cost 500 billion old francs (calculating the yearly cost per pupil at 32,000 francs). Now the total revenue of Algeria is 300 billion. Educational reform can be achieved only by an industrialized Algeria which has at least trebled its income. But the colonial system, as we have seen, is opposed to industrialization. France may sink billions into major works: but we know full well that nothing will be left of it.

And when we talk of the 'colonial system', we must be clear about what we mean. It is not an abstract mechanism. The system exists, it functions; the infernal cycle of colonialism is a reality. But this reality is embodied in a million colonists, children and grandchildren of colonists, who have been shaped by colonialism and who think, speak and act according to the very principles of the colonial system.

For the colonist is fabricated like the native; he is made by his function and his interests.

Linked to the mainland by the colonial pact, he has come to market for France, in exchange for a fat profit, the goods of the colonized country. He has even created new crops which reflect the needs of France much more than those of the natives. He is, therefore, double and contradictory: he has his 'homeland', France, and his 'country', Algeria. In Algeria, he represents France and wants to have relations only with her. But his *economic* interests bring him into conflict with the *political* institutions of his homeland. French institutions are those of a bourgeois democracy founded on liberal

capitalism. They include the right to vote, to free association and the freedom of the press.

But the *colon*, whose interests are directly contrary to those of the Algerians, and who can base exploitation only upon pure and simple oppression, can accept these rights *for himself* to enjoy only *in France*, among the French. To this extent he detests the token universality of French institutions. Precisely because they apply to everyone, the Algerians could claim these rights. One of the functions of racism is to compensate the latent universalism of bourgeois liberalism: since all human beings have the same rights, the Algerian will be made a subhuman. And this rejection of the institutions of his homeland, when his fellow-citizens wish to extend them to 'his' country, produces in each colonist a secessionist tendency. Was it not the president of the mayors of Algeria who said, a few months ago: 'If France falters, we will replace her'?

But the contradiction is expressed most sharply when the colonists explain that the Europeans are isolated among the Muslims, outnumbered nine to one. It is precisely because they are isolated that they reject any status that would give power to the majority. And, for the same reason, they have no alternative but to maintain their position by force.

But precisely because of that – and because the balance of power can only turn against them – they need the might of France, that is to say the French Army. So these separatists are also hyper-patriots. Republicans in France – insofar as our institutions allow them to constitute a political force at home – they are, in Algeria, fascists who hate the Republic but who passionately love the Republican army.

Can they be any different? No. Not as long as they are colonists. It has happened that invaders, having settled in a country, mix with the native population and end up creating a nation. It is then that we see the birth of common national interests – at least for certain classes. But the colonists are invaders whom the colonial pact has completely cut off from the invaded: in more than a century during which we have occupied Algeria, practically no mixed marriages or Franco-Muslim friendships have been recorded. As colonists their interest is in ruining Algeria for the benefit of France. As Algerians they would be obliged, one way or another, and *in their own interests*, to take an interest in the economic development – and consequently the cultural development – of the country.

Meanwhile mainland France is caught in the trap of colonialism. As long as she asserts her sovereignty over Algeria, she is compro-mised by the system, that is to say by the colonists who repudiate her institutions. And colonialism obliges France to send democratic Frenchmen to their deaths to protect the tyranny that the anti-democratic colonialists exert over the Algerians. But here again, the trap works and the circle tightens: the repression that we exert for their benefit makes them each day more detestable; to the same degree that they protect them, our troops increase the danger they are in, making the presence of the army all the more indispensable. This year the war will cost, if we continue with it, more than 300 billion francs, which equals the total Algerian revenue.

We are reaching the point where the system destroys itself. The colonies are costing more than they bring in.

In destroying the Muslim community, in refusing the assimilation of the Muslims, the colonists were logical with themselves. Assimilation implied that the Algerians would be guaranteed all basic rights, that they would benefit from our welfare and security

institutions, that room would be made in the French National Assembly for a hundred Algerian members of parliament, that the Muslims would be assured a standard of living equal to that of the French through effecting agricultural reform and the industrialization of the country. Assimilation taken to its extreme meant, quite simply, the ending of colonialism; how could one expect to get that from colonialism itself? But, since the colonists have nothing but hardship to offer the colonized, since they keep them at a distance, since they make them a bloc which cannot be integrated, this radically negative attitude must have the necessary concomitant of producing an awakening among the masses. The effect of the liquidation of the feudal structures, after weakening Arab resistance, has been to facilitate this collective awareness; new structures are born. It is as a reaction to segregation and in the daily struggle that the Algerian personality has discovered itself and has been forged. Algerian nationalism is not simply a revival of ancient traditions, old attachments; it is the only way for the Algerians to put an end to their exploitation. We saw Jules Ferry declare in Parliament: 'Where there is political predominance, there is economic predominance …' The Algerians are dying of our economic predominance, but they draw benefit from this lesson: to rid themselves of it, they have decided to attack our political predominance. Thus the colonists themselves have taught their adversaries; they have shown the hesitant that no solution was possible other than force.

The only good thing about colonialism is that, in order to last, it must show itself to be intransigent, and that, by its intransigence, it prepares its ruin.

We, the people of mainland France, have only one lesson to draw from these facts: colonialism is in the process of destroying itself. But it still fouls the atmosphere. It is our shame; it mocks our laws or caricatures them. It infects us with its racism; as the Montpellier episode proved the other day, it obliges our young men to fight *despite themselves* and die for the Nazi principles that we fought against ten years ago; it attempts to defend itself by arousing fascism even here in France. Our role is to help it to die. Not only in Algeria but wherever it exists. People who talk of the abandonment of Algeria are imbeciles. There is no abandoning what we have never owned. It is, quite the opposite, a question of our constructing with the Algerians new relations between a free France and a liberated Algeria. But above all let us not allow ourselves to be diverted from our task by reformist mystification. The neocolonialist is a fool who still believes that the colonial system can be overhauled – or a clever cynic who proposes reforms because he knows that they are ineffective. The reforms will come in their own good time: the Algerian people will make them. The only thing that we can and ought to attempt – but it is the essential thing today – is to fight alongside them to deliver *both* the Algerians *and* the French from colonial tyranny.

Albert Memmi's

The Colonizer and the Colonized*

Only the southern Confederates are qualified to talk about slavery: that is because they know the Negro; the Yankees of the north, abstract puritans, only know Man, who is an entity. This fine reasoning is still employed: in Houston, in the New Orleans press, and also, since one is always somebody's Yankee, in 'French' Algeria. The newspapers there keep telling us that only the colonists are qualified to talk about the colony: we, the people of mainland France, do not have their experience; we will see the burning land of Africa through their eyes or we will see only fire.

I recommend those who are intimidated by this blackmail read *The Colonized and the Colonizer*. This time it is experience against experience; the author, a Tunisian, has recounted, in *The Pillar of Salt*, his bitter childhood. What is he exactly? Colonizer or colonized? He himself would say: neither one nor the other; you will say, perhaps: both one and the other; it comes down to the same thing. He belongs to one of the indigenous but non-Muslim groups, 'relatively privileged compared with the colonized masses and … rejected … by the colonizing groupings' who nonetheless do not 'completely discourage' their efforts to become integrated into European society. United with the sub-proletariat by a *de facto* solidarity, separated from it by meagre privileges, their members live in

* *Les Temps Modernes*, Nos. 137–138, July–August 1957.

a perpetual *malaise*. Memmi has experienced this double solidarity and this double rejection: the movement which pits the colonists against the colonized, the 'colonists who refuse their identity' against the 'colonists who accept it'. He understood this so well because he first felt it as his own contradiction. He explains very well in his book that this tearing apart of the soul, the pure internalization of social conflicts, does not encourage action. But, if he becomes aware of himself, if he realizes his complicity, his temptations and his exile, the person who suffers from it can enlighten others by talking about himself: a 'negligible force in the confrontation', this suspect individual *represents* nobody; but, since he *is* everybody at once, he is the best of witnesses.

But Memmi's book does not tell a story: if it is nourished with memories, he has assimilated them all; it *gives form* to an experience. Between the colonists' racist usurpation and the future nation that the colonized will build, in which he 'suspects he will have no place', he attempts to live his particularity by transcending it towards the universal. Not towards Man, who does not yet exist, but towards a rigorous Reason which applies to all. This sober and clear work can be classified under 'passionate geometries': its calm objectivity is suffering and anger overcome.

It is because of this, no doubt, that he might be reproached for an appearance of

idealism: but in fact, it is all there. One might argue a little, however, over the order chosen. It would perhaps have been better to show the colonialist and his victim similarly strangled by the colonial *apparatus*, that heavy machine, constructed at the end of the Second Empire, under the Third Republic, and which, after giving complete satisfaction to the colonizers, is turning against them and could very well crush them. In fact, racism is inscribed in the system: the colony sells foodstuffs and raw materials cheaply, it buys manufactured products at very high prices from France. This strange trade is only beneficial for both parties if the natives work for nothing, or next to nothing. The agricultural sub-proletariat cannot even count upon an alliance with the least privileged Europeans. They all live off it, including the '*petits colons*' that the big landowners exploit but who, compared to the Algerians, are still privileged: the average income of the French in Algeria is ten times that of the Muslims. That is where the tension stems from. For wages and living costs to be as low as possible there needs to be fierce competition among the native workers, so the birthrate needs to increase; but as the country's resources are limited by colonial usurpation, *for the same wages*, the Muslims' standard of living constantly falls, the population lives in a perpetual state of under-nourishment. Conquest was achieved by violence; over-exploitation and oppression demand the maintenance of violence, which entails the presence of the Army. There would be no contradiction there if terror reigned everywhere on earth; but back in France, the colonist enjoys democratic rights that the colonial system denies the colonized. It is the system, in effect, that encourages the rise in population to reduce the cost of labour, and it is the system again that prohibits the *assimilation of the natives*. If they had the right to vote, their numerical superiority would make everything explode immediately. Colonialism denies *human rights* to people it has subjugated by violence, and whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force, therefore, as Marx would say, in a state of 'subhumanity'. Racism is inscribed in the events themselves, in the institutions, in the nature of the exchanges and the production. The political and social statuses reinforce one another: since the natives are sub-human, the Declaration of Human Rights does not apply to them; conversely, since they have no rights, they are abandoned without protection to the inhuman forces of nature, to the 'iron laws' of economics. Racism is *already there*, carried by the *praxis* of colonialism, engendered at every instant by the colonial apparatus, sustained by those relationships of production which define two sorts of individuals: for some, privilege and humanity are one and the same thing; they assert their humanity through the free exercise of their rights; for the others, the absence of rights sanctions their poverty, their chronic hunger, their ignorance, in short their subhumanity. I have always thought that ideas take shape in things and that they are already in man when he awakens them and expresses them to explain his situation to himself. The 'conservatism' of the colonist, his 'racism', the ambiguous relationship with mainland France, all of these things are *already* given, before he resuscitates them in the 'Nero Complex'.

Memmi would reply to me no doubt that he is not saying anything different: I know that; [1] furthermore, it is perhaps he who is right: by presenting his ideas in the order of their discovery, that is to say starting from human intentions and real-life relationships, he guarantees the authenticity of his experience: he suffered first in his relations with others, in his relations with himself; he encountered the objective structure in going more

deeply into the contradiction that was tearing him apart; and he presents them to us just as they are: raw, still permeated with his subjectivity.

But let us leave these quibbles aside. The work establishes some solid truths. First of all that there are neither good nor bad colonists: there are colonialists. Some among them reject their objective reality: carried along by the colonial apparatus, they *do* each day, *in deed*, what they condemn *in their dreams*, and each of their acts contributes to maintaining oppression. They will change nothing, be of no use to anyone, and find their moral comfort in their *malaise*, that is all.

The others – and they are the majority – sooner or later accept themselves as they are.

Memmi has provided a remarkable description of the sequence of steps which leads them to 'self-absolution'. Conservatism engenders the selection of mediocre people. How can this elite of usurpers, conscious of their mediocrity, justify their privileges? Only one way: diminish the colonized in order to exult themselves, deny the status of human beings to the natives, and deprive them of basic rights. That will not be difficult as, precisely, the system deprives them of everything; colonialist *practice* has engraved the colonial idea

1 Does he not write: 'The colonial situation manufactures colonists as it manufactures colonies'? (p. 77) The only difference between us is perhaps that he sees a situation where I see a system.

on things themselves; it is the movement of things which designates both the colonist and the colonized. Thus oppression justifies itself: the oppressors produce and maintain by force the evils which, *in their eyes*, make the oppressed resemble more and more what they would need to be in order to deserve their fate. The colonist can absolve himself only by systematically pursuing the 'dehumanization' of the colonized, that is by identifying a little more each day with the colonial apparatus. Terror and exploitation dehumanize, and the exploiter uses this dehumanization to justify further exploitation. The machine runs smoothly; impossible to distinguish between idea and *praxis*, and between the latter and objective necessity. These moments of colonialism sometimes influence one another and sometimes blend. Oppression is, *first of all*, hatred of the oppressor towards the oppressed. Only one limit to this enterprise of extermination: colonialism itself. It is here that the colonists meet their own contradiction: along with the colonized, colonization, the colonizers included, would disappear. No more underclass, no more exploitation: they would fall back into the normal forms of capitalist exploitation, wages and prices would come into line with those in France; it would mean ruin. The system wants the death and the multiplication of its victims at the same time; any transformation will be fatal to it: whether the natives are assimilated or massacred, labour costs will rise constantly. The heavy machine keeps those who are compelled to turn it between life and death – always closer to death than to life; a petrified ideology applies itself to considering *men* as animals that talk. In vain: in order to give them orders, even the harshest, the most insulting, you have to begin by *acknowledging* them; and as they cannot be watched over constantly, you have to resolve to trust them. Nobody can treat a man 'like a dog' if he does not first consider him as a man. The impossible dehumanization of the oppressed turns against the oppressors and becomes their alienation. It is the oppressors themselves who, by their slightest gesture, resuscitate the

humanity they wish to destroy; and, as they deny it to others, they find it everywhere like an enemy force. To escape from this, they must harden, give themselves the opaque consistency and impermeability of stone; in short they in turn must dehumanize themselves.

A pitiless reciprocity binds the colonizers to the colonized, their product and their destiny. Memmi has forcefully shown this; we discover with him that the colonial system is a moving form, born around the middle of the last century, and which will produce its own destruction. For a long time now it has been costing the colonizing countries more than it brings in; France is crushed under the weight of Algeria and we know now that we will abandon the war, without victory or defeat, when we are too poor to pay for it. But, above all, it is the mechanical rigidity of the apparatus that is causing it to break down. The traditional social structures have been pulverized, the natives 'atomized' and colonial society cannot assimilate them without destroying itself; they will therefore have to rediscover their unity *against it*. These people excluded from system will proclaim their exclusion in the name of national identity: it is colonialism that creates the patriotism of the colonized. Maintained at the level of animals by an oppressive system, they are not given any rights, not even the right to live, and their condition worsens day by day: when a people's only remaining option is in choosing how to die, when they have received from their oppressors only one gift – despair – what have they got left to lose? Their misery will become their courage; they will turn the eternal rejection that colonization confronts them with into an absolute rejection of colonization. The secret of the proletariat, Marx once said, is that it carries within itself the destruction of bourgeois society. We must be thankful to Memmi for reminding us that the colonized also have their secret, and that we are witnessing the awful death throes of colonialism.

You Are Wonderful * [1]

A collection of statements and documents on our methods of pacification – *Des Rappelés témoignent* (*Mobilized Reservists Bear Witness*) [2] – has just been published. Have you read it? These mobilized reservists are Christians, chaplains, priests. With regard to the overall policy, it seems likely that their opinions differ, so they do not say a word about it. But they have in common a will to reveal the gangrene – still a long way from affecting the entire Army, but which can no longer quite be prevented from spreading – of the cynical and systematic use of absolute violence. They hide nothing, and denounce all the war crimes committed before their eyes: pillaging, rape, reprisals against the civilian population, summary executions, use of torture to extract confessions or information. These measured, intelligent accounts, anxious to be fair to everyone, even the most guilty, constitute the most damning evidence. Reading them is absolutely unbearable; you have to force yourself to go from

* *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 135, May 1957.

1 It seems to me indispensable that the brochure about which I am going to speak is given the widest possible circulation. It is for that reason that I have written this article, which was intended for a major daily newspaper. The newspaper having refused it, I am publishing it in *Les Temps Modernes.*

2 Published by the *Comité de Résistance Spirituelle* (Committee of Spiritual Resistance), 14 *ter*, rue du Landy, Clichy (Seine).

one line to the next. Nevertheless I feel that I must strongly recommend this brochure to all those who are not yet familiar with it, and I would like all French people to read it. The fact is that we are ill, very ill; feverish and prostrate, obsessed by her old dreams of glory and by the sense of her shame, France is struggling in the midst of a vague nightmare which she can neither flee nor decipher. Either we see clearly or we are done for.

For 18 months our country has been the victim of what the legal code has called a ‘demoralization offensive’. And it is not by sabotaging its ‘morale’ that you demoralize a nation, it is by degrading its morality; as for the procedure, everyone knows it: by precipitating us into a despicable adventure, they have instilled in us, from without, a sense of social guilt. But we vote, we give mandates and, in a way, we can revoke them; the stirring of public opinion can bring down governments. We personally must be accomplices to the crimes that are committed in our name, since it is within our power to stop them. We have to take responsibility for this guilt which was dormant in us, inert, foreign, and demean ourselves in order to be able to bear it.

However, we have not sunk so low that we can hear the cries of a tortured child without horror. [3] How simple everything would be, how quickly everything would be sorted out if these cries reached our ears once, just once, but they do us the favour of

stifling them. It is not cynicism, it is not hatred that is demoralizing us: no, it is only the state of false ignorance in which we are made to live and which we ourselves contribute to maintaining. To ensure our peace of mind, the solicitude of our leaders goes as far as quietly to undermine freedom of expression: they hide or filter the truth. When the *fellagha* massacre a European family, the major newspapers spare us nothing, not even the photographs of mutilated bodies; but when the only means of escape a Muslim lawyer can find from his French tormenters is suicide, the event is reported in three lines in order not to upset our sensibilities. Concealing, deceiving and lying are a

3 *Des Rappelés témoignent*, pp. 10, 599.

duty for those who inform France; the only crime would be to *disturb* us. This has clearly been demonstrated to Mr Peyrega: nobody, in Algeria, thinks of denying the events he reports; he is simply reproached for having reported them to us. We are French; French soldiers are massacring at random in the streets of Algiers before the hardened eyes of the European population; but that is none of our business. The truth about Africa is too strong a wine for our tender minds: what would happen to the colonists if France got drunk? Calm, that is what we need, plenty of rest, a few distractions: since the death of Louis XVI, every good French citizen has been an orphan; the Mollet government knows and shares the inconsolable mourning of our bourgeoisie: shrinking from no sacrifice, they put the queen of England on the French throne for three days. What delights! What rapture! Complete strangers talked to one another, took each other by the hand and danced the conga. In Algeria, however, tenacious men continued their job: no days off for executioners. The radio brought them snatches of our sighs of ecstasy, and they said to each other:'Now they have got their queen, perhaps they will leave us in bloody peace.' The queen has gone, she is resting at Windsor; overwhelmed by love, France has taken to her bed; the government is walking on tiptoe: 'Do *not disturb* her sleep.' If, however, one of us opens our eyes and questions her nurses, quick, they use another ploy: in no time at all a safety commission is set up whose only function is to relieve us of our responsibilities. 'Abuses? One or two perhaps. In a war there are always some. But what are you worried about? You are a long way from Algiers, you are not familiar with the issues; trust the Safety Commission. We will set it up with good people, specialists in scruples. Give them your worries; they will take them over there with them. And sleep.'

If only we could sleep, and be ignorant of everything! If only we were separated from Algeria by a wall of silence! If we were *really* being deceived! Foreigners could doubt our intelligence but not our naiveté.

We are not naive, we are dirty. Our consciences have not been disturbed, and yet they are not clear. Our leaders know this full well; that is how they like us; what they want to achieve by their attentive care and well-publicized consideration is, under the pretence of a fake ignorance, our complicity. *Everybody* has heard about the torture, in spite of everything, something has filtered through into the national press, honest but small circulation newspapers have published eye-witness accounts, pamphlets are in circulation; soldiers return home and talk about it. But it is precisely that which serves the demoralizers: for everything gets lost or is dulled in the thickness of society, a pathway to the news peddled around has to be cleared, but then the pathway ends abruptly and the

news dies. The majority of the French people have not read, cannot read these newspapers, these pamphlets, but they know people who read them; many of us have never heard the account of a reservist, but someone has told them what certain soldiers were saying. Spread by word of mouth, officially denied, these accounts from afar suffer a progressive loss of their credibility as they circulate. This is where the 'offensive' awaits us: alas, it is here that we await ourselves. So why should we believe these tales? Where is the evidence? Where are the witnesses? Those who declare themselves convinced were convinced already. Of course we cannot automatically rule out the possibility either … But we must wait, and not judge before properly informing ourselves. So we do not judge. But we do not inform ourselves either: as soon as we try to get hold of the documentary evidence, our open society turns into tropical rain forest: we vaguely hear, a long way off, the sound of a tom-tom, but we go round in circles when we try to get closer to it. And of course we have enough problems of our own, don't we, without lumbering ourselves with other people's. You must not ask somebody who has worked all day and has had to put up with all the minor stresses and strains of daily life at the office to spend the evening gathering information about the Arabs.

And there is the first of our lies. All the demoralizers have to do is fold their arms and wait: we will finish off the job ourselves. It is easy to use practical concerns as an excuse: they have never prevented anyone from reading the newspaper after dinner; we take our minds off the specific by considering the universal, we forget the suppressed anger of the afternoon by shedding a few soft tears or by abandoning ourselves to after-dinner indignation. The newspapers court us; they want to make us believe that we are good. When the radio or the television ask us for a five franc piece, they call their programmes: 'You are wonderful'; that is enough to make us run from the Porte de Saint-Ouen to the Porte d'Italie at midnight. But we are not wonderful. No more than we are naive. The illusory community of decent people is quite simply that of the readers of *France-Soir*. If we refuse to investigate the French truth ourselves, when we are capable of piling up our old mattresses on top of our 4CVs and throwing them at the feet of some Jean Nohain, it is because we are afraid. Afraid of seeing our true faces naked. That is where the lie is – and the excuse for the lie: yes, we lack evidence, so we cannot *believe* anything; but we do not seek this evidence because, *in spite of ourselves, we know*. What were the demoralizers asking for? That and nothing else: an ignorance that is excusable but more and more unforgivable, which progressively demeans us and each day brings us closer to those whom we should condemn. When we resemble them completely, we will cry 'All men are brothers' and we will throw ourselves into their arms.

Our second lie has already been prepared for us. The trap is the Safety Commission. If only we could trust it! But even if we wanted to, how could we summon up the necessary gullibility? A commission, when crime and massacre are on the increase throughout Algeria? Who will inform it in Algiers of what is happening in Kabylia? And who will consult it? About what? Is it going to solemnly evoke human rights? Everybody knows them, including Mr Lacoste. It is a question of getting them recognized: and how is it supposed to manage that? If the resident minister cannot put an end to the illegal practices, do they think that providing him with a few advisers will give him the means to do so? If he is able to and wants to crack down on abuses, what does he need them for? And if he does not want to, why should he take their advice? But no matter! The

Government has made a gesture, Monsieur Mollet has declared himself to be 'deeply shocked', he says that he wants light shed on the whole affair. We believe this and we are excusable: a man's word is made to be believed; we do not believe it and we are even more excusable: M. Mollet's word is made to be doubted. We know that the Commission will be made up of irreproachable men, we also know that it will be unable to do anything: their decency enables us to conceal its impotence from ourselves. Thus we deny the Government our trust, and yet we count on it to dispel our mistrust.

Guilty. Twice guilty. We already feel prey to a vague malaise. It is not yet horror but a feeling that horror exists, very close by, all the more threatening because we cannot and will not look it in the face. And then, all at once a flash which makes it blindingly obvious: 'What if it were true?' Apart from that, still wonderful: but now suspect. Yes, each one of us finds his neighbour suspect and fears being considered suspect by his neighbour. Regarding the solution to the Algerian problem, friends could hold different opinions but still think highly of each other. But what about the summary executions? The torture? Can you remain friends with someone who approves of them? Everyone keeps quiet, everyone looks at their neighbour who keeps quiet, everybody wonders: 'What does he know? What does he believe? What has he decided to forget?' Except among people 'on the same side', we are afraid to speak. What if I were to find a criminal acquiescence in the man who has just shaken my hand? This man says nothing; he who says nothing consents. But I do not say anything either. What if, on the contrary, it were he who reproached me for my spinelessness? Mistrust teaches us a new solitude: we are separated from our fellow citizens by the fear of having to despise or of being despised. It is one and the same thing, moreover, since we are all the same and are afraid of questioning people because their response might well reveal our degradation. If, for example, one of them, without violence, to rid himself as quickly as possible of his anguish, says to us, under his breath: 'And what about the *fellagha*, then? Have they not carried out atrocities?' We understand at once that fear, denial, silence have made us return once more to the barbaric times of an eye for an eye. In a word, the French have a troubled conscience – with the exception, perhaps, of M. Mollet. And that is what makes us guilty: the turmoil in our minds, the game of hide and seek that we play, the lamps that we dim, this painful bad faith; let us not see in this our salvation but the sign of a profound collapse within ourselves. We are sinking. We are already furious at knowing that we are judged and our anger makes us sink further into complicity: 'America has no right to speak! If we treated our blacks the way they treat theirs!' … It is true. America has no *right* to speak; nor does Sweden, which has no colonies. Nobody has the right to speak, but *we* have the duty to do so; yet we do not speak. There are honest, courageous informers, who tell what they know every day or every week: we want to ruin them or put them in prison, and their audience does not increase. But what has become of the great virtuous voices which resounded like church organs last November? At that time we were still wonderful: we drew from our innocence indignant tones to condemn – *with justification* – Soviet intervention in Hungary. But did you not *also*, great voices, in your sublime thunder, make the commitment to tell us *everything* there was to know about *ourselves*? Because *you* know. You do not even have the excuse of ignorance. You are familiar with the documents, the accounts. Today we are the ones who are implicated. We are the ones who need to know, to believe. We are the ones whom you can rid of our

nightmares and save from our shame. You remain silent, and that is an error of judgement: fear that you may be judged on your silence today rather than on your commotion of November.

Why? Because the circle is closing, because we are going to be caught in a dreadful trap and, unfortunately for us, in a posture that we ourselves have condemned. False naiveté, flight, bad faith, solitude, silence, a complicity at once rejected and accepted, that is what we called, in 1945, collective responsibility. There was no way the German people, at the time, could feign ignorance of the camps. 'Come off it!' we said. 'They knew everything.' We were right, they did know everything, and it is only today that we can understand: because we too know everything. Most of them had never seen Dachau or Buchenwald, but they knew people who knew other people who had caught a glimpse of the barbed wire or consulted confidential files in a ministry. They, like us, thought that this information was unsound, they kept quiet, were mistrustful of one another. Do we still dare to condemn them? Do we still dare to absolve ourselves? How many mattresses will we have to lay on the Place de la Concorde to make the world forget that children are being tortured in our name and that we say nothing?

There is still time to thwart those who are demolishing the nation, it is still possible to break the infernal circle of this irresponsible responsibility, of this guilty innocence and this ignorance which is knowledge: let us look at the truth, it will put each one of us in a position either to publicly condemn the crimes committed or to accept responsibility for them in full knowledge of the facts. That is why I felt it necessary to bring to the attention of the public the reservists' brochure. There is the evidence, there is the horror – *ours*: we will be unable to see it without tearing it from ourselves and crushing it.

We Are All Murderers *

In November 1956, Fernand Yveton, a member of the *Combattants de la Libération* (Freedom Fighters), planted a bomb at the Hamma power station, an attempted sabotage, which can in no way equate with a terrorist action. Analysis proved that it was a time bomb precisely set so that the explosion could not occur before the personnel had left. To no avail: Yveton was arrested, sentenced to death, a reprieve was refused, he was executed. Not the slightest hesitation: this man declared and proved that he did not wish to kill anyone, but we wanted to kill *him*, and we did so without wavering. We had to look intimidating, didn't we? And, as one idiot said the other day, 'show the terrible face of an angry France'. How pure and how sure of your purity you need to be to dare to dispense this archangel's Justice! And even if we agreed with them for a moment that this absurd war has some sense, can we not see what the French military and civilian population would have to demand of themselves if they were to hope to justify the dreadful severity of this sentence?

A little later came the trial of the 'accomplices', Jacqueline and Abdelkader Guerroudj. He was a *political* officer who liaised between the Freedom Fighters and the leaders of the FLN. She was a petty bourgeois from mainland France who wanted to assume her share

* *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 145, March 1958.

of the risks because she approved of her husband's activities. She joined the movement well after him, and in November 1956, her immediate superiors assigned her the task of passing on to Yveton the materials for his future sabotage. She obeyed because she was given the guarantee that the explosion would not cost any human lives.

For those who are familiar with the logic of military courts, there was no doubt about the sentence: since they had killed Yveton and since the Guerroudj couple were his accomplices, they would have to kill them as well or go back on their judgement. The expected outcome has been confirmed since: the government commissioner, almost nonchalantly, called for the death sentence. He got it. What does it matter if the complicity of Guerroudj in the Yveton affair has not been established? In Algiers our justice prefers to astound the world by the harshness of its sentences rather than by the strength of the evidence on which they are based.

Will logic be taken to the extreme of executing the Guerroudjs, of refusing to grant a presidential pardon? If it were permitted to address the highest-ranking official of the Fourth Republic, I would respectfully point out to him that these are no longer the good times of 1956. Since the trial of the Guerroudjs, an incident has taken place, just a hiccup, of course, but one which should not be without impact upon our way of administering justice, especially military justice: Sakhiet. There were bombs at Sakhiet, just as at the Hamma power station. Only they did not have a timing mechanism. And those

responsible were not so foolish as to limit the operation simply to damage to property. For Sakhiet, too, the time of the operation had been precisely chosen: it was market time. Yveton clearly had no other aim than to plunge the town into darkness. The aim of our planes was to plunge a village into death. If we had wished to maintain our archangel-like severity, we should, perhaps, have sought out the guilty parties and – who knows? – brought them to trial. But no: Monsieur Gaillard 'covered up'! With what thick veil or impenetrable mist he hoped to cover up the ruins of Sakhiet I do not know. But the operation was not a success: the stones smoking in the sun were seen by the whole world. Only Monsieur Gaillard is *us*, is France. When, from his platform, he most officially made the august gesture of the man covering up, he implicated us all. Our foreign friends – as their press takes pleasure in explaining to us each day – are beginning to ask themselves very seriously if we have not become rabid dogs. And here is the question that we could humbly put to the highest-ranking official of our great Republic: is it really a good moment to execute the Guerroudjs? Would it not be in our interest to ease up a little on our arrogant severity? Is a country whose government proudly accepts responsibility for what Monsieur Mauriac, the other day, so aptly called a massacre of the poor, really qualified to allow its representatives to impose the death penalty, in its name, on a man who had no role other than to liaise between groups of communist origin and the FLN, or on a woman who, in taking part in a sabotage operation, took all necessary precautions to ensure that there would be no casualties? It must be repeated every day to the imbeciles who wish to terrify the world by showing it the 'terrible face of France': France terrifies nobody, she does not even have the means to intimidate any more; she is beginning to disgust, that is all. In the execution of the Guerroudj couple, if it were ever to take place, nobody would see or admire our archangel-like inflexibility; they would simply think that we have committed yet another crime.

A Victory *

In 1943, in the Rue Lauriston, French people were crying out in anguish and in pain; the whole of France heard them. The outcome of the war was not certain and we did not want to think about the future; one thing seemed impossible to us, though: that one day, in our name, people could be made to cry out.

But nothing is impossible for the French: in 1958, in Algiers, people are being tortured regularly, systematically; everybody knows, from Monsieur Lacoste to the farmers of the Aveyron, but nobody talks about it. Or hardly anybody: the sounds of thin voices fade into silence. France was scarcely more mute during the Occupation; and then she did have the excuse that she was gagged. Abroad they have already concluded that we have not ceased to demean ourselves. Since 1939, according to some; according to others, since 1918. It is easily said: I do not believe so readily in the degradation of a people; I do believe in their stagnation and their stupor. During the war, when the British radio or the underground press had told us about Oradour, we watched the German soldiers walking through the streets with an inoffensive air and we sometimes said to ourselves: 'And yet they are men who resemble us. How can they do what they do?' And we were proud of ourselves because we did not understand.

* *L'Express*, No. 350, 6 March 1958.

Now we know that there is nothing to understand: everything occurred unnoticed, by imperceptible abdications; and then, when we looked up we saw in the mirror an unfamiliar, hateful face: our own.

Deep in their stupor, the French people are discovering this terrible truth: if nothing protects a nation against itself, neither its past nor its loyalties, nor its own laws; if 15 years are enough to change the victims into torturers, it is because circumstances alone dictate. Depending on the circumstances, anyone, at any time will become a victim or a perpetrator.

Fortunate are those who have died without ever having to ask themselves: 'If they pull out my nails, will I talk?' But even more fortunate are those who have not been obliged, having scarcely left childhood, to ask themselves the *other* question: 'If my friends, my brothers in arms or my superior officers, before my eyes, pull out the nails of an enemy, what will I do?'

What do they know about themselves, these young men who, owing to circumstances, have their backs to the wall? They sense that the resolutions they make here will appear abstract and empty when the day comes, that their ideas will be fundamentally called into question by an unforeseeable situation and that they will have to decide over there, alone, about France and about themselves. They go off, and others, who have measured their impotence, and most of whom maintain a resentful silence, return. Fear is born: fear of others, fear of oneself, spreading to all sectors. Victim and perpetrator are one and the

same image: and it is our own image. In extreme cases, the only means of rejecting one of the two roles is effectively to assume the other.

This choice is not being imposed upon the people of France – or not yet; but this ambivalence weighs upon us: because of it we are both 'the wound and the knife'. The horror of being the latter and the fear of becoming the former govern and reinforce one another. Memories are awakened; 15 years ago, the best members of the Resistance were less afraid of suffering than of giving in to their suffering. They would say: when he remains silent, the victim saves everything; when he talks, no one has the right to judge, not even those who did not talk: but the victim is coupled with the perpetrator, is his spouse, and this entwined couple is engulfed in the night of debasement. The night of debasement has returned: at El Biar it returns every night; in France it blackens our hearts. Whispered propaganda gives us to understand that, precisely, 'everyone talks'. Thus the torture is justified by human ignominy; since every one of us is a potential traitor, the tormentor in each of us would be wrong to hold back. Especially as the greatness of France demands it, as honeyed voices explain to us each day. And a true patriot must have a clear conscience. And if you have a guilty one you must be a defeatist.

Consequently, stupor turns to despair: if patriotism must thrust us into debasement, if there is no safeguard anywhere, at any time, to stop nations or the whole of humanity from falling into inhumanity, then why indeed should we take so much trouble to become or to remain human beings: it is the inhuman in us which is our truth. But if nothing else is true, if we must either terrorize or die of terror, why should we take the trouble to live and remain patriotic?

These thoughts have been put into our minds by force. Obscure and false, they all flow from the same principle: mankind is inhuman. Their aim is to convince us of our impotence. They achieve this as long as we do not look them in the face. Abroad people should know: our silence is not a sign of assent; it stems from nightmares which have been deliberately caused, sustained and directed. I knew this already, but had been waiting for decisive proof of it for a long time.

Here it is.

About two weeks ago, a book entitled *The Question* was published by Editions de Minuit. Its author, Henri Alleg, who is still being held today in a prison in Algiers, recounts, without any superfluous commentary, and with admirable precision, the 'interrogation' he has undergone. The torturers, as they themselves had promised him, have 'seen to him': field telephone, water torture – as at the time of the Marchioness of Brinvilliers, but with the technical improvements *de rigueur* in our times – torture by fire, by thirst, etc. A book not to be recommended to sensitive souls. And yet the first edition – twenty thousand copies – is already out of print, and despite a rushed second print run, demand cannot be met: certain booksellers are selling from fifty to a hundred copies a day.

So far those who have dared to provide evidence have been reservists, mostly priests. They had lived among the torturers, their brothers, our brothers; all they knew of their victims, more often than not, was their cries, their wounds and their suffering. They showed us sadists bent over wrecks of human flesh. And what distinguished us from those sadists? Nothing, since we kept quiet: our indignation seemed sincere to us, but

would we have maintained it had we been living over there? Would it not have given way to a universal disgust, a dull resignation? I myself read out of a sense of duty, I sometimes published, and I hated the accounts which mercilessly implicated us all and left no room for hope.

With *The Question*, everything changes. Alleg spares us despair and shame because he is a victim who has overcome torture. This reversal is not without a certain sinister humour; it is in our name that he was made to suffer, and we, because of him, at last rediscover a little of our pride: we are proud that he is French. Readers identify with him passionately, they accompany him to the limit of his suffering; with him, alone and naked, they hold out. Would they, would we, be capable of this *in reality*? That is another matter. What counts is that the victim frees us by letting us discover, as he himself discovers, that we have the power and the duty to endure anything.

We were fascinated by the abyss of the inhuman; but one hard and stubborn man, obstinately carrying out his role as a man, is sufficient to rescue us from our giddiness. The 'question' is not inhuman; it is quite simply a vile, revolting crime, committed by men against men, and to which other men can and must put an end. The inhuman does not exist anywhere, except in the nightmares engendered by fear. And it is precisely the calm courage of a victim, his modesty and his lucidity, which awaken and demystify us: Alleg has just seized torture from the darkness that covers it; let us now have a closer look at it in broad daylight.

The perpetrators first of all, what are they? Sadists? Angry archangels? Warlords with terrifying whims? If we believe what they say, they are all of those things at once. But that is precisely it, Alleg does not believe them. What emerges from his account is that they would like to convince themselves and their victims of their total dominance: at times they are super-humans who have people at their mercy, and at times they are strict and strong men who have been given the task of taming the most obscene, the most ferocious, the most cowardly of animals: the human animal. You sense that they do not look too closely: the essential thing is to make the prisoner feel that he is not of the same race as they are. They undress him, they tie him up, they mock him; soldiers come and go, hurling insults and threats with a nonchalance meant to appear terrible.

But Alleg naked, shivering with cold, tied to a plank which is still black and sticky from old vomit, reduces all this posturing to its pitiful truth. It is an act played out by imbeciles. An act, the fascist violence of their comments, their promise to go and 'fuck up the Republic'. An act, the approach of the aide-de-camp of General Massu, which finishes with these words: 'All that's left for you to do now is commit suicide.' All a vulgar, wooden act that they repeat, without conviction, every night, for every prisoner, and which they stop very quickly because they run out of time. For these dreadful workers are overburdened. Overworked: the prisoners queue up before the torture plank, they are tied, then untied, the victims are taken from one torture chamber to another. Seeing this disgusting hive of activity through Alleg's eyes, we realize that the torturers cannot cope with what they have to do.

At times, of course, they play it cool; they drink beer, very relaxed, over a battered body; and then, all at once, they jump to their feet, running everywhere, swearing, screaming with anger, very nervy men who would make excellent victims; at the first pasting they would start confessing.

Vicious, enraged, certainly; but sadists, no, not even that; they are in too much of a hurry. That is what saves them, moreover; they hold out by keeping up their momentum; they have to keep running or collapse.

Yet they like a job well done; if they judge it necessary, they will stretch their professional conscience to the point of killing. That is what is striking, in Alleg's account: behind these wild-eyed, colourless surgeons, one senses a lack of flexibility which goes beyond them and beyond their leaders themselves.

We would be fortunate indeed if these crimes were the acts of a handful of violent individuals: in truth, torture creates torturers. After all, these soldiers did not join an elite corps in order to torture the defeated enemy.

Alleg, in a few lines, describes for us those he has known and that is sufficient to mark the different stages of their transformation.

There are the youngest of them, powerless, overwhelmed, who murmur 'It's horrible' when their torches shine on one of the tortured men; and then there are the torturers' assistants, who do not yet carry out the dirty work, who hold up and bring the prisoners; some of them are hardened, others not, all caught up in the system, all already inexcusable.

There is a blond lad from northern France 'with such a friendly face, able to talk about the torture sessions that Alleg underwent as if it were a match he was remembering and able to congratulate him, without embarrassment, as he would a cycle champion …'. A few days later, Alleg saw him again 'red in the face, disfigured by hatred, beating a Muslim on the stairs …'. And then there are the specialists, the hard men who do all the real work, who like to see the convulsive movements of someone being electrocuted but who cannot stand hearing him scream; and then the madmen who go round in circles like dead leaves in the whirlwind of their own violence.

None of these men exists on his own account, none of them will stay as he is; they represent the stages of an inexorable transformation. Between the best and the worst of them, only one difference: the best are raw recruits and the worst are the old hands. They will all leave eventually and, if the war continues, others will replace them, blond lads from the north or little dark-haired southerners, who will have the same apprenticeship and will discover the same violence, with the same nervous tension.

In this business, the individual does not count; a kind of stray, anonymous hatred, a radical hatred of man, takes hold of both torturers and victims, degrading them together and each by the other. Torture is this hatred, set up as a system, and creating its own instruments.

When this is said quite timidly in Parliament, the pack is unleashed: 'You are insulting the Army!' These yapping dogs must be asked once and for all: What the hell has the Army got to do with it? They torture *in the Army*; that is a fact; the Safety Commission, despite the mildness of its report, did not feel it necessary to hide this fact. So what? Is it the *Army* that tortures?

What rubbish! Do they think that the civilians are ignorant of their fine methods? If that is all it is about, let us put our trust in the Algiers police. And then, if a torturer-in-chief is needed, the whole of the National Assembly has designated him. It is not General S …, even less so General E …, not even General M … , though named by Alleg; it is Monsieur Lacoste, the man with full powers. Everything is done through him, by him, in

Bône as in Oran. All the men who suffered a horrific death in the El Biar apartment block or in villa S …, died by his will. It is not I who say so: it is the Members of Parliament, it is the Government. And what is more, the gangrene is spreading: it has crossed the sea: it has even been a rumour that people were being tortured in certain civilian prisons in France: I do not know whether there was any basis for it, but the persistence of it must have moved the authorities, since at the trial of Ben Saddok, the public prosecutor solemnly asked the accused if he had been ill-treated; the reply was, of course, known in advance.

No, torture is neither civilian nor military, nor specifically French: it is a pox which is ravaging the whole of this era. In the East as in the West there have been torturers. It is not so long ago that Farkas tortured the Hungarians; and the Polish do not hide the fact that their police, before Poznan, readily resorted to torture; as regards what happened in the USSR when Stalin was alive, the Khrushchev report is an indisputable account; not long ago, in Nasser's prisons, they 'questioned' politicians who since then have been elevated, albeit with a few scars, to eminent positions. I could go on: today it is Cyprus and it is Algeria; all in all, Hitler was just a forerunner.

Disavowed – at times very feebly – but systematically applied behind the façade of democratic legality, torture may be defined as a semi-clandestine institution. Are its causes the same everywhere? Probably not, but everywhere it is a manifestation of the same malaise. Anyway, that is of little importance; and our task is not to judge the century. Let us put our own house in order first and attempt to understand what has happened to *us*, the French people.

You know what they say sometimes to justify torturers: that you have to bring yourself to torture one man if his confession enables hundreds of lives to be spared. What hypocrisy! Alleg was no more a terrorist than Audin was; the proof is that he is charged with 'threatening State security and re-constituting a disbanded organization'.

Was it to save lives that his nipples and his pubic hair were burnt? No, they wanted to extract from him the address of the comrade who had sheltered him. If he had talked, they would have put another communist behind bars; that is all.

What is more, people are arrested at random; any Muslim is 'torturable' indefinitely: most of those tortured say nothing because they have nothing to say, unless they consent, so as not to suffer any more, to making a false statement or to gratuitously admitting to an unpunished crime, with which it seems opportune to charge them. As for those who could talk, we know full well that they remain silent. All or almost all of them. Neither Audin nor Alleg nor Guerroudj opened their mouths. On this point the torturers of El Biar are better informed than we are. One noted after the first interrogation of Alleg: 'He has at least gained a night to give his mates time to clear off.' And an officer, a few days later: 'For ten, fifteen years they have had the idea that, if they are caught, they must not say anything; and there is nothing that can be done to get that out of their heads.'

Perhaps he only meant the communists. But do they think that the ALN [1] fighters are made of different stuff? This type of violence is not very productive: by 1944 the Germans themselves had ended up convincing themselves of that: it costs human lives and does not save any.

And yet the argument is not entirely false: in any case it enlightens us regarding the function of torture. As a clandestine or semi-clandestine institution, *torture* is

indissolubly linked to the clan-destine nature of resistance or opposition.

In Algeria, our army has been deployed throughout the whole territory: we have the numbers, the finance and the weapons; the insurgents have nothing, except the trust and support of a large part of the population. We have defined, in spite of ourselves, the principal characteristics of this people's war: bomb attacks in the cities, ambushes in the country: the FLN has not chosen these actions; they do what they can, that is all; their forces in relation to ours oblige them to attack us by surprise: invisible, elusive, unexpected, they must strike and then disappear or else be exterminated. Hence our discomfort: we are struggling against a secret enemy; a hand throws a bomb in a street, a rifle shot injures one of our soldiers out on the road; we come running; there is no one there; later, in the vicinity, we will find Muslims who saw nothing. Everything links together: the people's war, a war of the poor against the rich, is characterized by the close ties between the rebel units and the population; as a result, for the regular army and the civilian authorities, this swarm of wretched people becomes the innumerable, daily enemy. The occupying troops are anxious about a silence which they have themselves engendered; one senses an elusive will to be

1 National Army of Liberation supporting the FLN.

silent, a circling, omnipresent secret; the rich feel hunted in the midst of the poor who say nothing; hampered by their own strength, the 'forces of law and order' can do nothing to oppose the guerrilla fighters, apart from their searches and their reprisal expeditions, nothing to oppose terrorism other than terror. Something is being hidden: everywhere and by everybody; people must be *made to talk*.

Torture is a vain fury, born of fear: they want to extract from *one* throat, in the midst of the screams and vomiting of blood, *everyone's* secret. Useless violence: whether the victim talks or dies beneath the blows, the vast secret is elsewhere, always elsewhere, out of reach; the torturer turns into Sisyphus: if he applies torture, he will have to begin over and over again.

Yet even this silence, even this fear, even these ever-present and ever-invisible dangers cannot fully explain the tenacity of the torturers, their will to debase their victims, and ultimately the hatred of mankind which has taken hold of them without their consent and which has shaped them.

That people kill each other is the rule: we have always fought for collective or individual interests. But in torture, this strange combat, the stakes seem extreme; it is for the title of *man* that the torturer pits himself against the tortured, and the whole thing happens as if they could not both belong to the human species.

The aim of torture is not simply to force someone to talk, to betray: the victim must designate *himself*, by his cries and his submission, as a human animal. In everyone's eyes and in his own eyes. His betrayal must break and dispose of the victim forever. The intention is not just to force those who yield to torture to talk; they have had a status imposed upon them forever: that of a subhuman.

This extreme raising of the stakes is a feature of our times. The reason is that the condition of man needs to be realized. At no time has the will to be free been more conscious or stronger; at no time has oppression been more violent or better armed.

In Algeria, the contradictions are implacable: each of the conflicting groups demands the radical exclusion of the other. We took everything from the Muslims, then we forbade them every-thing, including even the use of their own language. Memmi has clearly shown how colonization is achieved by the cancelling out of the colonized. They no longer owned anything, they *were no longer anybody*; we liquidated their civilization while at the same time refusing them ours. They had requested integration, assimilation, and we said no: by what miracle would we maintain colonial overexploitation if the colonized enjoyed the same rights as the colonists? Undernourished, uneducated, impoverished, they were mercilessly pushed back by the system to the edge of the Sahara, to the limits of what is human; with population growth, their standard of living fell year on year. When despair drove them to revolt, these sub-humans either had to perish or assert their humanity against us: they rejected all our values, our culture, our supposed superiority. Demanding the status of human beings and refusing French nationality amounted to one and the same thing for them.

This rebellion was not restricted to contesting the power of the colonists; they felt that their very existence was in question. For most of the Europeans of Algeria, there are two complementary and inseparable truths: the colonists are human beings by divine right, and the natives are subhumans. That is the mythical interpretation of a precise fact, since the wealth of the former depends on the extreme poverty of the latter.

Thus exploitation makes the exploiter dependent upon the exploited. And, on another level, this dependence is at the heart of racism; it is its profound contradiction and bitter misfortune: for the European in Algiers, being a man means *first of all* being superior to the Muslim.

But what if the Muslim, in turn, asserts himself as a man, as the colonist's equal? Well then, the colonist is wounded in his very being; he feels diminished, devalued: he not only sees the economic consequences of the accession of 'wogs' to the world of human beings, he also loathes it because it heralds his *personal* decline. In his rage, he sometimes dreams of genocide. But it is pure fantasy. He knows it, he is aware of his dependence; what would he do without an indigenous sub-proletariat, without a surplus workforce, without chronic unemployment that allows him to impose his salaries? And then if the Muslims are *already* human beings, all is lost, they do not even need to be exterminated any more. No, the most urgent thing, if there is still time, is to humiliate them, to wipe out the pride in their hearts, to reduce them to the level of animals. The body will be allowed to live on but the spirit will be destroyed. Tame, train, punish: those are the words that obsess the colonist. There is not enough room in Algeria for two human species; the choice must be made between one and the other.

And I do not claim, of course, that the Europeans of Algiers invented torture, nor even that they encouraged the civil and military authorities to practise it; on the contrary: torture imposed itself, it had become routine practice even before we realized it. But the hatred of man apparent within it is the expression of racism. For it is indeed the man that they want to destroy, with all his human qualities: courage, willpower, intelligence, loyalty – the very qualities to which the colonist lays claim. But if the European gets angry to the point of hating his own image, it is because that image is reflected by an Arab.

Thus, in these two inseparable couples – the colonist and the colonized, the torturer

and the victim – the second is no more than a manifestation of the first. And, without any doubt, the torturers are not colonists, nor are the colonists torturers. The latter are frequently young men who come from France and who have lived twenty years of their life without ever worrying about the Algerian problem. But the hatred was a magnetic field: it passed through, corroded, and subjected them.

It is the calm lucidity of Alleg that allows us to understand all that. Even if he contributed nothing else, we would have to be profoundly grateful to him. But he did much more: by intimidating his torturers, he ensured that the humanism of the victims and the colonized triumphed over the excessive violence of certain soldiers and the racism of the colonists. And let not the word 'victim' evoke any kind of tearful humanism: in the midst of these little chiefs, proud of their youth, their strength, their number, Alleg is the only hard man, the only one who is really strong. *We* may say that he paid the highest price for the simple right to remain a man among men. But he does not even think about it. That is why we are so moved by this sentence without affectation at the end of a paragraph:

'I felt suddenly proud and joyful at not having given in; I was convinced that I would hold out if they started again, that I would fight to the end, that I would not make their task easier by committing suicide.'

A hard man, yes, and one who ended up frightening the archangels of anger.

In some of their words, at any rate, you feel that they sense and are trying to ward off a vague and scandalous revelation: when it is the victim who wins, farewell to supremacy and to the *droit du seigneur*; the archangelic wings stiffen and the lads ask themselves, embarrassed, 'What about me? Would I hold out if I were tortured?' Here, at the moment of victory, one system of values has been replaced by another; the torturers, in their turn, come within an ace of feeling dizzy. But no, their heads are empty and their work exhausts them, and after all they scarcely believe in what they are doing.

Besides, what is the use of troubling the conscience of the torturers? If one of them faltered, his superiors would replace him: there are plenty more where they came from. Alleg's account in effect – and this is perhaps its greatest merit – finally dispels our illusions: no, it is not enough to punish or re-educate a few individuals; no, the Algerian war will not be humanized. Torture has established *itself* there: it was prompted by circumstances and required by racist hatred; in a certain manner, as we have seen, it is at the heart of the conflict and is, perhaps, what expresses its deepest truth. If we want to put an end to this revolting, dismal cruelty, save France from shame and the Algerians from hell, we have only one means, still the same, the only one we have ever had or will ever have: begin negotiations, make peace.

The Pretender *

At the beginning all went well. Too well. As always. Anti-militarist and chauvinistic, France adores the 14 July parade but, since the time of General Boulanger, she has not liked seditious soldiers so much. There were those shouts at the Algiers Forum, which the radio broadcast in bursts, the governor's palace was attacked, in the streets there were cries of 'long live Massu'; in Paris there was unity. The trade unions decided to resist together. Monsieur Pflimlin's heart was warmed: the President of the Council threw himself into the investiture ceremonies with the familiar anguish of the apprentice dictator attempting his coup d'état. He found the strength to quibble over the communist votes; but it was just to ease his conscience. All in all, pleasant evening, pleasant breeze, and that delightful mix of hope and concern that you find at all beginnings. Only, there was a pitfall: we had not seen everything yet.

A great honorary figure is dangerous for a nation; even if he has hidden himself away in a lonely village. If he says nothing, his past is heard. General de Gaulle had kept silent for a long time but his past remained among us. Alone against Massu and Salan we could hold out. But our ministers were caught from behind: suddenly, as they were negotiating with the generals, they saw at their feet an endless shadow stretching before them. Already on the

* *L'Express*, No. 362, 22 May 1958.

opposite shore, Salan was shouting: 'Long live de Gaulle', and all the people of Algiers: 'De Gaulle for president!'

All at once the weather deteriorated: we rediscovered the pitiless logic of disasters; whatever one does, in such events, everything benefits the enemy. The government, trying to save itself, was preparing its downfall: to escape from de Gaulle, they were throwing themselves into the arms of Salan. Most government ministers were convinced that the massacres in Algeria had to be halted as soon as possible. They wanted to say so; some, for the first time, had said so. But, if Pflimlin wanted to have a chance of remaining in post, he had to defeat de Gaulle by outdoing him. He offered twenty-seven months of military service, 80 billion francs of new taxes, sweeteners for the seditious generals. In vain: the men of Algiers – civilians as well as military – did not want him. Nor his money: they wanted de Gaulle.

To remain in power, the government became extremist; his heart broken, Monsieur Pflimlin sobbed into every microphone: 'Grave mistake; tragic misunderstanding.' But his bellicose pleading was immediately discredited by the very silence of his successor. In order to bring a smile to the lips of Salan, the government was losing its way: they would begin by winning a total victory, by wiping out the enemy; then they would negotiate. Salan would not make up his mind, but while the President of the Council was urging Algiers to remain confident, the French left asked themselves, in surprise, what

distinguished him from Bidault and by what aberration they had unanimously voted him the discretionary powers which, as he was already announcing, he could use against them.

In the twilight moments – frequent in our history – which precede coups d'état, something has always struck observers: the confusion of feelings and ideas. From a distance one imagines that there are a few competing groups – the supporters of the future dictator, the defenders of the old one – and that they slog it out until the latter have been liquidated by the former. From close up, nothing could be more deceptive: everyone hesitates, everyone is afraid, the dissidents as much as the government, everyone is for and against everybody at the same time. One has such deadly enemies that servitude or death is preferred to alliance with them, even against a more deadly but newer enemy. Coups d'état are greatly facilitated when everybody gives themselves up deliberately to the enemy rather than lose a certain thing that they place above all else, rather than produce a certain other thing that they particularly detest. Finally everyone becomes paralysed and paralyses everyone else, the least paralysed carries out the coup d'état by chance, trembling.

Here in France, as early as the third day, I realized that there was one thing in the world that the socialists detested more than servitude, death and the degradation of the country; it was the Popular Front. On the first day, the FO, the CFTC and the CGT trade unions decided to resist together. Immediately, the Assembly cried with one voice: 'It's coming back, there it is!' On that day the 'spectre of the Popular Front' dragged its chains through all the columns of the terrified *Le Monde*. It was on the next day that the CFTC and FO published a joint warning: the workers, by keeping their composure and remaining calm, by refraining from premature demonstrations, would save the Republic. Each trade union, except for the CGT, each political party, except for the Communist Party, exclaimed: 'Better the regime should perish!' There was no trace of a Popular Front. There were just a few agreements, a few strictly defensive measures taken jointly. That was enough for Monsieur Guy Mollet, jostling and interrupting Monsieur Pflimlin, to beg General de Gaulle, via an intermediary, to deign to offer a few words to appease public opinion.

This procedure suited everybody: on the previous day a rather stiff declaration from the General had only half pleased people. Charles de Gaulle had not made any allusion to the Republican institutions; if he would be so good as to say, in passing, a few words like: 'I would not touch them!' or 'I do not wish them any harm', France would acclaim him as in 1945, and Monsieur Mollet, in return, would find a way of ousting Monsieur Pflimlin: perhaps the General would reserve a few portfolios for the socialists in a cabinet of national unity. Soon after this, Monsieur Pflimlin discovered, with indignant stupefaction, that the communists had taken the liberty of voting for him. He grabbed their votes and threw them to the back of the Assembly. And in a generous gesture of eloquence he went as far as to deny them the right to defend individual liberties: they were not worthy. The effect of this escalation of anti-communism in the 'two great republican parties' was to reduce each of them to powerlessness and solitude. The angry outbursts of Maître Isorni proved that, despite the earlier attempt at reconciliation, the Pétainist right will never forgive de Gaulle for sentencing Pétain. On the left, on the contrary, hypocrites drew some reassurance from this brilliantly clear argument: can the Saviour of the Republic

destroy it by his own hand? (Yet the answer is simple: why not?)

Certain militants among the communists, beneath the firmness of their attitude, betrayed some discomfort: they foresaw a great national reconciliation and did not hide from the fact that it would be at their expense. But they did not forget either Charles de Gaulle's journey to Moscow or the Franco-Soviet pact. There was also this slogan: France! France alone! That meant perhaps: we are going to withdraw from NATO.

For the same reasons, but the other way round, the Catholic bourgeoisie, the financial support of the MRP, was annoyed with the Saviour of the Republic: they did not doubt that he would bring about order; and, certainly, a good clearout never does any harm; but they would willingly have sold off Algeria and the whole empire in order to maintain Anglo-Saxon friendship.

But what *had* he decided about Algeria? Were we to keep it? Were we to let it go? That depended on the day and on the audience. After his declaration, ambiguity remained: certain people pointed out, nevertheless, that, far from pronouncing the words 'French Algeria', he had taken care to refer, on several occasions, to the associated colonies. These observations resulted in an attack of masochism on the Left: since the Pflimlin government is confiscating our liberties in order to take pacification as far as the death of the last *fellagha*, would it not be better to hand these lost liberties to de Gaulle so that he can use them to make peace? For he is the only man in France who can make the military listen to reason and impose his will on the Europeans of Algeria. These future martyrs were willing to pay for peace in Algeria by the liquidation of our democratic institutions. They would rejoice in prison over Muslim independence.

Thus everybody seemed to follow – via a hundred different activities, in anti-fascist committees and even in political organizations – a slow and contradictory dream, as if, despairing already of the Republic, they could not help but put their hopes, now available, in the hands of General de Gaulle. In the streets the people remained silent: the cafés were full, takings in the theatres hardly dropped. You might have thought that they were only interested in their private lives; I have never seen so many lovebirds.

'And what of it? Must we take to the streets to defend Guy Mollet? The Guy Mollet of Algiers? The Guy Mollet of Suez? Must we risk the secession of Algeria for him? Civil war? Which of you would get your face smashed in for Monsieur Max Lejeune, the friend of the *ultras*?'

These words find an echo in people's hearts; they shake their heads: if there were one just man in the National Assembly … But no: we would know if there were. Should we not leave these wretched men to their fate? Put our trust in de Gaulle? Indeed General de Gaulle made people laugh at Mollet at his press conference. An easy success, but I defy Monsieur Mollet to do the same to him. You do not need to talk to a voter for long to sense the confused anger he is chewing over: anarchistic anger, *qualunquiste* anger, anger of the duped socialist. Motives a hundred times stronger but of a similar order, resentment and disgust in the past paralysed the resistance of the workers in the events of 2 December.

De Gaulle was waiting. This mountain of silence took its strength from our weaknesses, it was the geometric location of all our impotence, of all our contradictions: no more launch-pad but no more Popular Front; no more Algerian war, but the moral order consolidated. When it was announced on the radio that he would hold a press

conference on the Monday, it seemed like it was all over: he would be gentle, benign, loyalist, and the people would be won over. On the Monday morning, at about midday, they were gambling on a losing Republic.

After the press conference, the Republic was still standing; our institutions seemed more solid than we had thought. There were still threats: the Republic might not hold out against violence. But it was already quite something that it had not given in to the gentle approach.

The scenario was set up, as we have just seen: some reassurances would be offered to public opinion which, in its enthusiasm, would oblige Monsieur Pflimlin to resign. To everyone's surprise, the opposite happened: the General's friends pulled sour faces; the only faces that lit up were those of his resolute opponents. And yet, he had made some very reassuring declarations, the sincerity of which cannot be doubted: he did not wish or deign to be seditious, even less a dictator; he would receive his powers from the President of the Republic and – however exceptional the adopted procedure may be – his investiture from the Assembly.

But, already, what General de Gaulle thought or said was of importance only to himself and those close to him: when he stated, in all good faith, that he did not have any intention, at the age of 67, of running a dictatorship, he was left with only this alternative: renounce power (or not be called upon to take it) or become a dictator. For the situation decides. Not about our personal actions, but the meaning that they assume, in spite of ourselves, for other people and in our own eyes.

We must first of all talk about that lame fiction: arbitration. To avoid asking the fundamental question ('On what will the sovereign authority of General de Gaulle be based?'), Monsieur Soustelle had invented this juridical ruse: between the French of Algeria (civilian and military) and the Government there is a dispute. Charles de Gaulle is asked if he would be kind enough to arbitrate in this dispute.

But as soon as it is mentioned, this strange argument, which the General took up again at his press conference, does not sound right, it is awkward. Where has a government, however weak, been seen to agree to resolving by arbitration a conflict caused by the rebellion of its public officials? De Gaulle wished to make it clear that Generals Salan and Massu were not seditious; the Government, he added, does not consider them as such. That is true officially, but the Government is not sure of itself; it may be stalling. It is of little importance in any case: these Generals are either seditious or they are not.

In the first case, the Government takes disciplinary measures even if its temporary weakness obliges it not to apply them; to propose arbitration is to reward revolt. In the second case, they have not ceased to obey their superiors (even if the state of emergency has forced them to take such and such a measure without consultation) and there is nothing to arbitrate. As we can see, no sooner is this incredible proposal formulated than it becomes an affront to the sovereign authority of the State and has no legality.

Yet attempts are made to define it: it falls to pieces at once. The conflict is between 'French Algeria' and the government. What does the arbitrator do? He wants to remove one of the parties in the dispute and take his place. And indeed, it is in order *to arbitrate* that General de Gaulle will assume the role and powers of Monsieur Pflimlin. But when Monsieur Pflimlin becomes Charles de Gaulle, how can arbitration still be possible? First of all, the arbitrator is both judge and party; and then there is nothing to arbitrate because

there is no dispute between the head of free France and the Army in Algeria; these awkward explanations blow wide open the scandal they are intended to hide. When General de Gaulle declares that he is prepared to assume the powers of the Republic, he has already received his praetorian investiture, the only one that counts in his eyes. The officers and European civilians have designated him to exercise, in the name of the colonists, an unconditional dictatorship over the people of mainland France. That is something that General de Gaulle would certainly not accept: indeed his honesty, his patriotism and his pride forbid him to sacrifice France to her colonies: it *is unity* that he wants. And in the interest of both parties. But what does it matter what he wants? What does it matter what the officers overseas want? There is no doubt that they are totally devoted to him; perhaps they felt that they were just calling him to their aid, to the aid of France as he sees her. But the result is there: they have imposed or tried to impose their chosen leader upon the choice of the Assembly. It must accept or reject him under the threat of civil war. He will remain there, even if he is temporarily pushed aside, like the emperor designated by the Roman legions.

At the slightest crisis, tomorrow, in a week, in a year, he may reappear. He is a permanent candidate (unless a forceful action makes him the ruling emperor) as a result of this intolerable blackmail. The play of democratic institutions is radically distorted. And, if de Gaulle does not take power, it will remain distorted by the presence of this *pretender* until he officially renounces the false right that force has bestowed upon him.

What does it matter, after that, whether constitutional rules are observed or not? If the President of the Republic does not summon the pretender, and if the latter intends to use force, naked violence will be seen. If Monsieur Coty summons Charles de Gaulle, it is a further capitulation. One of the General's declarations is particularly significant: 'The army must obey the State. Provided that there is one.' Nothing could be better: the army cannot disobey *you*, Monsieur Pflimlin, because you are not the State. 'I am the State; that is why it will obey me.' But since the sovereign is a general, the army is only obeying itself and the country is obeying the army. And it is quite true that our State is weak. But whose fault is it if not that of the generals in Algeria and the civilians whom they support? If not that of the ministers who have all weakened the State by increasingly culpable and serious concessions? To 'cover up' Sakiet, Monsieur Gaillard, was not simply to blithely assume responsibility for a crime: it was also to leave your successor at the mercy of a military putsch.

And if Charles de Gaulle had those exceptional powers, what would he do with them? What are his plans? Which way will his arbitrator's judgement go? These questions will remain unanswered as long as he does not come to power, that is to say, perhaps, forever. For de Gaulle is finishing his portrait of himself in the same way as he began it: by silence. It is not that he does not have a plan. But he will not let it be known, because – and this is the gravest danger – he wishes to be elected not on the strength of a programme but on the strength of his person. Not on what he does now, but on what he did in the past when, for the Allies, he represented free France.

Our support, if he asks it of us, will not be *in spite of* our ignorance of his intentions, but *because* of it. It is not a question of asking him – with all due respect – what he intends to do, but of approving in advance all that he will do, on the basis of what he has done already. Those five years during which he made our history – along with many

other men – will guarantee all his future actions, whatever they may be. Or rather we must believe that his heroic past actions, whatever tomorrow's circumstances, are the ones which will be repeated, mysteriously adapted to the demands of the situation. It is the eternal return of his past heroic exploits that we must await: all his defunct actions, suddenly invading the present, will become *sacred*. This link which must unite us with him – devotion, fidelity, honour, religious respect – has a name: it is the oath of fealty which joins one person to another or, if you prefer, the bond of vassalage.

I am not claiming that this link is without human value: but precisely because these relationships are laden with death and the past, overloaded with the sacred, they are the very opposite of truly democratic relations, which consist of judging men by their actions and not vice versa, of communicating via common endeavour, of sharing responsibilities, of judging an action by its aim and its outcome. That is what the journalists present at the press conference, and later the radio audience, sensed: the solitude of this man locked in his grandeur prohibits him, in any case, from becoming the head of a republican state. Or, what amounts to the same thing, it prohibits the State of which he would be the head from remaining a republic. All those who, to a greater or lesser extent, have felt drawn recently to the vertigo of catastrophe, who have taken a bitter pleasure in seeing France as a destiny, and who dreamed of a Gaullist democracy, a little funereal but alive, all at once understood what they were being offered, the only thing that they could be offered: this dismal solitary grandeur. It is not by chance that the republican political forces, forgetting their disagreements, have got together since Monday evening for a more effective fight; it is not by chance that the government feels more solid by the hour, that the Métro, bus and telephone strikes have been undeniably successful. France must have a strong government, that is certain; the authority of the government, ruined by twelve years of neglect and compromise, must be restored, but the best way of completing its ruin would be to entrust it to *one* 'strong man' who would impose his rules on everybody: we must restore *this* crumbling State, *this* maligned Republic, with the same men, with all the men who are responsible for its semi-bankruptcy; we will only give it back its institutional strength if, at the same time, we restore, against all our dreams of dead grandeur, the real rights and liberties of the citizens.

The Constitution of Contempt *

They have told us that we are going to vote: they are lying to us. Let us pull away this fabric of fine words which covers up a crime: 28 September will be a day not of elections, but of violence. And we are the ones who suffer this violence.

First, who proposed this vote? Nobody. It is being imposed upon the sovereign state. It will descend upon us like a thief. And let us not imagine that we can get out of it by silence: to abstain is to vote blindly for the majority, whoever they are.

I do realize that, in France at least, no one will have the right to look at our voting slips. So what? There are other constraints, other ways of fixing things. The freedom of a vote would be at risk if it were defended only by a polling booth. In fact, it is the institutions, normally, which guarantee it. And custom. The periodic holding of elections protects the citizen against uncertainty and haste. The plurality of the parties obliges each of them to explain their programme, tirelessly. In short, the voters express their opinion in the received manner, they have their points of reference, their habits, they are not confused by new things as long as they are presented within the framework of the political tradition. But our Referendum enjoys the dubious charm of the impromptu. The relationship between the old and the new has been reversed. They began

* *L'Express*, No. 378, 11 September 1958.

by trampling on our institutions, there is nothing left of them but crumbs; and then they offer us that old idea of a royal charter.

The voter, lost in the no-man's-land that separates the defunct Republic from the future monarchy, must decide alone and unaided. It is all or nothing; all: King Charles XI. Nothing: a return to the Fourth Republic which nobody wants any more. I will accept all the demands of General de Gaulle or I will fall back into nothingness. Is there no other solution? 'I don't want to know', replies the pretender. 'You adopt mine or I'm going'. An underhand propaganda deliberately misleads us by a game of assimilation: the personnel of the Fourth Republic sicken you, *therefore* you are appalled by democracy, *therefore* you want a Gaullist monarchy.

They will say that the regime was rotten, that a snap of the fingers was enough to reduce it to dust, that our most urgent task is to constitute a state. I do not deny it. But on the basis of a sensible argument they are asking us, quite simply, to legalize a military takeover.

And certainly there are cases where it is a necessary precaution to transform force into law: a revolutionary government, brought to power by the masses, degenerates into tyranny if it does not make way as quickly as possible for a duly elected constituent assembly. But who speaks of a constituent assembly today? The fact is that General de Gaulle is no less than the choice of the masses. Will this candidate, who declines to make the election tour for fear of the disturbance that it would create, be called the people's

favourite? Proof was provided on the 4th of this month: he can talk on the radio, on television, before an audience; but in the public forum, never. Unless casualties are no cause for concern.

No, his government is not the outcome of a revolution; just a military coup. Neither the silence of the press that has rushed into servitude even before anything has been asked of it, nor the temporary bonhomie of officials, nor the circumlocutions of foreign diplomats will make us forget that General de Gaulle was brought to power by the colonels of Algiers.

He does not forget it himself. Does he suffer as a result? I hope so. In any case he is in a hurry to have us sanction a breach of the law. As long as we have not said yes, whatever his prestige may be, he reigns by force. By the force of others – that is the worst of it. And by the weakness of our elected representatives. As for the throne which was stolen from the Louvre for him to sit on, nothing will be done with it until we give it to him out of love.

And this is the trickery: power, even when usurped, always has the appearance of legality; it is enough that disorder *reigns*, especially if it is majestic, for it to be confused with order. Many French people are mistaken about this; the sanctimonious paternalism of the constitution will complete the process of leading them astray. To vote 'yes', it seems to them, is to vote for moral order; and a 'no' vote would plunge us into anarchy. Even if it were as straightforward as that, the referendum would be a fraud: we are promised a return to calm, to discipline, to tradition, so that we will give our votes to the rioters of Algiers.

Let us not be mistaken: all the referenda in the world cannot prevent a military takeover from being and continuing to be disorder. What is bred in the bone will come out in the flesh: the Gaullist regime, up to its end, in all its manifestations, will smell of the arbitrariness and the violence from which it came.

I said that we would vote without constraint – but that is only half true. The electorate is an indivisible whole; when gangrene sets in, it spreads right away through the whole electorate. If a vote is extracted by force, all others are forced. Who would dare claim at present that the Muslims in Algeria will vote freely and that they will demand their independence in the face of 500,000 soldiers whose task is to stop them from taking it?

The additional support of the votes extracted from the Muslims gives extra effectiveness to each 'yes' in France, and takes away from each 'no' vote a little of its power. The moment their voting slips drop into the ballot box, those who are opposed become second-class citizens. Their refusal does not have the same value as the approval of their neighbours.

To complete the clouding of the issue, two separate referenda are being held at once. The peoples of Africa, in effect, care very little about the relationship between the executive and the legislative in the new Constitution. The black voters want independence, but ask themselves whether the resources and economic development of their country allow them to do without our support. That is their only concern and their vote will depend on the response that they themselves give …

And that is how a YES, which in Madagascar means internal autonomy and a progressive move towards freedom, will come to mean in Paris the tutelage of the French people and will further reduce the effectiveness of the NO votes. This insidious violence

chooses its victims: only democrats will suffer as a result.

This nibbling away of votes is happening in France itself. The confusion is such that people do not know exactly for or against what or whom they are voting. At first sight this charter is a portrait. A self-portrait of the artist. Who is this prince-president who reigns and who answers only to God, if not de Gaulle in person?

Can we believe for a moment that he will be the nation's choice? Will he receive his powers from the sovereign people? Never. He is already in place and he has chosen his supporters as voters, which means that the election is no more than a ceremony. Who then is putting him on the throne? Well, it is France herself – an abstraction made up, of course, of all her inhabitants. This rigid and severe entity, invisible to all, is not averse to whispering in his ear, alone. The proof? Last Thursday, General de Gaulle had not yet been elected. Intrigue and fear alone had made him a minister; yet, we heard him, in a surprising speech, urge the French people, *in the name of France*, to vote for the constitution. Everything is there: France has already approved the Gaullist choice; our duty is set out. If we refuse, France will suffer and we will be villains. If we accept, France will smile and we may be invited to the official ceremonies.

It is said that Ulysses alone had the strength to bend his bow; likewise, General de Gaulle is the only person in the world who has the arrogance necessary to take on the role of providential president. I do not believe in God, but if, in this election, I had to choose between Him and the current pretender, I would be inclined to vote for God: He is more modest. He demands all our love and our infinite respect, but I have been told by priests that He loved us in return and that He infinitely respected the freedom of even the most wretched. Our future monarch also demands that we respect him, but I am very much afraid that he does not respect us. In a word, God needs people, but General de Gaulle does not need the French people.

Or rather he does. He said so: 'I'm in great need of your confidence.' But it will be enough for him if we give him our confidence once, just once, on 28 September. On that day, if everything goes as he wishes, we will put our trust in the man who demonstrates the greatest mistrust towards us and whose intention is to get us to adopt the Constitution of contempt. The people's Assembly is flanked by a reactionary Senate. It is denied the right to choose its ministers for itself and from its own ranks. It is denied, or almost, the right to overthrow the government that is imposed upon it. They are reducing the length of its sessions, they reserve the licence to dissolve it or send it into recess for ill-defined reasons. Will you, French citizens, understand that it is we, all of us, who are being denied all these rights. The 1958 referendum reminds me of a remark by Marx which goes back a hundred years: 'Universal suffrage,' he said, 'appeared in 1848 only to be removed immediately.'

And that is precisely where the ambiguity lies. For this Constitution seems, at first sight, to be the internal and exaggerated image that a man has created of himself. But on closer inspection, you can see that it is a compromise between the forces that have brought this man to power: the feudal landowners of Algiers and major financial capital. It is to satisfy the former that greater weight among the electorate is being given to the France of the farmer: the farmer has full voting rights; not so the worker – but he is compensated by being given the *Légion d'Honneur*. It is to satisfy the banks that ministers will be chosen from outside the Assembly. It could not be any other way:

brought to power by the agrarians of Algiers, de Gaulle has packed his ministries with bankers. In freeing the executive from the play of Parliament, finan-cial capital hopes to control the State; its representatives will not be content any longer with putting pressure on ministers, they will be ministers themselves. In favouring the farmers, that is to say, in spite of everything, the most reactionary section of the electorate, which for ten years has supported the expenditure, the colonels' representatives hope that they will have an 'untraceable' chamber of deputies elected, which will approve the highest military expenses without blinking.

Parisian capitalists, landowners of Algeria: I am not saying that these people get on very well with each other; quite the contrary, General de Gaulle must be considered as their battlefield and the Constitution as the geometric location of their contradictions. The fact remains that they are in agreement on one point: muzzling the people.

Against those who are not taken in by their lies, they take extreme measures. I am telling you: this power is born of violence, thus it will be maintained by violence. Blackmail has given us de Gaulle, it is blackmail that will keep him in place.

I accept that they have not yet reached the point of rifle-butting us at the ballot box. But I am telling you that an election is not free when the voters are terrorized. Without these threats, without those planes from Algeria that they talk about, ever ready to take to the sky and drop their load of paratroopers on Paris, without the men 'with a knife between their teeth', the charter would be received with bursts of laughter: it is so muddled, so silly, so naively reactionary that nobody would take it seriously. If the Fourth Republic is dead, it is above all because it cut itself off from the people. Do they believe they will do better by denying the people completely? The ceremony on 4 September was in the image of the France we are being prepared for: in the middle of the square, the prince; around him, the chorus of the elected; then behind the barricades and the row of cops, a long way off, the angry murmur of the people who say 'no'.

I address those who put their trust in the man of June and I ask them: why this charter? You say that General de Gaulle needs your trust; I realize that. You suppose that he will confront the colonels, that he cannot win this test of strength if he does not have the country behind him. I can still see that. But in what way do you see your vote as being a mandate to re-establish peace and order in Algeria? The 'yes' that you will pronounce is an approval of all that he has done since 1 June. Thus you approve the presence of Monsieur Soustelle at the ministry. But Monsieur Soustelle represents, almost officially, the Committees of National Salvation. You approve of the promotion of General Massu. But General Massu is one of those most responsible for 13 May. In order to vote against the *ultras*, you have found no other means than to mingle your 'yes' vote with theirs. For they will all say 'yes', do not doubt it. After which God will recognize his own. God, but not General de Gaulle. How will he know whether you approve or disapprove of integration, since you, who are against it, give him the same answer as those who are in favour?

Everything is fixed. If General de Gaulle had wished for your support in order to undertake reforms, concrete action, the struggle against certain elements both civilian and military, he would have begun by announcing his programme. Suppose he had said: 'I want to negotiate with the rebels'; or perhaps the very opposite: 'I will wage war until the end' – what clarity! Everyone would assume their responsibilities. Instead of that, he

invites us to meditate on the respective powers of a president and an Assembly which have not yet left the realm of the imagination. France is getting bogged down in a horrible war, prices are rocketing, industry is seeking markets. And they are offering us a Constitution! Apart from that, nothing; silence or words with a double meaning, which analysts hasten to interpret each in their own way.

No, it is not our support that the general asks of us, it is our obedience, and no more. Why then should you obey him? France has been adult for 150 years. What need has she of a father? Take care, it will not take long for us to return to the silliness of childhood; adults are only too keen to do so.

You will reply that you know all that, but that we must admit this defeat, since General de Gaulle is the only man who can bring the rebellion in Algiers under control. *He*, bring it under control? When it is he who gave it power and who maintains it?

In France, this government knows how to be authoritarian: it has already learned how to make the police charge crowds and seize opposition newspapers. But as far as Algeria is concerned, you would look in vain for what distinguishes it from the Bourgès-Maunoury government.

If you were to vote for de Gaulle, what would you give him that he does not have already? He enjoys total power. Over three months he could have done everything and he has done nothing. On the other hand you are reinforcing the resolve of the reactionary extremists. Count on them to proliferate beneath this great shadow. And hope that you have not elected the Neguib of some new Nasser who will suddenly unmask himself.

Everything is false. Lies and violence, blackmail, terror, ambiguity, everything in this referendum is designed to violate people's consciences and to devalue the vote of its opponents.

If the 'yes' vote were to win, consider what would follow. But even without taking the future into account, it would be unworthy to vote under threat. Since we have not been able to avoid this rigged election, there is only one response that we can make: 'no'. But let us not fall into the final trap. Let us not be the 'spirit that always refuses'. They have deliberately forced us into a refusal pure and simple: let us group together and give a meaning to this refusal. Let our 'no' to monarchy mean 'Constituent Assembly'. To General de Gaulle and those around him we will say: 'On one point we agree with you: the Fourth Republic is dead and we have no intention of resuscitating it! But it is not up to you to create the Fifth Republic. It is up the French people themselves in their full and entire sovereignty.'

The Frogs Who Demand a King *

The ‘yes’ vote will be large, very large. But to what will they be saying ‘yes’? The Constitution? People could not care less about it. A political programme? Rare are the inscrutable oracles that descend from the lofty firmament about the General’s head. No, this election is about the man himself. In this compartmentalized country bristling with barriers, divisions and obstacles, where everyone squabbles with their neighbour over a bone, the man of unanimity suddenly appears. We all know that if he were to win on 28 September, even with only a narrow margin, he would not consider himself to be leader of the government, but claim to unite all French people in his person. He is very careful not to offer anything: and interests down here on earth remain fragmented and conflicting. But when the electors raise their eyes, they descry beyond the clouds the fascinating mirage of unity. If we vote for him, Left and Right will be united just like his left ear and his right; major capital and roadmenders like the top of his head and the soles of his feet. Many French people hate their neighbours; they will love them in de Gaulle; everyone will commune in this great entity whose organic indissolubility wishes to symbolize the highest degree of social integration.

How can people not see, after so many dictatorships, that this mystic communion would paper over the cracks of our discords

* *L’Express*, No. 380, 25 September 1958.

without resolving them? How is it that people do not know that a nation projects its painful desire for unity onto a single man when the contradictions of the moment have made this very unity impossible? It is as if the elector were dozing. Look around you: the ‘yesses’ and the ‘noes’ are on display everywhere: on walls, in provincial newspapers, in *L’Express*. The ‘no’ vote states its reasons, explains its choice, it is impassioned geometry. The ‘yes’ votes are sighs: they abandon themselves to grand dreams, to grand sentiments, to grand words, to that flood of tears which has often preceded the setting up of dictatorships. A dismal enthusiasm: against Reason,‘yes’ invokes the reasons of the heart that the Reason knoweth not – but their heart is not in it.

This should not surprise us if we were only dealing with de Gaulle’s first supporters, loyal to their companion of heroic times, the leader they have never ceased to respect. And in another way, it is natural that a number of people, badly treated by life, should need to believe in God and, particularly in His Incarnation. How many solitary and betrayed women have extended their resentment to the whole of the human race: they are horrified by all things human, they love dogs and supermen.

But young people and young men will cast their vote for the future monarch: active, in some cases happy, intelligent people who regard themselves in good faith as republicans. Many are technicians, work in a team, know why a problem occurs and how to resolve it; in the face of infallibility, they have discovered through practice the importance of

checking, helping and challenging each other: they do not believe in Santa Claus anymore. What, then, have they got to do with the Great One? Why, when it comes to the State, should they place their trust in this infallible prince rather than in technical organizations which they could keep a check on? It must be because the very figure of General de Gaulle silently offers the slightly blurred image of a policy. And, above all, in order to decipher this image, these republicans must have a particular idea of France, of the Republic, of the world and of themselves. If we could, on the strength of innumerable surveys, statements and private conversations, determine the characteristics and thoughts of these perfectly honest and basically democratic electors who will vote 'yes' next Sunday, we would see, I think, that they too are victims of a mirage. And if they happen to see this sketch, some of them will perhaps recognize themselves, and perhaps have their eyes opened.

We must get away from the wretched Fourth Republic that has just fallen apart from self-loathing. There is nothing new about the reproaches levelled at it: they were levelled before at the Third Republic, which, on 6 February 1934, thought it was going die from them. At that time, they were less virulent and less unanimous: scarcely less justified. The fact is that, since 1947, the regime has lost its grip on reality, the fact is that the Assembly was cut off from the people, that is to say the electors; the fact is that there was a 'system', in other words our politicians had become inert objects and obeyed inflexible laws similar to those which govern the course of things. What stood out at first sight was ministerial instability. The sudden, sometimes unexpected falls, the long crises were, for many French people, the very image of disorder. In fact, there was never more than one government. Stable, but rotating. The – limited – team of potential ministers danced in a circle, each holding his neighbour by the hand while waiting for the revolving spotlight to pick him out of the shadows. It is possible that a few close friends of M. Pflimlin and M. Schumann could tell them apart, but politically, they elude the principle of individuation. Supported by the same majority, the newcomers continued the policies of their predecessors, in other words, persisted in their inertia.

During this entire period, a single tear in the fabric was mended fast, the Mendès-France government. This upstart was not one of the gang: they certainly let him know it.

All right. This description has been given a hundred times before. The system is impotence in power. Not anarchy – where people do what they like – but paralysis, where the brain continues to think but the limbs can no longer move. Yes, M. Gaillard and M. Pinay had something resembling a head, and that head told them – they made no mystery of this in private – that the Algerian War was absurd and negotiations had to take place. But when M. Gaillard did his stint of guard duty as prime minister, he was not crazy enough to imagine his new post had been entrusted to him so that he could do what he believed to be useful and just, to proclaim what he believed to be true. This interchangeable prime minister lent his voice to the system, and via his mouth, the system declared: to govern is not to foresee, or to prevent, or to choose, to govern is to obey; we shall continue all-out war.

The spectacle of impotence does not swell the heart with joy. It makes those who work indignant because work is action.

What proves pretty well that anti-parliamentarianism here is of professional origin is that one hears members of parliament being reproached less for their impotence or their

cowardice than for their idleness, a vice unknown to them. ‘They are paid for doing nothing.’ That’s the idea.

Around 15 June, a petty bourgeois came up to me in front of the Chamber of Deputies and said furiously: ‘So they’re still in recess, then!’ ‘You have to admit,’ I replied, ‘that we sent them there.’

He was disconcerted only for a moment and then weighed in again with:

‘We sent them there? Good. But they shouldn’t be paid.’

And our republicans – those who will cast their vote for de Gaulle – are honest workers who are fond of precise techniques and meticulous actions and who do not recognize themselves in or – as we shall see – *believe* they do not recognize themselves in their elected representatives.

So far we are all in agreement. But we have not yet left the realm of appearances. Because where does this impotence actually come from? Is it the people who have made the system, or the system that has made the people?

And what is the system precisely? Opposition to change cannot be its cause, but only the effect. On this point, responses remain imprecise.

I admit that I read *The Princes who Govern Us*, by M. Débré, in the hope of setting my teeth on edge; I was disappointed: there is nothing to chew in this mush. But judging by the Constitution, the primacy of the legislature is the original sin.

There we are. Let us imagine a man with nerves of steel, a stout and magnificent heart, a head full of grand plans, whose sole wish is to labour for France and who, to complete his mission successfully, needs only continuity: this is the executive. Let us now compare this noble figure with the legislature, that swarming basket of slimy crabs climbing up over each other and constantly falling. Is it not absurd to subject the man to the whims of the crabs?

It is at this point that the greatest Gaullist imposture must be denounced. Do they dare to claim that it is the Assembly that has turned our ministers into those drawn and terrorized creatures whom we have so often heard reciting rehearsed congratulatory statements on radio and television? And are these the ministers who caused fear to reign in the Assembly? Did the Assembly prevent M. Mollet from disowning Ben Bella’s kidnapping? Did it force M. Gaillard to ‘cover up’ the bombing of Sakhiet?

I say, on the contrary, that all the troubles of recent years have been caused by an over-powerful executive which has evaded legislative control. Because we did have an executive. This Prince bombed Haiphong when the Assembly wanted to negotiate with Ho Chi-minh; he demanded money – the lifeblood of war – which he was granted hastily and without argument; in Algeria he multiplied the ‘suspect laws’ and police operations, combed, controlled and bombed; in France itself he seized the opposition press and tried journalists at military tribunals; the entire life of the nation was shackled by his grandiose and heroic dreams of reconquest; he sacrificed France to her colonies and the Assembly, terrified and impotent, rattled around on the tail of the colonial wars like a saucepan on that of a cat.

The name of this authoritarian and uncontrollable executive was Thierry d’Argenlieu; today it has a hundred names – Massu, Trinquier, Lacheroy and other ‘colonels’. In 13 years, France has become a militarized country whose sons fight overseas under the orders of our Princes, the War Lords.

We have been waging war for 19 years: the system does not originate in the supposed vices of the 1946 Constitution, but in the lingering fascination of a nation which is shedding its blood, wasting its time, losing its culture and riches to preserve former conquests that, for a long time, have been costing more than they bring in.

Executive? Legislature? System? Regime? Mere words.

If there is a power crisis today, we must look for its causes deep within the ills that our new masters do not wish to or cannot cure. Everyone knows what I am about to say, but many do not want to know. For the sake of the *faux-naïfs* I shall repeat it.

I make no claim that History is fair: it was perhaps not fair that we faced the first onslaught of the German army alone, or that the enemy occupied us for four years, or that we were left chewing over our defeat while our allies were winning the war, or that we were liberated by them, hailed as victors out of kindness and tolerated as a poor relation among the Big Five.

In 1945, we thought that we were taking our fate back into our own hands: the USSR, the USA and General de Gaulle broke the Resistance. The strikes of 1948 exhausted the workers. We then discovered that we were a very old country, a society stratified from top to bottom by the economic Malthusianism of the interwar period. Where were the people? They did not exist any more: they had been compartmentalized into divergent interest groups which disliked one another. Besides, everyone was against everyone else: small, medium and large firms, retail and wholesale trade, the rural population and the towns, as happens when the movement of History stops and living contradictions are transformed into inert conflicts. Major industry accentuated its Malthusian tendencies, the working class tore itself apart: highly skilled workers, heirs to the old anarcho-syndicalism, slowed down modernization of equipment as much as possible because they feared above all that their skills would become redundant; unskilled workers, weary of getting nowhere in the vicious circle of prices and salaries, on the contrary, saw in mass production the only means of raising their standard of living. Trades unions and political parties added to these antagonisms and hardened them; but the *coup de grâce*, once more, was delivered *from without*, the Marshall Plan, and the 'Prague Coup' turned these economic and social conflicts into political hatred. The left had had its day.

That left the Empire. Very rapidly it started to disintegrate. You did not have to be that bright to realize, right from the first revolts, that we were witnessing the beginning of what was to be the most significant event of the second half of the century: the awakening of nationalism among the Afro-Asian peoples; or to understand that this movement of emancipation would be unstoppable and irreversible. But we did not want to see, and to begin with even the left needed a lot of persuading: the Empire was our greatness.

If we forced the rebels to recognize the sovereignty we had flogged off to the Americans, we could dream for a while that we had kept it.

It was not the Assembly that created the imbecilic verbosity which rots everything: it was the situation. We were among the Big Five, but seven years after the debacle, Germany was crushing us with its might. 'Great' became a word devoid of sense. In the colonies, we got them to respect our lost sovereignty by sheer butchery. Sovereignty was just a word. We affirmed France's greatness everywhere, but we knew that our wars of prestige outraged the world without striking it with terror. The atomic powers asked

themselves, astonished: ‘What are they up to? Are they playing? They must want to give their soldiers something to do.’ Greatness was just a word. Victory, another word: we had to stop the war or lose it. The others came of their own accord: when, in a last effort, we wanted to draw the USA into the conflict, we conveniently forgot that we had thrown ourselves into it partly to assert ourselves against them; nobody talked about a colonial expedition any more; the French became the sentries of the West, defending in Vietnam Christian and Graeco-Latin values against the Antichrist Stalin and Slavic barbarians. We had got high, had slipped into a dreamworld to escape the intolerable truth. For some years now, that dream has been a nightmare, but we prefer the terrors of the night to the shame of the broad light of day.

The Army has experienced this adventure more intensively, but by and large in the same way. It was stunned by the lightning defeat of 1940. Since then, it has regarded every war it has waged as revenge for the last. Its officers did not like the guerrillas of Indo-China, but they threw themselves into the fray with a grim passion. This revenge, however, was a defeat. It was not their fault: they always proved themselves to be courageous, sometimes heroic. But the Assembly was not guilty with regard to them: they were financed and armed. Distance was the only cause for the delays and errors. The truth is that they lost this war because we were bound to lose it: what can an expeditionary force do against the revolt of an entire country when its ‘natural’ bases are thousands of miles away?

They experienced this distance as a betrayal, however; they detested the civilian population because they did not want to feel embarrassed in front of them. No one would have even dreamed of criticizing them in the least, but they interpreted our looks, our words and our silences. The divorce between hapless hero and national community lies at the root of our present predicament. The Army is offended.

It is caught between two types of conflict – those of our century – and not really armed for either. What can it do about *popular* wars, despite the immense efforts of the past few years? Read Mao? It will learn there that the revolutionary Army lives in symbiosis with the population. What can be done about that? You can create psychological units and counter-guerrilla schools; you can make the cumbersome military machine as flexible as possible, deploy soldiers as the generals of the Fifth Army did – to plough, sow, aid the peasants. And then what? Do you believe you can change hearts? Without the civilian population, you may not lose the war, but you certainly will not win it.

If, on the other hand, a global conflict were to erupt, our military would not stand much chance because of the poverty of our resources. Missiles, intercontinental rockets, remote control devices, in a word push-button warfare, have made conventional armies redundant, as semi-automatic machines have made skilled workers redundant. The technician will prevail over the serviceman, and atomic death will bring soldier closer to civilian by striking both without discrimination.

The French Army is too rich to win the wars of the poor, too poor to impact on a war of the rich: however much it modernizes, politics and technology strike at its heart. It remains, despite itself, in spite of the youth and bravery of its officers, a sort of anachronism. It asks itself what is its *raison d’être*: it finds colonial conflicts repugnant, and it has declared them to be without honour; they are, however, the only ones in which it can still defend itself, counter-attack, and to a certain extent, adapt to the tactics of its

adversary. Since the loss of Indo-China, in a word, it has had to choose between the barracks and Algeria. It has made its choice: over there, it has found the elusive civilian, the European of Algiers, *its* civilian; the symbiosis of the *fellagha* and the Muslim population has found its equivalent in that of the French Army and the European population. Political out of necessity – because war is both military and political – the Army ends up, with the help of the colonists, creating a doctrine for itself: in this revolutionary struggle, it was counter-revolutionary out of duty. Then, as often happens, it gets carried away, and in order to fight its adversary on equal terms, it calls its counter-revolution a revolution. It has little interest in taking power itself and would be happy to rule via intermediaries. All it wants is to keep its bone: *French Algeria*.

Once again, it prolongs what it senses is a hopeless war as much to avenge its undeserved defeats as to put off the moment of what it believed would be its annihilation. Not that it wishes to wage war indefinitely. It believed in integration. It can conceive of a new role for the soldier: the pioneer of the Empire, now fighting, now lending a helping hand to the peasant to gather in the harvest. And now – who knows? – indoctrinating the villagers in the good cause. But whether it maintains the renewed peace or makes war, the Army – if it is to be believed – will never leave Algeria, its ultimate justification, its *interest as a corps*.

For almost five years, the Army has weighed heavily on the government of mainland France, and has become each day more threatening. It has joined forces with the *colons* – whose interests are too obvious and whose methods of exerting pressure are too familiar for me to rehearse them here – and their joint actions confer omnipotence on them. And yet the new War Lords remain sombre: for an officer, no political success is ever equal to a military victory. Since 1939, except when Leclerc's division returned from Africa to Paris, victory has never materialized. Deep down within these colonels lurks the defeatism, the vertigo of failure that lies at the root of all fascism.

So you see: there is nothing more misleading than these tales about the system, an ungovernable Assembly, etc. The executive is in fact in Algiers; it is composed of civilians and soldiers, and decides about France on the basis of Algeria. Until 13 May last, we were granted a sort of autonomy in matters relating exclusively to mainland France. Today, even that autonomy is being challenged. And the Army – almost totally absorbed by the war and, moreover, divided – can probably do very little. But even though its means are limited, it at least remains the only coherent and organized force.

What was needed was a united Left: nothing more. That was asking too much. In dividing the workers' parties by a barrier of hate and fire, the same reasons that launched us furiously into the colonial adventure – the power blocs, the Cold War – took away from us the means of getting out of it.

The USSR, the USA, the Bandung nations: it is rising everywhere at once – East, South and West – that gale which, for twelve years, has been raging across France. Just when the colonized peoples were demanding their freedom, the Cold War fragmented the only government that could have granted it to them.

That is the whole story: a situation that just keeps getting worse – whether it is Indo-China or Algeria – and an impotent government terrorized by the colonists, communists and soldiers, which constantly procrastinates and puts off decisions from one day to the next until they are forced upon it by circumstances.

An exhausted, humiliated country, undermined by dissent, which, disgraced and sulking, sinks deeper into hopeless wars and degrades itself a little more each day by selling its sovereignty and then laying the sheaf of its freedoms at the jackbooted feet of the military.

A paralysed country that is drowning in dreams and resentment. An arrested country with an outmoded economy that had to wait until 1949 to renew its equipment and then did so haphazardly without giving much thought to the markets which would absorb its excess production. A stratified country, numb with mistrust and gloom, which constantly repeated, not without self-conceit: 'I have a date with History!' and which has realized that History had stood it up.

The Assembly? Pooh! It is made in the country's image. If you want to change the Assembly, then change the country first. And of course we can change the latter; *all of us*, by getting at the root of its problems: for *we* are the country.

Understand that the greatness of a nation is not measured by the quantity of blood it causes to flow, but by the number of human problems it solves; stop the hostilities immediately, negotiate, reconsider the question of the associated colonies with their representatives; win back our lost sovereignty and work towards the break-up of the blocs, i.e. for peace; bring together all men of the left and reunite them on a jointly agreed programme; stop the currency haemorrhage by giving France an economy which complements the other European economies, encourage major industries to increase their productivity, fight in every possible way to ensure that the increase of so much production benefits the workers first and foremost, and – via the demographic movement occasioned by economic restructuring – break through the strata that separate groups and drive them into inert antagonisms; balance the redundancies that the rise in productivity might bring by a programme of re-skilling, then, by a series of classifications and re-classifications, reduce or even remove the conflicts of interest which divide the working class; develop scientific, literary, artistic and *political* culture in the most underprivileged social classes, etc., set up agricultural education, particularly in the Centre and South of France, increase agricultural productivity in those regions by encouraging agricultural communities, where the terrain permits, collectively to acquire motorized machinery etc. In ten years, the face of France will no longer be the same: the tertiary sector, bloated today, will deflate, the primary sector will reduce by a third, the secondary sector will be more homogeneous and its standard of living higher. If *we* did that ourselves and if we did it within ten years, we would perhaps be entitled to say without too much vanity that France is a great country.

But if I am quickly sketching out the main lines of a programme, it is not to propose it today. It is to ask of the republicans who will cast their vote for de Gaulle on Sunday: is *that* the reason you are going to vote for him? Are you going to demand from him housing, tractors, schools, a reorganization of the economy, an alliance pact with the overseas nations? I already know that the answer is no.

So why should you expect from him what he has never promised? Why should you claim you are voting for a programme when you are actually voting for the man himself?

You will reply that this man is capable in three years of carrying out more projects, and more ambitious ones, than the Fourth Republic has done in thirteen. I would believe you if I had the slightest proof. But your candidate is more famous for the noble stubbornness

of his refusals than for his economic and social achievements.

The truth is that you are choosing pure action, that is to say, the individual free from all checks, out of disgust for the abject swamp through which we have been wading since the Liberation. But I have tried to show that the causes were objective and profound, and that the remedies had to be so too. We will not change France by endlessly replacing its government. As long as the infrastructures remain as they are, the system will remain as it is. And it suddenly occurs to me that you are very quick to attribute this impotence you loathe to the Assembly, but it could well be that the impotence was above all your own, and that you projected it onto others to rid yourselves of it.

I have talked to a lot of people in the last few days. Some will vote for General de Gaulle, others will abstain. I wanted to know, of course, what his supporters expected of him, but also what the abstainers who are favourably inclined towards him expected.

The Algerian War, for example. What were their hopes? What were their demands? Should we make peace? The word 'peace' disconcerted them: they found it brutal. Peace? That is too much of a commitment.

They said: 'The end of the war.' They put their hands over their ears and cried: 'Let's put an end to it! Let's put an end to it! Let us not hear about it anymore.'

I pointed out to them that there were only two conceivable solutions: the crushing of the FLN (provided that were possible) or negotiations.

They did not dislike the first solution, as long as it was quick.

I said: 'It will require a great effort: the military will need money, arms and men.'

Straightaway they said: 'No. No, no. Not a man, not a penny more. All those poor lads who go off; and what about prices and taxes!'

'It might take some time, then,' I said.

They got angry again: 'It has lasted for over three years already. No, no. Quickly.'

We had to negotiate, then. But they all replied in so many words with what de Gaulle had said at Rennes: 'Independence, no. You don't abandon a million fellow Frenchmen, it's just not done. Integration: impossible; we'll pay for the war and we'll pay for social security and benefits. And they wouldn't want it anyway, the pigs!'

They said 'the pigs'. Without any harmful intentions or any dislike. I might add that it was difficult to get them to be precise about their feelings towards North Africans. They said: 'Mad dogs, they shoot at anybody, let's send them home, they've no business here.' And then the next moment: 'We understand why they've revolted. I've got a sister-in-law over there, she has told me that they were incredibly poor.'

And then coming back to the terrorist attacks: 'It was inevitable, it's our fault. We were out to get them on 13 May; they said right then!' etc.

Overall, these responses enlightened me: the contradiction in France today is not between those who are in favour of the war and those in favour of negotiation, between the sworn enemies of the Arabs and those who seek to understand them. It is in the hearts of individuals who want everything at once.

It seemed to me, moreover, that they would have wished – if only they had dared – for the Algerians to be granted independence, if only for the pleasure of hearing no more about it. But that is precisely it: they did not dare. They were afraid. Of their neighbours, of spies, of whatever. But above all, of themselves. They had heard of Jews flogging off empires cheap, and they did not want to be like those traitors. As a young man said in the

train the other day: ‘Me, I don’t give a damn about Algeria, and I don’t like colonization either. But it’s our heritage. And you have to hold on to your heritage, even if it doesn’t pay.’

So these people are going to vote for the *efficient* man, for the man who must and can solve all our problems. But they do not even know what they would like him to do.

Perhaps they are hoping for the most radical solution. Independence, for example. They would be a little scandalized but, deep down, delighted that he was forcing their hand: ‘Since everything that comes from him is sacred, independence, the very idea of which used to seem a sacrilege to me, is the fairest and most French of solutions.’ Is there not an exact resemblance between them and the people of the system: all, or nearly all, deputies wanted peace and voted for war.

And I am beginning to wonder whether these Gaullist republicans are responsible for the fallen Assembly which they detest.

On the streets you could hear the *Biaggistes* or Le Pen’s guys. They talked loudly, they shouted: ‘French Algeria!’ But how many of us shouted: ‘Peace in Algeria’? Deputies are fascinated by numbers: it is an odd habit of elected representatives.

You who criticize them today for having being unable either to make peace or win the war, why did you not go and shout outside their windows: ‘Negotiate!’; why did you not protest against the torture, against the summary judgements, the punitive expeditions, the disappearances, the camps? Those who will vote for de Gaulle are disgusted by, and want to escape from, their own paralysis, their own faint-heartedness. And furthermore, there were, in the Assembly, men who wanted peace and said so out loud. If we had supported them, all of us, instead of becoming entangled in our contradictions …

I also observe that the apolitical will vote for de Gaulle: the same people, perhaps, who abstained at the last elections. Among them you find indifferent, middle-of-the-road people, without passion, who just want peace and quiet. But there are other people who you can’t think about without shame.

Following an article where I explained why I will be voting ‘no’, a woman reader wrote to tell me she would be voting ‘yes’, although she appeared to agree with me on most issues: ‘*Yes* means ups and downs, but life will go on; *no* means an adventure.’

That is the crime – not of the Fourth Republic, but of our middle classes for the last 150 years: there have been second-class citizens without hope, and for so long that they think of themselves as such. They have so few rights, so little influence, they carry so little weight in the world that political upheavals do not affect them.

My correspondent thinks she has nothing to gain from the collapse of the Republic, but nothing to lose either. They will take away her civil liberties, they will whittle away her union rights perhaps, they will leave her only the right to stay silent. What does it matter? She is voting for dictatorship. That proves that she was already silent, that she has always been silent or that no one listened to her. No one. Ever.

If millions today are indifferent towards the Referendum, if they do not care about the respective powers of the President and the legislative body, it is our fault because we have never managed to make them understand that they affected other people simply by placing their vote in the ballot-box and that a citizen’s political activity is the most complete affirmation of his or her liberty. It is also because they do not count and have never counted for anything, and have made do with the life meted out to them as best

they could. They will vote 'yes' on 28 September: provided they get their meagre salary in January 1959 as they did in January 1958, they will think that nobody has taken anything away from them.

But their very modesty deceives them: their salaries will be affected; the war will continue, prices will rise. Today, they are nothing more than those few thousand francs, *their objective reality*; tomorrow, the franc will go down and they will be even less.

Out of indifference or impotence, all these apolitical citizens are voting for apoliticism, as if it were a programme they wanted to impose. In voting 'yes', they take their attitude to extremes, to the point of renouncing all their civil rights. They surrender the care of state to the man who will do everything for them. That is them simplified: they remain a spouse, son, employee, or billiards champion, but they will no longer be citizens. They remained silent, they are shown a muzzle; they vote to have it put on as quickly as possible: the advantage is they will *no longer be able* to speak.

If I look for the reasons for such paradoxical behaviour, I immediately discover one: the objective impotence of the French collective has been deeply inscribed in each and every one of us as a personal sense of powerlessness to alter the destiny of our country.

It is appropriate to recall here the survey carried out on the New Wave and the responses which struck readers of *L'Express*: 'I don't have an effect on Nikita, I haven't got any influence over Ike, it's not me who awards the Nobel Prize.'

In fact, when we were twenty, we too could have replied: 'I don't award the Nobel Prize, I have no influence over Stalin.' But we believed we had destinies on a human scale. We did not affect Stalin, but we did not imagine then that Stalin could affect us.

There was, of course, the big issue: Germany. We already feared it might re-arm, but that did not frighten us. Indeed, it seemed to us that it was *up to us* to prevent the future Franco-German war – or win it. We did not feel that we were dependent on the whole planet.

Bloc politics and the Cold War, as well as the extraordinary development of methods of communication, mean that young French people are first of all planetary; they belong to the 'One World' the Americans talk about. But for that very reason, France is shrinking, its fragility is showing, and anyway – so it seems – History is being made elsewhere.

What's the use of trying to exercise one's rights as a citizen in France, what's the use of voting, if France is merely an inert object whose movements and position are determined by outside forces? The timidity, seriousness and application of these young people are just the realization of their social powerlessness. They immerse themselves in work, worries about work, family life. They are also passionate about technology: it is their only hold on the world. They are not bothered about politics: if we were Russian, perhaps, or Chinese …

Behind this precocious wisdom, which is not even resignation, one senses a sort of anxiety. They live in freedom but without power in an apocalyptic world which the stock of American bombs is amply sufficient to blow up, under a sky criss-crossed by sputniks. Every three months the papers prophesy the next and last world war, listing the consequences with which you are familiar.

This fear shows clearly in a young employee's reply: 'Happy? Where? Ah, in the family! I can't complain, I suppose – I've got my wife and the little girls. I mean, we

don't have the right to complain because you see so many people who are so much worse off. But honestly, when I think about the future, and what they've got in store for us, I can tell you I'm not happy. Every night, before going to bed, my wife looks out of the window in case any sputniks pass by. When she sees that it's not going to happen that night, she calms down and manages to get to sleep.'

Since Hiroshima, we have been threatened, angered and worried the whole time. I imagine that in every mind there is a scar which is nothing less than terror at rest. Many people today could repeat Hobbes's words of three centuries ago: 'The one and only passion of my life has been fear.'

Fear and impotence, fear because of impotence, impotence because of fear, everything leads us, in this Referendum, to opt for impotence and fear. Without that little cerebral scar caused by numerous different traumas, blackmailing us with the paras – the basic argument of Gaullist propaganda, and even, if I may say so, the only argument – would not have had so much success. We would have been ashamed, when I was 30, of giving in to these drunkard's threats. Do not get me wrong: we were not braver. Simply fresher. Less damaged. First-timers' fear, so to speak.

The young people of today have already been tricked with the Red Army, the bomb, flying saucers, Martians, and now, finally, with the military coup of the paras. No matter, modesty has its advantages: those who vote 'yes' on Sunday will be shamelessly demonstrating that they are scared stiff, offering to the Gentle Lord their love and faith in exchange for his succour and protection. At the same time as acknowledging their impotence, they elevate his powers to the absolute. He is the Great Efficient One. We should no longer be surprised by the 'yes' on the walls, the slightly sanctimonious swooning fits: to accept, for love of the Prince, the Constitution he is granting us and which muzzles us, is to give up once and for all the control of the executive by the legislature and, more seriously, of action by reason.

These activists of impotence are counting on the Prince to solve the problems they will not even want to formulate for themselves, to take for them the decisions they are avoiding, to overcome the contradictions paralysing them. They are giving him free rein *because it is he*. The Prince's act, seen in this way, again becomes the unique, the ineffable and the irrational. Let us go further: it is the incommunicable via a reciprocal breakdown of communications.

Anyone who declares *today* that 'de Gaulle is the only one who …' is not saying anything sensible: we are no longer dealing with statements of facts such as popularity which is in a way measurable, but with a unique and incomparable quality which separates de Gaulle from our world. Sick and tired of the ineffectual, our apolitical republicans are saying 'yes' to the irrational, to the sacred and by the same token saying 'no' to equality.

If in the human species there exists a man who possesses wisdom that only he can have, if this wisdom gives him the right to determine our destinies, even if he were a good father, and if his acts are always valid and good for the sole reason that they express his essence, then the human species will disintegrate in a chain reaction: no human beings any longer; just a superman and animals.

De Gaulle is the protector of the planetary individual – I mean the French people – he represents for them the living incarnation of our frontiers, he surrounds them and protects

them, he conceals the world from them, he lulls them with the very reassuring words: 'France and France alone'. But at the same time, our humanism, the electorate and the Great Chosen One will combine their efforts to shatter them into a thousand pieces. Arbitrary, efficient, pure, violence, ineffable quality, intuitive knowledge possessed by one man alone – I recognize there all the characteristics of what a German sociologist, Weber, called 'charismatic power' – an expression which owed its fame to the events between 1933 and 1945.

Does it have to come down to that? To vote for grace is to belittle yourself, to acknowledge in the other not superiority of talent, means or virtues, which would be perfectly acceptable, but *superiority of species*. If there exists among human beings a species which is superior to them, then that is the human species, and those who do not belong to it are dogs.

O Gaullist republicans, is it so necessary to lower yourselves to the level of animals? It might just be acceptable if there were some enthusiasm in it. But our apathetic, global people want a quiet life at home. They believe the blackmail of the paras, they are afraid their windows will be broken or grenades thrown in their street. They are the people who say simultaneously that 'De Gaulle is the only one who can …', and 'De Gaulle is the lesser evil.' This dreary servility dismays me. Ultimately, it is Massu who counts above all. But he is not wanted. The pseudo-yes is in fact a straightforward 'no' to the paratrooper general. But thereupon, as in any well-organized blackmail, de Gaulle emerges to oppose Massu and the sacred appears with him, as a means to an end only. As for Gaullist republicans, political just for a day and against politics, they will return, on 29 September, to their loyal silence, their trembling freedom, the calm disorder of their private lives.

They are mistaken. It is not power that this vote of confidence communicates to de Gaulle, but powerlessness. Political leaders have power when they are supported by equals who backed them *on a programme* and urge them to put it into action. But the representative of a powerlessness which does not wish to be anything other than powerlessness must either reject his election or become powerless himself. He wishes to be everyone's representative: among those who will vote for him are some with the avowed intent of using him as a cover for their fascism, and others, left-wing Gaullists, who ask him to adopt a policy which, if not left-wing, is at least liberal and social.

Who will win? I am going to tell you. But if we acknowledge for a moment that it is the fascists, and if we suppose – as I consider likely – that de Gaulle disapproves of this brutal and vulgar form of authoritarianism, can we hope that he will find support among his neutralist electors, among those voting 'yes' as the lesser evil? Not for a moment: these people promised to approve in advance everything he undertakes. And then they went back to sleep. Fascism? Anti-fascism? They have no opinion and nobody asked them to have one. They will reply feebly: 'Oh, fascism with *de Gaulle* is the lesser evil.' And they will go a long way in this direction: whatever the bloodbath or St Bartholomew's Day organized by those *commandos*, they will always be able to claim that things would have been worse had de Gaulle withdrawn.

The Fourth Republic died because the French did not take it upon themselves to unite, organize massive demonstrations, wrest promises from their elected representatives and help them to keep them. With the vote not being based on a programme of action that his

electors would have obliged him to adhere to rigorously, de Gaulle, if he is elected, will remain in mid-air. That large body will float in empty space, above us but without a pedestal. And since his supporters offload their contradictions onto him, he is the one who inherits them.

Regarding the Algerian War, it is evident, at the present time, that he is hesitating and playing for time – no more and no less than most French people. The men of the system were malicious: they had clearly seen that a radical decision would have to be made sooner or later – all-out pacification or negotiation. They then proceeded as they did after Dien Bien Phu: they handed over their keys and their powers to a man of action, wished him good luck and crept away on tiptoe. The system is dead, long live the system! Because the system, at the present time, is de Gaulle. He alone.

How could it be any different? He has little desire to be the man of all-out war but even less, perhaps, to be accused of selling out. If elected, he will be, like the Assembly, a representative of the French people. But, at the same time, he derives his real power from the Army. Without the blackmail of the paras, he would still be in Colombey. That mute unanimity – always supposing that it is created around his name – is in itself an enigma.

Indeed, de Gaulle's government presents all the characteristics which seemed to us to define the system. He puts things off until tomorrow, that is to say, to the 28th. On the 29th, if he is elected, he will await the elections to the new Assembly and then his own election. And it is precisely this stalling that translates his powerlessness: he fudges, he evades, but the war of Algiers catches up with him in Paris. North Africans are being put to the *question* in several towns in mainland France.

I am absolutely convinced that General de Gaulle abhors torture, that he considers that it brings dishonour on the Army and that in Algeria, he reminded certain officers that field telephones are made for telephoning. What does he do, though? What can he do? He remains silent. So he covers up. Like Gaillard.

Besides, we live, today as the day before yesterday, in total unreality: impotence and abstraction are leading once again to mere words. The old system looked for words which evade while claiming to define. The system's New Look seeks ambiguity, the phrase which offers a double meaning, which appears to offer a double meaning and has none, or the string of phrases where each individually seems intelligible, but whose sum equals zero.

Or they play the trick of the word that is not spoken on us. It is in everybody's mouth; when you listen to the General, you wait for it, hope for it, fear it; each phrase is so well constructed that it seems bereft of it: it must have escaped. It ends up blazing in people's eyes, resonating in their heads, the voice falls silent, some say 'shit', others 'praise be to God'. The General leaves, the next day's press stresses that he did not once say the word 'integration'. And what else? No revolving ministry, of course; although you can never tell, with that two-faced Janus. Compromises, though, everywhere and at every moment: Soustelle and Mollet as ministers, in exactly the way the future Prime Minister constituted his team to please everybody, with the refinements of a mistress of the house.

Oh well, people will say, the system has won! What does it matter if de Gaulle is thin-sliced Republic: he has an impressive bearing, he will not be any worse than our deputies; let us vote for him. That is precisely why we should not.

First, *we no longer want* the system, whether condensed or unfolded. It had to be

defended against coups d'état because it was founded on real and freely accepted institutions. But the coup d'état occurred within the system through the good offices of Messrs Pflimlin, Mollet, Pinay and Coty. Perfect: we will not go backwards. What we need now are other men, other groupings, another government, a programme. Above all, remember that the Fourth Republic has died of its powerlessness.

And that this powerlessness came upon it because a visiting general had pounced on the executive and had gained the upper hand in Algiers. The system was appearance. For three years already, the colonels and the colonists had been the reality. At least neither Mollet nor Gaillard had been brought to power by force and under the threat of a military putsch. The New Look system was born of an Algiers uprising and blackmail of the paras. Moch has recently revealed that a good proportion of France's mainland Army had openly supported de Gaulle. He was therefore imposed on us by the Army.

I am not repeating this to recriminate: one judges things by the way they go. But that is just the point: they have gone very badly: since June, General de Gaulle has made concession after concession. At the present time, the French government is entirely in the hands of the Army; scarcely a few days ago, the Prime Minister pronounced the significant phrase: 'We must not hide from the fact that the Algerian war will last a long time.'

Is that better than invoking the 'closing moments'? Perhaps, but it also tells us that de Gaulle has chosen all-out war. He will certainly not have chosen it with a light heart, but because he could not do otherwise. Perhaps people will say that this is another reason to vote 'yes': 'He will have the support of the French masses.' But it is precisely that this mute or almost mute support, those mouths that open to let out a single word as ambiguous as the words of General de Gaulle himself, all this is useless. Ambiguity turns against the person who gave it birth.

Some people say 'yes' because they want to say 'no' (No to the colonels)? Other people say that *other* 'yes' for that *other* 'no' (No to de Gaulle and the system, see you soon Soustelle). *Who* says 'yes' and means 'yes'? And what does that mean? Without a programme, this pile of voting papers is useless; it hides too many hatreds, *already* smells of punch-ups. The only ones who can benefit from a 'yes' vote, provided it is huge, are the fascists. They do not ask them-selves about the meaning of the vote but simply think that victory will give them a bit more time, either to get de Gaulle involved up to his neck in the war, or set up organizations and mechanisms which will allow them to overthrow him one day.

Gaullist republicans, you vote against the system – you elect the resurrected system.You vote for de Gaulle against Massu – you give the colonels time to organize a putsch against your elected representative.

Do not forget; the ambiguity all stems from that: de Gaulle is not a fascist, he is a constitutional monarch; but today, nobody can vote *for* de Gaulle any more: your 'yes' vote can go to fascism alone.

Let us finally understand that one cannot extract a country from its impotence by entrusting all power to a single man. The only way to avoid those honeyed monarchies that have no grip on reality, and at the same time the helping hand of the Algiers *commandos*, is for *us* to extract ourselves from our own impotence, is for *us* to create a programme, an alliance of parties, defensive and offensive tactics against all those who

would like to attack the French. ‘Yes’ is the dream; ‘no’ is the awakening. It is time to decide whether we wish to get up or go to bed.

The Analysis of the Referendum *

> *L'Express: In his last speech, General de Gaulle announced that if there were a majority of 'no' votes in the Referendum, or even an insufficient majority of 'yes' votes in his view, he would stand down. This is a threat to which public opinion is clearly sensitive. What do you say about it?*

Jean-Paul Sartre: There is in this blackmail something very astonishing because it simply expresses what in a normal democratic system would be self-evident. It is perfectly obvious that if the percentage of abstentions and 'no' votes added the further problem of unpopularity to a policy that was already difficult to apply, the head of a democratic government might be obliged to resign. What he should not under any circumstances do is announce this in advance and use it as a threat as if it were exceptional conduct. De Gaulle, though, brings into play the charismatic, the sacred aspect of his personality.

What we have here is the same sort of threat as when he talked about self-determination while announcing at the same time that Algeria would be cut in two if its people chose independence. It was a case of offering a free choice while removing freedom, from the outset, via outside pressures.

* *L'Express*, No. 499, 4 January 1961.

It's the same again with the Referendum since the question asked has no meaning. Putting forward self-determination and getting people to vote on the setting up of provisional institutions in Algeria amounts to asking us: 'Are you for one thing and for its opposite?' This is pure mystification, because it is clear that the institutions de Gaulle wants to set up in Algeria can only serve to prefabricate self-determination.

> *L'Express: But can one ask a Head of State who has secretly decided to negotiate to lay his cards on the table before the negotiations? Is it not natural for him to acquire as many trump cards as possible before entering the final stage? Ministers are now all stating: 'Everyone knows that Algeria's independence has been won, and de Gaulle better than anyone. It's tactical considerations that impose this procedure on him.'*

Jean-Paul Sartre: It's having lost the sense of what an electoral campaign is. Politicians are, by nature, forced to carry out ambiguous actions. They deal with a left and right. They are in the middle and try to manage both sides. In the case of a dictatorship, even an anarchic one like ours, concessions are rotated, in other words, first you give to the one,

then to the other, which has the effect of displeasing everyone.

But a voter is not a politician. Voting is not engaging in politics, but approving or rejecting precisely what is unambiguous about a given policy.You should not say to the voters: 'You will be voting for a man who is running into such and such resistance, who has to manage such and such a group, and who in any case will be made to do something different from what he is asking you to approve'. You should give them a clear choice.

Today they are saying to us : 'If you vote for provisional institutions, you will be voting for negotiation and self-determination.' What does that mean? Either we vote for the institutions, in which case self-determination will be prefabricated. Or we vote to give de Gaulle the necessary authority to negotiate. In this case, the wrong question is being asked. It should have been: 'Do you want a negotiated peace?' Saying 'yes' to the institutions in no way reinforces de Gaulle's position *vis-à-vis* the right and the army. They will say: 'The French may well have voted for the institutions, but not for you to negotiate.' This is where Machiavellianism turns against Machiavelli. Even if de Gaulle obtains 90 per cent of the vote, it will be a vote whose mandate can be interpreted any way you like since one response will have been made to two contradictory questions.

> *L'Express: In fact, it's really a case of enabling de Gaulle to pursue his policy and allowing him the choice of methods.*

Jean-Paul Sartre: What is this policy? It consists of putting provisional institutions in place in Algeria, with certain powers entrusted to selected individuals in both communities. These institutions – as the recent events in Algiers and Oran have shown – will have no authority over the population. Anyone who agrees to participate in them will be regarded by the Muslim majority, and probably also by the Europeans, as Quislings. Their authority, therefore, will be able to rely only on force. For that the *harkis* will not suffice. The French Army will be needed.

All in all, to vote for the institutions is to enable the French Army to stay on in Algeria, no longer to 'pacify' as it has been doing up until now, but to preserve a supposedly achieved peace. Basically, nothing will have changed. The work will be a bit different, however. Instead of shooting at men who are fighting for their independence but who are, after all, combatants, instead of doing police jobs which degrade it morally but can pass as the hunt for terrorists, this time the Army will have to shoot at unarmed crowds. That's what happened during the latest demonstrations.

There has been a lot of talk about the thirty victims whose post mortems proved that they were killed by civilians. But since the official figures are faked and even the Europeans talk about 500 deaths and not 150, we really have to come to the conclusion that it was the paratroops who killed most of them. We will therefore have an Army which, on the pretext that peace already exists or that it is in sight, will be forced almost the whole time to shoot at unarmed demonstrators.

We can ask ourselves, therefore, whether the Referendum doesn't in fact amount to justifying keeping the Army in Algeria while at the same time aggravating the nature of its action. Perhaps de Gaulle doesn't realize this. It is certain, however, that the Army sees a big difference between the Referendum and negotiations. If negotiations had been announced, it would not have had the basically consenting attitude it adopted to the

Referendum. Its concern being to remain in Algeria, that means it regards the Referendum as a useless operation. At worst, since the FLN refuses to play General de Gaulle's game, the war will continue as before. At best, the Army will stay where it is, prepared, if need be, to shoot at the masses.

These are the perspectives opened up by the text we are being asked to approve. The voters should therefore simply ask themselves: 'Do I want that or do I not want it?'

> *L'Express:You said that the question asked was a mystification. Many people think that under those circumstances, an abstention or a blank vote are the best ways of demonstrating their refusal to join in the government's game and take part in an operation that was distorted from the start.*

Jean-Paul Sartre: For once I agree with the government against the abstainers. An abstention is an empty sign: people abstain just as much because they have a broken leg as because they don't like the government or have no interest in the whole affair. A blank ballot paper also remains an ambiguous sign. In fact, the people who take a trip to put a blank voting paper into the ballot box are 'against' what they are being asked to approve. So they should demonstrate it clearly by voting 'no'!

De Gaulle has understood full well that an abstention could express uncertainty or indifference just as well as a 'no'. That is why, in his speech, he appeals to the voters not to abstain so that they won't risk being confused with those who abstain to say 'no'. The argument can be turned round: all those who envisage abstaining to demonstrate their disagreement with de Gaulle's policy should vote 'no' so that this disagreement really is demonstrated.

The best way of rejecting this rigged game they want to get us to join in with is not to say 'I'm not playing' – because if we don't play, the others will play for us – but to say 'no', 'no' to this man, 'no' to Machiavellianism, 'no' to the plan being put to us.

The concern not to 'mix one's votes with those of the extremists' seems to me totally anti-democratic. The very play of democracy provides for governments to be overturned in the Assemblies by adding together the votes of the two oppositions. This coalition has always existed. Why should we reject it today?

I will go further: the extremists' 'no' is a valid 'no'. It is valid because it means: 'De Gaulle's policy is worthless. It is worthless because we have to choose between selling off Algeria and all-out war.' We don't say anything different, except that *we* choose what they call 'selling off ', but which it is not, since it is *they* who are selling off France by ruining both its internal credit and its international standing. But there is always something true in the coalition of two oppositions: it means that the Government is applying an ambiguous and hypocritical policy which satisfies nobody. That is the case today.

Besides, we know very well that if there were an overwhelming 'no' vote, it would be the Left that supplied it, not the extremists, because the left-wing groups have openly asked their supporters to vote 'no', and because the extreme right is numerically very weak in France. Now, can one imagine an Assembly where the communists would refuse to overturn a government because the extreme right were about to vote like them? It is simply unthinkable. Yet that is the present situation.

If de Gaulle were to go as a result of too high a percentage of abstentions, he would leave a political situation without clarity. If he goes as a result of a majority of 'no' votes, the situation will be perfectly clear: he will be going because France has rejected his policy. That is why the only possible response is, in my view, a 'no' vote. You can't slip off saying: 'It's got nothing to do with me.' It has. And as long as the trap is in place, the only way not to fall into it is to say 'no'.

> *L'Express: The opponents of the 'no' vote accuse the left of promoting the worst case to gain political advantage, in accepting the risk of a chaos whose immediate beneficiaries would probably be the extremists.*

Jean-Paul Sartre: You have to see things as they are: for two years now we have been dreaming. It's a dream which started off rose-coloured for some but which is gradually turning into a nightmare as they discover that only a test of strength can settle the question of the Algerian War and the political destiny of France. This test of strength has been postponed for two years by de Gaulle's supposed arbitration. But it will take place.

The unfortunate thing is that this arbitration has not worked in favour of the left but in favour of the right. Why? Because the extremists' actions are essentially clandestine – forming of combat groups, building up of stocks of weapons, infiltration of government departments, etc. – and because the benevolent neutrality of the police has enabled them to develop.

The weapon of the left, in contrast, is the action of the masses who go on strike, demonstrate, take to the streets. The parties of the left have not been able, or have not wanted, to set in motion this action – doubtless extremely improbable two years ago, but which would possibly be less so today – whereas the extremists' networks kept on getting reinforcements and getting stronger.

You should not believe that two or three more years of Gaullist rule would improve matters: they would only delay the outcome and make it more dangerous for the left. If de Gaulle holds on to power, two policies will be offered to him: either indefinite procrastination – what he has done up to now – or a move to negotiation. The latter would mark a breakdown in that it would spark off the test of strength delayed for so long. The Army can put up with the Referendum and the provisional institutions because, in a certain way, it benefits from them. But it could not accept negotiations.

Time does not increase our chances of winning this test of strength. There is first of all that kind of charismatic power, that almost sacred character de Gaulle has created for himself, that distinction of quality that he establishes between, on the one hand, a certain type of humanity represented by only a few individuals over a century or even in History, and, on the other, the masses. All this contributes to lulling the masses while maintaining the dream of a 'protective' de Gaulle and there is nothing to say that if he were overthrown, in two or three years, by a military coup, we would then be able to oppose it immediately.

Look what happened two months ago: when the left initiated a movement – which seemed as though it should flourish – in favour of negotiation, de Gaulle sowed confusion in its ranks by making new statements and announcing the Referendum. The latter does not bring us a step nearer the solution of the problem, but it does plunge

people into uncertainty once more, and within the left it creates a division between the 'yes' and the 'no' votes. The danger threatening us is not, therefore, that de Gaulle might go, but that he might stay.

A test of strength does not necessarily mean that blood will flow. It simply means that at a certain moment people take stock of their numbers and see what they can do. The Army is divided. The events in Algiers and Oran have certainly shaken a number of officers, captains and majors, who had convinced themselves until then that they were fighting against a band of rebels. When they saw the crowds of Muslims on the streets, they said to themselves: 'Ah well, we've got to begin all over again.' They don't find that particularly amusing. They also sense that it is no longer the same war, that something is lost, that it can no longer be a case of neatly cleaning up, by military operations, a troubled country, but whose population would be favourably disposed towards them.

> *L'Express: Many give de Gaulle the credit for this awareness on the part of the Army. They still think he is the only person capable of reducing the Army's resistance bit by bit by avoiding the test of strength you predict.*

Jean-Paul Sartre: Is it de Gaulle or the five hundred dead of Algiers that have opened the eyes of the military? It was not the SAS officers, as some maintained, who invited the Muslims to take to the streets of the Casbah. They took to them of their own accord. Nobody was expecting what happened. De Gaulle thought that a number of European troublemakers in the cities would be contained, and that he could have a cosy little tour of inspection of the Army. That's not what happened at all.

The proof that he was more surprised than anyone is that he has never mentioned the event, never drawn the lesson from it. Yet it was easy to say to the French: 'You can see that the Algerians need to express themselves. Rather than let them take to the streets, let us give them the possibility to choose their destiny for themselves.' He did not do it. Why? Because it embarrasses him. Because the Algiers demonstrations prove that there is no third force and that from now on his whole system will have to rely on the Army.

It is not de Gaulle's policy that is tiring the Army, then. It is the reality. De Gaulle contents himself with administering a bit of chloroform from time to time. That does the troublemakers in the Army good because it allows them, by getting some compromises, to stay in Algeria. But it does not show them the truth. The truth comes out, and will continue to come out, despite de Gaulle.

If this test of strength seems inevitable to me, it is because we are not dealing with children or madmen. There is talk about 'troublemakers' and 'the pack'. It is not that at all. It is about people who have precise interests to defend. The Army's interest is Algeria. Where would it be without it? An army of 1939, returning to barracks to wait to be massacred, just like the civilian population, the day atomic war broke out.

What else would you expect them to do? They are soldiers only in Algeria. In France, they are civilians like us, except that they have the right to carry a machine gun rather like nobles had the right to wear a sword. They carry absolutely no weight in international decisions. The three bombs we have detonated do not change anything. They are not even very keen on the modernization of their Army because that would mean the retirement of a number of officers who are very good at getting foot soldiers to

do an about-turn, but who would be incapable of fighting a technological war. Consequently, in any event, leaving Algeria would be the death of our Army.

> *L'Express: Unless it comes to take power in France, precisely in order to prevent this development.*

Jean-Paul Sartre: I couldn't agree more. As soon as it realizes there is nothing left for it to do in Algeria, it is possible – I'm not saying probable – that the Army might try to seize power in mainland France. The problem is knowing which elements could resist it. The Government, which has given in to it all the time? Clearly not! The UNR? But the UNR is nothing! It's a group of yes men. The only force that can resist are the masses. There is no other.

It is not certain that this military coup will take place because the Army tends to be divided not between Gaullists and anti-Gaullists, but between those who insist on seeing the war in Algeria as a war of military movements, and those who see it increasingly for what it is, that is to say, the systematic oppression of an entire population. These are not good conditions for attempting a coup d'état.

And then there are the reserve officers who are people like you and me, and the conscripts, who for a while now have been a little different. They have changed thanks to de Gaulle, not because he wanted to stop the war, but because he pursued it. They saw the arrival of the fifth, then the sixth year of the war.

There is a story about these young people: we abandoned them at the start. Five years ago, the conscripts and the reservists did not want to go. They revolted, as at the Rouen barracks, and the workers helped them. But orders came and everything was finished. They went with the impression that we had betrayed them, that everyone, from the extreme left to the right, agreed with fighting this war. As it requires a great deal of courage to fight against an army that can call you a 'traitor' and have you shot, they gave up.

They held it against us. I saw many of them, during those years, who had witnessed – were perhaps even forced to participate in – some not very pleasant things, but who refused to talk about them, saying: 'After all, what are you complaining about? You left us to get on with it.' It was almost like a child's resentment towards its father.

But the youngest, who found themselves being prepared for this war from the age of 14, who have seen their elders come back and obtained from them more complete accounts than their parents, have a very different mentality. Once more, it is not because the war is about to end. It is because it is continuing. It is against de Gaulle that they have become aware of themselves.

If de Gaulle went tomorrow, what would happen? The left, clearly, is not organized. But – that is the story of its life – it never is. It is always caught by surprise. It has always been said: left-wingers may not get on in front of prison walls, but they do get on behind them. If the going gets tough, the left will be totally surprised and, to start with, it will give up. But that will not last. First, because de Gaulle's blackmail cannot be adopted by anyone else. Can one imagine M. Morice, M. Soustelle, M. Bidault, General Salan or even General Massu becoming popular figures? It doesn't make sense. They would not even be supported by capitalist forces that have little interest in Algeria and wish to be rid

of the cost of the war. And then, the right is not ready either. It has too many internal divisions to surmount.

All fascisms were popular at the start because they gave people something, illusory though it may have been. In Germany, there was the defeat to wipe out and unemployment to combat. But the French people will not be mobilized by saying to them: 'Our defeat in Algeria is intolerable. Let's put at end to it! Let us kill all the Algerians. We shall double taxes and pursue the war.' It is unthinkable. With fascism, the complicity of the masses is very important. A short-lived complicity, but one which, via fascist parties like the German SA, allows a permanent link to be established, between the masses and the dictator. There are activists, agitators who terrorize the masses, but who can at the same time pass on precious information to the top: 'Careful, we must not push that line too hard, but instead move this way.'

There is no fascist party in France capable of playing that role. The kids from the 16th Arrondissement will not do it. For that, you need those who have emerged from the people, unemployed workers like those of Berlin, who took the Nazis' side because they provided better soup than the communists. When I was there in 1934, many of the workers who had became Nazis had retained Marxist vocabulary without realizing it, and offered me a Marxist interpretation of Hitler's supremacy. None of this exists in France.

Moreover, French fascism or pseudo-fascism would constitute such an international danger that it would stand no chance of lasting. The first thing the Americans would think is that the inevitable repercussions among the people would bring victory to the Front Populaire and the communists. They would try to get rid of the fascist Government as quickly as possible before it was overturned by a groundswell from the people. It is even to be wished that they do not make our chances of a real democracy disappear.

In any case, a test of strength is necessary because it is inscribed *de facto* in the situation. People resolve *de facto* situations by acts, not by recourse to prestige. If you like, we must fear what would happen if de Gaulle went, but with hope. And we must fear a little more what will happen if he stays, above all with a majority of 'yes' votes which would not force him to do anything or even increase his authority over the people who contest it.

To vote 'yes' is to refuse to wake up, it is to preserve the dream. To vote 'no' is an awakening. It means: we are tired of having been mystified by this fellow for two years.

The Sleepwalkers *

Yesterday evening, people gathered around the newspaper stands; the cold dispersed them quickly, but they had time to glance at the headlines, that was enough. One fellow said out loud: 'It's all over with Algeria. Whose turn is it now? France, Monsieur, has been fighting for 150 years.' They listened to him without replying but without hostility: in everybody's head there were strange thoughts, gleaming and confused. But above all, he had said: 'It's all over.' The only thing they wanted to remember was that: it's all over; it's all over with Algeria. In local restaurants, radios abandoned their usual reserve, blared out: they listened to them without listening. People came in, apologized for being late and shook hands; they were told: 'The cease-fire has been agreed.' They sat down saying: 'Yes, yes, I know.' And then they talked about something else. All over Paris, walls had ears. OAS ears. And there again, no one wanted to shock anyone: after seven years of discretion, do you know what the neighbours think? The extremists were the only people talking openly. I heard two of them laughing with rage in a public place. The others, despite their affected indifference and silence, occasionally allowed themselves a vague smile of relief. Of relief, nothing more: that was what was striking in the streets of Paris yesterday.

* *Les Temps Modernes*, No.191, April 1962.

It must be said that joy is out of place: for seven years, France has been a mad dog dragging a saucepan tied to its tail, every day becoming a little more terrified at its own din. Today, no one is unaware that we have ruined, starved and massacred a nation of poor people to bring them to their knees. They remained standing. But at what a price! While the delegations were putting an end to the business, 2,400,000 Algerians remained in the slow death camps; we have killed more than a million of them. The land lies abandoned, the *douars* have been obliterated by bombing, the livestock – the peasants' meagre wealth – has disappeared. After seven years, Algeria must start from scratch: first of all win the peace, then hang on with the greatest of difficulty to the poverty we have created: that will be our parting gift. We are no longer ignorant of anything, we know what we have done: in 1945, Parisians shouted for joy because they had been delivered from their suffering; today they have this taciturn relief because they are being freed of their crimes. No, not freed of their crimes – we know full well that the crimes we have committed will not fade so quickly – but of the obligation to commit any more. It was time, high time: for us too; you can be sure that our livestock has not diminished, and the standard of living has risen slightly. But in order to avoid the famous selling-off of our Empire, we have sold off France: in order to forge arms, we have cast our institutions into the fire; our freedoms and our guarantees, Democracy and Justice, everything has burnt; nothing remains. Simply ending the fighting is not enough to reclaim our wasted wealth: we too, I am afraid, in a different area, will have to start from scratch. But the Algerians

have retained their revolutionary strength. Where is ours?

The announcement of the 'cease-fire' has impinged on minds no more and no less than a news report 'from abroad': Khrushchev is to meet Kennedy, agreement over Berlin is to be reached, atomic tests are suspended. France was delirious when Glenn made his orbits round the earth. It was *our* victory, apparently. People applauded in the cinemas. But this fragile armistice is not *our* victory. Because the French people were not able to impose it. In 1955, the electorate voted for peace; the elected representatives intensified the war and we said nothing; barracks rebelled, the soldiers did not want to kill. Or be killed. We said nothing: their resistance was crushed. Without saying anything, we allowed the democratic regime to dishonour itself under pressure from the Army. And when the military replaced it by a regime of personal power, we persisted in our silence. Today, a coup d'état government is forced to give us what we timidly asked for seven years ago and we are silent: that goes without saying, since it is not our business. Only one person in France will benefit from the cease-fire: de Gaulle. Yet one only has to re-read his speeches to measure the distance covered from Mostaganem to the Evian negotiations. He did everything, short of moving the desert sands, to discover his Third Force and it is not his fault if the Muslim bourgeoisie, his heart's choice, does not exist in Algeria. Everything was decided, and his policies overturned, when the Muslim towns opened up and we saw unarmed crowds advancing with a flag at their head towards our soldiers. The truth is that this 'cease-fire', which we are quick to declare to be without 'victor or vanquished', was imposed by the Algerian people. Alone, by their extraordinary resistance and their discipline. And it is for precisely that reason that this 'compromise' has become an Algerian victory. Yet, as events have proved, we French were behind those men who struggled against colonialism. Colonialism over there, fascism here: one and the same thing. And the OAS cannot hope to make North Africa a colony again unless it starts by colonizing France. Same enemies, same interests, the necessity to cooperate on equal terms: what more do you need? If we had shaken off our lazy timidity, if the left had overcome its divisions … The left, it is true, always disunited, more noisy than convinced, is crying victory from its every mouth: it is an appalling cacophony. In vain: the Algerians have been demanding independence since 1954; which of all these rival parties, before 1960, adopted this demand itself? Which of them sincerely tried to make it the profound demand of all French people? Some demanded 'the right to independence' – they added with a wink: 'The right to divorce does not mean you force couples to separate'. And the others, their backs to the wall: 'I go further than independence'. The result is the 'cease-fire' – *our defeat*. And we are not defeated because we have at last acknowledged the right of a people to self-determination, but, quite the contrary, because we witnessed the most glorious, the most sombre of adventures without ever attempting to take part in it. So many lives would have been saved if the French masses had shown their strength. No, our defeat is not independence, it is the million Algerians whom we allowed to be killed. Wavering, then uncertain, then resigned, we gave our powers to a dictator so that he could decide without consulting us the best way of ending the affair: genocide, regrouping and partition, integration, independence, we washed our hands of it all, that was his business. The result surpasses our hopes: the Algerians have won their freedom, the French have lost theirs. For the former, everything is to be done: it was not without fear that they signed the agreement

protocol; they know that the cease-fire is a revolutionary departure, the beginning of the beginning. For us, it is the final stage: good riddance; and we repeat: 'It's over' with secret relief.

It is not over. Mobilization is not war and the cease-fire is not peace. In Algeria, armed men surround the European population; we know their tactics and their aim: by constant acts of provocation, they will pitch the two communities against each other and the massacres will force the French Army to shoot at the Muslims, the war will instantly flare up again and the 'cease-fire' will be no more than a scrap of paper. Unless they prefer to sabotage self-determination. Of course, none of this would happen if the Army remained loyal. But will it remain so? If the Europeans decide on a massacre and if there is only this way to stop them, will it shoot at European rebels? The French – when they deign to deal with politics – never stop turning these questions over in their heads without ever – and for good reason – finding an answer to them. Nothing demonstrates better the depth of their abdication. They wonder about the possible attitude of the active officers, their loyalty and the links that unite them with fascism, *pieds-noirs*, and the former putschists as if the Army alone, independent and sovereign, decided our destiny. It is wrong: the Army must obey the people. When it does not obey, it is the fault of the nation itself. And when all is said and done, one always has the army one deserves. Never, I admit, have the dangers been greater: scarcely has this faint hope been born than we already fear future butchery on both sides of the water. For this very reason, because of this shared threat, the French retain the chance of becoming *a people* again. They could not hasten the cease-fire, the entire history of our era went over their heads, they are sleepwalking towards their destiny: very well. But they have arrived, with closed eyes, at the crossroads. Let them look carefully: there will be sheep-like indifference, a resuscitated war and Salan in power. Or unity of action without reserve, the struggle for peace and Salan strung up. It is absurd, today, to claim to struggle *here* against the OAS – a rather thin peril in France – without compelling the Government to struggle against it over there where its strength is undeniable. It is absurd and criminal to maintain that one can separate the struggle against fascism and the fight for peace. It must be understood that today we have this chance, the only one, to regenerate ourselves: contain the Army in loyalty by all of us uniting *to guarantee the implementation* of the signed agreements. On this condition, the 'cease-fire' for us too will be the beginning of the beginning.

19 February 1962

The Wretched of the Earth *

Not so very long ago, the earth numbered 2,000 million inhabitants, that is 500 million human beings and 1,500 million natives. The former possessed the Word, the rest borrowed it. Between the former and the latter, corrupt kinglets, feudal landowners and an artificially created false bourgeoisie served as intermediaries. In the colonies, the naked truth revealed itself; the mother countries preferred it dressed; they needed the natives to love them, like mothers, in a way. The European elite set about fabricating a native elite; they selected adolescents, marked on their foreheads, with a branding iron, the principles of Western culture, stuffed into their mouths verbal gags, grand turgid words which stuck to their teeth; after a brief stay in the mother country, they were sent back, interfered with. These living lies no longer had anything to say to their brothers; they echoed; from Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we proclaimed the words 'Parthenon! Fraternity!' and, somewhere in Africa, in Asia, lips parted: '… thenon', '… nity'. It was a golden age.

It came to an end: the mouths opened of their own accord; the yellow and black voices still talked about our humanism, but it was to reproach us for our inhumanity. We listened without displeasure to these courteous expressions of bitterness. At first there was a

* Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon, Paris, Maspéro, 1961.

proud astonishment: What? Can they talk on their own? Look what we have made of them, though! We did not doubt that they accepted our ideals since they accused us of being unfaithful to them; then, Europe believed in its mission: it had hellenized the Asiatics, created that new species, Graeco-Roman negroes. And we pragmatically added, just among ourselves: anyhow, let them mouth off, it makes them feel better; their bark is worse than their bite.

Another generation came, which shifted the argument. With incredible patience, its writers and poets tried to explain to us that our values were poorly suited to the reality of their lives, that they could neither entirely reject them nor assimilate them. By and large, that meant: you are making monsters of us; your humanism claims that we are universal but your racist practices set us apart. We listened to them, very relaxed: colonial administrators are not paid to read Hegel, and in any case they read him very little, but they have no need of this philosopher to know that an unhappy consciousness gets entangled in its contradictions – result, zero effectiveness. Let us therefore perpetuate their unhappiness: only hot air will come of it. If there were the hint of a demand in their moaning, the experts told us, it would be for integration. There was no question of granting it, of course: that would have ruined the system which rests, as you know, on over-exploitation. But it would suffice to hold this carrot before their eyes: they would gallop. As for their revolting, we were quite untroubled: what sensible native would go

and massacre the fine sons of Europe with the sole aim of becoming European like them? In short, we encouraged this melancholy and were once not averse to awarding the Prix Goncourt to a negro: that was before 1939.

Now listen in 1961. 'Let us not waste time on sterile litanies or on nauseating mimicry. Let us quit this Europe which talks incessantly about Man while massacring him wherever it meets him, on every corner of its own streets, in every corner of the world. For centuries … in the name of a supposed "spiritual adventure", it has been suffocating almost the whole of humanity.' This tone is new. Who dares to adopt it? An African, a man of the Third World, a former colonial subject. He adds: 'Europe has reached such a mad and uncontrollable speed … that it is heading towards an abyss from which it would be better to move away.' In other words: it has had it. This is a difficult truth to admit, but one of which we are all – are we not, my dear fellow continentals? – convinced deep down.

We must express a reservation, however. When a French person, for example, says to other French people: 'We've had it!' – which, as far as I know, has been happening more or less every day since 1930 – it is a passionate discourse, burning with rage and love; the orator puts himself in the same boat as all his compatriots. And then he generally adds: 'Unless …'. We can see clearly what this means: no further mistake can be made; if his recommendations are not followed to the letter, then and only then will the country disintegrate. In short, it is a threat followed by advice and these comments are all the less shocking because they spring from the shared national consciousness. When Fanon, in contrast, says of Europe that it is heading towards ruin, far from giving a cry of alarm, he offers a diagnosis. This doctor wishes neither to condemn it without hope – miracles can happen – nor to give it the means to recover: he notes that it is in its death throes, based on external observation and going by the symptoms he has been able to gather. As for treating it, no; he has other worries on his mind; he does not care whether it lives or dies. His book is scandalous for that reason. And if you murmur, in a joking and embarrassed way: 'He's giving us some stick!', the real nature of the scandal escapes you: for Fanon is not giving you any 'stick' at all; his work – so burning hot for others – remains ice-cold for you; in it, the author often talks about you, but never to you. No more black Goncourt winners, no more yellow Nobel prizewinners: the time of colonized laureates will never return. A 'French-speaking' ex-native bends this language to new requirements, makes use of it and addresses only the colonized: 'Natives of all underdeveloped nations, unite!'. What a decline: for the fathers, we were the sole interlocutors; the sons no longer even consider us as qualified interlocutors: we are the object of their discourse. Of course, Fanon mentions in passing our famous crimes – Sétif, Hanoi, Madagascar – but he doesn't waste his effort condemning them: he uses them. If he dismantles the tactics of colonialism, the complex play of relations that unite and divide the *colons* from the 'metropolitans', it is *for his brothers*; his goal is to teach them to outsmart us.

In short, the Third World is discovering *itself* and talking to *itself* through this voice. We know that it is not homogenous and that we still find subjugated peoples there, others who have acquired a false independence, others who are fighting to win sovereignty, and others, finally, who have won total freedom but who live under the constant threat of imperialist aggression. These differences were born of colonial history, in other words, of oppression. Here, the mother country contented itself with paying a few feudal

landowners: there, by dividing and ruling, it has artificially created a bourgeoisie of the colonized; elsewhere it has killed two birds with one stone by establishing a colony of exploitation *and* settlement. Thus Europe has multiplied divisions and oppositions, forged classes and sometimes racisms, attempted by every means to cause and to increase the stratification of the colonized societies. Fanon hides nothing: to fight against us, the former colony must fight against itself. Or rather, the two are one and the same thing. In the heat of the combat, all internal barriers must melt, the powerless bourgeoisie of racketeers and traders, the urban proletariat which is always privileged, the *lumpenproletariat* of the shanty towns, all must come into line with the positions of the rural masses, the real reservoir of the national revolutionary army; in those lands whose development colonialism deliberately halted, the peasantry, when it revolts, appears very quickly as the *revolutionary* class: it knows naked oppression, it suffers from it much more than the workers of the towns and to prevent it from dying of hunger, it will take nothing less than a complete shattering of all existing structures. If it triumphs, the national revolution will be socialist; if its momentum is halted and the colonized bourgeoisie takes power, the new state, despite formal sovereignty, remains in the hands of the imperialists. This is illustrated rather well by the example of Katanga. Thus the unity of the Third World is not established: it is an enterprise in progress which goes via the union, in each country, both before and after independence, of all the colonized under the command of the peasant class. That is what Fanon explains to his African, Asian and Latin American brothers: we shall achieve revolutionary socialism everywhere together, or we shall be defeated one by one by our former tyrants. He hides nothing; neither the weaknesses, nor the discords, nor the mystifications. Here the movement gets off to a bad start; there, after resounding successes, it loses momentum; elsewhere it has stopped: if people want it to resume, the peasants must drive their bourgeoisie into the sea. The reader is strictly warned against the most dangerous types of alienation: the leader, the personality cult, Western culture, and just as much, the return of the distant past of African culture: the real culture is the Revolution; that means it must be forged while hot. Fanon speaks out loud; we Europeans can hear him: the proof is that you hold this book in your hands; does he not fear that the colonial powers might use his sincerity to their advantage?

No. He fears nothing. Our practices are no longer valid: they may sometimes delay emancipation, but they will not stop it. And let us not imagine that we can adapt our methods: neocolonialism, that lazy dream of the mother countries, is hot air; 'Third Forces' do not exist or they are bogus bourgeoisies that colonialism has already placed in power. Our Machiavellianism has little hold over this wide-awake world that has detected our lies one after the other. The colonist has only one recourse: force, when he still has some; the native has only one choice: servitude or sovereignty. What difference can it make to Fanon whether you read his work or not? It is to his brothers that he denounces our old acts of malice, sure that we have no replacements for them. It is to them that he says: Europe has got its paws on our continents, we must slash them until it removes them; the moment favours us: nothing happens in Bizerte, Elisabethville or in the Algerian countryside without the entire world knowing; the blocs occupy opposite positions, they hold each other in check, let us benefit from this paralysis, let us enter into History and may our sudden appearance make it universal for the first time; let us fight:

in the absence of other arms, the patience of the knife will suffice.

Europeans, open this book, and enter into it. After a few steps in the night, you will see strangers gathered round a fire, draw closer, listen: they are discussing the fate they have in store for your trading posts, for the mercenaries who defend them. They will see you perhaps, but they will continue to talk among themselves without even lowering their voices. Their indifference strikes at our hearts: their fathers, creatures of the shadows, *your* creatures, were dead souls, you dispensed light to them, they talked only to you, and you did not bother to reply to these zombies. The sons ignore you: a fire which is not yours lights and warms them. Standing at a respectful distance, you will feel furtive, nocturnal, chilled to the bone; everyone has their turn; in this darkness out of which will come a new dawn, you are the zombies.

In that case, you will say, let us throw this book out of the window. Why read it since it has not been written for us? For two reasons, the first of which is that Fanon is explaining you to his brothers and is dismantling for them the mechanism of our alienations: take advantage from this to discover yourselves in your true light as objects. Our victims know us by their wounds and their chains: that is what makes their testimony irrefutable. It is enough for them to show us what we have done with them for us to understand what we have done with ourselves. Is this useful? Yes, because Europe is in great danger of dying. But, you will continue, we live in mainland France and disapprove of the excesses. It is true: you are not *colons*, but you are no better. They are your pioneers, you sent them overseas, they made you rich; you had warned them: if they caused too much blood to be spilled, you would disown them reluctantly; in the same manner, a state – whichever it may be – maintains abroad a horde of agitators, *agents provocateurs* and spies whom it disowns when they are caught. You who are so liberal, so humane, and take the love of culture as far as affectation, pretend to forget that you have colonies and that people are being massacred there in your name. Fanon reveals to his comrades – to some of them, above all, who remain a little too Westernized – the solidarity of the 'metropolitans' and their colonial agents. Have the courage to read it, because it will make you ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary sentiment. So you see: I cannot free myself from subjective illusion either. I, too, say to you: 'Everything is lost, unless …' I, a European, steal the book of an enemy and use it as a means to cure Europe. Make the most of it.

The second reason is this: discarding Sorel's fascist chatter, you will find that Fanon is the first since Engels to bring back to light the midwife of History. And do not imagine that hot-bloodedness or an unhappy childhood have given him some sort of strange taste for violence: he offers himself as the interpreter of the situation, nothing more. But that is enough for him to establish, step by step, the dialectic which liberal hypocrisy hides from you, and which has produced us just as much as him.

In the last century, the bourgeoisie regarded the workers as envious and warped by vulgar appetites, but they were careful to include these rough brutes in our species: if they were not men, and free, how could they freely sell their labour? In France, and in England, humanism claimed to be universal.

With forced labour, it is quite the opposite: there is no contract; what is more, you have to intimidate and so oppression manifests itself. Our soldiers overseas reject metropolitan universalism, and apply a *numerus clausus* to human kind: since no one can rob, enslave or kill their fellow human beings without committing a crime, they establish the principle

that the colonized are not fellow human beings. Our strike force has been charged with the mission of turning that abstract certainty into reality: they have been given orders to reduce the inhabitants of the annexed territory to the level of a superior monkey to justify the *colon*'s treating them as beasts of burden. Colonial violence does not only aim to keep these enslaved people at a respectful distance, it also seeks to dehumanize them. No effort will be spared to liquidate their traditions, substitute our languages for theirs, destroy their culture without giving them ours; they will be rendered stupid by exploitation. Malnourished and sick, if they continue to resist, fear will finish the job: the peasants have guns pointed at them; along come civilians who settle the land and force them with the riding crop to farm it for them. If they resist, the soldiers shoot and they are dead men; if they give in, they degrade themselves and they are no longer human beings; shame and fear fissure their character and shatter their personality. The business is carried out briskly by experts: 'psychological services' are by no means a new invention. Nor is brainwashing. And yet, despite so much effort, the goal has not been attained anywhere: no more in the Congo, where Negroes' hands were cut off, than in Angola, where quite recently the lips of malcontents were pierced and padlocked together. And I am not claiming that it is impossible to change human beings into animals: I am saying that you cannot succeed without weakening them considerably; blows are never enough, one has to push malnutrition hard. That is the trouble with servitude: when we domesticate members of our own species, we diminish their output and, however little you give them, farmyard human beings end up costing more than they bring in. For this reason, the *colons* are obliged to stop the training half-way: the result, neither man nor beast, is the native. Beaten, undernourished, sick, frightened – but only up to a certain point – yellow, black or white, they always have the same characteristics: they are lazy, sly and thieving, live off nothing and understand only force.

Poor *colons*: that is their contradiction stripped naked. They should kill those whom they pillage, as the devil is said to do. Yet that is impossible, because they do have to exploit them, of course. Because they do not take massacre as far as genocide, and servitude as far as reducing them to beasts, they lose their grip, the operation goes into reverse, an implacable logic will lead it to decolonization.

But not immediately. First of all, the Europeans reign: they have already lost but do not realize it; they do not yet know that the natives are false natives: they hurt the natives, so they claim, to destroy or to repress the evil in them; three generations of this, and their pernicious instincts will never return. What instincts? Those which drive slaves to massacre their masters? Why can they not recognize their own cruelty turned against them? Why can they not recognize in the savagery of those oppressed peasants their savagery as *colons* which the natives have absorbed through every pore and from which they cannot recover? The reason is simple: these imperious characters, panic-stricken by their omnipotence and the fear of losing it, only dimly remember that they were human beings: they take themselves to be riding crops or guns; they have come to believe that the domestication of the 'inferior races' can be attained by conditioning their reflexes. They neglect human memory, the indelible recollections which mark it; and then, above all, there is something they have perhaps never known: that we become what we are only by a profound and radical negation of what others have made of us. Three generations? By the second generation, scarcely had the sons opened their eyes when they saw their

fathers being beaten; in psychiatric terms, there they were, 'traumatized' – for life. But these constantly repeated acts of aggression, far from causing them to submit, plunge them into an unbearable contradiction for which the European, sooner or later, will pay. Following that, whether we train them in their turn, whether we teach them shame, pain and hunger, we will only provoke in their bodies a volcanic rage whose force is equal to the pressure applied to them. You were saying they only understand force? Of course; to begin with, it will only be that of the *colon* but soon it will be theirs alone, that is to say, the same violence rebounding on us just as our reflection comes from the depths of the mirror to meet us. Do not be mistaken; it is through this mad rage, this gall and this bile, their permanent desire to kill us, the permanent contraction of powerful muscles which are afraid to loosen that they are men – also through and against the *colons*, who want them as their lackeys. Hatred – blind, still and abstract – is their only treasure: the Master provokes it because he seeks to reduce them to beasts; he fails to break it because his interests stop him half-way; thus the false natives are still human, owing to the oppressors' power and powerlessness which, in them, are transformed into a stubborn rejection of the animal condition. As for the rest, we have got the message; of course they are lazy, but that is sabotage. Of course they are sly and thieving, but their petty thefts mark the beginning of an as yet unorganized resistance. That is not enough: some of them assert themselves by throwing themselves empty-handed at the guns; these are their heroes; others again become men by assassinating Europeans. They are slaughtered: the suffering of these bandits and martyrs exalts the terrified masses.

Terrified, yes: at this new juncture, colonial aggression is internalized as Terror by the colonized. By that, I mean not only the fear they experience when confronted with our inexhaustible methods of repression, but also the fear which their own fury inspires in them. They are trapped between the arms we point at them, and the frightening impulses and murderous desires which rise from the depths of their hearts and which they do not always recognize: for it is not in the first place *their* violence that grows and tears them apart, but ours returned; and the first reflex of these oppressed people is to bury deeply this unspeakable anger censured by both their morality and ours, and yet which is simply the last refuge of their humanity. Read Fanon: you will know that, in their time of powerlessness, murderous madness is the collective unconscious of the colonized.

This contained fury, instead of exploding, goes nowhere and ravages the oppressed themselves. To free themselves of it, they end up massacring each other: the tribes fight against each other because they cannot challenge the real enemy – and you can count on colonial policies to nurture their rivalries; the brother raising the knife against his brother imagines he is destroying, once and for all, the detested image of their shared debasement. But these expiatory victims do not quench their thirst for blood; they stop themselves marching into the machine guns only by becoming our accomplices: they, by their own initiative, will accelerate the progress of the dehumanization which they reject. Under the amused eye of the *colon*, they protect themselves from themselves by supernatural barriers, sometimes resurrecting old and terrible myths, sometimes binding themselves with meticulous rites: thus the obsessed flee their profound need by inflicting upon themselves fetishes that do not release them for an instant. They dance: that occupies them, that loosens their painfully contracted muscles; and then dance secretly mimes, often without their knowing, the No they cannot say, the murders they dare not

commit. In some regions, they make use of that last resort, possession by spirits. What in the past was simply a straightforward religious act, a sort of communication between the faithful and the sacred, they turn into a weapon against despair and humiliation: the *zars*, the *loas*, all the sacred idols descend into them, govern their violence and dissipate it in trances ending in exhaustion. At the same time, these elevated figures protect them: in other words, the colonized defend themselves against colonial alienation by taking religious alienation to greater lengths. The only result ultimately is that they combine the two alienations and each reinforces the other. Thus, in certain psychoses, hallucinating patients, weary of being insulted every day, decide one fine day to hear an angel's voice complimenting them; the jibes do not, for all that, cease, but from now on they alternate with approbation. It is a defence but also the end of their adventure: the personality has become dissociated, the patient is on the way to insanity. Add to this, for some rigorously selected unfortunates, that other possession I mentioned above: Western culture. In their position, you will say, I would prefer my *zars* to the Acropolis. All right: you have understood. You have not understood completely, though, for you are not in their position – not yet. Otherwise you would know that they cannot choose: they add one thing to the other. Two worlds make two possessions: they dance the whole night, and then at dawn they pack into the churches to hear mass; day by day the crack widens. Our enemy betrays his brothers and makes himself our accomplice; his brothers do the same. The *indigénat* is a neurosis introduced and maintained by the *colon* among the colonized *with their consent*.

The contradiction of both claiming and renouncing the human condition is an explosive one. And explode it does, as you and I well know. And we are living in the age of the conflagration: if the rise in births increases the famine, and if the new arrivals come to fear living a little more than dying, the torrent of violence will sweep away all barriers. In Algeria and Angola, Europeans are massacred on sight. It is the moment of the boomerang, the third stage of violence: it comes back and hits us, and, no more than on the other occasions can we understand that it is our own violence. The 'liberals' are dumbfounded: they recognize that we were not polite enough with the natives, that it would have been fairer and more prudent to grant them certain rights as far as possible; they asked for nothing better than to be admitted in batches and without sponsors into that very exclusive club – our species: and now this barbaric and mad outbreak spares them no more than the bad *colons*. The Left in mainland France is embarrassed: they know the true fate of the natives, the merciless oppression to which they are subjected. They do not condemn their revolt, since they know that we did all we could to provoke it. But all the same, they think, there are limits: the guerrillas must have their hearts set on showing that they are chivalrous; that would be the best way to prove that they are men. Sometimes, they reprimand them: 'You're going too far: we will no longer support you.' They do not give a shit: for all the good the Left's support does them, they might just as well shove it up their arse. As soon as their war started, they saw the painful truth: we are all as bad as each other, we have all profited from them, they have nothing to prove, they will give favourable treatment to no one. They have a single duty, a single objective: to drive out colonialism by *any* means. And the shrewdest among us would consent to it, in extreme circumstances, but they cannot prevent themselves from seeing in this test of strength the utterly inhuman method taken by subhumans to win a charter of humanity for

themselves: let it be granted as quickly as possible and let them then attempt, by peaceful undertakings, to deserve it. Our well-meaning souls are racist.

They will benefit from reading Fanon; this irrepressible violence, as he demonstrates perfectly, is not an absurd storm, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even an effect of resentment: it is no less than man reconstructing himself. We knew this truth, I think, but we have forgotten it. No gentleness can efface the marks of violence; it is violence alone that can destroy them. And the colonized cure themselves of the colonial neurosis by driving out the *colon* with weapons. When their rage explodes, they recover their lost transparency, they know themselves in the same measure as they create themselves; from afar, we regard their war as the triumph of barbarism; but it leads by itself to progressive emancipation of the fighters, it progressively liquidates the colonial darkness within and outside them. Once it starts, it is merciless. One must remain terrified or become terrible; that is to say: abandon oneself to the dissociations of a falsified life or conquer native unity. When the peasants pick up guns, the old myths pale, prohibitions are one by one overturned: the fighters' weapons are their humanity. For, at this first stage of the revolt, they have to kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, doing away with oppressor and oppressed at the same time: what remains is a dead man and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels *national* soil under his feet. At this instant, the nation does not desert him: it is found wherever he goes, wherever he is – never any further away, it merges with his freedom. But, after the first surprise, the colonial Army reacts: it must unite or be massacred. Tribal discords diminish and tend to disappear: first because they endanger the Revolution, and more importantly, because their only purpose was to divert the violence towards false enemies. When they remain – as in the Congo – it is because they are kept alive by the agents of colonialism. The nation moves into action: for every brother, it is everywhere where other brothers are fighting. Their fraternal love is the opposite of the hate they have for you: they are brothers in that each of them has killed, can kill, from one instant to the next. Fanon demonstrates to his readers the limits of 'spontaneity', the necessity and the dangers of 'organization'. But, however immense the task may be, at every stage of its undertaking, revolutionary awareness deepens. The last complexes vanish: let them come and talk a little to us about the 'dependency complex' of the ALN soldiers. Freed from his blinkers, the peasant becomes aware of his needs: they used to kill him and he tried to ignore them; but now he sees in them an infinite necessity. In this violence of the people – to hold out for five years, eight years as the Algerians have done – military, social and political necessities cannot be distinguished from each other. Even if only in asking the question of command and responsibilities, war institutes new structures which will be the first institutions of peace. Here, then, human beings are established even in new traditions, the future daughters of a horrible present, here they are legitimated by a right which is about to be born, which is being born each day in the fire: when the last *colon* is killed, shipped back home or assimilated, the minority species disappears, giving way to socialist fraternity. And that is not yet enough: these fighters rush ahead; you can be sure they are not risking their skin to find themselves in the same position as the old colonial man. Look at their patience: perhaps they dream sometimes of a new Dien Bien Phu; but do not believe that they really expect it: they are beggars struggling, in their wretchedness, against rich people, powerfully armed. While waiting for the decisive

victories and, often, without expecting anything, they make their adversaries feel nauseated. This is not possible without terrible losses; the colonial Army becomes ferocious: controlling, combing the terrain, rounding up, carrying out punitive expeditions; women and children are massacred. They know: these new men begin their life as human beings at the end of it; they consider themselves potential dead men. They will be killed: it is not just that they accept the risk of it, but rather that they are certain of it; these potential dead men have lost their wives, their sons; they have seen so many agonies that they prefer victory to survival; others will benefit from the victory, not them: they are too weary. But this weariness of heart gives rise to an incredible courage. We find our humanity on this side of death and despair, they find it beyond torture and death. We have sown wind; they are the whirlwind. Sons of violence, at every instant they draw their humanity from it: we were human beings at their expense, they are making themselves human beings at ours. Different human beings, of better quality.

Here Fanon stops. He has shown the way: the spokesman of the fighters, he has called for the union, the unity of the African continent against all the discords and all the particularisms. His goal has been attained. If he wanted to describe the historic fact of decolonization completely, he would have to talk about us, which is certainly not his intention. But, when we have closed the book, it continues to work in us, in spite of its author: for we experience the force of peoples in revolution and we respond with force. There is thus a new moment of violence and this time we must return to ourselves, for it is changing us to the same degree as the false native is changed by it. It is up to everyone to reflect as they see fit, provided, however, that they do reflect: in today's Europe, thoroughly dazed by the blows being delivered to it, in France, in Belgium and in Britain, the slightest distraction of thought is criminal complicity with colonialism. This book had no need of a preface. Even less so because it is not addressed to us. I have written one, however, to bring the dialectic to its conclusion: we, the people of Europe, are also being decolonized, that is to say the *colon* within each of us is being removed in a bloody operation. Let us look at ourselves, if we have the courage, and see what is happening to us.

We must first face up to that unexpected spectacle: the strip-tease of our humanism. Here it is, completely naked and not beautiful: it was nothing but an illusory ideology, the exquisite justification for pillage; its tenderness and its affectation sanctioned our acts of aggression. The non-violent are looking pleased with themselves: neither victims nor executioners! Come on! If you are not victims, since the government for which you voted, since the Army in which your young brothers have served, carried out a 'genocide' without hesitation or remorse, then you are unquestionably executioners. And if you choose to be victims, to risk one or two days in prison, you are just extricating yourself while you can. But you cannot extricate yourself; you must stay in to the bitter end. Understand this for once: if the violence had started this evening, if exploitation or oppression had never existed on earth, perhaps this display of non-violence could settle the dispute. But if the entire regime and even your non-violent thoughts are a condition born of an age-old oppression, your passivity only serves to place you on the side of the oppressors.

You know very well that we are exploiters.You know very well that we took the gold and the metals and then the oil of the 'new continents' and brought them back to the old

mother countries. Not without excellent results: palaces, cathedrals, industrial capitals; and then whenever crisis threatened, the colonial markets were there to cushion or deflect it. Europe, stuffed with riches, granted *de jure* humanity to all its inhabitants: for us, a human being means 'accomplice', since we have all benefited from colonial exploitation. This fat and pallid continent has ended up lapsing into what Fanon rightly calls 'narcissism'. Cocteau was irritated by Paris, 'the city which is always talking about itself '. What else is Europe doing? Or that super-European monster, North America? What empty chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honour, country, and who knows what else? That did not prevent us from holding forth at the same time in racist language: filthy nigger, filthy Jew, filthy North Africans. Enlightened, liberal and sensitive souls – in short, neocolonialists – claimed to be shocked by this inconsistency; that is an error or bad faith. Nothing is more consistent, among us, than racist humanism, since Europeans have only been able to make themselves human beings by creating slaves and monsters. As long as there was an *indigénat*, this imposture remained unmasked; we saw in the human race an abstract principle of universality which served to conceal more realistic practices: there was, on the other side of the seas, a race of subhumans who, thanks to us, in a thousand years would perhaps reach our status. In short, we confused the human race with the elite. Today, the natives are revealing their truth; as a result, our exclusive club is revealing its weakness: it was a minority, no more and no less. And worse than that: since the others are making themselves human beings through their opposition to us, it appears that we are the enemies of the human race; the elite is revealing its true nature: a gang. Our cherished values are losing their sparkle: looking at it closely, there is not a single one that is not stained with blood. If you need an example, remember those grand words: 'How generous France is!' Generous, us? What about Sétif? And those eight years of ferocious war that have cost the lives of more than a million Algerians? And the torture? But you must understand that we are not being reproached for having betrayed some mission or other, for the good reason that we did not have one. It is generosity itself which is at issue; this beautiful melodious word has only one meaning: the granting of statutory rights. For the men on the other side, new and liberated, no one has the power or the privilege to give anything to anyone. Everyone has all rights to anything. And our species, when one day it is completely formed, will not define itself as the sum of the world's inhabitants, but as the infinite unity of their reciprocal relations. I shall stop here; you will finish the job without difficulty; it is enough to take a good look, for the first and the last time, at our aristocratic virtues: they are in their death throes. How could they outlive the aristocracy of subhumans which engendered them? A few years ago, a bourgeois – and colonialist – commentator could find nothing better to defend the West than this: 'We are not angels. But at least we feel remorse.' What an admission! In the past, our continent had other devices to keep it afloat: the Parthenon, Chartres, the Rights of Man, the swastika. We now know what they are worth: and now the only thing they claim can save us from shipwreck is the very Christian sentiment of our guilt. This is the end, as you can see: Europe is taking in water everywhere. What then has happened? Quite simply this: in the past we were the subjects of History, whereas we are now its objects. The balance of power has been reversed, the process of decolonization is in progress; all that our mercenaries can attempt is to delay its completion.

But for that, the old 'mother countries' would have to spare no expense and commit all

their might to a battle lost in advance. At the end of the adventure, we again encounter the old colonial brutality, which provided the Bugeauds with their dubious glory, now increased tenfold and insufficient. We sent the troops to pay with our blood for the shame of having been beaten by the Algeria where they have remained for seven years without effect. The violence has changed direction: when we were victorious, we employed it without appearing to be corrupted by it: it decomposed the others, while for us human beings, our humanism remained intact; united by profit, the people of the mother country baptized the community of their crimes 'fraternity' and 'love'; today, that same violence, everywhere obstructed, returns to us via our soldiers, is internalized and takes possession of us. Involution is starting: the colonized are reconstructing themselves, whereas we, the extremists as well as the liberals, the *colons* as well as the people of mainland France, are decomposing. Already rage and fear are naked: they are shown quite openly in the attacks on Arabs in Algiers. Where are the savages now? Where is the barbarity? Nothing is missing, not even the tom-tom: the car horns blare out 'French Algeria' while the Europeans have the Muslims burned alive. Not very long ago, Fanon reminds us, psychiatrists at a conference deplored the crimes of the natives: these people are killing each other, they said, that is abnormal. The Algerian's cortex must be under-developed. In central Africa, others have established that 'the African uses his frontal lobes very little'. Today, these scientists could usefully pursue their research in Europe, and particularly among the French. For we too, for some years now, must have been affected by cerebral laziness: the patriots have been murdering a few of their compatriots; if they are not at home, they blow up their concierge and their house. That is just the start: civil war is expected in the autumn or next spring. Our lobes, however, appear to be in perfect condition: could it not rather be the case that, because it has been unable to crush the native, the violence is rebounding on itself, mounting within us and seeking an outlet? The union of the Algerian people is producing the disunion of the French people: throughout the territory of mainland France, tribes are dancing and preparing for combat. Terror has left Africa and established itself here, for there are quite simply fanatics here who want to make us natives. And then there are the others, all the others, who are also guilty (did anyone take to the streets to say 'Enough' after Bizerte and the September lynchings?), but who are more composed: the liberals, the hard nuts of the soft Left. In them, too, the fever is mounting. And so too is aggression. But they are scared stiff! They mask their rage from themselves with myths and complicated rites; to delay the final reckoning and the hour of truth, they have placed at our head a Grand Sorcerer whose function is to keep us in the dark at all costs. To no effect – proclaimed by some, repressed by others, the violence is going round in circles: one day it explodes in Metz, the next in Bordeaux; it has passed through here, it will pass through there, it is like the game of pass the parcel. We in turn, step by step, are going down the path that leads to the *indigénat*. But for us to become total natives, our soil would have to be occupied by the former colonized and we would have to be dying of starvation. That will not happen: no, what possesses us is fallen colonialism, it is that which will soon be riding us, senile and haughty. That is our *zar* and our *loa*. And after reading Fanon's last chapter, you will be convinced that it is better to be a native at the worst hour of misery that a former *colon*. It is not a good thing for a police officer to be obliged to torture ten hours a day: at that rate, his nerves will crack up unless torturers are forbidden, in their own interest, to

work overtime. When one wants to protect, with the full rigour of the law, the morale of the Nation and the Army, it is not a good thing for the latter to systematically demoralize the former. Nor is it a good thing that a country with a republican tradition should entrust its young people in their hundreds of thousands to putschist officers. It is not a good thing, my fellow Frenchmen, you who are aware of all the crimes committed in our name, it is really not a good thing that you do not breathe a word of it to anyone, not even your own soul, for fear of having to be judged. At the start you did not know, I can believe that; then you suspected; now you know, but you continue to remain silent. Eight years of silence have a degrading effect. And all to no avail: today, the blinding sun of torture is at its zenith and illuminates the whole country; in this light, there is no laughter that does not sound false, no face that is not made up to conceal anger or fear, no act that does not betray our disgust and complicity. Whenever two French people meet now, there is a dead body between them. In fact, did I say one? … In the past, France was the name of a country; let us take care that it is not, in 1961, the name of a neurosis.

Will we recover? Yes. Violence, like Achilles' spear, can heal the wounds that it has made. Today we are in chains, humiliated, sick with fear, at our lowest ebb. Luckily, that is not yet enough for the colonial aristocracy: they cannot accomplish their delaying mission in Algeria unless they first complete the colonization of the French. Every day we shy away from the fight, but you can be sure that we will not avoid it: the killers need it; they will wade in and let us have it. Thus will end the time of sorcerers and fetishes: you will have to fight or rot in the camps. It is the last stage of the dialectic: you condemn this war, but do not yet dare to declare your solidarity with the Algerian fighters; have no fear, count on the *colons* and the mercenaries: they will make you take the plunge. Perhaps then, with your back to the wall, you will finally unleash this new violence aroused in you by old rehashed crimes. But that, as they say, is another story. That of man. The time is coming, I am sure, when we will join those who are writing it.

The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba *

1
The Venture

Lumumba and Fanon: these two great dead men represent Africa. Not only their nations: all of their continent. Reading their writings and deciphering their lives, one might take them to be implacable enemies. Fanon, the great-grandson of a slave, left his native Martinique, a country which at that time had not yet become aware of the Caribbean identity and its needs. He espoused the Algerian revolt and fought as a black among Muslim whites. Drawn with them into an atrocious and necessary war, he adopted the radicalism of his new brothers, became the theoretician of revolutionary violence and underlined in his books Africa's socialist calling: without agrarian reform and without the nationalization of colonial businesses, independence was an empty word. A victim of Belgian paternalism – no elite, no bother – Lumumba, despite his vast intelligence, did not possess Fanon's learning. On the other hand, he did appear at first sight to have the advantage over Fanon of working on his own soil for the emancipation of his brothers of colour and of his own native country. On countless occasions he said that the movement he was organizing, and whose uncontested leader he

* First published with the title 'Lumumba et le néo-colonialisme', as preface to *Discours de Lumumba*, Présence africaine, 1963.

became, would be *non-violent*, and apart from the provocations or a few local initiatives of which he always disapproved, it was by non-violent means that the MNC [1] established itself. As for structural problems, Lumumba clearly defined his position in his *Présence africaine* lectures: 'We do not have an economic option.' By that he meant that political questions – independence, centralism – came first, that political decolonization had to be achieved before the instruments of economic and social decolonization could be created.

In fact, these two men, far from fighting each other, knew and liked each other. Fanon often talked to me about Lumumba; quick to notice when an African party revealed itself to be vague or reticent on the issue of the re-organization of structures, he never reproached his Congolese friend for becoming, even unintentionally, the straw man of neocolonialism. Quite the contrary, he saw in him the uncompromising adversary of any restoration of disguised imperialism. The only thing he reproached him for – and one can imagine with what tenderness – was his unshakeable faith in man that was his downfall and his greatness. 'He would be given the proof ', Fanon told me, 'that one of his ministers was betraying him. He would go and find him, show him the documents and the reports and ask him: 'Are you a traitor? Look me straight in the eye and reply.' If he denied it without looking away, Lumumba would conclude: 'All right, I believe you.' But Fanon only considered this immense goodness, which some Europeans have called

naiveté, to be *harmful at that time*: as such, he was proud of it; he saw in it a fundamental trait of the African. The man of violence said to me several times:'We black people are good; we have a horror of cruelty. For a long time, I believed that the men of Africa would not fight each other. Alas, black blood is being spilled, black men are spilling it, and it will be spilled for a long time to come. The whites are leaving, but their accomplices are among us, armed by them. The last battle of the colonized against the colonizers will often be that of the colonized among themselves.' I know: the doctrinaire in him

1 The Congolese National Movement.

saw in violence the ineluctable fate of a world in the process of liberating itself, but the man, deep down, hated it. The differences and the friendship between these two men symbolize both the contradictions that are ravaging Africa and the common need to transcend them in pan-African unity. And each encountered within himself the same heart-rending problems and the will to resolve them.

The whole of Fanon's story remains to be told. But the better-known Lumumba continues, despite everything, to guard many a secret. No one has really attempted to discover the causes of his failure, [2] nor why major capital and the bank were so bitterly opposed to a government whose leader never stopped repeating that he would leave invested capital alone and never stopped seeking new investments. The speeches you are about to read serve that end: they will allow you to understand why, despite the moderation of his economic programme, the leader of the MNC was considered by the revolutionary Fanon as a brother in arms and by the Société Générale as a mortal enemy.

He has been accused of playing a double, even a triple, game. Before an exclusively Congolese audience, he would get carried away; he was able to calm himself when he discovered that whites were present and blow hot and cold skilfully. In Brussels, before a Belgian audience, he became prudent, charming, and his first concern was to reassure. This is in no way false; but the same can be said of all great orators: they quickly judge their audience and know just how far they can go. Moreover, the reader will see that while the form may vary from speech to speech, the basics do not change. No doubt, Lumumba developed: the political thought of the young author of *Is the Congo, the Land of the Future, under Threat?* – written in 1956 – is not that of the young but mature man who founded the MNC. He may have briefly dreamed of a Belgian-Congolese community (we will see later why), but from 10 October

2 I would, however, like to refer to the very remarkable work by Michel Merlier, *The Congo*, published by Maspéro.

1958 on, his opinion, from which he was not to waver, was formed and declared: independence became his sole aim.

What varies the most, depending on his audience, is his judgement of Belgian colonization. He often emphasizes its positive aspects (indeed, sometimes with so much complacency that you might imagine you were listening to a colonist): the development of the land above and below ground, the educational work of the Missions, medical aid,

hygiene, etc. Did he not, on one occasion, even go as far as to thank Léopold II's soliders for having delivered the Congolese from the 'Savage Arabs' who traded in black slaves? In those cases, he skates over the exploitation, the forced labour, the expropriations of property, the imposed crop-growing, the deliberately maintained illiteracy, the bloody repressions, the racism of the colonists. He limits himself to deploring the abuses of certain administrators or poor white settlers. At other times, the tone changes, as in the recorded speech of 28 October 1959 and, above all, in the famous reply to King Baudouin on 30 June 1960: 'Our wounds still are too fresh and too painful for us to be able to banish from our memory our fate during 80 years of colonial rule …', etc. Is it the same man speaking? Undeniably. Is he lying? Certainly not. But when he reveals now one, now the other of the two opposing conceptions of Belgium's 'civilizing' work, it is because they co-exist within him and translate the profound contradiction of what can only be called his class. In spite of itself, colonial exploitation endowed the Congo with new structures. Using the generally accepted vocabulary, in the 1950s, 78 per cent of the population were *coutumiers* – peasants subject to customary rule and tribal struggles – while 22 per cent were *extra-coutumiers*, of whom the majority lived in the towns. Despite the Administration's zeal in maintaining the population in ignorance, it was unable to prevent the rural exodus, the urban proliferation, proletarianization or, among *extra-coutumiers*, a degree of differentiation born of the needs of the colonial economy: a Congolese petty bourgeoisie of employees, public officials and shopkeepers was developing. This slender 'elite' – 150,000 people out of 14 million – contrasted with the country people held back by their rivalries and their traditions, led by 'chiefs' in the pay of the administration, and with the workers who, though violent at times, lacked a true revolutionary organization, and possessed only an embryonic class consciousness. The position of the black 'petty bourgeoisie' was extremely ambiguous at the outset because it believed that it gained benefit from colonization, and that this benefit enabled it to measure the iniquity of the system. In actual fact, its members – most of them very young since the class itself was a recent product of colonial development – were recruited by large firms or the Administration. There were not yet any who, at the age of 30, were petty bourgeois by birth. Lumumba's father was a Catholic peasant who took him to the fields from the age of 6; it was the Passionist Fathers who decided that the child would go to school. Later, when he was 13, the Protestant missionaries pinched him from them. The role of the father and the child in all this seems to have been zero. Emile Lumumba disapproved of his son when, at the age of 13, he went to the Swedish mission, but what could he do? Everything was decided without them; 'The Fathers' wanted to make a catechist of him, while the more practical Swedish wanted to give him a profession that would allow him to leave the peasantry for the wage-earning class and live on his own land as an *auxiliary* of the *colons*, in one of the agglomerations created by the whites. Patrice spent his childhood in the bush: the misery of the black peasants' life is well known, and without the religious organizations that took care of him, that misery would have been his lot, his only horizon. Did he understand immediately that the Missions were the recruiting agents for the colonial system? No, he probably did not. Did he see that the condition of rural life was, directly or indirectly, the product of colonial exploitation? He probably did not see this either: at about the time he was born, the Administration was realizing the disadvantages of too visible a coercion and of forced

labour. It was attempting to interest the peasant in production and encouraging individual ownership of property. Patrice regarded his father's poverty-stricken independence in the solitude of the Congolese countryside as a natural state: far from being responsible for it, the whites were nice gentlemen who would rescue him from it. He must have been given, at about this time, some strange explanations of his situation: the Christian faith was the dues young Congolese made to the Churches who taught them to read. The Fathers gave him a burning ambition to understand the causes of his misery, and, at the same time, the desire to resign himself to it. He later noted this contradiction in a poem:

> To make you forget that you were a man
> They taught you to sing God's praises
> And these diverse hymns, setting your Calvary to song
>
> Gave you the hope of a better world
> But in your heart of a human creature, you scarcely
> demanded more
> Than your right to life and your share of happiness.

Religion prostrates at the same time as it liberates. And then it offers salvation, and although a better world is only an alibi, they are obliged to teach that one can enter it thanks to merit and not according to the colour of one's skin. However hard many priests try to hide it, the egalitarianism of the Gospel retains its undermining effect on the colonies. It affects not only the catechumens but also the missionary himself, sometimes: either because they wanted to forestall a Socialist Party congress in Belgium, or out of conviction, or perhaps a mixture of both, in 1956 the Scheut missionaries approved a manifesto drawn up by Ileo, a 37-year-old *évolué* who called for independence – in the long term – for the Congo. The departure of the 18-year-old Patrice from the bush for Kindu, where the Symaf company took him on as a 'book-keeper', was part of the generalized rural exodus, and also the crucial stage in his developing consciousness. A young peasant who had read Rousseau and Victor Hugo suddenly encountered the town; his standard of living was radically transformed. He used to go to school in a loincloth; now, he went to work in a suit. He had lived in a hut; now he lived in a house and was earning enough money to buy and fetch Pauline, his Mututela fiancée, who became his wife. He worked frenetically. The whites claimed to be surprised by his zeal: the Congolese, they said, are usually lazy. But these obtuse colonists did not understand that the famous 'laziness of the native', a myth upheld in all the colonies, is a form of sabotage, the passive resistance of the peasant or exploited worker. Patrice's frenzy, in contrast, placed him for a time in the category of those whom he was later to call 'collaborators'. The peasant's son was now an *évolué*; he applied for a 'registration card' and obtained one with difficulty – there were only 150 of them in the whole country – thanks to the intervention of the whites: in other words, he was *betting* on them; he had realized his importance, that of the young 'elite' which was forming everywhere. The *évolués* formed a social stratum which was slowing expanding and providing indispensable aid to major businesses and the Administration. As a black, Patrice

Lumumba drew his powerful sense of pride from his post, the education he had received, the books he had read, from the vaguely deferential mistrust with which the whites surrounded him. When he talked later about the benefits of colonization, he was thinking about this extraordinary and common metamorphosis.

But his consciousness is twofold and contradictory: at the same time as he was enjoying his rise and the benevolent regard of his bosses, he was aware that he had, at the age of 20, reached his zenith. Above all the blacks, he would always remain beneath all the whites. Of course, he could earn more and, after an apprenticeship, become a third-class postal worker in Stanleyville. So what? For the same work, a Belgian clerk of equal merit would earn twice his salary. In addition, Lumumba knew that after a thundering start, the hare had suddenly turned into a tortoise: it would take him 24 years to reach first class, after which he would stay there until retirement. The European, in contrast, entered this junior rank directly, and could aspire to rise from there to the highest positions. It was the same in the *Force Publique*: a 'Negro' could not rise above the rank of sergeant. It was also the same in the private sector. The whites had raised him to the level they wished and then kept him there: his fate was in other people's hands. He experienced his condition with a sense of pride and alienation. Beyond his personal situation he caught a glimpse of naked class war; at 31, he was to write: 'A real duel exists between the employers and the employees with regard to salaries.' But the salaried class of *évolués* was not the proletariat: Lumumba's demands were based on the awareness of his professional worth – like those of the anarcho-syndicalists in Europe at the end of the last century – and not on need which motivates the demands of proletarians and the sub-proletariat everywhere. At about the same time, he realized – above all in Léopoldville – that he had been duped: the 'registration' that had been so hard to obtain separated him from the blacks without assimilating him to the whites. The registered black had no more right than the unregistered to enter European towns, unless he was working there; like them, he could not evade the curfew; when he went shopping, he met them again at the special counter reserved for blacks; like them, he was a victim of segregationist practices on every occasion and in every place. Now it should be noted that racism and segregation were a new experience for him: in the bush, one experiences adversity and malnutrition, and one is able to guess at that truth of the colonies, which is exploitation; but racism scarcely appears owing to a lack of contact between whites and blacks. The honeyed paternalism of the missionaries may have deluded him; the practices of discrimination only became evident in the towns and that is what made up the daily life of the colonized. But let us be clear about it: the exhausted and underpaid proletariat suffered much more from exploitation than from racist discrimination which is the consequence of it. When, on 30 June 1960, Lumumba denounced 'the exhausting work required in exchange for wages which did not allow us to eat our fill, or to clothe and house ourselves decently, or to raise our children', he was speaking for everyone. But when he added: 'We knew that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling grass huts for the blacks, that a black was never allowed into the so-called European cinemas, restaurants or shops; that a black travelled in the hull of the barges beneath the feet of the white in his luxury cabin', it is the *évolué* class speaking through his voice. And when he wrote in 1956 that 'registration should be considered as the last stage of integration', he was defending the interests of a handful of men and at the same time was contributing to

their isolation from the masses. In fact, the interests of this elite, artificially created by the Belgians, day by day demanded a more thorough assimilation: equality of whites and blacks in the job market, access of Africans to all posts for which they possessed the required qualifications. As we see, he was demanding not the Africanization of the cadres, but their semi-Africanization. Was it not to be feared, in this case, that the blacks admitted to higher posts might be the accomplices of colonial oppression or, at the very least, its hostages? Lumumba was not yet aware of the problem. In fact, the very same year that Ileo was demanding eventual independence in his manifesto, Patrice got no further than sketching out a 'Belgian-Congolese community'. He called for the equality of all citizens within this community. But for a long time to come, this equality would only work to the advantage of the *évolués*: 'We believe that it would be possible, in the relatively near future, to grant political rights to the Congolese elites and to the Belgians in the Congo according to certain criteria to be established by the Government.'

From this period on, however, Lumumba was the opposite of those whom he was later to call 'collaborators'. It is simply that he experienced the full extent of the contradictions of his class: he knew that it had been artificially created by the necessities of colonization, had been cut off from the masses by Belgian capitalist companies, and had a future only in the colonial system. But at the same moment, he drew the conclusion from his city experience that that future was definitively denied him by the colonists and the Administration. At the very moment he was proposing the 'Belgian-Congolese community', he no longer believed in it: he had finally discovered the rigidity of the system which had created him the better to exploit him. No reform was conceivable for the sole reason that colonialism maintains itself by coercion and disappears when it makes concessions. The only solution would be revolutionary: breaking away, independence.

As we have just seen, Ileo had called for it before him; likewise Kasavubu, the leader of the powerful Abako. Lumumba did not 'invent' independence; others revealed its necessity to him. If he was, however, its promoter and its martyr, it was because he wanted complete and full independence and events did not enable him to realize it. In fact, most nationalist organizations were necessarily formed in a regional framework: the PSA was set up in Kwango Kwilu, the CEREA in Kivu. They managed, with difficulty, to reconcile the ethnic groups, but for that very reason, they found it hard to expand beyond the provinces. Their nationalism – where it existed – was in fact federalism: they dreamed of a very limited central power whose principal function would be to unite autonomous provinces. In Léopoldville, the situation was even more extreme: the numerical superiority of the Bakongo enabled Abako to be both a regional and an ethnic party. To take just the last case, this resulted in two consequences: Abako was a powerful but archaic movement. It was at the same time a secret society and a mass party, and its main leaders were *évolués* who were not cut off from the people because they had adopted their fundamental demand: immediate independence for Lower Congo. Kasavubu, the most important, was an ambiguous and secret character who, though recruited by the Administration, could be said to have succeeded in staying in direct contact with his ethnic base, and yet at the same time never had the means, the opportunity or the will to raise himself to a clear awareness of his own class. A seminarist without faith and later a teacher, he was united with the Bakongo by an obscure,

messianic bond; he was their religious leader, their king, the living proof that they are the *chosen people*. When he was elected president of the independent Congo, he was suddenly to find himself in the most complete contradiction: his office required him to preserve national unity – in particular against the Katangan secession which threatened to destroy the Congo – while his people demanded that he himself should be secessionist and, by taking back territory from French Congo, restore the ancient Kongo kingdom. Incapable of mastering the situation, he would oscillate between an anarchic federalism and a dictatorial centralism supported by military force. Above all, he was to play the game of imperialism, at first unconsciously and then very consciously. It is not a question of psychology here, but of objective determination: separatist by nature, Abako, *after* independence, would destroy the work of the nationalists to the advantage of the foreign powers. *Before* independence, however, while Lumumba was awakening to national consciousness, this confused movement, being both obscurantist and revolutionary, did more than any other party for the liberation of the Congo. From 1956, it responded to Ileo's manifesto and Lumumba's reflections on the 'community' by demanding immediate independence and the *nationalization of big businesses*. One might have thought that it had a revolutionary and socialist programme, or, at the very least, that the demands of the rank and file were reaching the top. But as events proved, that was not so. It was only an attempt to outdo the others: Abako had to be the most radical party; as indeed it was, in the sense that the Bakongo made up 50 per cent of Léopoldville's black population and supplied the town with its unskilled labour. As they were disciplined, they could be mobilized at any time by secret instructions: they were the ones who went on strike and mounted disobedience campaigns. Their leaders only had to ban voting for no one to go near the ballot box. It was also they who rioted in January 1959 – whether under precise orders or despite a strict ban is a question that remains unresolved. Except in the Lower Congo, the *évolués* had no power over the masses, their small numbers and way of life making them incapable of taking direct action. It has to be admitted that they carried little weight in the events of January 1959. In fact, it was the economic crisis, the colonial recession which hit the mother country hard, coupled with the agitation of the proletarianized masses whose standard of living was deteriorating noticeably, along with the clumsiness of the Administration, that urged the Belgian Government to grant the Congo its independence so abruptly, or in other words, to swap – with the approval of the large companies – the colonial regime for neocolonialism.

Lumumba did not make the Congolese revolution; his situation as an *évolué* cut off from the urban proletariat (and even more so from the countryside) prevented him from having recourse to violence: his commitment to non-violence – which he maintained until his death – can be attributed not so much to a principle or a character trait but to a keen recognition of his powers. From 1956 on, he was the idol of the crowds in Stanleyville. But an idol is not a leader in the style of Nkrumah whom he admired, and even less a sorcerer like Kasavubu who disturbed him. He knew this: he knew he could convince an audience with his gift of being able to speak anywhere to anyone, and with the education that he had received from the Belgians and which was now turned against them. But it takes more than a gift with words to be able to send men empty-handed against submachine guns. And yet it was he who would catch the Revolution as it passed, put his stamp on it and orientate it. Why? Because his condition as an *assimilé* and the nature of

his work enabled him to raise himself to the level of universality. He had known the bush, small towns, provincial cities and the capital; from the age of 18, he had escaped provincialism. His reading and Christian education had given him an image of man which was still abstract, but free of racism. In his speeches, it is striking that he explained the situation of the Congo by constant references to the French Revolution and the struggle of the Netherlands against the Spanish. And there is, of course, something of an *ad hominem* argument in these allusions: how could you whites prevent the blacks from doing what you did? But, beyond these polemic intentions, he is guided by a humanism of principle which cannot avoid being the ideology of the *évolués*: and indeed, it was in the name of *homo faber* that the latter claimed equality between Belgians and Congolese in the labour market. This universal concept immediately placed Lumumba above ethnic groups and tribalism: it allowed this wanderer to benefit from his travels and to interpret local problems in the light of the universal. It was from this point of view that he was to understand – beyond the diversity of customs, rivalries and discords – the unity of needs, interests and sufferings. The Administration placed him above the ordinary level: without a doubt this isolated him, but it also allowed him to understand the condition of the Congolese in its totality. From then on, whatever his audience, he constantly affirmed the unity of his country: what divided people was the legacy of a pre-colonial past carefully preserved by the Administration; what united them, at that time negatively, was a sort of common adversity that went deeper than traditions and customs since it attacked their lives at the root through overwork and undernourishment; in short, it was Belgian colonization which created the Congolese nation by perpetual and omnipresent aggression.

This is both true and false. Colonization unifies, but it divides at least as much, not only by design and Machiavellianism – that would be nothing – but through the division of labour that it introduces and the social classes that it creates and stratifies. In the towns, socio-professional bonds tended to win over tribal bonds, but, on closer examination, divisions based on work, standard of living and education were superadded to ethnic divisions inside black districts. To this had to be added the conflicts between the first and the last to be urbanized. The proletariat of the camps was not the same as that of the towns, and above all, the rural *'coutumiers'*, ruled by conservative *tribalism* more often than not sold out to the Europeans, did not enter into the field of view of *évolué* town-dwellers. But the nascent petty bourgeoisie could not avoid making the same mistake as the French bourgeoisie at the time of the Revolution: confronted with a disorganized proletariat with confused demands, and a peasantry from which it had emerged and whose aspirations it imagined it knew, *it took itself to be the universal class.* The only differentiation which it was willing to acknowledge had nothing to do with the economy: the *évolués* defined themselves, according to the wish of the colonial administration, by their degree of education. The culture they had received was their pride and their most vital substance. The best among them believed that this imposed upon them the strict duty of leading their illiterate brothers from the camps and the bush to autonomy or independence. I say that this illusion was inevitable: how could Lumumba, who went to 'The Fathers'' school *in a loincloth* and would maintain peasant ties until his death, really consider himself as the representative of a new class? If he lived better, it was simply due to his *merit*. The abject and very skilfully chosen word

évolué hid the truth: a small privileged class regarded itself as the vanguard of the colonized. Everything conspired to deceive Lumumba: in August 1956, the *évolués'* demands were supported unanimously by the delegates at the general assembly of the APIC. [3] He saw in this agreement between the masses and the elite a sign of the profound unity of the Congolese. In the light of events, we now see that it was an abstract entente: the indigenous masses were proud of their *'évolués'* who proved *for everyone* that blacks, provided they were given the opportunity, could equal or surpass whites; they supported the demands of the privileged elite – mainly in word and applause – because they saw in them a radical stand of the exploited against the employer. It was an example and a symbol; from this, the delegates could envisage a radicalization of the workers' demands. But when circumstances produced this, its effect was abruptly to break up the alliance between the masses and the petty bourgeoisie.

Lumumba was mistaken about this, but this inevitable error did have positive consequences; in short, *he was right*, historically, to make it. It was that which enabled him to assert with so much force that unity alone would allow the Congo to gain independence. This formula, so often repeated, is nevertheless perfectly correct provided that one adds that the unitary movement should come from the base and flood the country like a tidal wave. Unfortunately for the Congo, social divisions, the timidity of the demands and the absence of a revolutionary apparatus springing from the masses and controlled by them made, and continue to make, such a flood

3 APIC: Association of Indigenous Personnel of the Colony.

impossible. That will be the history of the next decade. Lumumba, listened to everywhere with enthusiasm, had reason to believe that the masses would follow the *évolués* all the way. This unity, which he considered to be both already realized and still to be created – half *means*, half supreme end – was in his eyes the Nation itself. The Nation: the Congo becoming unified through its struggle for independence. But the future prime minister was not naive enough to believe that this unification would occur spontaneously. He simply stated this negative principle: as the Administration divides and rules, the only way to cause it to lose its power is to remove everywhere the divisions that it has created. Tribalism had to go, along with the provincialism, the artificial conflicts and the water-tight barriers that it maintained. Democracy, yes, but it should not be confused – as it was by Ileo – with federalism. Whatever the intention, however minimal the regional autonomy demanded by a party may be, federalism is the bad apple, it rots everything and imperialism *immediately* exploits it. Lumumba understood that Abako would for a while be a remarkable tool for overturning colonialism, but that autonomy would later prove the best instrument for restoring it. His work as a postman integrated him into the colonial Administration and enabled him to discover its principal characteristic: centralization. This discovery was all the more easy for him because chance made him a cog in the centralized communications system. The Post Office network extended into all the provinces and even into the bush; through it, the government's orders were relayed to the local gendarmeries and the *Force Publique*. If one day the Congolese Nation were to exist, it would owe its unity to a similar centralism. Patrice dreamed of a general uniting power which would apply everywhere, impose harmony and a community of action

everywhere, would receive information from remote villages, concentrate it, base the direction of its policies on it and send back information and orders by the same route to its representatives in every little hamlet. The Government atomized the colonized and unified them *from outside* as subjects of the king. Independence would be just an empty word unless this cohesion from without were to be replaced by unification *from within*. The Belgian Administration could only be replaced by a party of the masses, one that was omnipresent, like itself, and democratic; that is to say, derived from the people and controlled by them. But it would be all the more authoritarian because – at least until the liberated Congo established its institutions – it alone would have the responsibility of defending the nation against the still virulent effects of an atomization practised for 80 years. Lumumba was so conscious of the dangers that he wished to replace the useless multiplicity of nationalist movements by a single party. We have little information about this project. But we do know that what he had in mind was a party *à l'africaine*, not a restricted organ which co-opts its new members (like the Communist Party of the USSR), but the entire population, men and women, each becoming *both* citizen *and* member. He feared that the opposition, if it were to remain outside the Party, would lead to some form of separatism, and therefore to the death of the Congo. He would not have rejected it within the Party. He often repeated that discussions there would be frank and free. What he did not say, but what, as in all cases of extreme urgency, was self-evident, was that following a vote, the minority would be forced to adopt the point of view of the majority and that the opposition, each time dissolved only to be reborn elsewhere in connection with other problems, would simply represent the free exercise of each individual's judgement in the present circumstances and would be deprived of the means to establish a collective memory and structure itself as a party within the Party.

He attached less importance – at least during the initial stages of independence – to the elaboration of an economic and social programme than to the vital function of the Party as a claw holding the Congo together in place of the old colonial talon: the falling apart of the country should be prevented at all costs. But even this concern had economic motives: he was fully aware of the Conakat party's manoeuvres and was in no doubt about what the result of Katangan secession would be. Thus his political Jacobinism was essentially inspired by a practical knowledge of Congolese realities. His speeches prove that he foresaw everything that happened subsequently. His only mistake was to believe that one could avert disaster by creating a large modern party that in time would replace the coercive power of the occupier.

We know that Belgium, very much in spite of itself, on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition, served as a meeting place for Congolese of different ethnic groups. The unity of their white oppressors revealed in a negative way to these blacks isolated in Brussels their unity as an oppressed people, stronger, they believed, than their divisions. Indeed, *in Belgium*, the Congolese were only aware of what brought them together. On their return, they maintained the abstract hope of uniting the colonized, wherever they might come from, into a supra-ethnic party. Lumumba alone was qualified to found this party, which was to be the MNC. But the composition of the movement soon revealed its nature: it was universalist beyond ethnic groups and frontiers because its active members were people who had been universalized; in short, it was the movement of the *évolués*. It would find members almost everywhere and without much trouble – at least in the towns

– because the Administration and the large companies had distributed the civil servants and the employees they had created all over the country. But the dream of creating a mass party collapsed: at best, it was a party of cadres and agitators. No one was to blame: it could not be any other way. The MNC was the Congolese petty bourgeoisie in the process of discovering its class ideology.

Lumumba was the most radical: clear-sighted and blind at the same time, he may not have seen that his unitarianism was socially conditioned and impossible at that time, but he understood full well that the Congo's problems were those of the whole of Africa; better still, his country would only find the strength to survive independence in the framework of a free Africa. He attended the Accra conference as a representative of the MNC. In a speech there, he commented in the following terms on the need for unity which was coming into being all over the continent and of which the Accra meeting was the direct consequence:

> 'This conference (…) reveals one thing to us: despite the frontiers that separate us, despite our ethnic differences, we have the same consciousness, the same soul that is steeped day and night in anguish, the same desire to make of this African continent a free and happy continent, released from anxiety, fear and all colonial domination.'

Replace Africa with Congo, continent with nation, and you have the phrases he repeated every day in all the provinces of his country. This was because, for him, the Congo appeared to summarize all the differences which perpetuate African separatisms: here were provincial frontiers, ethnic and religious conflicts, economic differentiations of both a vertical (social strata) and a horizontal kind (geographical distribution of resources). In his eyes, therefore, there was only one task: to struggle for independence was to struggle not only for national unity, but, at the same time, for a free Africa. Conversely, as he made clear later, everything which hastened the integration of the many states into a single federation brought nearer the hour when the last of the colonized would rid themselves of their colonizers. The course of events has shown that on this point he had a practical and very clear-cut opinion: states that had attained independence should aid countries still subjugated to reject all domination in every way possible. Two and a half years later, as we know, when he felt that the frail Congolese Republic was on the brink of disintegrating, he asked for the support of Ghanaian troops. If he had won the game, the Congo would no doubt have aided Angola and all the neighbouring countries: Lumumba's professed pan-Africanism attracted some of his most fearsome adversaries – the whites of Rhodesia and South Africa, and, more insidiously, the British Conservatives.A pan-African Congo would have been, first, an example, an encouragement in all those hearts that were still enslaved. But above all, that great country would have provided in countless ways the most effective support to the revolutionary organizations of the neighbouring countries, not only out of fraternity, but because it was the only viable African policy. The liberated Congo remained surrounded by deadly enemies; the blacks had to break their chains in Rhodesia and Angola and overturn Youlou's neocolonialist government, or they would return to slavery in the Congo. What Lumumba hinted at – but as we know, he understood it immediately – was

that Congolese independence was not an end in itself but the beginning of a struggle to the death to win national sovereignty. The Belgians' departure could be obtained by an *internal* organization; after their departure, danger could only be averted by an *external* policy. The young nation, having lost its masters without finding the means of exerting its freedom, would be obliged to rely on less young states that had already attained sovereignty; it would have to support national movements in the colonies which surrounded it. For this reason, Lumumba emphasized in his Accra speech the interdependence of the two objectives that the conference finally established and which for good reason are, in his mind, one and the same thing: 'the struggle against internal and external factors that constitute an obstacle to the emancipation of our respective countries and to African unification'. He was, however, too involved in the political struggle for liberation to stress the fundamental aspect of pan-Africanism: that Africa cannot create itself without producing, *for itself*, an African market. The organization of a common market for the whole of the black continent involved other problems and other struggles: for the MNC, it was not yet the moment to envisage them. Neither was it the moment to discover and unravel the mystification contained, in many countries – for example in French Congo – in the prestigious word 'independence', especially since de Gaulle, by pronouncing it that year in Brazzaville, prompted real enthusiasm in the Belgian colony and at a stroke won over the most hesitant to hard-line demands. Be that as it may: what Lumumba lacked was an in-depth knowledge of the new nations and their infrastructures, with the result that he would realize too late that certain black states were by nature sworn enemies of Congolese independence. Above all, shaped by the most severe oppression and the most despicable segregation, he was unable to conceive of any adversary other than the old colonialism, an ancient machine that was so stiff that it had to crush or break up. It was against this that he was preparing to fight, and indeed, there it was, represented by the small colonists and the Administration. But the black leader did not suspect that this ogre, still so vigorous and vicious, was, in reality, already dead; nor that the imperialist governments and the large companies, confronted with the colonial crisis, had decided to liquidate the classic forms of oppression and the detrimental, ossified structures that had developed during the course of the preceding century. He was unaware that the old mother countries wished to entrust nominal power to 'natives' who would govern, more or less consciously, according to colonial interests; he was unaware that the accomplices or straw men had already been chosen in Europe, that they all belonged to the class recruited and trained by the Administration, to the petty bourgeoisie of employees and civil servants, *to his own class*. This ignorance was to be his downfall. He belonged to the elite, it is true, and was therefore cut off from the masses whom he was supposed to represent: his supporters were all petty bourgeois; if he won, he would have formed the first government with them. But his intelligence and his deep commitment to the African cause made him a black Robespierre. His project was both limited – politics first, the rest would come in time – and universal. 'The Fathers' had uprooted him from the traditional world of the *non-évolués*; at the start, intoxicated by his precocious knowledge, he had even made himself the spokesman of the elite, and demanded complete integration for them. But in the end it was his universalism which triumphed. This was doubtless an ideological principle of his class, and was, as we have seen, an optical illusion. But this humanism, which for other people masked the

specificity of class interests, had become his personal passion; he devoted himself to it entirely. He wished to give back to the subhumans of colonial exploitation their native humanity. Of course, this could not be done without a reworking of all the structures, in short without agrarian reform and nationalization: his training as a democratic bourgeois prevented him from discerning the necessity of this fundamental restructuring. That was not so serious: how could he have discovered it without proletarian organizations channelling and clarifying political demands? Had he stayed in power, people and circumstances would have forced him to choose: neocolonization or African socialism. Let us be in no doubt about the choice he would have made. Unfortunately, in founding the MNC and establishing contact with the leaders of the other parties – that is to say with other *'évolués'* – he was putting in place, totally unsuspectingly, the most active elements of his own class, that is to say, men whose shared and individual interests had for a long time disposed them to betray him and who, from the first days of July 1960, considered that he had betrayed them. Indeed, the conflict between him and his ministers and between him and the parliamentary minority, had no other cause: these petty bourgeois wanted to set the petty bourgeoisie up as the ruling class, which amounted *objectively* to changing positions with the imperialist powers. He looked upon himself as a guide, believing himself to be classless, and refusing, in his centralizing zeal, to take differences of economic origin any more seriously than tribal divisions: the single Party would break down these and other barriers, and reconcile all interests. It may be that he planned, however vaguely, to reorganize the economy in stages and that he kept his intentions secret out of prudence. He was suspected of it, at any rate: and the affair of the Russian planes was not the only thing for which he was suddenly accused of communism. The most astute of the parliamentarians and ministers certainly feared that his Jacobinism would end in socialism by virtue of his unitary humanism. The important thing, at any rate, was that he placed his class in power and then set about governing against it. Could it have been any different? No: during the last years of colonization, the proletariat did not do a single thing that would have made these petty bourgeois accept it as a valid interlocutor.

2
The Reasons for Failure

On his return from Accra, the leader of the future single Party did in fact become the man of reconciliation: under his influence, the MNC attempted to form alliances with the main nationalist move-ments. The United Front which he set up won the 1960 elections. But the legalistic victory of this cartel should not deceive us as to its fragility: as long as it was simply a question of common propaganda and an agreement limited to the one slogan – independence – individual concerns were temporarily put aside. But once the victors governed – and who else should govern? – the Front would fall apart for the two reasons already emphasized: because the real base for each of the allied parties was provincial – even the 'MNC-Lumumba' received its support above all from Stanleyville's *extra-coutumiers* – and because this cultural universalism did little to conceal the desire, among the leaders, to form with their troops the new governing class. From then on,

Lumumba's purity and integrity condemned him: History was made through him, but against him. As soon as the uncontested leader of centralism demonstrated his power as an orator and his skill as a negotiator, his enemies came out into the open. First there was Tschombe and the members of Conakat: the Katangans claimed that their province alone fed all the Congolese; if links with ungrateful and needy regions were severed, it would enjoy the benefits of its riches alone. Then there was the inevitable scission of the centralist party: Kalonji founded the 'MNC-Kalonji' which became established in South Kasai; here, contrary to what happened with other groupings, political rivalry determined ethnic separatism. Lastly, Abako remained unyielding: Lumumba made repeated advances to Kasavubu who failed to respond. Once independence was attained and a government had to be constituted, two powerful forces confronted each other: the still intransigent Abako, and the flexible nationalist bloc (MNC and allied parties), committed to finding a durable compromise. Conakat, which claimed to be federalist, was the first to agree to enter a central government with conditions: this was simply a manoeuvre whose meaning was not lost. The Belgian minister Ganshof hesitated between the two movements: Lumumba had helped to maintain public order during recent riots. His declarations were moderate, he had no economic programme, he constantly repeated that he would guarantee the colonists' properties. And then, just a detail, his group had won the majority of votes in the election. But his centralism was alarming. The colonists were *against him*. Kasavubu was possibly more dangerous: he was the master of violence, but he was also the master of discord; his federalism concealed the passionate separatism of his ethnic group. The minister began by conferring on Lumumba 'an information gathering mission with a view to constituting a Congolese government'. The length and heaviness of this formula clearly betray its author's dilemma. Lumumba demonstrated perfect realism by simplifying it as follows: 'I have been asked to form the Government.' But on 17 June, Ganshof announced that he was relieving him of his fact-finding mission and conferring it on Kasavubu instead. Fresh but fruitless consultations ensued. On 21st, the Chamber appointed its executive: the nationalist bloc were to form the government. Poor Ganshof immediately relieved Kasavubu of his mission and restored it to Lumumba. Negotiations started once more, but Kasavubu had lost nothing of his intransigence: on 22 June, Abako once again demanded the 'setting up of a sovereign and independent Bakongo province within a confederation of a united Congo'. We know what the final compromise was: Abako supplied the head of state and some ministers; the nationalist bloc supplied the prime minister and the rest of the government team, except for the seats reserved for Conakat. This difficult birth highlights two very important facts. The first is that the negotiations took place under the threat of a Bakongo uprising. Lumumba's power was parliamentary; Kasavubu's was concrete and massive. As long as Belgium remained in the Congo, Ganshof had no choice but to take the elected majority into account: at the least, Belgium could not but install a caricature of bourgeois democracy in its former colony. *After the departure of the Belgians*, votes lost their importance: Lumumba was dismissed and arrested without ever having been defeated. In other words, democracy was simply rejected: the appearance of it was maintained, but power was based on force. Nothing shows more clearly that Lumumba's tragic fate was decided in advance. As prime minister, he had to establish himself in the capital of the new state. But by a rare stroke of bad luck, the capital happened to be separatist: in Léopoldville, the

masses had one leader alone – Kasavubu. Between a head of state who dominated Abako and a population whose sole aim was secession, a centralist prime minister could play only one role – that of hostage. He had supporters in all the provinces, but to communicate with them, he was obliged either to go via the Belgian administration which was still in place and resisted him with its inertia, or via the black civil servants of Léopoldville, the majority of whom were against him. From 1 July 1960, centralism became the abstract dream of a prisoner of honour who had totally lost his grip on the country. This became clear in the second half of September when Lumumba, after his dismissal, drove through the streets of Léopoldville in a car equipped with loudspeakers: his harangues convinced no one. Closed faces, an indifferent or hostile public: the population of Léopoldville could not care less about centralism. On the contrary, one word whispered by Kasavubu was enough to have thousands of anti-Lumumba rioters pour into the city: little by little, deputies became worried and deserted the Assembly; the legislative power gave in to illegality of its own accord. For the deputies, as for the head of the executive, the secessionist capital was a prison. Later, it got to the stage that the exhausted Lumumba, acknowledging at last that he had lost the game in Léopoldville, fled and become a separatist in his turn by attempting to reach Stanleyville, his fiefdom. By that I mean a provisional secession, the negation of a negation; he hoped to assemble his forces and undertake from Stanleyville the reconquest – be it peaceful or violent – of the Congo and its reunification. But even if he had joined the main group of his supporters, is it really possible that he would have retaken the Bakongo capital without encountering any opposition? What forces did he have? The most likely outcome is that Lumumba would have held his position in Stanleyville without winning or losing, and that Kasavubu would have prided himself on styling this return of centralism to its origins as the secession of a province. And indeed, objectively, this enterprise, owing to a lack of sufficient means to complete it, would have increased the division of the Congolese and the dividing up of their land. It must be acknowledged, however, that at this moment Lumumba had only one alternative: either accept federation and the autonomy of the Lower Congo, or flee to Stanleyville to prepare for reconquest: in both cases, federalism would prevail. The truth of the matter is that it had won in advance. In politics, what is *necessary* is not always what is *possible*. What was *necessary* for the Congo was unity, the key idea of the MNC, a modern party modelled on European movements: without it, independence was a dead letter. But at that point in its history, the European formula did not adequately correspond to the needs of the Congolese; ties that were more rudimentary and solid linked them to their native soil, to their ethnic group. Centralization only represented the class consciousness of those who had been centralized, in other words, the *évolués*.

These remarks bring us to the second characteristic of the Congo's independence: it was *granted*. If it had been won by the Congolese, it would have indeed been inconceivable that the Belgian Ganshof should choose, on his own authority, the most suitable Congolese to form a ministry. Lumumba knew this and suffered from it: he requested the departure of the Belgian minister several times before 30 June. At a press conference he declared: 'Nowhere in the world has the former power organized and conducted the elections which consecrate a country's independence. There is no precedent for this in Africa. When Belgium *won* its independence in 1830, it was the

Belgians themselves who first constituted a provisional government …' etc.

The emphasis on '*won*' is mine, because that is the crux of the matter. It explains the paternalistic tone of King Baudouin's address, given on 30 June: we are giving you a lovely toy; do not break it. And also the apathy of Kasavubu, who, having knowledge of the speech, limited himself to removing too servile a peroration from his own. It was for that reason that the indignant Lumumba suddenly took over the microphone. The admirable 'statement of bitterness' with which he replied to the young king's arrogance is well known. But for me, the most important thing is not that, but the lines which immediately precede it:

> Although the Congo's independence is today being proclaimed with the agreement of Belgium, a country which is our friend and with whom we deal as an equal, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that we won it through struggle, a daily struggle, a fierce and idealistic struggle, a struggle in which we did not spare our energies, our sacrifices, or our sufferings.

Here the transcript notes *'applause'*, leaving no doubt that the speaker had struck a chord. Whatever their party, the Congolese taking part in the ceremony did not want a gift: liberty is not given, it is taken. Turning the argument round, we can see that independence granted is merely a variation on servitude. The Congolese had suffered for almost a century: they had often fought and strikes and riots had become more frequent towards the end, despite the cruelty of the repression. Just recently, the days of January 1959 were, if not the cause, then at least the opportunity for the Belgian government's new colonial policy. The courage of the proletariat or the rural fighters, and every colonial subject's deep and invincible rejection, sometimes despite himself, of colonization were beyond question. The fact remains, however, that circumstances did not allow or demand recourse to *organized* struggle. In Vietnam, in Angola and in Algeria, the organizations were armed, they were people's wars. In Ghana, Nkrumah claimed to be fighting with political means, but in fact, the strikes he organized were bloodless violence. In any case, the struggle is organized *secretly* and *spontaneously*; the unity of the fighters becomes the immediate means of any action before being its distant goal: they unite to bring off a raid but also to escape from mortal danger. The colonists' reprisals seal secret pacts: the oppressors' violence begets counter-violence which at the same time turns against the enemy and against the divisions that play the enemy's game. If the organization is armed, it sweeps aside all obstacles in its path, liquidates *kaids*, fiefdoms, feudal privileges, everywhere substituting, *during the struggle*, its own political cadres for those established by the Administration. At the same time, a people's war implies the unity of the Army and the people, and thus the unification of the people themselves: tribalism must disappear or the rebellion will be drowned in blood. The eradication of these vestiges is done spontaneously, through persuasion, political education, and if necessary, through terror. Thus the struggle itself brings about the unification of the country as it spreads from one end of it to the other. And if two rebel movements which coexist at the outset do not join together, one can be sure that they will both be massacred by the colonial army or that one of them will destroy the other. Victorious leaders are military men and politicians at the same time: they have

demolished the old structures. Everything must be rebuilt from scratch, but no matter; they will create *popular* infrastructures; their provisional institutions will not be copies of European ones, but will attempt to ward off the dangers which threaten the young State by reinforcing unity at the expense of traditional freedoms. The executive's power is irresistible, because it is the Army which created itself in the fight against the oppressors. From this point of view, we can say that for Vietnam and for Algeria – whatever their present difficulties may be – unity and centralization preceded independence and were its guarantee. In the Congo, what happened was the opposite. The economic recession, the development of the ex-French Congo and the Algerian War altered minds and prompted troubles. But the latter were never orchestrated: they had neither the same origins, nor the same reasons, nor the same aims. They served as *signs* to the Belgian government, which was informed by a few lucid administrators that though the country might not be on the verge of terrorism yet, it very soon would be if Belgium did not define its policy clearly. This information came at a time when imperialism had drawn a lesson from the colonial wars in which France had exhausted herself and from the British experience of false decolonization. Belgium had no desire to transform the Congo into a black Algeria and refused to sink millions and human lives into it. With its 100,000 whites, the country could hardly count as a settlement colony, and repatriation – if it were to happen – would not disrupt Belgium's economy. The large companies, for their part, were willing to give it a go: their interests would not suffer whether they were protected by a white government or by a black collaborator. And indeed, it even seems, on close examination of the development of new African states, that independence is the most profitable solution. In short, it would be granted to the Congo.

People say now that the Belgian government displayed criminal Machiavellianism. It seems to me that it actually displayed criminal stupidity. The French never let go of anything without a fight; they hang on until their hands are hacked off. The unintentional result is to create enemy cadres; war creates its elites. The English planned their rigged decolonization: they trained the cadres well in advance; they may have been collaborators, but at least they were *capable*. Belgium did nothing: no colonial war, no gradual transition. The truth is that in 1959 it was already too late to prepare the liberation of the Congo: the colonized were demanding immediate independence. But the government's mistake dates from much earlier: it lies in its dogged determination to maintain the conquered land in ignorance and illiteracy, in its desire to retain feudalism, rivalries, 'traditional structures' and customary law. Belgium spent 80 years 'congolizing' the Congo. And having atomized it, she suddenly decided to drop it, convinced that the lack of cadres and the fragmentation of power would put it at her mercy. Lumumba found himself both designated by the masses and at the same time placed in power by Ganshof in the name of the King of the Belgians. This was an uncomfortable position, especially when one remembers that Ho Chi-minh and Ben Bella took power *despite* the mother country, borne along by an unstoppable movement, and that their sovereignty – meaning national sovereignty, it comes to the same thing – was derived from that. Independence in the Congo was not – as in Vietnam and Algeria – the moment of a *praxis* that had started long before, and past events did not act as a springboard for future undertakings; it was a standstill, the degree zero of Congolese history, the moment when the whites were no longer in command but continued to

administer, and the blacks were in power but not yet in command. At this contradictory moment, Lumumba, however popular he might be, did not draw his authority from past actions but from authority imported from Europe, and which the Congolese – apart from the *évolués* – did not recognize. Of course his courage was admirable (he was known to have been arrested several times, beaten and thrown into prison), but that was not enough. In order to hold supreme power in a new state, one must have held it during the times of oppression as the unquestioned leader of the liberation army, or have possessed charismatic or religious power for a long time. Unfortunately, it was Kasavubu who possessed this power in Léopoldville. It must be understood that on 1 July 1960, Lumumba – leader of a majority coalition and head of the government – was isolated, without power, betrayed by everyone and already lost.

As I have said, when peoples free themselves by force, they throw out or massacre the former cadres who are simply their most visible oppressors. They have to be quickly replaced; as everyone is equally incompetent, the choice is guided according to revolutionary zeal rather than ability. The result is terrible confusion, criminal errors, and entire sectors of the economy are placed in grave jeopardy. But a victorious revolution has yet to collapse because there was no elite. Though painful convulsions were the price they had to pay, newcomers in the USSR, China, Vietnam and Cuba took up controlling positions, governing, inspecting and making decisions during the day, learning and reading at night. Thus the replacement of reactionary experts by inexpert revolutionaries is a normal and positive fact in the development of a revolution. And if this substitution is not carried out by force, it becomes necessary owing to the massive emigration of the specialists.

Moreover, this leap into the unknown has to be made spontaneously, and emerge as an inevitable moment of *praxis*. Who would dare systematically to replace knowledge with ignorance at all levels of the social hierarchy, if not in the storm of revolution? Lumumba was a revolutionary without a revolution. His inflexible Jacobinism brought him into radical conflict with the hypocritical improvements to colonialism which the Belgian government was attempting without dexterity to make, but this rigorous position was only a theoretical rejection, precisely because the popular war had not taken place. By dispensing with it, the Belgians had also deprived the Congolese of it. The leader of the MNC therefore found himself on the far side, as it were, of an insurrection that had not taken place. He could not envisage the cadres as he would have done at the height of the action. As an *évolué*, educated by the whites, accustomed to acknowledging their technical superiority, he was concerned, as we have seen, about the small number of *évolués* and the ignorance of the masses.

Without any doubt the cadres had to be Africanized: he had always wanted it, and now that he often felt paralysed by the ill-will of the administration, he wanted it even more. The Congo would not enjoy full independence as long as key posts remained in the hands of the whites. But in the absence of pressing urgency, he envisaged a gradual transformation. It is striking that he often talked in his speeches of higher education, but almost never about primary education. We should not see a class preoccupation in this. He simply had a sharp awareness of the problem. The Congo would send students to Europe as soon as it could; they would return to the country and each one would take the place of a Belgian. The more of them there were, the sooner the technical, administrative

and military dependence of the country would come to an end. As we can see, this was a reasonable solution, but a *reformist* one such as might be conceived by a statesman who coolly weighs up the pros and cons and takes calculated risks.

At the same time, the masses were giving revolutionary conclusions to the revolution that never took place. They took over the Africanization of the cadres and ousted the Europeans in no time. It began with the *Force Publique*. The officers and warrant officers were Belgian; by the end of their careers, the Congolese could only attain the rank of sergeant. Several months before independence, they made it known that they demanded an end to this privilege of the whites: after independence, a black should be able, depending on merit, to be promoted to lieutenant or general. Lumumba did not take the matter seriously: he doubtless looked at it from the point of view of national utility; officers would be trained gradually. But he was wrong: this was not a general demand regarding the conditions of future soldiers, it was *these soldiers* who wanted to become sergeants, *these sergeants* who coveted the rank of captain. In a word, it was a concrete and immediate demand. A shrewd politician would probably have satisfied it on the first day and taken control of the revolutionary movement again by carrying out the coup of dismissing Janssens. That would have won him the Army, the only instrument this executive without power had at its disposal. The soldiers of the *Force Publique* in particular had a worrying turn of mind: during the time of the Belgians, in other words until 30 June, they had maintained the colonial order. These Congolese had fought exclusively against Congolese; they put down riots, occupied villages, lived off the inhabitants. Objectively accomplices of the colonial caste, strongly influenced by their officers, they seemed by station to be counter-revolutionaries. And without a doubt, that is what they were to the very core of their being, except that they were furious at being held back in lower ranks like the commoners in the French Army before 1789. Without their knowing, their demand summed up the Congo's aspirations for total sovereignty since it could only be met by a sovereign decision. At the same time, class conflict was emerging behind racial conflict: the poor had had enough of the luxury of the rich and wanted to take their place. By taking the initiative, the government would have made the forces of law and order accomplices of the Revolution; it would have enlisted their solidarity. Lumumba hesitated: the pressure of the black army, so he thought, threatened to push him too soon towards radicalism: perhaps he had a class reflex in spite of himself. And who, he wondered, would be capable of commanding the Congolese Army *today*? He made the mistake of demanding a half measure from Janssens: all blacks would be promoted to the rank immediately above: second class would be promoted to first class, a sergeant to staff sergeant. Janssens knew how to make the most of his role as *agent provocateur*; he said to the soldiers: 'You won't get anything. Not today or ever.' The rest is history: the soldiers' mutiny, the ousting of the officers, Janssens' escape to Brazzaville, white with fear. This insurrection could have been positive, but in the event, it had only negative consequences. The soldiers were rebelling against both Janssens and Lumumba, who had waited for the revolt to dismiss him; in other words, they were rebelling against both colonial paternalism and the young Congolese democracy. Confused, used to imposing order by force, but rebelling against the military privileges of the Belgians, they adopted for the most part a sort of Bonapartism to assert their new class and show their contempt for the regime that had betrayed them.

The Africanization of the administrative cadres began with the debacle of the Europeans. Civil servants took flight, private companies shut their doors. Lumumba did what he could to make them stay. But at the same time, Belgian troops were being flown into the Congo; he had to break with Belgium, which finally made the white population panic. The masses, however, wished to expel the Belgians and yet reproached them for leaving. Lumumba remained powerless: he was reproached for not taking leadership of the movement. The workers were demanding a pay rise, a legitimate claim, but one which the Jacobin Lumumba considered inopportune. Strikes broke out, no longer against the Belgians, but against him. He had them suppressed: the Congolese economy had to be saved, the level of production had to be maintained. And above all, in the confused and sporadic disturbances that radically, but catastrophically, brought about the Africanization of the cadres, he did not recognize *his political praxis*, *his* revolution or *his* personnel. Those people, he thought, have done nothing so far; now we have won, they are demanding from us what they would never have asked of the Belgians. What have they in common with us? Lumumba the pacifist took a stand against violence, Lumumba the *évolué* abandoned his solidarity with the *non-évolués* and all the *évolués* who did not aim for the common good alone. He repressed these spontaneous movements, thus losing his last chance of shoring up his faltering power with this wild revolution. It must be admitted, moreover, that that was only a slim chance: without organization, without a revolutionary programme, this brutal radicalization of independence led to nothing. The demonstrations continued, directed henceforth against the government. To identify with national unity, Lumumba had attempted to separate himself from his class: he was forced back into it. Just as Lumumba was attempting to break the protest strikes, deputies awarded themselves an allowance of 500,000 francs. The *extra-coutumier* masses discovered at the same time the appetite of the *évolués* and the repression of the government. Before colonization, the ‘elite’ earned much more than unskilled workers, but remained exploited, oppressed: for the same work, a black civil servant earned half as much as a white. This inequality helped, despite everything, to bring the lower middle class nearer to the people: *in opposition to the Belgians*, the blacks were proud of their *évolués*. Scarcely had the latter come to power than they discovered they were a class by the salaries and payments they demanded. The masses believed they were looking at new masters. They saw in the government – as in the past, with good reason, under colonial rule – a repressive power. Everything was wrong: the black lower middle class could only establish its authority by abandoning the Congo to imperialism, which in return would allow it to manage the country; moreover, Lumumba, far from representing the interests of the *évolué* class, saw his power dwindling daily because he opposed them. Not, it is true, in the name of the interests of the masses, but in the name of Jacobin universalism. Be that as it may: the contamination occurred rapidly, and the prime minister was considered to be an apprentice dictator chosen by numerous privileged people at the very moment when he was losing their confidence. From July on, Kasavubu, Abaka and the Belgian *agents provocateurs* knew how to turn this confusion to their advantage: they presented Lumumba as a tyrant.

Nothing was further from his character: even as he was being accused of the abuse of power, moreover, he was no longer able to command obedience. But what his enemies sensed from the beginning was that in a divided country, national unity is a permanent

praxis of unification; as Merleau-Ponty said, opposition can easily become betrayal when it increases discord and disintegration: central government should reduce it, by force if necessary. From this point of view, strikes or urban riots, however justifiable their demands might be, are just as dangerous as ethnic conflicts. The latter delay the harvests and fragment the Congolese land; the former reduce production. For every conceivable reason, it was indispensable that, in the first years of its childhood, the free Congo should not fall too far below the Belgian Congo from which it was born: *therefore*, centralism carries within itself a policy of social austerity. However, the Incorruptible – whether his name is Robespierre or Lumumba – must at the same time attack the governing class – *his own* class – to maintain its position as the universal class, in other words to prevent it entering into conflict with the rest of the country by virtue of its demands, lifestyle or too rapid an accumulation of wealth. That means that every social group is required to sacrifice its interests to the common interest. Nothing better provided that the common interest exists. After the tumultuous few months which followed his taking of power, Castro forced the workers' unions to end their strikes and take their industrial grievances to arbitration. But he had just defeated the army of feudal landowners, driven them off and redistributed their properties to the underprivileged classes through agrarian reform: by demanding sacrifices from everyone, he invited the rural and urban workers to recognize their real unity and their common interest, which was the free exploitation of the island by all for the benefit of all. Put in another way, centralism can only equate national unity with the common interest if the revolution from which it has emerged is a socialist one. There was as yet no class struggle proper between the *évolués* who were taking power in the Congo and the unskilled workers or the agricultural labourers, but already the Congolese pseudo-unity was concealing the divergence of interests. Without knowing it, centralism demands national unity, that abstract minimum which is necessary for a new society to find time to develop its structures and its strata. But neither the exploited nor the future exploiters had any intention of sacrificing their concrete demands to this still uncertain future: the mere existence of the one class prevented the others from giving way. The proletarians knew how much the ministers earned. For their part, the ministers and all the *évolués* would make no concessions to anyone: they had a moral code based on *merit*; not to serve themselves first would basically be to sacrifice themselves to the illiterate masses, that is, to non-militants.

Thus, owing to the absence of a mass movement, an armed struggle and a socialist programme, centralism, as a unifying *praxis*, seemed arbitrary to everyone. Everyone regarded the unity it aimed to establish as a concept without content; each group preferred its own concrete idea of unity to it, which, in that situation, was a cause of division. Everyone was against Lumumba: the provincial, federalist parties, the capital, the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie which he represented and which should have supported him. What is worse is that the rural population put up with independence on the condition that they kept their 'traditional structures'. Very few understood that the *coutumier* chiefs were the 'native' representatives of the Belgian administration. Now the kinglets lost everything when the colonists left. The Belgians had bought them and maintained them in place: this was centralization by division. The Congolese government's policy would be to eradicate divisions: it had to create a black administration, teach the civil servants in Léopoldville and send them everywhere as the

only qualified agents of power. These measures which are necessary for any unitary nationalism sounded the knell for the feudal fiefdoms: the central power would cover the country with a network of officials who would take decisions according to the orders from the capital and would replace the authority of the local lords with their own. The large chiefdoms were concerned: European emissaries made it their business to enlighten them. Finally, many feudal landowners – even among those who had allied themselves with the MNC to demand independence – suddenly became passionately anti-Lumumba. Their troops followed. In Katanga, Lumumba's deadly enemy Munongo – possibly the person who murdered him with his own hands – was the son of the king. The Katangan secession which precipitated the disaster was the result of an agreement made between the local fiefdoms, the colonists and the *Union Minière*.

What could be done against so many enemies? Literally nothing. If centralism possesses a solid base, if it has the support of the armed forces, sooner or later, depending on the degree of urgency, it will end up fighting federalism with terror: that is what Robespierre did in 1793. Not for long: having broken the popular riots, he too fell when it was noticed that he no longer represented anyone. But Lumumba! Less than a week after the proclamation of independence, the July mutiny had deprived him of the support of the *Force Publique*. In Léopoldville, it soon became clear that only the police would defend him – him and the parliament – against the Abako demonstrations. And when he sent the Army to re-establish order in the separatist provinces, it is true that it set off, but it never arrived, preferring to dally en route, that is to say, pillage and massacre peasants. And yet this man who was isolated from everyone and who now had only the external appearance of power would be accused of carrying out a bloody dictatorship. [4] Not without a hint of justification: in fact, taking into account the forces involved and the singular characteristics of the situation, a unitary leader, if he had the means, would be forced to use terror or else renounce his objectives. Congolese unity demanded a dictatorship. As that of the proletariat, ill-informed and badly educated by its representatives, was unthinkable, a petty bourgeois had to seize power against everyone else.

After the July mutiny came the Katangan secession, provoking everywhere a fairly strong separatist movement. Lumumba the tyrant

4 Kasavubu knew that he was lying when he held him responsible for the *Force Publique*'s exactions.

was admirable: immediately he was informed of troubles, worries or hostility, he took a plane with the deadly silent Kasavubu, who followed him everywhere, landed at the scene and as soon as he emerged from the cabin held meetings anywhere. The warmth of his voice, his sincerity, his optimism – naive or mystical, depending on one's point of view – seduced all his audiences and often persuaded them. When he had disarmed prejudice, calmed doubts, responded to objections, *explained*, above all explained, his plans and his reasons *in detail*, he won the battle for an evening. For one evening in a provincial town, his dictatorship of the word, the only one he ever imposed, made real the Jacobin unity of several hundred people – the only ones to be politicized. Accompanied by cheers, Patrice would return to the aircraft, take off and think: game won, while at his side, Kasavubu would be thinking: game lost, the word does not have that power. In fact,

it has, provided that it is repeated a thousand times, first by the chiefs, then the activists, and then, on the ground, by the rank and file. Lumumba was alone, absolutely alone. Each time the plane took off, silence would be restored in the small town he had just left, people returned to their immediate concerns, their prejudices, their tribal or socio-professional groups; nothing remained, not even a seed in a heart. However, the tyrant circled in the air; when he landed, the poor white settlers insulted him; he had to accept the humiliating – and one suspects largely ineffectual – protection of the Belgian military, of the colonial troops whose action he had denounced in Parliament and whose expulsion from Africa by the UN he had demanded. He even tried to land in Katanga, but the Belgian officers who controlled the airfield informed him that they would arrest him as soon as he landed. Lumumba wanted to carry on regardless, but the Belgians – it was night-time – extinguished all the lights and blocked air-traffic control. He was dissuaded from what was little short of suicide. Finally, he gave up, the aeroplane climbed and circled. The free Congo was circling, a prisoner of the skies, being shifted from place to place like a game of pass the parcel. For at that moment, the Congo, centralized, united by independence, identified with Lumumba alone. *Les jeux sont faits*: the appeal to the United Nations; the dispatch of the Blue Berets; Kasavubu's military coup; the *pronunciamiento* of Mobutu, that cop under Belgian orders who headed the *Force Publique* – that is, armed bands without pay who resorted to holding passers-by to ransom; Hammarskjöld's abject partiality; the intrigues of Youlou who was manipulated by the French government. All these well-known episodes were nothing more than the stations of an inevitable Calvary. The Belgians, the French, the English, the large companies and Mr. H … had Lumumba murdered by their hired hands – Kasavubu, Mobutu, Tschombe, Munongo – while puritanical North America looked away to avoid seeing the blood. Why so much determination? Was it really necessary for neocolonialism to be established in the Congo by this blatant murder? This tall, thin, energetic black man, a tireless worker and a magnificent orator, had lost his power: the real fact of the atomization of the Congo, the indisputable result of 80 years of 'paternalistic' colonialism and six months of Machiavellianism, radically contradicted the prime minister's Jacobin dream: he had lost his power except perhaps in Stanleyville, where, rather than supporters, he had a clientele. If he had gone there, what more could he have done than Gizenga, who, after some lightning victories, was betrayed a little later by his Chief of Staff, Lumumba's uncle, who preferred the restored unity of the only effective power – the black army – to the unitarianism of the politicians. Imperialism does not care about human lives, but since it was assured of victory, could it not have spared itself the scandal? In truth it could not; that was the secret of this sordid trickery: Lumumba was the man of the transfer of power; immediately afterwards, he had to disappear.

The reason was that, alive, he represented the rigorous rejection of the neocolonialist solution. This basically consists of buying the new masters, the bourgeoisie of the new countries, as classic colonialism bought the chiefs, the emirs, the sorcerers. Imperialism needs a governing class which is sufficiently aware of its precarious situation to link its class interests with those of the large Western companies. From this angle, the national Army, symbol to the naive of sovereignty, becomes the instrument of a twofold exploitation: that of the working classes by the 'elite' and, through them, that of the

blacks by Western capitalism. Loans and investments are made: the government of the independent nation is completely dependent on the Europeans and the Americans. This happened to Cuba in 1900 after a colonial war that it had won. The model still holds good: it is used every day. The aim is to reserve the same fate for the black continent as that of Latin America: weakness of central government, alliance of the bourgeoisie (or remaining feudal landowners) with the Army, a super-government of multi-national corporations. People are needed for this scam: in the Congo, it would be Kasavubu; his ambitions and his separatism – even if in the end he accepted a very loose federation – maintained the old discords sustained by the Belgian administration, and this time without the whites being suspected of having a hand in it. Ileo and Adoula were able to second him: their class awareness matched their appetites: protected by the *Force Publique*, they could be counted on to finish off the constitution and hasten the development of the new bourgeoisie. Until now, the *évolués* had been only salaried employees, recruited and trained by imperialism and convinced by their masters that their interests coincided with those of capital: now it was necessary to modify the Congolese economy, turn some salaried employees into little capitalists, maintain the rural feudal class, and allow the forces of concentration free rein, even in the countryside. That was the programme, that was the Congo of 1963; the subject of History between 1960 and 1961, today it is nothing more than the most passive of objects. The fate of Katanga was settled between Belgians, English, French, Americans, Rhodesians and white South Africans. The struggles, the uprisings, the war, the brusque and contradictory decisions of the UN were the effects and the signs of the bargaining which had taken place between the multi-national corporations, between the governments. If today everything seems to have been settled, if Katanga is returning to the Congo, it is because the United States has come to an agree-ment with the Belgians to exploit the Congo's riches jointly through mixed companies – against Rhodesia and South Africa and against English and French designs.

To perfect such delicate compromises, the first thing to be done was to exclude the Congo from debates and that came down to removing Lumumba. Alone and betrayed, he remained the abstract symbol of national unity; he *was* the Congo at the historic moment of the transfer of powers. Before him there had only been a colony, a jigsaw of dislocated empires; after him, all that remained was a torn country that would need more than a decade to achieve its national unity. As prime minister, Lumumba had lost his supports one after the other and in spite of himself became, by force of circumstances, the agent of a new separatism which called itself centralization. As a captive and alive, he might become overnight a principle, a rallying point. He continued to represent a political approach that he had been prevented from adopting, but which, at the new Government's first failures, might appear to be an alternative political solution, one which had not been allowed to prove itself because it had not been given long enough, and which, if tried, could possibly turn out to be the only viable one. The mal-contents of the day before had united against him, those of the day after – doubtless the same – might rally round him. A prisoner who was once idolized by the crowds continues to be the naked possibility of *praxis*; his very existence transforms regrets into hope; because he remains faithful to his principles, they are much more than a purely theoretical view for new opponents; they are alive, they are current, humanized by the man who, as people know, is their guardian in

his cell. They become an object of fascinated meditation for everyone. This became clear at Thysville when the soldiers who were guarding him mutinied: if they did not receive their pay, they would release Lumumba, they said. In panic at this threat, the leaders in Léopoldville approached the Katanganese. A deal was struck: Tschombe would pay; in exchange, he would be given Lumumba. In short, even from his prison the deposed prime minister bore witness to the necessity of centralism, all the more so as his fall coincided with a sudden flare-up of riots and local wars.

More was to come: from October onwards an upsurge in revolutionary disturbances became noticeable. This time it was the rank and file – peasants and workers – who had rallied against the maintenance of the colonialist economy. These scattered movements had no common aim: however, it would have been possible to unite them, beyond the old divisions, if their demands had been brought together in a common programme. This was no hysterical fear: later, Gizenga, the new leader of centralism, took radical measures in Stanleyville: multi-national corporations were to be Africanized and Belgians placed under house arrest and subject to an exceptional tax; after six months, the State would seize the abandoned possessions. These decrees marked the beginnings of a rapprochement between the concrete demands of the masses, lacking a genuine perspective, and the abstract Jacobinism of the MNC. And Gizenga did not share Lumumba's popularity or his intelligence. What would we have had to fear if the former prime minister had himself grasped that what was required was to reconnect with the masses, break with the *évolués* and give a social content to his unitary politics, in short, to stir up the people against neo-capitalist mystification? That was indeed the whole problem: Jacobinism is petty bourgeois; it subordinates the economy to political integration and constantly collides with the demands of the masses, which it accuses of sabotaging unity. This conflict usually allows enemies to defeat one after the other the unitary movement and the workers' movement. But if the Jacobins manage to survive for a while – and that is extremely rare – they are enlightened by their setbacks and make a fresh start: unity is no longer the beginning but an intermediary stage, the only way of cementing together the interests of the masses and their demands. It is also the final goal of an economic, social and political revolution which, at the risk of breaking up, must undergo continuous radicalization. I have met young people from the towns – former students from the middle classes – who were part of Castro's government: they were Jacobins against Batista. Having joined the rebels, they had no difficulty in temporarily abandoning their political ideal to regain it *through* the movement of socialist construction. Robespierre and Lumumba died too soon to effect the synthesis which would have made them invincible. And in the France of 1789 as in the Congo of 1961, the masses were still mainly rural; in France, the proletariat had not yet been born or properly developed; in the Congo, Belgian paternalism had stupefied it. In neither case did the real victims of exploitation have representatives or an apparatus which could appeal to the politicians to seek unity in the struggle against exploitation. All the same: there are 3 million black proletarians in the Congo; had Patrice lived, he might well have ended up inciting them against his own class out of disappointment with it. The fiction he never exposed, the crazy bourgeois idea of the 'universal class' might, under certain conditions, have facilitated various rapprochements: Lumumba might have been able to approach the local leaders of the revolutionary movements without guilt or a superiority

complex. From this abstract equality might have come forth light, he might have at last understood what was called 'Africa's socialist vocation', which can be reduced more succinctly to the dilemma of neocolonialism versus collectivization. He *might*: I use this word not to evoke an abstract possibility, but to explain the fear which, even in chains, he inspired in his enemies. Imperialism is lucid: if it shows its cards to the excolonized, if they can perceive its intention to conceal the maintenance of an economy based on over-exploitation behind a political farce, it knows perfectly well that the masses will unite against the politicians, its accomplices. Confusion in the Congo was extreme, but the Congolese would have understood quickly if someone had explained to them that they were serving the enemy: Lumumba had learned in a very short time that Belgium was going back on its promise, that the *Union Minière* was fomenting and supporting the secessions against the Government of the former mother country, that UN soldiers, sent to maintain order, had protected the separatist Kasavubu and left the centralist prime minister at the mercy of his enemies: even a petty bourgeois who claimed to know nothing about the economy would not need long to draw disturbing conclusions. In short, what the large companies and the *évolués* feared above all was the radicalization of Lumumba by the masses and the unification of the masses by Lumumba. His assassination can be said to have sealed the recent alliance of imperialism and the black petty bourgeoisie: henceforth there would be a corpse between them.

But the prestige of the Congolese minister extended far beyond the borders of his country. He demonstrated the necessity of a united Africa, not in the manner of conquering states for whom *unity* means *hegemony*; but on the contrary by the weakness of the government, by that inflexible courage and that fatal but undeserved impotence which imposed on all black countries the duty to aid him. And this strict and urgent obligation was not a matter of generosity, nor of some idealistic solidarity. In fact, African nations were discovering their own destiny, the destiny of Africa in that of the Congo; neocolonial countries were deciphering the mystification which had released them from all their chains except over-exploitation. The others, those which had narrowly escaped 'Congolization', were discovering the mechanism, the role played by internal divisions in this collapse; they thought that nothing was saved yet, that separatism had to be fought *across the whole continent*, or else Africa would not escape Balkanization. In this sense, Lumumba's failure was that of pan-Africanism. Nkrumah experienced the most bitter disappointment: in July he had sent Ghanaian troops to the Congo under the authority of the United Nations who used them against Patrice Lumumba, despite Ghana's protests; the experience taught him that the UN was not an impartial organization giving strictly objective rulings on Third World conflicts, but a system rigorously constructed to defend imperialism everywhere in the West, even if people's republics and Afro-Asian nations were allowed to join. But the whole of Africa, humiliated by its inability to save the man of Accra, also learnt the fate reserved for 'neutralists'. In a moment of exasperation, indignant at Hammarskjöld's attitude, Lumumba had appealed to the USSR which had sent him some warplanes. On this occasion he had applied the strictest principles of neutrality: engage in commerce with all countries regardless of their political system, accept or request effective aid in an emergency, on condition that it is disinterested. That was all it took: the Missions were quick to baptize him a communist. Imperialism did not fail to do so either. The most

amazing thing is that it was caught out at its own game and considered this *évolué*, the son of a Catholic, with a Catholic marriage, and the father of Catholics, to be a secret agent of the Kremlin. If one wishes to judge the situation better, one should compare the desperate appeal of this Jacobin 'without an economic option' with what Castro was able to do on an island stuck on the side of America. And let us make no mistake: Castro's victory was due precisely to the fact that he took the leadership of a socialist revolution: the failure of this Congolese, the title 'communist' with which people imagined they were blackening him, is all simply due to the fact that he did not want to commit himself to reworking the infrastructure of the country. Africa has understood: when an independent head of government asks for help from the Soviets, Westerners dismiss him. Neutrality will remain an empty declaration of principle so long as the various states of the black continent do not unite to impose it.

The alive and captive Lumumba was the shame and the rage of an entire continent: he was present for everyone as a demand which they could neither fulfil nor remove; *in him*, everyone recognized the power and the ferocity of neocolonial trickery. He therefore had to be dealt with as quickly as possible; imperialism kept its hands clean; it was in the interest of its two main representatives, Kasavubu and the pathetic Mobutu, not to have spilt this blood in front of their people. Tschombe did the killing: in any case, the *Union Minière* and the colonists had compromised him so much, and he had invested so much zeal in selling himself that it would soon be necessary to liquidate him as well. They wiped out a black who had been made prime minister and who took his mission seriously; Kasavubu was again asked to form a cabinet. I suppose they thought that the dead man would be less of an embarrassment than the living: we forget the deceased. What can be done for him? With him? The overexcited Africans would be deprived of any reason to call their brothers to a liberating crusade by the single bayonet thrust which, so they say, Munongo took upon himself to administer. That, at any rate, was the calculation. As we know, it was wrong.

The dead Lumumba ceased to be a person and became Africa in its entirety, with its unitary will, the multiplicity of its social and political systems, its divisions, its disagreements, its power and its impotence: he was not, nor could he be, the hero of pan-Africanism: he was its martyr. His story has highlighted for everyone the profound link between independence, unity and the struggle against the multi-national corporations. His death – I remember that Fanon in Rome was devastated by it – was a cry of alarm; in him, the whole continent died and was resurrected. The African Nations have understood: what Accra *was saying*, Addis-Ababa *is about to do*: they will put in place a shared mechanism which will allow them to support revolutionary struggles in countries that have not yet gained independence. Unity is war; influenced by Algeria, some are understanding better and better that it is also the socialist revolution.

The Congo has lost only a battle. With the protection of the National Congolese Army (ANC), the Congolese bourgeoisie, that group of venal traitors, will complete its work and form an exploitative class. Capitalist concentration will gradually overcome the feudal divisions and unite the exploited; all the conditions for Castroism will be in place. The Cubans, however, honour the memory of Martí who died at the end of the last

century without seeing Cuba's victory over Spain or the subjugation of the island to American imperialism. If in a few years' time, the Congolese Castro wishes to teach his own people that unity must be won, he will remind them of its first martyr, Lumumba.