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# THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

Frantz Fanon

*Translated from the French  
by Richard Philcox*

*with commentary by  
Jean-Paul Sartre  
and  
Homi K. Bhabha*



GROVE PRESS  
New York

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*Published simultaneously in Canada  
Printed in the United States of America*

FIRST EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fanon, Frantz, 1925–1961.

[*Damnés de la terre*. English]

The wretched of the earth / Frantz Fanon ; translated from the French by Richard Philcox ; introductions by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha.

p. cm.

Originally published: *Damnés de la terre*. Paris : F. Maspero, 1961.

ISBN 0-8021-4132-3

1. France—Colonies—Africa. 2. Algeria—History—1945–1962. I. Philcox, Richard. II. Title.

DT33.F313 2004

960'.097 1244—dc22 2004042476

Grove Press

an imprint of Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

841 Broadway

New York, NY 10003

05 06 07 08 09 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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## On Violence

National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event. At whatever level we study it—individual encounters, a change of name for a sports club, the guest list at a cocktail party, members of a police force or the board of directors of a state or private bank—decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one “species” of mankind by another. The substitution is unconditional, absolute, total, and seamless. We could go on to portray the rise of a new nation, the establishment of a new state, its diplomatic relations and its economic and political orientation. But instead we have decided to describe the kind of *tabula rasa* which from the outset defines any decolonization. What is singularly important is that it starts from the very first day with the basic claims of the colonized. In actual fact, proof of success lies in a social fabric that has been changed inside out. This change is extraordinarily important because it is desired, clamored for, and demanded. The need for this change exists in a raw, repressed, and reckless state in the lives and consciousness of colonized men and women. But the eventuality of such a change is also experienced as a terrifying future in the consciousness of another “species” of men and women: the *colons*, the colonists.



\* \* \*

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentleman's agreement. Decolonization, we know, is an historical process: In other words, it can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance. Decolonization is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. Their first confrontation was colored by violence and their cohabitation—or rather the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer—continued at the point of the bayonet and under cannon fire. The colonist and the colonized are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he “knows” them. It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system.

Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: The “thing” colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation.

Decolonization, therefore, implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation. Its definition can, if we want to describe it accurately, be summed up in the well-known words: “The last shall be first.” Decolonization is verification of this. At a descriptive level, therefore, any decolonization is a success.

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In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can be the first only after a murderous and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists. This determination to have the last move up to the front, to have them clamber up (too quickly, say some) the famous echelons of an organized society, can only succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence.

You do not disorganize a society, however primitive it may be, with such an agenda if you are not determined from the very start to smash every obstacle encountered. The colonized, who have made up their mind to make such an agenda into a driving force, have been prepared for violence from time immemorial. As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence.

The colonial world is a compartmentalized world. It is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of “native” towns and European towns, of schools for “natives” and schools for Europeans, as it is to recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet if we penetrate inside this compartmentalization we shall at least bring to light some of its key aspects. By penetrating its geographical configuration and classification we shall be able to delineate the backbone on which the decolonized society is reorganized.

The colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier. In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of



submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order. In capitalist countries a multitude of sermonizers, counselors, and "confusion-mongers" intervene between the exploited and the authorities. In colonial regions, however, the proximity and frequent, direct intervention by the police and the military ensure the colonized are kept under close scrutiny, and contained by rifle butts and napalm. We have seen how the government's agent uses a language of pure violence. The agent does not alleviate oppression or mask domination. He displays and demonstrates them with the clear conscience of the law enforcer, and brings violence into the homes and minds of the colonized subject.

The "native" sector is not complementary to the European sector. The two confront each other, but not in the service of a higher unity. Governed by a purely Aristotelian logic, they follow the dictates of mutual exclusion: There is no conciliation possible, one of them is superfluous. The colonist's sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It's a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of leftovers. The colonist's feet can never be glimpsed, except perhaps in the sea, but then you can never get close enough. They are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone. The colonist's sector is a sated, sluggish sector, its belly is permanently full of good things. The colonist's sector is a white folks' sector, a sector of foreigners.

The colonized's sector, or at least the "native" quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized's sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. The colonized's sector is a sector that crouches and cowers, a sector on its knees,

a sector that is prostrate. It's a sector of niggers, a sector of towelheads. The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist's table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man. The colonist is aware of this as he catches the furtive glance, and constantly on his guard, realizes bitterly that: "They want to take our place." And it's true there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist.

This compartmentalized world, this world divided in two, is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue. It is not just the concept of the precapitalist society, so effectively studied by Marx, which needs to be reexamined here. The serf is essentially different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is needed to justify this difference in status. In the colonies the foreigner imposed himself using his cannons and machines. Despite the success of his pacification, in spite of his appropriation, the colonist always remains a foreigner. It is not the factories, the estates, or the bank account which primarily characterize the "ruling class." The ruling species is first and foremost the outsider from elsewhere, different from the indigenous population, "the others."

The violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world, which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous



social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress, this same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities. To blow the colonial world to smithereens is henceforth a clear image within the grasp and imagination of every colonized subject. To dislocate the colonial world does not mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors. To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist's sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory.

Challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of viewpoints. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different. The colonial world is a Manichaeian world. The colonist is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized, i.e., with the help of his agents of law and order. As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil.<sup>1</sup> Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values. The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The "native" is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil. A corrosive element, destroying everything within his reach, a corrupting element, distorting everything which involves aesthetics or morals, an agent of malevolent powers, an unconscious and incurable instrument of blind forces. And Monsieur Meyer could say in all seriousness in the French National Assembly that we

<sup>1</sup> We have demonstrated in *Black Skin, White Masks* the mechanism of this Manichaeian world.

should not let the Republic be defiled by the penetration of the Algerian people. Values are, in fact, irreversibly poisoned and infected as soon as they come into contact with the colonized. The customs of the colonized, their traditions, their myths, especially their myths, are the very mark of this indigence and innate depravity. This is why we should place DDT, which destroys parasites, carriers of disease, on the same level as Christianity, which roots out heresy, natural impulses, and evil. The decline of yellow fever and the advances made by evangelizing form part of the same balance sheet. But triumphant reports by the missions in fact tell us how deep the seeds of alienation have been sown among the colonized. I am talking of Christianity and this should come as no surprise to anybody. The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigners' Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen.

Sometimes this Manichaeism reaches its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the colonized subject. In plain talk, he is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the "native" quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constantly to the bestiary. The European seldom has a problem with figures of speech. But the colonized, who immediately grasp the intention of the colonist and the exact case being made against them, know instantly what he is thinking. This explosive population growth, those hysterical masses, those blank faces, those shapeless, obese bodies, this headless, tailless cohort, these children who seem not to belong to anyone, this indolence sprawling under the sun, this vegetating existence, all this is part of the colonial vocabulary. General de Gaulle speaks of "yellow



multitudes,” and Monsieur Mauriac of the black, brown, and yellow hordes that will soon invade our shores. The colonized know all that and roar with laughter every time they hear themselves called an animal by the other. For they know they are not animals. And at the very moment when they discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory.

As soon as the colonized begin to strain at the leash and to pose a threat to the colonist, they are assigned a series of good souls who in the “Symposiums on Culture” spell out the specificity and richness of Western values. But every time the issue of Western values crops up, the colonized grow tense and their muscles seize up. During the period of decolonization the colonized are called upon to be reasonable. They are offered rock-solid values, they are told in great detail that decolonization should not mean regression, and that they must rely on values which have proved to be reliable and worthwhile. Now it so happens that when the colonized hear a speech on Western culture they draw their machetes or at least check to see they are close to hand. The supremacy of white values is stated with such violence, the victorious confrontation of these values with the lifestyle and beliefs of the colonized is so impregnated with aggressiveness, that as a counter measure the colonized rightly make a mockery of them whenever they are mentioned. In the colonial context the colonist only quits undermining the colonized once the latter have proclaimed loud and clear that white values reign supreme. In the period of decolonization the colonized masses thumb their noses at these very values, shower them with insults and vomit them up.

Such an occurrence normally goes unseen because, during decolonization, certain colonized intellectuals have established a dialogue with the bourgeoisie of the colonizing country. During this period the indigenous population is seen as a blurred mass. The few “native” personalities whom the colonialist bour-

geois have chanced to encounter have had insufficient impact to alter their current perception and nuance their thinking. During the period of liberation, however, the colonialist bourgeoisie frantically seeks contact with the colonized “elite.” It is with this elite that the famous dialogue on values is established. When the colonialist bourgeoisie realizes it is impossible to maintain its domination over the colonies it decides to wage a rearguard campaign in the fields of culture, values, and technology, etc. But what we should never forget is that the immense majority of colonized peoples are impervious to such issues. For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with “human” dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal. All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his bread. For the colonized, to be a moralist quite plainly means silencing the arrogance of the colonist, breaking his spiral of violence, in a word ejecting him outright from the picture. The famous dictum which states that all men are equal will find its illustration in the colonies only when the colonized subject states he is equal to the colonist. Taking it a step further, he is determined to fight to be more than the colonist. In fact, he has already decided to take his place. As we have seen, it is the collapse of an entire moral and material universe. The intellectual who, for his part, has adopted the abstract, universal values of the colonizer is prepared to fight so that colonist and colonized can live in peace in a new world. But what he does not see, because precisely colonialism and all its modes of thought have seeped into him, is that the colonist is no longer interested in staying on and coexisting once the colonial context has disappeared. It is no coincidence that, even before any negotiation between the Algerian government and the French government, the so-called “liberal” European minority



has already made its position clear: it is clamoring for dual citizenship, nothing less. By sticking to the abstract the colonist is being forced to make a very substantial leap into the unknown. Let us be honest, the colonist knows perfectly well that no jargon is a substitute for reality.

The colonized subject thus discovers that his life, his breathing and his heartbeats are the same as the colonist's. He discovers that the skin of a colonist is not worth more than the "native's." In other words, his world receives a fundamental jolt. The colonized's revolutionary new assurance stems from this. If, in fact, my life is worth as much as the colonist's, his look can no longer strike fear into me or nail me to the spot and his voice can no longer petrify me. I am no longer uneasy in his presence. In reality, to hell with him. Not only does his presence no longer bother me, but I am already preparing to waylay him in such a way that soon he will have no other solution but to flee.

The colonial context, as we have said, is characterized by the dichotomy it inflicts on the world. Decolonization unifies this world by a radical decision to remove its heterogeneity, by unifying it on the grounds of nation and sometimes race. To quote the biting words of Senegalese patriots on the maneuvers of their president, Senghor: "We asked for the Africanization of the top jobs and all Senghor does is Africanize the Europeans." Meaning that the colonized can see right away if decolonization is taking place or not: The minimum demand is that the last become the first.

But the colonized intellectual introduces a variation on this demand and in fact, there seems to be no lack of motivation to fill senior positions as administrators, technicians, and experts. The colonized, however, equate this nepotism with acts of sabotage and it is not unusual to hear them declare: "What is the point of being independent then . . . ?"

Wherever an authentic liberation struggle has been fought, wherever the blood of the people has been shed and the armed phase has lasted long enough to encourage the intellectuals to

withdraw to their rank and file base, there is an effective eradication of the superstructure borrowed by these intellectuals from the colonialist bourgeois circles. In its narcissistic monologue the colonialist bourgeoisie, by way of its academics, had implanted in the minds of the colonized that the essential values—meaning Western values—remain eternal despite all errors attributable to man. The colonized intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas and there in the back of his mind stood a sentinel on duty guarding the Greco-Roman pedestal. But during the struggle for liberation, when the colonized intellectual touches base again with his people, this artificial sentinel is smashed to smithereens. All the Mediterranean values, the triumph of the individual, of enlightenment and Beauty turn into pale, lifeless trinkets. All those discourses appear a jumble of dead words. Those values which seemed to ennoble the soul prove worthless because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are engaged.

And first among them is individualism. The colonized intellectual learned from his masters that the individual must assert himself. The colonialist bourgeoisie hammered into the colonized mind the notion of a society of individuals where each is locked in his subjectivity, where wealth lies in thought. But the colonized intellectual who is lucky enough to bunker down with the people during the liberation struggle, will soon discover the falsity of this theory. Involvement in the organization of the struggle will already introduce him to a different vocabulary. "Brother," "sister," "comrade" are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie because in their thinking my brother is my wallet and my comrade, my scheming. In a kind of auto-da-fé, the colonized intellectual witnesses the destruction of all his idols: egoism, arrogant recrimination, and the idiotic, childish need to have the last word. This colonized intellectual, pulverized by colonialist culture, will also discover the strength of the village assemblies, the power of the people's commissions and the extraordinary productivity of neighborhood and section committee meetings. Personal



interests are now the collective interest because in reality *everyone* will be discovered by the French legionnaires and consequently massacred or else *everyone* will be saved. In such a context, the "every man for himself" concept, the atheist's form of salvation, is prohibited.

Self-criticism has been much talked about recently, but few realize that it was first of all an African institution. Whether it be in the *djemaas* of North Africa or the palavers of West Africa, tradition has it that disputes which break out in a village are worked out in public. By this I mean collective self-criticism with a touch of humor because everyone is relaxed, because in the end we all want the same thing. The intellectual sheds all that calculating, all those strange silences, those ulterior motives, that devious thinking and secrecy as he gradually plunges deeper among the people. In this respect then we can genuinely say that the community has already triumphed and exudes its own light, its own reason.

But when decolonization occurs in regions where the liberation struggle has not yet made its impact sufficiently felt, here are the same smart alecks, the sly, shrewd intellectuals whose behavior and ways of thinking, picked up from their rubbing shoulders with the colonialist bourgeoisie, have remained intact. Spoiled children of yesterday's colonialism and today's governing powers, they oversee the looting of the few national resources. Ruthless in their scheming and legal pilfering they use the poverty, now nationwide, to work their way to the top through import-export holdings, limited companies, playing the stock market, and nepotism. They insist on the nationalization of business transactions, i.e., reserving contracts and business deals for nationals. Their doctrine is to proclaim the absolute need for nationalizing the theft of the nation. In this barren, national phase, in this so-called period of austerity, their success at plundering the nation swiftly sparks anger and violence from the people. In the present international and African context, the poverty-stricken and independent population achieves a social consciousness at

a rapidly accelerating pace. This, the petty individualists will soon find out for themselves.

In order to assimilate the culture of the oppressor and venture into his fold, the colonized subject has had to pawn some of his own intellectual possessions. For instance, one of the things he has had to assimilate is the way the colonialist bourgeoisie thinks. This is apparent in the colonized intellectual's inaptitude to engage in dialogue. For he is unable to make himself inessential when confronted with a purpose or idea. On the other hand, when he operates among the people he is constantly awestruck. He is literally disarmed by their good faith and integrity. He is then constantly at risk of becoming a demagogue. He turns into a kind of mimic man who nods his assent to every word by the people, transformed by him into an arbiter of truth. But the fellah, the unemployed and the starving do not lay claim to truth. They do not say they represent the truth because they are the truth in their very being.

During this period the intellectual behaves objectively like a vulgar opportunist. His maneuvering, in fact, is still at work. The people would never think of rejecting him or cutting the ground from under his feet. What the people want is for everything to be pooled together. The colonized intellectual's insertion into this human tide will find itself on hold because of his curious obsession with detail. It is not that the people are opposed to analysis. They appreciate clarification, understand the reasoning behind an argument, and like to see where they are going. But at the start of his cohabitation with the people the colonized intellectual gives priority to detail and tends to forget the very purpose of the struggle—the defeat of colonialism. Swept along by the many facets of the struggle, he tends to concentrate on local tasks, undertaken zealously but almost always too pedantically. He does not always see the overall picture. He introduces the notion of disciplines, specialized areas and fields into that awesome mixer and grinder called a people's revolution.



Committed to certain frontline issues he tends to lose sight of the unity of the movement and in the event of failure at the local level he succumbs to doubt, even despair. The people, on the other hand, take a global stance from the very start. "Bread and land: how do we go about getting bread and land?" And this stubborn, apparently limited, narrow-minded aspect of the people is finally the most rewarding and effective working model.

The question of truth must also be taken into consideration. For the people, only fellow nationals are ever owed the truth. No absolute truth, no discourse on the transparency of the soul can erode this position. In answer to the lie of the colonial situation, the colonized subject responds with a lie. Behavior toward fellow nationalists is open and honest, but strained and indecipherable toward the colonists. Truth is what hastens the dislocation of the colonial regime, what fosters the emergence of the nation. Truth is what protects the "natives" and undoes the foreigners. In the colonial context there is no truthful behavior. And good is quite simply what hurts *them* most.

We have seen therefore that the Manichaeanism that first governed colonial society is maintained intact during the period of decolonization. In fact the colonist never ceases to be the enemy, the antagonist, in plain words public enemy number 1. The oppressor, ensconced in his sector, creates the spiral, the spiral of domination, exploitation and looting. In the other sector, the colonized subject lies coiled and robbed, and fuels as best he can the spiral which moves seamlessly from the shores of the colony to the palaces and docks of the metropolis. In this petrified zone, not a ripple on the surface, the palm trees sway against the clouds, the waves of the sea lap against the shore, the raw materials come and go, legitimating the colonist's presence, while more dead than alive the colonized subject crouches for ever in the same old dream. The colonist makes history. His life is an epic, an odyssey. He is invested with the very beginning:

"We made this land." He is the guarantor for its existence: "If we leave, all will be lost, and this land will return to the Dark Ages." Opposite him, listless beings wasted away by fevers and consumed by "ancestral customs" compose a virtually petrified background to the innovative dynamism of colonial mercantilism.

The colonist makes history and he knows it. And because he refers constantly to the history of his metropolis, he plainly indicates that here he is the extension of this metropolis. The history he writes is therefore not the history of the country he is despoiling, but the history of his own nation's looting, raping, and starving to death. The immobility to which the colonized subject is condemned can be challenged only if he decides to put an end to the history of colonization and the history of despoliation in order to bring to life the history of the nation, the history of decolonization.

A world compartmentalized, Manichaean and petrified, a world of statues: the statue of the general who led the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge. A world cocksure of itself, crushing with its stoniness the backbones of those scarred by the whip. That is the colonial world. The colonial subject is a man penned in; apartheid is but one method of compartmentalizing the colonial world. The first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits. Hence the dreams of the colonial subject are muscular dreams, dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing. I dream I burst out laughing, I am leaping across a river and chased by a pack of cars that never catches up with me. During colonization the colonized subject frees himself night after night between nine in the evening and six in the morning.

The colonized subject will first train this aggressiveness sedimented in his muscles against his own people. This is the period when black turns on black, and police officers and magistrates



don't know which way to turn when faced with the surprising surge of North African criminality. We shall see later what should be made of this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Confronted with the colonial order the colonized subject is in a permanent state of tension. The colonist's world is a hostile world, a world which excludes yet at the same time incites envy. We have seen how the colonized always dream of taking the colonist's place. Not of becoming a colonist, but of replacing him. This hostile, oppressive and aggressive world, bulldozing the colonized masses, represents not only the hell they would like to escape as quickly as possible but a paradise within arm's reach guarded by ferocious watchdogs.

The colonized subject is constantly on his guard: Confused by the myriad signs of the colonial world he never knows whether he is out of line. Confronted with a world configured by the colonizer, the colonized subject is always presumed guilty. The colonized does not accept his guilt, but rather considers it a kind of curse, a sword of Damocles. But deep down the colonized subject acknowledges no authority. He is dominated but not domesticated. He is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority. He patiently waits for the colonist to let his guard down and then jumps on him. The muscles of the colonized are always tensed. It is not that he is anxious or terrorized, but he is always ready to change his role as game for that of hunter. The colonized subject is a persecuted man who is forever dreaming of becoming the persecutor. The symbols of society such as the police force, bugle calls in the barracks, military parades, and the flag flying aloft, serve not only as inhibitors but also as stimulants. They do not signify: "Stay where you are." But rather "Get ready to do the right thing." And in fact if ever the colonized subject begins to doze off or forget, the colonist's arrogance and preoccupation with testing the solidity of the colo-

nial system will remind him on so many occasions that the great showdown cannot be postponed indefinitely. This impulse to take the colonist's place maintains a constant muscular tonus. It is a known fact that under certain emotional circumstances an obstacle actually escalates action.

The relationship between colonist and colonized is one of physical mass. Against the greater number the colonist pits his force. The colonist is an exhibitionist. His safety concerns lead him to remind the colonized out loud: "Here I am the master." The colonist keeps the colonized in a state of rage, which he prevents from boiling over. The colonized are caught in the tightly knit web of colonialism. But we have seen how on the inside the colonist achieves only a pseudo-petrification. The muscular tension of the colonized periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals.

At the individual level we witness a genuine negation of common sense. Whereas the colonist or police officer can beat the colonized subject day in and day out, insult him and shove him to his knees, it is not uncommon to see the colonized subject draw his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive look from another colonized subject. For the colonized subject's last resort is to defend his personality against his fellow countryman. Internecine feuds merely perpetuate age-old grudges entrenched in memory. By throwing himself muscle and soul into his blood feuds, the colonized subject endeavors to convince himself that colonialism has never existed, that everything is as it used to be and history marches on. Here we grasp the full significance of the all too familiar "head-in-the-sand" behavior at a collective level, as if this collective immersion in a fratricidal bloodbath suffices to mask the obstacle and postpone the inevitable alternative, the inevitable emergence of the armed struggle against colonialism. So one of the ways the colonized subject releases his muscular tension is through the very real collective self-destruction

<sup>2</sup> *Colonial Wars and Mental Disorders*, chapter 5.



of these internecine feuds. Such behavior represents a death wish in the face of danger, a suicidal conduct which reinforces the colonist's existence and domination and reassures him that such men are not rational. The colonized subject also manages to lose sight of the colonist through religion. Fatalism relieves the oppressor of all responsibility since the cause of wrong-doing, poverty, and the inevitable can be attributed to God. The individual thus accepts the devastation decreed by God, grovels in front of the colonist, bows to the hand of fate, and mentally readjusts to acquire the serenity of stone.

In the meantime, however, life goes on and the colonized subject draws on the terrifying myths that are so prolific in underdeveloped societies as inhibitions for his aggressiveness: malevolent spirits who emerge every time you put one foot wrong, leopard men, snake men, six-legged dogs, zombies, a whole never-ending gamut of animalcules or giants that encircle the colonized with a realm of taboos, barriers, and inhibitions far more terrifying than the colonialist world. This magical superstructure that permeates the indigenous society has a very precise function in the way the libido works. One of the characteristics, in fact, of underdeveloped societies is that the libido is primarily a matter for the group and family. Anthropologists have amply described societies where the man who dreams he has sexual intercourse with a woman other than his own must publicly confess his dream and pay the penalty in kind or in several days' work to the husband or the injured family party—which proves, by the way, that so-called prehistorical societies attach great importance to the unconscious.

In scaring me, the atmosphere of myths and magic operates like an undeniable reality. In terrifying me, it incorporates me into the traditions and history of my land and ethnic group, but at the same time I am reassured and granted a civil status, an identification. The secret sphere in underdeveloped countries is a collective sphere that falls exclusively within the realm of magic. By entangling me in this inextricable web where gestures are repeated with

a secular limpidity, my very own world, our very own world, thus perpetuates itself. Zombies, believe me, are more terrifying than colonists. And the problem now is not whether to fall in line with the armor-plated world of colonialism, but to think twice before urinating, spitting, or going out in the dark.

The magical, supernatural powers prove to be surprisingly ego boosting. The colonist's powers are infinitely shrunk, stamped by foreignness. There is no real reason to fight them because what really matters is that the mythical structures contain far more terrifying adversaries. It is evident that everything is reduced to a permanent confrontation at the level of phantasy.

In the liberation struggle, however, this people who were once relegated to the realm of the imagination, victims of unspeakable terrors, but content to lose themselves in hallucinatory dreams, are thrown into disarray, re-form, and amid blood and tears give birth to very real and urgent issues. Giving food to the mujahideen, stationing lookouts, helping deprived families and taking over from the slain or imprisoned husband—such are the practical tasks the people are asked to undertake in the liberation struggle.

In the colonial world, the colonized's affectivity is kept on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent. And the psyche retracts, is obliterated, and finds an outlet through muscular spasms that have caused many an expert to classify the colonized as hysterical. This overexcited affectivity, spied on by invisible guardians who constantly communicate with the core of the personality, takes an erotic delight in the muscular deflation of the crisis.

Another aspect of the colonized's affectivity can be seen when it is drained of energy by the ecstasy of dance. Any study of the colonial world therefore must include an understanding of the phenomena of dance and possession. The colonized's way of relaxing is precisely this muscular orgy during which the most brutal aggressiveness and impulsive violence are channeled, transformed, and spirited away. The dance circle is a permissive



circle. It protects and empowers. At a fixed time and a fixed date men and women assemble in a given place, and under the solemn gaze of the tribe launch themselves into a seemingly disarticulated, but in fact extremely ritualized, pantomime where the exorcism, liberation, and expression of a community are grandiosely and spontaneously played out through shaking of the head, and back and forward thrusts of the body. Everything is permitted in the dance circle. The hillock, which has been climbed as if to get closer to the moon, the river bank, which has been descended whenever the dance symbolizes ablution, washing, and purification, are sacred places. Everything is permitted, for in fact the sole purpose of the gathering is to let the supercharged libido and the stifled aggressiveness spew out volcanically. Symbolic killings, figurative cavalcades, and imagined multiple murders, everything has to come out. The ill humors seep out, tumultuous as lava flows.

One step further and we find ourselves in deep possession. In actual fact, these are organized seances of possession and dispossession: vampirism, possession by djinns, by zombies, and by Legba, the illustrious god of voodoo. Such a disintegration, dissolution or splitting of the personality, plays a key regulating role in ensuring the stability of the colonized world. On the way there these men and women were stamping impatiently, their nerves "on edge." On the way back, the village returns to serenity, peace, and stillness.

During the struggle for liberation there is a singular loss of interest in these rituals. With his back to the wall, the knife at his throat, or to be more exact the electrode on his genitals, the colonized subject is bound to stop telling stories.

After years of unreality, after wallowing in the most extraordinary phantasms, the colonized subject, machine gun at the ready, finally confronts the only force which challenges his very being: colonialism. And the young colonized subject who grows up in an atmosphere of fire and brimstone has no scruples mocking zombie ancestors, two-headed horses, corpses woken from the

dead, and djinns who, taking advantage of a yawn, slip inside the body. The colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through his praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation.

We have seen that this violence throughout the colonial period, although constantly on edge, runs on empty. We have seen it channeled through the emotional release of dance or possession. We have seen it exhaust itself in fratricidal struggles. The challenge now is to seize this violence as it realigns itself. Whereas it once reveled in myths and contrived ways to commit collective suicide, a fresh set of circumstances will now enable it to change directions.

From the point of view of political tactics and History, the liberation of the colonies poses a theoretical problem of crucial importance at the current time: When can it be said that the situation is ripe for a national liberation movement? What should be the first line of action? Because decolonization comes in many shapes, reason wavers and abstains from declaring what is a true decolonization and what is not. We shall see that for the politically committed, urgent decisions are needed on means and tactics, i.e., direction and organization. Anything else is but blind voluntarism with the terribly reactionary risks this implies.

What are the forces in the colonial period which offer new channels, new agents of empowerment for the violence of the colonized? First and foremost, the political parties and the intellectual and business elite. However, what is characteristic of certain political groups is that they are strong on principles but abstain from issuing marching orders. During the colonial period the activities of these nationalist political parties are purely for electioneering purposes and amount to no more than a series of philosophic-political discourses on the subject of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the human rights of dignity and



freedom from hunger, and the countless declarations of the principle "one man, one vote." The nationalist political parties never insist on the need for confrontation precisely because their aim is not the radical overthrow of the system. Pacifist and law-abiding, partisans, in fact, of order, the new order, these political groups bluntly ask of the colonialist bourgeoisie what to them is essential: "Give us more power." On the specific issue of violence, the elite are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes. While the bourgeois nationalist political leaders say one thing, they make it quite clear it is not what they are really thinking.

This characteristic of the nationalist political parties must be attributed to the nature of their leaders and their supporters. The supporters of the nationalist parties are urban voters. These workers, elementary school teachers, small tradesmen, and shopkeepers who have begun to profit from the colonial situation—in a pitiful sort of way of course—have their own interests in mind. What these supporters are demanding is a better life and improved wages. The dialogue between these political parties and colonialism has continued uninterrupted. Discussions focus on improvements, electoral representation, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. Reforms are discussed. It should come as no surprise therefore that a good many colonial subjects are active members in branches of metropolitan political parties. These colonial subjects are militant activists under the abstract slogan: "Power to the proletariat," forgetting that in their part of the world slogans of national liberation should come first. The colonized intellectual has invested his aggression in his barely veiled wish to be assimilated to the colonizer's world. He has placed his aggression at the service of his own interests, his interests as an individual. The result is the ready emergence of a kind of class of individually liberated slaves, of freed slaves. The intellectual calls for ways of freeing more and more slaves and ways of organizing a genuine class of the emancipated. The

masses, however, have no intention of looking on as the chances of individual success improve. What they demand is not the status of the colonist, but his place. In their immense majority the colonized want the colonist's farm. There is no question for them of competing with the colonist. They want to take his place.

The peasantry is systematically left out of most of the nationalist parties' propaganda. But it is obvious that in colonial countries only the peasantry is revolutionary. It has nothing to lose and everything to gain. The underprivileged and starving peasant is the exploited who very soon discovers that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possibility of concession. Colonization or decolonization: it is simply a power struggle. The exploited realize that their liberation implies using every means available, and force is the first. When Monsieur Guy Mollet capitulated to the French settlers in Algeria in 1956, the Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN) in a famous tract stated that colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat. No Algerian really thought these terms too violent. The tract merely expressed what every Algerian felt deep down: colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence.

At the critical, deciding moment the colonialist bourgeoisie, which had remained silent up till then, enters the fray. They introduce a new notion, in actual fact a creation of the colonial situation: nonviolence. In its raw state this nonviolence conveys to the colonized intellectual and business elite that their interests are identical to those of the colonialist bourgeoisie and it is therefore indispensable, a matter of urgency, to reach an agreement for the common good. Nonviolence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around the negotiating table before the irreparable is done, before any bloodshed or regrettable act is committed. But if the masses, without waiting for the chairs to be placed around the negotiating table, take matters into their



own hands and start burning and killing, it is not long before we see the “elite” and the leaders of the bourgeois nationalist parties turn to the colonial authorities and tell them: “This is terribly serious! Goodness knows how it will all end. We must find an answer, we must find a compromise.”

This notion of compromise is very important in the case of decolonization, for it is far from being a simple matter. Compromise, in fact, involves both the colonial system and the burgeoning national bourgeoisie. The adherents of the colonial system discover that the masses might very well destroy everything. The sabotage of bridges, the destruction of farms, repression and war can severely disrupt the economy. Compromise is also on the agenda for the national bourgeoisie who, unable to foresee the possible consequences of such a whirlwind, fear in fact they will be swept away, and hasten to reassure the colonists: “We are still capable of stopping the slaughter, the masses still trust us, act quickly if you do not want to jeopardize everything.” If events go one step further, the leader of the nationalist party distances himself from the violence. He loudly claims he has nothing to do with these Mau-Mau, with these terrorists, these butchers. In the best of cases, he barricades himself in a *no-man’s-land* between the terrorists and the colonists and offers his services as “mediator”; which means that since the colonists cannot negotiate with the Mau-Mau, he himself is prepared to begin negotiations. Thus the rear guard of the national struggle, that section of the people who have always been on the other side, now find themselves catapulted to the forefront of negotiations and compromise—precisely because they have always been careful not to break ties with colonialism.

Before holding negotiations, most of the nationalist parties are content in the best of cases to explain and excuse this “savagery.” They distance themselves from the people’s struggle and can often be heard in private condemning those spectacular acts that have been decreed heinous by the metropolitan press and pub-

lic opinion. Their preoccupation with objectivity constitutes the legitimate excuse for their failure to act. But this classic attitude of the colonized intellectual and the leaders of the nationalist parties is by no means objective. In fact they are not sure that this reckless violence is the most effective way of defending their own interests. Another thing is that they are convinced violent methods are ineffective. For them, there can be no doubt, any attempt to smash colonial oppression by force is an act of despair, a suicidal act. Because the colonizer’s tanks and fighter planes are constantly on their minds. When they are told *we must act*, they imagine bombs being dropped, armored cars rumbling through the streets, a hail of bullets, the police—and they stay put. They are losers from the start. Their incapacity to triumph by violence needs no demonstration; they prove it in their daily life and their maneuvering. They have remained in the puerile position which Engels adopted in his famous argument with that mountain of puerility, ~~Monsieur Dühring~~:

“Just as Crusoe could procure a sword for himself, we are equally entitled to assume that one fine morning Friday might appear with a loaded revolver in his hand, and then the whole ‘force’ relationship is inverted. Friday commands and it is Crusoe who has to drudge . . . So, then, the revolver triumphs over the sword; and this will probably make even the most childish axiomatician comprehend that force is no mere act of the will, but requires very real preliminary conditions before it can come into operation, that is to say, instruments, the more perfect of which vanquish the less perfect; moreover, that these instruments have to be produced, which also implies that the producer of more perfect instruments of force, *vulgo* arms, vanquishes the producer of the less perfect instrument, and that, in a word, the triumph of force is based on the production of arms, and this in turn on production in general—therefore on ‘economic power’, on the ‘economic order’, on the material means which force has at its disposal.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, trans. Emile Burns (New York International Publishers), pt. 2, chap. III (*The Force Theory*), 184.



In fact the reformist leaders say the same thing: "What do you expect to fight the colonists with? With your knives? With your shotguns?"

Yes, instruments are important in the field of violence since in the end everything is based on the allocation of these instruments of force. But in this respect it so happens that the liberation of colonial territories sheds new light on the matter. For example during the Peninsular War, which was an authentic colonial war, Napoleon was forced to retreat, despite having mustered the massive figure of 400,000 men during the 1810 spring offensive. Yet the French army's instruments of war, the bravery of its soldiers, and the military genius of its leaders made the whole of Europe tremble. Confronted with the enormous resources of the Napoleonic army, the Spanish, buoyed by an unshakeable national fervor, discovered guerrilla warfare, which twenty-five years earlier the American militia had tested on the British troops. But guerrilla warfare, that instrument of violence of the colonized, would amount to nothing if it did not count as a new factor in the global competition between cartels and monopolies.

At the start of colonization, a single military column could occupy a vast amount of territory—from the Congo and Nigeria to the Ivory Coast, etc. But today the national struggle of the colonized is part and parcel of an entirely new situation. Capitalism, in its expansionist phase, regarded the colonies as a source of raw materials which once processed could be unloaded on the European market. After a phase of capital accumulation, capitalism has now modified its notion of profitability. The colonies have become a market. The colonial population is a consumer market. Consequently, if the colony has to be constantly garrisoned, if trade slumps, in other words if manufactured and industrial goods can no longer be exported, this is proof that the military solution must be ruled out. A blind domination on the model of slavery is not economically profitable for the metropolis.

The monopolistic fraction of the metropolitan bourgeoisie will not support a government whose policy is based solely on the power of arms. What the metropolitan financiers and industrialists expect is not the devastation of the colonial population but the protection of their "legitimate interests" using economic agreements.

Capitalism therefore objectively colludes with the forces of violence that erupt in colonial territories. Moreover, the colonized subject is not alone in the face of the oppressor. There is, of course, the political and diplomatic aid of the progressive countries and their peoples. But above all there is the competition and the pitiless war waged by the financial groups. The Conference of Berlin was able to carve up a mutilated Africa among three or four European flags. Currently, the issue is not whether an African region is under French or Belgian sovereignty but whether the economic zones are safeguarded. Artillery shelling and scorched earth policy have been replaced by an economic dependency. The crackdown against a rebel sultan is a thing of the past. Matters have become more subtle, less bloody; plans are quietly made to eliminate the Castro regime. Guinea is held in a stranglehold, Mossadegh is liquidated. The national leader who is afraid of violence is very much mistaken if he thinks colonialism will "slaughter us all." The military, of course, continue to play tin soldiers dating back to the conquest, but the financial interests soon bring them back to earth.

The moderate nationalist political parties are therefore requested to clearly articulate their claims and to calmly and dispassionately seek a solution with the colonialist partner respecting the interests of both sides. When this nationalist reformist movement, often a caricature of trade unionism, decides to act, it does so using extremely peaceful methods: organizing work stoppages in the few factories located in the towns, mass demonstrations to cheer a leader, and a boycott of the buses or imported commodities. All these methods not only put pressure on the colonial



authorities but also allow the people to let off steam. This hibernation therapy, this hypnotherapy of the people, sometimes succeeds. From the negotiating table emerges then the political agenda that authorizes Monsieur M'ba, president of the Republic of Gabon, to very solemnly declare on his arrival for an official visit to Paris: "Gabon is an independent country, but nothing has changed between Gabon and France, the status quo continues." In fact the only change is that Monsieur M'ba is president of the Republic of Gabon, and he is the guest of the president of the French Republic.

The colonialist bourgeoisie is aided and abetted in the pacification of the colonized by the inescapable powers of religion. All the saints who turned the other cheek, who forgave those who trespassed against them, who, without flinching, were spat upon and insulted, are championed and shown as an example.

The elite of the colonized countries, those emancipated slaves, once they are at the head of the movement, inevitably end up producing an ersatz struggle. They use the term *slavery of their brothers* to shame the slave drivers or to provide their oppressors' financial competitors with an ideology of insipid humanitarianism. Never in fact do they actually appeal to the slaves, never do they actually mobilize them. On the contrary, at the moment of truth—for them, the lie—they brandish the threat of *mass mobilization* as a decisive weapon that would as if by magic put "an end to the colonial regime." There are revolutionaries obviously within these political parties, among the cadres, who deliberately turn their backs on the farce of national independence. But their speeches, their initiatives, and their angry outbursts very soon antagonize the party machine. These factions are gradually isolated, then removed altogether. At the same time, as if there were a dialectical concomitance, the colonial police swoops down upon them. Hounded in the towns, shunned by the militants, rejected by the party leaders, these undesirables with their inflammatory attitude end up in the

countryside. It is then they realize in a kind of intoxication that the peasant masses latch on to their every word and do not hesitate to ask them the question for which they are not prepared: "When do we start?"

This encounter between the revolutionaries from the towns and the peasant population will be dealt with later on. For the time being our attention should focus on the political parties in order to demonstrate the nevertheless progressive nature of their action. In their speeches, the political leaders "name" the nation. The demands of the colonized are thus formulated. But there is no substance, there is no political and social agenda. There is a vague form of national framework, what might be termed a minimal demand. The politicians who make the speeches, who write in the nationalist press, raise the people's hopes. They avoid subversion but in fact stir up subversive feelings in the consciousness of their listeners or readers. Often the national or ethnic language is used. Here again, expectations are raised and the imagination is allowed to roam outside the colonial order. Sometimes even these politicians declare: "We blacks, we Arabs," and these terms charged with ambivalence during the colonial period take on a sacred connotation. These nationalist politicians are playing with fire. As an African leader recently told a group of young intellectuals: "Think before speaking to the masses, they are easily excitable." There is therefore a cunning of history which plays havoc with the colonies.

When the political leader summons the people to a meeting, there could be said to be blood in the air. Yet very often the leader is mainly preoccupied with a "show" of force—so as not to use it. The excitement that is fostered, however—the comings and goings, the speech making, the crowds, the police presence, the military might, the arrests and the deportation of leaders—all this agitation gives the people the impression the time has come for them to do something. During these times of unrest the political



parties multiply the calls for calm to the left, while to the right they search the horizon endeavoring to decipher the liberal intentions of the colonial authorities.

In order to maintain their stamina and their revolutionary capabilities, the people also resort to retelling certain episodes in the life of the community. The outlaw, for example, who holds the countryside for days against the police, hot on his trail, or who succumbs after killing four or five police officers in single-handed combat or who commits suicide rather than "give up" his accomplices, all constitute for the people role models, action schemas, and "heroes." And there is no point, obviously, in saying that such a hero is a thief, a thug, or a degenerate. If the act for which this man is prosecuted by the colonial authorities is an act exclusively directed against a colonial individual or colonial asset, then the demarcation line is clear and manifest. The process of identification is automatic.

In this maturation process we should also underscore the historical role of national resistance to the colonial conquest. The major figures in the history of the colonized are always those who led the national resistance against foreign invasion. Behanzin, Sundiata, Samory, and Abdel Kader are revived with particular fervor during the period preceding the actual struggle. This is proof that the people are preparing to march again, to break the lull introduced by colonialism and make History.

The emergence of the new nation and the demolition of the colonial system are the result of either a violent struggle by the newly independent people or outside violence by other colonized peoples, which has an inhibiting effect on the colonial regime.

Colonized peoples are not alone. Despite the efforts of colonialism, their frontiers remain permeable to news and rumors. They discover that violence is atmospheric, it breaks out sporadically, and here and there sweeps away the colonial regime. The success of this violence plays not only an informative role but also an operative one. The great victory of the Vietnamese people

at Dien Bien Phu is no longer strictly speaking a Vietnamese victory. From July 1954 onward the colonial peoples have been asking themselves: "What must we do to achieve a Dien Bien Phu? How should we go about it?" A Dien Bien Phu was now within reach of every colonized subject. The problem was mustering forces, organizing them and setting a date for action. This pervading atmosphere of violence affects not just the colonized but also the colonizers who realize the number of latent Dien Bien Phu's. The colonial governments are therefore gripped in a genuine wholesale panic. Their plan is to make the first move, to turn the liberation movement to the right and disarm the people: Quick, let's decolonize. Let's decolonize the Congo before it turns into another Algeria. Let's vote a blueprint for Africa, let's create the Communauté for Africa, let's modernize it but for God's sake let's decolonize, let's decolonize. They decolonize at such a pace that they force independence on Houphouët-Boigny. In answer to the strategy of a Dien Bien Phu defined by the colonized, the colonizer replies with the strategy of containment—respecting the sovereignty of nations.

But let us return to this atmospheric violence, this violence rippling under the skin. We have seen as it develops how a number of driving mechanisms pick it up and convey it to an outlet. In spite of the metamorphosis imposed on it by the colonial regime in tribal or regional conflicts, violence continues to progress, the colonized subject identifies his enemy, puts a name to all of his misfortunes, and casts all his exacerbated hatred and rage in this new direction. But how do we get from the atmosphere of violence to setting violence in motion? What blows the lid? First of all there is the fact that such a development has a certain impact on the colonist's state of bliss. The colonist who "knows" the colonial subject realizes from several pointers that something is in the process of changing. The good "natives" become scarce, silence falls when the oppressor approaches. Sometimes looks harden and attitudes and remarks are downright



hostile. The nationalist parties become restless, call for more meetings, and, at the same time, security is increased and troop reinforcements are dispatched. The colonists, especially those isolated on their farms, are the first to become alarmed. They demand drastic measures.

The authorities do in fact take dramatic measures; they arrest one or two leaders, organize military parades, maneuvers and flyovers. These demonstrations of military power, these saber-rattling exercises, this smell of gunpowder which now fills the atmosphere do not intimidate the people. These bayonets and heavy gunfire strengthen their aggressiveness. A dramatic atmosphere sets in where everyone wants to prove he is ready for anything. It is under these circumstances that the gun goes off on its own for nerves are on edge, fear has set in, and everyone is trigger-happy. A trivial incident and the machine-gunning begins: you have a Sétif in Algeria, the Central Quarries in Morocco, and Moramanga in Madagascar.

Far from breaking the momentum, repression intensifies the progress made by the national consciousness. From the moment national consciousness reaches an embryonic stage of development, it is reinforced by the bloodbath in the colonies which signifies that between oppressors and oppressed, force is the only solution. We should point out here that it is not the political parties who called for the armed insurrection or organized it. All these perpetrations of repression, all these acts committed out of fear, are not what the leaders wanted. These events catch them off guard. It is then that the colonial authorities may decide to arrest the nationalist leaders. But nowadays the governments of colonialist countries know perfectly well that it is highly dangerous to deprive the masses of their leader. For it is then that the people hurl themselves headlong into jacqueries, mutinies and "bestial murders." The masses give free rein to their "bloodthirsty instincts" and demand the liberation of their leaders whose difficult job it will be to restore law and order. The colonized who

spontaneously invested their violence in the colossal task of destroying the colonial system soon find themselves chanting the passive, sterile slogan: "Free X or Y!"<sup>4</sup> The colonial authorities then free these men and start negotiating. The time for dancing in the streets has arrived.

In other cases, the political party apparatus may remain intact. But in the interplay of colonial repression and the spontaneous reaction by the people, the parties find themselves outmaneuvered by their militants. The violence of the masses is pitted against the occupier's military forces; the situation deteriorates and festers. The leaders still at liberty are left on the sidelines. Suddenly rendered helpless with their bureaucracy and their reason-based agenda, they can be seen attempting the supreme imposture of a rearguard action by "speaking in the name of the muzzled nation." As a general rule, the colonial authorities jump at this piece of good fortune, transform these useless characters into spokesmen, and, in next to no time, grant them independence, leaving it up to them to restore law and order.

Everybody therefore has violence on their minds and the question is not so much responding to violence with more violence but rather how to defuse the crisis.

What in fact constitutes this violence? As we have seen, the colonized masses intuitively believe that their liberation must be achieved and can only be achieved by force. What aberration of the mind drives these famished, enfeebled men lacking technology and organizational resources to think that only violence can liberate them faced with the occupier's military and economic might? How can they hope to triumph?

Since what is scandalous is that violence can be used as a party slogan and the people urged to rise up in an armed struggle. This issue of violence needs to be given careful consideration. When

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<sup>4</sup> The arrested leader might very well be the authentic mouthpiece of the colonized masses. In this case, the colonial authorities will take advantage of his detention to try and establish new leaders.



German militarism decides to resolve its border problems by force, it is no surprise, but when the Angolan people, for instance, decide to take up arms, when the Algerians reject any method which does not include violence, this is proof that something has happened or is in the process of happening. The colonized peoples, these slaves of modern times, have run out of patience. They know that such madness alone can deliver them from colonial oppression. A new type of relationship is established in the world. The peoples of the Third World are in the process of shattering their chains, and what is extraordinary is that they succeed. In this age of the Sputnik we might think it ridiculous to die of hunger, but for the colonized masses the explanation is more down to earth. The truth is that no colonialist country today is capable of mounting the only form of repression which would have a chance of succeeding, i.e., a prolonged and large scale military occupation.

At home, the colonialist countries are faced with contestation and workers' demands that require the deployment of their security forces. Moreover, in the current international situation these countries need their troops to protect their own regime. Finally, the myth of the liberation movements masterminded by Moscow is all too familiar. For this panic-stricken reasoning read: "If this continues, the Communists will very likely take advantage of the unrest in order to infiltrate these regions."

In his impatience, the fact that the colonized subject brandishes the threat of violence proves that he is aware of the exceptional nature of the current situation and that he intends to make the most of it. But also on a more immediate personal level, as he sees the modern world penetrate the remotest corners of the interior, he becomes acutely aware of everything he does not possess. The masses, by a kind of (infantile) reasoning, are convinced they have been robbed. In certain developing countries, therefore, they are quick to catch on and realize two or three years after independence their hopes have been dashed: "What was

the point of fighting" if nothing was really destined to change? In 1789, after the bourgeois French Revolution, the humblest French peasant gained substantially from the upheaval. But it is common knowledge that for 95 percent of the population in developing countries, independence has not brought any immediate change. Any observer with a keen eye is aware of a kind of latent discontent which like glowing embers constantly threatens to flare up again.

So they say the colonized want to move too fast. Let us never forget that it wasn't such a long time ago the colonized were accused of being too slow, lazy, and fatalistic. Obviously the violence channeled into the liberation struggle does not vanish as if by magic after hoisting the national colors. It has even less reason to disappear since nation building continues to operate within the framework of critical competition between capitalism and socialism.

This competition gives a quasi-universal dimension to the most local of disputes. Every meeting, every act of repression reverberates around the international arena. The Sharpeville massacre shook public opinion for months. In the press, over the airwaves and in private conversations, Sharpeville has become a symbol. It is through Sharpeville that men and women addressed the problem of apartheid in South Africa. And there is no reason to believe that demagoguery alone explains the sudden interest by the major powers in the petty affairs of the underdeveloped regions. Every peasant revolt, every insurrection in the Third World fits into the framework of the cold war. Two men are beaten up in Salisbury and an entire bloc goes into action, focuses on these two men and uses this beating to raise the issue of Rhodesia\* — linking it to the rest of Africa and every colonized subject. But the full-scale campaign under way leads the other bloc to gauge the flaws in its sphere of influence. The colonized peoples realize

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\*Translator's Note: Present-day Zimbabwe



that neither faction is interested in disengaging itself from regional conflicts. They no longer limit their horizons to one particular region since they are swept along in this atmosphere of universal convulsion.

When every three months we learn that the sixth or seventh U.S. Fleet is heading toward some coast or other, when Khrushchev threatens to come to Castro's aid with the help of missiles, when Kennedy envisages drastic solutions for Laos, the colonized or newly independent peoples get the impression they are being forced, whether they like it or not, into a frantic march. In fact they are already marching. Let us take, for example, the case of governments of recently liberated countries. The men in power spend two thirds of their time keeping watch over their borders, averting any threat of danger, and the other third working for the country. At the same time they are looking for support. Governed by the same dialectic, the national opposition gives parliamentary channels the cold shoulder. It seeks allies who agree to support them in their ruthless endeavor at sedition. The atmosphere of violence, after having penetrated the colonial phase, continues to dominate national politics. As we have said, the Third World is not excluded. On the contrary, it is at the very center of the convulsion. This is why in their speeches the statesmen of underdeveloped countries maintain indefinitely a tone of aggressiveness and exasperation which normally should have disappeared. The often-reported impoliteness of the new leaders is understandable. What is less noticeable is the extreme courtesy these same leaders show toward their brothers and comrades. Their impolite behavior is first and foremost directed against the others, against the former colonialists who come to observe and investigate. The excolonized too often get the impression that the findings of these investigations are a foregone conclusion. The journalist is on assignment to justify them. The photos that illustrate the article provide proof that he knows what he is talking about and was actually there. The investigation sets out to

prove that "everything went wrong as soon as we left." The journalists often complain they are badly treated, are forced to work under poor conditions, and come up against a wall of indifference or hostility. All this is quite normal. The nationalist leaders know that international opinion is forged solely by the Western press. When a Western journalist interviews us, however, it is seldom done to render us service. In the war in Algeria, for example, the most liberal-minded French reporters make constant use of ambiguous epithets to portray our struggle. When we reproach them for it, they reply in all sincerity they are being objective. For the colonized subject, objectivity is always directed against him. Understandable, too, is that new tone of voice which dominated international diplomacy at the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960. The representatives of the colonial countries were aggressive and violent in the extreme, but their populations found nothing exaggerated. The radicalism of the African spokespersons brought the abscess to a head and shone the spotlight on the unacceptable nature of the veto, on the collusion between the major powers, and above all on the insignificant role allotted to the Third World.

Diplomacy as initiated by the newly independent peoples is no longer a matter of nuances, innuendoes, and hypnotic passes. Their spokesmen have been assigned by their population to defend both the unity of the nation, the welfare of the masses as well as the right to freedom and self-sufficiency.

It is therefore a diplomacy in motion, in rage, which contrasts strangely with the petrified, motionless world of colonization. And when Mr. Khrushchev brandishes his shoe at the United Nations and hammers the table with it, no colonized individual, no representative of the underdeveloped countries laughs. For what Mr. Khrushchev is showing the colonized countries who are watching, is that he, the missile-wielding muzhik, is treating these wretched capitalists the way they deserve. Likewise Castro attending the UN in military uniform does not scandalize the



underdeveloped countries. What Castro is demonstrating is how aware he is of the continuing regime of violence. What is surprising is that he did not enter the UN with his submachine gun; but perhaps they wouldn't have allowed that. The revolts, the acts of desperation, the factions armed with machetes or axes find their national identity in the unrelenting struggle that pits capitalism against socialism.

In 1945 the 45,000 dead at Sétif could go unnoticed; in 1947 the 90,000 dead in Madagascar were written off in a few lines in the press; in 1952 the 200,000 victims of repression in Kenya were met with relative indifference—because the international contradictions were not sufficiently clear-cut. The Korean War and the war in Indochina had already established a new phase. But it was above all Budapest and Suez which constituted the deciding moments of this confrontation.

Heartened by the unconditional support of the socialist countries the colonized hurl themselves with whatever weapons they possess against the impregnable citadel of colonialism. Although the citadel is invincible against knives and bare hands, its invincibility crumbles when we take into account the context of the cold war.

In this new context, the Americans take their role as the barons of international capitalism very seriously. At first, they advise the European countries to decolonize on gentleman's terms. In a second phase they have no hesitation first proclaiming their respect then their support for the principle: *Africa for the Africans*. Today the U.S. has no qualms officially declaring they are the defenders of the right of peoples to self-determination. The latest voyage by Mr. Mennen-Williams illustrates all too well the American consciousness that the Third World must not be sacrificed. Understandably, violence is a desperate act only if it is compared *in abstracto* to the military machine of the oppressors. On the other hand, violence in the context of international relations, we realize, represents a formidable threat to the oppres-

sor. Persistent jacqueries and Mau-Mau agitation disrupt the economic life of a colony but pose no threat to the metropolis. A greater threat, as far as imperialism is concerned, is that socialist propaganda might infiltrate the masses and contaminate them. It is already a serious risk during the conflict's cold period; but what would happen to the colony rotted by bloody guerrilla warfare in the event of a real war?

Capitalism then realizes that its military strategy has everything to lose if national conflicts were to break out. In the framework of peaceful coexistence, therefore, every colony is destined to disappear and, taking it to the extreme, neutrality will command capitalism's respect. What must be avoided at all costs are strategic risks, the espousal by the masses of an enemy doctrine and radical hatred by tens of millions of men. The colonized peoples are perfectly aware of these imperatives which dominate international politics. This is why even those who rage against violence always plan and act on the basis of this global violence. Today the peaceful coexistence between the two blocs maintains and aggravates the violence in colonial countries. Perhaps tomorrow we shall see a shift in the violence once the colonial territories have been fully liberated. Perhaps we shall see the issue of minorities raised. Already some of them have no qualms advocating violent methods in response to their problems and it is no coincidence that, so we have learned, black radicals in the U.S. have formed armed militia groups. It is no coincidence either that in the so-called free world there are defense committees for Jewish minorities in the USSR and that General de Gaulle in one of his speeches shed a few tears for the millions of Muslims oppressed by the communist dictatorship. Imperialism and capitalism are convinced that the fight against racism and national liberation movements are purely and simply controlled and masterminded from "the outside." So they decide to deploy practical tactics such as the creation of Radio Free Europe and committees for the defense of oppressed minorities. They



practice anticolonialism in the same way the French colonels in Algeria engaged in counter-terrorism with the SAS (Sections Administratives Speciales) or psychological warfare. They "used the people against the people." We know where that got them.

This threatening atmosphere of violence and missiles in no way frightens or disorients the colonized. We have seen that their entire recent history has prepared them to "understand" the situation. Between colonial violence and the insidious violence in which the modern world is steeped, there is a kind of complicit correlation, a homogeneity. The colonized have adapted to this atmosphere. For once they are in tune with their time. People are sometimes surprised that, instead of buying a dress for their wife, the colonized buy a transistor radio. They shouldn't be. The colonized are convinced their fate is in the balance. They live in a doomsday atmosphere and nothing must elude them. This is why they fully understand Phouma and Phoumi, Lumumba and Tschombe, Ahidjo and Moumié, Kenyatta and those introduced from time to time to replace him. They fully understand all these men because they are able to unmask the forces behind them. The colonized, underdeveloped man is today a political creature in the most global sense of the term.

Independence has certainly brought the colonized peoples moral reparation and recognized their dignity. But they have not yet had time to elaborate a society or build and ascertain values. The glowing focal point where the citizen and individual develop and mature in a growing number of areas does not yet exist. Situated in a kind of indeterminate state they have fairly quickly convinced themselves that everything is decided elsewhere for everyone at the same time. As for the leaders, when confronted with such a situation, they hesitate and choose a policy of neutrality.

There is much to be said on the subject of neutrality. Some liken it to a kind of loathsome mercantilism which consists of

taking handouts left and right. But although neutrality, a creation of the cold war, allows underdeveloped countries to receive economic aid from both sides, it does not permit either of these two sides to come to the aid of underdeveloped regions the way they should. Those literally astronomical sums invested in arms research, these engineers transformed into technicians of nuclear war could raise the living standards of the underdeveloped countries by 60 percent in fifteen years. It is therefore obvious that the underdeveloped countries have no real interest in either prolonging or intensifying this cold war. But they are never asked for their opinion. So whenever they can, they disengage. But can they really do so? For example, here is France testing its atomic bombs in Africa. Even allowing for the resolutions, the meetings and slammings of the door on diplomatic relations, it cannot be said that the African peoples had much impact on France's attitude in this particular sector.

Neutrality produces in the citizen of the Third World an attitude of mind which translates in everyday life to a brazenness and hieratic pride strangely resembling an act of defiance. This staunch refusal to compromise, this sheer determination to go it alone recall the behavior of those deprived, self-centered teenagers who are always prepared to fight to the last over a mere word. All of this disconcerts Western observers. For there is, strictly speaking, a scandalous discrepancy between what these men claim to be and what in fact they have to back them up. These countries without urban transportation, without troops, and without money cannot justify flaunting such bravado. It is without doubt an imposture. The Third World often gives the impression it revels in sensationalism and it needs its weekly dose of crises. These leaders of empty countries who talk too loud are exasperating. You'd like to shut them up. But instead they are wooed. They are given bouquets of flowers. Invitations. To be frank, everyone wants a piece of them. And that is what we call neutrality. For a population 98 percent illiterate, there is, however, an enormous amount of literature



written about them. They are constantly on the move. The leaders and students of the underdeveloped countries are a gold mine for the airlines. Asian and African officials can attend a seminar on socialist planning in Moscow one week and then another on free trade in London or at Columbia University the next. As for African labor union members, they are making enormous progress. No sooner are they appointed to positions of leadership than they decide to group themselves into autonomous units. They do not have the fifty years' experience of labor unions in an industrialized country, but they already know that nonpolitical unionism is an absurdity. They have not had to deal with the bourgeois bulldozer, they have not developed a consciousness from the class struggle, but perhaps this is not required. Perhaps. We shall see that this totalizing determination which often becomes a caricature of internationalism is one of the most basic characteristics of underdeveloped countries.

But let us return to the single combat between the colonized and the colonist. It is clearly and plainly an armed struggle. Indochina, Indonesia, and, of course, North Africa are historical examples. But we should never lose sight of the fact that this struggle could have broken out anywhere, in Guinea as well as Somaliland, and even today it can break out anywhere where colonialism intends to stay, in Angola for instance. The existence of an armed struggle is indicative that the people are determined to put their faith only in violent methods. The very same people who had it constantly drummed into them that the only language they understood was that of force, now decide to express themselves with force. In fact the colonist has always shown them the path they should follow to liberation. The argument chosen by the colonized was conveyed to them by the colonist, and by an ironic twist of fate it is now the colonized who state that it is the colonizer who only understands the language of force. The colonial regime owes its legitimacy to force and at no time does it ever endeavor to cover up this nature of things. Every statue of Faïdherbe or Lyautey, Bugeaud

or Blandan, every one of these conquistadors ensconced on colonial soil, is a constant reminder of one and the same thing: "We are here by the force of the bayonet . . ." Everyone knows the rest of the quote. During the insurrectional stage every colonist reasons on the basis of simple arithmetic. Such a logic is no surprise to the other colonists, but it is important to point out that it is no surprise to the colonized either. And first and foremost, stating the principle "It's them or us" is not a paradox since colonialism, as we have seen, is precisely the organization of a Manichaean world, of a compartmentalized world. And when advocating an exact line of procedure the colonist asks every representative of the oppressor minority to take out 30 or 100 or 200 natives, he realizes there is no outcry of indignation and that at the most the issue boils down to whether it can be done in one step or in stages.<sup>5</sup>

This line of reasoning which envisages the surgical elimination of the colonized does not morally upset the colonized subject. He has always known that his dealings with the colonist would take place in a field of combat. So the colonized subject wastes no time lamenting and almost never searches for justice in the colonial context. In fact if the colonist's argument leaves the colonized subject unmoved it is because the latter poses the issue of his liberation in virtually identical terms: "Let us form groups of two or five hundred and let each group deal with a colonist." It is in this mutual frame of mind that both protagonists begin the struggle.

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<sup>5</sup> It is obvious that this general clean-up destroys the thing one wants to save. This is exactly what Sartre indicates when he says: "*In short, by the very act of repeating them (i.e., racist ideas) one shows that it is impossible for everyone to unite simultaneously against the natives, that it is merely shifting recurrence, and that in any case such a unification could occur as an active grouping only so as to massacre the colonized people, which is the perpetual absurd temptation of the colonialists, and, which, if it were possible, would amount to the immediate destruction of colonization.*" Critique of Dialectical Reason. Translated by Alan Sheridan-Smith.



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For the colonized, this violence represents the absolute praxis. The militant therefore is one who works. The questions which the organization asks the militant bear the mark of this vision of things: "Where have you worked? With whom? What have you accomplished?" The group requires each individual to have performed an irreversible act. In Algeria, for example, where almost all the men who called on the people to join the national struggle were sentenced to death or wanted by the French police, trust was proportional to the desperate nature of each case. A new militant could be trusted only when he could no longer return to the colonial system. Such a mechanism apparently existed in Kenya with the Mau-Mau, who required every member of the group to strike the victim. Everyone was therefore personally responsible for the death of the victim. To work means to work towards the death of the colonist. Claiming responsibility for the violence also allows those members of the group who have strayed or have been outlawed to come back, to retake their place and be reintegrated. Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. This praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end. Césaire's poetry takes on a prophetic significance in this very prospect of violence. Let us recall one of the most decisive pages of his tragedy where the Rebel (what a coincidence!) proclaims:

REBEL (*toughly*)

My family name: offended; my given name: humiliated; my profession: rebel; my age: the stone age.

MOTHER

My race: the human race. My religion: brotherhood . . .

REBEL

My race: the fallen race. My religion . . .

but it is not you who will prepare it with your disarmament;  
it is I with my revolt and my poor clenched fists and my bushy head.  
(*Very calmly*)

I recall a November day; he was not six months old and the master came into the shack murky as an April moon, and he was probing the child's small muscled limbs, he was a very good master, he ran his fat fingers caressingly across his little dimpled face. His blue eyes were laughing and his mouth was teasing him with sugary things: this one will make a good one, the master said looking at me, and he was saying other friendly things, the master was, that you had to start very early, that twenty years were not too much to make a good Christian and a good slave, a good subject, utterly devoted, a good slavedriver for an overseer, with a sharp eye and a strong arm. And this man was speculating over my son's cradle, a slavedriver's cradle.

MOTHER

Alas you will die.

REBEL

Killed . . . I killed him with my own hands. . . .

Yes: a fecund and copious death. . . .

It was night. We crawled through the sugarcane.

The cutlasses were chortling at the stars, but we didn't care about the stars.

The cane slashed our faces with streams of green blades.

MOTHER

I had dreamed of a son who would close his mother's eyes.

REBEL

I chose to open my child's eyes to another sun.

MOTHER

. . . O my son . . . an evil and pernicious death.

REBEL

Mother, a verdant and sumptuous death.

MOTHER

From too much hate.

REBEL

From too much love.

MOTHER

Spare me, I'm choking from your shackles, bleeding from your wounds.

REBEL

And the world does not spare me. . . . There is not in the world one single poor lynched bastard, one poor tortured man, in whom I am not also murdered and humiliated.



MOTHER

God in Heaven, deliver him!

REBEL

My heart, you will not deliver me of my memories. . . .

It was a November night. . . .

And suddenly clamors lit up the silence,

we had leapt, we the slaves, we the manure, we beasts with patient hooves.

We were running like lunatics; fiery shots broke out. . . . We were striking. Sweat and blood cooled us off. We were striking amidst the screams and the screams became more strident and a great clamor rose toward the east, the outbuildings were burning and the flames sweetly splashed our cheeks.

Then came the attack on the master's house.

They were shooting from the windows.

We forced the doors.

The master's bedroom was wide open. The master's bedroom was brilliantly lit, and the master was there, very calm. . . . and all of us stopped . . . he was the master. . . . I entered. It's you, he said, very calmly. . . . It was me, it was indeed me, I told him, the good slave, the faithful slave, the slave slave, and suddenly my eyes were two cockroaches frightened on a rainy day. . . . I struck, the blood spurted: it is the only baptism that today I remember.<sup>6</sup>

It is understandable how in such an atmosphere everyday life becomes impossible. Being a fellow, a pimp, or an alcoholic is no longer an option. The violence of the colonial regime and the counterviolence of the colonized balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity. The greater the number of metropolitan settlers, the more terrible the violence will be. Violence among the colonized will spread in proportion to the violence exerted by the colonial

regime. In the initial phase of this insurrectional period the metropolitan governments are slaves of the colonists. These colonists are a threat to both the colonized and their own governments. They will use the same methods indiscriminately. The assassination of the mayor of Evian can be likened to the assassination of Ali Boumendjel in its method and motivation. For the colonists the alternative is not between an Algerian Algeria and a French Algeria, but between an independent Algeria and a colonial Algeria. Anything else is hot air or an act of treason. The colonist's logic is unrelenting and one is only baffled by the counterlogic of the colonized's behavior if one has remained out of touch with the colonists' way of thinking. Once the colonized have opted for counterviolence, police reprisals automatically call for reprisals by the nationalist forces. The outcome, however, is profoundly unequal, for machine-gunning by planes or bombardments from naval vessels outweigh in horror and scope the response from the colonized. The most alienated of the colonized are once and for all demystified by this pendulum motion of terror and counterterror. They see for themselves that any number of speeches on human equality cannot mask the absurdity whereby seven Frenchmen killed or wounded in an ambush at the Sakamody pass sparks the indignation of civilized consciences, whereas the sacking of the Guergour *douars*, the Djerah *dechra*, and the massacre of the population behind the ambush count for nothing. Terror, counterterror, violence, counterviolence. This is what observers bitterly report when describing the circle of hatred which is so manifest and so tenacious in Algeria.

In the armed struggle there is what we could call the point of no return. It is almost always attributable to the sweeping repression which encompasses every sector of the colonized population. This point was reached in Algeria in 1955 with the 12,000 victims of Philippeville and in 1956 by Lacoste's creation of rural

<sup>6</sup> Aimé Césaire, "And the dogs were silent" in *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry—1946–82*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1990).



and urban militias.<sup>7</sup> It then becomes evident for everyone and even for the colonists that "things cannot go on as they are and

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<sup>7</sup> In order to gauge the importance of this decision by the French government in Algeria we need to return to this period. In issue no. 4 of *Résistance Algérienne* dated March 28, 1957, we read:

"In response to the wishes of the United Nations General Assembly, the French government has recently decided to create urban militias. Enough bloodshed, said the UN. Let us form militias, replies Lacoste. Cease fire, advised the UN. Let us arm the civilians, screams Lacoste. The two parties involved are requested to make initial contacts in order to agree on a democratic and peaceful solution, the UN recommended. Lacoste decrees that henceforth every European shall be armed and should fire on anybody appearing suspect. The savage, iniquitous repression bordering on genocide must above all things be combated by the authorities, was then the general opinion. Lacoste retorts: Let us systematize the repression, let us organize a manhunt of Algerians. And symbolically he hands over civilian power to the military and military power to the civilians. The circle is sealed. In the middle, the Algerian, disarmed, starved, hounded, jostled, struck, lynched and soon to be shot because he is a suspect. Today in Algeria there is not a single Frenchman who is not authorized or welcome to make use of his arms. Not a single Frenchman in Algeria one month after the UN's appeal for calm who does not have permission or the obligation to unearth, fabricate and hunt down suspects.

One month after the UN General Assembly's resolution there is not a single European in Algeria who is not party to the most appalling act of extermination in modern times. Democratic solution? Okay, concedes Lacoste, let's start by eliminating the Algerians. In order to do so let's arm the civilians and let them do the job. The majority of the Parisian press cautiously reported the creation of these armed gangs. Fascist militia, they said. Yes. But at the level of the individual and human rights what is fascism but colonialism at the very heart of traditionally colonialist countries? Systematically authorized and condoned assassination they suggested. But for one hundred and thirty years hasn't Algerian flesh borne the marks of ever gaping, ever growing, ever deeper wounds? We should be careful, advises Monsieur Kenne-Vignes, parliamentary member for the M.R.P. party, not to widen the abyss between the two communities in Algeria by creating these militias. Yes. But isn't the colonial status the organized enslavement of an entire people? The Algerian Revolution is precisely the living challenge to this enslavement and this abyss. The Algerian Revolution addresses the occupying nation as follows: 'Remove your fangs from Algeria's bruised and wounded flesh! Let the Algerian people speak!'

The creation of these militias, they say, will alleviate the army. They will free units whose mission is to protect the borders with Tunisia and Morocco.

have to change." The colonized, however, do not keep accounts. They register the enormous gaps left in their ranks as a kind of necessary evil. Since they have decided to respond with violence, they admit the consequences. Their one demand is that they are not asked to keep accounts for others as well. To the expression: "All natives are the same," the colonized reply: "All colonists are the same."<sup>8</sup> When the colonized subject is tortured, when his

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A six hundred thousand strong army. Almost the entire navy and airforce. A vast police network, operating expeditiously, with a staggering record since it recruited the ex-torturers of the Moroccan and Tunisian peoples. Territorial units one hundred thousand men strong. The job of the army must be alleviated. Let's create urban militias. So impressive is Lacoste's criminal and hysterical frenzy it convinces even clear-sighted Frenchmen. The truth is that the justification for creating such militias is contradictory in itself. The French army's job is infinite. From the moment its mission is to gag the mouths of the Algerians the door to the future is closed for ever. Above all there is a refusal to analyze, to understand and to gauge the depth and the density of the Algerian Revolution: every district, every section, every street, every housing block, every floor has its community leader. . . . Coverage on the ground is now backed up by coverage floor by floor.

In 48 hours two thousand candidates were enrolled. The Europeans of Algeria immediately responded to Lacoste's call for murder. From now on every European will have to make a list of the surviving Algerians in his sector. Gathering intelligence, 'rapid response' to terrorism, identifying suspects, elimination of runaways and police reinforcements. Yes the army must be alleviated of such jobs. Combing the ground is now backed up by combing floor by floor. Haphazard killings are now backed up by premeditated murder. Stop the bloodshed, urged the UN. The best way of doing so, retorts Lacoste, is to have no more blood to shed. After having been delivered up to Massu's hordes the Algerian people are now entrusted to the care of the urban militias. Lacoste's decision to create these militias clearly means hands off HIS war. It is proof there are no limits once the rot has set in. Of course now he is a prisoner, but what a delight to drag down everyone with him.

After every one of these decisions the Algerian people increase their muscular tension and intensify their struggle. After every one of these organized, requisitioned killings the Algerian people better structure their consciousness and strengthen their resistance. Yes. The tasks for the French army are infinite because the unity of the Algerian people is infinite, O so infinite!"

<sup>8</sup> This is the reason why at the outbreak of hostilities, no prisoners are taken. It is only through politicizing the *cadres* that the leaders manage to get the masses to accept (1) that the recruits dispatched from the *métropole* are not



wife is killed or raped, he complains to no one. The authorities of oppression can appoint as many commissions of inquiry and investigation as they like. In the eyes of the colonized, these commissions do not exist. And in fact, soon it will be seven years of crimes committed in Algeria and not a single Frenchman has been brought before a French court of justice for the murder of an Algerian. In Indochina, Madagascar, and the colonies, the "native" has always known he can expect nothing from the other side. The work of the colonist is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the colonized. The work of the colonized is to imagine every possible method for annihilating the colonist. On the logical plane, the Manichaeism of the colonist produces a Manichaeism of the colonized. The theory of the "absolute evil of the colonist" is in response to the theory of the "absolute evil of the native."

The arrival of the colonist signified syncretically the death of indigenous society, cultural lethargy, and petrification of the individual. For the colonized, life can only materialize from the rotting cadaver of the colonist. Such then is the term-for-term correspondence between the two arguments.

But it so happens that for the colonized this violence is invested with positive, formative features because it constitutes their only work. This violent praxis is totalizing since each individual represents a violent link in the great chain, in the almighty body of violence rearing up in reaction to the primary violence of the colonizer. Factions recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people, i.e., it pitches them in a single direction, from which there is no turning back.

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always sent of their own free will and in some cases even are sickened by this war; (2) that it is in the current interest of the movement to wage a struggle abiding by certain international conventions; (3) that an army which takes prisoners is an army, and ceases to be considered a gang of outlaws; (4) in any case, the possession of prisoners constitutes a significant means of applying pressure for protecting our militants held by the enemy.

When it is achieved during a war of liberation the mobilization of the masses introduces the notion of common cause, national destiny, and collective history into every consciousness. Consequently, the second phase, i.e., nation building, is facilitated by the existence of this mortar kneaded with blood and rage. This then gives us a better understanding of the originality of the vocabulary used in underdeveloped countries. During the colonial period the people were called upon to fight against oppression. Following national liberation they are urged to fight against poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment. The struggle, they say, goes on. The people realize that life is an unending struggle.

The violence of the colonized, we have said, unifies the people. By its very structure colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism is not merely content to note the existence of tribes, it reinforces and differentiates them. The colonial system nurtures the chieftainships and revives the old *marabout* confraternities. Violence in its practice is totalizing and national. As a result, it harbors in its depths the elimination of regionalism and tribalism. The nationalist parties, therefore, show no pity at all toward the *kaid*s and the traditional chiefs. The elimination of the *kaid*s and the chiefs is a prerequisite to the unification of the people.

At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic, and even if they have been demobilized by rapid decolonization, the people have time to realize that liberation was the achievement of each and every one and no special merit should go to the leader. Violence hoists the people up to the level of the leader. Hence their aggressive tendency to distrust the system of protocol that young governments are quick to establish. When they have used violence to achieve national liberation, the masses allow nobody to come forward as "liberator." They prove themselves to be jealous of their achievements and take care not to place their future, their destiny, and the fate of their homeland



into the hands of a living god. Totally irresponsible yesterday, today they are bent on understanding everything and determining everything. Enlightened by violence, the people's consciousness rebels against any pacification. The demagogues, the opportunists and the magicians now have a difficult task. The praxis which pitched them into a desperate man-to-man struggle has given the masses a ravenous taste for the tangible. Any attempt at mystification in the long term becomes virtually impossible.

#### ON VIOLENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

We have many times indicated in the preceding pages that in underdeveloped countries the political leader is constantly calling on the people to fight. To fight against colonialism, to fight against poverty and underdevelopment, to fight against debilitating traditions. The vocabulary he uses is that of a chief of staff: "Mobilization of the masses," "the agricultural front," "the illiteracy front," "defeats suffered," "victories won." During its early years the young independent nation evolves in the atmosphere of a battleground. This is because the political leader of an underdeveloped country is terror-stricken at the prospect of the long road that lies ahead. He appeals to the people and tells them: "Let us roll up our sleeves and get to work." Gripped in a kind of creative frenzy the nation plunges into action of a hugely disproportionate nature. The agenda is not only to pull through but to catch up with the other nations as best one can. There is a widespread belief that the European nations have reached their present stage of development as a result of their labors. Let us prove therefore to the world and ourselves that we are capable of the same achievements. Posing the problem of development of underdeveloped countries in this way seems to us to be neither right nor reasonable.

The European nations achieved their national unity at a time when the national bourgeoisies had concentrated most of the

wealth in their own hands. Shopkeepers and merchants, clerks and bankers monopolized finance, commerce, and science within the national framework. The bourgeoisie represented the most dynamic and prosperous class. Its rise to power enabled it to launch into operations of a crucial nature such as industrialization, the development of communications, and, eventually, the quest for overseas outlets.

In Europe, barring a few exceptions (England, for instance, had taken a slight lead), states achieving national unity were in roughly the same economic situation. Because of the nature of their development and progress, no nation really *insulted* the others.

Today, national independence and nation building in the underdeveloped regions take on an entirely new aspect. In these regions, except for some remarkable achievements, every country suffers from the same lack of infrastructure. The masses battle with the same poverty, wrestle with the same age-old gestures, and delineate what we could call the geography of hunger with their shrunken bellies. A world of underdevelopment, a world of poverty and inhumanity. But also a world without doctors, without engineers, without administrators. Facing this world, the European nations wallow in the most ostentatious opulence. This European opulence is literally a scandal for it was built on the backs of slaves, it fed on the blood of slaves, and owes its very existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world. Europe's well-being and progress were built with the sweat and corpses of blacks, Arabs, Indians, and Asians. This we are determined never to forget. When a colonialist country, embarrassed by a colony's demand for independence, proclaims with the nationalist leaders in mind: "If you want independence, take it and return to the Dark Ages," the newly independent people nod their approval and take up the challenge. And what we actually see is the colonizer



withdrawing his capital and technicians and encircling the young nation with an apparatus of economic pressure.<sup>9</sup>

The apotheosis of independence becomes the curse of independence. The sweeping powers of coercion of the colonial authorities condemn the young nation to regression. In other words, the colonial power says: "If you want independence, take it and suffer the consequences." The nationalist leaders then are left with no other choice but to turn to their people and ask them to make a gigantic effort. These famished individuals are required to undergo a regime of austerity, these atrophied muscles are required to work out of all proportion. An autarkic regime is established and each state, with the pitiful resources at its disposal, endeavors to address the mounting national hunger and the growing national poverty. We are witness to the mobilization of a

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<sup>9</sup> In the current international context capitalism does not impose an economic blockade solely upon the colonies in Africa and Asia. The U.S. with its anti-Castro policy has inaugurated in the Western Hemisphere a new chapter in the history of man's laborious fight for freedom. Latin America composed of independent countries sitting at the UN with their own national currency should be a lesson for Africa. Since their liberation these former colonies live in terror and destitution under Western capitalism's stranglehold.

The liberation of Africa and the development of man's consciousness have enabled the peoples of Latin America to break the spiral of dictatorships where one regime looked very much like the next. Castro takes power in Cuba and hands it to the people. The Yankees feel this heresy to be a national scourge and the U.S. organizes counter-revolutionary brigades, fabricates a provisional government, burns the sugar cane harvests, and finally decides to place an implacable stranglehold on the Cuban people. It won't be easy, however. The Cuban people will suffer, but they will win in the end. Janos Quadros, the president of Brazil, recently declared in a declaration of historical importance that his country will defend the Cuban Revolution by every means possible. Perhaps the U.S. too will bow to the will of the people. That will be a day for rejoicing since it will be a crucial moment for men and women throughout the world. The almighty power of the dollar, whose security after all is only guaranteed by the slaves of this world, toiling in the oil wells of the Middle East, the mines of Peru and the Congo, and the United Fruit or Firestone plantations, will then cease to dominate these slaves who created it and who continue to drain their heads and bellies of all their substance to feed it.

people who now have to work themselves to exhaustion while a contemptuous and bloated Europe looks on.

Other Third World countries refuse to accept such an ordeal and agree to give in to the terms of the former colonial power. Taking advantage of their strategic position in the cold war struggle, these countries sign agreements and commit themselves. The formerly colonized territory is now turned into an economically dependent country. The former colonizer, which has kept intact and, in some cases, reinforced its colonial marketing channels, agrees to inject small doses into the independent nation's budget in order to sustain it. Now that the colonial countries have achieved their independence the world is faced with the bare facts that makes the actual state of the liberated countries even more intolerable. The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anticolonialism, indeed capitalism versus socialism, is already losing its importance. What matters today, the issue which blocks the horizon, is the need for a redistribution of wealth. Humanity will have to address this question, no matter how devastating the consequences may be.

It was commonly thought that the time had come for the world, and particularly for the Third World, to choose between the capitalist system and the socialist system. The underdeveloped countries, which made use of the savage competition between the two systems in order to win their national liberation, must, however, refuse to get involved in such rivalry. The Third World must not be content to define itself in relation to values which preceded it. On the contrary, the underdeveloped countries must endeavor to focus on their very own values as well as methods and style specific to them. The basic issue with which we are faced is not the unequivocal choice between socialism and capitalism such as they have been defined by men from different continents and different periods of time. We know, of course, that the capitalist way of life is incapable of allowing us to achieve our national and universal project. Capitalist exploitation, the



cartels and monopolies, are the enemies of the underdeveloped countries. On the other hand, the choice of a socialist regime, of a regime entirely devoted to the people, based on the principle that man is the most precious asset, will allow us to progress faster in greater harmony, consequently ruling out the possibility of a caricature of society where a privileged few hold the reins of political and economic power without a thought for the nation as a whole.

But in order for this regime to function feasibly and for us to constantly abide by the principles which have been our inspiration, we need something other than human investment. Certain underdeveloped countries expend a huge amount of energy along these lines. Men and women, young and old, enthusiastically commit themselves to what amounts to forced labor and proclaim themselves slaves of the nation. This spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the common interest fosters a reassuring national morale which restores man's confidence in the destiny of the world and disarms the most reticent of observers. We believe, however, that such an effort cannot be sustained for long at such an infernal pace. These young nations accepted to take up the challenge after the unconditional withdrawal of the colonizer. The country finds itself under new management, but in actual fact everything has to be started over from scratch, everything has to be rethought. The colonial system, in fact, was only interested in certain riches, certain natural resources, to be exact those that fueled its industries. Up till now no reliable survey has been made of the soil or subsoil. As a result the young independent nation is obliged to keep the economic channels established by the colonial regime. It can, of course, export to other countries and other currency zones, but the basis of its exports remains basically unchanged. The colonial regime has hammered its channels into place and the risk of not maintaining them would be catastrophic. Perhaps everything needs to be started over again: The type of exports needs to be changed, not just their destina-

tion; the soil needs researching as well as the subsoil, the rivers and why not the sun. In order to do this, however, something other than human investment is needed. It requires capital, technicians, engineers and mechanics, etc. Let us confess, we believe that the huge effort demanded of the people of the underdeveloped nations by their leaders will not produce the results expected. If working conditions are not modified it will take centuries to humanize this world which the imperialist forces have reduced to the animal level.<sup>10</sup>

The truth is we must not accept such conditions. We must refuse outright the situation to which the West wants to condemn us. Colonialism and imperialism have not settled their debt to us once they have withdrawn their flag and their police force from our territories. For centuries the capitalists have behaved like real war criminals in the underdeveloped world. Deportation, massacres, forced labor, and slavery were the primary methods used by capitalism to increase its gold and diamond reserves, and establish its wealth and power. Not so long ago, Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a genuine colony. The governments of various European nations demanded reparations and the restitution in money and kind for their stolen treasures. As a result, cultural artifacts, paintings, sculptures, and stained-glass windows were returned to their owners. In the aftermath of the war the Europeans were adamant about one thing: "Germany will pay." At the opening of the Eichmann trial Mr. Adenauer, on behalf of the German people, once again asked forgiveness from the Jewish people. Mr. Adenauer renewed his country's

<sup>10</sup> Some countries which have benefited from a large European settlement acquire walls and avenues with their independence and tend to forget the poverty and starvation in the back-country. In a kind of complicity of silence, by an irony of fate, they act as if their towns were contemporary with independence.



commitment to continue paying enormous sums to the state of Israel to compensate for Nazi crimes.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time we are of the opinion that the imperialist states would be making a serious mistake and committing an unspeakable injustice if they were content to withdraw from our soil the military cohorts and the administrative and financial services whose job it was to prospect for, extract and ship our wealth to the metropolis. Moral reparation for national independence does not fool us and it doesn't feed us. The wealth of the imperialist nations is also our wealth. At a universal level, such a statement in no way means we feel implicated in the technical feats or artistic creations of the West. In concrete terms Europe has been bloated out of all proportions by the gold and raw materials from such colonial countries as Latin America, China, and Africa. Today Europe's tower of opulence faces these continents, for centuries the point of departure of their shipments of diamonds, oil, silk and cotton, timber, and exotic produce to this very same Europe. Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The riches which are choking it are those plundered from the underdeveloped peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks in Bordeaux and Liverpool owe their importance to the trade and

<sup>11</sup> And it is true that Germany has not paid in full the reparations for its war crimes. The compensation imposed on the conquered nation has not been claimed in full because the injured parties included Germany in their anti-Communist defense system. The colonialist countries are motivated by the same concerns when they try to obtain military bases and enclaves from their former colonies, failing their integration into the system of the West. They have decided by common agreement to waive their claims in the name of NATO's strategy, in the name of the free world. And we have seen Germany receive wave after wave of dollars and equipment. A strong and powerful Germany back on its feet was a necessity for the Western camp. It was clearly in the interests of a so-called free Europe to have a prosperous, reconstructed Germany capable of serving as a bastion against the threatened Red hordes. Germany has manipulated the European crisis. Consequently, the U.S. and the other European states feel legitimately bitter toward this Germany, once brought to its knees and now one of their most ruthless competitors on the market.

deportation of millions of slaves. And when we hear the head of a European nation declare with hand on heart that he must come to the aid of the unfortunate peoples of the underdeveloped world, we do not tremble with gratitude. On the contrary, we say among ourselves, "it is a just reparation we are getting." So we will not accept aid for the underdeveloped countries as "charity." Such aid must be considered the final stage of a dual consciousness—the consciousness of the colonized that it is their due and the consciousness of the capitalist powers that effectively they must pay up.<sup>12</sup> If through lack of intelligence—not to mention ingratitude—the capitalist countries refused to pay up, then the unrelenting dialectic of their own system would see to it that they are asphyxiated. It is a fact that the young nations attract little private capital. A number of reasons justify and explain these reservations on the part of the monopolies. As soon as the capitalists know, and they are obviously the first to know, that their government is preparing to decolonize, they hasten to withdraw all their capital from the colony. This spectacular flight of capital is one of the most constant phenomena of decolonization.

In order to invest in the independent countries, private companies demand terms which from experience prove unacceptable or unfeasible. True to their principle of immediate returns as soon as they invest "overseas," capitalists are reluctant to invest in the long term. They are recalcitrant and often openly hostile to the so-called economic planning programs of the young regimes. At the most they are willing to lend capital to the young

<sup>12</sup> "To make a radical distinction between the construction of socialism in Europe and 'relations with the Third World' (as if our only relations with it were external) is, knowingly or unknowingly, giving priority to restructuring the colonial heritage over the liberation of the underdeveloped countries, in other words constructing a de luxe type of socialism on the fruits of imperial plunder—as if a gang were to share out the loot more or less equitably even if it means giving a little to the poor by way of charity and forgetting they are giving back to the people they stole from." Marcel Pétu, "Mourir pour de Gaulle?" in *Temps Modernes* No. 175–176, October–November 1960.



nations on condition it is used to buy manufactured goods and machinery, and therefore keep the factories in the metropolis running.

In fact the Western financiers are wary of any form of risk taking. Their demands, therefore, are for political stability and a peaceful social climate which are impossible to achieve given the appalling situation of the population as a whole in the aftermath of independence. In their search, then, for a guarantee which the former colony cannot vouch for, they demand that certain military bases be kept on and the young nation enter into military and economic agreements. The private companies put pressure on their own government to ensure that the troops stationed in these countries are assigned to protecting their interests. As a last resort these companies require their government to guarantee their investments in such and such an underdeveloped region.

As a result few countries meet the conditions required by the cartels and monopolies. So the capital, deprived of reliable outlets, remains blocked in Europe and frozen. Especially as the capitalists refuse to invest in their own country. Returns in this case are in fact minimal and the fiscal pressure disheartens the boldest.

The situation in the long-term is catastrophic. Capital no longer circulates or else is considerably reduced. The Swiss banks refuse funding and Europe suffocates. Despite the enormous sums swallowed up by military expenditures, international capitalism is in desperate straits.

But another danger looms on the horizon. Since the Third World is abandoned and condemned to regression, in any case stagnation, through the selfishness and immorality of the West, the underdeveloped peoples decide to establish a collective autarchy. The industries of the West are rapidly deprived of their overseas outlets. Capital goods pile up in the warehouses and the European market witnesses the inexorable rivalry between financiers and cartels. Factory closures, layoffs, and unemployment

force the European proletariat to engage in an open struggle with the capitalist regime. The monopolies then realize that their true interests lie in aiding, and massively aiding without too many conditions, the underdeveloped countries. It is clear therefore that the young nations of the Third World are wrong to grovel at the feet of the capitalist countries. We are powerful in our own right and the justness of our position. It is our duty, however, to tell and explain to the capitalist countries that they are wrong to think the fundamental issue of our time is the war between the socialist regime and them. An end must be put to this cold war that gets us nowhere, the nuclear arms race must be stopped and the underdeveloped regions must receive generous investments and technical aid. The fate of the world depends on the response given to this question.

And it is pointless for the capitalist regimes to try and implicate the socialist regimes in the "fate of Europe" confronted by the starving multitudes of colored peoples. Colonel Gagarin's exploit, whatever General de Gaulle thinks, is not a feat which "does credit to Europe." For some time now the leaders of the capitalist regimes and their intellectuals have had an ambivalent attitude towards the Soviet Union. After having joined forces to eliminate the socialist regime they now realize they have to come to terms with it. So they switch on the smiles, multiply the overtures and make constant reminders to the Soviet people that they "are part of Europe."

Brandishing the Third World as a flood which threatens to engulf the whole of Europe will not divide the progressive forces whose intentions are to lead humanity in the pursuit of happiness. The Third World has no intention of organizing a vast hunger crusade against Europe. What it does expect from those who have kept it in slavery for centuries is to help it rehabilitate man, and ensure his triumph everywhere, once and for all.

But it is obvious we are not so naive as to think this will be achieved with the cooperation and goodwill of the European

governments. This colossal task, which consists of reintroducing man into the world, man in his totality, will be achieved with the crucial help of the European masses who would do well to confess that they have often rallied behind the position of our common masters on colonial issues. In order to do this, the European masses must first of all decide to wake up, put on their thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty.

## Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity

These reflections on violence have made us realize the frequent discrepancy between the cadres of the nationalist party and the masses, and the way they are out of step with each other. In any union or political organization there is a traditional gap between the masses who demand an immediate, unconditional improvement of their situation, and the cadres who, gauging the difficulties likely to be created by employers, put a restraint on their demands. Hence the oft-remarked tenacious discontent of the masses with regard to the cadres. After a day of demonstrations, while the cadres are celebrating victory, the masses well and truly get the feeling they have been betrayed. It is the repeated demonstrations for their rights and the repeated labor disputes that politicize the masses. A politically informed union official is someone who knows that a local dispute is not a crucial confrontation between him and management. The colonized intellectuals, who in their respective metropolises have studied the mechanism of political parties, establish similar organizations so as to mobilize the masses and put pressure on the colonial administration. The formation of nationalist parties in the colonized countries is contemporary with the birth of an intellectual and business elite. These elite attach primordial importance to the organization as such, and blind devotion to the organization