

OTHER WORKS BY FRANTZ FANON
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Black Skin, White Masks

A Dying Colonialism

Toward the African Revolution

THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

Frantz Fanon

*Translated from the French
by Richard Philcox*

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



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Foreword: Framing Fanon by Homi K. Bhabha

The colonized, underdeveloped man is a political creature in the most global sense of the term.

Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*

And once, when Sartre had made some comment, he [Fanon] gave an explanation of his egocentricity: a member of a colonised people must be constantly aware of his position, his image; he is being threatened from all sides; impossible to forget for an instant the need to keep up one's defences.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Force of Circumstance*

Frantz Fanon's legend in America starts with the story of his death in Washington on December 6, 1961. Despite his reluctance to be treated "in that country of lynchings",¹ Fanon was advised that his only chance of survival lay in seeking the leukemia treatment available at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. Accompanied by a CIA case officer provided by the American Embassy in Tunis, Fanon flew to Washington, changing planes in Rome, where he met Jean-Paul Sartre but was too

For my brother Sorab: doctor of my soul; healer of my mind.—HKB

¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Force of Circumstance, Vol. II: The Autobiography of Simone de Beauvoir*, trans. Peter Green (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 317.

enfeebled to utter a single word. A few days later, on October 3, Fanon was admitted to the hospital as Ibrahim Fanon, a supposedly "Libyan" nom de guerre he had assumed to enter a hospital in Rome after being wounded in Morocco during a mission for the Algerian National Liberation Front.

His body was stricken, but his fighting days were not quite over; he resisted his death "minute by minute," a friend reported from his bedside, as his political opinions and beliefs turned into the delirious fantasies of a mind raging against the dying of the light. His hatred of racist Americans now turned into a distrust of the nursing staff, and he awoke on his last morning, having probably had a blood transfusion through the night, obsessed with the idea that "they put me through the washing machine last night."² His death was inevitable. "We did everything we could," his doctor reported later, "but in 1961 there wasn't much you could do . . . especially when he came to us so late."³ Perhaps it was the writing of *The Wretched of the Earth* in a feverish spurt between April and July of 1961 that contributed to this fatal delay; when his wife, Josie Fanon, read him the enthusiastic early reviews of the book, he could only say, "That won't give me back my bone marrow."⁴ On the day of his death, the French police seized copies of *The Wretched of the Earth* from the Paris bookshops.⁵ After his death, Simone de Beauvoir remembered seeing Fanon's photograph all over Paris for a couple of weeks, "on the cover of *Jeune Afrique*, in the window of the Maspero bookstore, younger, calmer than I had ever seen him, and very handsome."⁶

* * *

² Claude Lanzmann, as cited by David Macey in *Frantz Fanon: A Life* (London: Granta Books, 2000), 489–90. Much of the biographical detail and personal incident comes from Simone de Beauvoir's account of Fanon in *The Force of Circumstance*, and from David Macey's remarkably informed biography.

³ Joseph Alsop, "Passing of New Left's Hero an Odd Facet of U.S. History," in *Washington Post*, February 21, 1969, A21.

⁴ Macey, 489.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ de Beauvoir, 329.

A colonized person must constantly be aware of his image, jealously protect his position, Fanon said to Sartre. The defenses of the colonized are tuned like anxious antennae waiting to pick up the hostile signals of a racially divided world. In the process, the colonized acquire a peculiar visceral intelligence dedicated to the survival of body and spirit. Fanon's two most influential texts, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, evoke the concrete and contrasting worlds of colonial racism as experienced in metropolitan France in the 1950s and during the anticolonial Algerian war of liberation a decade later. Is his work lost in a time warp? Is his impassioned plea that "the Third World must start over a new history of man"⁷ merely a vain hope? Does such a lofty ideal represent anything more than the lost rhetorical baggage of that daunting quest for a nonaligned postcolonial world inaugurated at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Who can claim that dream now? Who still waits in the antechamber of history? Did Fanon's ideas die with the decline and dissolution of the black power movement in America, buried with Steve Biko in South Africa, or were they born again when the Berlin Wall was dismembered and a new South Africa took its place on the world's stage? Questions, questions. . . .

As we catch the religiosity in Fanon's language of revolutionary wrath—"the last shall be the first," "the almighty body of violence rearing up . . ."⁸—and run it together with his description of the widening circle of national unity as reaching the "boiling point" in a way that "is reminiscent of a religious brotherhood, a church or a mystical doctrine,"⁹ we find ourselves both forewarned and wary of the ethnonationalist religious conflicts of our own times. When we hear Fanon say that "for the people only fellow nationals are ever owed the truth,"¹⁰ we furiously object

⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (WE), 238.

⁸ WE, 2, 50.

⁹ WE, 84.

¹⁰ WE, 14.

to such a narrow and dangerous definition of “the people” and “the truth.” To have Fanon uphold the view that the building of national consciousness demands cultural homogeneity and the disappearance or dissolution of differences is deeply troubling. Is he not dangerously outdated? Fanon’s best hopes for the Algerian revolution were taken hostage and summarily executed, first by a bureaucratized military rule that violated his belief “that an army is never a school for war, but a school for civics . . . ,”¹¹ and then by the rise of fundamentalist groups like the Islamic Salvation Front. Josie Fanon looked out of her window in the El Biar district of Algiers in October 1988 only to find scenes of carnage. In violently quelling a demonstration in the street below, the army had enflamed the passions of Algerian youths, who responded by torching police cars before they were felled by a barrage of bullets. Speaking to her friend the Algerian writer Assia Djebar on the telephone, Josie sighed: “Oh Frantz, the wretched of the earth again.”¹² The legacy of Fanon leaves us with questions; his virtual, verbal presence among us only provokes more questions. And that is as it should be. “O my body, make of me always a man who questions!” was Fanon’s final, unfinished prayer at the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*.

The time is right to reread Fanon, according to David Macey, his most brilliant biographer, because “Fanon was angry,” and without the basic political instinct of anger there can be no hope for “the wretched of the earth [who] are still with us.”¹³ What hope does Fanon’s anger hold for us today? Although times have changed, and history never appears twice in the emperor’s new clothes, *mais plus ça change*. . . . New global empires rise to enforce their own civilizing missions in the name of democracy and free markets where once progress and development were

¹¹ WE, 141.

¹² Assia Djebar, *Le blanc de l’Algérie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), 106–7, cited in Macey, 506.

¹³ Macey, 503.

seen as the shibboleths of a modernized, westernized salvation. As if such civic, public goods were exportable commodities; as if these “other” countries and cultures were innocent of the leavening spirit of freedom; as if the deplorable tyrannies and dictatorships of our day, which must be destroyed, were not themselves part of the intricate negotiations, and internecine histories, of world powers and their political interests; as if any civilizing mission, despite its avowed aims, had ever been free of psychological terror, cultural arrogance, and even physical torture. “The colonized, underdeveloped man is today a political creature in the most global sense of the term,”¹⁴ Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, and it is my purpose, almost half a century later, to ask what might be saved from Fanon’s ethics and politics of decolonization to help us reflect on globalization in our sense of the term.

It must seem ironic, even absurd at first, to search for associations and intersections between decolonization and globalization—parallels would be pushing the analogy—when decolonization had the dream of a “Third World” of free, postcolonial nations firmly on its horizon, whereas globalization gazes at the nation through the back mirror, as it speeds toward the strategic denationalization of state sovereignty. The global aspirations of Third World “national” thinking belonged to the internationalist traditions of socialism, Marxism, and humanism, whereas the dominant forces of contemporary globalization tend to subscribe to free-market ideas that enshrine ideologies of neoliberal technocratic elitism. And finally, while it was the primary purpose of decolonization to repossess land and territoriality in order to ensure the security of national polity and global equity, globalization propagates a world made up of virtual transnational domains and wired communities that live vividly through webs and connectivities “on line.” In what way, then, can the once colonized woman or man become figures of instruction for our global century?

¹⁴ WE, 40.

To this end, there is an immediate argument to be made that suggests that the economic “solutions” to inequality and poverty subscribed to by the IMF and the World Bank, for instance, have “the feel of the colonial ruler,” according to Joseph Stiglitz, once senior vice president and chief economist of the World Bank. “They help to create a dual economy in which there are pockets of wealth. . . . But a dual economy is not a developed economy.”¹⁵ It is the reproduction of dual, unequal economies as effects of globalization that render poorer societies more vulnerable to the “culture of conditionality,” through which what is purportedly the granting of loans turns, at times, into the peremptory enforcement of policy. These dual economies claim to sustain diverse worlds of opportunity, consisting of global villages, silicon valleys, and oases of outsourcing dotted across the North and the South. The landscape of opportunity and “choice” has certainly widened in scope, but the colonial shadow falls across the successes of globalization. Dual economies create divided worlds in which uneven and unequal conditions of development can often mask the ubiquitous, underlying factors of persistent poverty and malnutrition, caste and racial injustice, the hidden injuries of class, the exploitation of women’s labor, and the victimization of minorities and refugees. For instance, “India shining,” the 2004 election slogan of the “high tech” Hindu nationalist BJP government, failed to mention the darker, daily reality of the 63 percent of rural households that do not have electricity and the ten to fifteen hours of blackouts and brownouts that afflict those that do on any given day.¹⁶

Global duality should be put in the historical context of Fanon’s founding insight into the “geographical configuration” of colonial

¹⁵ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 40.

¹⁶ Anil K. Rajvanshi, “Key Issues in Rural Electrification,” published in *Projects Monitor*, 16 October 2003, <http://pune.sancharnet.in/nariphaltan/ruralelec.htm>.

governance,¹⁷ his celebrated description of the Manichaean or compartmentalized structure of colonial society. The generic duality that spans the global world of colonized societies is “a world divided in two . . . inhabited by different species.”¹⁸ Spatial compartmentalization, Macey acutely argues, is typical of the social structure of settler societies like Algeria, but demographic duality is also found in other colonial societies that were divided between the club and the bazaar or the cantonment and the civil lines. Fanon’s emphasis on the racialization of inequality does not, of course, apply uniformly to the inequities of contemporary global underdevelopment. However, the racial optic—if seen as a symbolic stand-in for other forms of social difference and discrimination—does clarify the role played by the obscuring and normalizing discourses of progress and civility, in both East and West, that only “tolerate” differences they are able to culturally assimilate into their own *singular* terms, or appropriate within their own *untranslated* traditions. As Fanon puts it in what is perhaps the most quoted (and quarreled over) passage in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

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.¹⁹

In my view, *The Wretched of the Earth* does indeed allow us to look well beyond the immediacies of its anticolonial context—the Algerian war of independence and the African continent—toward a critique of the configurations of contemporary globalization.

¹⁷ WE, 3.

¹⁸ WE, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid.

This is not because the text prophetically transcends its own time, but because of the peculiarly grounded, historical stance it takes toward the future. The critical language of duality—whether colonial or global—is part of the *spatial* imagination that seems to come so naturally to geopolitical thinking of a progressive, postcolonial cast of mind: margin and metropole, center and periphery, the global and the local, the nation and the world. Fanon's famous trope of colonial compartmentalization, or Manichaeism, is firmly rooted within this anticolonial spatial tradition. But there is another time frame at work in the narrative of *The Wretched of the Earth* that introduces a *temporal* dimension into the discourse of decolonization. It suggests that the *future* of the decolonized world—"The Third World must start over a new history of Man . . ."—is imaginable, or achievable, only in the process of resisting the peremptory and polarizing choices that the superpowers impose on their "client" states. Decolonization can truly be achieved only with the destruction of the Manichaeism of the cold war; and it is this belief that enables the insights of *The Wretched of the Earth* to be effective beyond its publication in 1961 (and the death of its author in that year), and to provide us with salient and suggestive perspectives on the state of the decompartmentalized world after the dismemberment of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Fanon is resolute that the Third World should follow the socialist path, "based on the principle that man is the most precious asset."²⁰ But he is equally insistent that the Third World "must not be content to define itself in relation to values which preceded it. . . . 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" (my emphasis).²¹ If decolonization can be achieved only through the destruction of the "compartment-

²⁰ WE, 56.

²¹ WE, 55.

alized" colonial system, then the "new humanism" of the Third World cannot properly emerge until the bipolar tensions, contradictions, and dependencies of the cold war are brought to an end. There are two histories at work in *The Wretched of the Earth*: the Manichaeism of colonialism and decolonization embedded in text and context, against which the book mounts a major political and ethical offensive; and a history of the coercive "univocal choices" imposed by the cold warriors on the rest of the world, which constitute the ideological conditions of its writing. In attempting to think proleptically of questions of freedom and fairness beyond the cold war, Fanon intriguingly projects unfinished business and unanswered questions related to the mid-twentieth century and the "end" of empire into the uncertain futures of the *fin de siècle* and the end of the cold war. It is in this sense that his work provides a genealogy for globalization that reaches back to the complex problems of decolonization (rather than the simpler story of the death of communism and the triumph of free-market neoliberalism), and it could be said, both factually and figuratively, that *The Wretched of the Earth* takes us back to the future. Reflect, for instance, on Fanon's far-reaching wariness about the national consciousness of "young" nations, then absent it from his wider critique of the "underdeveloped" nationalist bourgeoisie of postcolonial countries and listen to his statement as a weather report on our own day:

National consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty fragile shell. The cracks in it explain how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group and from state to tribe—a regression which is so terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity."²²

It is, of course, one of the most significant lessons of the postcolonial experience that no nation is simply young or old, new

²² WE, 97.

or ancient, despite the date of its independence. "New" national, international, or global emergences create an unsettling sense of transition, as if history is at a turning point; and it is in such *incubational* moments—Antonio Gramsci's word for the perceived "newness" of change—that we experience the palimpsestical imprints of past, present, and future in peculiarly contemporary figures of time and meaning. Fanon's description of the "crude, empty fragile shell" of emergent national histories quickens the long shadows cast by the ethnonationalist "switchbacks" of our own times, the charnel houses of ethnic cleansing: Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Gujarat, Sudan. Less spectacular, but no less tragic, are the regressions that lead to the "tribalisms" of religious fundamentalism. And then there are those deeply disabling theses of "the clash of civilizations" once turned against Islam and now targeting migrants, refugees, and minorities more generally.

Fanon's vision of the global future, *post* colonialism and after decolonization, is an ethical and political *project*—yes, a plan of action as well as a projected aspiration—that must go beyond "narrow-minded nationalism" or bourgeois nationalist formalism because "if nationalism is not explained, enriched, and deepened, if it does not very quickly turn into a social and political consciousness, into humanism, then it leads to a dead-end."²³ Now many readers have held that *The Wretched of the Earth* is long on prophecy and polemics and short on policy and planning—a deliberately universalized level of analysis that has led *The Wretched of the Earth* to become, as Stuart Hall has remarked, the "Bible of decolonisation."²⁴ It has also been justly argued that Fanon's Third World is an iconic evocation of Africa, a symbol of Pan-African solidarity composed of his syncretic experiences of the Maghreb, West Africa, South Africa, and the Antilles, with scant

²³ WE, 144.

²⁴ Interview with Stuart Hall in *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks*. dir. Isaac Julien (UK: Arts Council of England, 1996).

awareness of Latin America (with the exception of Cuba), Asia, or the Middle East.²⁵

These fine historical readings have greatly enhanced our understanding of the universalizing, generalizing tendency in Fanon's writings. There is more to be said, however, about Fanon's universalism if it is read, as I have proposed, in relation to a concept of the Third World as a project marked by a double temporality. Decolonization demands a sustained, quotidian commitment to the struggle for national liberation, for when the high, heady wind of revolution loses its velocity, there is no "question of bridging the gap in one giant stride. The epic is played out on a difficult day to day basis and the suffering endured far exceeds that of the colonial period."²⁶ But the coming into being of the Third World is also a *project of futurity* conditional upon being freed from the "univocal choice" presented by the cold war. Fanon's invocation of a new humanism—"Let us endeavour to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving"²⁷—is certainly grounded in a universalist ontology that informs both its attitude to human consciousness and social reality. The historical agency of the discourse of Third Worldism, however, with its critical, political stance against the *imposed* univocal choice of "capitalism vs. socialism," makes it less universalist in temper and more strategic, activist, and aspirational in character:

The basic confrontation which seemed to be colonialism versus anti-colonialism, 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.²⁸

²⁵ Macey, 469.

²⁶ WE, 90.

²⁷ WE, 236.

²⁸ WE, 55.

Fanon's call for a redistribution of wealth and technology beyond the rhetorical pieties of "moral reparation"²⁹ is a timely reminder of the need for something like a "right" to equitable development (controversial though it may be) at a time when dual economies are celebrated as if they were global economies. And coming to us from the distances of midcentury decolonization, Fanon's demand for a fair distribution of rights and resources makes a timely intervention in a decade-long debate on social equity that has focused perhaps too exclusively on the culture wars, the politics of identity, and the politics of recognition. Fanon's call has certainly been heard by popular movements and social institutions committed to debt relief or forgiveness; it has led to health initiatives that see the availability of generic drugs for HIV-AIDS as an economic necessity for the "right" to life and human capability; and his influence is felt amongst reformist bodies that seek to restructure international trade and tariffs, and democratize the governance of global financial institutions, in favor of equitable assistance and redistribution.

The actors and agents of these global initiatives of an international civil society *in the making*, whether they are NGOs, human rights organizations, international legal or educational bodies, or national and transnational popular movements, have done their best to resist the coercive cultures of univocal choice. Sometimes they succeed; often they fail; most likely they survive uncertainly between success and failure. By seeing the need for equitable distribution as part of a humanistic project, Fanon transforms its economic terms of reference; he places the problem of development in the context of those forceful and fragile "psycho-affective" motivations and mutilations that drive our collective instinct for survival, nurture our ethical affiliations and ambivalences, and nourish our political desire for freedom.

²⁹ WE, 40.

I want to turn now to Fanon's exploration of the psycho-affective realm, which is neither subjective nor objective, but a place of social and psychic mediation, and—if I may quote Fanon out of context—"the glowing focal point where citizen and individual develop and grow. . . ."³⁰ It is Fanon's great contribution to our understanding of ethical judgment and political experience to insistently frame his reflections on violence, decolonization, national consciousness, and humanism in terms of the psycho-affective realm—the body, dreams, psychic inversions and displacements, phantasmatic political identifications. A psycho-affective relation or response has the semblance of universality and timelessness because it involves the emotions, the imagination or psychic life, but it is only ever mobilized into social meaning and historical effect through an embodied and embedded action, an engagement with (or resistance to) a given reality, or a performance of agency in the present tense.

The nervous conditions and political agitations of psycho-affectivity compose and decompose the compartmentalized worlds of colonialism and metropolitan racism. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon dramatically explores the psycho-affective predicament of the Antillean Negro as he is assailed by the de-personalizing, discriminatory gaze of racist recognition: "Look, a Negro . . . !" The black person, a free French citizen from an overseas department of the republic, is assailed on a public thoroughfare in Lyon or Paris. He is forced to inhabit an alienating and fragmented reality as soon as "the white man's eyes" calls forth this "other" being who is "battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects. . . ."³¹ Black citizens are fixed as dyes in the personae of stereotypes whose persecutory force creates a sense of social death; or they are vaporized into a more general "climate of opinion" where

³⁰ WE, 40.

³¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press), 116.

the racialized person is seen as a threat, an infection, a symptom of social decline: "overdetermined from without . . . dissected under white eyes . . . I am fixed . . . and my long antennae pick up the catch phrases strewn over the surface of things. . . ." ³² It is the peculiarity of regimes of racial oppression that they make immediately visible and vivid the more mediated and abstract practices of power such as class division, the exploitation of labor, and social hierarchies of status. "Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context," Fanon writes, "it becomes 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." ³³

It is the Manichaeian mentality that goes with such racial-cultural discriminations, and the economic divisions set up to accommodate and authorize them, that create the violent psycho-affective conditions that Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The colonial vocabulary is shot through with arrogance, antagonism, and anxiety: *those* hysterical masses; *their* blank faces; *this* vegetative existence. ³⁴ The colonized, who are often devoid of a public voice, resort to dreaming, imagining, acting out, embedding the reactive vocabulary of violence and retributive justice in their bodies, their psyches: "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. . . . To destroy the colonist's sector. . . . 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." ³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ WE, 5.

³⁴ WE, 7.

³⁵ WE, 6.

There is more to the psycho-affective realm than the subject of violence, which has become the cause célèbre of the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, "On Violence." Hannah Arendt's assault on the book in the late sixties was an attempt at staunching the wildfire it spread across university campuses, while she readily acknowledged that it was really Sartre's preface that glorified violence beyond Fanon's words or wishes. Sartre fanned the flames—"We have certainly sown the wind; they are the whirlwind. Sons of violence, at every instant they draw their humanity from it" ³⁶—while arguing that despite the doctrine of liberatory violence, Fanon, "the man, deep down hated it." ³⁷ It is difficult to do justice to Fanon's views on violence, or to appreciate his passionate approach to the phenomenology of decolonization, without acknowledging a profound internal dissonance, in French colonial thought, between the free standing of the citizen and the segregated status of the subject—the double political destiny of the same colonized person. Indeed, I want to argue that the troubled traffic between the psychic body and the body politic—the subjective experience of objective reality ³⁸ so typical of Fanon's style—suggests that the psycho-affective relation is also "the glowing focal point where citizen and individual develop and grow. . . ." ³⁹ When Fanon insists that the colonized's impassioned claim to difference is a challenge to the discourse of rational confrontation and universality, he is both using and opposing the very words and values—rationality, universalism—upon which the French *mission civilisatrice* founded its governmental practices of colonial assimilation, associationism, and integration.

³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, trans. Haddour, Brewer, and McWilliams (London: Routledge, 2001), 149.

³⁷ Ibid., 158.

³⁸ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2001), 274. Young provides a most cogent and clarifying introductory account of Fanon's life and work.

³⁹ WE, 40.

The originality of the French phenomenological approach to colonialism and decolonization lies in its awareness of the abiding instability of the system, however stable its institutions may appear. "If one chooses to understand the colonial system," Albert Memmi writes in *The Coloniser and the Colonized*, "he must admit that it is unstable and its equilibrium constantly threatened."⁴⁰ The civilizing mission is grounded in a profound sense of instability—not a surmountable or sublatale "contradiction"—as the French Republic gazes anxiously upon its own mirror image as a world power. On the one hand, France is the supreme bearer of universal Rights and Reason—"bearer even of a new category of time for the indigenous populations";⁴¹ on the other, its various administrative avatars—assimilation, association, integration—deny those same populations the right to emerge as "French citizens" in a public sphere of their own ethical and cultural making. The principle of citizenship is held out; the *poesis* of free cultural choice and communal participation is withheld.

The fear of instability and disequilibrium between freedom and fealty, as I have described it, is evident in the history of colonial Algeria. Citizenship becomes the unstable, unsustainable psycho-affective site in the conflict between political and legal assimilation, and the respect for, and recognition of, Muslim ethical and cultural affiliations. Between 1865 and 1936, fewer than three thousand Algerian Muslims had availed themselves of Napoleon's *senatus consulte*, which extended French citizenship to those Muslims who agreed to divest themselves of civil status under Islamic law.⁴² Again, the Algerian statute of 1947

⁴⁰ Albert Memmi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) 120.

⁴¹ James D. LeSueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20. I am indebted to this excellent work for historical information on the civilizing mission.

made a "grand" gesture, which was no more than a sleight of hand. The electoral system was divided into two colleges: one for Europeans and a small number of Muslims who were granted full political rights, the other for the majority of the Muslim population. Fearful of the increase in the Muslim vote, the statute allotted half the seats in the Algerian assembly to the first college, and in 1948 and subsequent years, the colonial administration rigged the ballots to prevent further Muslim participation.⁴³ Such widespread disenfranchisement bred a deep distrust in the Muslim population, leading a number of dissident groups to amalgamate in 1954 to form the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). Hussein Bulhan describes the process: "Gradually those who for decades sought assimilation into French society and the traditional nationalists joined forces in the FLN."⁴⁴ When "integration" was proposed by the last governor-general, Jacques Soustelle (after the Algerian War of Independence began in 1954), the "Algerian fact" of diverse regional cultures, languages, and ethnicities was recognized, so long as these "provincial"—provisional?—French citizens could be kept "secure" under the surveillant eye of the paternalistic colonial power that deeply distrusted what it saw as the regressive zealotry of Islam.⁴⁵ Such a threatened equilibrium leads to a phenomenological condition of nervous adjustment, narcissistic justification, and vain, even vainglorious, proclamations of progressive principles on the part of the colonial state; and it is these very psycho-affective symptoms that reveal the injustices and disequilibrium that haunts the colonial historical record. Fanon was quick to grasp the psycho-affective implications of a subtly punishing and disabling paternalistic power:

⁴³ Paul Clay Sorum, *Intellectuals and Decolonization in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 60.

⁴⁴ Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, "Revolutionary Psychiatry of Fanon," in *Rethinking Fanon: The Continuing Dialogue*, ed. Nigel Gibson (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 155.

⁴⁵ LeSueur, 23–27.

At the level of the unconscious, therefore, colonialism was not seeking to be perceived as a sweet, kind-hearted mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather a mother who constantly prevents her basically perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to its malevolent instincts. The colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune.⁴⁶

French colonial policy acknowledges the naked right of the colonized *as individual*—divested of cultural differences—to be identified as a citizen of the republic. But there exists, at the same time, a discriminatory denial or disavowal of the colonized citizen's right to be represented and recognized as a culturally clothed subject who may not conform to the norms and practices of French civil society. Without the rights of representation and participation, in the *public* sphere, can the subject ever be a citizen in the true sense of the term? If the colonized citizen is prevented from exercising his or her collective and communal agency as a full and equal member of civil society, what kind of shadow does that throw on the public virtue of the French republic? This does not merely make an ass of the law of assimilationist colonialism; it creates profound ethical and phenomenological problems of racial injustice at the heart of the psycho-affective realm of the colonial relation. As Sartre perceived the problem, "One of the functions of racism is to compensate the latent universalism of bourgeois liberalism: since all human beings have the same rights, the Algerian will be made a subhuman."⁴⁷ It is this anomalous and ambivalent situation of universality-with-racism, and formal citizenship-without-equality, that is an unresolvable embarrassment within the ideals and ideologies of the civilizing mission. I use the word *embarrassment* advisedly, to return to the question of colonial "instability" and my discussion of the psycho-affective sphere in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

⁴⁶ WE, 149.

⁴⁷ Sartre, 45.

"On Violence" describes the struggle between brute realities and resistant bodies in a prose that rises off the page to take you by the hand, "to touch my reader affectively, or in other words irrationally or sensually. For me words have a charge. I find myself incapable of escaping the bite of a word, the vertigo of a question-mark."⁴⁸ The colonialist declares the native to be "a corrosive element . . . distorting everything which involves aesthetics or morals . . . an unconscious and incurable instrument of blind forces."⁴⁹ Such an ontological obliteration of the "other" results in "the colonised's affectivity [being put] on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent,"⁵⁰ as the psyche retreats into muscular spasms and hysterical symptoms. Treating the natives as *something* less than human—settler vigilante groups called their wanton killing of Muslim Algerians "rat-hunts"⁵¹—results in a process of depersonalization that creates a sense of bodily memory and a violent corporeal agency: "The shanty-town is the consecration of the colonised's *biological* decision to invade the enemy citadel at all costs, and if need be, by the most underground channels" (my emphasis).⁵² These violent aspects of the realm of psycho-affective conflict and defense do not, however, tell the whole story to be found in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Much of the book is devoted to exploring the processes by which decolonization turns into the project of nation building; and by delving into the "bubbling trepidation"⁵³ that exists in the moment of transition, *The Wretched of the Earth* opens up possibilities for positive and productive psycho-affective relations. "Reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture," Fanon writes, "it triggers a change of

⁴⁸ Macey, 159.

⁴⁹ WE, 6.

⁵⁰ WE, 19.

⁵¹ Bulhan, in Gibson, 155.

⁵² WE, 81.

⁵³ WE, 161.

fundamental importance in the colonised's psycho-affective equilibrium."⁵⁴ The psycho-affective equilibrium achieved through the creation of a national culture passes through a "national stage" on its way to constructing a world-system based on the ideals of global equity. "This cold war . . . gets us nowhere," Fanon argues repeatedly. "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."⁵⁵ If the anticolonial movement aims at establishing national sovereignty and cultural independence, the visionary goal of decolonization is to dismantle the "either-or" of the cold war that dictates ideological options and economic choices to Third World nations as an integral part of the supranational, xenophobic struggle for world supremacy. Cold war internationalism, with its dependent states and its division of the spoils, repeats the Manichaeian structure of possession and dispossession experienced in the colonial world. The unraveling of the Soviet system saw the rapid emergence of ethnoregional patriotisms and nationalisms of a fissionary kind that destroyed the existence of the very possibility of civil society in the midst of civil war and ethnic cleansing.

Fanon was committed to creating a world-system of Third World nations that fostered a postcolonial consciousness based on a "dual emergence" of national sovereignty and international solidarity, for "it is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness establishes itself and thrives."⁵⁶ The hopeful symmetry of Fanon's dual emergence was based not on a "metaphysical principle" of cultural authenticity or geopolitical exceptionalism (the African "tradition," the Asian "temperament," the Latin American "spirit") but on the political and ethical principles of independence and security—a regional

⁵⁴ WE, 148.

⁵⁵ WE, 61.

⁵⁶ WE, 180.

solidarity extended to any nation that seems to be internally vulnerable to antidemocratic governance or externally threatened by hegemonic, quasi-colonial powers.⁵⁷ In many ways, Fanon's cherished ideals of regional integration and economic collaboration on broad socialist principles of urban and agrarian development were sullied by the corrupt and nepotistic practices of the colonial bourgeoisie that he despised for its hedonistic appropriation of the role of the settler, its small-time racketeering, its lack of the "pioneering aspect, the inventive, discoverer-of-new-worlds aspect" of a progressive national bourgeoisie. (According to a World Bank Working Report, almost 40 percent of South African private wealth is held outside the country.)⁵⁸ But Fanon's belief in the critical importance of economic and technological support for "underdeveloped regions"—"the fate of the world depends on the response given to this question"—is a troubling issue that returns each time a new famine occurs, or a developing country is shackled by unredeemable debt, and these problems have had no satisfactory solution across the half century from his day to ours.

With a few exceptions, the cartography of the global south follows the contours of the Third World. The unanswered call for "development as freedom,"⁵⁹ to use Amartya Sen's excellent phrase, has a long history of failure (for which national governments must share responsibility with the international community). However, Fanon's proleptic proposal that the postcolonial narrative of independent nation building could enter its international phase only after the end of the Cold War telescopes that long history of neglect into our times, whence it reveals the poignant proximity of the incomplete project of decolonization to the

⁵⁷ WE, 179.

⁵⁸ Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Catherine Pattillo, "Flight Capital as a Portfolio Choice," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* no. 2066 (February 1999).

⁵⁹ See Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books), (see Oxford UP, 1999).

dispossessed subjects of globalization. Caught up in this spiral of history, the wretched of the earth, in our time and Fanon's, enter the zone of psycho-affectivity and echo the horrifying call to violence. Fanon for our times.

And Fanon for other times and places . . .

* * *

In 1966, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton read *The Wretched of the Earth* in a house in Oakland, and—so the story goes⁶⁰—when they were arrested some months later for “blocking the sidewalk,” the text provided foundational perspectives on neocolonialism and nationalism that inspired the founding of the Black Nationalist Party. In *A Panther Is a Black Cat*, written in 1971, Reginald Major (Kelley) acknowledges Fanon's influence on the Panthers. With a sexist swagger that was part of the macho style of the times, Major praises Fanon's analysis of the colonial mentality in understanding the yardstick of “whiteness” that devalues black consciousness and results in a “cultural and psychic genocide”⁶¹ that leads to the inadequacy of black manhood. Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* became a cult film among the Bay Area Panthers because it was “Fanon-linked,” and young revolutionaries attentively watched its depiction of terrorist acts and the organization of covert cells. “They found satisfaction in the flick. The natives won.”⁶²

* * *

In the early seventies, Steve Biko's room in the student residence at the University of Natal became the meeting place for members of the South African Students Association; it was also the intellectual center of the black consciousness movement. That dorm room in Durban was the place where Biko, “the person

⁶⁰ Sandra Adell, ed., *African American Culture* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1996), 50–51.

⁶¹ Reginald Major, *A Panther Is a Black Cat* (New York: William Morrow, 1971), 138–39.

⁶² *Ibid.*

who brought ideas,”⁶³ first circulated *The Wretched of the Earth* to his friends and comrades—writers, activists, community workers, actors, students—who were also conversant with the poetry and the politics of the Black Panther movement. Fanon's singular contribution to the theoretical understanding of the black consciousness movement lay in his extension of the economic theories of Marxism toward a greater emphasis on the importance of psychological and cultural liberation—the psycho-affective realm of revolutionary activism and emancipation.

* * *

In a prison cell in the notorious H-Block of Belfast prison, sometime after 1973, a young apprentice coach builder and member of the Irish Republican Army, Bobby Sands, first read Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, of which there were multiple copies on the H-Block shelves. A historian of the IRA⁶⁴ suggests that Fanon's incendiary spirit may have set alight IRA passions because of passages like this:

“The last shall be first and the first last.” Decolonisation is the putting into practice of this sentence. . . . For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things . . . can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence.

* * *

The Shiite revival of the 1960s and 1970s, which developed into the Iranian revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini, was based on a revision of Shiite doctrine influenced by Marxism and com-

⁶³ N. Barney Pityana, M. Ramphela, M. Mpumwana, and L. Wilson, eds., *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Cape Town, South Africa: David Phillip, 1991), 28–29, 109, 147.

⁶⁴ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 197–99, 234–35.

mitted to the ideology of Third World liberation.⁶⁵ No scholar or intellectual was more respected among the student militants who followed the People's Mujahideen than Ali Shariati, who had read Fanon during his student days in Paris and translated *The Wretched of the Earth* into Persian. According to Giles Keppel, a historian of political Islam, "Shariati rendered the difference between 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' with the Koranic terms *mostakbirmie* (the arrogant) and *mostadafine* (the weakened or disinherited), thus transposing the theory of class struggle into the terminology of Islam."⁶⁶ This "translated," hybrid term crept into Khomeini's political rhetoric—via Shariati's translation of Fanon—after 1978, in his attempt to broaden the appeal of his message and address a more diverse audience.

* * *

Finally, on September 19, 2001, Richard Perle, former U.S. assistant secretary of defense (1981–87), wrote the following three passages:

There is an air of Vichyite defeatism about some of the commentary on the current war on terrorism.

We constantly hear the reiteration of such themes as "We don't know who the enemy is," "We don't know where to strike them" . . . and that the "Wretched of the Earth" (to use the title of Frantz Fanon's famous anti-colonial tract) are so desperate that they would not fear honorable death at the hands of what they see as the Great Satan.

The U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld . . . [is] quite right to say that it is a totally new kind of war which the Free World now faces.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Giles Keppel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F. Roberts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). My account derives from this book.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Richard Perle, "Get Governments out of Terrorism Business," *National Post*, September 19, 2001, A16.

* * *

Fanon acknowledges the enormous significance of this phenomenological level of life when he opens his essay "On National Culture" with one of his most enigmatic and inspiring pronouncements: "Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity."⁶⁸ I turn to that issue by first returning to my beginning: What forms of unhappy consciousness prevail among the colonized who feel threatened from all sides? How does the body speak in extremis, how does the mind withstand? "Colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: 'Who am I in reality?'"⁶⁹ Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. From where does the spirit of revolt arise in the midst of the confusion of "myriad signs of the colonial world"?⁷⁰ How do the oppressed discover the enduring strength to found a free and just society, a national consciousness, if they are continuously aware of their own anxiety and fragility?

The Wretched of the Earth emerges, year after year, in Oakland, Natal, Belfast, Tehran, Washington, Paris, to say nothing of Bombay, where I first read it, or wherever you may be today as this book falls into your hands. Fanon is invoked repeatedly by liberal students, radical activists, human rights workers, cultural historians, literary scholars, journalists, even a former U.S. assistant defense secretary. It could be said that Fanon's street fighting days came to an end in the 1970s and 1980s, and that he now takes his place on the bookshelves alongside CLR James, Sartre, Memmi, Marcuse, Guevara, Angela Davis. . . . Those who claim to follow in Fanon's footsteps, it is often said, only absorb his abstract arguments and stirring sentiments; they fail to understand his selfless engagement with the Algerian War of Independence and turn a blind eye to his failure to consider the possibility that a state built on the revolutionary violence of the FLN could slide

⁶⁸ WE, 145.

⁶⁹ WE, 182.

⁷⁰ WE, 16.

more easily into state terror and religious fanaticism. Marxists have traditionally distanced themselves from Fanon's emphasis on psycho-affective factors in political reasoning while criticizing his refusal to prioritize the role of the organized proletariat in the anticolonial revolution.

The insurgent energies of the Algerian peasantry and lumpen-proletariat, Fanon believed, would guard against the corruption and cooptation of "westernized" nationalist parties led by urban elites. But in the opinion of some of his FLN comrades, Fanon displayed a naïve *nostalgie de la boue* in championing a peasantry that had become fragmented and displaced through the 1950s, some of them confined to refugee or resettlement camps in Tunisia and Morocco, others having migrated to cities in Algeria or France.⁷¹ It was in the late 1950s that Fanon's commitment to the Algerian cause seemed to turn from a political commitment into a more inward identification, a consummate self-fashioning of himself as an Algerian. This radical indigenization of identity, like his overestimation of the peasantry, could be seen as his avoidance or enhancement of his own natal and psychic reality—a compensatory family romance that would disavow his Martinican origins,⁷² through a phantasmatic denial of the "unheroic assimilation" of the Antillean heritage in favor of the "virile and decolonised fraternity" of the FLN.⁷³ Simone de Beauvoir's memories of her conversations with Fanon flesh out this poignant and problematic predicament. "Above all I don't want to become a professional revolutionary,"⁷⁴ Fanon anxiously observed of himself, as he lamented his exilic existence as an Antillean fighting for Algerian independence.

⁷¹ Mohamed Harbi, quoted in Macey, 481.

⁷² See Albert Memmi's remarkable essay, "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon," in *Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1973), 9–39, and *Dominated Man: Notes Toward a Portrait* (New York: Orion Press, 1968).

⁷³ François Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romances and Métissage* (Durham: Duke University Press), 211.

⁷⁴ de Beauvoir, 317.

Fanon's involvement in the Algerian revolution was primarily as witness, doctor, diplomat, writer—or as he was once known in Tunisia, "the pamphleteer from Martinique." (This moniker refers to his frequent contributions to *El Mujahid*, the Algerian nationalist newspaper, after he took up residence in Tunis, having been expelled from Algeria by the French administration in 1957.) During his tenure at the psychiatric hospital at Blida (1953–56), there were occasions on which he covertly trained the *fidayine* (village militias) to cope with their own attacks of terror and anxiety while they were carrying out assassination attempts; he also taught them psychological ways and physiological means of withstanding torture and resisting interrogation.⁷⁵ In 1960, Fanon was involved in exploring the possibility of establishing a Saharan front in southern Algeria, to be accessed from Mali, which could provide a line of supply and support for FLN forces.⁷⁶

The years leading up to the composition of *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961 were fraught with the violence and uncertainty of the Algerian War of Independence, which the French state pursued as if it were no more than the "pacification" of a civil uprising. French left-wing intellectuals came together under the banner of the "Manifesto of the 121" to support the Algerian nationalists, and compared the French military presence in Algeria to the "Hitlerite order": "Does it have to be recalled that fifteen years after the destruction of the Hitlerite order, French militarism has, because of the demands of a war of this kind, succeeded in reintroducing torture and has once more institutionalised it in Europe?"⁷⁷

Simone de Beauvoir, one of the staunchest supporters of the Manifesto, expressed a shared sense of disgust and despair: "Ten thousand Algerians had been herded into the Vel' d'Hiv' like the Jews at Drancy once before. Again I loathed it all—this country,

⁷⁵ de Beauvoir, 315.

⁷⁶ Macey, 437–44. Once again, Macey provides the definitive account of the Mali expedition.

⁷⁷ *Manifesto*, quoted in Macey, 449.

myself, the whole world.”⁷⁸ During a particularly brutal offensive in July 1959 named Operation Binoculars, General René Challe’s troops sought to root out the insurgents of the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN) hiding in the high Kabylia mountains by annihilating local villages that offered support to the nationalists. The policy of *regroupement*, or resettlement, moved the rural population to barbed-wire compounds resembling concentration camps—fifteen thousand people sequestered in a space meant for three thousand and surrounded by bleak torched fields “without water, without sewage or sanitation of any kind, without land to cultivate and for the most part without work. . . .”⁷⁹ A couple of years earlier, in 1957, the southern edge of the Kabylia had been the site of the appalling massacre of Melouza. The rivalry between the FLN and the MNA (Mouvement Nationaliste Algérienne), which had centered on territorial control and tribal affiliation, exploded into a bloodbath when the FLN leadership ordered its operatives to “exterminate this vermin”⁸⁰—a chilling, uncanny echo, half a century later, of Kurtz’s command, “Exterminate the brutes,” in Joseph Conrad’s classic tale of colonial turpitude in the Belgian Congo, *Heart of Darkness*. The FLN herded all males above the age of fifteen, Alistair Horne writes, “into houses and into the mosque and slaughtered them with rifles, pick-axes and knives: a total of 301.”⁸¹

Fanon forged his thinking on violence and counterviolence in these conditions of dire extremity, when everyday interactions were turned into exigent events of life and death—incendiary relations between colonizer and colonized, internecine feuds between revolutionary brotherhoods,⁸² terrorist attacks in Paris

⁷⁸ de Beauvoir, 321.

⁷⁹ Jules Roy in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 338.

⁸⁰ My account is based on Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 221–22. For the discursive representation of the event, and the implications of its various ideological interpretations and manifestations, see LeSueur, “Massacre at Melouza: The ‘Whodunit’ of the French-Algerian War?” 166ff.

⁸¹ Horne, 222.

⁸² *WE*, 18.

and Algiers by the ultra right-wing OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète) and their *pieds noirs* supporters (European settlers in Algeria). As a locus classicus of political resistance and the rhetoric of retributive violence, *The Wretched of the Earth* captures the tone of those apocalyptic times:

The colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through his praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation.⁸³

But how do we get from violence to setting violence in motion? What blows the lid?⁸⁴

When the Algerians reject any method which does not include violence . . . 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.⁸⁵

Hannah Arendt’s objection to *The Wretched of the Earth* has less to do with the occurrence of violence than with Fanon’s teleological belief that the whole process would end in a new humanism, a new planetary relation to freedom defined by the Third World. Collective violence engenders close political kinships like suicide squads and revolutionary brotherhoods, she wrote, but “No body politic I know was ever founded on equality before death and its actualisation in violence.”⁸⁶ Arendt is, at best, only half right in her reading of Fanon. He is cautious about the celebration of spontaneous violence—“where my blood calls for the blood of the other”—because “hatred is not an agenda” capable of maintaining the unity of party organization once violent revolt breaks down into the difficult day-to-day strategy of

⁸³ *WE*, 21.

⁸⁴ *WE*, 31.

⁸⁵ *WE*, 34.

⁸⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), 69.

fighting a war of independence.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Sartre's preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (the nub of Arendt's attack on Fanon's ideas) is committed to bringing the colonial dialectic to its conclusion by carrying home— to metropolitan France—the lessons and the lesions of anticolonial violence.⁸⁸ Those who adhere to principles of nonviolence in the face of colonial oppression are taunted with the ethical *impossibility* of their positions—“even your non-violent thoughts are a condition born of an age-old oppression. . . .”⁸⁹ Sartre pares away the pieties and vanities of Enlightenment universalism to reveal its tolerance of racist ideas and practices. He confronts his compatriots with a spectacular “strip-tease of our humanism”⁹⁰ while justifying the uses of violence to recover an ontological claim to humanity for those who have been treated as subhuman: “Sons of violence, at every instant they draw their humanity from it: we were human beings at their expense, they are making themselves human beings at ours.”⁹¹

For Arendt, Fanon's violence leads to the death of politics; for Sartre, it draws the fiery, first breath of human freedom. I propose a different reading. Fanonian violence, in my view, is part of a struggle for psycho-affective survival and a search for human agency in the midst of the agony of oppression. It does not offer a clear choice between life and death or slavery and freedom, because it confronts the colonial condition of life-in-death. Fanon's phenomenology of violence conceives of the colonized—body, soul, culture, community, history—in a process of “continued agony [rather] than a total disappearance.”⁹² He describes this

⁸⁷ WE, 89.

⁸⁸ I have slightly altered Sartre's phrase “to bring the dialectic to its conclusion.” See Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 150.

⁸⁹ Sartre, 151.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 149–50.

⁹² I have adapted this phrase from Frantz Fanon, “Racism and Culture” in *Towards an African Revolution*, 35.

state of political consciousness and psychic being with a harrowing accuracy:

Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations . . . [all] make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation. This object man, without means of existing, without a *raison d'être*, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears.⁹³

Does the “guilt complex” lie at the very origins of violence, or does the struggle for liberation have to violently free itself of guilt in order to be effective? The double-edged nature of this question—guilt as a stimulant, or an obstacle to freedom, or possibly both—fulfills Fanon's wish (expressed to Sartre and Beauvoir) that “all political leaders should be psychiatrists as well.”⁹⁴ Fanon's style of thinking and writing operates by creating repeated disjunctions—followed by proximate juxtapositions—between the will of the political agent and the desire of the psycho-affective subject. His discourse does not privilege the subjective over the objective, or vice versa, nor does his argument prescribe a hierarchy of relations between material reality and mental or corporeal experience. The double figure of the politician-psychiatrist, someone like Frantz Fanon himself, attempts to decipher the changing *scale* (measure, judgment) of a problem, event, identity, or action as it comes to be represented or framed in the shifting ratios and relations that exist between the realms of political and psycho-affective experience.

The connections between guilt and violence are part of such a delicate balance:

The colonized subject is always on his guard: *confused by the myriad signs of the colonial world he never knows whether he is out of line.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ de Beauvoir, 318.

Confronted with a world configured, 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 knows 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 down his guard and then jumps on him. The muscles of the colonized are always tensed. . . . 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 stimulants. They do not signify: "Stay where you are." But rather "Get ready to do the right thing." . . . 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 usually escalates action (my emphasis).⁹⁵

It seems, at first, that this is a straightforward spectacle of Fanonian retributive violence. The origins of violence lie in a presumptive "false guilt," which the colonized has to assume because of his powerless position; but it is a guilt that he does not accept or interiorize—"He is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority." The eruption of violence is a manifestation of this anxious act of masking, from which the colonized emerges as a guerrilla in camouflage waiting for the colonist to let down his guard so that he might jump; each obstacle encountered is a stimulant to action and a shield to hide the insurgent's intention to take the colonist's place. Because he is dominated by military power and yet not fully domesticated by the hegemonic persuasions of assimilation and the civilizing mission, the anticolonial nationalist is able to decipher the double and opposed meanings emitted by the sounding symbols of society, the bugle calls or police sirens: "They do not signify: 'Stay where you are.' But rather 'Get ready to do the right thing.'" From the torqued mind and muscle of the colonized subject "on guard"

⁹⁵ WE, 16.

emerges the nationalist agent as mujahid (FLN soldier) or *fidayine* (FLN guerrilla).

There is, however, another scenario that runs through this narrative of violence and is somewhat unsettling to its progress, although not unraveled by it. Here the psycho-affective imagination of violence is a desperate act of survival on the part of the "object man," a struggle to keep alive. The "false" or masked guilt complex (as I have called it) emerges, Fanon tells us in the preceding quotation, when the very desire to live becomes faint and attenuated, "more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like."⁹⁶ At this point, the splitting, or disjunction, between being dominated and being domesticated—the irresolvable tension between the colonized as both subject and citizen from which anticolonial violence emerges—is experienced as a psychic and affective *curse* rather than, primarily, as a political "cause" (in both senses of the term). The native may not accept the authority of the colonizer, but his complex and contradictory fate—where rejected guilt begins to *feel* like shame—hangs over him like a Damoclean sword; it threatens him with an imminent disaster that may collapse both the internal life and the external world. At this moment, the political agent may be shadowed—rather than stimulated—by the psycho-affective subject who also inhabits his bodily space. The colonizer's constant muscular tension may turn into a hysterical rigid limb, just as Fanon observes that "the colonist is an exhibitionist."⁹⁷ The mujahid may hear the double call of siren and bugle and yet be caught "in the tightly-knit web of colonialism,"⁹⁸ psychically split and politically paralyzed between the command to "Stay where you are" and the desire to "Get ready to do the right thing." There

⁹⁶ In a larger version of this essay to be published in *A Global Measure* (Harvard University Press), I develop the concept of "false-guilt" in the direction of an understanding of shame.

⁹⁷ WE, 17.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

is every possibility, as Fanon writes, "that the colonist keeps the colonized in a state of rage, which he prevents from boiling over . . . [and this] periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans, and individuals."⁹⁹ The aspiration to do the right thing might be felled by the fragility of the individual, by atavistic animosities, by the iron hand of history, or by indecision and uncertainty, but these failures do not devalue the ethical and imaginative act of reaching out toward rights and freedoms.

Fanon, the phantom of terror, might be only the most intimate, if intimidating, poet of the vicissitudes of violence. But poetic justice can be questionable even when it is exercised on behalf of the wretched of the earth. And if, as I have argued, the lesson of Fanon lies in his fine adjustment of the balance between the politician and the psychiatrist, his skill in altering the "scale" between the social dimension and the psycho-affective relation, then we have to admit that he is in danger of losing his balance when, for instance, he writes: "Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence. The praxis enlightens the militant because it shows him the means and the end."¹⁰⁰ Knowing what we now know about the double destiny of violence, must we not ask: Is violence ever a *perfect* mediation? Is it not simply rhetorical bravura to assert that *any* form of secular, material mediation can provide a transparency of political action (or ethical judgment) that reveals "the means *and* the end"? Is the clear mirror of violence not something of a mirage in which the dispossessed see their reflections but from which they cannot slake their thirst?

Fanon has a rich variety of readers who do not come to his work to seek the "perfect mediation" of violence. They turn to *The Wretched of the Earth*, generation after generation, for a more obscure reason, armed only with an imperfect sense of obligation toward the ideals they want to serve and the values they seek

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ WE, 44.

to preserve. The message they take away from Fanon's book is a quieter, more contemplative one: "*Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.*"¹⁰¹

According to his friends, Fanon was somewhat opaque in person. There was a dark and hesitant air about him that infused his speech and writing with "an enigmatic quality, as though they contained obscure, disturbing prophecies."¹⁰² His publisher, Francis Jeanson, called it the "bodily aspect of his intellectual approach."¹⁰³ Jean Daniel, the editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, remembers that the handshake of the dying Fanon became "more urgent and always seemed to have a message."¹⁰⁴ The deeper messages of poet-politicians are never as easy to decipher as the myths offered up in their names. It is for this reason that I have tried, in this essay, to trace the prophecies of Fanon's living hand as it rises again to beckon enigmatically toward our own times, in this new translation of *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Each age has its peculiar opacities and its urgent missions. The parts we play in the design and direction of historical transformations are shadowed by the contingency of events and the quality of our characters. Sometimes we break the mold; at others, our will is broken. What enables us to aspire to the fraught and fervent desire for freedom is the belief that human beings are capable of imagining what Fanon once described as a "time [that] must no longer be that of the moment or the next harvest but rather of the rest of the world."¹⁰⁵

I would like to thank Mark Jerng and David Mulrooney for invaluable assistance with this essay, and Lia Brozgal for her excellent translations.

¹⁰¹ WE, 132.

¹⁰² de Beauvoir, 317.

¹⁰³ Francis Jeanson, quoted in Macey, 159.

¹⁰⁴ Macey, 433.

¹⁰⁵ WE, 122.

Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre

Not so long ago the Earth numbered 2 billion inhabitants, i.e., 500 million men and 1.5 billion "natives." The first possessed the Word, the others borrowed it. In between, an array of corrupt petty kings, feudal lords, and a fake, fabricated bourgeoisie served as go-betweens. In the colonies, truth displayed its nakedness; the metropolises preferred it clothed; they had to get the "natives" to love them. Like mothers, of sorts. The European elite decided to fabricate a native elite; they selected adolescents, branded the principles of Western culture on their foreheads with a red-hot iron, and gagged their mouths with sounds, pompous awkward words that twisted their tongues. After a short stay in the metropolis they were sent home, fully doctored. These walking lies had nothing more to say to their brothers; from Paris, London, and Amsterdam we yelled, "Parthenon! Fraternity!" and somewhere in Africa and Asia mouths echoed "... thenon! ... nity!" It was a golden age.

Then it was over: the mouths opened of their own accord; the black and yellow voices still talked of our humanism, but it was to blame us for our inhumanity. We quite happily listened to these polite displays of bitterness. At first we were amazed and proud: "What? They can chat away all on their own? Look what

we did with them!" There was no doubt in our minds they accepted our ideal since they were accusing us of not respecting it. Europe then really believed in its mission: it had Hellenized the Asians and created this new species, the Greco-Roman blacks. Pragmatic as ever, we added, quite among ourselves, "Oh let them shout, it will get it out of their system; their bark is worse than their bite."

Then came another generation, which shifted the question. Its writers and poets took enormous pains to explain to us that our values poorly matched the reality of their lives and that they could neither quite reject them nor integrate them. Roughly, this meant: You are making monsters out of us; your humanism wants us to be universal and your racist practices are differentiating us. We listened to them, very nonchalantly. Colonial administrators are not paid to read Hegel, so he's seldom on their reading list, but they don't need this philosopher to tell them that unhappy consciences get tangled up in their contradictions. Ultimate end result: nil. So let us perpetuate their misfortune; nothing will come out of it but hot air. If, the experts told us, there were the slightest hint of a demand in their lamentations, it would be for integration. Consenting to it, of course, would be out of the question: we would ruin the system, which, as you know, relies on gross exploitation. All we need do is dangle a carrot in front of their eyes and they will come running. As for anything like a revolt, we had absolutely nothing to worry about: what lucid "native" would set about massacring the dashing sons of Europe with the sole intention of becoming Europeans like them? In short, we encouraged their melancholic moods, and we thought it would not be bad, for once, to award the Goncourt Prize to a black. That was before 1939.

1961. Listen: "Let us not lose time in useless laments and sickening mimicry. Let us leave this Europe which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world. For centuries it has stifled virtually the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called 'spiritual adventure.'"

The tone is new. Who dares voice it? An African, a man from the Third World, a former colonized subject. "Europe," he adds, "has gained such a mad and reckless momentum . . . that it is heading toward the brink from which we would be advised to remove ourselves." In other words, Europe is done for. A truth that is hard to swallow, but of which all of us are—are we not, fellow Europeans?—convinced deep down.

We must make one reservation, however. When one Frenchman, for example, says to another: "We're done for!"—which, to my knowledge, has happened practically every day since 1930—it's a passionate discourse, burning with rage and love, where the speaker puts himself in the same boat as his fellow countrymen. And then as a rule he adds: "Unless . . ." Everyone gets the message: one cannot afford to make a single mistake. If his recommendations are not followed to the letter, then and only then will the country be done for. In short, it's a threat, followed by a piece of advice, and such remarks shock even less because they spring from a national intersubjectivity. When Fanon, on the contrary, says that Europe is heading for ruin, far from uttering a cry of alarm, he is offering a diagnostic. Dr. Fanon claims he neither considers it to be a hopeless case—miracles have been known to exist—nor is he offering to cure it. He is stating the fact that it is in its death throes. As an outsider, he bases his diagnostic on the symptoms he has observed. As for treating it, no: he has other things to worry about. Whether it survives or perishes, that's not his problem. For this reason his book is scandalous. And if you mumble, sniggering awkwardly: "He's really got it in for us!" you have missed the true nature of the scandal, for Fanon has got nothing "in for you" at all; his book, which is such a hot issue for others, leaves you out in the cold. It often talks *about* you, but never *to* you. Gone are the black Goncourts and the yellow Nobels: the days of the colonized prizewinners are over. A "French-speaking" ex-native bends the language to new requirements, fashions it for his own use, and speaks to the colonized alone: "Natives of all the underdeveloped countries unite!"

What a downfall. For the fathers, we were the only interlocutors; for the sons, we no longer count: we are the object of their discourse. Of course, Fanon mentions in passing our infamous crimes at Sétif, Hanoi, and Madagascar, but he does not waste time condemning them: he makes use of them. He demolishes the tactics of colonialism, the complex play of relations uniting and opposing the colonists and the "metropolitans." *For the sake of his brothers*, his aim is to teach them how to outwit us.

In short, the Third World discovers *itself* and speaks to *itself* through this voice. We know it is not a uniform world, and it still contains subjected peoples, some of whom have acquired a false independence, others who are fighting to conquer their sovereignty, and yet others who have won their freedom, but who live under the constant threat of imperialist aggression. These differences are born out of colonial history, in other words, oppression. In some places the metropolis makes do with paying a clique of feudal overlords; in others, it has fabricated a fake bourgeoisie of colonized subjects in a system of divide and rule; elsewhere, it has killed two birds with one stone: the colony is both settlement and exploitation. Europe, therefore, has hardened the divisions and conflicts, forged classes, and in some cases, racism, and endeavored by every means to generate and deepen the stratification of colonized societies. Fanon hides nothing. In order to wage the struggle against us, the former colony must wage a struggle against itself. Or rather it is one and the same thing. In the heat of combat, all domestic barriers must be torn down, the powerless bourgeoisie of racketeers and *compradores*, the still privileged urban proletariat and the lumpenproletariat of the shanty towns, must all align with the positions of the rural masses, the true reservoir for the national and revolutionary army. In countries where colonialism has deliberately halted development, the peasantry, when it decides to revolt, very quickly emerges as the *radical* class. It is all too familiar with naked oppression, suffers far worse than the urban workers, and to prevent it from dying of hunger, nothing less will do than the demolition of every existing

structure. If it triumphs, the national revolution will be socialist; if it is stopped in its momentum, if the colonized bourgeoisie takes over power, the new state, despite its official sovereignty, will remain in the hands of the imperialists. The case of Katanga illustrates this fairly well. The unity of the Third World, therefore, is not complete: it is a work in progress that begins with all the colonized in every pre- or post-independent country, united under the leadership of the peasant class. This is what Fanon explains to his brothers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America: we shall achieve revolutionary socialism everywhere and all together or we shall be beaten one by one by our former tyrants. He hides nothing: neither the weaknesses nor the disagreements nor the mystification. In some places the government gets off to a bad start; in others, after a stunning success, it loses momentum; elsewhere, it has come to a halt. In order to revive it the peasants must drive their bourgeoisie into the ocean. The reader is sharply warned of the most dangerous types of alienation: the leader, the personality cult, Western culture, and equally so, the revival of African culture from a distant past. The true culture is the revolution, meaning it is forged while the iron is hot. Fanon speaks out loud and clear. We Europeans, we can hear him. The proof is you are holding this book. Isn't he afraid that the colonial powers will take advantage of his sincerity?

No. He is not afraid of anything. Our methods are outdated: they can sometimes delay emancipation, but they can't stop it. And don't believe we can readjust our methods: neocolonialism, that lazy dream of the metropolises, is a lot of hot air; the "Third Force" does not exist or if it does it is the phony bourgeoisie to which colonialism has already handed over power. Our Machiavellianism has little hold on this world, which is wide awake and hot on the trail of every one of our lies. The colonist has but one recourse: force or whatever is left of it. The "native" has but one choice: servitude or sovereignty. What does Fanon care if you read or don't read his book? It is for his brothers he denounces our old box of mischief, positive we don't have

anything else up our sleeve. It is to them he says: Europe has got its claws on our continents, they must be severed until she releases them. The moment is right for us. Nothing can happen in Bizerta, Elizabethville, or the Algerian *bled* without the whole world knowing about it. The rival blocs take up opposite sides, they keep each other at bay, let us take advantage of this paralysis, let us enter history, and as we burst in let us make it universal for the first time. Let us fight. Failing other weapons, the patience of the knife will suffice.

Europeans, open this book, look inside. After taking a short walk in the night you will see strangers gathered around a fire, get closer and listen. They are discussing the fate reserved for your trading posts and for the mercenaries defending them. They might see you, but they will go on talking among themselves without even lowering their voices. Their indifference strikes home: their fathers, creatures living in the shadows, *your* creatures, were dead souls; you afforded them light, you were their sole interlocutor, you did not take the trouble to answer the zombies. The sons ignore you. The fire that warms and enlightens them is not yours. You, standing at a respectful distance, you now feel eclipsed, nocturnal, and numbed. It's your turn now. In the darkness that will dawn into another day, you have turned into the zombie.

In that case, you say, let's throw this book out of the window. Why bother to read it since it is not meant for us? For two reasons: first, because Fanon analyzes you for his brothers and demolishes for them the mechanism of our alienations. Take advantage of it to discover your true self as an object. Our victims know us by their wounds and shackles: that is what makes their testimony irrefutable. They only need to know what we have done to them for us to realize what we have done to ourselves. Is this necessary? Yes, because Europe is doomed. But, you will say once again, we live in the metropolis, and we disapprove of extremes. It's true, you are not colonists, but you are not much better. They were your pioneers, you sent them overseas, they made you rich.

You warned them: if they shed too much blood you would pretend to disown them; the same way a State—no matter which one—maintains a mob of agitators, provocateurs, and spies abroad whom it disowns once they are caught. You who are so liberal, so humane, who take the love of culture to the point of affectation, you pretend to forget that you have colonies where massacres are committed in your name. Fanon reveals to his comrades—especially to those who remain a little too Westernized—the solidarity of the metropolitans with their colonial agents. Have the courage to read it, primarily because it will make you feel ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary feeling. You see I, too, cannot lose my subjective illusion. I, too, say to you: “All is lost unless. . .” I, a European, am stealing my enemy's book and turning it into a way of healing Europe. Make the most of it.

And this is the second reason: aside from Sorel's fascist chatter, you will find that Fanon is the first since Engels to focus again on the midwife of history. And don't be led into believing that hotheadedness or an unhappy childhood gave him some odd liking for violence. He has made himself spokesman for the situation, nothing more. But that is all he needs to do in order to constitute, step by step, the dialectic that liberal hypocrisy hides from you and that has produced us just as much as it has produced him.

In the last century, the bourgeoisie considered the workers an envious lot, unhinged by their uncouth appetites, but it was careful to include these great brutes in the human race. Unless they were men and free, how could they possibly sell their manpower? In France and England humanism claims to be universal.

Forced labor is quite the opposite: there is no contract; in addition it requires intimidation; the oppression, therefore, is visible. By rejecting metropolitan universalism, our soldiers overseas apply the *numerus clausus* to the human species: since none can rob, enslave, or kill his fellow man without committing a

crime, they lay down the principle that the colonized subject is not a fellow man. Our military forces have received orders to change this abstract certainty into reality: orders are given to reduce the inhabitants of the occupied territory to the level of a superior ape in order to justify the colonist's treatment of them as beasts of burden. Colonial violence not only aims at keeping these enslaved men at a respectful distance, it also seeks to dehumanize them. No effort is spared to demolish their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs, and to destroy their culture without giving them ours. We exhaust them into a mindless state. Ill fed and sick, if they resist, fear will finish the job: guns are pointed at the peasants; civilians come and settle on their land and force them to work for them under the whip. If they resist, the soldiers fire, and they are dead men; if they give in and degrade themselves, they are no longer men. Shame and fear warp their character and dislocate their personality. Such a business is conducted briskly by experts: psychological warfare was not born yesterday. Nor was brainwashing. And yet despite all their efforts, nowhere have they achieved their aim; no more in the Congo where they cut off the hands of the blacks than in Angola where quite recently they pierced the lips of the malcontents in order to padlock them. And I am not saying it is impossible to change a man into an animal. I am saying they can't do it without weakening him considerably: beating is never enough, pressure has to be brought by undernourishing him. That's the problem with servitude: when you domesticate a member of our species, you lower his productivity, and however little you give him, a barnyard being ends up costing more than he's worth. For this reason the colonists are forced to stop breaking him in halfway. The result: neither man nor beast, but the "native." Beaten, underfed, sick, and frightened, but only up to a certain point, yellow, black, or white he always has the same character traits—lazy, sly, and thieving, who lives on nothing and understands only the language of violence.

Poor colonist: his contradiction has been unmasked. He ought to kill those he plunders, like they say the *djinns* do. But that is

now out of the question. Doesn't he have to exploit them as well? Failing to carry the massacre to the point of genocide, and servitude to a state of mindlessness, he cracks up, the situation is reversed, and an implacable logic leads to decolonization.

Not right away. First of all the European reigns: he has already lost but doesn't realize it; he does not yet know that the "natives" are false "natives." He has to make them suffer, he claims, in order to destroy or repress the evil they have inside them; after three generations, their treacherous instincts will be stamped out. What instincts? Those that drive the slaves to massacre their masters? How come he cannot recognize his own cruelty now turned against him? How come he can't see his own savagery as a colonist in the savagery of these oppressed peasants who have absorbed it through every pore and for which they can find no cure? The answer is simple: this arrogant individual, whose power of authority and fear of losing it has gone to his head, has difficulty remembering he was once a man; he thinks he is a whip or a gun; he is convinced that the domestication of the "inferior races" is obtained by governing their reflexes. He disregards the human memory, the indelible reminders; and then, above all, there is this that perhaps he never knew: we only become what we are by radically negating deep down what others have done to us. Three generations? As early as the second, hardly had the sons opened their eyes than they saw their fathers being beaten. In psychiatric terms, they were "traumatized." For life. But these constant acts of repeated aggression, far from forcing them into submission, plunge them into an intolerable contradiction, which sooner or later the European will have to pay for. After that, when it is their turn to be broken in, when they are taught shame, pain, and hunger, we will only be fueling in their bodies a volcanic fury whose power matches the pressure applied to them. They only understand the language of violence, you were saying? Of course; at first the only violence they understand is the colonist's, and then their own, reflecting back at us like our reflection bouncing back at us from a mirror. Don't be mistaken;

it is through this mad rage, this bile and venom, their constant desire to kill us, and the permanent contraction of powerful muscles, afraid to relax, that they become men. It is *through* the *colonist*, who wants to turn them into beasts of burden, and against him. Still blind and abstract, hatred is their only asset. The master provokes it because he seeks to deaden their minds; he fails to break it because his interests stop him halfway. The false "natives," therefore, are still humans owing to the power and powerlessness of the oppressor that are transformed into the natives' stubborn rejection of their animal condition. As for the rest, the message is clear. They are lazy, of course they are: it's a form of sabotage. Sly and thieving: What did you expect? Their petty thieving marks the start of a still unorganized resistance. And if that is not enough there are those who assert themselves by hurling themselves with their bare hands against the guns; these are their heroes; and others turn into men by killing Europeans. They are shot: the sacrifice of these outlaws and martyrs exalts the terrified masses.

Terrified, yes. At this new stage colonial aggression is internalized by the colonized as a form of terror. By that I mean not only the fear they feel when faced with our limitless means of repression, but also the fear that their own fury inspires in them. They are trapped between our guns, which are pointing at them, and those frightening instincts, those murderous impulses, that emerge from the bottom of their hearts and that they don't always recognize. For it is not first of all *their* violence, it is ours, on the rebound, that grows and tears them apart; and the first reaction by these oppressed people is to repress this shameful anger that is morally condemned by them and us, but that is the only refuge they have left for their humanity. Read Fanon: you will see that in a time of helplessness, murderous rampage is the collective unconscious of the colonized.

This repressed rage, never managing to explode, goes round in circles and wreaks havoc on the oppressed themselves. In order to rid themselves of it they end up massacring each other, tribes

battle one against the other since they cannot confront the real enemy—and you can count on colonial policy to fuel rivalries; the brother raising his knife against his brother believes he is destroying once and for all the hated image of their common debasement. But these expiatory victims do not satisfy their thirst for blood, and the only way to stop themselves from marching against the machine guns is to become our accomplices: the very dehumanization process they are rejecting will be speeded up by their own initiative. Under the amused gaze of the colonist, they protect themselves with supernatural safeguards, sometimes reviving awesome old myths, at other times tying themselves to meticulous rituals. The colonized, therefore, in his obsession, shuns his deep desires by inflicting on himself odd rites that monopolize him at every moment. They dance: that keeps them occupied; it relaxes their painfully contracted muscles, and what's more, the dance secretly mimes, often unbeknownst to them, the No they dare not voice, the murders they dare not commit. In some regions they use the last resort: possession. What was once quite simply a religious act, an exchange between the believer and the sacred, has been turned into a weapon against despair and humiliation: the *zars*, the *loas*, the Saints of Santeria possess them, take control of their violence and squander it in trances ending in exhaustion. At the same time their idols protect them: in other words the colonized protect themselves from colonial alienation by going one step better with religious alienation, with the ultimate end result of having accumulated two alienations, each of which reinforces the other. In certain psychoses, therefore, tired of being insulted day in and day out, the hallucinating individual suddenly gets it into his head to hear an angel's voice complimenting him; this doesn't stop the jeering, but at least it gives him a break. It is a means of defense and the end of their story: the personality dislocates and the patient is a case for dementia. For a few rigorously selected unfortunates, there is that other possession I mentioned earlier: Western culture. In their shoes, you might say, I would prefer my *zars* to the

Acropolis. Okay: you've got the message. Not quite, however, because you are not in their shoes. Not yet. Otherwise you'd know they have no choice: they accumulate. Two worlds, that makes two possessions: you dance all night long, at dawn you hurry to church to attend mass. Day by day the crack widens. Our enemy betrays his brothers and becomes our accomplice; his brothers do the same. The status of "native" is a neurosis introduced and maintained by the colonist in the colonized *with their consent*.

Demanding yet denying the human condition makes for an explosive contradiction. And explode it does, as you and I know. And we live in an age of conflagration: it only needs the rising birth rate to worsen the food shortage, it only needs the newly born to fear living a little more than dying, and for the torrent of violence to sweep away all the barriers. In Algeria and Angola, Europeans are massacred on sight. This is the age of the boomerang, the third stage of violence: it flies right back at us, it strikes us and, once again, we have no idea what hit us. The "liberals" remain stunned: they admit we had not been polite enough to the "natives," that it would have been wiser and fairer to grant them certain rights, wherever possible; they would have been only too happy to admit them in batches without a sponsor to that exclusive club—the human species; and now this barbaric explosion of madness is putting them in the same boat as the wretched colonists. The metropolitan Left is in a quandary: it is well aware of the true fate of the "natives," the pitiless oppression they are subjected to, and does not condemn their revolt, knowing that we did everything to provoke it. But even so, it thinks, there are limits: these guerrillas should make every effort to show some chivalry; this would be the best way of proving they are men. Sometimes the Left berates them: "You're going too far; we cannot support you any longer." They don't care a shit for its support; it can shove it up its ass for what it's worth. As soon as the war began, they realized the harsh truth: we are all equally as good as each other. We have all taken advantage of them, they have nothing to prove, they won't give anyone

preferential treatment. A single duty, a single objective: drive out colonialism by *every* means. And the most liberal among us would be prepared to accept this, at a pinch, but they cannot help seeing in this trial of strength a perfectly inhuman method used by subhumans to claim for themselves a charter for humanity: let them acquire it as quickly as possible, but in order to merit it, let them use nonviolent methods. Our noble souls are racist.

They would do well to read Fanon; he shows perfectly clearly that this irrepressible violence is neither a storm in a teacup nor the reemergence of savage instincts nor even a consequence of resentment: it is man reconstructing himself. I believe we once knew, and have since forgotten, the truth that no indulgence can erase the marks of violence: violence alone can eliminate them. And the colonized are cured of colonial neurosis by driving the colonist out by force. Once their rage explodes, they recover their lost coherence, they experience self-knowledge through reconstruction of themselves; from afar we see their war as the triumph of barbarity; but it proceeds on its own to gradually emancipate the fighter and progressively eliminates the colonial darkness inside and out. As soon as it begins it is merciless. Either one must remain terrified or become terrifying—which means surrendering to the dissociations of a fabricated life or conquering the unity of one's native soil. When the peasants lay hands on a gun, the old myths fade, and one by one the taboos are overturned: a fighter's weapon is his humanity. For in the first phase of the revolt killing is a necessity: killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free; for the first time the survivor feels a *national* soil under his feet. In that moment the nation does not forsake him: it is there wherever he goes and wherever he is—always by his side, it merges with his freedom. But after the initial surprise the colonial army responds: one must unite or be massacred. Tribal conflicts diminish and tend to disappear: firstly, because they jeopardize the revolution, and more precisely because they had no other purpose but to shift

the violence onto false enemies. When they persist—like in the Congo—it is because they are fueled by the agents of colonialism. The nation moves forward: every comrade in arms represents the nation for every other comrade. Their brotherly love is the reverse side of the hatred they feel for you: linked as brothers by the fact that each of them has killed and can at any moment kill again. Fanon shows his readers the limits of “spontaneity,” the need for and the risks of “organization.” But however immense the task, at each new stage of the undertaking, the revolutionary consciousness deepens. The last complexes are swept away: just let them try and talk about a “dependency complex” in an ALN soldier. Freed from his blinkers, the peasant becomes aware of his needs: these were killing him, but he tried to ignore them; now he discovers their infinite demands. In this atmosphere of mass violence—in order to hold out five or eight years, as the Algerians have done—the military, social, and political demands are indistinguishable. The war—if only the question of command and responsibilities—establishes new structures that will be the first institutions of peace. Here then is man instated in new traditions even, future daughters of a horrible present; here he is legitimized by a right about to be born or born every day in the heat of combat: with the last of the colonists killed, re-embarked or assimilated, the minority species disappears, giving way to socialist brotherhood. And this is still not enough: the fighter takes short cuts; you don’t think he is risking his life to turn himself into an old “metropolitan.” Look how patient he is: perhaps he dreams sometimes of another Dien Bien Phu; but don’t believe he is really counting on it: he is a beggar who in his wretchedness is fighting the rich and their military might. In expectation of decisive victories, and very often expecting nothing, he works his enemies to distraction. This is not without terrifying losses; the colonial army turns savage: police checks, search operations, roundups, and punitive raids; they massacre women and children. This new man knows that his life as a man begins with death; he considers himself a potential candidate for

death. He will be killed: it is not just that he accepts the risk of being killed, he is certain of it. This walking dead man has lost his wife and his sons; he has seen so much agony he prefers victory to survival; others will profit from the victory, not him; he is too weary. But this weariness of heart is the reason behind his incredible courage. We find our humanity this side of death and despair; he finds it on the other side of torture and death. We have sown the wind; he is the hurricane. Offspring of violence, he draws every moment of his humanity from it: we were men at his expense, he becomes a man at ours. Another man: a man of higher quality.

Here Fanon stops. He has shown the way: as spokesman for the fighters, he has called for union, the unity of the African continent against every discord and every idiosyncrasy. He has achieved his purpose. If he had wanted to describe fully the historical phenomenon of colonization, he would have had to talk about us—which was certainly not his intention. But when we have closed the book, it continues to haunt us, in spite of its author: for we sense the force of these peoples waging a revolution and our only response is violence. A new moment in violence, therefore, occurs, and this time it involves us because it is in the process of changing us to the same extent it changes the false “native.” Everyone can think what he likes, provided however that he thinks: in a Europe stunned by the blows it is receiving these days, the slightest distraction of thought in France, Belgium, and England amounts to a criminal complicity with colonialism. This book had certainly no need for a preface. Especially as it is not addressed to us. I have written one, however, to carry the dialectic through to its conclusion: we, too, peoples of Europe, we are being decolonized: meaning the colonist inside every one of us is surgically extracted in a bloody operation. Let’s take a good look at ourselves, if we have the courage, and let’s see what has become of us.

First of all we must confront an unexpected sight: the striptease of our humanism. Not a pretty sight in its nakedness:

nothing but a dishonest ideology, an exquisite justification for plundering; its tokens of sympathy and affectation, alibis for our acts of aggression. The pacifists are a fine sight: neither victims nor torturers! Come now! If you are not a victim when the government you voted for and the army your young brothers served in, commits "genocide," without hesitation or remorse, then, you are undoubtedly a torturer. And if you choose to be a victim, risking one or two days in prison, you are simply trying to take the easy way out. But you can't; there is no way out. Get this into your head: if violence were only a thing of the future, if exploitation and oppression never existed on earth, perhaps displays of nonviolence might relieve the conflict. But if the entire regime, even your nonviolent thoughts, is governed by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passiveness serves no other purpose but to put you on the side of the oppressors.

You know full well we are exploiters. You know full well we have taken the gold and minerals and then oil from the "new continents," and shipped them back to the old metropolises. Not without excellent results in the shape of palaces, cathedrals, and centers of industry; and then when crisis loomed, the colonial markets were there to cushion the blow or divert it. Stuffed with wealth, Europe granted humanity *de jure* to all its inhabitants: for us, a man means an accomplice, for we have *all* profited from colonial exploitation. This pale, bloated continent ended up by lapsing into what Fanon rightly calls "narcissism." Cocteau was irritated by Paris, "this city that never stops talking about herself." And Europe, what else is it doing? And that super-European monster, North America? What empty chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honor, country, and what else? This did not prevent us from making racist remarks at the same time: dirty nigger, filthy Jew, dirty Arab. Noble minds, liberal and sympathetic—neocolonialists, in other words—claimed to be shocked by this inconsistency, since the only way the European could make himself man was by fabricating slaves and monsters. As long as the status of "native" existed, the imposture remained unmasked.

We saw in the human species an abstract premise of universality that served as a pretext for concealing more concrete practices: there was a race of subhumans overseas who, thanks to us, might, in a thousand years perhaps, attain our status. In short, we took the human race to mean elite. Today the "native" unmasks his truth; as a result, our exclusive club reveals its weakness: it was nothing more and nothing less than a minority. There is worse news: since the others are turning into men against us, apparently we are the enemy of the human race; the elite is revealing its true nature—a gang. Our beloved values are losing their feathers; if you take a closer look there is not one that isn't tainted with blood. If you need proof, remember those noble words: How generous France is. Generous? Us? And what about Sétif? And what about those eight years of fierce fighting that have cost the lives of over a million Algerians? And the torture by electricity? But you must understand we are not being blamed for having betrayed some mission or other: for the good reason we don't have any. It is our very generosity that is being challenged; such a beautiful, melodious word means only one thing: status granted. For the new men on the other side who have been set free, nobody has the power or the privilege to deny anybody anything. Everyone has every right. Over everything. And the day when our human race has fully matured, it will not define itself as the sum of the inhabitants of the globe, but as the infinite unity of their reciprocities. I shall stop here; you won't have trouble finishing the job; for the first and last time you only need to look our aristocratic virtues in the face: they are doomed; how could they survive the aristocracy of subhumans who engendered them? A few years back, a bourgeois, and colonialist, commentator had only this to say in defense of the West: "We are no angels. But at least we have remorse." What an admission! In the past our continent had other life buoys: the Parthenon, Chartres, the Rights of Man, and the swastika. We know now what they are worth. And now the only thing they claim can save us from shipwreck is the very Christian feeling of guilt. It's the end; as

you can see, Europe leaks like a sieve. What then has happened? Quite simply this: we were the subjects of history, and now we are the objects. The power struggle has been reversed, decolonization is in progress; all our mercenaries can try and do is delay its completion.

But in order to do that, the former metropolises would have to pull out all the stops and commit all their forces to a battle lost in advance. That old colonial brutality that made Bugeaud a dubious hero, here it is at the end of the colonial venture applied tenfold yet still insufficient. The troops are dispatched to Algeria where they have held out for seven years with no result. The violence has changed direction; victorious, we enforced it without it ever seeming to affect us; it dislocated the other, whereas our humanism as men remained intact. United by profit, the metropolitans baptized their commonwealth of crimes Fraternity and Love. Today, the very same violence, blockaded everywhere, comes back to us through our soldiers, internalizes itself and possesses us. Involution begins: the colonized reintegrate themselves, and we, the reactionaries and the liberals, the colonists and the metropolitans, disintegrate. Fury and fear are already stripped naked: they are laid bare in the brutal punitive raids in Algiers. Where are the savages now? Where is the barbarity? Nothing is missing, not even the drums: the car horns hammer out, "Algeria for the French," while the Europeans burn the Muslims alive. Not so long ago, Fanon recalls, a congress of psychiatrists deplored Algerian criminality: these people are killing themselves, they said, it's not normal; the cortex of the Algerian must be underdeveloped. In Central Africa others established that "the African uses his frontal lobes very little." These scientists would do well to pursue their research in Europe, and especially among the French. For we, too, must be affected by frontal idleness for some time now: our patriots have been assassinating their fellow countrymen, and if they find no one home, they blow up the concierge and the house. This is only the beginning; civil war is predicted for autumn or next spring. Our lobes, however,

seem perfectly normal: couldn't the reason be rather that, powerless to crush the "native," violence turns inward, bottles itself up deep inside us, and seeks an outlet? The unity of the Algerian people produces the disunity of the French: throughout the territories of the ex-metropolises the tribes are dancing and preparing to fight. Terror has left Africa to settle here; for there are raving fanatics who want to make us pay with our blood for the shame of having been beaten by the "native," and then there are the others, all the others, the liberals, the hardliners of the spineless Left who are just as guilty (after Bizerta, after the September lynchings, who took to the streets to shout "Enough is enough"?), but more composed. The fever is mounting in them, too, as well as spiteful anger. But they're scared stiff! They conceal their rage behind myths and complicated rituals. In order to delay the final reckoning and the hour of truth, they have given us a Grand Magician as our leader whose function is to keep us in the dark at any cost. To no effect; hailed by some, rejected by others, violence goes round in circles: one day it explodes in Metz, the next day in Bordeaux; now it's here, then it's there, like the game of pass the slipper. Slowly but surely it is our turn to head down the road to "native" status. But in order to become genuine "natives" our territory would have to be occupied by the formerly colonized and we would have to be starving to death. This will not be the case; no, it is the demise of colonialism that possesses us; we shall soon be mounted by it in all its arrogance and senility; that is our *zar*, that is our *loa*. And you will be convinced on reading Fanon's last chapter that it is better to be a "native" in the pit of misery than an erstwhile colonist. It is not right that a police officer should be obliged to torture ten hours a day: at that rate his nerves will go to pieces, unless torturers are forbidden to work overtime in their own interest. When you want to safeguard the morale of the nation and the army under the rigor of the law, it is not right for the latter to systematically demoralize the former. Nor for a country with a republican tradition to entrust its young men by the hundreds of thousands to putschist officers. It is not

right, my fellow countrymen, you who know all the crimes committed in our name, it is really not right not to breathe a word about them to anybody, not even to your own soul, for fear of having to pass judgment on yourselves. At first you had no idea, I am prepared to believe it, then you suspected, and now you know, but you still keep silent. Eight years of silence have a damaging effect. And in vain: the blinding glare of torture is high in the sky, flooding the entire country; under this blaze of light, not a single laugh rings true any longer, not a single face that is not painted to mask the anger and the fear, no longer a single act that does not betray our disgust and our complicity. Today whenever two Frenchmen meet, there is a dead body between them. And did I say one . . . ? France was once the name of a country; be careful lest it become the name of a neurosis in 1961.

Will we recover? Yes. Violence, like Achilles' spear, can heal the wounds it has inflicted. Today we are in chains, humiliated, sick with fear: at our lowest ebb. Fortunately for us, this is still not enough for the colonialist aristocracy: it cannot accomplish its rearguard mission in Algeria until it has first finished colonizing the French. Every day we shrink back from the fight, but rest assured it will be inevitable. The killers, they need it; they will swoop down on us and lash out haphazardly. The time for illusionists and wizardry is over: either you fight or rot in the camps. This is the last stage of the dialectic: you condemn this war but you don't yet dare declare your support for the Algerian fighters; have no fear, you can count on the colonists and mercenaries to help you make up your mind. Perhaps, then, with your back to the wall, you will finally unleash this new violence aroused in you by old, rehashed crimes. But, as they say, that is another story. The history of man. The time is coming, I am convinced, when we shall join the ranks of those who are making it.

September 1961

The Wretched of the Earth

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.

* * *

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 Manichaean 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.¹ 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

¹ We have demonstrated in *Black Skin, White Masks* the mechanism of this Manichaean 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 Manichaeanism 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 Manichaeism 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, Manichaeism 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.² 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-

² *Colonial Wars and Mental Disorders*, chapter 5.

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

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.”³

³ 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 face 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!"⁴ 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

⁴ 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

*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.⁵

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.

⁵ 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.

* * *

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.⁶

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

⁶ 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).

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

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

⁷ 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."⁸ When the colonized subject is tortured, when his

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!"

⁸ 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.

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.⁹

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

⁹ 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.¹⁰

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

¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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

¹¹ 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*.¹² 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

¹² "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 Pétju, "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