

the people fails in its mission and inevitably gets tangled up in a series of trials and tribulations. 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. A bourgeois leadership of the underdeveloped countries confines the national consciousness to a sterile formalism. Only the massive commitment by men and women to judicious and productive tasks gives form and substance to this consciousness. It is then that flags and government buildings cease to be the symbols of the nation. The nation deserts the false glitter of the capital and takes refuge in the interior where it receives life and energy. The living expression of the nation is the collective consciousness in motion of the entire people. It is the enlightened and coherent praxis of the men and women. The collective forging of a destiny implies undertaking responsibility on a truly historical scale. Otherwise there is anarchy, repression, the emergence of tribalized parties and federalism, etc. If the national government wants to be national it must govern by the people and for the people, for the disinherited and by the disinherited. No leader, whatever his worth, can replace the will of the people, and the national government, before concerning itself with international prestige, must first restore dignity to all citizens, furnish their minds, fill their eyes with human things and develop a human landscape for the sake of its enlightened and sovereign inhabitants.

## On National Culture

It is not enough to write a revolutionary hymn to be a part of the African revolution, one has to join with the people to make this revolution. Make it with the people and the hymns will automatically follow. For an act to be authentic, one has to be a vital part of Africa and its thinking, part of all that popular energy mobilized for the liberation, progress and happiness of Africa. Outside this single struggle there is no place for either the artist or the intellectual who is not committed and totally mobilized with the people in the great fight waged by Africa and suffering humanity.

Sékou Touré<sup>16</sup>

Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity. In the underdeveloped countries preceding generations have simultaneously resisted the insidious agenda of colonialism and paved the way for the emergence of the current struggles. Now that we are in the heat of combat, we must shed the habit of decrying the efforts of our forefathers or feigning incomprehension at their silence or passiveness. They fought as best they could with the weapons they possessed at the time, and if their struggle did not reverberate throughout the international arena, the reason should be attributed not so much to a

<sup>16</sup> "The Political Leader as Representative of a Culture." Paper presented at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Rome, 1959.

lack of heroism but to a fundamentally different international situation. More than one colonized subject had to say, "We've had enough," more than one tribe had to rebel, more than one peasant revolt had to be quelled, more than one demonstration to be repressed, for us today to stand firm, certain of our victory.

For us who are determined to break the back of colonialism, our historic mission is to authorize every revolt, every desperate act, and every attack aborted or drowned in blood.

In this chapter we shall analyze the fundamental issue of the legitimate claim to a nation. The political party that mobilizes the people, however, is little concerned with this issue of legitimacy. Political parties are concerned solely with daily reality, and it is in the name of this reality, in the name of this immediacy, which influences the present and future of men and women, that they make their call to action. The political party may very well speak of the nation in emotional terms, but it is primarily interested in getting the people who are listening to understand that they must join in the struggle if they want quite simply to exist.

We now know that in the first phase of the national struggle colonialism attempts to defuse nationalist demands by manipulating economic doctrine. At the first signs of a dispute, colonialism feigns comprehension by acknowledging with ostentatious humility that the territory is suffering from serious underdevelopment that requires major social and economic reforms.

And it is true that certain spectacular measures such as the opening of work sites for the unemployed here and there delay the formation of a national consciousness by a few years. But sooner or later colonialism realizes it is incapable of achieving a program of socio-economic reforms that would satisfy the aspirations of the colonized masses. Even when it comes to filling their bellies, colonialism proves to be inherently powerless. The

colonialist state very quickly discovers that any attempt to disarm the national parties at a purely economic level would be tantamount to practicing in the colonies what it did not want to do on its own territory. And it is no coincidence that today the doctrine of Cartierism is on the rise just about everywhere.

Cartier's bitter disillusionment with France's stubborn determination to retain ties with people it will have to feed, whereas so many French citizens are in dire straits, reflects colonialism's inability to transform itself into a nonpartisan aid program. Hence once again no need to waste time repeating "Better to go hungry with dignity than to eat one's fill in slavery." On the contrary we must persuade ourselves that colonialism is incapable of procuring for colonized peoples the material conditions likely to make them forget their quest for dignity. Once colonialism has understood where its social reform tactics would lead it, back come the old reflexes of adding police reinforcements, dispatching troops, and establishing a regime of terror better suited to its interests and its psychology.

Within the political parties, or rather parallel to them, we find the cultured class of colonized intellectuals. The recognition of a national culture and its right to exist represent their favorite stamping ground. Whereas the politicians integrate their action in the present, the intellectuals place themselves in the context of history. Faced with the colonized intellectual's debunking of the colonialist theory of a precolonial barbarism, colonialism's response is mute. It is especially mute since the ideas put forward by the young colonized intelligentsia are widely accepted by metropolitan specialists. It is in fact now commonly recognized that for several decades numerous European researchers have widely rehabilitated African, Mexican, and Peruvian civilizations. Some have been surprised by the passion invested by the colonized intellectuals in their defense of a national culture. But those who consider this passion exaggerated are strangely apt

to forget that their psyche and their ego are conveniently safeguarded by a French or German culture whose worth has been proven and which has gone unchallenged.

I concede the fact that the actual existence of an Aztec civilization has done little to change the diet of today's Mexican peasant. I concede that whatever proof there is of a once mighty Songhai civilization does not change the fact that the Songhais today are undernourished, illiterate, abandoned to the skies and water, with a blank mind and glazed eyes. But, as we have said on several occasions, this passionate quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era can be justified by the colonized intellectuals' shared interest in stepping back and taking a hard look at the Western culture in which they risk becoming ensnared. Fully aware they are in the process of losing themselves, and consequently of being lost to their people, these men work away with raging heart and furious mind to renew contact with their people's oldest, inner essence, the farthest removed from colonial times.

Let us delve deeper; perhaps this passion and this rage are nurtured or at least guided by the secret hope of discovering beyond the present wretchedness, beyond this self-hatred, this abdication and denial, some magnificent and shining era that redeems us in our own eyes and those of others. I say that I have decided to delve deeper. Since perhaps in their unconscious the colonized intellectuals have been unable to come to loving terms with the present history of their oppressed people, since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity, they have decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame, but dignity, glory, and sobriety. Reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture. It triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently

demonstrated that colonialism is not content merely to impose its law on the colonized country's present and future. Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance.

When we consider the resources deployed to achieve the cultural alienation so typical of the colonial period, we realize that nothing was left to chance and that the final aim of colonization was to convince the indigenous population it would save them from darkness. The result was to hammer into the heads of the indigenous population that if the colonist were to leave they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality. At the level of the unconscious, therefore, colonialism was not seeking to be perceived by the indigenous population 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.

In this context there is nothing extravagant about the demands of the colonized intellectual, simply a demand for a coherent program. The colonized intellectual who wants to put his struggle on a legitimate footing, who is intent on providing proof and accepts to bare himself in order to better display the history of his body, is fated to journey deep into the very bowels of his people.

This journey into the depths is not specifically national. The colonized intellectual who decides to combat these colonialist

lies does so on a continental scale. The past is revered. The culture which has been retrieved from the past to be displayed in all its splendor is not his national culture. Colonialism, little troubled by nuances, has always claimed that the "nigger" was a savage, not an Angolan or a Nigerian, but a "nigger." For colonialism, this vast continent was a den of savages, infested with superstitions and fanaticism, destined to be despised, cursed by God, a land of cannibals, a land of "niggers." Colonialism's condemnation is continental in scale. Colonialism's claim that the precolonial period was akin to a darkness of the human soul refers to the entire continent of Africa. The colonized's endeavors to rehabilitate himself and escape the sting of colonialism obey the same rules of logic. The colonized intellectual, steeped in Western culture and set on proving the existence of his own culture, never does so in the name of Angola or Dahomey. The culture proclaimed is African culture. When the black man, who has never felt as much a "Negro" as he has under white domination, decides to prove his culture and act as a cultivated person, he realizes that history imposes on him a terrain already mapped out, that history sets him along a very precise path and that he is expected to demonstrate the existence of a "Negro" culture.

And it is all too true that the major responsibility for this racialization of thought, or at least the way it is applied, lies with the Europeans who have never stopped placing white culture in opposition to the other noncultures. Colonialism did not think it worth its while denying one national culture after the other. Consequently the colonized's response was immediately continental in scope. In Africa, colonized literature over the last twenty years has not been a national literature but a "Negro" literature. The concept of negritude for example was the affective if not logical antithesis of that insult which the white man had leveled at the rest of humanity. This negritude, hurled against the contempt of the white man, has alone proved capable in some sectors of lifting taboos and maledictions. Because the Kenyan and

Guinean intellectuals were above all confronted with a generalized ostracism and the syncretic contempt of the colonizer, their reaction was one of self-regard and celebration. Following the unconditional affirmation of European culture came the unconditional affirmation of African culture. Generally speaking the bards of negritude would contrast old Europe versus young Africa, dull reason versus poetry, and stifling logic versus exuberant Nature; on the one side there stood rigidity, ceremony, protocol, and skepticism, and on the other, naïveté, petulance, freedom, and, indeed, luxuriance. But also irresponsibility.

The bards of negritude did not hesitate to reach beyond the borders of the continent. Black voices from America took up the refrain on a larger scale. The "black world" came into being, and Busia from Ghana, Birago Diop from Senegal, Hampaté Ba from Mali and Saint-Clair Drake from Chicago were quick to claim common ties and identical lines of thought.

This might be an appropriate time to look at the example of the Arab world. We know that most of the Arab territories came under colonial domination. Colonialism used the same tactics in these regions to inculcate the notion that the precolonial history of the indigenous population had been steeped in barbarity. The struggle for national liberation was linked to a cultural phenomenon commonly known as the awakening of Islam. The passion displayed by contemporary Arab authors in reminding their people of the great chapters of Arab history is in response to the lies of the occupier. The great names of Arabic literature have been recorded and the past of the Arab civilization has been brandished with the same zeal and ardor as that of the African civilizations. The Arab leaders have tried to revive that famous Dar el Islam, which exerted such a shining influence in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Today, at a political level, the Arab League is a concrete example of this determination to revive the legacy of the past and

carry it to a conclusion. Today Arab physicians and poets hail each other across borders in their endeavor to launch a new Arab culture, a new Arab civilization. They join forces in the name of Arabism, which is the guiding light for their thoughts. In the Arab world, however, even under colonial domination, nationalist feeling has been kept alive at an intensity unknown in Africa. As a result the Arab League shows no signs of that spontaneous solidarity between members of the group. On the contrary, paradoxically, each member endeavors to praise the achievements of his nation. Although the cultural element has been freed from that lack of differentiation that is characteristic of the African world, the Arabs do not always manage to forget their common identity when faced with an objective. Their actual cultural experience is not national but Arab. The issue at stake is not yet to secure a national culture, not yet to plunge into the groundswell of nations, but rather to pit an Arab or African culture against the universal condemnation of the colonizer. From both the Arab and African perspectives, the claims of the colonized intellectual are syncretic, continental in scope and, in the case of the Arabs, global.

This historical obligation to racialize their claims, to emphasize an African culture rather than a national culture leads the African intellectuals into a dead end. Let us take as an example the African Society for Culture. This Society was created by African intellectuals for a mutual exchange of ideas, experiences, and research. The aim of the Society was therefore to establish the existence of an African culture, to detail it nation by nation and reveal the inner dynamism of each of the national cultures. But at the same time this Society was responding to another demand: the need to take its place within the ranks of the European Society for Culture that threatened to turn into the Universal Society for Culture. At the root of this decision there was therefore the preoccupation with taking its place on an equal footing in the universal arena, armed with a culture sprung from

the very bowels of the African continent. Very quickly, however, this Society proved incapable of handling these assignments and members' behavior was reduced to window-dressing operations such as proving to the Europeans that an African culture did exist and pitting themselves against the narcissism and ostentation of the Europeans. We have demonstrated that such an attitude was normal and drew its legitimacy from the lie propagated by the European intellectuals. But the aims of this Society were to deteriorate seriously once the concept of negritude had been elaborated. The African Society for Culture was to become the Cultural Society for the Black World and was forced to include the black diaspora, i.e., the dozens of millions of blacks throughout the Americas.

The blacks who lived in the United States, Central, and Latin America in fact needed a cultural matrix to cling to. The problem they were faced with was not basically any different from that of the Africans. The whites in America had not behaved any differently to them than the white colonizers had to the Africans. We have seen how the whites were used to putting all "Negroes" in the same basket. During the First Congress of the African Society for Culture in Paris in 1956 the black Americans spontaneously considered their problems from the same standpoint as their fellow Africans. By integrating the former slaves into African civilization the African intellectuals accorded them an acceptable civil status. But gradually the black Americans realized that their existential problems differed from those faced by the Africans. The only common denominator between the blacks from Chicago and the Nigerians or Tanganyikans<sup>17</sup> was that they all defined themselves in relation to the whites. But once the initial comparisons had been made and subjective feelings had settled down, the black Americans realized that the objective problems were fundamentally different. The principle and purpose of the

<sup>17</sup> Translator's Note: Present-day Tanzanians

freedom rides whereby black and white Americans endeavor to combat racial discrimination have little in common with the heroic struggle of the Angolan people against the iniquity of Portuguese colonialism. Consequently, during the Second Congress of the African Society for Culture the black Americans decided to create the American Society for African Culture.

Negritude thus came up against its first limitation, namely, those phenomena that take into account the historicizing of men. "Negro" or "Negro-African" culture broke up because the men who set out to embody it realized that every culture is first and foremost national, and that the problems for which Richard Wright or Langston Hughes had to be on the alert were fundamentally different from those faced by Léopold Senghor or Jomo Kenyatta. Likewise certain Arab states, who had struck up the glorious hymn to an Arab renaissance, were forced to realize that their geographical position and their region's economic interdependence were more important than the revival of their past. Consequently the Arab states today are organically linked to Mediterranean societies and cultures. The reason being that these states are subject to modern pressures and new commercial channels, whereas the great trade routes of the days of Arab expansion have now disappeared. But above all there is the fact that the political regimes of certain Arab states are so heterogeneous and alien to each other that any encounter, even cultural, between these states proves meaningless.

It is clear therefore that the way the cultural problem is posed in certain colonized countries can lead to serious ambiguities. Colonialism's insistence that "niggers" have no culture, and Arabs are by nature barbaric, inevitably leads to a glorification of cultural phenomena that become continental instead of national, and singularly racialized. In Africa, the reasoning of the intellectual is Black-African or Arab-Islamic. It is not specifically national. Culture is increasingly cut off from reality. It finds safe haven in a refuge of smoldering emotions and has difficulty

cutting a straightforward path that would, nevertheless, be the only one likely to endow it with productiveness, homogeneity, and substance.

Though historically limited the fact remains that the actions of the colonized intellectual do much to support and justify the action of the politicians. And it is true the attitude of the colonized intellectual sometimes takes on the aspect of a cult or religion. But under closer analysis it clearly reflects he is only too aware that he is running the risk of severing the last remaining ties with his people. This stated belief in the existence of a national culture is in fact a burning, desperate return to anything. In order to secure his salvation, in order to escape the supremacy of white culture the colonized intellectual feels the need to return to his unknown roots and lose himself, come what may, among his barbaric people. Because he feels he is becoming alienated, in other words the living focus of contradictions which risk becoming insurmountable, the colonized intellectual wrenches himself from the quagmire which threatens to suck him down, and determined to believe what he finds, he accepts and ratifies it with heart and soul. He finds himself bound to answer for everything and for everyone. He not only becomes an advocate, he accepts being included with the others, and henceforth he can afford to laugh at his past cowardice.

This painful and harrowing wrench is, however, a necessity. Otherwise we will be faced with extremely serious psycho-affective mutilations: individuals without an anchorage, without borders, colorless, stateless, rootless, a body of angels. And it will come as no surprise to hear some colonized intellectuals state: "Speaking as a Senegalese and a Frenchman. . . . Speaking as an Algerian and a Frenchman." Stumbling over the need to assume two nationalities, two determinations, the intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, if he wants to be sincere with himself, chooses the negation of one of these two

determinations. Usually, unwilling or unable to choose, these intellectuals collect all the historical determinations which have conditioned them and place themselves in a thoroughly "universal perspective."

The reason being that the colonized intellectual has thrown himself headlong into Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating their new family environment once their psyche has formed a minimum core of reassurance, the colonized intellectual will endeavor to make European culture his own. Not content with knowing Rabelais or Diderot, Shakespeare or Edgar Allen Poe, he will stretch his mind until he identifies with them completely.

La dame n'était pas seule  
Elle avait un mari  
Un mari très comme il faut  
Qui citait Racine et Corneille  
Et Voltaire et Rousseau  
Et le Père Hugo et le jeune Musset  
Et Gide et Valéry  
Et tant d'autres encore.<sup>18</sup>

In some cases, however, at the very moment when the nationalist parties mobilize the people in the name of national independence, the colonized intellectual rejects his accomplishments, suddenly feeling them to be alienating. But this is easier said than done. The intellectual who has slipped into Western civilization through a cultural back door, who has managed to embody, or rather change bodies with, European civilization, will realize that the cultural model he would like to integrate for authenticity's

<sup>18</sup> "The lady was not alone/She had a husband/A fine, upstanding husband/Who recited Racine and Corneille/And Voltaire and Rousseau/And old Hugo and the young Musset/And Gide and Valéry/And so many others as well." René Depestre, "Face à la nuit."

sake offers little in the way of figureheads capable of standing up to comparison with the many illustrious names in the civilization of the occupier. History, of course, written by and for Westerners, may periodically enhance the image of certain episodes of the African past. But faced with his country's present-day status, lucidly and "objectively" observing the reality of the continent he would like to claim as his own, the intellectual is terrified by the void, the mindlessness, and the savagery. Yet he feels he must escape this white culture. He must look elsewhere, anywhere; for lack of a cultural stimulus comparable to the glorious panorama flaunted by the colonizer, the colonized intellectual frequently lapses into heated arguments and develops a psychology dominated by an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility. This movement of withdrawal, which first of all comes from a *petitio principii* in his psychological mechanism and physiognomy, above all calls to mind a muscular reflex, a muscular contraction.

The foregoing is sufficient to explain the style of the colonized intellectuals who make up their mind to assert this phase of liberating consciousness. A jagged style, full of imagery, for the image is the drawbridge that lets out the unconscious forces into the surrounding meadows. An energetic style, alive with rhythms bursting with life. A colorful style too, bronzed, bathed in sunlight and harsh. This style, which Westerners once found jarring, is not, as some would have it, a racial feature, but above all reflects a single-handed combat and reveals how necessary it is for the intellectual to inflict injury on himself, to actually bleed red blood and free himself from that part of his being already contaminated by the germs of decay. A swift, painful combat where inevitably the muscle had to replace the concept.

Although this approach may take him to unusual heights in the sphere of poetry, at an existential level it has often proved a dead end. When he decides to return to the routine of daily life,



after having been roused to fever pitch by rubbing shoulders with his people, whoever they were and whoever they may be, all he brings back from his adventures are terribly sterile clichés. He places emphasis on customs, traditions, and costumes, and his painful, forced search seems but a banal quest for the exotic. This is the period when the intellectuals extol every last particular of the indigenous landscape. The flowing dress of the *boubou* is regarded as sacred and shoes from Paris or Italy are shunned for Muslim slippers, *babouches*. The language of the colonizer suddenly scorches his lips. Rediscovering one's people sometimes means in this phase wanting to be a "nigger," not an exceptional "nigger," but a real "nigger," a "dirty nigger," the sort defined by the white man. Rediscovering one's people means becoming a "filthy Arab," of going as native as possible, becoming unrecognizable; it means clipping those wings which had been left to grow.

The colonized intellectual decides to draw up a list of the bad old ways characteristic of the colonial world, and hastens to recall the goodness of the people, this people who have been made guardians of truth. The scandal this approach triggers among the colonists strengthens the determination of the colonized. Once the colonists, who had relished their victory over these assimilated intellectuals, realize that these men they thought saved have begun to merge with the "nigger scum," the entire system loses its bearings. Every colonized intellectual won over, every colonized intellectual who confesses, once he decides to revert to his old ways, not only represents a setback for the colonial enterprise, but also symbolizes the pointlessness and superficiality of the work accomplished. Every colonized intellectual who crosses back over the line is a radical condemnation of the method and the regime, and the uproar it causes justifies his abdication and encourages him to persevere.

If we decide to trace these various phases of development in the works of colonized writers, three stages emerge. First, the colonized intellectual proves he has assimilated the colonizer's

culture. His works correspond point by point with those of his metropolitan counterparts. The inspiration is European and his works can be easily linked to a well-defined trend in metropolitan literature. This is the phase of full assimilation where we find Parnassians, Symbolists, and Surrealists among the colonized writers.

In a second stage, the colonized writer has his convictions shaken and decides to cast his mind back. This period corresponds approximately to the immersion we have just described. But since the colonized writer is not integrated with his people, since he maintains an outsider's relationship to them, he is content to remember. Old childhood memories will surface, old legends be reinterpreted on the basis of a borrowed aesthetic, and a concept of the world discovered under other skies. Sometimes this precombat literature is steeped in humor and allegory, at other times in anguish, malaise, death, and even nausea. Yet underneath the self-loathing, the sound of laughter can be heard.

Finally, a third stage, a combat stage where the colonized writer, after having tried to lose himself among the people, with the people, will rouse the people. Instead of letting the people's lethargy prevail, he turns into a galvanizer of the people. Combat literature, revolutionary literature, national literature emerges. During this phase a great many men and women who previously would never have thought of writing, now that they find themselves in exceptional circumstances, in prison, in the resistance or on the eve of their execution, feel the need to proclaim their nation, to portray their people and become the spokesperson of a new reality in action.

Sooner or later, however, the colonized intellectual realizes that the existence of a nation is not proved by culture, but in the people's struggle against the forces of occupation. No colonialism draws its justification from the fact that the territories it occupies are culturally nonexistent. Colonialism will never be put to shame by exhibiting unknown cultural treasures under its nose.



The colonized intellectual, at the very moment when he undertakes a work of art, fails to realize he is using techniques and a language borrowed from the occupier. He is content to cloak these instruments in a style that is meant to be national but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. The colonized intellectual who returns to his people through works of art behaves in fact like a foreigner. Sometimes he will not hesitate to use the local dialects to demonstrate his desire to be as close to the people as possible, but the ideas he expresses, the preoccupations that haunt him are in no way related to the daily lot of the men and women of his country. The culture with which the intellectual is preoccupied is very often nothing but an inventory of particularisms. Seeking to cling close to the people, he clings merely to a visible veneer. This veneer, however, is merely a reflection of a dense, subterranean life in perpetual renewal. This reification, which seems all too obvious and characteristic of the people, is in fact but the inert, already invalidated outcome of the many, and not always coherent, adaptations of a more fundamental substance beset with radical changes. Instead of seeking out this substance, the intellectual lets himself be mesmerized by these mummified fragments which, now consolidated, signify, on the contrary, negation, obsolescence, and fabrication. Culture never has the translucency of custom. Culture eminently eludes any form of simplification. In its essence it is the very opposite of custom, which is always a deterioration of culture. Seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history, but against one's people. When a people support an armed or even political struggle against a merciless colonialism, tradition changes meaning. What was a technique of passive resistance may, in this phase, be radically doomed. Traditions in an underdeveloped country undergoing armed struggle are fundamentally unstable and crisscrossed by centrifugal forces. This is why the intellectual often risks being out of step. The peoples who have waged the struggle are increasingly imperme-

able to demagoguery, and by seeking to follow them too closely, the intellectual turns out to be nothing better than a vulgar opportunist, even behind the times.

In the field of visual arts, for example, the colonized creator who at all costs wants to create a work of art of national significance confines himself to stereotyping details. These artists, despite having been immersed in modern techniques and influenced by the major contemporary trends in painting and architecture, turn their backs on foreign culture, challenge it, and, setting out in search of the true national culture, they give preference to what they think to be the abiding features of national art. But these creators forget that modes of thought, diet, modern techniques of communication, language, and dress have dialectically reorganized the mind of the people and that the abiding features that acted as safeguards during the colonial period are in the process of undergoing enormous radical transformations.

This creator, who decides to portray national truth, turns, paradoxically enough, to the past, and so looks at what is irrelevant to the present. What he aims for in his inner intentionality is the detritus of social thought, external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time. The colonized intellectual, however, who strives for cultural authenticity, must recognize that national truth is first and foremost the national reality. He must press on until he reaches that place of bubbling trepidation from which knowledge will emerge.

Before independence the colonized painter was insensitive to the national landscape. He favored therefore the nonrepresentational or, more often, specialized in still life. After independence his desire to reunite with the people confines him to a point by point representation of national reality which is flat, untroubled, motionless, reminiscent of death rather than life. The educated circles go ecstatic over such careful renditions of

truth, but we have every right to ask ourselves whether this truth is real, whether in fact it is not outmoded, irrelevant, or called into question by the heroic saga of the people hacking their way into history.

Much the same could be said about poetry. After the assimilation period of rhyming verse, the beat of the poetic drum bursts onto the scene. Poetry of revolt, but which is also analytical and descriptive. The poet must, however, understand that nothing can replace the rational and irreversible commitment on the side of the people in arms. Let us quote Depestre once again:

La dame n'était pas seule  
 Elle avait un mari  
 Un mari qui savait tout  
 Mais à parler franc qui ne savait rien  
 Parce que la culture ne va pas sans concessions  
 Une concession de sa chair et de son sang  
 Une concession de soi-même aux autres  
 Une concession qui vaut le  
 Classicisme et le romantisme  
 Et tout ce dont on abreuve notre esprit.<sup>19</sup>

The colonized poet who is concerned with creating a work of national significance, who insists on describing his people, misses his mark, because before setting pen to paper he is in no fit state to make that fundamental concession which Depestre mentions. The French poet René Char fully understood this when he reminds us that "the poem emerges from a subjective imposition and an objective choice. The poem is a moving assembly of

<sup>19</sup> "The lady was not alone/She had a husband/A husband who knew everything/But to tell the truth knew nothing/Because culture does not come without making concessions/Without conceding your flesh and blood/Without conceding yourself to others/A concession worth just as much as/Classicism or Romanticism/And all that nurtures our soul." René Depestre, "Face à la nuit."

decisive original values, in topical relation with someone whom such an undertaking brings to the foreground."<sup>20</sup>

Yes, the first duty of the colonized poet is to clearly define the people, the subject of his creation. We cannot go resolutely forward unless we first realize our alienation. We have taken everything from the other side. Yet the other side has given us nothing except to sway us in its direction through a thousand twists, except lure us, seduce us, and imprison us by ten thousand devices, by a hundred thousand tricks. To take also means on several levels being taken. It is not enough to try and disengage ourselves by accumulating proclamations and denials. It is not enough to reunite with the people in a past where they no longer exist. We must rather reunite with them in their recent counter move which will suddenly call everything into question; we must focus on that zone of hidden fluctuation where the people can be found, for let there be no mistake, it is here that their souls are crystallized and their perception and respiration transfigured.

Keita Fodeba, minister for internal affairs of the Republic of Guinea, when he was director of the African Ballet, did not trifle with the reality of the people of Guinea. He reinterpreted all the rhythmic images of his country from a revolutionary perspective. But he did more than this. In his little-known poetical work there is a constant obsession with identifying the exact historical moment of the struggle, with defining the place of action and the ideas around which the will of the people will crystallize. Here is a poem by Keita Fodeba, a genuine invitation for us to reflect on demystification and combat.

#### AFRICAN DAWN

(Guitar music)

It was dawn. The little village which had danced half the night away to the sound of the drums was slowly awakening. The shepherds dressed

<sup>20</sup> René Char, "Partage Formel."

in rags were driving their flocks down to the valley to the sound of their flutes. The young girls, carrying their water pots on their heads, wound their way in single file to the well. In the marabout's compound a group of children were chanting in unison verses from the Koran.

*(Guitar music)*

It was dawn. The combat between day and night. Exhausted from the struggle the night slowly breathed its last sigh. A few rays of sun heralding the victory of daylight hovered timid and pale on the horizon while the last stars slipped under a bank of clouds the color of flame trees in flower.

*(Guitar music)*

It was dawn. And there at the edge of the vast, purple-contoured plain was the silhouette of a man bent over as he cleared the ground: the silhouette of Naman, the peasant farmer. Every time he wielded his hoe, a frightened flock of birds flew up and swiftly made their way to the peaceful banks of the Joliba, the great Niger river. His grey cotton trousers, soaked in dew, brushed the grass on either side. Sweating, untiring, constantly bent, he skilfully worked with his hoe for his seeds had to be sown before the next rains.

*(Kora music)*

It was dawn. Dawn was still breaking. The millet birds flitted among the foliage announcing the coming day. A child carrying over his shoulder a small bag of arrows was running out of breath along the damp track over the plain in the direction of Naman. "Brother Naman," he called, "the head of the village wants you under the palaver tree."

*(Kora music)*

Surprised at such an early summons, Naman laid down his hoe and walked towards the village which now shone in the glow of the rising sun. The elders, looking more solemn than ever, were already seated. Beside them was a man in uniform, a district guard quietly smoking his pipe unperturbed.

*(Kora music)*

Naman sat down on a sheepskin. The griot of the village head stood up to convey to the assembly the elders' decision: "The whites have sent a district guard to request that a man from the village be sent to fight in the war in their country. After deliberating, the elders have decided to send the young man who best represents our race so that he can prove

to the white man the courage which we Mandingos have always been known for."

*(Guitar music)*

Naman, whose imposing build and muscular frame were the subject of nightly songs by the young girls of the village, was chosen unanimously. Gentle Kadia, his young wife, distraught by the news, suddenly stopped her pounding, placed the mortar under the granary, and without saying a word, shut herself up in her hut to weep in muffled sobs over her misfortune. Since death had taken her first husband, she could not believe that the whites would take Naman in whom she had placed all her hopes.

*(Guitar music)*

The next morning, in spite of her tears and lamentations, the solemn beat of the war drums accompanied Naman to the little village harbor where he boarded a barge headed for the district capital. That night, instead of dancing in the open as usual, the young girls came to keep watch in Naman's antechamber where they told their tales around a wood fire until morning.

*(Guitar music)*

Several months went by without news from Naman. Little Kadia became so worried she went to consult the fetish priest in the neighboring village. Even the elders met in secret counsel on the subject, but nothing came of it.

*(Kora music)*

At last one day a letter arrived addressed to Kadia. Concerned about her husband's situation she left that night and after walking for many long hours arrived in the district capital where a translator read her letter.

Naman was in North Africa in good health and was asking for news of the harvest, the fishing festival, the dances, the palaver tree and the village . . .

*(Balafon)*

That night the old women of the village allowed the young Kadia to attend their traditional evening palaver in the compound of their most senior member. The village head, overjoyed at the news, offered a huge banquet to all the beggars in the neighborhood.

*(Balafon)*

Several months went by once more and everyone became anxious again for there was still no news of Naman. Kadia was planning on going

to consult the fetish priest again when she received a second letter. After Corsica and Italy Naman was now in Germany and was proud of having been decorated.

*(Balafon)*

The next time it was just a card which said that Naman had been taken prisoner by the Germans. This news threw the village into consternation. The elders held counsel and decided that henceforth Naman was authorized to dance the Douga, the sacred dance of the vulture, reserved for those who had performed an exceptional feat, the dance of the Mandingo emperors whose every step represents a period in the history of Mali. Kadia found consolation in seeing her husband raised to the dignity of a national hero.

*(Guitar music)*

Time went by. . . . One year followed the next . . . Naman was still in Germany. He no longer wrote.

*(Guitar music)*

One day the head of the village received word from Dakar that Naman would soon be home.

Immediately the drums began to beat. They danced and sang until dawn. The young girls composed new songs to welcome him for the old ones dedicated to him made no mention of the Douga, that famous dance of the Mandingos.

*(Drums)*

But one month later Corporal Moussa, a great friend of Naman's, sent this tragic letter to Kadia: "It was dawn. We were at Tiaroye-sur-Mer. In the course of a major dispute between us and our white chiefs in Dakar, a bullet struck Naman. He lies in Senegalese soil."

*(Guitar music)*

In fact it was dawn. The first rays of the sun lightly brushing the surface of the sea tipped the little foam-flecked waves with gold. Stirred by the breeze the palm trees gently bent their trunks towards the ocean as if sickened by this morning's battle. The noisy flocks of crows cawed to the neighborhood the news of the tragedy which had bloodied the dawn at Tiaroye. . . . And in the scorched blue of the sky, right above the body of Naman, a gigantic vulture slowly hovered. It seemed to say to him: "Naman! You have not danced the dance that bears my name. Others will dance it."

*(Kora music)*

The reason I have chosen this long poem is because of its undeniable pedagogical value. Here things are clear. It is a meticulous account that develops progressively. Understanding the poem is not only an intellectual act, but also a political one. To understand this poem is to understand the role we have to play, to identify our approach and prepare to fight. There is not one colonized subject who will not understand the message in this poem. Naman, hero of the battlefields of Europe, Naman who vouched for the power and the continuity of the metropolis, Naman mowed down by the police at the very moment he returns home; this is Sétif in 1945, Fort-de-France, Saigon, Dakar, and Lagos. All the "niggers" and all the "filthy Arabs" who fought to defend France's liberty or British civilization will recognize themselves in this poem by Keita Fodeba.

But Keita Fodeba sees further. After having utilized the native peoples on its battle fields, colonialism uses them as veterans in its colonies to break up the independence movement. The veterans associations in the colonies are some of the most anti-nationalist forces that exist. The poet Keita Fodeba was preparing the minister for internal affairs of the Republic of Guinea to thwart the plots organized by French colonialism. It was in fact with the help of the veterans that the French secret service intended, among other things, to bring down the newly independent Guinea.

When the colonized intellectual writing for his people uses the past he must do so with the intention of opening up the future, of spurring them into action and fostering hope. But in order to secure hope, in order to give it substance, he must take part in the action and commit himself body and soul to the national struggle. You can talk about anything you like, but when it comes to talking about that one thing in a man's life that involves opening up new horizons, enlightening your country and standing tall alongside your own people, then muscle power is required.

The colonized intellectual is responsible not to his national culture, but to the nation as a whole, whose culture is, after all, but one aspect. The colonized intellectual should not be concerned with choosing how or where he decides to wage the national struggle. To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation. For example, all the men and women fighting French colonialism in Algeria with their bare hands are no strangers to the national culture of Algeria. The Algerian national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine, and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions.

We should not therefore be content to delve into the people's past to find concrete examples to counter colonialism's endeavors to distort and depreciate. We must work and struggle in step with the people so as to shape the future and prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already sprouting. National culture is no folklore where an abstract populism is convinced it has uncovered the popular truth. It is not some congealed mass of noble gestures, in other words less and less connected with the reality of the people. National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong. National culture in the underdeveloped countries, therefore, must lie at the very heart of the liberation struggle these countries are waging. The African intellectuals who are still fighting in the name of "Negro-African" culture and who continue to organize conferences dedicated to the unity of that culture should realize that they can do little more than compare coins and sarcophagi.

There is no common destiny between the national cultures of Guinea and Senegal, but there is a common destiny between the nations of Guinea and Senegal dominated by the same

French colonialism. If we want the national culture of Senegal to resemble the national culture of Guinea it is not enough for the leaders of the two countries to address the problems of independence, labor unions, and the economy from a similar perspective. Even then they would not be absolutely identical since the people and the leaders operate at a different pace.

There can be no such thing as rigorously identical cultures. To believe one can create a black culture is to forget oddly enough that "Negroes" are in the process of disappearing, since those who created them are witnessing the demise of their economic and cultural supremacy.<sup>21</sup> There will be no such thing as black culture because no politician imagines he has the vocation to create a black republic. The problem is knowing what role these men have in store for their people, the type of social relations they will establish and their idea of the future of humanity. That is what matters. All else is hot air and mystification.

In 1959 the African intellectuals meeting in Rome constantly spoke of unity. But one of the leading bards of this cultural unity is Jacques Rabemananjara, today a minister in the government of Madagascar, who toed his government's line to vote against the Algerian people at the United Nations General Assembly. Rabe, if he had been sincere with himself, should have resigned from the government and denounced those men who claim to represent the will of the Malagasy people. The ninety thousand dead of Madagascar did not authorize Rabe to oppose the aspirations of the Algerian people at the UN General Assembly.

<sup>21</sup> At the last school prize-giving ceremony in Dakar, the president of the Republic of Senegal, Léopold Senghor, announced that negritude should be included in the school curriculum. If this decision is an exercise in cultural history, it can only be approved. But if it is a matter of shaping black consciousness it is simply turning one's back on history which has already noted the fact that most "Negroes" have ceased to exist.

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“Negro-African” culture grows deeper through the people’s struggle, and not through songs, poems, or folklore. Senghor, who is also a member of the African Society for Culture and who has worked with us on this issue of African culture, had no scruples either about instructing his delegation to back the French line on Algeria. Support for “Negro-African” culture and the cultural unity of Africa is first contingent on an unconditional support for the people’s liberation struggle. One cannot expect African culture to advance unless one contributes realistically to the creation of the conditions necessary for this culture, i.e., the liberation of the continent.

Once again, no speech, no declaration on culture will detract us from our fundamental tasks which are to liberate the national territory; constantly combat the new forms of colonialism; and, as leaders, stubbornly refuse to indulge in self-satisfaction at the top.

#### MUTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR NATIONAL CULTURE AND LIBERATION STRUGGLES

The sweeping, leveling nature of colonial domination was quick to dislocate in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people. The denial of a national reality, the new legal system imposed by the occupying power, the marginalization of the indigenous population and their customs by colonial society, expropriation, and the systematic enslavement of men and women, all contributed to this cultural obliteration.

Three years ago at our first congress I demonstrated that in a colonial situation any dynamism is fairly rapidly replaced by a reification of attitudes. The cultural sphere is marked out by safety railings and signposts, every single one of them defense mechanisms of the most elementary type, comparable in more ways than one to the simple instinct of self-preservation. This

period is interesting because the oppressor is no longer content with the objective nonexistence of the conquered nation and culture. Every effort is made to make the colonized confess the inferiority of their culture, now reduced to a set of instinctive responses, to acknowledge the unreality of their nation and, in the last extreme, to admit the disorganized, half-finished nature of their own biological makeup.

The reactions of the colonized to this situation vary. Whereas the masses maintain intact traditions totally incongruous with the colonial situation, whereas the style of artisanship ossifies into an increasingly stereotyped formalism, the intellectual hurls himself frantically into the frenzied acquisition of the occupier’s culture, making sure he denigrates his national culture, or else confines himself to making a detailed, methodical, zealous, and rapidly sterile inventory of it.

What both reactions have in common is that they both result in unacceptable contradictions. Renegade or substantialist, the colonized subject is ineffectual precisely because the colonial situation has not been rigorously analyzed. The colonial situation brings national culture virtually to a halt. There is no such thing as national culture, national cultural events, innovations, or reforms within the context of colonial domination, and there never will be. There are scattered instances of a bold attempt to revive a cultural dynamism, and reshape themes, forms, and tones. The immediate, tangible, and visible effects of these minor convulsions is nil. But if we follow the consequences to their very limit there are signs that the veil is being lifted from the national consciousness, oppression is being challenged and there is hope for the liberation struggle.

National culture under colonial domination is a culture under interrogation whose destruction is sought systematically. Very quickly it becomes a culture condemned to clandestinity. This notion of clandestinity can immediately be perceived in the reactions of the occupier who interprets this complacent attachment

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to traditions as a sign of loyalty to the national spirit and a refusal to submit. This persistence of cultural expression condemned by colonial society is already a demonstration of nationhood. But such a demonstration refers us back to the laws of inertia. No offensive has been launched, no relations redefined. There is merely a desperate clinging to a nucleus that is increasingly shriveled, increasingly inert, and increasingly hollow.

After one or two centuries of exploitation the national cultural landscape has radically shriveled. It has become an inventory of behavioral patterns, traditional costumes, and miscellaneous customs. Little movement can be seen. There is no real creativity, no ebullience. Poverty, national oppression, and cultural repression are one and the same. After a century of colonial domination culture becomes rigid in the extreme, congealed, and petrified. The atrophy of national reality and the death throes of national culture feed on one another. This is why it becomes vital to monitor the development of this relationship during the liberation struggle. Cultural denial, the contempt for any national demonstration of emotion or dynamism and the banning of any type of organization help spur aggressive behavior in the colonized. But this pattern of behavior is a defensive reaction, nonspecific, anarchic, and ineffective. Colonial exploitation, poverty, and endemic famine increasingly force the colonized into open, organized rebellion. Gradually, imperceptibly, the need for a decisive confrontation imposes itself and is eventually felt by the great majority of the people. Tensions emerge where previously there were none. International events, the collapse of whole sections of colonial empires and the inherent contradictions of the colonial system stimulate and strengthen combativity, motivating and invigorating the national consciousness.

These new tensions, which are present at every level of the colonial system, have repercussions on the cultural front. In literature, for example, there is relative overproduction. Once a pale imitation of the colonizer's literature, indigenous production now

shows greater diversity and a will to particularize. Mainly consumer during the period of oppression, the intelligentsia turns productive. This literature is at first confined to the genre of poetry and tragedy. Then novels, short stories, and essays are tackled. There seems to be a kind of internal organization, a law of expression, according to which poetic creativity fades as the objectives and methods of the liberation struggle become clearer. There is a fundamental change of theme. In fact, less and less do we find those bitter, desperate recriminations, those loud, violent outbursts that, after all, reassure the occupier. In the previous period, the colonialists encouraged such endeavors and facilitated their publication. The occupier, in fact, likened these scathing denunciations, outpourings of misery, and heated words to an act of catharsis. Encouraging these acts would, in a certain way, avoid dramatization and clear the atmosphere.

But such a situation cannot last. In fact the advances made by national consciousness among the people modify and clarify the literary creation of the colonized intellectual. The people's staying power stimulates the intellectual to transcend the lament. Complaints followed by indictments give way to appeals. Then comes the call for revolt. The crystallization of the national consciousness will not only radically change the literary genres and themes but also create a completely new audience. Whereas the colonized intellectual started out by producing work exclusively with the oppressor in mind—either in order to charm him or to denounce him by using ethnic or subjectivist categories—he gradually switches over to addressing himself to his people.

It is only from this point onward that one can speak of a national literature. Literary creation addresses and clarifies typically nationalist themes. This is combat literature in the true sense of the word, in the sense that it calls upon a whole people to join in the struggle for the existence of the nation. Combat literature, because it informs the national consciousness, gives it shape and contours, and opens up new, unlimited horizons. Combat

literature, because it takes charge, because it is resolve situated in historical time.

At another level, oral literature, tales, epics, and popular songs, previously classified and frozen in time, begin to change. The storytellers who recited inert episodes revive them and introduce increasingly fundamental changes. There are attempts to update battles and modernize the types of struggle, the heroes' names, and the weapons used. The method of allusion is increasingly used. Instead of "a long time ago," they substitute the more ambiguous expression "What I am going to tell you happened somewhere else, but it could happen here today or perhaps tomorrow." In this respect the case of Algeria is significant. From 1952-53 on, its storytellers, grown stale and dull, radically changed both their methods of narration and the content of their stories. Once scarce, the public returned in droves. The epic, with its standardized forms, reemerged. It has become an authentic form of entertainment that once again has taken on a cultural value. Colonialism knew full well what it was doing when it began systematically arresting these storytellers after 1955.

The people's encounter with this new song of heroic deeds brings an urgent breath of excitement, arouses forgotten muscular tensions and develops the imagination. Every time the storyteller narrates a new episode, the public is treated to a real invocation. The existence of a new type of man is revealed to the public. The present is no longer turned inward but channeled in every direction. The storyteller once again gives free rein to his imagination, innovates, and turns creator. It even happens that unlikely characters for such a transformation, social misfits such as outlaws or drifters, are rediscovered and rehabilitated. Close attention should be paid to the emergence of the imagination and the inventiveness of songs and folk tales in a colonized country. The storyteller responds to the expectations of the people by trial and error and searches for new models, national models, apparently on his own, but in fact with the support of

his audience. Comedy and farce disappear or else lose their appeal. As for drama, it is no longer the domain of the intellectual's tormented conscience. No longer characterized by despair and revolt, it has become the people's daily lot, it has become part of an action in the making or already in progress.

In artisanship, the congealed, petrified forms loosen up. Wood carving, for example, which turned out set faces and poses by the thousands, starts to diversify. The expressionless or tormented mask comes to life, and the arms are raised upwards in a gesture of action. Compositions with two, three, or five figures emerge. An avalanche of amateurs and dissidents encourages the traditional schools to innovate. This new stimulus in this particular cultural sector very often goes unnoticed. Yet its contribution to the national struggle is vital. By bringing faces and bodies to life, by taking the group set on a single socle as creative subject, the artist inspires concerted action.

The awakening national consciousness has had a somewhat similar effect in the sphere of ceramics and pottery. Formalism is abandoned. Jugs, jars, and trays are reshaped, at first only slightly and then quite radically. Colors, once restricted in number, governed by laws of traditional harmony, flood back, reflecting the effects of the revolutionary upsurge. Certain ochers, certain blues that were apparently banned for eternity in a given cultural context, emerge unscathed. Likewise, the taboo of representing the human face, typical of certain clearly defined regions according to sociologists, is suddenly lifted. The metropolitan anthropologists and experts are quick to note these changes and denounce them all, referring rather to a codified artistic style and culture developing in tune with the colonial situation. The colonialist experts do not recognize these new forms and rush to the rescue of indigenous traditions. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of indigenous style. A memorable example, and one that takes on particular significance because it

does not quite involve a colonial reality, was the reaction of white jazz fans when after the Second World War new styles such as bebop established themselves. For them jazz could only be the broken, desperate yearning of an old "Negro," five whiskeys under his belt, bemoaning his own misfortune and the racism of the whites. As soon as he understands himself and apprehends the world differently, as soon as he elicits a glimmer of hope and forces the racist world to retreat, it is obvious he will blow his horn to his heart's content and his husky voice will ring out loud and clear. The new jazz styles are not only born out of economic competition. They are one of the definite consequences of the inevitable, though gradual, defeat of the Southern universe in the USA. And it is not unrealistic to think that in fifty years or so the type of jazz lament hiccuped by a poor, miserable "Negro" will be defended by only those whites believing in a frozen image of a certain type of relationship and a certain form of negritude.

We would also uncover the same transformations, the same progress and the same eagerness if we enquired into the fields of dance, song, rituals, and traditional ceremonies. Well before the political or armed struggle, a careful observer could sense and feel in these arts the pulse of a fresh stimulus and the coming combat. Unusual forms of expression, original themes no longer invested with the power of invocation but the power to rally and mobilize with the approaching conflict in mind. Everything conspires to stimulate the colonized's sensibility, and to rule out and reject attitudes of inertia or defeat. By imparting new meaning and dynamism to artisanship, dance, music, literature, and the oral epic, the colonized subject restructures his own perception. The world no longer seems doomed. Conditions are ripe for the inevitable confrontation.

We have witnessed the emergence of a new energy in the cultural sphere. We have seen that this energy, these new forms, are linked to the maturing of the national consciousness, and now

become increasingly objectivized and institutionalized. Hence the need for nationhood at all costs.

A common mistake, hardly defensible, moreover, is to attempt cultural innovations and reassert the value of indigenous culture within the context of colonial domination. Hence we arrive at a seemingly paradoxical proposition: In a colonized country, nationalism in its most basic, most rudimentary, and undifferentiated form is the most forceful and effective way of defending national culture. A culture is first and foremost the expression of a nation, its preferences, its taboos, and its models. Other taboos, other values, other models are formed at every level of the entire society. National culture is the sum of all these considerations, the outcome of tensions internal and external to society as a whole and its multiple layers. In the colonial context, culture, when deprived of the twin supports of the nation and the state, perishes and dies. National liberation and the resurrection of the state are the preconditions for the very existence of a culture.

The nation is not only a precondition for culture, its ebullition, its perpetual renewal and maturation. It is a necessity. First of all it is the struggle for nationhood that unlocks culture and opens the doors of creation. Later on it is the nation that will provide culture with the conditions and framework for expression. The nation satisfies all those indispensable requirements for culture which alone can give it credibility, validity, dynamism, and creativity. It is also the national character that makes culture permeable to other cultures and enables it to influence and penetrate them. That which does not exist can hardly have an effect on reality or even influence it. The restoration of the nation must therefore give life in the most biological sense of the term to national culture.

We have thus traced the increasingly essential fissuring of the old cultural strata, and on the eve of the decisive struggle for

national liberation, grasped the new forms of expression and the flight of the imagination.

There now remains one fundamental question. What is the relationship between the struggle, the political or armed conflict, and culture? During the conflict is culture put on hold? Is the national struggle a cultural manifestation? Must we conclude that the liberation struggle, though beneficial for culture a posteriori, is in itself a negation of culture? In other words, is the liberation struggle a cultural phenomenon?

We believe the conscious, organized struggle undertaken by a colonized people in order to restore national sovereignty constitutes the greatest cultural manifestation that exists. It is not solely the success of the struggle that consequently validates and energizes culture; culture does not go into hibernation during the conflict. The development and internal progression of the actual struggle expand the number of directions in which culture can go and hint at new possibilities. The liberation struggle does not restore to national culture its former values and configurations. This struggle, which aims at a fundamental redistribution of relations between men, cannot leave intact either the form or substance of the people's culture. After the struggle is over, there is not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized.

This new humanity, for itself and for others, inevitably defines a new humanism. This new humanism is written into the objectives and methods of the struggle. A struggle, which mobilizes every level of society, which expresses the intentions and expectations of the people, and which is not afraid to rely on their support almost entirely, will invariably triumph. The merit of this type of struggle is that it achieves the optimal conditions for cultural development and innovation. Once national liberation has been accomplished under these conditions, there is none of that tiresome cultural indecisiveness we find in certain newly

independent countries, because the way a nation is born and functions exerts a fundamental influence on culture. A nation born of the concerted action of the people, which embodies the actual aspirations of the people and transforms the state, depends on exceptionally inventive cultural manifestations for its very existence.

The colonized who are concerned for their country's culture and wish to give it a universal dimension should not place their trust in a single principle—that independence is inevitable and automatically inscribed in the people's consciousness—in order to achieve this aim. National liberation as objective is one thing, the methods and popular components of the struggle are another. We believe that the future of culture and the richness of a national culture are also based on the values that inspired the struggle for freedom.

And now the moment has come to denounce certain pharisees. Humanity, some say, has got past the stage of nationalist claims. The time has come to build larger political unions, and consequently the old-fashioned nationalists should correct their mistakes. We believe on the contrary that the mistake, heavy with consequences, would be to miss out on the national stage. If culture is the expression of the national consciousness, I shall have no hesitation in saying, in the case in point, that national consciousness is the highest form of culture.

Self-awareness does not mean closing the door on communication. Philosophy teaches us on the contrary that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is alone capable of giving us an international dimension. This question of national consciousness and national culture takes on a special dimension in Africa. The birth of national consciousness in Africa strictly correlates with an African consciousness. The responsibility of the African toward his national culture is also a responsibility toward "Negro-African" culture. This joint responsibility does not rest upon a metaphysical principle but mindfulness of a

simple rule which stipulates that any independent nation in an Africa where colonialism still lingers is a nation surrounded, vulnerable, and in permanent danger.

If man is judged by his acts, then I would say that the most urgent thing today for the African intellectual is the building of his nation. If this act is true, i.e., if it expresses the manifest will of the people, if it reflects the restlessness of the African peoples, then it will necessarily lead to the discovery and advancement of universalizing values. Far then from distancing it from other nations, it is the national liberation that puts the nation on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness establishes itself and thrives. And this dual emergence, in fact, is the unique focus of all culture.

*Paper presented at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Rome, 1959.*

## Colonial War and Mental Disorders

But the war goes on. And for many years to come we shall be bandaging the countless and sometimes indelible wounds inflicted on our people by the colonialist onslaught.

Imperialism, which today is waging war against a genuine struggle for human liberation, sows seeds of decay here and there that must be mercilessly rooted out from our land and from our minds.

We shall deal here with the problem of mental disorders born out of the national war of liberation waged by the Algerian people.

Perhaps the reader will find these notes on psychiatry out of place or untimely in a book like this. There is absolutely nothing we can do about that.

We had no control over the fact that the psychiatric phenomena, the mental and behavioral disorders emerging from this war, have loomed so large among the perpetrators of "pacification" and the "pacified" population. The truth is that colonization, in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals. Since 1954 we have drawn the attention of French and international psychiatrists in scientific works to the difficulty of "curing" a colonized subject correctly, in other words