

# *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*

*Jean-Paul Sartre*

*Translated by*

Azzedine Haddour,

Steve Brewer and

Terry McWilliams



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## *A Victory \**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here it is.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 National Army of Liberation supporting the FLN.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## *The Sleepwalkers* \*

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

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

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

have retained their revolutionary strength. Where is ours?

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

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

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

19 February 1962

## *The Wretched of the Earth* \*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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