

The Imperial Frenchman

'For several days and nights torrential rain fell on the mountain and the muddy water raced down its sides. This morning, a whole section of the cliff face fell and buried an entire village ... ' This kind of story can often be found in the press of any nation. It is, however, not the whole story; the catastrophe had indeed been caused by the flood but geologists will tell you that unseen fissures in the cliff had been developing over hundreds of years and that the flood had carried away rock already loosened and fragmented.

The massive plebiscite - 80% - which de Gaulle gained on the 28th September in France in favour of an authoritarian constitution, instituting a kind of elective monarchy without any relation to what is called democracy, either in the Old or the New world, occurred in the same way. Not one Frenchman in a thousand had read this constitution and very often during debates in the only meetings organised during the campaign - by those in favour of voting 'No' - those who defended it declared in good faith 'I don't know what's in the constitution, but I have confidence in General de Gaulle.' To get to this point it certainly needed a flood of Gaullist propaganda. From the 1st June, and even more after the spokesman of Algerian fascism, Jacques Soustelle, took over control of the radio, television and propaganda in general, the French people have been subjected, hour by hour, to the pressure of propaganda which never ceased to remind them of the gulf into which they would fall if by any chance the 'Noes' won, and, on the other hand, of the reassuring advantages of the General's paternal government.

In addition, the large-circulation Parisian and provincial press is in the hands of financial groups supporting de Gaulle with all their power. The big evening daily *France-Soir* belongs to the Hachette Book and Distribution Trust, which had regained all its

power after being broken up during the liberation because of its pro-Vichy attitude; another evening paper *Paris-Press* and the big weekly *Jour de France* belong to the military aircraft industrialist, former Gaullist, R.P.F.¹ deputy, and financial supporter of de Gaulle's activity, Marcel Dassault - a man who has everything to gain from the development of militarism and rearmament in France. The other big weekly *Match* and the controlling share of *Figaro* belong to wool industrialist M. Prouvoust - founder of the pre-war *Paris-Soir* who for many years after the war was not allowed to control a periodical because of his attitude under the occupation. The most violently reactionary daily in Paris, *L'Aurore* belongs to the textile industrialist, Marcel Boussac, for whom the projected colonial markets of Africa are of the utmost importance ... and so on. I could go on for page after page in this way describing the similar situation in the provincial press. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in the support which the big capitalist press has given, with all its might, to the work of the radio, television and newsreels directed or controlled by M. Soustelle.

This torrent of propaganda played upon a confused patriotism - the walls of all the towns of France were covered with enormous posters, paid for out of taxation, and carrying these simple words - 'Yes to France' - i.e. 'if you vote "No" you are a bad Frenchman'. A number of non-communist left-wing organisations campaigned for 'No' - the U.G.S. (Left Socialist Union), a section of the Radical Party grouped around Mendes-France, the minority socialists led by Edouard Depreux, the 'Reconstruction' group within the Christian trade unions, and above all, the very powerful National Union of Teachers. But the press, in its presentation of this campaign, always tended either to ignore, or to minimise, these attitudes. As for the radio and television - these only presented the communist attitude, attempting in this way to persuade the French that those who voted 'No' could only be communists. At a meeting at which I spoke, in a town in the north of France, the organisers themselves were so impressed by this manufactured atmosphere, that the meeting was entitled 'Can you vote "No" if you are not a Communist?'

Lastly, and above all, the propaganda, both of the Government and of the big capitalist press, was essentially based on the enormous danger that would accompany a victory for the 'Noes', who were, in fact, already overtaken by events. De Gaulle had, in effect, destroyed the Fourth Republic at the end of May, 1958 (or, if you like, it had allowed itself to be destroyed). In any case, the regime no longer existed, and when de Gaulle said 'I will return my powers to the Assembly' (in the case of a victory for 'No'), he didn't have any need to add, as in fact he did, 'and you will have all the old mistakes again'. What he said, in effect, meant that he

would return his powers to a *void*, to a regime which no longer existed, to an Assembly which no longer sat and which was no longer regarded by anybody as the centre of power.

His friends in the press, on radio, and television were not wrong to add 'and there will be a civil war - parachutists and Algerian fascists will pour into the country'. Algerian military fascism received a powerful impetus on the 15th and 19th May because of de Gaulle's appeals which sapped the moral power of the Pflimlin government at the precise moment when the constitution of this government had thrown the Algerian military rebels into disarray. In the last analysis, de Gaulle had systematically used the overshadowing menace of these rebels first, in order to gain power, and then to blackmail Parliament into endorsing his constitution and submitting it to a Referendum. De Gaulle, with Machiavellian sleight-of-hand, was able to give the impression to the public that he was not closely tied to the rebels, while abandoning to the Algerian fascists the essential levers of propaganda. This allowed him to play a constant double game - on the one hand, inflating the menace of fascism and, on the other, posing as a mediator between this menace and the population.

This process is astonishingly similar to that which allowed Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, on the 20th December, 1851, also to impose his own constitution and to construct a regime, authoritarian at the outset, and soon to become Imperial, by means of a plebiscite which won 7,350,000 votes against 600,000 - an even greater majority than today. Victor Hugo said of this plebiscite, '*The first candidate was Louis Napoleon, the second candidate was the abyss.*' Louis Napoleon, like de Gaulle, knew how to paint the abyss in the blackest colours. He, too, proposed to return his powers, if he failed, to an Assembly which no longer really existed. He held out the spectre of anarchy, just as the Gaullists held out the spectre of civil war or of 'communism'.

It must also be said that the French people - civilised, peaceful, enjoying a high standard of living - constitute today well-prepared ground for such blackmail. The war of 1914-18 and the enormous bloodshed which it caused, the war of 1939-45, the German occupation and the physical losses and moral crisis which it entailed, made the Country afraid of further upheavals. In 1938 a crushing majority in parliament had approved the capitulation of Munich. Then, too, principles were sacrificed to buy peace, and there is no doubt that, at the moment of crisis, the capitulation was approved by the majority of the people. In 1940 the liquidation of the Third Republic by Marshall Petain was also approved by a crushing parliamentary majority, and it is quite probable that the lassitude of the country and the fear of total occupation were such that Petain would have been approved by an immense popular majority»

if a plebiscite had been taken. This does not mean that the French are not capable of courage. In a prosperous and happy country, however, there is never more than a minority of individuals - for example, in the French resistance - who are prepared to throw over their own comfort for the sake of principle and to run risks which seem to them preferable to capitulation. The majority of citizens are incapable of making such decisions and it is only when these citizens are thrown, willy-nilly, into the struggle that they rediscover the courage natural to themselves.

The result of the referendum of the 28th September was therefore written in advance in the capitulation of the Fourth Republic during May. In addition, the intellectual and moral defeatism, which the 'Yes' of the referendum constituted, had another consequence - it led, within two months, to the most reactionary parliament that France has known since the last century. This is simply explained. Those citizens who had delivered up their political destiny into the hands of de Gaulle, voted, quite naturally, for the 'most Gaullist' candidates, i.e., for the men of the large fascist and neo-fascist party of Soustelle, the Union for the New Republic. This reactionary upsurge would, by itself, have changed the character of the new Assembly, but the effect was enormously multiplied by the electoral system which encouraged the elimination of the Communists and the non-Communist Left, and the election of a completely unbalanced Assembly, where the Right and the extreme Right occupy two-thirds of the seats while they are, even today, far from representing half of the electorate.

This analysis goes some way to explain the Gaullist flood, which has overwhelmed classical democracy in France. However, to take up the metaphor with which I began this article, this flood overwhelmed the land easily because it was already water-logged. If the plebiscite follows naturally and necessarily upon the legal *coup d'etat* of the 1st June, 1958, the latter is itself a consequence of the internal collapse of the Fourth Republic and, more particularly, of a break-up due to the incapacity of the French to face the inevitable loss of their colonies.

French ministerial crises are often something like the superficial, external symptoms of an internal illness - they are not the illness itself - and this is what we really want to diagnose. Let us go back through the years. The Gaillard ministry fell over the Sakhiet affair. The right, which, in the person of the Gaullist Minister of War, Chambam-Delmas, was directly responsible for this massacre had, under the leadership of M. Jacques Soustelle, destroyed the Gaillard government for not resisting the pressure of international opinion. The preceding government, that of M. Bourges-Maunory, fell over the 'loi-cadre'. Here too the Right had agreed to try and mislead international opinion as to the 'democratic' intentions of

France in Algeria by fabricating a kind of semi-autonomous statute, designed essentially for use as propaganda at the United Nations - but it immediately demonstrated the most violent hostility when, under the pressure of French diplomats and Allied ambassadors, the Government tried to put into this 'outline' some minimum reforms, which would have won support for the French position at UNO. The preceding ministry, that of Guy Mollet, also fell over Algeria, or rather over economic problems linked with the Algerian war. The SFIO had accepted, from the beginning of 1956, the continuation of this war, in order to maintain its alliance with the Right. It was, however, electorally dangerous for it to pay for the war from taxation falling upon wage-earners. This is why its Minister of Finance, M. Ramadier, tried to find the necessary resources by means of a tax on private industry. French capitalism, which had shown itself up to this point full of sympathy for the Socialists who were carrying on the war on its behalf, reacted immediately and threatening articles appeared in the major periodicals of the financial world, announcing the imminent fall of Guy Mollet. This followed a few days later.

The electoral defeat of Edgar Faure on the 2nd January, 1956, also occurred because of the Algerian war. Mendes-France fell in February, 1955, for having tried to resolve, in liberal terms, the Moroccan and Tunisian problems. The war in Indo-China entered directly or indirectly into all the preceding governmental crises from 1946 onwards, either because of the disillusion which followed the absence of promised military success, or because of the increasingly heavy economic load which fell upon the nation, or because of the corruption of political life by the rackets linked to the war in Indo-China - such as the Piastres affair.

Colonial conflicts have modified the general direction of French politics and the equilibrium of the political forces in France in, perhaps, an even more profound manner. After May, 1947, the break between the Communist Party and the political forces 'of the Resistance' - essentially the Socialist Party, the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. - had forced the former partners of the Communist Party to seek other alliances situated, naturally, further to the Right. As a result the French Right reappeared on the political scene and was able to impose its social, economic and international policy on the M.R.P. and the Socialist Party, forcing the former further and further to the Right, alienating from the latter most of its working-class elements and reducing its influence among the masses. This break within the tripartite coalition (M.R.P., S.F.I.O. Communists) was partly a result of the failure of the Moscow conference, the rapid widening of the gap between the war-time allies, the Marshall Plan, which implied the exclusion of Communists from the governments of Europe, and of the creation of

the Cominform, whose reaction to the Marshall Plan led to a hardening in the attitudes of Communist Parties. But the break, and in any case its violence, was also so far as France is concerned, the consequence of the war in Indo-China, which was implacably pursued by the M.R.P. and S.F.I.O. but which the Communist parliamentary group and its ministers could neither support nor tolerate without risking the loss of a great part of its influence over the working-class.

The tripartite coalition might well have broken up even without the war in Indo-China. But it would probably not have done so with such violence, culminating in the abnormal insurrectional strikes at the end of 1947, the split in the C.G.T., the development of the French Communist Party into the most rigidly Stalinist of the western communist parties, and the constant increase in bourgeois influence within the S.F.I.O. and its evolution into a hostage of the Right. In any event, the Communist Party would not have had the almost total monopoly of the struggle against the war in Indo-China, nor the opportunity to have its other errors overlooked. The Socialist Party would have been less discredited, the Right less powerful, and the development of French politics, over the next ten years, might have been quite different.

Even within the parties of the centre-Left, colonial conflict induced a deep intellectual and moral deterioration and stimulated their drift to the Right. Georges Bidault, formerly president of the National Council of the Resistance, a supporter during the war of a close alliance with the Communists, became, progressively, from 1947 onward, the leader of the most chauvinist and reactionary section of the M.R.P. The fact that he was responsible, at least technically, for the outbreak of war in Indo-China, through the bombardment of Haiphong in November, 1946, certainly played a great part in his personal evolution, as well as that of his party.

General de Gaulle's own part in the destruction of the great alliance of the Resistance must not be forgotten. His name was linked with the attempt in 1945 to resuscitate a scarcely camouflaged colonialism. He certainly carries some of the responsibility for the Constantine massacres of 1945, by his encouragement of the extremists in the colonial administration, and by his refusal to conduct any inquiries which might have determined the responsibility for these massacres. In Indo-China, he insisted on Admiral d'Agenlieu who, from the moment he arrived in Saigon, instigated a policy of reconquest which led to the outbreak of war. Finally, later in 1946, after de Gaulle had resigned as Prime Minister, he created that powerful neo-fascist organisation to which all the reactionaries of France gravitated, the R.P.F., with its wholly imperialist and chauvinist programme, particularly in colonial affairs. *The fear of losing forces to the R.P.F., in turn, influenced,*

in the period that followed, all the parties of the centre and above all prevented them from adopting reasonable colonial policies.

All this summarizes, too briefly, the influence of colonial wars in the progressive decline of the Fourth Republic. But what was the fundamental cause of the inability of the French to adapt themselves, peacefully, to the new conditions overseas? Why did France refuse to concede independence to Ho-Chi-Minh within the framework of the French Union, as he requested in 1946? Why did France refuse to transform the Moroccan and Tunisian protectorates, instead of attempting, by all possible means, to maintain the fiction of *Algerie-Francaisel*? First of all, because of the decisive influence in French politics of financial interests committed to the maintenance of colonial domination. Colonies constitute, for any metropolitan country, a highly protected market. Collusion between the administration and metropolitan capitalism is not only a means of keeping out foreign firms, but also allows certain groups determining hold on the economy of the colony, e.g., the Bank of Paris and the Pennaroya group in Morocco. Indigenous colonial capitalism, and in particular the agricultural capitalism of Algeria, gains, at the same time, enormous super-profits through low wages and tax privileges, which enable it to build up secret funds, to buy the press and to subsidise the parties.

But this direct connection is only one aspect of the situation. If the French Left had been able to act coherently and vigorously in colonial affairs, it could, in many cases, have neutralised the effectiveness of the 'financial lobby'. In any case, *to the extent that the failure of the policy of the 'financial lobby' became apparent*, it would have been simple to win over public opinion. Unfortunately, the French Left has never been able to act in this way. Its internal divisions are one reason. The ineffectiveness of the French Left, however, is also linked to an even deeper cause - the inroads made by over a century of colonialism into the consciences of all Frenchmen and *even into the heart of left-wing political circles.*

Immediately after the war, in spite of texts by Marx, Engels and Lenin on the primary need of colonial nations to gain independence before any development towards socialism, the French Communists maintained policies tainted with paternalism toward the overseas peoples, e.g., their opposition to Ferhat-Abbas' proposals for an autonomous Algeria within a federal French community. Few Socialists, in spite of well-meaning motions at annual congresses, remembered the fight of Jaures against the invasion of Morocco. No Radical had the least memory of the battle led by Clemenceau against the conquest of Tonkin and Tunisia. Among many Republicans the idea of colonial independence appears as a retreat - the 'convention' of continuous progress within the French system is generally up-held, mixed with the sort

of theory typified by a remark of Guy Mollet's on the 'obsolete' nature of nationalism in the modern age.

All this reflected and still reflects a widespread state of mind among the people. Communists, socialists and other men of the Left have, just like the majority of citizens, been inculcated since earliest childhood with a false and idyllic version of colonialism. No school boy, and few students, know that Algeria was conquered as a result of financial conflict born of the intrigues of Talleyrand, Minister of Napoleon I, and businessmen in Syria and Lebanon; nor that the conquest of Tunisia sprang from the intrigues of a corrupt French consul who was the faithful protege of the financiers of Marseilles; nor that the conquest of Morocco is linked to the imperialism of the Bank of Paris, whose political agents, Premier Riuvier and Foreign Minister Delcasse put their interests before all others. No French schoolboy knows of the atrocities which accompanied the conquest of Algeria and which gave rise to a speech by the Duke of Moskowa in the Upper House which, today, would have resulted in the immediate loss of his parliamentary immunity. French schoolboys are certain that colonial conquest was undertaken to spread civilization (and, in religious schools, Christianity), and that it was carried out in the humane manner befitting the most civilized country in the world.

The idea that the people of colonised countries might sometimes not rejoice at living under the sway of the tricolour would seem, against such a background, completely unthinkable. All this is logically reinforced, moreover, by a myth embedded deep in the minds of Frenchmen - that of the universal, egalitarian empire conceived by the revolutionaries of 1793. Now, this myth was, for some years, the expression of a reality - to be exact, from the period of the Consuls to the Constitution of Year VIII, which saw the triumph, in colonial affairs, of the concepts of the colonists of the Antilles, which imposed the (successful) reconquest of Martinique and Guadeloupe and the (unsuccessful) reconquest of St. Domingo-Haiti. The egalitarian colonial empire lasted less than seven years. But the Jacobin theses on centralisation combined with complete legal equality and local and national representation irrespective of colour or religion, *were never abandoned and yet never again enforced.* They served as a mask, a 'smoke-screen' for a policy based, from then on, upon inequality, exploitation and the absence of political representation of the exploited.

These theses, and not the reality, were spread by text-books, children's books and all kinds of publications both within France and within the colonial countries. To my mind this touches on the main reason for the gravity of the French colonial situation. In Great Britain, 'City' finance, export capital and colonial lobbies, stronger even than those of Paris, and a Conservative Party as

reactionary as the French Right, have, for some time, succeeded in preventing the emancipation of certain colonies, but British colonialism has never sheltered beneath the mantle of civilisation. England conquered India because it was the strongest power, and the best known apologists for imperialism, like Kipling, have never seen nor praised in the British 'Raj' anything other than an image of glory and strength.

Thus, when the objective situation changed, the English people did not see in this any slight to their ideals and 'mission'. The financial 'lobby' and others could not, as in France, play on semi-religious feeling among most of the population. In France, on the other hand, colonial interests would not have been so powerful, and the struggle of the Left so ineffective, if it had not been for the fact that, thanks to a hundred years of falsified history, thanks to a myth buried deep in the popular imagination, the French *believed and still half believe, in the existence of the Jacobin egalitarian empire and in a French civilisation bestowed equally upon all*. It is the pseudo-jacobin 'smoke-screen' which lies behind the centralised constitution of 1946, and which was taken up again in a scarcely more liberal, and equally centralised, version in the articles of the Gaullist constitution of 28th September, 1958, on the 'Community'.

Of course, the French press and the deputies of the Centre and the Right have, during the past years, done all in their power to prevent the French people grasping the realities of the situation - and the process continues. It is not simply the conscious manipulation by the big colonial interests, the officer corps, reactionaries of all sorts and those guilty of colonial crimes, which these circles systematically reinforce. The reality is more complex. Journalists, owners of periodicals, politicians, militarists and capitalists themselves are Frenchmen like the rest, imbued, like the rest, with these false concepts. Almost all of them bring to the defence of an obsolete and impossible state of affairs, the clear conscience which sustains all fanaticism.

We can now see how the fact of modern colonialism balanced against outdated French ideology has led the Fourth Republic into a series of impasses. Under such conditions the French Left should have been able to undertake a total re-education of the people, but this needed to be both wide and deep. The united participation of the whole of the Left was, therefore, indispensable for such action to be successful. This has only really been tried by the Communists on the one hand, and by the former editorial staff of *Combat* who founded *France-Observateur*, and, in the last few years, *Express*. The Communists are, however, heavily handicapped. Their acknowledged dependence on Soviet foreign policies is, here, an even more important obstacle than in internal French affairs.

If, for example, a party demands more housing and higher wages, it would not be easy to persuade citizens that these demands were unjust on the pretext that the party which presents them has ties with Moscow. If, however, it is a question of some far off area, not *directly* affecting the citizen, as in colonial policy, of an area which, moreover, is the pawn of international rivalry, then the accusation '*This is Moscow's policy*', can carry great weight. This has not only deprived the Communists of part of their influence, but they themselves, conscious of their vulnerability, have been much less precise than they should, and have sought to put themselves 'at the level of the masses' - a level which was, let me repeat, extremely low in this connection. As for the anti-colonialist intellectual elite, it has taken very positive action, which, however, does not in the short run have any great influence on the public. All the same, the influence of these circles on the body of teachers is not negligible and it is quite likely that, in time, this will modify the state of mind of the next generation of French children on colonial questions.

In this way the French colonial crisis is related to the fall of the Fourth Republic. Let us now see how this double crisis is knit together in the person of General de Gaulle and what the consequences of this will be. De Gaulle has, himself, taken part like everybody else, passively or actively, in the myth-making described above. His original concepts were in the purest 'imperial' vein. He then absorbed, by 'osmosis', some semi-republican sentiments after he became leader of the Free French in 1940, and became, it can be said, 'a semi-enlightened colonialist'.

When de Gaulle founded the R.P.F. in 1946, his ideas on the colonies had certainly not evolved. Nothing in the propaganda of the R.P.F. could be of any attraction, either for anti-colonialists or for the overseas peoples. In France, the R.P.F. drew in only some chauvinist imperialists; in the colonies, only the representatives of the most reactionary colonialist circles. Much later, however, after the collapse of the R.P.F. and the General's return to private life, it seemed that some progress had again been made in his mind. We must, obviously, take into account the machiavellianism of a person who has always tended to say what people wanted to hear. But we can believe that the assurances that he gave to men of the Left and to anti-colonialists are a better reflection of his state of mind than those given to the chauvinist reactionaries who made up his Old-Guard. The ideas attributed to him in 1955-56 on the development of North Africa are characteristic enough - he declared his agreement with a form of independence or autonomy for former colonial countries, but on condition that France retained a free hand over diplomacy and the army. Diplomacy and the army are the two single political instruments in which de Gaulle is

really interested - his policy being much closer to that of Richelieu or Louis XIV than to that of a modern dictator. We can believe that de Gaulle saw in the internal autonomy of former colonial countries a less costly way of conserving for himself the control of a powerful, centralised military and diplomatic system. This concept can be found, moreover, in the constitution of September, 1958 - an amalgam of centralised coercion in the military diplomatic (and economic) fields, and of federal freedom in other fields.

We might well ask, then, why de Gaulle, during the past three or four years, did not attempt to intervene in colonial affairs on behalf of solutions which, although not shaped to present needs were, nevertheless, well in advance of the mediaeval colonialism of the parties of the Right and of the Centre, including the S.F.I.O.? The explanation is not difficult to find. De Gaulle's object, in fact, *was not to help the Republic out of its difficulties without him*. If this were not true it would have been enough for him to come out publicly in favour of peace in Indo-China or negotiation in Algeria in order to dislocate the entire French Right, and bring out of hiding the impulse which existed in the centre parties, and even in financial circles themselves, for a more liberal colonial party. De Gaulle, however, *who understood that the colonial crisis was, in reality, a crisis of the Republic*, chose to use it against the regime. His attitude remains inexplicable outside this theory. His anti-colonialist assurances to men of the Left and Centre are not simple lies - they reflect one of the aspects (but one only) of his political views.

These assurances were needed to gain allies on the Left for the day when he would return to power, in order to make his attempt at the semi-liberal colonial policy, that he envisaged, easier. At the same time, however, it was important for him not to do anything to help such a policy being immediately implemented. His most faithful adherents had to prevent, even by violence, any solution of colonial problems while he was not yet in power. It would be preferable to think that it was by accident, and without the agreement of General de Gaulle, that M. Jacques Soustelle became one of the most brutal opponents of any negotiation in Algeria and the spokesman of the *Ultras* in their campaigns against the Mollet, Bourges-Maunory and Gaillard governments. It might be possible to believe that it was by accident that M. Michel Debre lent a helping hand, and that Chalmas-Delmas became one of the instigators, and ministerially responsible, for the bombardment of Sakhiet-Sidi-Youssef.

When, however, the tight inter-relationships of the Gaullist milieu is known, the friendly links which exist between de Gaulle's immediate entourage and the still faithful cluster of former R.P.F. deputies, the idea of complete independence between these varying

I groups seems unlikely. It becomes understandable, though, if you suppose that General de Gaulle's 'ultra' agents were given the task of preventing any solution within the framework of the Fourth Republic. For the same reason, de Gaulle allowed, with the agreement of his friends, the plot of the 13th May to succeed, encouraged the rebels of the 15th and 19th May and he and his friends did everything they could to increase the menace which weighed upon the Republic up to its final collapse on the 31st May. For de Gaulle, convinced that the Fourth Republic was incapable of serving the interests of France, and that he alone could found the healthy regime which our country needed, this duplicity was not immoral.

Power having been achieved, however, is it possible for General de Gaulle to put into effect a liberal colonial policy and to lead France out of the crisis which killed the Fourth Republic and which gave him power? To answer this it is not enough to know whether our present Prime Minister *wishes to do this*. We must first of all ask whether he is clear about his goal, and next, whether the means which he has chosen lead towards this goal. In my opinion it is doubtful whether the solution sought by de Gaulle corresponds to today's needs. These are, I feel, the acceptance of complete independence, as soon as possible, for all former colonial peoples and the search, together with them, for a form of equal association on the economic, technical, cultural, diplomatic and even military levels, within the framework of a modern commonwealth. In order to enter firmly upon this road, a more subtle and more contemporary idea of 'grandeur' is needed than that of General de Gaulle. The prestige that the influence of language, culture, technique, and economy give to de jure and de facto alliances count much less for him than the administrative influence which the police, the army and diplomatic and administrative subjection, acquires.

These concepts appear quite clearly in the Constitution of 28th September, 1958. General de Gaulle has constructed a veritable institutional monument for the definition of a centralised community of semi-dependent nations while he has only hidden in a few negligent lines in Articles 86 and 88 of the Constitution the equal association of independent states, which could have become a real French Commonwealth. Caught in the logic of this attitude he greeted the demand from independent Guinea to take part in this association with bad grace. In fact, he only put into the Constitution the possibility of independence for the member nations of the centralised community and the possibility of creating with them an association of equals, under pressure from the parties of Black Africa, without which they would never have agreed to advise voting 'Yes'.

Doubtless, reality will force the General to move forward. A section of modern capitalism has already acknowledged the movement of Africa towards independence and is seeking to establish, as quickly as possible, normal relations with it, in order not to be replaced by other nations and other, less backward capitalisms. This is particularly clear in the case of Guinea where, around de Gaulle and probably in his own mind too, the struggle between modern capitalism and the old imperialism dictates a somewhat contradictory policy. Some officials are attempting to sabotage the economy of Guinea, while others are preparing to replace old colonial links with new relations. If, however, it is possible to believe that in the end good sense will win in Guinea and that from then on the movement of all the states of Black Africa towards independence will continue without conflict and lead these states progressively towards the form of equal association (which would then become, no longer 'poor relations' but the centre-piece of France-Overseas relations) - it is still not certain that these things will develop in the same way in Algeria.

The General has certainly astonished many people in considering making contact with the F.L.N., even though the terms of his offer were relatively humiliating for an army and a people which had held the French army in check for four years. Over and above the terms of his offer for talks, however, his intentions remain obscure. It seems that here, too, de Gaulle has stopped half way. He agrees to talks with his opponent, but for the time being any idea of independence, even on conditions, is unacceptable to him. If it was, for him, simply an ideological choice it could be hoped that the development of the situation during the next few months, the maintenance of the power of the Algerian army (in spite of the claims of French propaganda), the impossibility of obtaining the surrender of the Algerian leaders, at the same time as the need of the Algerians to find a positive ending to an exhausting war - all this might lead to a reasonable agreement, once talks are begun. And, indeed, such an agreement would be swift and sure if General de Gaulle had decided to lean on the support of the Left and the popular forces of France. Everything goes to show, however, that he has not the slightest intention of breaking with the army, which remains one of the pillars of his regime, or even with the assorted reactionaries who helped him to power, and for whom he is, whatever he does, their symbol and protector. He, no doubt, does not want to be the prisoner of these forces. But neither does he want to fight against them, on the side of the people. What he is trying to do is to hold the balance, to use the reactionary and military forces to contain the people, and vice-versa. This equilibrium prevents him from choosing real solutions, for these *do not lie half-way between Right or Left solutions, but, in the colonial sphere,*

must be at least as advanced as the most advanced thinking of the most advanced elements of the French Left.

We are probably moving towards a Bao-Dai solution, towards a kind of Algerian autonomy based on stooges elected at fake elections. The war will continue as vigorously as before. The F.L.N. will be forced to rely more and more on the Arab League and the Communist countries. The French people will have to devote even more resources to the war, and it will be presented to them as a duty because the rebels have refused to make peace and are now '*prisoners of the communist block*'. The internal political consequences are not difficult to predict. In one form or another the 'liberal empire' will be swiftly transformed into an 'authoritarian empire' or into classic fascism.

All the same, if the forces of the Left - scarcely recovering from their defeat in the referendum - learn how to become active once more in the country, if modern capitalism and top-level administration learn how to exercise sufficiently strong pressure instead of accepting, as in the past, an outmoded colonial policy (deploring it, meanwhile in private) - then it is not impossible for de Gaulle and his regime to be pushed, partly in spite of themselves, towards a liberal colonial policy. If this happens, there will certainly be considerable discontent sooner or later, among the 'ultras' of Algeria, some of whom, at least, will have to be repatriated to France, and among that part of the officer corps who will have had 'their war' stolen. The end of the war in Algeria will, however, entail the disappearance of the whole chauvinist and militarist climate which has poisoned French politics for years. The repatriated colonialists and the embittered soldiers will have the greatest difficulty in fostering among a population, happy and relaxed at finding peace, *a fascism of pure hatred*. All the problems will not have been resolved and the question of the transformation of the Gaullist 'liberal empire' into a real republic will remain. But, the Left, at least, its ideas triumphant, will be in a good position to effect the re-conquest of democracy.

As I write it is extremely difficult to give any exact idea of the probable development of events. The new, ultra-reactionary Assembly will obviously throw its weight behind that of the army in order to prevent de Gaulle taking any progressive measures in any sphere. It is impossible to see how the situation can get better - it can remain as it is, or, more likely, get worse. All that can be said is that the decisive turn will occur within the next three months, or even earlier. The friends of France, abroad, can do much to prevent the worst, for the Gaullist regime, whether liberal or authoritarian, will be a costly one, constantly obliged to live up to its promises of 'renewal' and 'grandeur' by expensive innovations in all fields - economic, social and military. If it has to sup-

port the cost of the war in Algeria, the regime will be unable to implement them without recourse to foreign financial assistance. If foreign countries finance the Guallist regime unconditionally, they will not be aiding the French people. They will be financing the war in Algeria, contributing to the ruin of France, the destruction of its influence in Africa, and to the deaths of many Moslems and Frenchmen. If, on the other hand, the friends of France, abroad, learn how to link their efforts to those of the reasonable elements within France, we can hope to lead our country into that group of nations which has passed through the infantile stages of colonialism. If not, the French people will not be the only ones to suffer the consequences.

Claude Bourdet

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