

Algeria, writes Jean Rous in the article we reprint from *Temps Modernes*, raises to the nth degree the contradictions of colonialism. A classic colonialist economic structure, certainly: export surplus, settler—dominated land settlement, average farmer incomes at £20 a year. A classic war, too, of declining colonialism. In the age of high imperialism, terror—even when as horrible as Jallianwalabagh in India—was marginal as a means of maintaining the imperial rule. There were other pressures, more subtle, more effective. But to-day in Algeria, as before in Madagascar and Indo-China, it is only through terror, systematised and generalised, that declining French colonialism can maintain its hold.

And yet, in a very significant sense, Algeria is more than a personification of the contemporary colonial crisis. There are over one million French settlers in Algeria. Somehow the two communities must be brought to exist on terms of equality. The new Algerian nation must be built in co-operation between Algerians and a renewed French democracy. But this can only come about if racism, colonialism and the exploitative position of the French minority is finally destroyed.

The Algerian war is very relevant, we believe, to the concerns of the British Left.

Suez showed that the continuation of the Algerian war menaced peace throughout the Middle Eastern area.

Suez showed that anti-colonialism, to be effective, must be international in its scope and its participation.

Algeria is a warning. The rumoured establishment of the British Middle Eastern base in Kenya threatens a repetition

of Suez and Cyprus, threatens the sort of policy, the kind of ethos, which has produced the present confrontation in Algeria. We cannot minimise the tremendous wave of chauvinism which has engulfed one of the historic democracies of Europe, just as we cannot ignore the incipient popular jingoism in Britain during the Suez period. No jingoism is more menacing than the jingoism of a declining imperial power. There is, finally, the warning of the disastrous *domestic* effect of colonialist policies. It is only eighteen months from the mood of hope which produced the Republican Front government to the atmosphere which Andre Phillip calls pre-fascist.

A more vigilant, more conscious, more continuous, more active anti-colonialism is an urgent necessity for the British Left.

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Algeria

THE massacre at Melouza is the logical outcome of the policy of "pacification", following on a century of colonial rule. As such it does not confirm but decisively refutes the thesis of a "police operation" against a small band of terrorists. If this had been the task before the French Governor-General in Algeria, there would have been no need for the systematic policy of destroying the links, always very tenuous, between the European and Muslim populations, of creating a cleavage of hatred and suspicion great

enough to exclude all negotiation, and leave blind repression as the only way out. Above all there would have been no need for the mass executions by the forces of order which were at the basis of many "ralliments" of Algerian villages. These policies express a situation of deadlock. With 400,000 French troops patrolling the country, the National Liberation Forces cannot hope to bring under their effective military control even a small portion of Algerian territory. But if they cannot win, they cannot be

defeated either. An army double or triple the already great size of the French force could not definitively put down a revolt supported by the vast majority of the Muslim population, benefiting from a terrain ideally suited to guerilla warfare, and able to obtain supplies and arms from abroad.

The civilian population of Algeria pay the price of this deadlock. The *ratissages* of Algerian villages are a desperate attempt of the government to break it. If enough villages are destroyed, surely

the rest will come round definitively. What happened at Melouza is the long expected answer to this policy, an answer dreaded by those who have supported the idea of Algerian independence—although not by everyone, if one can judge by the ill-concealed glee of certain sections of the French Right. The massacre cannot in any way be condoned. One cannot even plead for it what has been pleaded for the acts of individual terror and assassination, of which the F.L.N. have been pilpy in the past—that they were not carried out on orders, but expressed rather the personal vengeance of individuals who had suffered under the colonialist repression. Whether this was done with the knowledge and approval of the F.L.N. general staff or simply at the initiative of a local commander, it represents the acceptance by at least a section

of the Algerian revolutionaries of the methods which the French forces have been using from the beginning: massacre systematised.

The deadlock must be broken. And the only way to break the deadlock is through negotiation. To conclude from Melouza that "one cannot negotiate with terrorists" is to obscure the real issue behind a carefully nourished emotional reaction. By the same logic the French government would be unfit to negotiate with after their mass executions in Algeria, and earlier French colonialist massacres in Madagascar (1947) and the Constantine region of Algeria (1955). This kind of argument is calculated to perpetuate the very crime against which it ostensibly protests.

The only effective protest against Melouza is a negotiated peace.

Last chances of negotiation in Algeria

Jean Rous

WE have never been closer to a solution of the Algerian problem than at this very moment, when we seem to be moving further away than ever from it. Thirty months of struggle have prepared conditions in which the existence of the Algerian nation can no longer be contested. This is the result not only of the activists and propagandists of the Algerian national ideal: to as great an extent it is the handiwork of military and police repression.

Moroccan nationalist leaders frequently assert: "The authors of the coup d'etat against the Sultan advanced by ten years the cause of Moroccan independence. Without this unexpected support from the colonialists we would never have had such unanimous fervour, such sudden success."

A fortiori, an argument of this kind is valid for Algeria. The Gordian knot had to be cut in an emergent Algeria—a nation which was achieving self-consciousness only with hesitation. The blind force of the sorcerer's apprentice was going to be a more effective midwife than thirty years of theoretical and political propaganda.

True, before the insurrection began there existed in embryo a situation whose full significance would be seen in the explosion of violence. The explosion of November 1954 was the product of the contradictions which had dominated the Algerian situation, especially since 1947. Official policy towards the Algerians was provocation, conscious or unconscious. It forced the Algerians to define themselves by opposition. On the one hand they were granted a statute of local government which they rejected; on the other, this statute was either manipulated or not applied at all. The statute itself was the very synthesis of all the contradictions of colonialist Algeria. It made Algeria a French Department, and at the same time instituted a veritable little Parliament, coupled with a Council of Government. But because it was necessary to prevent this parliament from

becoming fully conscious, even by stages, that it was an Algerian parliament, the elections were systematically "fixed" and the Assembly "packed" to the tastes of the administration. "Fixing"—official spokesmen were quite frank about this—"has become a state necessity. Without it the nationalists would have 90% of the seats in the second college."

The door to national evolution had hardly been opened before it had been hermetically sealed again. Algerian nationalism was to be marked by this suppression: "It is forbidden to be elected, it is forbidden to have organisations and newspapers, it is forbidden to say the word 'independence', on pain of indictment for sedition." This word "independence" was in some ways sanctified by the repression: it became a key word, informed by resentment and hope. This has been true, no doubt, for all colonial countries, but it is even truer, and to an incomparable degree, for Algeria. Because of the suppression, Algeria carries the contradictions of colonialism to the nth power.

Only an evolutionary road could have released all the complexes of the Algerian situation. But even while at both ends of the Maghreb, starting with Tunisia, they were entering upon an evolution to independence, in Algeria the exasperating *immobilisme*, expressed in the silence of repression, was provoking insurrection

"No question of withdrawal"

"There could be no question of our withdrawal from Indo-China."—PRIME MINISTER PLEVEN, 27/6/52.

"There has never been any question of France abandoning Algeria. There never will be any. France will fight to stay in Algeria, and she will stay there."—PRIME MINISTER MOLLET, 10/2/56.

"The last quarter an hour"

"Without being unduly optimistic, I believe that total peace could be restored in

and armed conflict. This conflict was only, according to the well known expression, the continuation of the same policy, by other means. The duel of arms replaced the suppressed and stifled dialogue: this evolution which was supposed to be blocked by force was, on the contrary, precipitated by it. This nation, the very existence of which was being denied, began to affirm itself. It was moulded by blows, as the statue is shaped by the chisel.

To take the two examples of military pacification and of the evolution of the Muslim bourgeoisie, and, in general, of those Muslims not involved in active nationalism.

Algeria was divided and cordoned off by a French army of 400,000. The garrisoning changed the character of rebel activity. In the cities it emerged as terrorism by small groups. But the terrorism, dismembered by the 10,000 all-powerful paratroopers—we know at what price—reappeared in ambushes, finding every day new recruits. And so pacification, in spite of the small pockets cleared, in spite of the illusions created by military superiority, was the shawl of Penelope. Every time they had to begin all over again, and this very fact shows the soldiers themselves, or at least the more clear-sighted of them, that the real problem is no one of military superiority.

Thus, to cite certain official figures: hardly had the terrorist acts diminished in Algiers from 91 per month to 19, and the Muslim students returned to the schools, than the French had to turn towards the Oran Department, where, in the first days of April 1956, fifty odd farms were destroyed, one hundred Algerians killed per day, and ninety a fortnight on the French side in the first few weeks. In a single day 25 terrorist attacks were registered. The south flamed up with skirmishes and acts of sabotage on the railroad of Comb-Bechar. According to official sources the Algerian rebels are losing an average of 3,000 men a month. But their effective force remains about 30,000, for there is perpetual recruitment. About 10,000 young men, they say, have fled Algiers to the Jebels, and provide reinforcements.

Losing 2,000 rifles a month, they receive new arms at the rate of 3,000 a month. The kidnapping of the Algerian delegation at the time of the October (1956) conference in Tunis meant that they were able to get supplies and train

Indo-China—Algeria

Indo China between now and the end of the year."—ALBERT SARAUT, 5/4/51.

"If the political situation does not deteriorate the armed struggle could be over by the autumn."—MAX LEJEUNE, 9/7/56.

No negotiation possible

"The possibilities of negotiation with Ho Chi Minh are nil."—FREDERIC DUPONT, 8/4/52.

"There are not, there could not be, people with whom we can negotiate, either within or outside Algeria."—BOURGES-MANOURY, 16/5/56.

Algeria

their troops nearer at hand, Moroccans and Tunisians having taken over from Nasser.

A description of the results of the pacifications since November 1954 would show that at the beginning, there were some hundreds of "rebels" in the Aures region; at the end of thirty months, the "rebellion" had burgeoned throughout the country, in the form of the "Liberation Army", which maintains *ad hoc* homogeneity beyond the dissensions and mutual rivalries of the F.L.N. (National Liberation Front) and the M.N.A. (followers of the veteran nationalist leader, Messali Hadj). It is a real revolution, as even Robert Lacoste himself has to admit. As he says in his March 1957 circular: "The F.L.N. is pursuing with resolution all over Algeria the setting-up of a politico-military sub-structure. If we don't react vigorously, it is certain that the political and administrative personnel formed in this way will acquire a progressively greater influence on the masses."

Thus a sort of underground nation in arms has been formed, with its soldiers, its terrorists, its tax-collectors, its judges, its political commissars. When it is decimated in one sector, it reappears, renewed, in another, because its source is inexhaustible: it is the political will of the Algerian people.

Just as one could discover in pre-1917 police reports some presentiments of the Russian Revolution, so one can see in certain speeches and declarations of French soldiers more depth than in those of certain government spokesmen. In a speech by "Colonel X", analysed in *Le Monde*, 15th April, 1957, the officer, discussing "pacification", recognised that if the mass of the Muslims were to take their stand with the fighting minority, the armed forces would be "forced either to practice a policy of extermination—hypothesis excluded by definition—or to capitulate". But refusing this choice the

Colonel denounces "the impermissible excesses in the attitude towards the population", and the behaviour of certain units "driven by blind fury" and carried away to the worst kind of excesses: "pillage, assassination, collective torture, which equal those committed by the enemy, and justify all his propaganda".

There is some work here for the *Commission for the Safeguard of Individual Rights and Liberties*.

Thus the problem of the "good war" is posed. Without denying the impor-

"Sometimes you contrast the 'big' with the 'little' whites. That's a great mistake. Even if you are poor trash, in a century's time you get used to having beneath you others who are more miserable than you. A foreman here would be a labourer in France, an overseer a worker, etc. On each level everybody clings to his little kingdom and nobody wants to let go. Here's one of my most important discoveries here: all the French in Algeria, from the biggest to the smallest, stick together—a sort of shameful solidarity in damnation.

"Do you still believe in brotherhood or

tance of protests against these excesses, one cannot help asking oneself if they don't follow from the very nature of the war. One is forced to recognise that the excesses and the denunciation of them have awakened French opinion, and have contributed to bringing us nearer a solution: putting an end to the war itself. However one approaches the military problem, one spills over into politics.

Here too official action has had the paradoxical effect of pushing the moderates into the nationalist camp. We have to pause for a moment on the case of two men who were typical intermediaries and men of "compromise", and who finally went over to the F.L.N.: Ferhat Abbas, leader of the U.D.M.A., and Ben Mhamed, socialist deputy (S.F.I.O.).

Ferhat Abbas had set himself the task of bringing about peacefully, by way of

Pacification, past and present

By the entrance lay oxen, donkeys and sheep; instinct had drawn them to the outlet so that they might breathe the air which was lacking within. Among these animals and lying in piles underneath them were women and children. I saw one dead man, kneeling on the ground with his hand clutching the horn of an ox; in front of him was a woman with a child in her arms. This man, it was easy to perceive, had been suffocated, along with the woman, the child and the ox at the moment when he was trying to protect his family from the fury of this animal.

The grottoes are huge: 760 corpses were counted yesterday.

Revolts did not stop in 1847.

In 1958 there was the rising of the Benis-hassen.

In 1864 the rising of Outed Sidi Cheik.

In 1871 the rising of the Kalybie region.

In 1945 40,000 Algerians were killed during French repression in the Constantine region.

If the methods of the F.L.N. are more violent than the Neo-Destour and the Istaqal, it is because French colonialism has always been more violent in Algeria than in Tunisia or Morocco.

reform, an Algerian Republic associated with France, where the French minority would have guaranteed rights. But all ways were blocked: he had to admit the failure of his attempt. Nevertheless, during the first year of the insurrection he didn't give up hope of reconstructing a new bridge. Thus, as he explains himself, he had, after contacting the Algerian resistance fighters, worked out a compromise consisting of a sort of Executive Council, composed of Muslims and Europeans, which, under the Chairmanship

"Solidarity in damnation"

friendship among nations? Where does it exist? Yesterday I was ambushed and very nearly killed. What a preposterous end that would have been! A man of deep, sincere leftist convictions, here in order to retain just a little contact, killed by people who fight for their liberty. I felt like talking with you to-night—alone, in this hostile city, amidst people whom I can no longer recognise as speaking my language (the Europeans here) and in the face of Algerians with whom very few contacts and sometimes such desperate and inhuman contacts. Goodbye.

—Letter from a French official in Algeria.

of a Minister Resident, was to elaborate a plan for the major reform of Algerian institutions. But we know how the administration, dominated by the ultras, blocked every attempt at a compromise. Ferhat Abbas, despair in his heart, left for Cairo to join the F.L.N. leaders in exile.

The case of F.L.N. deputy, Ben Mhamed, is not less significant. At the Lille Congress, in July 1955, Ben Mhamed belonged to the majority of the Socialist Party, and voted for the motion approved by Lacoste and Guy Mollet which put forward free elections and an Algerian Legislature and Executive. He didn't associate himself with the minority motion which demanded a first stage negotiation with a view to organising a cease-fire, and which recognised the existence of an Algerian homeland, common to the two elements, Muslim and European. Ben Mhamed's policy was to pile up complaint against the repression by means of public speeches and interventions. He insisted that the generalising of mass executions and excesses was helping to push towards the maquis those elements of the population which had remained indifferent. Finally, in August 1955, he too left for Cairo.

Almost all the moderate leaders have now rallied to the nationalist camp. "Pacification" was supposed to reassure the moderate and francophil elements of the Arab population: in fact, it has pushed them over to the enemy camp. Astonishing victory, whose outcome is so obvious a political failure!

It is fair to add that one cannot see much chance of the F.L.N. achieving a military victory either. In their famous manifesto of 6th February, 1956, the F.L.N. visibly disappointed by the success of the Ultra's demonstration (the retreat of the Prime Minister, eviction of General Catroux) had threatened a new *Dien Bien Phu*, had attacked violently both the

"We intend to maintain the peace which you have known and enjoyed since the arrival of France in this country."

—MAX LEJEUNE

The French conquest of Algeria took nearly twenty years to complete—fifteen of them in suppressing the rising of Abd El Kadar.

The French conquest of Algeria took on almost genocidal characteristics—the massacre of the El Ouffias people is only the best-known example of the massacres of that period.

The following is one example among a mass of contemporary material giving evidence of the character of the French conquest. It is taken from Armand Moulignac's Lettres d'un Soldat quoted in P. Christian's L'Afrique Francaise (page 442).

What pen could describe the scene: behold in the middle of the night, by the light of the moon, a force of French troops engaged in feeding a hellish fire! Hear the dull groans of men, women, children and animals, the cracking of rocks burned by the fire and crashing down, and the ceaseless sound of gunfire. The night was filled with the frightful conflict of men and animals. In the morning I visited the three grottoes.

French Left and the French Right, and denounced all contacts with the French, reserving the right, however, to renew them later, when they might be guaranteed the monopoly of negotiation.

We have not seen a military *Dien Bien Phu*. But with the prospect of a continued struggle locking up in Algeria at

least 400,000 French troops, with the heavy costs this implies, with increasing international pressure, can we say that this developing general crisis, the polarisation of chauvinist and fascist sentiment, does not threaten us with a political and economic *Dien Bien Phu*? The persistent refusal to recognise the Algerian Republic

is calling into question the democratic foundations of the French Republic itself. With the impossibility of a decisive victory by either side we must pass to political methods—with all that these imply: loyalty to principles combined with diplomacy and a sense of compromise.

The peace of Nenetchar

Robert Bonnaud

HPHESE days when I speak to one of

• those rare people who are interested about the course of the pacification in Algeria and I mention the massacre by the forces of order of fellagha prisoners, they usually retort—although they are surprised and, as it were, to excuse their surprise—"Yes, but the fellaghas do the same thing". The quiet conscience regains its composure very quickly with the chauvinist. His reason is contented by little when it has to come to the rescue of an imperialist pharasm. How can 20,000 guerillas pursued from Jebel to Jebel, with a permanent base nowhere (the caves of Wadi Hallail were emptied every time the army column went up there, and the deluge of straffing descended on them), how can they, day by day, take prisoners?

That is why it seems too simple to put side by side the massacre of French prisoners by the Algerian rebels and the massacre of Algerian prisoners by the French army, and it seems bad logic to explain the latter by the former. The day when the fellagha will be able to take prisoners will be for them a day of victory, a decisive stage in their struggle. If the army began to take prisoners, they would lose one of the most terrible but one of the most sure methods they possess of inspiring fear—the beginning of "wisdom" from a colonial point of view.

These methods, obviously, put the

The promise of one socialist . . .

"The Right committed the crass stupidity of dethroning Ben Youssef. The result has been the dizzy acceleration of our difficulties in Morocco and, after some petty and impotent blustering, the Right was obliged to allow the Sultan to resume the position from which he had been ousted. Too late. Blood had been shed, war had broken out in the Rif, our young men had been cast in the furnace. The same criminal stupidity now in Algeria, where they have refused for too long to take into account modern realities and the aspirations of the Algerian people.

Our young men are witnessing these atrocities, they are taught to accept them as inevitable. We risk corrupting a whole generation, depriving it of the sense of moral and historical values which are the essence of France. It is here that there really is a profound and real threat to the morale of the Army and nation.

We are already in a pre-Fascist atmosphere when anything is possible; the country might be delivered at any moment to a man who could offer a clear programme giving an impression of energy and knowing how to mobilise the latent anti-Parliamentarism in the masses.

pacification in its true light—a tragic buffoonery and a myth-mongering one. This pacification, "which is not war", and which for this reason does not bother to observe the conventions, this pacification, worse than war, treats the patriots captured with arms in their hands as foreign armies of occupation have always treated patriots: hanged by the feet or shot down where they stand by a burst of machine-gun fire, dying under electric torture . . .

The veterans of 1914-18, who knew what respect for the prisoner meant, will probably be disturbed by these facts more than others. A friend of mine, a reservist stationed in the region of Orleanville, tells me of the indignant astonishment of his father, a man of "order", a Catholic, soldier of the Great War, at the sight of a photograph of massacred prisoners. An impressive picture, it is true: the machine-gun bullets fired from one and a half metres, left in their clothes dozens of little shameful holes: their faces and hands are bloated, strained, riddled, monstrous like cankers.

The executioner of these three disarmed men is a lieutenant of the French army, probably a Eurasian (his soldiers call him "le Viet"), whose racist compulsions and mercenary brutality find something to work on after each engagement. But his case is not at all pathological. Whether the massacre takes place on the

We in the Socialist Party recall that since 1951 we have supported one Government only—that of Mendes France, because he put an end to the war in Indo China and, by negotiating the Franco-Tunisian Pact, he showed the way to peace in North Africa . . . for the last five years the Socialist Party has preached humane solutions for North Africa . . . everything we proposed would have avoided the fall of our country's moral credit in the eyes of the world."

—ROBERT LACOSTE 23/12/55.

. . . The verdict of another

The trouble is that such a team, without principles or scruples, capable of carrying on such an operation, is forming itself already in Algeria. The military and political administrators who have for months acquired the habit of suspending freedom, arresting anyone in any conditions, using systematic torture to obtain information, would be ready to use the same methods in France.

When a Government gives an example of ignorance, intellectual mediocrity and moral cynicism it destroys the fundamental basis of democracy and creates conditions opening the way for a *coup d'etat*.—ANDRÉ PHILIP former Socialist Minister of Justice.

spot, as soon as they are captured, or on returning to the barracks, or in some ravine on the way, whether they hide it from the soldiers or parade it with a kind of swaggering nonchalance, the massacre always takes place.

Even worse: the soldiers sometimes collaborate spontaneously in it. The Algerian war, a war of ambushes, of surprises, of unexpected attacks, a war of ruse, of savagery, is made to order for the release of primitive reflexes, vengeance and anger. As no order, generally speaking, succeeds in stopping it, as childishness, sadism and stupidity produce attitudes of pseudo-virility, as the disdain for the native reinforces the prestige of the soldier, French youth is going through, in Algeria, the apprenticeship to murder without risk, to irresponsible killing. An intoxicating apprenticeship, no doubt, the paroxysm of power: to reduce to the docility of a corpse the living body of the rebel. Fidelity to the memory of dead comrades is the universal excuse, but not alas the only motive of these young novices, whom the colonial war is transforming into game for ambushes and into budding assassins into pitiful victims and horrible executioners. They find pleasure in it, the habit takes root. It's a strange moral formation which is being given in this way to thousands of young citizens, an introduction to life without principles, an initiation to the law of the jungle and to the right of the strongest, which will finish by weighing heavily on the national destiny.

At Tebessa, the courtyard of the Negrier barracks saw one day an army truck filled with Algerian prisoners. It was just after one of those murderous ambushes that the 60th Infantry regiment had sustained on the Tunisian frontier. The prisoners, tied up, had been piled between the racks lying one on top of the other like coal sacks. A certain number had already succumbed to asphyxia and the rigours of the road. The convoy, soldiers, reservists of the 60th, began to unload the truck. It pulled the inert bodies by the feet and let them fall to the ground from the full height of the truck. A second lieutenant, reservist, from the Tebessa garrison, who saw the spectacle, thought he should do something: "Bunch of morons!" he began, "I'll . . ." One of the morons turned around, threw himself towards the speaker with the intention of beating him up, noticed his rank, and stopped short, shouting: "Moron yourself." and went

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back to his task. The prisoners were now on the ground. They had to get up and line up against the wall. Kicks and rifle-butt blows overcame the weakness of the less wounded, who, staggering or dragging themselves on their knees, got to the designated spot. The others were strewn over the courtyard.

Scenes of this kind, where the unleashed brutality of the soldiers seems to go beyond even the will of their chiefs, occur every day, in an Algeria "pacified" without respite. But let's not make a conflict of principles out of something which is almost always only a bestial rivalry for the sharing of the game: the only question is to know who is to have the pleasure of inflicting the punishment, the companions of the soldiers who had been killed in the ambush, or the old-time professionals of the "interrogation". If the soldiers disfigure the prisoners too much the police will lose their 'raison d'être'. Whence their provisional humanism, so to speak, and that of the officers who support them . . .

We explored the bed of the waterfall, the holes, the rocks, the bushes. We discovered the bodies, green and pale, that death and the cold had fixed into life-like attitudes, and I thought of those Pompeian mouldings in the Museum in Naples, exposed to the idle pity of millions of tourists. There was one, notably, that a bullet had struck in the heart, and who had stayed in the exact position of a rifleman on his knees, leaning on a bench of stone, and on his negroid features the half-smile and the animation of battle. Another one, the body of a very young man, horribly convulsed, carried a pouch full of manuscripts. Perhaps a former pupil of the school at Cheria, who had found in the history of France the meaning of liberty and the need for a native land, one of those alive and interested boys of whom the teacher had said to me, with an understanding look: "They are very strong on their Joan of Arc".

The wounded, who hadn't been able to flee, were often wounded in the legs, and therefore could have recuperated, in spite of the loss of blood and the nocturnal cold which had made their flesh blue. They were massacred, in odious conditions, which surpassed a normal imagination, but not the Algerian reality. The European cadre of the

"A laconic communique announced yesterday: in view of the fact that ten mechtas (hamlets) were used on Saturday as centres of rebellion, the commandos received orders to destroy them on Monday. The hamlets concerned are situated in the three communes of Conde Smendou, Oued Zenati and Hammam-Meskoutine.

On Sunday evening Army H.Q. gave figures of 110 dead on the French side—which is probably correct—and 521 on the rebel side. According to estimates made by reliable military personnel, from to-day, Tuesday, one might add zero to that figure.

It was not possible for me to be present on

G.M.P.R., who were directing the mopping-up, distinguished themselves particularly. They kicked the wounds violently, till the unfortunate victims almost suffocated with pain. They joked abominably while taking photographs ("Go on, look beautiful, smile at the little birdie, do us a favour"), redoubled their brutality on the pretext of making an interrogation. Finally, taking out the kitchen knife, they sharpened it for a long time on the rock under the eyes of the condemned prisoners. The execution was maladroit and slow, they cut into the neck, avoiding the jugular vein. But the historic words were never lacking after the neck-cutting ("Another one who died as he lived . . ."). As a last precaution, a bullet fired at blank-point blew out the face, transformed it into a horror which has no name in the language of savagery.

The soldiers looked on, approved without much passion. Our young lieutenant tried to push them away, to hide the spectacle from them, because of the same universal prudery that had already led him, at Cheria, to hang old mailsacks before the latrines. But the spectacle fascinated us, we couldn't turn away. And the assassins took pride in this, posed for the gallery, made the pleasure last. The majority were Europeans of Algeria. Behind their nonchalant airs, their stupidity, their cruelty, one could make out the hatred and the fear of the bigot, the guilty conscience turned into savage aggression, the exacerbated will to dominate, the terrified refusal of change, the apprehension run riot of a native liberation. No, the character of the settler is not one of the beautiful human characters, and a nation concerned for its moral health, a people desirous of avoiding a marginal rotting and a generalised infection, owes it to itself to liquidate as fast as possible the traces of a colonising past . . .

At bottom, the massacre of Bou-Kammech was above all for us a drama—for us, that is, for the twenty-odd liberal and more or less anti-colonial Frenchmen who participated in the affair. It put before us a responsibility which we could not refuse. It forbade us the easy consolations of pilatism. It was the proof of our powerlessness, of our renunciation, of our successive capitulations . . .

Ratissage

all these operations, but I can at least bear witness to one whose objectiveness was the mechta of Carrieres Roumaines, five kilometres outside Phillippsville.

There—in the absence of the able-bodied men who had fled the night before—about fifty old men, women and children were put to death. I cannot conceive of a more tragic spectacle than that which met my eyes after the departure of the commandos, as I walked among the charred walls, greeted by the plaintive howling of the still-chained dogs, the only survivors of the massacre. . . . —GEORGES PENCHENIER in *Le Monde*, 25/8/55.

Settler Mentality

In a country where the colonial regime has concentrated over 5 million acres in the hands of 6,000 big landowners, nothing can keep the colonist from becoming the symbol of a state of repression of which he was until now the chief beneficiary.

Certain of them now say they are its victims. They regard themselves as doubly innocent, historically and morally. It is not we, they say, who conquered Algeria. They have improved their lands under conditions that were often difficult: it is only just that their sons should harvest the fruits. Capitalist concentration has drawn rather a clear line between "big business" and the small and middle colonists who work their lands themselves. But many of the middle bracket colonists lead a life comparable to that of the big French landowners. Whether they want it or not, they derive from their lands a high profit through the low wages of their workers. The "medium settler" adopts "humanitarian" positions, which he thinks distinguish him from the big settler. While integrating himself in a colonial system, he doesn't identify with it completely: he has some "honourable" reservations: he is con-

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cerned about law and justice. He pays his workers the official rate, sees that they benefit from the appropriate social advantages, and doesn't mix in politics.

The official wage rate is very much below a vital minimum (even if one reduces the latter to a supposed Algerian level). The "good" colonist regrets—sometimes—Us inadequacy, but he is content to pay the agricultural worker this "legal" wage. He limits himself to respecting the law and so he believes that there is nothing for which he can reproach himself. He fails to see that his "humanity" presupposes his acceptance of an order of things of which the justice remains unquestioned.

It is by his vaunted respect for legality that one can recognise the "good" settler, who feels to-day that he is paying for mistakes he did not commit.

But if one objects: how about the "existence of others"?) He will reply that his workers are well off, well treated and have nothing to complain about. He will admit that not all settlers behave like himself, and he will willingly rail against those who abuse their rights and deform the ideal of the colonist. He commonly thinks that if all settlers were like himself, all the Arabs would be like those he knows, devoted and faithful. This is the same as saying that this condition is directly dependent upon the goodwill of the settler, that his "humane" attitude alone saves them, by an arbitrary act, from poverty and oppression.

Inversely, if his worker "moved" (a revealing euphemism: he sees the Arab as immobile) he would speak of his ingratitude. This humanism, which recognises no rights, creates on the other hand duties for its recipients.

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