
Jean-Paul Sartre

Preface to Wretched of the Earth

1961

NOT so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word; the others had the use of it. Between the two there were hired kinglets, overlords and a bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end, which served as go-betweens. In the colonies the truth stood naked, but the citizens of the mother country preferred it with clothes on: the native had to love them, something in the way mothers are loved. The European élite undertook to manufacture a native élite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture, they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words 'Parthenon! Brotherhood!' and somewhere in Africa or Asia lips would open ... thenon! ... therhood!' It was the golden age.

It came to an end; the mouths opened by themselves; the yellow and black voices still spoke

of our humanism but only to reproach us with our inhumanity. We listened without displeasure to these polite statements of resentment, at first with proud amazement. What? They are able to talk by themselves? Just look at what we have made of them! We did not doubt but that they would accept our ideals, since they accused us of not being faithful to them. Then, indeed, Europe could believe in her mission; she had hellenized the Asians; she had created a new breed, the Graeco-Latin Negroes. We might add, quite between ourselves, as men of the world: 'After all, let them bawl their heads off, it relieves their feelings; dogs that bark don't bite.'

A new generation came on the scene, which changed the issue. With unbelievable patience, its writers and poets tried to explain to us that our values and the true facts of their lives did not hang together, and that they could neither reject them completely nor yet assimilate them. By and large, what they were saying was this: 'You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claim we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart.' Very much at our ease, we listened to them all; colonial administrators are not paid to read Hegel, and



for that matter they do not read much of him, but they do not need a philosopher to tell them that uneasy consciences are caught up in their own contradictions. They will not get anywhere; so, let us perpetuate their discomfort; nothing will come of it but talk. If they were, the experts told us, asking for anything at all precise in their wailing, it would be integration. Of course, there is no question of granting that; the system, which depends on over-exploitation, as you know, would be ruined. But it's enough to hold the carrot in front of their noses, they'll gallop all right. As to a revolt, we need not worry at all; what native in his senses would go off to massacre the fair sons of Europe simply to become European as they are? In short, we encouraged these disconsolate spirits and thought it not a bad idea for once to award the Prix Goncourt to a Negro. That was before '39.

1961. Listen: 'Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience.' The tone is new. Who dares to speak thus? It is an African, a man from the Third World, an ex-'native'. He adds: 'Europe now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she is running headlong into the abyss; we would do well to keep away from it.' In other words, she's done for. A truth which is not pleasant to state but of which we are

all convinced, are we not, fellow-Europeans, in the marrow of our bones?

We must however make one reservation. When a Frenchman, for example, says to other Frenchmen 'The country is done for' — which has happened, I should think, almost every day since 1930 — it is emotional talk; burning with love and fury, the speaker includes himself with his fellow-countrymen. And then, usually, he adds 'Unless ...' His meaning is clear; no more mistakes must be made; if his instructions are not carried out to the letter, then and only then will the country go to pieces. In short, it is a threat followed by a piece of advice and these remarks are so much the less shocking in that they spring from a national intersubjectivity. But on the contrary when Fanon says of Europe that she is rushing to her doom, far from sounding the alarm he is merely setting out a diagnosis. This doctor neither claims that she is a hopeless case — miracles have been known to exist — nor does he give her the means to cure herself. He certifies that she is dying, on external evidence, founded on symptoms that he can observe. As to curing her, no; he has other things to think about; he does not give a damn whether she lives or dies. Because of this, his book is scandalous. And if you murmur, jokingly embarrassed, 'He has it in for us!' the true nature of the scandal escapes you; for Fanon has nothing in for you at all; his work — red-hot for some — in what concerns you is as cold as ice; he speaks of you often, never to you. The black Goncourts and the yellow Nobels are finished; the days of colonized laureats are over. An ex-native



French-speaking, bends that language to new requirements, makes use of it, and speaks to the colonized only: 'Natives of an under-developed countries, unite!' What a downfall! For the fathers, we alone were the speakers; the sons no longer even consider us as valid intermediaries: we are the objects of their speeches. Of course, Fanon mentions in passing our well-known crimes: Sétif, Hanoi, Madagascar: but he does not waste his time in condemning them; he uses them. If he demonstrates the tactics of colonialism, the complex play of relations which unite and oppose the colonists to the people of the mother country, it is for his brothers; his aim is to teach them to beat us at our own game.

In short, the Third World finds *itself* and speaks to *itself* through his voice. We know that it is not a homogeneous world; we know too that enslaved peoples are still to be found there, together with some who have achieved a simulacrum of phoney independence, others who are still fighting to attain sovereignty and others again who have obtained complete freedom but who live under the constant menace of imperialist aggression. These differences are born of colonial history, in other words of oppression. Here, the mother country is satisfied to keep some feudal rulers in her pay; there, dividing and ruling she has created a native bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end; elsewhere she has played a double game: the colony is planted with settlers and exploited at the same time. Thus Europe has multiplied divisions and opposing groups, has fashioned classes and sometimes

even racial prejudices, and has endeavoured by every means to bring about and intensify the stratification of colonized societies. Fanon hides nothing: in order to fight against us the former colony must fight against itself: or, rather, the two struggles form part of a whole. In the heat of battle, all internal barriers break down; the puppet bourgeoisie of businessmen and shopkeepers, the urban proletariat, which is always in a privileged position, the *lumpen-proletariat* of the shanty towns — all fall into line with the stand made by the rural masses, that veritable reservoir of a national revolutionary army; for in those countries where colonialism has deliberately held up development, the peasantry, when it rises, quickly stands out as the revolutionary class. For it knows naked oppression, and suffers far more from it than the workers in the towns, and in order not to die of hunger, it demands no less than a complete demolishing of all existing structures. In order to triumph, the national revolution must be socialist; if its career is cut short, if the native bourgeoisie takes over power, the new State, in spite of its formal sovereignty, remains in the hands of the imperialists. The example of Katanga illustrates this quite well. Thus the unity of the Third World is not yet achieved. It is a work in progress, which begins by the union, in each country, after independence as before, of the whole of the colonized under the command of the peasant class. This is what Fanon explains to his brothers in Africa, Asia and Latin America: we must achieve revolutionary socialism all together everywhere, or else one by one we will be defeated by our former masters. He hides



nothing, neither weaknesses, nor discords, nor mystification. Here, the movement gets off to a bad start; then, after a striking initial success it loses momentum; elsewhere it has come to a standstill, and if it is to start again, the peasants must throw their bourgeoisie overboard. The reader is sternly put on his guard against the most dangerous will o' the wisps: the cult of the leader and of personalities, Western culture, and what is equally to be feared, the withdrawal into the twilight of past African culture. For the only true culture is that of the Revolution; that is to say, it is constantly in the making. Fanon speaks out loud; we Europeans can hear him, as the fact that you hold this book in your hand proves; is he not then afraid that the colonial powers may take advantage of his sincerity?

No; he fears nothing. Our methods are out-of-date; they can sometimes delay emancipation, but not stop it. And do not think that we can change our ways; neo-colonialism, that idle dream of mother countries, is a lot of hot air; the 'Third Forces' don't exist, or if they do they are only the tin-pot bourgeoisies that colonialism has already placed in the saddle. Our Machiavellianism has little purchase on this wide-awake world that has run our falsehoods to earth one after the other. The settler has only recourse to one thing: brute force, when he can command it; the native has only one choice, between servitude or supremacy. What does Fanon care whether you read his work or not? It is to his brothers that he denounces our old tricks, and he is sure we have no more up our sleeves. It is to them he says: 'Europe has laid

her hands on our continents, and we must slash at her fingers till she lets go. It's a good moment; nothing can happen at Bizerta, at Elizabethville or in the Algerian *bled* that the whole world does not hear about. The rival blocks take opposite sides, and hold each other in check; let us take advantage of this paralysis, let us burst into history, forcing it by our invasion into universality for the first time. Let us start fighting; and if we've no other arms, the waiting knife's enough.'

Europeans, you must open this book and enter into it. After a few steps in the darkness you will see strangers gathered around a fire; come close, and listen, for they are talking of the destiny they will mete out to your trading-centres and to the hired soldiers who defend them. They will see you, perhaps, but they will go on talking among themselves, without even lowering their voices. This indifference strikes home: their fathers, shadowy creatures, your creatures, were but dead souls; you it was who allowed them glimpses of light, to you only did they dare speak, and you did not bother to reply to such zombies. Their sons ignore you; a fire warms them and sheds light around them, and you have not lit it. Now, at a respectful distance, it is you who will feel furtive, nightbound and perished with cold. Turn and turn about; in these shadows from whence a new dawn will break, it is you who are the zombies.

In this case, you will say, let's throw away this book. Why read it if it is not written for us? For two reasons; the first is that Fanon explains you



to his brothers and shows them the mechanism by which we are estranged from ourselves; take advantage of this, and get to know yourselves seen in the light of truth, objectively. Our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable. It is enough that they show us what we have made of them for us to realize what we have made of ourselves. But is it any use? Yes, for Europe is at death's door. But, you will say, we live in the mother country, and we disapprove of her excesses. It is true, you are not settlers, but you are no better. For the pioneers belonged to you; you sent them overseas, and it was you they enriched. You warned them that if they shed too much blood you would disown them, or say you did, in something of the same way as any state maintains abroad a mob of agitators, agents provocateurs and spies whom it disowns when they are caught. You, who are so liberal and so humane, who have such an exaggerated adoration of culture that it verges on affectation, you pretend to forget that you own colonies and that in them men are massacred in your name. Fanon reveals to his comrades above all to some of them who are rather too Westernized — the solidarity of the people of the mother country and of their representatives in the colonies. Have the courage to read this book, for in the first place it will make you ashamed, and shame, as Marx said, is a revolutionary sentiment. You see, I, too, am incapable of ridding myself of subjective illusions; I, too, say to you: 'All is lost, unless ...' As a European, I steal the enemy's book, and out of it I fashion a remedy for Europe. Make the

most of it.

And here is the second reason: if you set aside Sorel's fascist utterances, you will find that Fanon is the first since Engels to bring the processes of history into the clear light of day. Moreover, you need not think that hot-headedness or an unhappy childhood have given him some uncommon taste for violence; he acts as the interpreter of the situation, that's all. But this is enough to enable him to constitute, step by step, the dialectic which liberal hypocrisy hides from you and which is as much responsible for our existence as for his.

During the last century, the middle classes looked on the workers as covetous creatures, made lawless by their greedy desires; but they took care to include these great brutes in our own species, or at least they considered that they were free men — that is to say, free to sell their labour. In France, as in England, humanism claimed to be universal.

In the case of forced labour, it is quite the contrary. There is no contract; moreover, there must be intimidation and thus oppression grows. Our soldiers overseas, rejecting the universalism of the mother country, apply the 'numerus clausus' to the human race: since none may enslave, rob or kill his fellowman without committing a crime, they lay down the principle that the native is not one of our fellow-men. Our striking-power has been given the mission of changing this abstract certainty into reality: the order is given to reduce the inhabitants of the annexed country to the level



of superior monkeys in order to justify the settler's treatment of them as beasts of burden. Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours. Sheer physical fatigue win stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are levelled at the peasant; civilians come to take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to till the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. The business is conducted with flying colours and by experts: the 'psychological services' weren't established yesterday; nor was brain-washing. And yet, in spite of an these efforts, their ends are nowhere achieved: neither in the Congo, where Negroes' hands were cut off, nor in Angola, where until very recently malcontents' lips were pierced in order to shut them with padlocks. I do not say that it is impossible to change a Man into an animal I simply say that you won't get there without weakening him considerably. Blows will never suffice; you have to push the starvation further, and that's the trouble with slavery.

For when you domesticate a member of our own species, you reduce his output, and however little you may give him, a farmyard man finishes by costing more than he brings in. For

this reason the settlers are obliged to stop the breaking-in half-way; the result, neither man nor animal, is the native. Beaten, under-nourished, ill, terrified — but only up to a certain point — he has, whether he's black, yellow or white, always the same traits of character: he's a sly-boots, a lazybones and a thief, who lives on nothing, and who understands only violence.

Poor settler; here is his contradiction naked, shorn of its trappings. He ought to kill those he plunders, as they say djinns do. Now, this is not possible, because he must exploit them as well. Because he can't carry massacre on to genocide, and slavery to animal-like degradation, he loses control, the machine goes into reverse, and a relentless logic leads him on to decolonization.

But it does not happen immediately. At first the European's reign continues. He has already lost the battle, but this is not obvious; he does not yet know that the natives are only half-native; to hear him talk, it would seem that he ill-treats them in order to destroy or to repress the evil that they have rooted in them; and after three generations their pernicious instincts will reappear no more. What instincts does he mean? The instincts that urge slaves on to massacre their master? Can he not here recognize his own cruelty turned against himself? In the savagery of these oppressed peasants, does he not find his own settler's savagery, which they have absorbed through every pore and for which there is no cure? The reason is simple; this imperious being, crazed by his absolute power and by the



fear of losing it, no longer remembers clearly that he was once a man; he takes himself for a horsewhip or a gun; he has come to believe that the domestication of the 'inferior races' will come about by the conditioning of their reflexes. But in this he leaves out of account the human memory and the ineffaceable marks left upon it; and then, above all there is something which perhaps he has never known: we only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us. Three generations did we say? Hardly has the second generation opened their eyes than from then on they've seen their fathers being flogged. In psychiatric terms, they are 'traumatized', for life. But these constantly renewed aggressions, far from bringing them to submission, thrust them into an unbearable contradiction which the European will pay for sooner or later. After that, when it is their turn to be broken in, when they are taught what shame and hunger and pain are, all that is stirred up in them is a volcanic fury whose force is equal to that of the pressure put upon them. You said they understand nothing but violence? Of course; first, the only violence is the settlers; but soon they will make it their own; that is to say, the same violence is thrown back upon us as when our reflection comes forward to meet us when we go towards a mirror.

Make no mistake about it; by this mad fury, by this bitterness and spleen, by their ever-present desire to kill us, by the permanent tensing of powerful muscles which are afraid to relax, they have become men: men because of the settler,

who wants to make beasts of burden of them — because of him, and against him. Hatred, blind hatred which is as yet an abstraction, is their only wealth; the Master calls it forth because he seeks to reduce them to animals, but he fails to break it down because his interests stop him half-way. Thus the 'half-natives' are still humans, through the power and the weakness of the oppressor which is transformed within them into a stubborn refusal of the animal condition. We realize what follows; they're lazy: of course — it's a form of sabotage. they're sly and thieving; just imagine! But their petty thefts mark the beginning of a resistance which is still unorganized. That is not enough; there are those among them who assert themselves by throwing themselves barehanded against the guns; these are their heroes. Others make men of themselves by murdering Europeans, and these are shot down; brigands or martyrs, their agony exalts the terrified masses.

Yes, terrified; at this fresh stage, colonial aggression turns inward in a current of terror among the natives. By this I do not only mean the fear that they experience when faced with our inexhaustible means of repression but also that which their own fury produces in them. They are cornered between our guns pointed at them and those terrifying compulsions, those desires for murder which spring from the depth of their spirits and which they do not always recognize; for at first it is not their violence, it is ours, which turns back on itself and rends them; and the first action of these oppressed creatures is to bury deep down that hidden anger which their and our



moralties condemn and which is however only the last refuge of their humanity. Read Fanon: you will learn how, in the period of their helplessness, their mad impulse to murder is the expression of the natives' collective unconscious.

If this suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves. In order to free themselves they even massacre each other. The different tribes fight between themselves since they cannot face the real enemy — and you can count on colonial policy to keep up their rivalries; the man who raises his knife against his brother thinks that he has destroyed once and for all the detested image of their common degradation, even though these expiatory victims don't quench their thirst for blood. They can only stop themselves from marching against the machine-guns by doing our work for us; of their own accord they will speed up the dehumanisation that they reject. Under the amused eye of the settler, they will take the greatest precautions against their own kind by setting up supernatural barriers, at times reviving old and terrible myths, at others binding themselves by scrupulous rites. It is in this way that an obsessed person flees from his deepest needs — by binding himself to certain observances which require his attention at every turn. They dance; that keeps them busy; it relaxes their painfully contracted muscles; and then the dance mimes secretly, often without their knowing, the refusal they cannot utter and the murders they dare not commit. In certain districts they make use of that

last resort — possession by spirits. Formerly this was a religious experience in all its simplicity, a certain communion of the faithful with sacred things; now they make of it a weapon against humiliation and despair; Mumbo-Jumbo and all the idols of the tribe come down among them, rule over their violence and waste it in trances until it is exhausted. At the same time these high-placed, personages protect them; in other words the colonized people protect themselves against colonial estrangement by going one better in religious estrangement, with the unique result that finally they add the two estrangements together and each reinforces the other. Thus in certain psychoses the hallucinated person, tired of always being insulted by his demon, one fine day starts hearing the voice of an angel who pays him compliments; but the jeers don't stop for all that; only from then on, they alternate with congratulations. This is a defence, but it is also the end of the story; the self is disassociated, and the patient heads for madness. Let us add, for certain other carefully selected unfortunates, that other witchery of which I have already spoken: Western culture. If I were them, you may say, I'd prefer my mumbo-jumbo to their Acropolis. Very good: you've grasped the situation. But not altogether, because you *aren't* them — or not yet. Otherwise you would know that they can't choose; they must have both. Two worlds: that makes two bewitchings; they dance all night and at dawn they crowd into the churches to hear mass; each day the split widens. Our enemy betrays his brothers and becomes our accomplice; his brothers do the same thing. The status of 'native'



is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people *with their consent*.

Laying claim to and denying the human condition at the same time: the contradiction is explosive. For that matter it does explode, you know as well as I do; and we are living at the moment when the match is put to the fuse. When the rising birthrate brings wider famine in its wake, when these newcomers have life to fear rather more than death, the torrent of violence sweeps away all barriers. In Algeria and Angola, Europeans are massacred at sight. It is the moment of the boomerang; it is the third phase of violence; it comes back on us, it strikes us, and we do not realize any more than we did the other times that it's we that have launched it. The 'liberals' are stupefied; they admit that we were not polite enough to the natives, that it would have been wiser and fairer to allow them certain rights in so far as this was possible; they ask nothing better than to admit them in batches and without sponsors to that very exclusive club, our species; and now this barbarous, mad outburst doesn't spare them any more than the bad settlers. The Left at home is embarrassed; they know the true situation of the natives, the merciless oppression they are submitted to; they do not condemn their revolt, knowing full well that we have done everything to provoke it. But, all the same, they think to themselves, there are limits; these guerrillas should be bent on showing that they are chivalrous; that would be the best way of showing they are men. Sometimes the Left

scolds them ... 'you're going too far; we won't support you any more.' The natives don't give a damn about their support; for all the good it does them they might as well stuff it up their backsides. Once their war began, they saw this hard truth: that every single one of us has made his bit, has got something out of them; they don't need to call anyone to witness; they'll grant favoured treatment to no one.

There is one duty to be done, one end to achieve: to thrust out colonialism by every means in their power. The more far-seeing among us will be, in the last resort, ready to admit this duty and this end; but we cannot help seeing in this ordeal by force the altogether inhuman means that these less-than-men make use of to win the concession of a charter of humanity. Accord it to them at once, then, and let them endeavour by peaceful undertakings to deserve it. Our worthiest souls contain racial prejudice.

They would do well to read Fanon; for he shows clearly that this irrepressible violence is neither sound and fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man re-creating himself. I think we understood this truth at one time, but we have forgotten it — that no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When his rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self. Far removed from his



war, we consider it as a triumph of barbarism; but of its own volition it achieves, slowly but surely, the emancipation of the rebel, for bit by bit it destroys in him and around him the colonial gloom. Once begun, it is a war that gives no quarter. You may fear or be feared; that is to say, abandon yourself to the disassociations of a sham existence or conquer your birthright of unity. When the peasant takes a gun in his hands, the old myths grow dim and the prohibitions are one by one forgotten. The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot. At this moment the Nation does not shrink from him; wherever he goes, wherever he may be, she is; she follows, and is never lost to view, for she is one with his liberty. But, after the first surprise, the colonial army strikes; and then all must unite or be slaughtered. Tribal dissensions weaken and tend to disappear; in the first place because they endanger the Revolution, but for the more profound reason that they served no other purpose before than to divert violence against false foes. When they remain — as in the Congo — it's because they are kept up by the agents of colonialism. The Nation marches forward; for each of her children she is to be found wherever his brothers are fighting. Their feeling for each other is the reverse of the hatred they feel for you; they are brothers inasmuch as each of them has killed and may at any moment have

to kill again. Fanon shows his readers the limits of 'spontaneity' and the need for and dangers of 'organization'. But however great may be the task at each turning of the way the revolutionary consciousness deepens. The last complexes flee away; no one need come to us talking of the 'dependency' complex of an A.L.N. soldier.

With his blinkers off, the peasant takes account of his real needs; before they were enough to kill him, but he tried to ignore them; now he sees them as infinitely great requirements. In this violence which springs from the people, which enables them to hold out for five years — for eight years as the Algerians have done — the military, political and social necessities cannot be separated. The war, by merely setting the question of command and responsibility, institutes new structures which will become the first institutions of peace. Here, then, is man even now established in new traditions, the future children of a horrible present; here then we see him legitimized by a law which will be born or is born each day under fire: once the last settler a killed, shipped home or assimilated, the minority breed disappears, to be replaced by socialism. And that's not enough; the rebel does not stop there; for you can be quite sure that he is not risking his skin to find himself at the level of a former inhabitant of the old mother country. Look how patient he is! Perhaps he dreams of another Dien Bien Phu, but don't think he's really counting on it; he's a beggar fighting, in his poverty, against rich men powerfully armed. While he is waiting for decisive victories, or even

without expecting them at all, he tires out his adversaries until they are sick of him.

It will not be without fearful losses; the colonial army becomes ferocious; the country is marked out, there are mopping-up operations, transfers of population, reprisal expeditions, and they massacre women and children. He knows this; this new man begins his life as a man at the end of it; he considers himself as a potential corpse. He will be killed; not only does he accept this risk, he's sure of it. This potential dead man has lost his wife and his children; he has seen so many dying men that he prefers victory to survival; others, not he, will have the fruits of victory; he is too weary of it all. But this weariness of the heart is the root of an unbelievable courage. We find our humanity on this side of death and despair; he finds it beyond torture and death. We have sown the wind; he is the whirlwind. The child of violence, at every moment he draws from it his humanity. We were men at his expense, he makes himself man at ours: a different man; of higher quality.

Here Fanon stops. He has shown the way forward: he is the spokesman of those who are fighting and he has called for union, that is to say the unity of the African continent against all dissensions and all particularisms. He has gained his end. If he had wished to describe in all its details the historical phenomenon of decolonization he would have to have spoken of us; this is not at all his intention. But, when we have closed the book, the argument continues

within us, in spite of its author; for we feel the strength of the peoples in revolt and we answer by force. Thus there is a fresh moment of violence; and this time we ourselves are involved, for by its nature this violence is changing us, accordingly as the 'half-native' is changed. Everyone of us must think for himself — always provided that he thinks at all; for in Europe today, stunned as she is by the blows received by France, Belgium or England, even to allow your mind to be diverted, however slightly, is as good as being the accomplice in crime of colonialism. This book has not the slightest need of a preface, all the less because it is not addressed to us. Yet I have written one, in order to bring the argument to its conclusion; for we in Europe too are being decolonized: that is to say that the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out. Let us look at ourselves, if we can bear to, and see what is becoming of us. First, we must face that unexpected revelation, the strip-tease of our humanism. There you can see it, quite naked, and it's not a pretty sight. It was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affectation of sensibility were only alibis for our aggressions. A fine sight they are too, the believers in non-violence, saying that they are neither executioners nor victims. Very well then; if you're not victims when the government which you've voted for, when the army in which your younger brothers are serving without hesitation or remorse have undertaken race murder, you are, without a shadow of doubt, executioners. And if you chose to be victims and to risk being put in prison for a day or two, you are



simply choosing to pull your irons out of the fire. But you will not be able to pull them out; they'll have to stay there till the end. Try to understand this at any rate: if violence began this _very evening and if exploitation and oppression had never existed on the earth, perhaps the slogans of non-violence might end the quarrel. But if the whole regime, even your non-violent ideas, are conditioned by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passivity serves only to place you in the ranks of the oppressors.

You know well enough that we are exploiters. You know too that we have laid hands on first the gold and metals, then the petroleum of the 'new continents', and that we have brought them back to the old countries. This was not without excellent results, as witness our palaces, our cathedrals and our great industrial cities; and then when there was the threat of a slump, the colonial markets were there to soften the blow or to divert it. Crammed with riches, Europe accorded the human status *de jure* to its inhabitants. With us, to be a man is to be an accomplice of colonialism, since all of us without exception have profited by colonial exploitation. This fat, pale continent ends by falling into what Fanon rightly calls narcissism. Cocteau became irritated with Paris — 'that city which talks about itself the whole time'. Is Europe any different? And that super-European monstrosity, North America? Chatter, chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honour, patriotism and what have you. All this did not prevent us from making anti-racial speeches about dirty niggers, dirty Jews

and dirty Arabs. High-minded people, liberal or just soft-hearted, protest that they were shocked by such inconsistency; but they were either mistaken or dishonest, for with us there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters. While there was a native population somewhere this imposture was not shown up; in the notion of the human race we found an abstract assumption of universality which served as cover for the most realistic practices. On the other side of the ocean there was a race of less-than-humans who, thanks to us, might reach our status a thousand years hence, perhaps; in short, we mistook the elite for the genus. Today, the native populations reveal their true nature, and at the same time our exclusive 'club' reveals its weakness — that it's neither more nor less than a minority. Worse than that: since the others become men in name against us, it seems that we are the enemies of mankind; the *élite* shows itself in its true colours — it is nothing more than a gang. Our precious sets of values begin to moult; on closer scrutiny you won't see one that isn't stained with blood. If you are looking for an example, remember these fine words: 'How generous France is!' Us, generous? What about Sétif, then? And those eight years of ferocious war which have cost the lives of over a million Algerians? And the tortures?

But let it be understood that nobody reproaches us with having been false to such-and-such a mission — for the very good reason that we



had no mission at all. It is generosity itself that's in question; this fine melodious word has only one meaning: the granting of a statutory charter. For the folk across the water, new men, freed men, no one has the power nor the right to give anything to anybody; for each of them has every right, and the right to everything. And when one day our human kind becomes full-grown, it will not define itself as the sum total of the whole world's inhabitants, but as the infinite unity of their mutual needs. Here I stop; you will have no trouble in finishing the job; all you have to do is to look our aristocratic virtues straight in the face, for the first and last time. They are cracking up; how could they survive the aristocracy of underlings who brought them into being? A few years ago, a bourgeois colonialist commentator found only this to say in defence of the West: 'We aren't angels. But we, at least, feel some remorse.' What a confession! Formerly our continent was buoyed up by other means: the Parthenon, Chartres, the Rights of Man or the swastika. Now we know what these are worth; and the only chance of our being saved from, shipwreck is the very Christian sentiment of guilt. You can see it's the end; Europe is springing leaks everywhere. What then has happened? It simply is that in the past we made history and now it is being made of us. The ratio of forces has been inverted; decolonization has begun; all that our hired soldiers can do is to delay its completion.

The old 'mother countries' have still to go the whole hog, still have to engage their entire forces

in a battle which is lost before it has begun. At the end of the adventure we again find that colonial brutality which was Bugeaud's doubtful but though it has been multiplied ten-fold, it's still not enough. The national service units are sent to Algeria, and they remain there seven years with no result. Violence has changed its direction. When we were victorious we practised it without its seeming to alter us; it broke down the others, but for us men our humanism remained intact. United by their profits, the peoples of the mother countries baptized their commonwealth of crimes, calling them fraternity and love; today violence, blocked everywhere, comes back on us through our soldiers, comes inside and takes possession of us. Involution starts; the native re-creates himself, and we, settlers and Europeans, ultras and liberals we break up. Rage and fear are already blatant; they show themselves openly in the nigger-hunts in Algeria. Now, which side are the savages on? Where is barbarism? Nothing is missing, not even the tom-toms; the motor-horns beat out '*Al-gér-ie fran-çaise*' while the Europeans burn Moslems alive. Fanon reminds us that not so very long ago, a congress of psychiatrists was distressed by the criminal propensities of the native population. 'Those people kill each other,' they said, 'that isn't normal. The Algerian's cortex must be under-developed.' In central Africa, others have established that 'the African makes very little use of his frontal lobes'. These learned men would do well today to follow up their investigations in Europe, and particularly with regard to the French. For we, too, during the last few years, must be victims of 'frontal



sluggishness' since our patriots do quite a bit of assassinating of their fellow-countrymen and if they're not at home, they blow up their house and their concierge. This is only a beginning; civil war is forecast for the autumn, or for the spring of next year. Yet our lobes seem to be in perfect condition; is it not rather the case that, since we cannot crush the natives, violence comes back on its tracks, accumulates in the very depths of our nature and seeks a way out? The union of the Algerian people causes the disunion of the French people; throughout the whole territory of the ex-mother-country, the tribes are dancing their war-dances. The terror has left Africa, and is settling here; for quite obviously there are certain furious beings who want to make us Pay with our own blood for the shame of having been beaten by the native. Then too, there are the others, all the others who are equally guilty (for after Bizerta, after the lynchings of September, who among them came out into the streets to shout 'We've had enough'?) but less spectacular — the liberals, and the toughs of the tender Left.

The fever is mounting amongst them too, and resentment at the same time. And they certainly have the wind up! They hide their rage in myths and complicated rites; in order to stave off the day of reckoning and the need for decision they have put at the head of our affairs a Grand Magician whose business it is to keep us all in the dark at all costs. Nothing is being done; violence, proclaimed by some, disowned by others, turns in a vacuum; one day it bursts out at Metz, the next at Bordeaux; it's here, there and everywhere,

like in a game of hunt the slipper. It's our turn to tread the path, step by step, which leads down to native level. But to become natives altogether, our soil must be occupied by a formerly colonized people and we must starve of hunger. This won't happen; for it's a discredited colonialism which is taking hold on us; this is the senile, arrogant master who will straddle us; here he comes, our mumbo-jumbo.

And when you have read Fanon's last chapter, you will be convinced that it would be better for you to be a native at the uttermost depths of his misery than to be a former settler. It is not right for a police official to be obliged to torture for ten hours a day; at that rate, his nerves will fall to bits, unless the torturers are forbidden in their own interests to work overtime. When it is desirable that the morality of the Nation and the Army should be protected by the rigours of the law, it is not right that the former should systematically demoralize the latter, nor that a country with a Republican tradition should confide hundreds and thousands of its young folk to the care of putschist officers. It is not right, my fellow-countrymen, you who know very well all the crimes committed in our name, it's not at all right that you do not breathe a word about them to anyone, not even to your own soul, for fear of having to stand in judgement on yourself. I am willing to believe that at the beginning you did not realize what was happening; later, you doubted whether such things could be true; but now you know, and still you hold your tongues. Eight years of silence; what degradation! And



your silence is all of no avail; today, the blinding sun of torture is at its zenith; it lights up the whole country. Under that merciless glare, there is not a laugh that does not ring false, not a face that is not painted to hide fear or anger, not a single action that does not betray our disgust, and our complicity. It is enough today for two French people to meet together for there to be a dead man between them. One dead man did I say? In other days France was the name of a country. We should take care that in 1961 it does not become the name of a nervous disease.

Will we recover? Yes. For violence, like Achilles' lance, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted. Today, we are bound hand and foot, humiliated and sick with fear; we cannot fall lower. Happily this is not yet enough for the colonialist aristocracy; it cannot complete its delaying mission in Algeria until it has first finished colonizing the French. Every day we retreat in front of the battle, but you may be sure that we will not avoid it; the killers need it; they'll go for us and hit out blindly to left and right.

Thus the day of magicians and fetishes will end; you will have to fight, or rot in concentration camps. This is the end of the dialectic; you condemn this war but do not yet dare to declare yourselves to be on the side of the Algerian fighters; never fear, you can count on the settlers and the hired soldiers; they'll make you take the plunge. Then, perhaps, when your back is to the wall, you will let loose at last that new violence which is raised up in you by old, oft-repeated

crimes. But, as they say, that's another story: the history of mankind. The time is drawing near, I am sure, when we will join the ranks of those who make it.

Jean-Paul Sartre