

THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH

by

Frantz Fanon

Preface by JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Translated by CONSTANCE FARRINGTON

GROVE WEIDENFELD NEW YORK

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Published by Grove Weidenfeld A division of Grove Press, Inc. 841 Broadway New York, NY 10003-4793

Originally published by François Maspero éditeur, Paris, France, under the title *Les damnés de la terre*, copyright (©) 1961 by François Maspero éditeur S.A.R.L.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 65-14196 ISBN 0-8021-5083-7

Manufactured in the United States of America

Printed on acid-free paper

First Black Cat Edition 1968

First Evergreen Edition 1991

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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PREFACE

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 elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. 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

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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 Greco-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 claims 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 overexploitation, as you know, would be mined. 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

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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 fellowcountrymen. 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

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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 laureates 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 all underdeveloped 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 phony 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

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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 endeavored 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 *lumpenproletariat* 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 people 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; there, after a striking initial success it loses momentum;

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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 of 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 blocs take opposite sides, and hold each other in check; let us take advantage of this paralysis, let us burst into history, forcing

*Up-country in North Africa.--*Trans.*

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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 centers 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

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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 hotheadedness or an unhappy childhood has 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 labor. In France, as in England, humanism claimed to be universal.

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In the case of forced labor, 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 fellow man 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 will stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are leveled 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 colors and by experts; the "psychological services" weren't established yesterday; nor was brainwashing. And yet, in spite of all 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

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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 halfway; the result, neither man nor animal, is the native. Beaten, undernourished, 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

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"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 settler's; 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 toward 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 halfway. 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;

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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 moralities 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

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themselves from marching against the machine-guns by doing our work for us; of their own accord they will speed up the dehumanization 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 defense, 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

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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 birth rate 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 who 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 guerillas

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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 favored 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 farseeing 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 endeavor 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 recreating 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

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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 ALN soldier. *

With his blinkers off, the peasant takes account of his real needs; before they were enough to kill him, but he

* *National Army of Liberation in Algeria.--Trans*

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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 is 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

*The French army's drastic defeat at Dien Bien Phu ended the war in Indo-China.--
Trans.

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. Every one 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 had 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,

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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 nonviolence, 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 choose 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?

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And that super-European monstrosity, North America? Chatter, chatter: liberty, equality, fraternity, love, honor, 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 softhearted, 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 elite shows itself in its true colors--it is nothing more than a gang. Our precious sets of values begin to molt; 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

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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 defense 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; they 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 glory; 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

*Thomas-Robert Bugeaud de la Piconnerie, 1784-1849, Duke of Islay, Marshall of France. Famous for military exploits in the conquest of Algeria, he was appointed Governor of Algeria in 1840.-*Trans.*

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years with no result. Violence has changed its direction. When we were victorious we practiced 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 recreates 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 Algiers. Now, which side are the savages on? Where is barbarism? Nothing is missing, not even the tom-toms; the motorhorns 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 underdeveloped." 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 ter-

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ritory 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 of 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

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should be protected by the rigors 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 judgment of 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 to 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

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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

The Wretched of the Earth

CONCERNING VIOLENCE

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. At whatever level we study it--relationships between individuals, new names for sports clubs, the human admixture at cocktail parties, in the police, on the directing boards of national or private banks--decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and absolute substitution. It is true that we could equally well stress the rise of a new nation, the setting up of a new state, its diplomatic relations, and its economic and political trends. But we have precisely chosen to speak of that kind of *tabula rasa* which characterizes at the outset all decolonization. Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the

lives of the men and women who are colonized. But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another "species" of men and women: the colonizers.

Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. But it cannot come as a result of magical practices, nor of a natural shock, nor of a friendly understanding. Decolonization, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content. Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together--that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler--was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. The settler and the native are old acquaintances. In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing "them" well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system.

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the

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"thing" which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.

In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the wellknown words: "The last shall be first and the first last." Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence. That is why, if we try to describe it, all decolonization is successful.

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence.

You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a program if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is to say from the actual formulation of that program, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing. The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence.

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at

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least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be reorganized.

The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of

oppression. In capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behavior--all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably. In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counselors and "bewilderers" separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both

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follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession--all manner of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, "They want to take our place." It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place.

This world divided into compartments, this world cut

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in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.

Everything up to and including the very nature of precapitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must here be thought out again. The serf is in essence different from the knight, but a reference to divine right is necessary to legitimize this statutory difference. In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines. In defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner. It is neither the act of owning factories, nor estates, nor a bank balance which distinguishes the governing classes. The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants, "the others."

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. To wreck the colonial world is henceforward a mental picture of action

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which is very clear, very easy to understand and which may be assumed by each one of the individuals which constitute the colonized people. To break up the colonial world does not mean that after the frontiers have been abolished lines of communication will be set up between the two zones. The destruction of the colonial world is no more and no less than the abolition of one zone, its burial in the depths of the earth or its expulsion from the country.

The natives' challenge to the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of points of view. It is not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute. The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. * Native society

is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. Monsieur Meyer could thus state seriously in the French National Assembly that the Republic must not be prostituted by allowing

*We have demonstrated the mechanism of this Manichean world in *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

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the Algerian people to become part of it. All values, in fact, are irrevocably poisoned and diseased as soon as they are allowed in contact with the colonized race. The customs of the colonized people, their traditions, their myths -- above all, their myths--are the very sign of that poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity. That is why we must put the DDT which destroys parasites, the bearers of disease, on the same level as the Christian religion which wages war on embryonic heresies and instincts, and on evil as yet unborn. The recession of yellow fever and the advance of evangelization form part of the same balance sheet. But the triumphant *communiqués* from the missions are in fact a source of information concerning the implantation of foreign influences in the core of the colonized people. I speak of the Christian religion, and no one need be astonished. The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen.

At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary. The European rarely hits on a picturesque style; but the native, who knows what is in the mind of the settler, guesses at once what he is thinking of. Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or

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end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life--all this forms part of the colonial vocabulary. General de Gaulle speaks of "the yellow multitudes" and François Mauriac of the black, brown, and

yellow masses which soon will be unleashed. The native knows all this, and laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory.

As soon as the native begins to pull on his moorings, and to cause anxiety to the settler, he is handed over to well-meaning souls who in cultural congresses point out to him the specificity and wealth of Western values. But every time Western values are mentioned they produce in the native a sort of stiffening or muscular lockjaw. During the period of decolonization, the natives's reason is appealed to. He is offered definite values, he is told frequently that decolonization need not mean regression, and that he must put his trust in qualities which are welltried, solid, and highly esteemed. But it so happens that when the native hears a speech about Western culture he pulls out his knife--or at least he makes sure it is within reach. The violence with which the supremacy of white values is affirmed and the aggressiveness which has permeated the victory of these values over the ways of life and of thought of the native mean that, in revenge, the native laughs in mockery when Western values are mentioned in front of him. In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values. In the period of decolonization, the colonized masses mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up.

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This phenomenon is ordinarily masked because, during the period of decolonization, certain colonized intellectuals have begun a dialogue with the bourgeoisie of the colonialist country. During this phase, the indigenous population is discerned only as an indistinct mass. The few native personalities whom the colonialist bourgeois have come to know here and there have not sufficient influence on that immediate discernment to give rise to nuances. On the other hand, during the period of liberation, the colonialist bourgeoisie looks feverishly for contacts with the elite and it is with these elite that the familiar dialogue concerning values is carried on. The colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides to carry out a rearguard action with regard to culture, values, techniques, and so on. Now what we must never forget is that the immense majority of colonized peoples is oblivious to these problems. For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with the dignity of the human individual: for that human individual has never heard tell of it. All that the native has seen in his country is that they can freely arrest him, beat him, starve him: and no professor of ethics, no priest has ever come to be beaten in his place, nor to share their bread with him. As far as the native is concerned, morality is very concrete; it is to silence the settler's defiance, to break his flaunting violence--in a word, to put him out of the picture. The wellknown principle that all men are equal will be illustrated in the colonies from the moment that the native claims that he is the equal of the settler. One step more, and he is ready to fight to be more than the settler. In fact, he has already decided to eject him and to take his place; as

we see it, it is a whole material and moral universe which is breaking up. The intellectual who for his part has followed the colonialist with regard to the universal abstract will fight in order that the settler and the native may live together in peace in a new world. But the thing he does not see, precisely because he is permeated by colonialism and all its ways of thinking, is that the settler, from the moment that the colonial context disappears, has no longer any interest in remaining or in co-existing. It is not by chance that, even before any negotiation * between the Algerian and French governments has taken place, the European minority which calls itself "liberal" has already made its position clear: it demands nothing more nor less than twofold citizenship. By setting themselves apart in an abstract manner, the liberals try to force the settler into taking a very concrete jump into the unknown. Let us admit it, the settler knows perfectly well that no phraseology can be a substitute for reality.

Thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the native stems from it. For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him. Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am already preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of flight.

We have said that the colonial context is characterized by the dichotomy which it imposes upon the whole peo-

* Fanon is writing in 1961.--*Trans.*

ple. Decolonization unifies that people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity, and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial, basis. We know the fierce words of the Senegalese patriots, referring to the maneuvers of their president, Senghor: "We have demanded that the higher posts should be given to Africans; and now Senghor is Africanizing the Europeans." That is to say that the native can see clearly and immediately if decolonization has come to pass or not, for his minimum demands are simply that the last shall be first.

But the native intellectual brings variants to this petition, and, in fact, he seems to have good reasons: higher civil servants, technicians, specialists--all seem to be needed. Now, the ordinary native interprets these unfair promotions as so many acts of sabotage, and he is often heard to declare: "It wasn't worth while, then, our becoming independent..."

In the colonial countries where a real struggle for freedom has taken place, where the blood of the people has flowed and where the length of the period of armed warfare has favored the backward surge of intellectuals toward bases grounded in the people, we can observe a genuine eradication of the superstructure built by these intellectuals from the bourgeois colonialist environment. The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course. The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greco-Latin pedestal. Now it so happens that during the struggle for liberation, at the moment that the native intellectual comes into touch again with his people, this

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artificial sentinel is turned into dust. All the Mediterranean values--the triumph of the human individual, of clarity, and of beauty--become lifeless, colorless knickknacks. All those speeches seem like collections of dead words; those values which seemed to uplift the soul are revealed as worthless, simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged.

Individualism is the first to disappear. The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully. The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organization of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend--these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on. The native intellectual takes part, in a sort of auto-da-fé, in the destruction of all his idols: egoism, recrimination that springs from pride, and the childish stupidity of those who always want to have the last word. Such a colonized intellectual, dusted over by colonial culture, will in the same way discover the substance of village assemblies, the cohesion of people's committees, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of local meetings and groupments. Henceforward, the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in concrete fact *everyone* will be discovered by the troops, *everyone* will be massacred--or *everyone* will be saved. The motto "look out for yourself," the atheist's method of salvation, is in this context forbidden.

Self-criticism has been much talked about of late, but

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few people realize that it is an African institution. Whether in the *djemaas* * of northern Africa or in the meetings of western Africa, tradition demands that the quarrels which occur in a village should be settled in public. It is communal self-criticism, of course, and

with a note of humor, because everybody is relaxed, and because in the last resort we all want the same things. But the more the intellectual imbibes the atmosphere of the people, the more completely he abandons the habits of calculation, of unwonted silence, of mental reservations, and shakes off the spirit of concealment. And it is true that already at that level we can say that the community triumphs, and that it spreads its own light and its own reason.

But it so happens sometimes that decolonization occurs in areas which have not been sufficiently shaken by the struggle for liberation, and there may be found those same know-all, smart, wily intellectuals. We find intact in them the manners and forms of thought picked up during their association with the colonialist bourgeoisie. Spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism and of today's national governments, they organize the loot of whatever national resources exist. Without pity, they use today's national distress as a means of getting on through scheming and legal robbery, by import-export combines, limited liability companies, gambling on the stock exchange, or unfair promotion. They are insistent in their demands for the nationalization of commerce, that is to say the reservation of markets and advantageous bargains for nationals only. As far as doctrine is concerned, they proclaim the pressing necessity of nationalizing the robbery of the nation. In this arid phase of national life, the so-called period of austerity, the success of their depredations is

*Village assemblies.--*Trans.*

swift to call forth the violence and anger of the people. For this same people, poverty-stricken yet independent, comes very quickly to possess a social conscience in the African and international context of today; and this the petty individualists will quickly learn.

In order to assimilate and to experience the oppressor's culture, the native has had to leave certain of his intellectual possessions in pawn. These pledges include his adoption of the forms of thought of the colonialist bourgeoisie. This is very noticeable in the inaptitude of the native intellectual to carry on a two-sided discussion; for he cannot eliminate himself when confronted with an object or an idea. On the other hand, when once he begins to militate among the people he is struck with wonder and amazement; he is literally disarmed by their good faith and honesty. The danger that will haunt him continually is that of becoming the uncritical mouthpiece of the masses; he becomes a kind of yes-man who nods assent at every word coming from the people, which he interprets as considered judgments. Now, the *fellah*, the unemployed man, the starving native do not lay a claim to the truth; they do not say that they represent the truth, for they *are* the truth.

Objectively, the intellectual behaves in this phase like a common opportunist. In fact he has not stopped maneuvering. There is never any question of his being either rejected or

welcomed by the people. What they ask is simply that all resources should be pooled. The inclusion of the native intellectual in the upward surge of the masses will in this case be differentiated by a curious cult of detail. That is not to say that the people are hostile to analysis; on the contrary, they like having things explained to them, they are glad to understand a line of argument and they like to see where they are going. But at the beginning of his association with the people the native

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intellectual over-stresses details and thereby comes to forget that the defeat of colonialism is the real object of the struggle. Carried away by the multitudinous aspects of the fight, he tends to concentrate on local tasks, performed with enthusiasm but almost always too solemnly. He fails to see the whole of the movement all the time. He introduces the idea of special disciplines, of specialized functions, of departments within the terrible stone crusher, the fierce mixing machine which a popular revolution is. He is occupied in action on a particular front, and it so happens that he loses sight of the unity of the movement. Thus, if a local defeat is inflicted, he may well be drawn into doubt, and from thence to despair. The people, on the other hand, take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of *bread and the land*: how can we obtain the land, and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure.

The problem of truth ought also to be considered. In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause. No absolute verity, no discourse on the purity of the soul, can shake this position. The native replies to the living lie of the colonial situation by an equal falsehood. His dealings with his fellow-nationals are open; they are strained and incomprehensible with regard to the settlers. Truth is that which hurries on the break-up of the colonialist regime; it is that which promotes the emergence of the nation; it is all that protects the natives, and ruins the foreigners. In this colonialist context there is no truthful behavior: and the good is quite simply that which is evil for "them."

Thus we see that the primary Manicheism which governed colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization; that is to say that the settler never

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ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown. The oppressor, in his own sphere, starts the process, a process of domination, of exploitation and of pillage, and in the other sphere the coiled, plundered creature which is the native provides fodder for the process as best he can, the process which moves uninterruptedly from the banks of the colonial territory to the palaces and the docks of the mother country. In this becalmed zone the sea has a smooth surface, the palm tree stirs gently in the breeze, the waves lap against the pebbles, and raw materials are ceaselessly transported, justifying the presence of the settler: and all the while the native, bent double, more dead than alive, exists interminably in an unchanging dream. The settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an

Odyssey. He is the absolute beginning: "This land was created by us"; he is the unceasing cause: "If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages." Over against him torpid creatures, wasted by fevers, obsessed by ancestral customs, form an almost inorganic background for the innovating dynamism of colonial mercantilism.

The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves.

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization--the history of pillage -and to bring into existence the history of the nation--the history of decolonization.

A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manicheistic world, a world of statues: the statue of the

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general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world. The native is a being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world. The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing; I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning.

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime in North Africa. We shall see later how this phenomenon should be judged. * When the native is confronted with the colonial order of things, he finds he is in a state of permanent tension. The settler's world is a hostile world, which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious. We have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler--not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler. This hostile world, ponderous and aggressive because it fends off the colonized masses with all the harshness it is capable of, represents not merely a hell from which the swiftest flight

* See the section: "Colonial War and Mental Disorders."

possible is desirable, but also a paradise close at hand which is guarded by terrible watchdogs.

The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier. Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty. But the native's guilt is never a guilt which he accepts; it is rather a kind of curse, a sort of sword of Damocles, for, in his innermost spirit, the native admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler is off his guard to fly at him. The native's muscles are always tensed. You can't say that he is terrorized, or even apprehensive. He is in fact ready at a moment's notice to exchange the role of the quarry for that of the hunter. The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor. The symbols of social order--the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags--are at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating: for they do not convey the message "Don't dare to budge"; rather, they cry out "Get ready to attack." And, in fact, if the native had any tendency to fall asleep and to forget, the settler's hauteur and the settler's anxiety to test the strength of the colonial system would remind him at every turn that the great showdown cannot be put off indefinitely. That impulse to take the settler's place implies a tonicity of muscles the whole time; and in fact we know that in certain emotional conditions the presence of an obstacle accentuates the tendency toward motion.

The settler-native relationship is a mass relationship. The settler pits brute force against the weight of numbers. He is an exhibitionist. His preoccupation with security makes him remind the native out loud that there he alone

is master. The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo petrification. The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions--in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs, and in quarrels between individuals.

Where individuals are concerned, a positive negation of common sense is evident. While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality *vis-à-vis* his brother. Tribal feuds only serve to perpetuate old grudges buried deep in the memory. By throwing himself with all his force into the vendetta, the native tries to persuade himself that colonialism does not exist, that everything is going on as before, that history continues. Here on the level of communal organizations we clearly discern the well-known behavior patterns of avoidance. It is as if

plunging into a fraternal bloodbath allowed them to ignore the obstacle, and to put off till later the choice, nevertheless inevitable, which opens up the question of armed resistance to colonialism. Thus collective autodestruction in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the native's muscular tension is set free. All these patterns of conduct are those of the death reflex when faced with danger, a suicidal behavior which proves to the settler (whose existence and domination is by them all the more justified) that these men are not reasonable human beings. In the same way the native manages to by-pass the settler. A belief in fatality removes all blame from the oppressor; the cause of misfortunes and of poverty is attributed to God: He is Fate. In this way

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the individual accepts the disintegration ordained by God, bows down before the settler and his lot, and by a kind of interior restabilization acquires a stony calm.

Meanwhile, however, life goes on, and the native will strengthen the inhibitions which contain his aggressiveness by drawing on the terrifying myths which are so frequently found in underdeveloped communities. There are maleficent spirits which intervene every time a step is taken in the wrong direction, leopard-men, serpent-men, six-legged dogs, zombies--a whole series of tiny animals or giants which create around the native a world of prohibitions, of barriers and of inhibitions far more terrifying than the world of the settler. This magical superstructure which permeates native society fulfills certain well-defined functions in the dynamism of the libido. One of the characteristics of underdeveloped societies is in fact that the libido is first and foremost the concern of a group, or of the family. The feature of communities whereby a man who dreams that he has sexual relations with a woman other than his own must confess it in public and pay a fine in kind or in working days to the injured husband or family is fully described by ethnologists. We may note in passing that this proves that the so-called prehistoric societies attach great importance to the unconscious.

The atmosphere of myth and magic frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper. In underdeveloped countries the occult sphere is a sphere belonging to the community which is entirely under magical jurisdiction. By entangling myself in this inextricable network where actions are repeated with crystalline inevitability, I find the everlasting world which belongs to

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me, and the perennality which is thereby affirmed of the world belonging to us. Believe me, the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers; and in consequence the problem is no longer that of keeping oneself right with the colonial world and its barbed-wire entanglements, but of considering three times before urinating, spitting, or going out into the night.

The supernatural, magical powers reveal themselves as essentially personal; the settler's powers are infinitely shrunken, stamped with their alien origin. We no longer really need to fight against them since what counts is the frightening enemy created by myths. We perceive that all is settled by a permanent confrontation on the phantasmic plane.

It has always happened in the struggle for freedom that such a people, formerly lost in an imaginary maze, a prey to unspeakable terrors yet happy to lose themselves in a dreamlike torment, such a people becomes unhinged, reorganizes itself, and in blood and tears gives birth to very real and immediate action. Feeding the *moudjahidines*,* posting sentinels, coming to the help of families which lack the bare necessities, or taking the place of a husband who has been killed or imprisoned: such are the concrete tasks to which the people is called during the struggle for freedom.

In the colonial world, the emotional sensitivity of the native is kept on the surface of his skin like an open sore which flinches from the caustic agent; and the psyche shrinks back, obliterates itself and finds outlet in muscular demonstrations which have caused certain very wise men to say that the native is a hysterical type. This sensitive emotionalism, watched by invisible keepers who are how-

*Highly-trained soldiers who are completely dedicated to the Moslem cause.--*Trans.*

ever in unbroken contact with the core of the personality, will find its fulfillment through eroticism in the driving forces behind the crisis' dissolution.

On another level we see the native's emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic. This is why any study of the colonial world should take into consideration the phenomena of the dance and of possession. The native's relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed, and conjured away. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. At certain times on certain days, men and women come together at a given place, and there, under the solemn eye of the tribe, fling themselves into a seemingly unorganized pantomime, which is in reality extremely systematic, in which by various means--shakes of the head, bending of the spinal column, throwing of the whole body backward--may be deciphered as in an open book the huge effort of a community to exorcise itself, to liberate itself, to explain itself. There are no limits--inside the circle. The hillock up which you have toiled as if to be nearer to the moon; the river bank down which you slip as if to show the connection between the dance and ablutions, cleansing and purification--these are sacred places. There are no limits--for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption. Symbolical killings, fantastic rides, imaginary mass murders--all must be brought out. The evil humors are undammed, and flow away with a din as of molten lava.