

# Part I

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# *Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness*

FRANTZ FANON

Frantz Fanon's work has proven to be seminal in the development of postcolonial studies. *Black Skin, White Masks*, his study of race and the effects of racism in colonial and postcolonial contexts, was instrumental in the formation of **Homi Bhabha**'s theory of disavowal and has contributed greatly to our understanding of the racial politics of colonialism. *The Wretched of the Earth*, from which this essay is taken, may justly be regarded as foundational for postcolonial theory. Its analysis of violence and national consciousness has influenced nearly every significant theory of postcolonialism that seeks to move beyond simplistic, binary conceptions of the struggle against colonialism. This essay features an exploration of the idea of "spontaneity," the violent expression of injustice and the desire for freedom that lie, according to Fanon, at the heart of all anti-colonial movements. Fanon willingly confronts the possibility of complicity between nationalist leaders and colonial powers and champions "the people" (by which term Fanon means both the rural peasantry and the shantytown dwellers of urban centers) who are all too often overlooked by nationalist movements. The emphasis on nationalism and the role it plays in the formation of postcolonial states has made Fanon's work consistently relevant – a fact made abundantly clear in the essays by **Bhabha**, **Luke Gibbons**, and **Declan Kiberd**.

## *Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness*

[The] consideration of violence has led us to take account of the frequent existence of a time lag, or a difference of rhythm, between the leaders of a nationalist party and the mass of the people. In every political or trade-union organization there is a traditional gap between the rank-and-file, who demand the total and immediate bettering of their lot, and the leaders, who, since they are aware of the difficulties which may be made by the employers, seek to limit and restrain the workers' demands. This is why you often are aware of a dogged discontentment among the rank-and-file as regards their leaders. After a day spent in demonstrating for their demands, the leaders celebrate the victory, whereas the rank-and-file have a strong suspicion that they have been cheated. It is through a multiplicity of demonstrations in support of their claims and through an increase in trade-union demands that the rank-and-file achieve their political education. A politically informed trade-union member is a man who knows that a local conflict is not a decisive settlement between himself and the employers. The native intellectuals, who have studied in their respective "mother countries" the working of political parties, carefully organize similar institutions in order to mobilize the masses and bring pressure to bear on the colonial administration. The birth of nationalist parties in the colonized countries is contemporary with the formation of an intellectual elite engaged in trade. The elite will attach a fundamental importance to organization, so much so that the fetish of organization will often take precedence over a reasoned study of colonial society. The notion of the party is a notion imported from the mother country. This instrument of modern political warfare is thrown down just as it is, without the slightest modification, upon real life with all its infinite variations and lack of balance, where slavery, serfdom, barter, a skilled working class, and high finance exist side by side.

The weakness of political parties does not only lie in the mechanical application of an organization which was created to carry on the struggle of the working class inside a highly industrialized, capitalist society. If we limit ourselves to the *type* of organization, it is clear that innovations and adaptations ought to have been made. The great mistake, the inherent defect in the majority of political parties in underdeveloped regions has been, following traditional lines, to approach in the first place those elements which are the most politically conscious: the working classes in the towns, the skilled workers, and the civil servants – that is to say, a tiny portion of the population, which hardly represents more than 1 per cent.

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Taken from *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), pp. 107–48.

But although this proletariat has read the party publications and understood its propaganda, it is much less ready to obey in the event of orders being given which set in motion the fierce struggle for national liberation. It cannot be too strongly stressed that in the colonial territories the proletariat is the nucleus of the colonized population which has been most pampered by the colonial regime. The embryonic proletariat of the towns is in a comparatively privileged position. In capitalist countries, the working class has nothing to lose; it is they who in the long run have everything to gain. In the colonial countries the working class has everything to lose; in reality it represents that fraction of the colonized nation which is necessary and irreplaceable if the colonial machine is to run smoothly: it includes tram conductors, taxi drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters, nurses, and so on. It is these elements which constitute the most faithful followers of the nationalist parties, and who because of the privileged place which they hold in the colonial system constitute also the "bourgeois" fraction of the colonized people.

So we understand that the followers of the nationalist political parties are above all town-dwellers – shop stewards, industrial workers, intellectuals, and shopkeepers all living for the most part in the towns. Their way of thinking is already marked in many points by the comparatively well-to-do class, distinguished by technical advances, that they spring from. Here "modern ideas" reign. It is these classes that will struggle against obscurantist traditions, that will change old customs, and that will thus enter into open conflict with the old granite block upon which the nation rests.

The overwhelming majority of nationalist parties show a deep distrust toward the people of the rural areas. The fact is that as a body these people appear to them to be bogged down in fruitless inertia. The members of the nationalist parties (town workers and intellectuals) pass the same unfavorable judgment on country districts as the settlers. But if we try to understand the reasons for this mistrust on the part of the political parties with regard to the rural areas, we must remember that colonialism has often strengthened or established its domination by organizing the petrification of the country districts. Ringed round by marabouts, witch doctors, and customary chieftains, the majority of country-dwellers are still living in the feudal manner, and the full power of this medieval structure of society is maintained by the settlers' military and administrative officials.

So now the young nationalist middle class, which is above all a class interested in trade, is going to compete with these feudal lords in many and various fields. There are marabouts and medicine men who bar the way to sick people who otherwise could consult the doctor, oracles which pass judgment and thus render lawyers useless, caids who make use of their political and administrative powers to set up in trade or to start a transport service, customary chiefs who oppose, in the name of religion and tradition, the setting up of businesses and the introduction of new goods. The rising class of native traders and wholesalers needs the disappearance of these prohibitions and barriers in order to develop. The native customers, the preserve of feudal lords, who now become aware that they are more or less forbidden to buy the new products, therefore become a market to be contended for.

The feudal leaders form a screen between the young Westernized nationalists and the bulk of the people. Each time the elite tries to get through to the country people,

the tribal chieftains, leaders of confraternities, and traditional authorities intensify their warnings, their threats and their excommunications. These traditional authorities who have been upheld by the occupying power view with disfavor the attempts made by the elite to penetrate the country districts. They know very well that the ideas which are likely to be introduced by these influences coming from the towns call in question the very nature of unchanging, everlasting feudalism. Thus their enemy is not at all the occupying power with which they get along on the whole very well, but these people with modern ideas who mean to dislocate the aboriginal society, and who in doing so will take the bread out of their mouths.

The Westernized elements experience feelings with regard to the bulk of the peasantry which are reminiscent of those found among the town workers of industrialized countries. The history of middle-class and working-class revolutions has shown that the bulk of the peasants often constitute a brake on the revolution. Generally in industrialized countries the peasantry as a whole are the least aware, the worst organized, and at the same time the most anarchical element. They show a whole range of characteristics – individualism, lack of discipline, liking for money, and propensities toward waves of uncontrollable rage and deep discouragement which define a line of behavior that is objectively reactionary.

We have seen that the nationalist parties copy their methods from those of the Western political parties; and also, for the most part, that they do not direct their propaganda toward the rural masses. In fact, if a reasoned analysis of colonized society had been made, it would have shown them that the native peasantry lives against a background of tradition, where the traditional structure of society has remained intact, whereas in the industrialized countries it is just this traditional setting which has been broken up by the progress of industrialization. In the colonies, it is at the very core of the embryonic working class that you find individualist behavior. The landless peasants, who make up the *lumpenproletariat*, leave the country districts, where vital statistics are just so many insoluble problems, rush toward the towns, crowd into tin-shack settlements, and try to make their way into the ports and cities founded by colonial domination. The bulk of the country people for their part continue to live within a rigid framework, and the extra mouths to feed have no other alternative than to emigrate toward the centers of population. The peasant who stays put defends his traditions stubbornly, and in a colonized society stands for the disciplined element whose interests lie in maintaining the social structure. It is true that this unchanging way of life, which hangs on like grim death to rigid social structures, may occasionally give birth to movements which are based on religious fanaticism or tribal wars. But in their spontaneous movements the country people as a whole remain disciplined and altruistic. The individual stands aside in favor of the community.

The country people are suspicious of the townsman. The latter dresses like a European; he speaks the European's language, works with him, sometimes even lives in the same district; so he is considered by the peasants as a turncoat who has betrayed everything that goes to make up the national heritage. The townspeople are "traitors and knaves" who seem to get on well with the occupying powers, and do their best to get on within the framework of the colonial system. This is why you often hear the country people say of town-dwellers that they have no morals. Here, we are

not dealing with the old antagonism between town and country; it is the antagonism which exists between the native who is excluded from the advantages of colonialism and his counterpart who manages to turn colonial exploitation to his account.

What is more, the colonialists make use of this antagonism in their struggle against the nationalist parties. They mobilize the people of the mountains and the up-country dwellers against the townsfolk. They pitch the hinterland against the seaboard, they rouse up the tribes-people, and we need not be surprised to see Kalondji crowned king of Kasai, just as it was not surprising to see, some years ago, the assembly of the chiefs of Ghana making N'kruma dance to their tune.

The political parties do not manage to organize the country districts. Instead of using existing structures and giving them a nationalist or progressive character, they mean to try and destroy living tradition in the colonial framework. They believe it lies in their power to give the initial impulse to the nation, whereas in reality the chains forged by the colonial system still weigh it down heavily. They do not go out to find the mass of the people. They do not put their theoretical knowledge to the service of the people; they only try to erect a framework around the people which follows an a priori schedule. Thus from the capital city they will "parachute" organizers into the villages who are either unknown or too young, and who, armed with instructions from the central authority, mean to treat the *douar* or village like a factory cell.

The traditional chiefs are ignored, sometimes even persecuted. The makers of the future nation's history trample unconcernedly over small local disputes, that is to say the only existing national events, whereas they ought to make of village history – the history of traditional conflicts between clans and tribes – a harmonious whole, at one with the decisive action to which they call on the people to contribute. The old men, surrounded by respect in all traditional societies and usually invested with unquestionable moral authority, are publicly held up to ridicule. The occupying power's local authorities do not fail to use the resentment thus engendered, and keep in touch with the slightest decisions adopted by this caricature of authority. Police repression, well-informed because it is based on precise information, strikes. The parachuted leaders and the consequential members of the new assembly are arrested.

Such setbacks confirm the "theoretical analysis" of the nationalist parties. The disastrous experience of trying to enroll the country people as a whole reinforces their distrust and crystallizes their aggressiveness toward that section of the people. Even after the struggle for national freedom has succeeded, the same mistakes are made and such mistakes make for the maintenance of decentralizing and autonomist tendencies. Tribalism in the colonial phase gives way to regionalism in the national phase, and finds its expression as far as institutions are concerned in federalism.

But it may happen that the country people, in spite of the slight hold that the nationalist parties have over them, play a decisive part either in the process of the maturing of the national consciousness, or through working in with the action of nationalist parties, or, less frequently, by substituting themselves purely and simply for the sterility of these parties. For the propaganda of nationalist parties always finds an echo in the heart of the peasantry. The memory of the anti-colonial period is very much alive in the villages, where women still croon in their children's ears songs to which the warriors marched when they went out to fight the conquerers. At twelve or thirteen years of age the village children know the names of the old men who were

in the last rising, and the dreams they dream in the *douars* or in the villages are not those of money or of getting through their exams like the children of the towns, but dreams of identification with some rebel or another, the story of whose heroic death still today moves them to tears.

Just when the nationalist parties are trying to organize the embryonic working class in the towns, we notice certain seemingly completely inexplicable explosions in the country districts. Take for example the famous rebellion of 1947 in Madagascar. The colonial authorities were categorical: it was a peasant rising. In fact we now know that as usual things were much more complicated than that. During the Second World War the big colonial companies greatly increased their power and became the possessors of all the land that up to then was still free. At the same time there was talk of planting the island eventually with Jewish, Kabylean, and West Indian refugees. Another rumor was equally rife – that the whites of South Africa were soon going to invade the island with the collusion of the settlers. Thus, after the war the candidates on the nationalist list were triumphantly elected. Immediately after, organized repression began of the cells of the Mouvement Democratique de la Rénovation Malgache (Democratic Movement for Madagascan Restoration). Colonialism, in order to reach its ends, used the usual traditional methods: frequent arrests, racist propaganda between tribes, and the creation of a party out of the unorganized elements of the *lumpenproletariat*. This party, with the name of the Disinherited Madagascans, gave the colonial authorities by its distinctly provocative actions the legal excuse to maintain order. It happened that this very frequent operation of liquidating a party which had been set up in advance took on in this context gigantic proportions. The rural masses, on the defensive for the last three or four years, suddenly felt themselves in deadly peril and decided to oppose colonialist forces savagely. Armed with spears, or more often simply with sticks and stones, the people flung themselves into the general revolt for national liberty. We know the end of the story.

Such armed rebellions only represent one of the means used by the country-dwellers to join in the national struggle. Sometimes when the nationalist party in the towns is tracked down by police repression the peasants carry on the tradition of urban agitation. News of the repression comes to the country districts in a grossly exaggerated form; the tale runs that the leaders are arrested, that machine-gunning is rife, that the town is running red with the blood of Negroes, or that the small settlers are bathing in Arab blood. Thereupon the accumulated, exacerbated hate explodes. The neighboring police barracks is captured, the policemen are hacked to pieces, the local school-master is murdered, the doctor only gets away with his life because he was not at home, etc. Pacifying forces are hurried to the spot and the air force bombards it. Then the banner of revolt is unfurled, the old warriorlike traditions spring up again, the women cheer, the men organize and take up positions in the mountains, and guerrilla war begins. The peasantry spontaneously gives concrete form to the general insecurity; and colonialism takes fright and either continues the war or negotiates.

What is the reaction of the nationalist parties to this eruption of the peasant masses into the national struggle? We have seen that the majority of nationalist parties have not written into their propaganda the necessity for armed intervention. They do not oppose the continuing of the rebellion, but they content themselves with leaving it to

the spontaneous action of the country people. As a whole they treat this new element as a sort of manna fallen from heaven, and pray to goodness that it'll go on falling. They make the most of the manna, but do not attempt to organize the rebellion. They don't send leaders into the countryside to educate the people politically, or to increase their awareness or put the struggle onto a higher level. All they do is to hope that, carried onward by its own momentum, the action of the people will not come to a standstill. There is no contamination of the rural movement by the urban movement; each develops according to its own dialectic.

The nationalist parties do not attempt to give definite orders to the country people, although the latter are perfectly ready to listen to them. They offer them no objective; they simply hope that this new movement will go on indefinitely and that the bombardments will not put an end to it. Thus we see that even when such an occasion offers, the nationalist parties make no use at all of the opportunity which is offered to them to integrate the people of the countryside, to educate them politically, and to raise the level of their struggle. The old attitude of mistrust toward the countryside is criminally evident.

The political leaders go underground in the towns, give the impression to the colonialists that they have no connection with the rebels, or seek refuge abroad. It very seldom happens that they join the people in the hills. In Kenya, for example, during the Mau-Mau rebellion, not a single well-known nationalist declared his affiliation with the movement, or even tried to defend the men involved in it.

The different strata of the nation never have it out with each other to any advantage; there is no settling of accounts between them. Thus, when independence is achieved, after the repression practiced on the country people, after the entente between colonialism and the national parties, it is no wonder that you find this incomprehension to an even greater degree. The country-dwellers are slow to take up the structural reforms proposed by the government; and equally slow in following their social reforms, even though they may be very progressive if viewed objectively, precisely because the people now at the head of affairs did not explain to the people as a whole during the colonial period what were the aims of the party, the national trends, or the problems of international politics.

The mistrust which country-dwellers and those still living within the feudal system feel toward nationalist parties during the colonial period is followed by a similarly strong hostility during the national period. The colonial secret services which were not disbanded after independence keep up the discontentment and still manage to make serious difficulties for the young governments. All in all, the government is only being made to pay for its laziness during the period of liberation, and its unflinching mistrust of the country people. The nation may well have a reasonable, even progressive, head to it; its body will remain weak, stubborn, and non-cooperative.

The temptation therefore will be to break up this body by centralizing the administration and surrounding the people by a firm administrative framework. This is one of the reasons why you often hear it said that in underdeveloped countries a small dose of dictatorship is needed. The men at the head of things distrust the people of the countryside; moreover, this distrust takes on serious proportions. This is the case for example of certain governments which, long after national independence is declared, continue to consider the interior of the country as a non-pacified area where the chief

of state or his ministers only go when the national army is carrying out maneuvers there. For all practical purposes, the interior ranks with the unknown. Paradoxically, the national government in its dealings with the country people as a whole is reminiscent of certain features of the former colonial power. "We don't quite know how the mass of these people will react" is the cry; and the young ruling class does not hesitate to assert that "they need the thick end of the stick if this country is to get out of the Middle Ages." But as we have seen, the offhand way in which the political parties treated the rural population during the colonial phase could only prejudice national unity at the very moment when the young nation needs to get off to a good start.

Sometimes colonialism attempts to dislocate or create diversions around the upward thrust of nationalism. Instead of organizing the sheiks and the chiefs against the "revolutionaries" in the towns, native committees organize the tribes and confraternities into parties. Confronted with the urban party which was beginning to "embody the national will" and to constitute a danger for the colonial regime, splinter groups are born, and tendencies and parties which have their origin in ethnic or regional differences spring up. It is the entire tribe which is turning itself into a political party, closely advised by the colonialists. The conference table can now be pulled out. The party which advocates unity will be drowned in the computations of the various splinter groups, while the tribal parties will oppose centralization and unity, and will denounce the party of unity as a dictatorship.

Later on, the same tactics will be used by the national opposition. The occupying power has made its choice from among the two or three nationalist parties which led the struggle for liberation. The ways of choosing are well-known: when a party has achieved national unanimity and has imposed itself on the occupying power as the sole spokesman of the nation, the colonial power starts complicated maneuverings and delays the opening of negotiations as much as ever it can. Such a delay will be used to fritter away the demands of this party or get its leaders to put certain "extremist" elements into the background.

If on the other hand no party really succeeds in imposing itself, the occupying power is content to extend privileges to the party which it considers to be the most "reasonable." The nationalist parties which have not taken part in the negotiations engage in denunciations of the agreement reached between the other party and the occupying power. The party which takes over the reins from the colonialists, conscious of the danger with which the extremely demagogical and confused attitude of the rival party threatens it, tries to disband its competitor and to condemn it to illegality. The persecuted party has no alternative but to seek refuge in the outskirts of the towns and in the country districts. It tries to rouse the people of the country against the "traitors of the seaboard and the corrupt politicians of the capital." Any excuse is good enough: religious feeling, innovations made by the new government which break from tradition, and so on. The obscurantist tendencies of the country-dwellers are exploited to the full. The so-called revolutionary doctrine in fact rests on the retrograde, emotional, and spontaneous nature of the country districts. Here and there it is whispered that the mountain is moving, that the countryside is discontented. It's said that in a certain place the police have opened fire on the peasantry, that reinforcements have been sent out, and that the government is on

the point of falling. The parties in opposition, since they have no clear program, have no other end in view but to take the place of the governing party; and with this as their goal they place their destiny in the hands of the obscure, spontaneous mass of the peasantry.

Inversely, it sometimes happens that the opposition no longer relies for support on the country people, but rather on the progressive elements found in the trade unions of the young nation. In this case the government calls upon the countryfolk to oppose the demands of the workers, which they denounce as the maneuvers of anti-traditionalist adventurers. The facts we have established regarding the political parties are once more observed, *mutatis mutandis*, on the level of the trade unions. In the beginning the trade-union organizations in colonial territories are regularly local branches of the trade unions of the mother country, and their orders are the echo of those given in the mother country.

Once the decisive phase of the struggle for liberation emerges, some native trade unionists will decide upon the creation of national unions. The old structure, imported from the mother country, will suffer heavy losses as the native members desert it. This creating of new unions is a fresh element of pressure in the hands of the populations of the towns upon colonialism. We have seen that the working class in the colonies is in an embryonic state and represents that fraction of the people which is the most favored. The national unions are born out of the struggle for independence organized in the towns, and their program is above all a political program and a nationalist program. Such a national union which comes into being during the decisive phase of the fight for independence is in fact the legal enlistment of conscious, dynamic nationalist elements.

The mass of the country-dwellers, looked down upon by the political parties, continue to be kept at a distance. Of course there will be an agricultural workers' union there, but its creation is simply to supply an answer to the categorical necessity to "present a united front to colonialism." The trade-union officials who have won their colors in the field of the union organizations of the mother country have no idea how to organize the mass of country people. They have lost all contact with the peasantry and their primary preoccupation is to enlist dockers, metallurgists, and state-employed gas and electricity workers in their ranks.

During the colonial phase, the nationalist trade-union organizations constitute an impressive striking power. In the towns, the trade unionists can bring to a standstill, or at any rate slow down at any given moment, the colonialist economy. Since the European settlement is often confined to the towns, the psychological effects of demonstrations on that settlement are considerable: there is no electricity, no gas, the dust bins are left unemptied, and goods rot on the quays.

These little islands of the mother country which the towns constitute in the colonial structure are deeply conscious of trade-union action; the fortress of colonialism which the capital represents staggers under their blows. But the "interior" – the mass of country-dwellers – knows nothing of this conflict.

Thus we see that there is a lack of proportion from the national point of view between the importance of the trade unions and the rest of the nation. After independence, the workers who have joined the unions get the impression that they are living in a vacuum. The limited objective that they set themselves turns out to be, at the very

moment that it is attained, extremely precarious, having regard to the immensity of the task of national reconstruction. When faced with the national middle class whose connections with the government are often closely linked, the trade-union leaders discover that they can no longer limit themselves to working-class agitation. Isolated by their very nature from the country people, and incapable of giving directions once outside the suburbs, the unions become more and more political in their attitude. In fact, the unions become candidates for governmental power. They try by every means to corner the middle classes: they protest against the maintenance of foreign bases on the national territory, they denounce trade agreements, and they oppose the national government's foreign policy. The workers, now that they have their "independence," do not know where to go from there. For the day after independence is declared the trade unions realize that if their social demands were to be expressed, they would scandalize the rest of the nation: for the workers are in fact the most favored section of the population, and represent the most comfortably off fraction of the people. Any movement starting off to fight for the bettering of living conditions for the dockers and workmen would not only be very unpopular, but would also run the risk of provoking the hostility of the disinherited rural population. The trade unions, to whom all trade-union activity is forbidden, merely mark time.

This unhealthy state of affairs simply shows the objective necessity of a social program which will appeal to the nation as a whole. Suddenly the unions discover that the back-country too ought to be enlightened and organized. But since at no time have they taken care to establish working links between themselves and the mass of the peasants, and since this peasantry precisely constitutes the only spontaneously revolutionary force of the country, the trade unions will give proof of their inefficiency and find out for themselves the anachronistic nature of their programs.

The trade-union leaders, steeped in working-class political action, automatically go from there to the preparation of a *coup d'état*. But here again the back-country is left out; this is a limited settling of accounts only, between the national middle class and the union workers. The national middle class, taking up the old traditions of colonialism, makes a show of its military and police forces, while the unions organize mass meetings and mobilize tens of thousands of members. The peasants confronted with this national middle class and these workers, who after all can eat their fill, look on, shrugging their shoulders; and they shrug their shoulders because they know very well that both sides look on them as a makeweight. The unions, the parties, or the government in a kind of immoral Machiavellian fashion all make use of the peasant masses as a blind, inert tactical force: brute force, as it were.

On the other hand, in certain circumstances the country people are going to intervene in decisive fashion both in the struggle for national freedom and in the way that the future nation marks out for itself. This phenomenon takes on a fundamental importance for underdeveloped countries; this is why we propose to study it in detail.

We have seen that inside the nationalist parties, the will to break colonialism is linked with another quite different will: that of coming to a friendly agreement with it. Within these parties, the two processes will sometimes continue side by side. In the first place, when the intellectual elements have carried out a prolonged analysis of the true nature of colonialism and of the international situation, they will begin to criticize their

party's lack of ideology and the poverty of its tactics and strategy. They begin to question their leaders ceaselessly on crucial points: "What is nationalism? What sense do you give to this word? What is its meaning? Independence for what? And in the first place, how do you propose to achieve it?" They ask these questions, and, at the same time, require that the problems of methodology should be vigorously tackled. They are ready to suggest that electoral resources should be supplemented by "all other means." After the first skirmishes, the official leaders speedily dispose of this effervescence which they are quick to label as childishness. But since these demands are not simply effervescence, nor the sign of immaturity, the revolutionary elements which subscribe to them will rapidly be isolated. The official leaders, draped in their years of experience, will pitilessly disown these "adventurers and anarchists."

The party machine shows itself opposed to any innovation. The revolutionary minority finds itself alone, confronted with leaders who are terrified and worried by the idea that they could be swept away by a maelstrom whose nature, force, or direction they cannot even imagine. The second process concerns the main leaders, or their seconds in command, who were marked out for police repression under the colonialists. It must be emphasized that these men have come to the head of the party by their untiring work, their spirit of sacrifice, and a most exemplary patriotism. Such men, who have worked their way up from the bottom, are often unskilled workers, seasonal laborers, or even sometimes chronically unemployed. For them the fact of militating in a national party is not simply taking part in politics; it is choosing the only means whereby they can pass from the status of an animal to that of a human being. Such men, hampered by the excessive legalism of the party, will show within the limits of the activities for which they are responsible a spirit of initiative, courage, and a sense of the importance of the struggle, which mark them out almost automatically as targets for colonialist repression. Arrested, condemned, tortured, finally amnestied, they use their time in prison to clarify their ideas and strengthen their determination. Through hunger strikes and the violent brotherhood of the prisons' quicklime they live on, hoping for their freedom, looking on it as an opportunity to start an armed struggle. But at one and the same time outside the prison walls colonialism, attacked from all sides, is making advances to the nationalist moderates.

So we can observe the process whereby the rupture occurs between the illegal and legal tendencies in the party. The illegal minority is made to feel that they are undesirables and are shunned by the people that matter. The legal members of their party come to their aid with great precaution, but already there is a rift between the two tendencies. The illegalists, therefore, will get in touch with the intellectual elements whose attitude they were able to understand a few years back; and an underground party, an offshoot of the legal party, will be the result of this meeting. But the repression of these wayward elements intensifies as the legal party draws nearer to colonialism and attempts to modify it "from the inside." The illegal minority thus finds itself in a historical blind alley.

Boycotted by the towns, these men first settle in the outskirts of the suburbs. But the police network traps them and forces them to leave the towns for good, and to quit the scenes of political action. They fall back toward the countryside and the mountains, toward the peasant people. From the beginning, the peasantry closes in around them, and protects them from being pursued by the police. The militant nationalist who

decides to throw in his lot with the country people instead of playing at hide-and-seek with the police in urban centers will lose nothing. The peasant's cloak will wrap him around with a gentleness and firmness that he never suspected. These men, who are in fact exiled to the backwoods, who are cut off from the urban background against which they had defined their ideas of the nation and of the political fight, these men have in fact become "Maquisards." Since they are obliged to move about the whole time in order to escape from the police, often at night so as not to attract attention, they will have good reason to wander through their country and to get to know it. The cafés are forgotten; so are the arguments about the next elections or the spitefulness of some policeman or other. Their ears hear the true voice of the country, and their eyes take in the great and infinite poverty of their people. They realize the precious time that has been wasted in useless commentaries upon the colonial regime. They finally come to understand that the changeover will not be a reform, nor a bettering of things. They come to understand, with a sort of bewilderment that will from henceforth never quite leave them, that political action in the towns will always be powerless to modify or overthrow the colonial regime.

These men get used to talking to the peasants. They discover that the mass of the country people have never ceased to think of the problem of their liberation except in terms of violence, in terms of taking back the land from the foreigners, in terms of national struggle, and of armed insurrection. It is all very simple. These men discover a coherent people who go on living, as it were, statically, but who keep their moral values and their devotion to the nation intact. They discover a people that is generous, ready to sacrifice themselves completely, an impatient people, with a stony pride. It is understandable that the meeting between these militants with the police on their track and these mettlesome masses of people, who are rebels by instinct, can produce an explosive mixture of unusual potentiality. The men coming from the towns learn their lessons in the hard school of the people; and at the same time these men open classes for the people in military and political education. The people furbish up their weapons; but in fact the classes do not last long, for the masses come to know once again the strength of their own muscles, and push the leaders on to prompt action. The armed struggle has begun.

The rising disconcerts the political parties. Their doctrine, in fact, has always affirmed the uselessness of a trial of force, and their very existence is a constant condemnation of all rebellion. Secretly, certain political parties share the optimism of the settlers, and congratulate themselves on being well away from this act of madness which, it's said, will be put down with bloodshed. But once the match is lit, the blaze spreads like wildfire through the whole country. The armored cars and the airplanes do not win through with unqualified success. Faced with the full extent of the trouble, colonialism begins to reflect on the matter. At the very core of the oppressing nation voices are raised, and listened to, which draw attention to the gravity of the situation.

As for the people, they join in the new rhythm of the nation, in their mud huts and in their dreams. Under their breath and from their hearts' core they sing endless songs of praise to the glorious fighters. The tide of rebellion has already flooded the whole nation. Now it is the parties' turn to be isolated.

The leaders of the rising, however, realize that some day or another the rebellion must come to include the towns. This awareness is not fortuitous; it is the crowning

point of the dialectic which reigns over the development of an armed struggle for national liberation. Although the country districts represent inexhaustible reserves of popular energy, and groups of armed men ensure that insecurity is rife there, colonialism does not doubt the strength of its system. It does not feel that it is endangered fundamentally. The rebel leaders therefore decide to bring the war into the enemy's camp, that is to say into his grandiose, peaceful cities.

The organizing of the rising in the centers of population sets the leaders some difficult problems. We have seen that the greater part of the leaders, born or brought up in the towns, have fled from their normal background because they were wanted by the colonialist police and were in general unappreciated by the cautious, reasonable administrators of the political parties. Their retreat into the country was both a flight from persecution and a sign of their distrust for the old political structure. The natural receiving stations in the towns for these leaders are well-known nationalists who are in the thick of the political parties. But we have seen that their recent history was precisely an offshoot from these timid, nervous officials who spend their time in ceaseless lamentation over the misdeeds of colonialism.

Moreover, the first overtures which the men of the Maquis make toward their former friends – precisely those whom they consider to be the most toward the Left – will confirm their fears and will take away even the wish to see their old companions again. In fact the rebellion, which began in the country districts, will filter into the towns through that fraction of the peasant population which is blocked on the outer fringe of the urban centers, that fraction which has not yet succeeded in finding a bone to gnaw in the colonial system. The men whom the growing population of the country districts and colonial expropriation have brought to desert their family holdings circle tirelessly around the different towns, hoping that one day or another they will be allowed inside. It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the *lumpenproletariat*, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the *lumpenproletariat*, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people.

In Kenya, in the years preceding the Mau-Mau revolt, it was noticeable how the British colonial authorities multiplied intimidatory measures against the *lumpenproletariat*. The police forces and the missionaries coordinated their efforts, in the years 1950–51, in order to make a suitable response to the enormous influx of young Kenyans coming from the country districts and the forests, who when they did not manage to find a market for their labor took to stealing, debauchery, and alcoholism. Juvenile delinquency in the colonized countries is the direct result of the existence of a *lumpenproletariat*. In parallel fashion, in the Congo, Draconian measures were taken from 1957 onward to send back to the countryside the “young hooligans” who were disturbing the social order. Resettlement camps were opened and put under the charge of evangelical missions, protected, of course, by the Belgian army.

The constitution of a *lumpenproletariat* is a phenomenon which obeys its own logic, and neither the brimming activity of the missionaries nor the decrees of the central government can check its growth. This *lumpenproletariat* is like a horde of rats; you may kick them and throw stones at them, but despite your efforts they'll go on gnawing at the roots of the tree.

The shantytown sanctions the native's biological decision to invade, at whatever cost and if necessary by the most cryptic methods, the enemy fortress. The *lumpen-proletariat*, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the "security" of the town, and is the sign of the irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination. So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals, urged on from behind, throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. They won't become reformed characters to please colonial society, fitting in with the morality of its rulers; quite on the contrary, they take for granted the impossibility of their entering the city save by hand grenades and revolvers. These workless less-than-men are rehabilitated in their own eyes and in the eyes of history. The prostitutes too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all the hopeless dregs of humanity, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness, will recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation.

The nationalist parties do not understand this new phenomenon which precipitates their disintegration. The outbreak of the rebellion in the towns changes the nature of the struggle. Whereas before the colonialist troops were entirely concerned with the country districts, we now see them falling back in haste on the towns in order to ensure the safety of the town population and their property. The forces of repression spread out; danger is present everywhere; now it's the very soil of the nation, the whole of the colony, which goes into a trance. The armed groups of peasants look on while the mailed fist loses its grip. The rising in the towns is like an unhoped-for gas balloon.

The leaders of the rising who see an ardent and enthusiastic people striking decisive blows at the colonialist machine are strengthened in their mistrust of traditional policy. Every success confirms their hostility toward what in future they will describe as mouthwash, wordspinning, blather, and fruitless agitation. They feel a positive hatred for the "politics" of demagogy, and that is why in the beginning we observe a veritable triumph for the cult of spontaneity.

The many peasant risings which have their roots in the country districts bear witness wherever they occur to the ubiquitous and usually solidly massed presence of the new nation. Every native who takes up arms is a part of the nation which from henceforward will spring to life. Such peasant revolts endanger the colonial regime; they mobilize its troops, making them spread out, and threaten at every turn to crush them. They hold one doctrine only: to act in such a way that the nation may exist. There is no program; there are no speeches or resolutions, and no political trends. The problem is clear: the foreigners must go; so let us form a common front against the oppressor and let us strengthen our hands by armed combat.

So long as the uncertainty of colonialism continues, the national cause goes on progressing, and becomes the cause of each and all. The plans for liberation are sketched out; already they include the whole country. During this period spontaneity is king, and initiative is localized. On every hill a government in miniature is formed and takes over power. Everywhere – in the valleys and in the forests, in the jungle and in the villages – we find a national authority. Each man or woman brings the nation to life by his or her action, and is pledged to ensure its triumph in their locality. We

are dealing with a strategy of immediacy which is both radical and totalitarian: the aim and the program of each locally constituted group is local liberation. If the nation is everywhere, then she is here. One step further, and only here is she to be found. Tactics are mistaken for strategy. The art of politics is simply transformed into the art of war; the political militant is the rebel. To fight the war and to take part in politics: the two things become one and the same.

This people that has lost its birthright, that is used to living in the narrow circle of feuds and rivalries, will now proceed in an atmosphere of solemnity to cleanse and purify the face of the nation as it appears in the various localities. In a veritable collective ecstasy, families which have always been traditional enemies decide to rub out old scores and to forgive and forget. There are numerous reconciliations. Long-buried but unforgettable hatreds are brought to light once more, so that they may more surely be rooted out. The taking on of nationhood involves a growth of awareness. The national unity is first the unity of a group, the disappearance of old quarrels and the final liquidation of unspoken grievances. At the same time, forgiveness and purification include those natives who by their activities and by their complicity with the occupier have dishonored their country. On the other hand, traitors and those who have sold out to the enemy will be judged and punished. In undertaking this onward march, the people legislates, finds itself, and wills itself to sovereignty. In every corner that is thus awakened from colonial slumber, life is lived at an impossibly high temperature. There is a permanent outpouring in all the villages of spectacular generosity, of disarming kindness, and willingness, which cannot ever be doubted, to die for the "cause." All this is evocative of a confraternity, a church, and a mystical body of belief at one and the same time. No native can remain unmoved by this new rhythm which leads the nation on. Messengers are despatched to neighboring tribes. They constitute the first system of intercommunication in the rebellion, and bring movement and cadence to districts which are still motionless. Even tribes whose stubborn rivalry is well known now disarm with joyful tears and pledge help and succour to each other. Marching shoulder to shoulder in the armed struggle these men join with those who yesterday were their enemies. The circle of the nation widens and fresh ambushes to entrap the enemy hail the entry of new tribes upon the scene. Each village finds that it is itself both an absolute agent of revolution, and also a link in the chain of action. Solidarity between tribes and between villages, national solidarity, is in the first place expressed by the increasing blows struck at the enemy. Every new group which is formed, each fresh salvo that bursts out is an indication that each is on the enemy's track, and that each is prepared to meet him.

This solidarity will be much more clearly shown during the second period, which is characterized by the putting into operation of the enemy offensive. The colonial forces, once the explosion has taken place, regroup and reorganize, inaugurating methods of warfare which correspond to the nature of the rising. This offensive will call in question the ideal, Utopian atmosphere of the first period. The enemy attacks, and concentrates large forces on certain definite points. The local group is quickly over-run, all the more so because it tends to seek the forefront of the battle. The optimism which reigned in the first period makes the local group fearless, or rather careless. It is persuaded that its own mountain peak is the nation, and because of this it refuses to abandon it, or to beat a retreat. But the losses are serious, and doubts

spring up and begin to weigh heavily upon the rebels. The group faces a local attack as if it were a decisive test. It behaves as if the fate of the whole country was literally at stake, here and now.

But we should make it quite clear that this spontaneous impetuosity which is determined to settle the fate of the colonial system immediately is condemned, in so far as it is a doctrine of instantaneity, to self-repudiation. For the most everyday, practical realism takes the place of yesterday's effusion, and substitutes itself for the illusion of eternity. The hard lesson of facts, the bodies mown down by machine guns: these call forth a complete reinterpretation of events. The simple instinct to survive engenders a less rigid, more mobile attitude. This modification in fighting technique characterized the first months of the war of liberation of the people of Angola. We may remember that on March 15, 1961, a group of two or three thousand Angolan peasants threw themselves against the Portuguese positions. Men, women, and children, armed and unarmed, afire with courage and enthusiasm, then flung themselves in successive waves of compact masses upon the districts where the settler, the soldier, and the Portuguese flag held sway. Villages and airports were encircled and subjected to frequent attacks, but it must be added that thousands of Angolans were mown down by colonialist machine guns. It did not take long for the leaders of the Angolan rising to realize that they must find some other methods if they really wanted to free their country. So during the last few months<sup>1</sup> the Angolan leader Holden Roberto has reorganized the National Angolan Army, using the experience gained in various other wars of liberation, and employing guerrilla techniques.

The fact is that in guerrilla warfare the struggle no longer concerns the place where you are, but the place where you are going. Each fighter carries his warring country between his bare toes. The national army of liberation is not an army which engages once and for all with the enemy; it is rather an army which goes from village to village, falling back on the forests, and dancing for joy when in the valley below there comes into view the white column of dust that the enemy columns kick up. The tribes go into action, and the various groups move about, changing their ground. The people of the north move toward the west; the people of the plains go up into the mountains. There is absolutely no strategically privileged position. The enemy thinks he is pursuing us; but we always manage to harry his rearguard, striking back at him at the very moment when he thinks he has annihilated us. From now on, it is *we* who pursue *him*; in spite of all his technical advantages and his superior artillery power the enemy gives the impression that he is floundering and getting bogged down. And as for us, we sing, we go on singing.

Meantime, however, the leaders of the rising realize that the various groups must be enlightened; that they must be educated and indoctrinated, and that an army and a central authority must be created. The scattering of the nation, which is the manifestation of a nation in arms, needs to be corrected and to become a thing of the past. Those leaders who have fled from the useless political activity of the towns rediscover politics, no longer as a way of lulling people to sleep nor as a means of mystification, but as the only method of intensifying the struggle and of preparing the people to undertake the governing of their country clearly and lucidly. The leaders of the rebellion come to see that even very large-scale peasant risings need to be controlled and directed into certain channels. These leaders are led to renounce the

movement in so far as it can be termed a peasant revolt, and to transform it into a revolutionary war. They discover that the success of the struggle presupposes clear objectives, a definite methodology, and above all the need for the mass of the people to realize that their unorganized efforts can only be a temporary dynamic. You can hold out for three days – maybe even for three months – on the strength of the admixture of sheer resentment contained in the mass of the people; but you won't win a national war, you'll never overthrow the terrible enemy machine, and you won't change human beings if you forget to raise the standard of consciousness of the rank-and-file. Neither stubborn courage nor fine slogans are enough.

Moreover, as it develops the war of liberation can be counted upon to strike a decisive blow at the faith of the leaders. The enemy, in fact, changes his tactics. At opportune moments he combines his policy of brutal repression with spectacular gestures of friendship, maneuvers calculated to sow division, and "psychological action." Here and there he tries with success to revive tribal feuds, using *agents provocateurs* and practicing what might be called counter-subversion. Colonialism will use two types of natives to gain its ends; and the first of these are the traditional collaborators – chiefs, caids, and witch doctors. The mass of the peasantry is steeped, as we have seen, in a changeless, ever-recurring life without incident; and they continue to revere their religious leaders who are descended from ancient families. The tribe follows, as one man, the way marked out for it by its traditional chief. Colonialism secures for itself the services of these confidential agents by pensioning them off at a ransom price.

Colonialism will also find in the *lumpenproletariat* a considerable space for maneuvering. For this reason any movement for freedom ought to give its fullest attention to this *lumpenproletariat*. The peasant masses will always answer the call to rebellion, but if the rebellion's leaders think it will be able to develop without taking the masses into consideration, the *lumpenproletariat* will throw itself into the battle and will take part in the conflict – but this time on the side of the oppressor. And the oppressor, who never loses a chance of setting the niggers against each other, will be extremely skillful in using that ignorance and incomprehension which are the weaknesses of the *lumpenproletariat*. If this available reserve of human effort is not immediately organized by the forces of rebellion, it will find itself fighting as hired soldiers side by side with the colonial troops. In Algeria, it is the *lumpenproletariat* which furnished the harkis and the messalists;<sup>2</sup> in Angola, it supplied the road openers who nowadays precede the Portuguese armed columns; in the Congo, we find once more the *lumpenproletariat* in regional manifestations in Kasai and Katanga, while at Leopoldville the Congo's enemies made use of it to organize "spontaneous" mass meetings against Lumumba.

The enemy is aware of ideological weaknesses, for he analyzes the forces of rebellion and studies more and more carefully the aggregate enemy which makes up a colonial people; he is also aware of the spiritual instability of certain layers of the population. The enemy discovers the existence, side by side with the disciplined and well-organized advance guard of rebellion, of a mass of men whose participation is constantly at the mercy of their being for too long accustomed to physiological wretchedness, humiliation, and irresponsibility. The enemy is ready to pay a high price for the services of this mass. He will create spontaneity with bayonets and

exemplary floggings. Dollars and Belgian francs pour into the Congo, while in Madagascar levies against Hova increase and in Algeria native recruits, who are in fact hostages, are enlisted in the French forces. The leaders of the rebellion literally see the nation capsizing. Whole tribes join up as harkis, and, using the modern weapons that they have been given, go on the warpath and invade the territory of the neighboring tribe, which for this occasion has been labeled as nationalist. That unanimity in battle, so fruitful and grandiose in the first days of the rebellion, undergoes a change. National unity crumbles away; the rising is at a decisive turning of the way. Now the political education of the masses is seen to be a historic necessity.

That spectacular volunteer movement which meant to lead the colonized people to supreme sovereignty at one fell swoop, that certainty which you had that all portions of the nation would be carried along with you at the same speed and led onward by the same light, that strength which gave you hope: all now are seen in the light of experience to be symptoms of a very great weakness. While the native thought that he could pass without transition from the status of a colonized person to that of a self-governing citizen of an independent nation, while he grasped at the mirage of his muscles' own immediacy, he made no real progress along the road to knowledge. His consciousness remains rudimentary. We have seen that the native enters passionately into the fight, above all if that fight is an armed one. The peasants threw themselves into the rebellion with all the more enthusiasm in that they had never stopped clutching at a way of life which was in practice anti-colonial. From all eternity, by means of manifold tricks and through a system of checks and balances reminiscent of a conjurer's most successful sleight-of-hand, the country people had more or less kept their individuality free from colonial impositions. They even believed that colonialism was not the victor. The peasant's pride, his hesitation to go down into the towns and to mingle with the world that the foreigner had built, his perpetual shrinking back at the approach of the agents of colonial administration: all these reactions signified that to the dual world of the settler he opposed his own duality.

Racial feeling, as opposed to racial prejudice, and that determination to fight for one's life which characterizes the native's reply to oppression are obviously good enough reasons for joining in the fight. But you do not carry on a war, nor suffer brutal and widespread repression, nor look on while all other members of your family are wiped out in order to make racialism or hatred triumph. Racialism and hatred and resentment – "a legitimate desire for revenge" – cannot sustain a war of liberation. Those lightning flashes of consciousness which fling the body into stormy paths or which throw it into an almost pathological trance where the face of the other beckons me on to giddiness, where my blood calls for the blood of the other, where by sheer inertia my death calls for the death of the other – that intense emotion of the first few hours falls to pieces if it is left to feed on its own substance. It is true that the never-ending exactions of the colonial forces reintroduce emotional elements into the struggle, and give the militant fresh motives for hating and new reasons to go off hunting for a settler to shoot. But the leader realizes, day in and day out, that hatred alone cannot draw up a program. You will only risk the defeat of your own ends if you depend on the enemy (who of course will always manage to commit as many crimes as possible) to widen the gap, and to throw the whole people on the side of the rebellion. At all events, as we have noticed, the enemy tries to win the support of

certain sectors of the population, of certain districts, and of certain chiefs. As the struggle is carried on, instructions are issued to the settlers and to the police forces; their behavior takes on a different complexion: it becomes more "human." They even go as far as to call a native "Mister" when they have dealings with him. Attentions and acts of courtesy come to be the rule. The native is in fact made to feel that things are changing.

The native, who did not take up arms simply because he was dying of hunger and because he saw his own social forms disintegrating before his eyes, but also because the settler considered him to be an animal, and treated him as such, reacts very favorably to such measures. Hatred is disarmed by these psychological windfalls. Technologists and sociologists shed their light on colonialist maneuvers, and studies on the various "complexes" pour forth: the frustration complex, the belligerency complex, and the colonizability complex. The native is promoted; they try to disarm him with their psychology, and of course they throw in a few shillings too. And these miserable methods, this eyewash administered drop by drop, even meet with some success. The native is so starved for anything, anything at all that will turn him into a human being, any bone of humanity flung to him, that his hunger is incoercible, and these poor scraps of charity may, here and there, overwhelm him. His consciousness is so precarious and dim that it is affected by the slightest spark of kindness. Now it is that the first great undifferentiated thirst for light is continually threatened by mystification. The violent, total demands which lit up the sky now become modest, and withdraw into themselves. The springing wolf which wanted to devour everything at sight, and the rising gust of wind which was to have brought about a real revolution run the risk of becoming quite unrecognizable if the struggle continues: and continue it does. The native may at any moment let himself be disarmed by some concession or another.

The discovery of this instability inherent in the native is a frightening experience for the leaders of the rebellion. At first they are completely bewildered; then they are made to realize by this new drift of things that explanation is very necessary, and that they must stop the native consciousness from getting bogged down. For the war goes on; and the enemy organizes, reinforces his position, and comes to guess the native's strategy. The struggle for national liberation does not consist in spanning the gap at one stride; the drama has to be played out in all its difficulty every day, and the sufferings engendered far out-measure any endured during the colonial period. Down in the towns the settlers seem to have changed. Our people are happier; they are respected. Day after day goes by; the native who is taking part in the struggle and the people who ought to go on giving him their help must not waver. They must not imagine that the end is already won. When the real objectives of the fight are shown to them, they must not think that they are impossible to attain. Once again, things must be explained to them; the people must see where they are going, and how they are to get there. The war is not a single battle, but rather a series of local engagements; and to tell the truth, none of these are decisive.

So we must be sparing of our strength, and not throw everything into the scales once and for all. Colonialism has greater and wealthier resources than the native. The war goes on; the enemy holds his own; the final settling of accounts will not be today, nor yet tomorrow, for the truth is that the settlement was begun on the very first day

of the war, and it will be ended not because there are no more enemies left to kill, but quite simply because the enemy, for various reasons, will come to realize that his interest lies in ending the struggle and in recognizing the sovereignty of the colonized people. The objectives of the struggle ought not to be chosen without discrimination, as they were in the first days of the struggle. If care is not taken, the people may begin to question the prolongation of the war at any moment that the enemy grants some concession. They are so used to the settler's scorn and to his declared intention to maintain his oppression at whatever cost that the slightest suggestion of any generous gesture or of any good will is hailed with astonishment and delight, and the native bursts into a hymn of praise. It must be clearly explained to the rebel that he must on no account be blindfolded by the enemy's concessions. These concessions are no more than sops; they have no bearing on the essential question; and from the native's point of view, we may lay down that a concession has nothing to do with the essentials if it does not affect the real nature of the colonial regime.

For, as a matter of fact, the more brutal manifestations of the presence of the occupying power may perfectly well disappear. Indeed, such a spectacular disappearance turns out to be both a saving of expense to the colonial power and a positive way of preventing its forces being spread out over a wide area. But such a disappearance will be paid for at a high price: the price of a much stricter control of the country's future destiny. Historic examples can be quoted to help the people to see that the masquerade of giving concessions, and even the mere acceptance of the principle of concessions at any price, have been bartered by not a few countries for a servitude that is less blatant but much more complete. The people and all their leaders ought to know that historical law which lays down that certain concessions are the cloak for a tighter rein. But when there has been no work of clarification, it is astonishing with what complacency the leaders of certain political parties enter into undefined compromises with the former colonialist. The native must realize that colonialism never gives anything away for nothing. Whatever the native may gain through political or armed struggle is not the result of the kindness or good will of the settler; it simply shows that he cannot put off granting concessions any longer. Moreover, the native ought to realize that it is not colonialism that grants such concessions, but he himself that extorts them. When the British government decides to bestow a few more seats in the National Assembly of Kenya upon the African population, it needs plenty of effrontery or else a complete ignorance of facts to maintain that the British government has made a concession. Is it not obvious that it is the Kenyan people who have made the concession? The colonized peoples, the peoples who have been robbed, must lose the habits of mind which have characterized them up to now. If need be, the native can accept a compromise with colonialism, but never a surrender of principle.

All this taking stock of the situation, this enlightening of consciousness, and this advance in the knowledge of the history of societies are only possible within the framework of an organization, and inside the structure of a people. Such an organization is set afoot by the use of revolutionary elements coming from the towns at the beginning of the rising, together with those rebels who go down into the country as the fight goes on. It is this core which constitutes the embryonic political organization of the rebellion. But on the other hand the peasants, who are all the time adding to their knowledge in the light of experience, will come to show themselves capable of

directing the people's struggle. Between the nation on a wartime footing and its leaders there is established a mutual current of enlightenment and enrichment. Traditional institutions are reinforced, deepened, and sometimes literally transformed. The tribunals which settle disputes, the *djemmas* and the village assemblies turn into revolutionary tribunals and political and military committees. In each fighting group and in every village hosts of political commissioners spring up, and the people, who are beginning to splinter upon the reefs of misunderstanding, will be shown their bearings by these political pilots. Thus the latter will not be afraid to tackle problems which if left unclarified would contribute to the bewilderment of the people. The rebel in arms is in fact vexed to see that many natives go on living their lives in the towns as if they were strangers to everything taking place in the mountains and as if they failed to realize that the essential movement for freedom has begun. The towns keep silent, and their continuing daily humdrum life gives the peasant the bitter impression that a whole sector of the nation is content to sit on the side line. Such proofs of indifference disgust the peasants and strengthen their tendency to condemn the townsfolk as a whole. The political educator ought to lead them to modify this attitude by getting them to understand that certain fractions of the population have particular interests and that these do not always coincide with the national interest. The people will thus come to understand that national independence sheds light upon many facts which are sometimes divergent and antagonistic. Such a taking stock of the situation at this precise moment of the struggle is decisive, for it allows the people to pass from total, indiscriminating nationalism to social and economic awareness. The people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheism of the settler – Blacks and Whites, Arabs and Christians – realize as they go along that it sometimes happens that you get Blacks who are whiter than the Whites and that the fact of having a national flag and the hope of an independent nation does not always tempt certain strata of the population to give up their interests or privileges. The people come to realize that natives like themselves do not lose sight of the main chance, but quite on the contrary seem to make use of the war in order to strengthen their material situation and their growing power. Certain natives continue to profiteer and exploit the war, making their gains at the expense of the people, who as usual are prepared to sacrifice everything, and water their native soil with their blood. The militant who faces the colonialist war machine with the bare minimum of arms realizes that while he is breaking down colonial oppression he is building up automatically yet another system of exploitation. This discovery is unpleasant, bitter, and sickening; and yet everything seemed to be so simple before: the bad people were on one side, and the good on the other. The clear, unreal, idyllic light of the beginning is followed by a semi-darkness that bewilders the senses. The people find out that the iniquitous fact of exploitation can wear a black face, or an Arab one; and they raise the cry of "Treason!" But the cry is mistaken; and the mistake must be corrected. The treason is not national, it is social. The people must be taught to cry "Stop thief!" In their weary road toward rational knowledge the people must also give up their too-simple conception of their overlords. The species is breaking up under their very eyes. As they look around them, they notice that certain settlers do not join in the general guilty hysteria; there are differences in the same species. Such men, who before were included without distinction and indiscriminately in the monolithic mass of the

foreigner's presence, actually go so far as to condemn the colonial war. The scandal explodes when the prototypes of this division of the species go over to the enemy, become Negroes or Arabs, and accept suffering, torture, and death.

Such examples disarm the general hatred that the native feels toward the foreign settlement. The native surrounds these few men with warm affection, and tends by a kind of emotional over-valuation to place absolute confidence in them. In the mother country, once looked upon as a blood-thirsty and implacable stepmother, many voices are raised, some those of prominent citizens, in condemnation of the policy of war that their government is following, advising that the national will of the colonized people should be taken into consideration. Certain soldiers desert from the colonialist ranks; others explicitly refuse to fight against the people's liberty and go to prison for the sake of the right of that people to independence and self-government.

The settler is not simply the man who must be killed. Many members of the mass of colonialists reveal themselves to be much, much nearer to the national struggle than certain sons of the nation. The barriers of blood and race-prejudice are broken down on both sides. In the same way, not every Negro or Moslem is issued automatically a hallmark of genuineness; and the gun or the knife is not inevitably reached for when a settler makes his appearance. Consciousness slowly dawns upon truths that are only partial, limited, and unstable. As we may surmise, all this is very difficult. The task of bringing the people to maturity will be made easier by the thoroughness of the organization and by the high intellectual level of its leaders. The force of intellect increases and becomes more elaborate as the struggle goes on, as the enemy increases his manoeuvres and as victories are gained and defeats suffered. The leaders show their power and authority by criticizing mistakes, using every appraisal of past conduct to bring the lesson home, and thus insure fresh conditions for progress. Each local ebb of the tide will be used to review the question from the standpoint of *all* villages and of *all* political networks. The rebellion gives proof of its rational basis and expresses its maturity each time that it uses a particular case to advance the people's awareness. In defiance of those inside the movement who tend to think that shades of meaning constitute dangers and drive wedges into the solid block of popular opinion, the leaders stand firm upon those principles that have been sifted out in the national struggle, and in the worldwide struggle of mankind for his freedom. There exists a brutality of thought and a mistrust of subtlety which are typical of revolutions; but there also exists another kind of brutality which is astonishingly like the first and which is typically anti-revolutionary, hazardous, and anarchist. This unmixed and total brutality, if not immediately combated, invariably leads to the defeat of the movement within a few weeks.

The nationalist militant who had fled from the town in disgust at the demagogic and reformist maneuvers of the leaders there, disappointed by political life, discovers in real action a new form of political activity which in no way resembles the old. These politics are the politics of leaders and organizers living inside history who take the lead with their brains and their muscles in the fight for freedom. These politics are national, revolutionary, and social and these new facts which the native will now come to know exist only in action. They are the essence of the fight which explodes the old colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which brings out new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts. The people engaged in

the struggle who because of it command and know these facts, go forward, freed from colonialism and forewarned of all attempts at mystification, inoculated against all national anthems. Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them. Without that struggle, without that knowledge of the practice of action, there's nothing but a fancy-dress parade and the blare of the trumpets. There's nothing save a minimum of readaptation, a few reforms at the top, a flag waving; and down there at the bottom an undivided mass, still living in the middle ages, endlessly marking time.

## NOTES

- 1 This was written in 1961 (*Trans.*).
- 2 Algerians enlisted in the French army (*Trans.*).