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The Algerian Tragedy

THE ALGERIAN war began just six years ago. In the small hours of a Monday morning, November 1st, 1954, seventy small groups of Arabs all over the country attacked police stations and public buildings and vehicles with their home-made bombs and old hunting-rifles.

Almost everywhere, the raids failed completely; only in the wild Aurès mountains near the Tunisian border, a turbulent area since Roman times, did they develop into yet another local rising. In that region a group of fifteen rebels stopped a bus and shot two passengers, a young French schoolteacher and his wife. Germaine Tillion, the ethnologist (well known to readers of ENCOUNTER*) was in the mountains at the time; she reports that Moslem opinion unanimously condemned the murder. Only two years later, Moslem children in the Algiers Casbah cheered when the ambulances rushed past to the scene of a successful terrorist outrage. And after four further years this bitter little war continues to absorb the military strength of France, and to sap the moral credit of the West.

By 1960 the endless conflict was provoking a "crisis of the French conscience," especially among young men awaiting their call-up. Some *insoumis* went into hiding or exile. A few even (through the "Jeanson network") offered their services to the Algerian nationalists; twenty of these went on trial in September. A former head of the Algiers police testified in court to the tortures and disappearances against which they were protesting. A manifesto by 121 artists, teachers, and intellectuals justified their motives and excused *insoumission*. And the Cardinals and Archbishops of France, the Pro-

testant Assembly and the Teachers' Federation, while condemning both *insoumission* and torture, all confirmed that the malaise of youth was both widespread and sincere.

These events harmed the Right; but they also brought the Left into disrepute. At the Jeanson trial, the interminable obstruction of some defence lawyers alienated their warmest sympathisers. Jean-Paul Sartre affirmed that the Algerian nationalists were fighting for French liberties; Francis Jeanson himself, from Switzerland, expressed surprise that they had shot so few French prisoners. These provocative statements brought the popular reaction and the official repression which their authors (believing "fascism" to be the necessary "prelude to revolution") had probably intended. True to form, the government played into their hands, seizing journals which discussed *insoumission* (even disapprovingly); prosecuting some of the 121 for inciting desertion; suspending civil servants and teachers who had signed; and banning any radio or TV appearance by signatories, or any mention of their names or works. Even Jacques Soustelle condemned this "mean, petty administrative persecution."

OPINION WAS HARDENING on the other side too.

Abandoning French sovereignty in Algeria is an illegitimate act; it outlaws those who commit it and their accomplices, and places those who oppose it, by whatever means, in a state of legitimate self-defence.

Thus Michel Debré, now de Gaulle's Premier, in 1957. Counsel for the Right-wing insurgent leaders of January, 1960 (who went on trial in November), used Debré's words to present them as defenders of republican legality. Meanwhile prominent generals like Salan were demanding drastic action against those who incited disaffection, while themselves threatening to dis-

* Cf. her "Algeria in 1958," ENCOUNTER (July, 1958) and "The Terrorist" (December, 1958).

obey a government whose policies they disapproved. Responsible student leaders feared that the *insoumission* of the generals would encourage that of the next batch of conscripts. They tried to divert their followers by a massive peace demonstration of the entire Left; it was boycotted by the Communists and beaten up by the police. Each side, feeding on the other's excesses, prepared to defy the law. The Gaullists of 1940 and 1958 had denied the legitimacy of previous régimes. Now their own faced a double challenge.

The "Europeans"

ALGERIA is a huge country, nine-tenths of it desert. Even in the inhabited north, only a fifth of the area can be cultivated. But on this land of poor soil and resources, with hardly any industry, live over a million Europeans and nearly nine million Moslems.

Five-sixths of the Europeans were born in the country; thus their roots go much deeper than those of their less numerous opposite numbers in Tunisia and Morocco, Kenya and Rhodesia. Many of their forebears were Alsations escaping from German rule, or democratic refugees, fleeing from repressive government in France; Pierre Lagaille, leader of the right-wing insurrections of May 13th, 1958, and January 24th, 1960, claims descent from a famous democratic deputy killed on the barricades. Others are of Spanish, Italian, or Maltese origin—and the more fiercely "French" in consequence. The indigenous Jews, who to-day number 140,000, were granted French citizenship in 1871.

Only one European in twenty now lives on the land. Of these true *colons*, about three hundred are rich, and about a dozen enormously wealthy. Their urban compatriots have overwhelmingly dominated business, the professions, and (until recently) the public service. Indeed the European minority accounts for three-quarters of Algeria's more prosperous groups, which enjoy an average income rather above that of Frenchmen at home. But the prosperous groups comprise less than a third of the European community; and the income of the remaining 70 per cent is only half the figure in France. These poor whites—the postmen and teachers, clerks and tram-drivers—are, of course, the most afraid of Arab competition. The rich can send their capital to France (and lately have been exporting more than the Constantine Plan brings in). The poor have no such easy escape.

In normal times, the rich have dominated

European politics. Most of them have been conscienceless reactionaries, clinging to every privilege and fighting every measure to improve the Moslems' lot. Strong supporters of Pétain during the war, they operated before and afterwards mainly through the metropolitan Radical Party. As skilful lobbyists with large funds, great experience, and a powerful influence on the Algiers administration, they were usually able to impose their wishes on the weak and timid ministries which—theoretically—ruled in Paris.

In times of crisis, however, the European poor have often turned to less orthodox leadership. They were revolutionary in 1871, violently anti-semitic in 1898, often Socialist or Communist after 1945. But well before the 1954 revolt began, class conflict had given way to racial alarms, and most of the reactionary insurgents of January, 1960, came from Bab-el-Oued, a working-class suburb and former Communist stronghold.

Far more dangerous than the Left were the right-wing advocates of fascism and dictatorship. Joseph Ortiz led the Bab-el-Oued workers, Pierre Lagaille organised the students, Robert Martel appealed to the farmers of the Algiers neighbourhood. In normal times their movements were tiny; but in a crisis they swelled overnight, as the European population were seized by the fear of betrayal. So, in January, 1960, they became suddenly representative of a fear-stricken population, and even moderate politicians hastened to their defence—among them a Gaullist senator who had only recently warned against the blind folly of trying to repeat the 13th of May.

The Moslems

THE nine million Moslems have for thirty years been among the fastest growing populations in the world. Well over half of them are under twenty, and their numbers are doubling every twenty-five years. Most are Arab-speaking, but about a third are descended from the country's original inhabitants, the Berbers, who have been driven back into the hills by successive invaders. The Berbers live mainly in the rugged Kabyle mountains east of Algiers (parts of which are as heavily populated as Belgium), in the capital itself, and in the Aurès mountains to the east. There seems to be little substance in French claims that Arab-Berber antagonism seriously divides the nationalist movement.

There is no segregationist legislation in Algeria, no separate seating on buses or distinct queues in the post-offices; in so far as the Moslems have worse opportunities than the Europeans, the blame lies with educational inadequacies rather than legal obstacles. About a quarter of the Moslems of working age are engaged in pursuits other than agriculture; in work, their average income (excluding the well-off 2 per cent at the top) is around a third of the French metropolitan average. But a quarter of these Moslems suffer complete or partial unemployment, from which the Europeans are virtually immune.

The three-quarters of Moslems who live from agriculture are nearly all desperately poor. While their average income is calculated to be less than a tenth of the French, one ethnologist's classification—into those who eat twice a day, those who eat once, and the hungry—is more to the point. *The wretched soil of Algeria can probably not maintain its present population, certainly not the ten million more who will appear by 1980.* The only solution is emigration to France; and in 1954, when the revolt began, one adult male in seven was working there. (In parts of Kabylia the proportion was one in two, and is even higher to-day.)

It was among these emigrant workers that, in the 1920's, nationalist politics first developed; not in Algeria itself. There, the rich Moslem landowners were content with a régime which left them free to exploit and oppress their wretched peasantry. The small intellectual élite ardently desired equal status with the French—a pretension rejected with contempt by both the *colons* and the administration—rather than independence. For Algeria had never been a political entity, unlike the neighbouring protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco with their traditional state organisation, their puppet monarchies and, by 1939, their powerful parties, *Néo-Destour* and *Istiqlal*.

The equivalent Algerian movement was much weaker. It was founded in France by a shoemaker, Messali Hadj, and called the North African Star; repeatedly it was banned by the French and revived under new titles. Its tactics changed as often as its name; Messali co-operated in turn with revolutionary Communists and Islamic reactionaries, with Blum's Socialists and Doriot's Fascists. By 1947 his party, now called the MTLD ("Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties") had attracted Moslem support away from the European-dominated

Socialists and Communists. Its chief rival was the UDMA ("Democratic Union for the Algerian Manifesto"), which had been founded during the war by Ferhat Abbas. This appealed mainly to the educated élite which, like Abbas himself, had hitherto favoured assimilation to France; the MTLD recruited from the workers and lower middle-class. The UDMA was mild, secularist, and westernising, the MTLD violent, conservative, and pan-Arab. Messali's following seems, by 1947, to have been at least double that of Abbas.

During the post-war years, nationalist activity took various forms. Disorders at Sétif on VE-Day (May 8th, 1945) turned into an armed outbreak which was savagely put down; the hundred murdered Europeans were avenged by several thousand Moslem dead. (European Communists took an active part in the repression; nationalists have never trusted them since then.) A law of 1947 gave the vote to all Moslems; but both MTLD and UDMA found election after election shamelessly rigged against them by the French administration. Finally, however, in 1953, a genuine chance of constructive progress emerged.

THE INITIATIVE CAME from the new mayor of Algiers, Jacques Chevallier, a former reactionary converted to liberalism. He invited the MTLD municipal councillors to join his administration and co-operate in his spectacular re-housing programme. The party's Central Committee accepted his offer; Messali, who was interned in France, was furious at this capitulation to reformism. A bitter quarrel broke out, with fighting for the party's physical and financial assets, rival congresses and mutual expulsions. In the midst of this struggle another group made its appearance.

The new body originally called itself the CRUA, "Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action." Most of its leaders had formerly belonged to the "Secret Organisation" (OS) of the MTLD, a direct-action body which the French broke up in 1950. They were younger and poorer than the established politicians; most of them were peasants by origin, extremists by temperament, and professional revolutionaries by occupation. The soil had been prepared for them by the repression of the Sétif outbreak and the rigging of elections; organising work had been started by the OS; and their opportunity came with the MTLD split. For now they could offer to the party activists, disgusted with fratri-

cidal strife, a way to end nationalist dissensions overnight: an armed rising against French rule which would render all the old divisions obsolete and force every Moslem to choose his side. Moderate nationalist intellectuals, corrupt stooges of the administration, middle-class assimilationists, reformist city councillors, even the old patriarch Messali dictating terms from his Vendean exile—all would be swept aside once the stark alternative was posed: for the freedom fighters or against them? *Thus the revolution was directed against the Moslem politicians no less than against the French.* Its first handbill, issued on the first day of the rebellion, proclaimed:

Our National Movement, prostrated by years of immobility and routine, badly directed, was disintegrating little by little. Faced with this situation, a youthful group, gathering about it the majority of the wholesome and resolute elements, judged that the moment had come to take the National Movement out of the impasse into which it had been forced by the conflicts of persons and of influence and to launch it into the true revolutionary struggle. . . .

Rebels, Nationalists, Terrorists

THE rebels, who soon took the name of National Liberation Front (FLN) were determined to monopolise the representation of Moslem opinion. Their method was to eliminate or intimidate those who contested their claim. Rival nationalists were even more obnoxious than Francophiles, for one day France might try to negotiate with them as she had in Tunisia. But, as a leader in exile wrote to a commander in the *maquis* in 1955:

France as well as the trashy politicians will be sadly disappointed. The vigilance of the combatants will, in Algeria, nip Bourguibaism in the bud. . . .

Several nationalist (especially UDMA) leaders were sentenced to be assassinated during the outbreaks of August 20th, 1955; though most escaped, Ferhat Abbas' nephew was killed. Abbas himself was one of the designated victims. But he soon made his peace with the FLN, and joined them in Cairo in April, 1956. In 1958 he became head of their "provisional government," a position of more prominence than power. Many other moderate politicians have similarly "taken out insurance" by vigorous criticisms of the French, or even by going over to the FLN; most have been treated with

contempt. In September, 1955, the FLN publicly warned those who

now think they can climb aboard with us. . . . But the people will not forget that these men, instead of helping them, helped themselves. . . . their eleventh-hour speeches cannot ward off the punishment that awaits them.

The FLN is thus determined to monopolise Algerian nationalism. Naturally it is strongly opposed by the original nationalists of Messali's party, now called the MNA ("Algerian National Movement"). In Algeria these have almost been wiped out except for a few pockets; their armed bands were attacked by both sides, their civilian sympathisers deterred by terrorism (the worst example was the massacre of the three hundred male inhabitants of Mechta Kasbah, near Melouza, in April, 1957) or discredited by being driven to accept French protection. But the MNA survives among its original adherents, the Algerian workers in France. Here the two movements wage a savage war: *over five years, an average of two Moslems a day have been killed in France, and four more wounded, by their co-religionists.* (Thus one emigrant in forty has been a victim.) The MNA trade union has had six leaders murdered. Workers are attacked for holding the wrong views, or for not paying the stiff levy demanded by FLN (about ten shillings a week; merchants, of course, pay much more). The FLN is said to raise £500,000 a month in this way within France; in Algeria its "taxes" bring in a similar amount. There, most of the Moslem rich, and many Europeans, protect themselves by heavy contributions.

In Algeria itself, terrorism against Europeans has usually been indiscriminate—attacks on isolated victims, or bombs timed to explode at peak hours in cafés and dance-halls, at football grounds and bus-stops. Moslems sometimes suffer from similarly indiscriminate violence, such as the inexplicable attack on a school bus at El Marsa (25th November, 1959), in which four Moslem children were killed. But more commonly the Moslem targets are such designated victims as local councillors, candidates at elections, "tax" defaulters, smokers (the FLN banned tobacco), or participants in the French land reform scheme. About six Moslems a day (till recently, eight) are still being assassinated by terrorists in Algeria.

TERRORISM CANNOT SIMPLY be explained away as the brutal but understandable elimination of "quislings." For instance, Senator Chérif Ben-

habyles, who (with an unlucky passer-by) was shot dead in Vichy on August 27th, 1959, had denounced the excesses of French repression, condemned integration, avowed his continued friendship with Ferhat Abbas—and refused French police protection. He had recently made several trips to Switzerland, undoubtedly to meet FLN representatives. His murder was plainly meant by the extremists as a warning to any moderate, on either side, who was thinking of the compromise peace for which Moslem opinion unquestionably longed.

It would be absurd to accept the official French contention that the FLN are a mere handful of criminals without popular support; if they were, they would have been destroyed long ago. But it seems hard to maintain that a movement which uses terror for so long, on such a scale, represents the true wishes of all its people—those of El Marsa, for instance. One should not make too much of the 180,000 Moslems under arms on the French side, some six times more than the FLN forces ever had. For the latter could probably multiply their numbers if they had more arms, while the former include village self-defence groups which often reach a live-and-let-live agreement with the local FLN band, and auxiliaries (*harkis*) who willingly accept a well-paid occupation in a land where unemployment is rife. Yet it is worth noting that desertions, frequent among Moslem troops in 1956-7, are negligible to-day; and this although the *harkis* include many *ralliés*—ex-FLN soldiers who have come over, voluntarily or after capture. (According to *Officiers en Algérie*, a “stop-the-war” pamphlet by three returned officers, prisoners who join the French forces number between 10 and 15 per cent of all the FLN casualties, and the proportion is rising.) Many French officers go out on patrol night after night with a section entirely made up of former FLN fellagas.

The FLN thus meets hostility from its bitter enemies who have everything to lose from its victory: all the *ralliés*; some of the *harkis*; a few rich friends of France; the families of the victims of terrorism; the villagers who have supported the French because their neighbours and traditional enemies were pro-FLN; the surviving followers of the MNA. Yet the groups committed to France are no doubt a much smaller minority than that actively supporting the FLN. The majority, as in most civil wars, passively endures the exactions of both sides and longs for the return of peace.

AS FLN TERROR HAS WON some Moslems to the French side, so French repression, often blind and indiscriminating, has been the rebels' strongest weapon. Villagers from the hills, numbering a million and a half, have been “re-grouped” in new areas where they could be better protected and controlled—but only a third of these re-groupments were economically viable; most suffered hardship, sometimes even starvation. In the towns, any Moslem with a primary education is likely to have been in an internment camp. These naturally function (as in Ireland in 1917) as nationalist universities; in one of the best managed, where the authorities hoped most of the inmates would cast votes at the 1958 referendum, the turn-out was 2 per cent. The system is neither as efficient nor as ruthless as is often supposed—the murderer of Senator Benhabyles has just been freed after a short prison sentence (in France) for illegally carrying arms. But conditions vary widely. A Red Cross inspection commission reported in December, 1959 that, while conditions in over half the camps in central Algeria (*Algérois*) were bad, in two-thirds of those in the west (*Oranais*) and east (*Constantinois*) they were good or very good.

The French have some ground for complaining of their bad press. Charges of torture, like the cases of Djamila Bouhired in 1957 and Djamila Boupacha in 1960, invariably and properly receive wide publicity, both in the Paris opposition press and abroad. Understandably, the critics demand a higher standard from the French than from the FLN. But the picture they present is often incomplete. Thus a respectable American professor, in an academic work, can denounce French infringements of civil liberties without once mentioning FLN terrorism (Edgar Furniss in *France—Troubled Ally*). The *New Statesman's* account of the Red Cross report gave a quarter of its space to describing the worst camp of all, without bothering to say that the Commission, on its second visit a month later, had found the place transformed. No one pointed the contrast between the French, who invited Red Cross inspections (though not publicity for the results), and the FLN which, up to June, 1960, refused every Red Cross request for access to prisoners or even for a list of their names.

There is, however, no doubt that torture is still all too common. Some commanders have made genuine, sometimes even effective efforts to stamp it out—though punishments, in accord-

ance with French tradition in cases of abuses committed in the public service, are never publicised. But, only too often, the authorities have preferred to cover up outrages by denouncing those who reveal them, or pointing to the FLN terrorism which may explain, but does not excuse, French brutality and sadism.

The Men Between

THE ordinary Moslem is caught between the violence, arbitrary or deliberate, of both sides. His dominating wish is for an end to the nightmare. Yet the profound changes made by the war have not all been evil. Psychologically, since Algerian Moslems are affirming their nationality in arms, to accept western values no longer seems a symbolic capitulation; where French modernisers could not induce Moslem women to renounce the veil, or men to abandon their right to divorce their wives at will, sociologists now report that these changes have spread rapidly under FLN sponsorship. Materially, French attempts to win Moslem allegiance have brought substantial improvements. Land reform has been begun, industrialisation encouraged, civil service jobs opened to Moslems, local government brought under their control, education greatly extended.

These belated measures seem unlikely to fulfil their political aim. Too many of the beneficiaries regard them as by-products of the revolt, and give their gratitude to the FLN. Moreover, the repression, striking blindly, causes the whole Moslem community to feel endangered, and reinforces its solidarity—from which the FLN profits. Even Moslems who detest FLN methods cannot help feeling pride in men of their race who have defied the French army for six years. While the war continues, few Moslems can repudiate their own folk under arms.

But afterwards? Psychologically, everything would be changed once the terror and repression ended—though the Moslems' thirst for human dignity could no doubt be slaked only by the grant of independence. Materially, those who give the FLN credit for provoking the French into constructive reforms may well doubt its capacity for carrying them out itself. Many who know the Moslems well, therefore, believe that, with peace, the elusive third force might at last come to life. For the mass of *attentistes* are not without views on their country's future; they are *cross-pressured*, like

those voters in western democracies who are slowest and most hesitant in making up their minds. In Algeria, where the conflicting pressures are so much more terrible, the uncertainties are magnified. Numbers of Moslem families are divided against themselves. Mme Germaine Tillion, who knows the Moslems as well as any westerner, believes that while 90 per cent of them favour the FLN, 60 per cent want friendship with France. The left-wing authors of *Officiers en Algérie* record similar impressions.

To Moslems who want *both* independence and links with Paris, *both* the FLN and the French, de Gaulle has long been the one man capable of making peace, and the only leader who could fulfil their aspirations. "Their confidence in de Gaulle is total, startling," wrote one of the *Officiers*, referring to 1958. An "Algiers letter" in Mendès-France's monthly *Cahiers de la République* (June, 1959) spoke of their "immense hope (in de Gaulle) which you can scarcely conceive." During the January 1960 insurrection, anti-Gaullist European territorials at Mostaganem, in Oranie, clashed with Moslem demonstrators shouting "Down With Massu!", "We want work!", and "Vive de Gaulle!" Later, in the anti-Gaullist *L'Express* (February 11th, 1960), Claude Krief reported that "At Algiers... (de Gaulle) could be acclaimed by virtually the whole Moslem population," and Mendès-France agreed that his "measures have brought, as all witnesses confirm, a profound response among the Moslems." And on June 1st, *Le Monde's* correspondent recorded that "the anti-Gaullism of the FLN has practically no hold on the Moslems, even the nationalists."

The French Army

BESIDES the Europeans and the Moslems there is a third political entity in Algeria: the French army. It cumulates the powers of all armies in countries at war, with the immense *civil* administrative authority conferred by successive governments, from 1956 to 1960, on the only force capable of running this chronically under-administered territory. This transfer of power was at first warmly approved by Mendès-France and his friends, who rightly much preferred the army to the settler-ridden administration and police. Even Moslems welcomed it as a lesser evil.

The consequences have been mixed: neither black nor white, or rather both black and white,

for in Algeria the contrasts between neighbouring zones or sectors are often startling. The army is not a monolithic unit, and its conduct depends on the standards and outlook of individual generals—and second-lieutenants. Moreover, there are many divisions within its ranks. The “activist” officers have always been concentrated in the Algiers command; Oran and Constantine have never been in their hands—just as civilian extremism has always been far stronger in the capital than in the two regional centres). There are distinct differences of outlook between professionals and conscripts; between the parachutists (who get all the glory and publicity) and other regulars; between different paratroop divisions; between the politically-minded staff officers in the Algiers hot-house and their fellows out in the *bled*; between the powerful, strongly integrationist psychological warfare enthusiasts, and the “SAS” officers directly administering Moslem villages and towns.

Yet on two points the great majority of officers are agreed. First, the unity of the army must be maintained; the political split of the second world war must never be repeated. Secondly, they will not put up with another defeat imposed by the politicians. They have no desire whatever to take over political power, and loathe the thought of making and unmaking governments like a “Mexican army.” But they will not tolerate a capitulation in Algeria. Some may fear the loss of comforts and privileges. Others are alarmed at the likely effects in France itself of the return of an angry army and a million furious settlers. None will concede defeat in a war which they believe they are winning, or again abandon to nationalist vengeance, as they did in Indo-China, natives who had trusted in French promises to remain.

THE ARMY'S POLITICAL ROLE has been more that of a lobby, trying to influence the government, than that of a conspiracy to replace it. Few officers are prepared to plot—though their numbers might swell rapidly if a capitulation seemed imminent. Their attitude is more like that of Gough's cavalry officers who, in 1914, resigned their commissions rather than coerce Ulster—and so in effect vetoed certain possible lines of policy. But this analogy conceals a crucial fact: *the French army in Algeria is pro-Moslem and anti-colon*. For, to compete with

the well-entrenched FLN clandestine organisation, the army has been forced to behave almost as a political party, paternalist in outlook yet progressive and even revolutionary in aim.*

The insurrection of January, 1960, with which the troops then in Algiers plainly sympathised, should not mislead us. These were Massu's paratroops, partly recruited from the city and based there for three tense years; in contrast, the troops who replaced them (another parachutist division) were furious at having to abandon their operations in the *bled* to deal with Lagailarde. Yet even Massu's entourage was described by a left-wing journalist (Jean Daniel in *L'Express*, February 11th, 1960) as advocating “rural socialism.” The soldiers hoped to counter the “myth” of independence by the rival myth of modernisation, equality, integration—a “Kemal revolution” sponsored by France. Thus, though ashamed of French neglect of Algeria in the past, the army—despite all its bitter critics—is proud of what it is doing there to-day, enthusiastic in its efforts to improve the living conditions of remote peasant villages which have never before seen a doctor or a schoolmaster.

“For the very first time in my military career I have an entirely clear conscience,” I was told by a general distinguished for his liberalism and humanity. The junior officers in the SAS often voluntarily prolong their military service to continue with their task of social reconstruction. These constructive activities cannot compete for publicity with charges of torture. But in fact, once more, the black and the white exist side by side.

Self-Determination?

YET the policy of self-determination by referendum—accepted officially by both de Gaulle and the FLN—arouses no enthusiasm in the army, despite military sympathy for the Moslems. For it is a procedure, not an objective; and, as one officer put it, “you can't commit yourself to a question-mark.” The army knows that France cannot remain in Algeria without Moslem support and co-operation; the Moslems know what happened to France's friends in Morocco and Tunisia after independence. How can any self-respecting officer, out in the *bled*, encourage a village leader whom he likes and trusts to risk his own life and his family's by becoming mayor of his hamlet—unless the Frenchman can honestly promise that no scuttle in twelve or eighteen months' time

* Cf. Brian Crozier, “The General's Generals,” *ENCOUNTER*, April, 1960.

will deliver his friends into the power of the FLN?

The practical problems of self-determination, too, are enormous. Can there be a fair vote in a primitive country torn by the passions and hatred of six years of bitter civil warfare? A spokesman from Ortiz's balcony, in January, put the point brutally:

If no one takes the Moslems to the polls, they will stay at home. If the army takes them, they will vote for France; if the FLN takes them, they will vote for independence. So what's all this nonsense about self-determination?

No doubt the two sides might agree to regroup their forces and keep them out of the referendum campaign. Even so, the verdict would reflect the sum of local positions of strength rather than any genuine popular wish. Moreover, de Gaulle has demanded a long delay between the cease-fire and the vote. But if the military contest were merely transformed into a political one, would passions really cool off as the crucial vote approached? Would the rival armed forces really withstand the temptation to intervene surreptitiously where things were going badly for their side?

This is not all. Even if no one interfered improperly with the campaign or the poll, the vote would be profoundly influenced by the result the Moslems *expected*; once convinced the FLN was going to win, every *attentiste* would hasten to make his peace with them. Experience in the North African protectorates has shown that a compromise line cannot be held more than a few weeks (in Morocco) or months (in Tunisia) because of the rush to get on the victor's band-wagon. Thus the first sign of French recognition of the FLN—however informal or unofficial—would consolidate their hold on Moslem opinion, and give them the representativeness which they have always claimed, but might not find it easy to retain once peace was signed. *Once recognised as representative, however, they will become so.*

THIS IS WHY the FLN long refused to discuss peace terms until France had agreed to concede both Algerian independence and their own status as a provisional government. They abandoned these explicit claims after de Gaulle's offer of self-determination on September 16th, 1959. But they still hoped to reach the same ends by an indirect approach. For their insistence that military talks on a cease-fire must be accompanied by political negotiations on the

guarantees of a fair vote (fully justified by the history of French-managed elections in the past) was accompanied by a rejection of round-table discussion with other tendencies of Algerian opinion. These, whether European or Moslem, must express their views to and through the French government—which would thus have to accept a *tête-à-tête* with the FLN. And to ensure that the lesson sinks into Moslem minds, the FLN wanted an early meeting between General de Gaulle and Ferhat Abbas.

Thus a truly free vote, without physical or psychological coercion, will be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Much left-wing opinion, and perhaps some Gaullist opinion too, holds that the one way out is through a *referendum of which the result is predetermined by negotiation between the contestants*, both sides campaigning for an affirmative answer to a solution previously agreed between them. The FLN would accept no such solution unless their claim to independence was conceded. But, today, a state can be independent and yet remain within the French Community.

There are two strong arguments for "pre-determination." The first is the impracticability of a truly free vote. The second is that, even if this were practicable, it would leave the Europeans and the pro-French Moslems wholly without protection. The Algerian economy is utterly dependent on the Europeans, who employ more than 90 per cent of those working in industry and commerce, account for 92 per cent of gross business earnings, and provide 92 per cent of the country's private investment; a vote for independence without safeguards would inevitably provoke a panic exodus, disrupting the economic life of Algeria—and the political life of France. Only by negotiations with those who have the prestige to accept unpopular concessions, and the authority to carry their followers' consent, can any sort of guarantees be obtained. But the word "guarantees" arouses only scepticism. Stages and safeguards, time-limits and precautions have been utterly discredited by developments in Morocco and Tunisia. *The exodus will not be prevented by paper promises which no European will trust; it can be averted only if the French army remains in Algeria for a decade after the cease-fire.*

Alternatives

EVEN LAST SUMMER a settlement on these lines still seemed possible. France badly needed one, both to regain influence in Europe

and to retain her ties with the new African states of the Community. And the FLN needs one too.

For the French held some strong cards. The military situation has been moving steadily in their favour. Though the FLN keeps strong forces in Tunisia and Morocco, fewer arms have been getting through to its troops within Algeria; they are broken up into much smaller bands than a year ago; their morale seems to be lower (the proportion of prisoners is rising); and they are finding more difficulty in recruitment. Whereas in 1958 the *maquis* leaders were thought to be much more intransigent than the exiles in Tunis, by 1960 the roles were reversed.

Next, the French could impose what the FLN most dread: *partition*. No one can stop them from setting up a "new Israel" along the coast from Oran to Algiers, and denying to the nationalists the principal cities and most fertile lands in Algeria. Both sides agree that this would be disastrous to the country's welfare—but if the war drags on a few more years, it might then seem less ruinous than an endless struggle. The choice before the FLN—and the French—might well lie between a negotiated settlement in 1961, and a *de facto* partition in 1963 or 1965.

Thirdly, Moslem opinion in Algeria is passionately anxious for the nightmare to end. Extreme intransigence by the FLN might in the end have forfeited Moslem goodwill. Tunis was beginning to fear this last February, when de Gaulle's firmness against the European insurgents had sent his prestige soaring among the Moslems.

Fourthly, the alternative for the FLN is dangerous. China is prodigal with offers of aid; but the benefits are dubious, the reluctance of the Tunisians evident, the risks of acceptance manifest. Their cautious acceptance of de Gaulle's overtures in June, and their refusal finally to break off talks after the first unsatisfactory meetings, suggested awareness that they stood at a cross-roads, and reluctance to follow the highway to the east.

Moreover, in the last resort a link between France and Algeria is even more important to the Moslems than to the French. Not only do Frenchmen provide capital and technical skills, but France offers an indispensable outlet for Algeria's leaping population. As French citizens, the Algerian Moslems have free access

* Cf. Herbert Luchty, "De Gaulle," *ENCOUNTER*, July, 1960.

to the French labour market—unlike the Tunisians and Moroccans, only one of whom works in France for every ten Algerians. These immigrants send much of their earnings home, and keep alive at least a million-and-a-half (some estimates say three or even four million) of their fellow-countrymen. If Algeria were wholly severed from France, most nationals of each country would soon return home, voluntarily or under compulsion. Economically, the exchange (and the loss of Saharan oil) would bring minor inconvenience in France. Algeria would suffer immediate catastrophe.

An agreed settlement clearly meant hard bargaining, with the FLN manoeuvring to obtain implicit recognition and the French to deny it, the French trying and the FLN refusing to give the negotiations the outward appearance of a capitulation. It would have faced hostility from the Europeans and the army, both determined to resist concessions beyond a certain point. But experience did not seem to bear out the gloomy views expressed by the *New Statesman* when the Fourth Republic fell:

De Gaulle is a "Wooden Titan." . . . The *colon* extremists . . . do not expect much resistance from this ageing prima donna who owes his Indian Summer of power entirely to their efforts. De Gaulle's slogans may be vague . . . but . . . it is Soustelle and Massu who will do the interpreting.

And again,

There is no doubt that the new régime will be dominated by the French in Algeria. . . . General de Gaulle can play the role of a Neguib, but if he tries to carry out his personal policy he will soon be replaced by a Nasser.

The General

FOR two-and-a-half years, General de Gaulle had survived these dangers by skilfully blurring the issues and bewildering his opponents. His seemingly incomprehensible zig-gagging policy had gratified and discouraged each side in turn. In January he delighted the Moslems by refusing to compromise with Lagailarde; in March he bitterly disappointed them by his reassurances to the army; in June he swung back so far that the FLN, for the first time, agreed to send an emissary to Paris—only to confront the emissary with conditions so rigid that no one can have imagined they would be accepted. Where, if anywhere, was he going?

The answer, I think, is to be found in his past career.* De Gaulle has twenty years' experience as a politician, and his strategic method

has not varied. Against Churchill against Giraud, against the Communists in 1944 and the Committees of Public Safety in 1958, he has played for time, confused the issue, conciliated everyone a little and no one completely, and created a fog around his real intentions in which he could forge steadily ahead towards his objective. When he came to power, he would neither repudiate integration nor commit himself to it. But by 1960 integration was dead. The army had swallowed, without reacting, first the dissolution of the Committees of Public Safety; then self-determination; finally, instead of *Algérie française*, "an Algerian Algeria linked with France." And even while the war goes on, this Algerian Algeria is coming into being. Power is passing quite rapidly into the Moslems' hands. Nearly 200,000 of them have been armed by France; a predominant share in new administrative appointments is reserved to them; local government is under their control; their integrationist representatives have nearly all swung over to supporting *Algérie algérienne*. De Gaulle has given an irrevocable answer to one crucial question: in a few years' time Algeria will be a land ruled by Moslems, not by Frenchmen. A second crucial question remains open: will its rulers be friendly or hostile towards France?

De Gaulle hoped that his concessions on the first question would ensure a favourable answer to the second. "France," he had said in 1957, "dislikes half-measures which turn against her. She likes great concessions which bring everything back to her. . . . The more the Algerians are free the more they will be united to the French." For this happy ending he needed time—to win back the army, to master the Europeans, above all to convince the ordinary Moslem voter (through economic and educational reforms) of the advantages of the French connection. As they found these advantages working in their daily lives, he could begin to build up a Moslem-controlled Algeria—keeping a place open for the FLN, but denying them exclusive control.

The FLN might well refuse to come in. For, on both sides, war is now routine, and peace a leap into the unknown. Negotiations would threaten French unity; but they would also terribly strain the cohesion of the FLN, as they broke Sinn Fein in 1921. If the FLN did refuse, the new Algeria would be built without them—subjecting them to growing pressure to join. If they agreed, this would mark the defeat of the

extreme wing by Abbas and the moderates, who could then co-operate with the "third force" nationalists in facing the desperate problems of reconstruction.

Early in 1960 it seemed de Gaulle might be granted the time he needed. In France his popularity was unimpaired. Among the Algerian Moslems it soared after the January 1960, insurrection—which alarmed the army by showing how isolated it was from both Moslems and Frenchmen at home. Abroad, both the great powers were courting the General, and thus wary of the FLN. So at Melun, in June, France confronted the FLN emissaries with rigid terms. Most observers thought this a prelude to tough bargaining; none, however pessimistic, expected the FLN to break off the talks.

YET A TURNING-POINT CAME, if not at Melun, at de Gaulle's press conference of September 5th, when the world waited in vain for the balancing move towards peace. For all the President had to offer was this: "People sometimes say: de Gaulle is the man to settle the Algerian problem—if he cannot, no one can. Then will they kindly let me get on with it?" The answer was No.

The General's assets began to fall away alarmingly. Khrushchev, for reasons of his own (Berlin? China? U.N.?), gave *de facto* recognition to the "Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic." His press began printing violent criticisms of France; FLN visitors in Moscow (whose presence in the past had been concealed) were given a state welcome. Ferhat Abbas returned from Peking to answer de Gaulle's invitation to "peace if they lay down the knife" with a defiant "we will lay down our knives when we have planes instead." The United States had at last to choose whether to back France against the Afro-Asian bloc, or to help the FLN so as to keep them from the Communist embrace. Back in 1957, one American senator had outspokenly condemned the former course. His name was John F. Kennedy.

De Gaulle's collapse was equally sudden in North Africa. Hopes had been raised and then dashed once too often. "Moslem Gaullism is stone dead," wrote a journalist who had formerly insisted on its importance. The Moslem politicians reflected the widespread disillusionment. Most of them, elected under army auspices as integrationists, had rallied to de Gaulle when he defied Lagayette's insurgents; now they were demanding political talks

with the FLN. Even President Bourguiba of Tunisia, who had so often preached moderation to the FLN leaders, publicly doubted whether de Gaulle could solve the problem, or whether he himself could any longer prevent Communist arms from flowing through his country.

In France, too, the position was deteriorating fast. The active minorities on both sides were growing, as we have seen, in numbers and extremism. But the masses, too, were affected; Grenoble became the first provincial city to receive the President of the Republic frigidly. His increasingly personal conception of his power drew heavy fire from both Right and Left in Parliament and the press. Centre politicians dared to attack him in public, and even the devoted Guy Mollet went into formal opposition. As General Salan emerged as the spokes-

man of *Algérie française*, tension built up again in army circles.

DE GAULLE KNOWS HE MUST QUICKLY regain the initiative. On November 4th he promised the nationalists their Algerian Republic. For the Right, Bidault denounced his policy: "execrable, worse than ever." But the Left did not abate its distrust of *pouvoir personnel*. Confidently monarchical, the President continued to evoke the popular faith in himself which he had so far re-kindled after each disappointment.

The State will not permit the claim of those who enjoy some personal standing—political, trade union, military, journalistic, or other personalities—to influence the guidance of France. The guidance of France belongs to those upon whom she has conferred that duty. Therefore it belongs above all to me.

Homage to Caliban

Sick on this morning after some escapade
Of my shadow-man who still puts light to rout,
And, whooping, makes bad hay in a childish shade,
Of that fishy monster I think, whose claws and snout
Through every sea-change of a magic island
Remained exactly as they always were,
The Bard's black twin without—so hints the postscript—
One scrap of hope from Art; only from prayer.
Well, he it seems should know, who rode the ocean
On that mere self of his—a rotten butt—
Yet plucked his Ariel of imagination
From the gross mothering tree where it was shut,
That art, in one sense, only begs the question
Of what we are; leaves Caliban to rot.
And yet that beast of his was not cast off;
Return he did and say—though shredded fine
In its loose jaws the old unleavened stuff—
"This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine."

Thomas Blackburn