Situations of the colonized

Since the colonized is presumed a thief, he must in fact be guarded against (being suspect by definition, why should he not be guilty?). Some laundry was stolen (a frequent incident in these sunny lands, where the laundry dries in the open air and mocks those who are naked), and who but the first colonized seen in that vicinity can be guilty? Since it may be he, they go to his home and take him to the police station.

"Some injustice!" retorts the colonizer. "One time out of two, we hit it right. And, in any case, the thief is a colonized; if we don't find him in the first hut, he'll be in the second one."

It would have been too good if that mythical portrait had remained a pure illusion, a look at the colonized which would only have softened the colonizer's bad conscience. However, impelled by the same needs which created it, it cannot fail to be expressed in actual conduct, in active and constructive behavior.

This conduct, which is common to colonizers as a group, thus becomes what can be called a social institution. In other words, it defines and establishes concrete situations which close in on the colonized, weigh on him until they bend his conduct and leave their marks on his face. Generally speaking, these

are situations of inadequacy. The ideological aggression which tends to dehumanize and then deceive the colonized finally corresponds to concrete situations which lead to the same result. To be deceived to some extent already, to endorse the myth and then adapt to it, is to be acted upon by it. That myth is furthermore supported by a very solid organization; a government and a judicial system fed and renewed by the colonizer's historic, economic and cultural needs. Even if he were insensitive to calumny and scorn, even if he shrugged his shoulders at insults and jostling, how could the colonized escape the low wages, the agony of his culture, the law which rules him from birth until death?

Just as the colonized cannot escape the colonialist hoax, he could not avoid those situations which create real inadequacy. To a certain extent, the true portrait of the colonized is a function of this relationship. Reversing a previous formula, it can be stated that colonization creates the colonized just as we have seen that it creates the colonizer.

The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community. Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility.

It is true that discouraged citizens of free countries tell themselves that they have no voice in the

nation's affairs, that their actions are useless, that their voice is not heard, and that the elections are fixed. Such people claim that the press and radio are in the hands of a few, that they cannot prevent war, or demand peace, or even obtain from their elected representatives that for which they were sent to parliament. However, they at least immediately recognize that they possess the right to do so; the potential if not the effective power; that they are deceived or weary, but not enslaved. They try to believe they are free men, momentarily vanquished by hoaxes or stunned by demagogy. Driven beyond the boiling point, they are seized by sudden anger, break their paper chains and upset the politicians' little calculations. These people proudly remember those periodic and just storms! Thinking it over, they may feel guilty for not revolting more often; after all, they are responsible for their own freedom and if, because of fatigue or weakness or skepticism, they do not use it, they deserve their punishment.

The colonized, on the other hand, feels neither responsible nor guilty nor skeptical, for he is out of the game. He is in no way a subject of history any more. Of course, he carries its burden, often more cruelly than others, but always as an object. He has forgotten how to participate actively in history and no longer even asks to do so. No matter how briefly colonization may have lasted, all memory of freedom seems distant; he forgets what it costs or else he no

longer dares to pay the price for it. How else can one explain how a garrison of a few men can hold out in a mountain post? How a handful of often arrogant colonizers can live in the midst of a multitude of colonized? The colonizers themselves are amazed, and it follows that they accuse the colonized of cowardice. Actually, the accusation is too easy; they know very well that if they were in danger, their lonely position would quickly be changed. All the resources of science—telephone, telegraph, and airplane—would be placed at their disposal and, within a few minutes, terrible weapons of defense and destruction. For each colonizer killed, hundreds or thousands of the colonized have been or would be exterminated. That experience has occurred often enough—perhaps incited—for the colonized to be convinced of the inevitable and heinous punishment. Everything has been brought into play to destroy his courage to die and face the sight of blood.

It is even more clear that if it is really a matter of inadequacy involved, born of a situation and of the will of the colonizer, it is only that and not some congenital inability to assume a role in history. The severity of the laws attest to the difficulty of conditioning the colonized to feel inadequate. While it is pardonable for the colonizer to have his little arsenals, the discovery of even a rusty weapon among the colonized is cause for immediate punishment. The Arab *fantasia* has become nothing more than the act

of a trained animal which is asked to roar, as he used to, to frighten the guests. But the animal roars extremely well; and nostalgia for arms is always present, and is part of all ceremonies in Africa, from north to south. The lack of implements of war appears proportional to the size of the colonialist forces; the most isolated tribes are still the first to pick up their weapons. That is not a proof of savagery, but only evidence that the conditioning is not sufficiently maintained.

That is also why the experience of the last war was so decisive. It did not only, as has been stated, imprudently teach the colonized the technique of guerilla warfare, but also it reminded them of the possibility of aggressive and free action. The European governments which, after that war, prohibited the showing of certain movies of resistance in colonial theaters were not wrong from their point of view. In objection to this, it was stated that American Westerns, gangster pictures and war propaganda strips had already shown how to use a revolver or tommy-gun. That argument was not enough. The significance of resistance films is entirely different. They show that poorly armed or even unarmed oppressed people did dare attack their oppressors.

When the first disturbances broke out in the colonies, those who did not understand their meaning were consoled by the fact that there were so few active fighters. The colonized, it is true, hesitates be-

fore taking his destiny in his hands. But the meaning of the event was so much greater than its arithmetical weight! The rebels were laughed at because of their insistence on wearing khaki uniforms. Obviously, they hoped to be considered soldiers and treated in accordance with the rules of war. There is profound meaning to this emphatic desire, as it was by this tactic that they laid claim to and wore the dress of history; and, unfortunately, history today wears a military uniform.

As mentioned before, the same goes for community affairs. "They are not capable of governing themselves," says the colonizer. "That is why," he explains, "I don't let them and will never let them, enter the government."

The fact is that the colonized does not govern. Being kept away from power, he ends up by losing both interest and feeling for control. How could he be interested in something from which he is so resolutely excluded? Among the colonized few men are suitable for government. How could such a long absence from autonomous government give rise to skill? Can the colonizer succeed in barring the colonized from future participation in government by cheating him from this role in the present?

Since the colonized's organizations have nationalistic claims, it is often concluded that the colonized are chauvinistic. Nothing is less true. What is involved, on the contrary, is an ambition and a form of

mob psychology which appeals to passionate motives. Except among the militants of this national renaissance, the usual signs of chauvinism—aggressive love for the flag, use of patriotic songs, fervent feeling of belonging to the same national organization—are rare among the colonized. It is repeated that the colonization precipitated the awakening of national consciousness of the colonized. One could state equally well that it moderated the tempo of this awareness by keeping the colonized apart from the true conditions of contemporary citizenship. It is not a coincidence that colonized peoples are the last to awaken to national consciousness.

The colonized enjoys none of the attributes of citizenship; neither his own, which is dependent, contested and smothered, nor that of the colonizer. He can hardly adhere to one or claim the other. Not having his just place in the community, not enjoying the rights of a modern citizen, not being subject to his normal duties, not voting, not bearing the burden of community affairs, he cannot feel like a true citizen. As a result of colonization, the colonized almost never experiences nationality and citizenship, except privately. Nationally and civically he is only what the colonizer is not.

This social and historical mutilation gives rise to the most serious consequences. It contributes to bringing out the deficiencies in the other aspects of the colonized's life and, by a countereffect which is

frequent in human processes, it is itself fed by the colonized's other infirmities.

Not considering himself a citizen, the colonized likewise loses all hope of seeing his son achieve citizenship. Before long, renouncing citizenship himself, he no longer includes it in his plans, eliminates it from his paternal ambitions, and allows no place for it in his teachings. Nothing therefore suggests to the young colonized the self-assurance or pride of his citizenship. He will expect nothing more from it and will not be prepared to assume its responsibilities. (Obviously, there is likewise nothing in his school education, in which references to the community and nation are always in terms of the colonizing nation.) This educational void, a result of social inadequacy, thus perpetuates that same inadequacy, damaging one of the essential dimensions of the colonized individual.

Later, as an adolescent, it is with difficulty that he conceives vaguely, if at all, of the only way out of a disastrous family situation . . . revolt. The ring is tightly sealed. Revolt against his father and family is a wholesome act and an indispensable one for self-achievement. It permits him to start his adult life—a new unhappy and happy battle—among other men. The conflict of generations can and must be resolved by social conflict; conversely, it is thus a factor in movement and progress. The young generations find the solution to their problems in collective move-

ments. By choosing a movement, they accelerate it. It is necessary, of course, that that movement be possible. Now, into what kind of life and social dynamic do we emerge? The colony's life is frozen; its structure is both corseted and hardened. No new role is open to the young man, no invention is possible. The colonizer admits this with a now classical euphemism: He respects, he proclaims, the ways and customs of the colonized. And, to be sure, he cannot help respecting them, be it by force. Since any change would have to be made against colonization, the colonizer is led to favor the least progressive features. He is not solely responsible for this mummification of the colonized society; he demonstrates relatively good faith when he maintains that it is independent by its own will. It derives largely, however, from the colonial situation. Not being master of its destiny, not being its own legislator, not controlling its organization, colonized society can no longer adapt its institutions to its grievous needs. But it is those needs which practically shape the organizational face of every normal society. It is under their constant pressure that the political and administrative face of France has been gradually changing over the centuries. However, if the discord becomes too sharp, and harmony becomes impossible to attain under existing legal forms, the result is either to revolt or to be calcified.

Colonized society is a diseased society in which in-

ternal dynamics no longer succeed in creating new structures. Its century-hardened face has become nothing more than a mask under which it slowly smothers and dies. Such a society cannot dissolve the conflicts of generations, for it is unable to be transformed. The revolt of the adolescent colonized, far from resolving into mobility and social progress, can only sink into the morass of colonized society—unless there is a total revolution. But we shall return to that later.

Sooner or later then, the potential rebel falls back on the traditional values. This explains the astonishing survival of the colonized's family. The colonial superstructure has real value as a refuge. It saves the colonized from the despair of total defeat and, in return, it finds confirmation in a constant inflow of new blood. The young man will marry, will become a devoted father, reliable brother, responsible uncle and, until he takes his father's place, a respectful son. Everything has gone back into the order of things. Revolt and conflict have ended in a victory for the parents and tradition.

But it is a pyrrhic victory. Colonized society has not taken even half a step forward; for the young man, it is an internal catastrophe. He will remain glued to that family which offers him warmth and tenderness but which simultaneously absorbs, clutches and emasculates him. Doesn't the community require the full duties of citizenship? Wouldn't it refuse

them to him if he should still try to claim them? Doesn't it grant him few rights and prohibit him from participating in all national life? Actually, he no longer desperately needs them. His correct place, always reserved in the soft warmth of clan reunions, satisfies him. He would be afraid to leave it. With good grace now, he submits, as do the others, to his father's authority and prepares to replace him. The model is a weak one. His universe is that of the vanquished. But what other way out is there? By a curious paradox, his father is simultaneously weak and possessive. The young man is ready to assume his role of the colonized adult—that is, to accept being an oppressed creature.

The same goes for the indisputable hold of a deep-rooted and formal religion. Complacently, missionaries depict this formality as an essential feature of non-Christian religions. Thus they suggest that the only way to escape from one would be to pass over to the next closest one. Actually, all religions have moments of coercive formality and moments of indulgent flexibility. It remains to be explained why a given group, at a given period in its history, goes through a certain stage. Why such hollow rigidity in the religions of the colonized?

It would be useless to construct a religious psychology which is peculiar to the colonized or to invoke that all-explaining nature which is attributed to them. While they give a certain amount of attention

to religion, one seldom notices excessive religious zeal among the colonized. It seems to me that the explanation is parallel to that of family control. It is not an original psychology which explains the importance of the family, nor is it the intensity of family life which explains the state of social structures. It is rather the impossibility of enjoying a complete social life which maintains vigor in the family and pulls the individual back to that more restricted cell, which saves and smothers him. At the same time, the entire condition of the colonized institutions takes into account the excessive weight of religion.

With its institutional network, its collective and periodic holidays, religion constitutes another refuge value, both for the individual and for the group. For the individual, it is one of the rare paths of retreat; for the group, it is one of the rare manifestations which can protect its original existence. Since colonized society does not possess national structures and cannot conceive of a historical future for itself, it must be content with the passive sluggishness of its present. It must withdraw even that present from the conquering invasion of colonization which gives it prestige with the young generations. Formalism, of which religious formality is only one aspect, is the cyst into which colonial society shuts itself and hardens, degrading its own life in order to save it. It is a spontaneous action of self-defense, a means of safeguarding the collective consciousness without which

a people quickly cease to exist. Under the conditions of colonial dependence, religious emancipation, like the breakup of the family, would have involved a serious risk of dying by itself.

The calcified colonized society is therefore the consequence of two processes having opposite symptoms: encystment originating internally and a corset imposed from outside. Both phenomena have one common factor, contact with colonization. They converge in the social and historical catalepsy of the colonized.

As long as he tolerates colonization, the only possible alternatives for the colonized are assimilation or petrifaction. Assimilation being refused him, as we shall see, nothing is left for him but to live isolated from his age. He is driven back by colonization and, to a certain extent, lives with that situation. Planning and building his future are forbidden. He must therefore limit himself to the present, and even that present is cut off and abstract.

We should add that he draws less and less from his past. The colonizer never even recognized that he had one; everyone knows that the commoner whose origins are unknown has no history. Let us ask the colonized himself: who are his folk heroes? his great popular leaders? his sages? At most, he may be able to give us a few names, in complete disorder, and fewer and fewer as one goes down the

generations. The colonized seems condemned to lose his memory.

Memory is not purely a mental phenomenon. Just as the memory of an individual is the fruit of his history and physiology, that of a people rests upon its institutions. Now the colonized's institutions are dead or petrified. He scarcely believes in those which continue to show some signs of life and daily confirms their ineffectiveness. He often becomes ashamed of these institutions, as of a ridiculous and overaged monument.

All effectiveness and social dynamics, on the other hand, seem monopolized by the colonizer's institutions. If the colonized needs help, it is to them that he applies. If he does something wrong, it is by them that he is punished. When a man of authority happens to wear a tarboosh, he has an evasive glance and abrupt manners, as though he wanted to forestall any challenge, as though he were under the colonizer's constant surveillance. Suppose the community has a festival. It is the colonizer's holiday, a religious one perhaps, and is celebrated brilliantly—Christmas and Joan of Arc, Carnival and Bastille Day. It is the colonizer's armies which parade, the very ones which crushed the colonized and keep him in his place.

Naturally, by virtue of his formalism, the colonized observes all his religious holidays. These holidays are located at the beginning of history, rather

than in history. From the time they were instituted, nothing else has happened in the life of that people. That is, nothing peculiar to their own existence which deserves to be retained by the collective consciousness and celebrated. Nothing except a great void.

Finally, the few material traces of that past are slowly erased, and the future remnants will no longer carry the stamp of the colonized group. The few statues which decorate the city represent (with incredible scorn for the colonized who pass by them every day) the great deeds of colonization. The buildings are patterned after the colonizer's own favorite designs; the same is true of the street names, which recall the faraway provinces from which he came. Occasionally, the colonizer starts a neo-Eastern style, just as the colonized imitates European style. But it is only exoticism (like old guns and antique chests) and not a renaissance; the colonized himself only avoids his own past.

By what else is the heritage of a people handed down? By the education which it gives to its children, and by language, that wonderful reservoir constantly enriched with new experiences. Traditions and acquirements, habits and conquests, deeds and acts of previous generations are thus bequeathed and recorded in history.

However, the very great majority of colonized children are in the streets. And he who has the wonderful good luck to be accepted in a school will not be

saved nationally. The memory which is assigned him is certainly not that of his people. The history which is taught him is not his own. He knows who Colbert or Cromwell was, but he learns nothing about Khaznadar; he knows about Joan of Arc, but not about El Kahena. Everything seems to have taken place out of his country. He and his land are nonentities or exist only with reference to the Gauls, the Franks or the Marne. In other words, with reference to what he is not: to Christianity, although he is not a Christian; to the West which ends under his nose, at a line which is even more insurmountable than it is imaginary. The books talk to him of a world which in no way reminds him of his own; the little boy is called Toto and the little girl, Marie; and on winter evenings Marie and Toto walk home along snow-covered paths, stopping in front of a chestnut vendor. His teachers do not follow the same pattern as his father; they are not his wonderful and redeeming successors like every other teacher in the world. They are something else. There is no communication either from child to teacher or (admittedly all too often) from teacher to child, and the child notices this perfectly well. One of my former schoolmates told me that literature, art and philosophy had remained foreign to him, as though pertaining to a theoretical world divorced from reality. It was only after a long visit to Paris that he could really begin to absorb them.

If communication finally takes place, it is not without its dangers. The teacher and school represent a world which is too different from his family environment. In both cases, far from preparing the adolescent to find himself completely, school creates a permanent duality in him.

The colonized is saved from illiteracy only to fall into linguistic dualism. This happens only if he is lucky, since most of the colonized will never have the good fortune to suffer the tortures of colonial bilingualism. They will never have anything but their native tongue; that is, a tongue which is neither written nor read, permitting only uncertain and poor oral development.

Granted, small groups of academicians persist in developing the language of their people, perpetuating it through scholarly pursuits into the splendors of the past. But its subtle forms bear no relationship to everyday life and have become obscure to the man on the street. The colonized considers those venerable scholars relics and thinks of them as sleepwalkers who are living in an old dream.

If only the mother tongue was allowed some influence on current social life, or was used across the counters of government offices, or directed the postal service; but this is not the case. The entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer's language. Likewise, highway markings, railroad station signs, street signs and re-

ceipts make the colonized feel like a foreigner in his own country.

In the colonial context, bilingualism is necessary. It is a condition for all culture, all communication and all progress. But while the colonial bilinguist is saved from being walled in, he suffers a cultural catastrophe which is never completely overcome.

The difference between native language and cultural language is not peculiar to the colonized, but colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguistic dualism. Possession of two languages is not merely a matter of having two tools, but actually means participation in two psychical and cultural realms. Here, the two worlds symbolized and conveyed by the two tongues are in conflict; they are those of the colonizer and the colonized.

Furthermore, the colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued. It has no stature in the country or in the concert of peoples. If he wants to obtain a job, make a place for himself, exist in the community and the world, he must first bow to the language of his masters. In the linguistic conflict within the colonized, his mother tongue is that which is crushed. He himself sets about discarding this infirm language, hiding it from the sight of strangers. In short, colonial

bilingualism is neither a purely bilingual situation in which an indigenous tongue coexists with a purist's language (both belonging to the same world of feeling), nor a simple polyglot richness benefiting from an extra but relatively neuter alphabet; it is a linguistic drama.

Some express wonder at the fact that the colonized does not have a living literature in his own language. Why should he turn to literature, considering that he disdains it? Similarly, he turns away from his music, the plastic arts and, in effect, his entire traditional culture. His linguistic ambiguity is the symbol and one of the major causes of his cultural ambiguity. The position of a colonized writer is a perfect illustration of this. The material conditions of the existence of the colonized would suffice to explain the rarity of writers. The excessive poverty of the majority drastically reduces the probability of finding a budding and developing writer. However, history shows us that only one privileged class is enough to provide an entire people with artists. The fact is that the role of a colonized writer is too difficult to sustain. He incarnates a magnified vision of all the ambiguities and impossibilities of the colonized.

Suppose that he has learned to manage his language to the point of re-creating it in written works; for whom shall he write, for what public? If he persists in writing in his language, he forces himself to speak before an audience of deaf men. Most of the

people are uncultured and do not read any language, while the bourgeoisie and scholars listen only to that of the colonizer. Only one natural solution is left; to write in the colonizer's language. In this case, of course, he is only changing dilemmas.

He must, in either case, overcome his handicap. Although a colonial bilinguist has the advantage of knowing two tongues, he wastes much of his imagination and energy in attempting to achieve a proficiency that will never be fully realized. This is another explanation of the slow birth of colonial literature. After this there re-emerges the ambiguity of the colonized writer in a new but even more serious form.

It is a curious fate to write for a people other than one's own, and it is even stranger to write to the conquerors of one's people. Wonder was expressed at the acrimony of the first colonized writers. Do they forget that they are addressing the same public whose tongue they have borrowed? However, the writer is neither unconscious, nor ungrateful, nor insolent. As soon as they dare speak, what will they tell just those people, other than of their malaise and revolt? Could words of peace or thoughts of gratitude be expected from those who have been suffering from a loan that compounds so much interest? For a loan which, besides, will never be anything but a loan. We are here, it is true, putting aside fact for conjecture. But it is so easy to read, so obvious. The

emergence of a literature of a colonized people, the development of consciousness by North African writers for example, is not an isolated occurrence. It is part of the development of the self-consciousness of an entire human group. The fruit is not an accident or miracle of a plant but a sign of its maturity. At most, the surging of the colonized artist is slightly ahead of the development of collective consciousness in which he participates and which he hastens by participating in it. And the most urgent claim of a group about to revive is certainly the liberation and restoration of its language.

Indeed, if I express wonder, it is that anyone wonders. Only that language would allow the colonized to resume contact with his interrupted flow of time and to find again his lost continuity and that of his history. Is the French language only a precise and efficient instrument? Or is it that miraculous chest in which are heaped up discoveries and victories, writers and moralists, philosophers and scholars, heroes and adventurers, in which the treasures of the intellect and of the French soul are transformed into one single legend?

The colonized writer, having succeeded after much effort in being able to use European languages—those of the colonizers, let us not forget—can use them only to clamor for his own. That is not a question of incoherence or blind resentment, but a necessity. Were he not to do it, his entire people would

eventually step in. It is an objective dynamism which he feeds, to be sure, but which nourishes him and would continue without him. By so doing, he contributes toward the liquidation of his drama as a man, and he confirms and accentuates his drama as a writer. In order to reconcile his destiny with himself, he could attempt to write in his mother tongue. But such apprenticeship is not repeated during manhood. The colonized writer is condemned to live his renunciations to the bitter end. The problem can be concluded in only two ways: by the natural death of colonized literature; the following generations, born in liberty, will write spontaneously in their newly found language. Without waiting that long, a second possibility can tempt the writer; to decide to join the literature of the mother country. Let us leave aside the ethical problems raised by such an attitude. It is the suicide of colonized literature; in either prospect (the only difference being in the date) colonized literature in European languages appears condemned to die young.

Everything takes place as though contemporary colonization were a historical mistake. By its inherent inevitability and by egotism, it apparently has failed completely and has polluted everything which it has touched. It has decayed the colonizer and destroyed the colonized.

In order to triumph, colonization wanted to serve only its own interests. But, by pushing aside the

colonized man, through whom alone it could have exalted the colony, it condemned itself to remain foreign to it and thus of necessity transitory.

It is nevertheless accountable only to itself for its suicide. More unpardonable is its historic crime toward the colonized, dropping him off by the side of the road—outside of our time.

The question of whether the colonized, if let alone, would have advanced at the same pace as other peoples has no great significance. To be perfectly truthful, we have no way of knowing. It is possible that he might not. The colonial factor is certainly not the only one which explains the backwardness of a people. All countries have not followed the same tempo as that of America or England; each had its own special causes of delay and its own restraints. However, each one traveled according to its own pace and along its own path. Furthermore, can one justify the historical misfortune of a people by the difficulties of another? The colonized peoples are not the only victims of history, but the historical misfortune peculiar to the colonized was colonization.

To this same spurious problem, the question which disturbs many people returns. Didn't the colonized nonetheless profit by colonization? Did the colonizer not open roads, build hospitals and schools? This reservation amounts to saying that colonization was positive after all; for without it, there would have been neither roads, nor hospitals, nor schools. How

do we know? Why must we suppose that the colonized would have remained frozen in the state in which the colonizer found him? We could just as well put forward the opposite view. If colonization had not taken place, there would have been more schools and more hospitals. If Tunisian history were better known, it would be realized that the country was then in full pregnancy. After having shut the colonized out of history and having forbidden him all development, the colonizer asserts his fundamental and complete immobility.

Besides, that objection disturbs only those who are inclined to be disturbed. After decades of colonization, the multitude of children in the streets is greatly in excess of those in the classrooms; the number of hospital beds is pitiful compared to the number of sick; the purpose of the highway system is without regard to the needs of the colonized—but absolutely in line with those of the colonizer. For so little gain, colonization was truly not indispensable. Is it daring to suppose that the Tunisia of 1952 would have been, in any event, very different from that of 1881? After all, domination is not the only possible method of influence and exchange among people. Other small countries have transformed themselves greatly without being colonized. Thus a number of countries of Central Europe. . . .

But our listener has been smiling skeptically.

"Yes, but it isn't the same thing."

"Why not? You mean, don't you, that those countries are populated by Europeans?"

"Well—yes!"

"There you are, sir! You are just simply a racist."

Of course, this brings us back to the fundamental bias. Europeans conquered the world because their nature was predisposed to it, while non-Europeans were colonized because their nature condemned them to it.

But let's be serious and drop right here both racism and this urge to rewrite history. Let us even put aside the problem of initial responsibility for colonization. Was it the result of capitalistic expansion or an accidental venture by voracious businessmen? In the final analysis, all that is not important. What does count is the present reality of colonization and the colonized. We have no idea what the colonized would have been without colonization, but we certainly see what has happened as a result of it. To subdue and exploit, the colonizer pushed the colonized out of the historical and social, cultural and technical current. What is real and verifiable is that the colonized's culture, society and technology are seriously damaged. He has not acquired new ability and a new culture. One patent result of colonization is that there are no more colonized artists and not yet any colonized technicians. It is true that there also exists a technical inadequacy among the colonized. "Arab work," says the colonizer disdainfully. But far from

finding an excuse for his conduct and a point of comparison in his favor, he should see in it his own guilt. It is true that the colonized do not know how to work. But where were they taught, who taught them modern techniques? Where are the professional schools and centers of apprenticeship?

I sometimes hear it said, "You put too much emphasis on industrial methods. What about handicrafts? Look at that table made with white wood: why is it made of wood taken from crates? Poorly finished, too, badly planed, neither painted nor polished." Yes, of course, that description is correct. The only decent feature in those tea tables is their shape—a centuries-old gift of tradition to the handicraftsman. As for the rest, it is the demand that inspires creation. For whom are those tables made? The buyer cannot afford to pay for those extra strokes with a plane, nor for varnish, nor for paint. So they remain disjointed boards from crates, with the nail holes still open.

What is clear is that colonization weakens the colonized and that all those weaknesses contribute to one another. Nonindustrialization and the absence of technical development in the country lead to a slow economic collapse of the colonized. This collapse threatens the standard of living of the colonized, keeping the technician from existing and the artisan from perfecting himself and his creations. The final causes of the collapse are rejection of the

colonizer who enriches himself further by selling raw materials rather than competing with industry in the home country. In addition to this, the system works within a vicious circle and acquires a calamitous autonomy. Had more apprenticeship centers and even universities been open, they would not have saved the colonized; who, upon leaving them, would not have found a way to apply their training. In a country within which everything is lacking, the few colonized engineers who were able to obtain degrees are used as bureaucrats or instructors. Colonized society does not have a direct need for technicians and does not create one. But woe to him who is not indispensable! The colonized laborer is interchangeable, so why pay him what he is really worth? Besides, as our times and our history become more and more technical-minded; the colonized's technical backwardness increases and seems to justify the scorn which it generates. This backwardness concretely shows the distance separating him from the colonizer. It is not untrue that the technical distance is partly responsible for the lack of understanding between the two partners. The general standard of living of the colonized is often so low that contact is almost impossible. One gets out of it by speaking of the colony's medievalism. One can go on like that for a long time. Enjoyment of technical advances creates technological traditions. An ordinary Frenchman or ordinary Italian has the opportunity of tinkering with a motor or a

radio, and is surrounded by products of technology. Many colonized don't even come near the least-complicated machines until they leave their fathers' homes. How can they have a taste for mechanized civilization and a feeling for machinery?

Everything in the colonized is deficient, and everything contributes to this deficiency—even his body, which is poorly fed, puny and sick. Many lengthy discussions would be saved if, in the beginning, it was agreed that there is this wretchedness—collective, permanent, immense. Simple and plain biological wretchedness, chronic hunger of an entire people, malnutrition and illness. Of course, from a distance, that remains a bit abstract, and an extraordinary imagination would be required. I remember that day when the "Tunisienne Automobile" taking us south stopped in the midst of a crowd whose mouths were smiling, but whose eyes, almost all eyes, were watery; I looked uneasily for a nondiseased glance on which to rest my own. Tuberculosis and syphilis, and those skeletonlike and naked bodies passing between the chairs of the cafés like living dead, sticky as flies, the flies of our remorse. . . .

"Oh, no!" cries our questioner. "That poverty was there before! We found it there when we arrived!"

Granted. (Indeed, what is more, the slumdweller is often a dispossessed fellah.) But how could a social system which perpetuates such distress—even

supposing that it does not create it—endure for long? How can one dare compare the advantages and disadvantages of colonization? What advantages, even if a thousand times more important, could make such internal and external catastrophes acceptable?