

YES I SAID YES I WILL YES

A Survey of the French Reviews

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‘While I, brought up to scoff rather than bless
And to say No, unless the facts require
A neutral verdict, for this once say Yes.’

(Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Sequel*.)

WHEN the Mongols conquered Mesopotamia in 1401, they erected a triumphal monument with the skulls of the hundred thousand inhabitants of Baghdad who had not defended themselves.’ This quotation from Spengler begins Jacques Soustelle’s defence of French right-wing policy in Algeria (*Le drame algérien et la décadence française. Réponse à Raymond Aron*. Plon, 1957). The pamphlet might well have served the French left as a warning of how far Soustelle and his fellows were likely to go in defending their point of view. There is no such thing, proclaimed Soustelle—with some show of justification—as historical necessity, any more than there is such a thing as the inevitability of progress. There is no reason at all why we should believe in the ultimate triumph of Arab nationalism, of Pan-Arabism. A similar surrender to a feeling of inevitability in 732 would have stayed the hand of Charles Martel against the Moors, and in 1940 would have prevented de Gaulle from rallying the forces of Free France. There is no need to abdicate any position.

The historical references are a feature of Soustelle’s thinking which illustrate the fact that the revolt of May 13 was not entirely a question of Professors versus Colonels. Certainly in the case of Maurice Audin there is much more than a suspicion that the French army was willing to go to extreme lengths to silence intellectual opposition; but the civilian who espoused the army’s cause is himself an ex-academic of considerable ability who was, in addition, one of the first to join de Gaulle in 1940. But it does not appear that Soustelle—who was, much more than de Gaulle, the man acclaimed by the first crowds in Algiers—realizes the ambiguous application of Spengler’s phrase. It is one which might equally give food for thought to those French democrats who believe that France is now bound to turn into an authoritarian state, to the punctured French left wing which, in its confusion, has disintegrated in the face of the most banal of attacks that can be made on any democracy: usurpation of power by the armed forces.

For the death of the Fourth Republic was suicide, not murder. And, indeed, suicide with insurance policies realized, as the backing of de Gaulle by the egregious Mollet and other runners of ‘the system’ has clearly demonstrated. To some French democrats, the presence of these

representatives of the deceased in the de Gaulle entourage may be a guarantee that the tendency to authoritarianism will be controlled; to others it must simply seem like the undignified scuttling it really is. A writer in *Esprit* has pointed out that the Fourth Republic, rickety as it always was, had gone through crises which were potentially as difficult as that in Algiers: the war in Indo-China and the even more hotly contested peace at Geneva which ended it, the independence of Tunisia and Morocco, wine scandals, currency scandals, army scandals, Poujadist threats, Communist boring from within—all these, somehow or other, the Fourth Republic had managed to contain (Pierre Vianson-Ponte, 'Comment meurt une république', *Esprit*, September 1958). What was so hypnotizing about General Massu and M. de Sérigny? Theirs, moreover, were by no means the only voices in the uprising. A group of young officers, the same writer declares, though it is not clear with what proofs, had outlined, a week before the rising, the composition of a Committee of Public Safety which was to consist of four captains and a major, the liberal mayor of Algiers M. Jacques Chevallier, the Archbishop Mgr Duval, the tortured Arab woman prisoner, Djamilia Bouhired, and last but not least a seat for Ferhat Abbas should he care to come back from Cairo for it. Cloud-cuckoo-land, no doubt. But the *form* the uprising was to take was obviously not clear in the minds of all who had a hand in it; and even of the generals who took charge in order—they said—to avoid worse, General Salan had to be pushed back on to the balcony facing the Forum to shout *Vive de Gaulle!* which he had either quite forgotten or never intended to do when he began his speech.

Whatever the original motives, the situation crystallized soon enough to reveal one or two unpleasant facts. A *putsch* in France had been seriously planned, and neither the army nor the police could be relied upon to stop it or repress it once begun. In other words, French democracy—a 'state of reason and of fragile and exceptional courage' in the words of Jean-Marie Domenach—had surrendered before that classic problem, a contest between legislative and executive. It was the sort of conflict that we in this country escaped by the skin of our teeth in 1914 over the Curragh, in circumstances not dissimilar to those of France and Algeria in May of this year; the sort of conflict that even the Third Republic, purulent with corruption in the 1880s, mastered in the person of General Boulanger; and which the diminutive but tough-minded Harry Truman solved perfectly satisfactorily in his contest with the megalomaniac proconsul MacArthur in the Pacific.

By the time this comes to be printed, such considerations will no doubt matter very little, and what de Gaulle intends as a result of coming to power on the ruins of the Fourth Republic should be

clearer. But even so what he intends will not be the whole story. His presence at the seat of power was not unanimously desired by the revolting officers; and the tremendous acquiescence of the French people was based on ambiguities too many to enumerate. *L'Express*, giving over two pages week by week to opposing Ayes and Noes all over France, showed on what shifting bases the national consent to de Gaulle was given, and the quite different motives of those who refused it. 'I will vote YES', wrote one reader from Toulon, 'because ever since May 13 I have been praying every day—and I know I am not the only one—that God may let those who have taken to heart the fate of France be enlightened and guided by the Holy Ghost.' An indignant school teacher from Corsica asserted:

'I will vote NO in the referendum because

- (i) I have the highest esteem for General de Gaulle.
- (ii) Bidden, at the age of ten, together with my other classmates, to write a letter to Pétain, I wrote to de Gaulle. The punishment I received was exemplary, and I shall not deny my childhood.
- (iii) Péguy taught me to believe in the Republic.
- (iv) Mounier taught me to despise the M.R.P.
- (v) My experience has taught me that the socialists are without honour.'

While not insisting that de Gaulle was the Holy Ghost's candidate, a priest, a professor of philosophy, wrote from Périgueux: 'I will vote YES because the new constitution . . . reinforces the authority of the President of the Republic . . . it puts an end to the Assembly régime which we have endured since 1946. To vote NO would be to encourage the secession of our African territories. YES reinforces the authority of General de Gaulle, the only politician alive who serves France instead of using her.'

The best outline of the motives of certain left-wingers who voted YES is given by a Parisian industrialist:

'Two negative reasons first:

- (i) I consider that the de Gaulle solution is the only good one at present against a dictatorship of the colonels or a dictatorship of the Communists. I have never been able to discover, in my imagination or anywhere else, a concrete and realistic democratic parry to these fearful threats. The idea of a left-wing group based on the Communist Party is to my mind a chimera of intellectuals lost in total abstraction. Even if such a grouping were to take place . . . it would not let us escape the temporary but bloody phase of the colonels, which would come first.
- (ii) No régime, other than the dictatorships mentioned in (i), could be worse than the base demagoguery of the Fourth Republic.

Lastly a positive reason: If the two negative reasons given above were not enough to make me vote—and they are—I would still vote YES because in all conscience I prefer, by reason of my horror of dictatorship, to follow the path proposed by de Gaulle rather than that to which the French Communist Party would commit us, and I continue in spite of everything to consider myself as a man of the left in my actions as in my thoughts.'

The point was put cogently by Gilbert Grandval, the former ambassador and representative of France in Morocco:

'Those who today accuse de Gaulle of coming back to power thanks to the "colonels" should rather reproach themselves for not having given proof of a little more political sense at a time when it would have been useful. As for the *coup d'état* of Algiers, which the army was able to orientate in the direction of de Gaulle, I am not afraid to say that in my eyes its active element: the return of the general, far outweighs its passive one: the danger of sedition in its first hours, against the threat of which the general's presence acts precisely as a bulwark. Some criticize him for not having defined his Algerian policy. Can one reasonably reproach him for not having done in a few weeks what has not been done in the forty-two months since the rebellion began? . . . To vote NO is to vote both against the constitution and against General de Gaulle. To vote YES is above all to accept a constitution which, we can be sure, will survive the General himself and will confer on these in office both effectiveness and continuity.'

It is precisely this last point which most of those who voted NO would dispute.

'What makes you think', writes Sartre in an open letter to the French people ('La Constitution du Mépris', *L'Express*, September 11, 1958), 'that your vote is to be a mandate to re-establish order and peace in Algeria? Your YES is an approbation of everything he has done since June 1. Therefore you approve the presence in the ministry of M. Soustelle. But M. Soustelle represents semi-officially the Committee of Public Safety. You approve the promotion of General Massu. But General Massu is one of those responsible for May 13. To vote against the extreme reactionaries you have found no other means than to mingle your YES with theirs. For they will all say YES, don't doubt that. After which God will know his own. God, but not General de Gaulle. How can he know whether you approve or disapprove of integration since you, who oppose it, give him the same answer as those who are its partisans?' In a later article under the bitter title 'The Frogs who asked for a King' (*L'Express*, September 25, 1958), Sartre claims that if the Ayes have it, the vote will not be for the

constitution which gags the Assembly and puts an authoritarian Senate with it to keep it in order, but for the person of de Gaulle pure and simple: 'These activists of impotence count upon the Prince to resolve problems which they themselves do not even wish to formulate, to take in their stead decisions which they avoid, to surmount contradictions which paralyse them. They give him *carte-blanche* because he is who he is. Disgusted with inefficiency, our non-political republicans say YES to unreason. . . .' Nor is de Gaulle an improvement on 'the system'. He procrastinates, which betrays his impotence: 'he avoids, he dodges, but the war in Algeria comes to Paris to meet him. The *question* is applied to North Africans in several towns of France itself. I am profoundly convinced that General de Gaulle is horrified by torture, that he thinks it dishonours the army . . . but what does he *do*? He keeps quiet. Therefore he covers up. Just like Caillard.'

He covers up, because the French army needs Algeria, needs the Algerian war. Nineteen years at war, nineteen years without a single victory [here Sartre forgets a good deal], the army needs a war its own size to bolster up its battered ego; incompetent as it would be to take part in an intercontinental war with the terrible panoply of modern science, and however distasteful it may find colonial wars, these are the only sort that the anachronism which it is can fight: 'Since the loss of Indochina, it has had to choose between Algeria and the barracks. . . . Deep down in these colonels, there is that defeatism, that vertigo in the face of failure which is at the root of all forms of fascism.' Fighting in this mood, the army's war in Algeria can only degenerate into torture, however different the spirit of 'les paras' may have been to start with. It may be true that on the doors of the paratroop barracks at Toulouse is written, with a good deal of elevating phraseology, the following words: 'Paratroops, you are soldiers of the élite. . . . Raise yourself to the stature of heroes. . . . Against an enemy who fights in the open, fight with chivalry. In the face of guerrilla war, remain human.' They sound rather like the sentiments of Imperial Bushido which used to be printed in the first pages of the diaries all Japanese soldiers used to carry. And much good these phrases did *their* prisoners.

Fundamentally, Sartre is right when he insists that, given the origins of de Gaulle's return, little or no good can be hoped from it from the point of view of preserving liberties. It is the adventure of a people who need a drastic change, and who don't seek to enquire what will follow it. This being the case, it seems pointless to carp in the rather irritated manner of Maurice Duverger (*L'Express*, June 12, 1958) that the constitution proposed by de Gaulle is similar to that in force under Louis-Philippe or in Germany under the Weimar Republic, and that it represents 'a stage which we have passed beyond today and which

has never lasted long because such a system cannot function'. 'In a constitution of this kind', says Duverger, 'the Premier is obliged to obtain both the confidence of the Chamber and that of the President of the Republic. So either the President is a weakling and does nothing in spite of the immense powers conferred on him by the constitution; or he is an energetic man who wants to govern himself and it is the Premier who has to put up with the consequences and finds himself in an impossible position. This system only divides the executive power, and thereby weakens it.'

But what in fact would the Left propose, since it is chiefly owing to lack of firmness and unwillingness to take a risk on the part of the Left that the situation has arisen in the first place? What, for instance, does Mendès-France propose, if the Noes have it? A constitutional struggle for 'the adoption in a month at the latest, of some reforms, few in number but decisive, destined to guarantee a real and effective democracy; principally a strengthening of the executive by having recourse to the arbitrament of the nation, or by dissolution when an essential problem divides the powers and paralyses action; a correct mode of scrutiny assuring the real control of universal suffrage; a definition of the Franco-African structure, by a congress of all the free peoples of the French Union who will lay down in common the conditions of their future co-operation; and lastly a genuine attempt to begin a conversation with the peoples of Algeria; showing to Algerians of European extraction that others are leading them to disaster and that we alone really and truly defend their future; showing to Muslim Algerians and to their authentic spokesmen that the emancipation which they desire can be obtained with us, and not necessarily against us in bloodshed, terror and hate . . .' (*L'Express*, September 11, 1958). No one doubts for a moment the courage, the lucidity, the integrity of Pierre Mendès-France. But apart from the last few phrases suggesting discussions with the F.L.N., what is there in these words more than most Frenchmen desire? Where are the modalities of it all, how *in practice* would he pierce through the curtain of hatred on both sides, to an understanding in Algeria?

For clearly this is the crux of the matter. Sartre may be right, the army may be holding on to Algeria because it is a psychological necessity for it to purge itself of past humiliations; the army may on the other hand be a tool of those elements in the civilian population who themselves have the humiliations of the years after 1944 to live down; the terrorism of the F.L.N. may well have reduced hopes of a compromise to nothingness. Whichever angle one sees it from, it remains true, in the words of Mendès-France, that ' . . . As long as the war in Algeria goes on, as long as its consequences penetrate more and

more deeply into all the aspects of the national life, there will be no security for the Republic, no chances of improvement on the social plane, no progress in the wider sense, no real and lasting consolidation of the Franco-African Community. . . .’ Can de Gaulle solve this? If he can, the undoubted authoritarianism which will come with him will be forgiven even by the Servan-Schreibers, the Domenachs, the Sartres who have filled the left-wing press for months with their resolute and well-argued negatives. An assembly which, as Charles Morazé insisted in ‘Les Français et la République’ (*Revue Française de Science Politique*, March 1958), could provide no true majority on the left or on the right (both Mollet and Pinay were well aware of this), could never solve this problem because it lacked the power given by national consent.

As this is written, de Gaulle has just been given that power by a majority that, even for him, would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the year. The first use he must make of it is to discipline the security services of the army. ‘How do you expect me’, cried Habib Bourguiba when interviewed on de Gaulle’s prospects in North Africa, ‘to have the impression of a great policy or of the preparation of a great future? . . . If after Sakiet and all the accounts we have been given of the war in Algeria, you haven’t enough understanding to see that for some time the French military uniform is an irritating sight for us, what do you expect? Let your army go! Let me be no longer at the mercy of a uniform! Let me no longer have to negotiate under pressure!—And then come back—you will be all the more welcome. We will speak with each other again. And if you achieve that miraculous conversion, we will speak profitably and effectively.’ (*L’Express*, June 4, 1958.) Whether the French presence is possible without the backing of its army may be doubted, at least in the form it takes at the moment. But there can be no doubt that the army’s methods, though they may cow the Algerian populace, can lay no permanent foundation for the ‘dialogue’ desired by Bourguiba and by all Frenchmen of good will.

Or at least by most Frenchmen of good will. Because one finds here and there among those whose good will one would take for granted, among Catholics, among priests, a consent to the use of torture which is startling and dismaying. Nobody now disputes the *fact* of torture. Mgr Charles Journet, in his monthly *Nova et Vetera*, has several times given circumstantial accounts of its occurrence in Algeria, and in a review of Pierre-Henri Simon’s book *Contre la Torture* he cites a paragraph about the army in Viet-Nam which is profoundly disturbing:

‘There is a page in the book where the author tells of questioning

a Catholic chaplain, returned seriously wounded from Indo-China, to find out if torture really went on out there, and he had this reply: "Yes, it's true, and it's inevitable. It happens naturally in the kind of war our lads are fighting out there. Suppose you're in the bush in command of a section, with your chaps behind you. The Viets are all around, invisible. You've got to know what they're up to, where they're lying in wait for you. It's a question of life or death for forty Frenchmen who are your responsibility. Well, then! If you have a chance to find out by arresting a woman from a village and then driving a nail into her hand until she speaks, would you hesitate? Not likely. And you would be right!"

M. Simon himself concludes:

'One must be circumspect in the judgment one makes upon the man who is acting; only God knows what is the degree of guilt of a French lieutenant who has the hand of the Vietnamese woman pierced, as he knows that of the centurion who, on receiving his orders, had the hands of Christ nailed to the cross. But one must remain firm and hard in the moral evaluation of the act: what is evil can never be good.'

Which can equally be applied to the talk given to the troops by the chaplain of a paratroop regiment and published later by *Alger Université* as 'Reflections of a priest on terrorism in cities'.

'I cannot see', declared this chaplain, whose name is not given, 'what is so terrible about the fact of submitting a criminal—recognized as such, moreover, and already punishable with death—to an interrogation which may certainly be rough but of which the only aim is, by means of revelations he will make about his chief and his accomplices, to be able effectively to protect the innocent. . . .

' . . . It is an error—which we owe like so many others to the bleating of the progressives—to claim that the same criminal code can maintain order amongst primitive peoples and amongst more advanced peoples. For civilized peoples, a civilized penal code; for primitive peoples, a primitive penal code. . . . And let no one talk to me about respect for the freedom of such an individual—he is a scoundrel. . . . By coming here, you have accepted the risk of being killed to ensure the protection of honest people, whether Muslims or Europeans. Urban terrorism imposes on you an additional task less in conformity with your soldierly tastes. But that task must be done, because here we must stay. . . .'

Small wonder that Mgr Journet can only comment bitterly: 'If the salt of the earth has come to this! If it has come to propose to the boys of France the noble apprenticeship of torture, to whom shall we appeal?' The chaplain was certainly a bad case. The official Catholic view is,

naturally enough, on the other side and—not so naturally—outspoken. Mgr Journet quotes the March issue of the *Lettre aux Communautés de la Mission de France*: ‘Priests of the Catholic Church founded by Christ for all races and all civilizations on earth, we have no right to enclose ourselves in narrowly nationalist views. . . . Neither torture nor terrorism is justifiable.’ And a text from an allocution by the late Holy Father (to the members of the IVth International Congress on Criminal Law, October 3, 1953):

‘To avenge a bomb outrage committed by an unknown individual, by sweeping with a machine-gun a street of harmless passers-by, is not a legal procedure. . . . The first act of punitive action, arrest, must not be capricious, but must follow judicial norms. It is not admissible that the most innocent of men should be arbitrarily arrested and disappear without trace in prison. To send someone to a concentration camp and keep him there without due process of law is to make a mockery of the law. Preliminary investigation must exclude physical and mental torture and narco-analysis, firstly because they are against the natural law even if the accused is guilty. And also because very often they give the wrong results. It not infrequently happens that they produce exactly the confessions required by the court . . . not because the accused is in fact guilty but because his physical and mental energy is exhausted and he is ready to make any sort of declaration that is required. Better prison or death than such physical and mental torture!’

A year later the Pope repeated this exhortation and asked: ‘Has not justice today in many places slipped back . . . to real torture, often more violent than the ordeals of the past? Does our age not run the risk of seeing history reproach it for having, without restraint or scruple, pursued in its investigations purely utilitarian ends?’

The attitude expressed by the paratroop chaplain is in a way merely a distortion of some temptations in the path of missionaries, described by Fr Gosmans in an interesting article entitled ‘L’Impérialisme culturel de l’Eglise en Afrique’ (*La Revue Nouvelle*, July 1958). It is a familiar argument to us now to hear that the Church has, through its missionaries, often been identified with the particularity of a European missionary source, against its Catholic nature. The exaggerations of this are obvious. We can and should dismiss what Fr Gosmans calls the ‘partisan bad faith’ of the Negro novelist Richard Wright who says: ‘It matters little whether the motives of the missionaries coincided or not with imperialist financial interests; there remains the fact that their action could not have been more effective in throwing out of gear for ever the psychology of the African who, under the appearance of docility, was never deeply converted to a Christianity which reduced

his vision of the world to nothingness, which destroyed all the values it had taken him centuries to acquire and for which he had made incalculable sacrifices.' But what Wright says is simply an extremist expression of a view held by many Negro intellectuals, to whom Islam is preferable to Christianity because it does not, they say, hinder the development of indigenous cultures, and does not use a religion of justice and goodness to inculcate submission and resignation. The desire—the need—to destroy such practices as polygamy and cannibalism led the early missionaries who had little acquaintance with anthropology to throw out what was good in the native culture, to make a *tabula rasa* and start afresh. Even now, when the process is reversed, suspicions are being aroused in the minds of Africans that they are being got at. So J. Howlett, writing in *Présence Africaine* (No. 7), says this of Fr Tempels's 'Bantu catechesis': 'We must affirm first an ambiguity which certainly does not exist for Fr Tempels and his "let's make ourselves Bantu with the Bantus"—in fact it's only a question of a conversion technique rather cleverer than the others: it is less a recognition of the other person as such than a process of degradation of his otherness'. And he stigmatizes it ironically as follows: "'So the difference isn't so great between you and me! Look how alike we are! How close our ideas are, provided I make the necessary effort to think them in your language. Am I not even closer to you than you are yourself? Then your course is clear: you have only to become like me to realize yourselves fully.'" Such is the morbid hunger of the orthodoxies. Dogmatism fears whatever is different from itself, the existence of which, however modest, is a negation of its truth; and it well knows that it's better to hunt with the wolves than to let the wolves confront it freely, as wolves. Its dialectic is that of contamination.' On this point Fr Gosmans quotes the Abbé Sastre who points out—what should be obvious—that such comments are really not made against Catholicism, but against a mistaken notion of missionary method, and that attacks are made against the method because the attackers are in fact convinced of the charity which lies behind it. They appeal, he thinks, from the facts to the missionary ideal, an ideal of charity, as expressed in the instructions of Propaganda as long ago as 1659 and summed up in its phrase: 'Preach not your country but the faith.' The drama of the missionary effort today is twofold: it has to walk a tightrope between respecting native custom (and drawing down upon itself the criticism that it patronizes and fosters backwardness), and helping on the development of native institutions towards an increasing Europeanization which is on its way in any case (and being then open to the criticism of destroying valuable traditions).

The missionary problem is of course a more complex one than the

purely political and social problem of the French presence in North Africa, particularly in Algeria. In Algeria it is the vicious circle terrorism—torture—terrorism which does the permanent damage. *L'Express* was confiscated not so long ago for printing what is, I think, the best illustration of this in the narrative of Germaine Tillion in the witness-box in Algiers, during the trial of the F.L.N. terrorist leader Yacef Saadi, and his girl assistant Zora Drif. What a wonderful woman Mme Tillion must be! A genuine French patriot, who was in the resistance from the moment of the Armistice in 1940, and spent three years in a German prison camp for having organized a resistance network; an anthropologist who has lived and worked with the Algerians, a pupil of Massigon and a colleague of Soustelle, she was ideally placed to explain one side to the other. In a semi-official capacity, but at her own risk, she undertook conversations with an Arab group of which Yacef Saadi turned out to be the chief speaker. Her testimony, which occupies nine columns of *L'Express* (August 28, 1958), is too long to quote in full or even summarize adequately, but some extracts from it give an idea of the groping dissatisfaction with their position which one finds on both sides.

“How do you think it is all going to end?” Yacef asked anxiously. I was very pessimistic and answered roughly, “There is no reason why it should ever end. The F.L.N. will never beat the French army, but if French troops temporarily crush the revolt, it seems just as impossible to me that the victory should be permanent. If in the distant future France tired of the exhaustion of her blood and treasure which this chronic war represents for her, and if she renounced it, it seems impossible that Algerian workers would be able to retain the privilege they have now in the French labour market; in which case your whole country is condemned to an extremely rapid regression, and, necessarily, a bloody one.” I explained also that on paper there were in Algeria eight million Muslims and a little more than one million Europeans, which represented a balance of forces of eight to one, but that such a balance was simply a mental concept and that in reality the potential of a population was not related merely to numbers but was a result of its technical knowledge and the investments at its disposal; with this in mind, there was a kind of equivalence of forces between the two groups which made the situation even more insoluble: if there had been far fewer Europeans, the Tunisian solution would have been possible; if there had been far fewer Muslims, the integrationist programme would have been carried out without much difficulty, etc. It was then that Yacef cried out, “Then I shall never be free!” The tone was neither aggressive nor angry, but one of genuine

despair. . . .’ [Then they began to speak of the tortures which were practised in Algeria and particularly in Algiers itself.] ‘I answered that I was almost as well informed on this as they were and that it was the reason for my journey. [She was taking part in the enquiry set up by the International Committee Against Concentration Camps.] I told them it was the non-communist French deportees who had asked that the enquiry take place, that these deportees belonged to all kinds of different parties, but that they were all patriots and that it was with no joy in their hearts that they had taken this decision—in other words that their ambition was not to blazon across a front page the faults committed by their country, but to put a stop to them. . . .

‘I don’t know who first mentioned the name M \acute{e} louza [a small town where a terrible massacre had taken place], but it gave rise to one of the few interventions of the man who had been introduced to me under the name of Ali la Pointe [shades of Francis Carco!]. Quickly he said “It wasn’t us!” I replied that he had come to the wrong shop, because I had just got back from M \acute{e} louza where I had myself questioned the survivors and that I could affirm personally in that particular case that the F.L.N. *was* responsible without any doubt at all. . . .

‘After about two and a half hours discussion, Yacef said to me with a little smile a phrase rather like this: “You see we are neither criminals nor murderers.” Very sadly, but very firmly, I answered, “You *are* murderers.” He was so taken aback that he didn’t say anything for a moment, as if he couldn’t breathe. Then his eyes filled with tears and he said, word for word, “Yes, Madame Tillion, you are right, we are murderers.” He then gave me some details about the bomb outrage on the casino, adding that when he learnt about them he had wept for three days and nights. In the second part of our talks he had tears in his eyes on three or four occasions, and when he spoke about the casino the tears really flowed.’

It was as a result of these talks that Yacef Saadi promised Mme Tillion that attacks on the civilian population would cease; and she believes he kept his word. He made one reservation.

“‘If there are executions”, I asked, “will you keep your promise?” . . . He started violently. “In the event of executions, I can answer for nothing.””

Which proves the point Mme Tillion made throughout her talks with him and on the witness-stand in Algiers: unless the vicious circle of terrorism and torture is broken somewhere, the hysteria of the two opposing groups mounts and mounts, mutual hatred and terror increase until no solution is possible. The value of her testimony is that she

sounded for herself, in the F.L.N.'s own camp, the good faith of some at any rate of its members and their willingness to desist from terror if there were any hope of reciprocity.

The pity of it all is, as a reading of recent issues of *La Table Ronde* devoted to Islam shows (June and July-August, 1958), that France is deeply and sympathetically involved in the evolution of the Arab peoples of North Africa. The relationship, like ours with other groups of Arabs in Mesopotamia and the Levant, was naturally paternalist to begin with; but it did lead to understanding of a certain kind, and it encouraged not simply the exotic romanticism of the various 'voyages en Orient'—Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, Gobineau—but also a genuine fostering of the *Nahd*'a or cultural renaissance in North Africa, which is a feature of the twentieth century under French rule as opposed to the centuries of stagnation under the Ottoman Turks.

In an article entitled 'Quelques aspects de la renaissance intellectuelle au XXe siècle en Afrique du Nord', Henri Pérès says that not only were a number of Arab literary works translated into French and so gained an audience they might not have achieved in Arabic (the plays of Tewfik el Hakim, the Book of Days of Taha Hussein, etc.); printing presses sprang up in Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Tlemcen, Algiers, Constantine, Tunis; Arab libraries were organized on French models, reading rooms opened, manuscripts properly conserved—catalogues of these libraries are originally the work of Frenchmen; institutes and schools which had fallen into ruin were restored, new ones set up, clubs and reviews started. Certainly there were gaps: poetry was unadventurous, and the novel did not flourish; but the theatre, on the other hand, was tremendously alive, and not dependent on the Arab East like the other *genres*. This theatre included marionette plays, European adaptations, and original pieces; Tunis in particular was the forcing ground for a number of dramatic societies. There was and is also a considerable literature, particularly in the field of the novel, in the French language, evident in the works of Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Driss Chraïbi, and others. Pérès concludes, not unreasonably: 'If French thought and language exert a profound ascendancy—as they certainly do—it does not appear on the other hand that Arabic culture is on the point of extinction. It is not illogical to suppose that the two languages of civilization may continue to coexist, so that both may in the future produce works of strength—specific emanations direct from the soil of North Africa.'

The real test for de Gaulle is whether he can create the conditions not simply for the co-existence of two languages but of two peoples in the same political framework. I recently had a brief intimation of how difficult this really is, even on a small scale. I organized a debate

between a Frenchman and an Arab, both university lecturers, to expound their respective points of view before an audience of seminary students in the North of England. These lecturers had known each other and conversed daily at High Table for months; but it was obvious that only now, when the need was pressing to bring habitually inarticulate feelings to the surface, did either of them really consider the separateness and the value of the other's views. This bringing together in understanding must be the beginning of the process, and not its end.

NOTICES

PORTRAIT OF A PARISH PRIEST, by Lancelot C. Sheppard (Burns Oates, 18s.), is much more than a re-statement of the already well-known life of St John Vianney, Curé d'Ars. And it is much more than a biography of a saint in the conventional style. Mr Sheppard presents a fresh, stimulating, sometimes provocative, appreciation of the humble, and so engaging, parish priest of Ars.

PRINCIPLES AND PERSUASIONS (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 21s.) is a collection of literary essays by Anthony West, which, despite the permanence of a book, preserves the glossy origins of the *New Yorker*. Mr West's principles are often prejudices: he cares nothing for the statistical calm of academic criticism. But, whether his subject be Hugh Walpole or Reinhold Niebuhr, George Eliot or Winston Churchill, he says what he will, unembarrassed by what the Establishment will think. Negative and destructive he may often be, but never boring.

ENDGAME (Faber, 10s. 6d.) is Samuel Beckett's latest play, first performed in a French version in London. Two helpless men watch and comment on the end of all things—'time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended'. But there is a faint hope in this bleak duologue, and always a wonderful sense of the mystery of words.

THE CIRCLE OF GUILT (Dennis Dobson, 18s.) is a study by Dr Frederic Wertham of a particularly shocking American juvenile murder, committed by a Puerto Rican boy in a New York street-gang fight. Dr Wertham, who was called in to examine the murderer, sees this murder as the symptom of a grave malady in American