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Césaire

DISCOURSE ON COLONIALISM

by Aimé Césaire

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.

A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization.

The fact is that the so-called European civilization—"Western" civilization—as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of "reason" or before the bar of "conscience"; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive.

Europe is indefensible.

Apparently that is what the American strategists are whispering to each other.

That in itself is not serious.

What is serious is that "Europe" is morally, spiritually indefensible.

And today the indictment is brought against it not by the European masses alone, but on a world scale, by tens and tens of millions of men who, from the depths of slavery, set themselves up as judges.

The colonialists may kill in Indochina, torture in Madagascar, imprison in Black Africa, crack down in the West Indies. Henceforth the colonized know that they have an advantage over them. They know that their temporary "masters" are lying.

Therefore that their masters are weak.

And since I have been asked to speak about colonization and civilization, let us go straight to the principal lie that is the source of all the others.

Colonization and civilization?

In dealing with this subject, the commonest curse is to be the dupe in good faith of a collective hypocrisy that cleverly misrepresents problems, the better to legitimize the hateful solutions provided for them.

In other words, the essential thing here is to see clearly, to think clearly—that is, dangerously—and to answer clearly the innocent first question: what, fundamentally, is colonization? To agree on what it is not: neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once and for all,

without flinching at the consequences, that the are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale owner, the gold digger and the merchant, app behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a which, at a certain point in its history, find: internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the antagonistic economies.

Pursuing my analysis, I find that hypocrisy is neither Cortéz discovering Mexico from the top nor Pizzaro before Cuzco (much less Marco Polo claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, slaving apologists came later; that the chief culprit is Christian pedantry, which laid down the *Christianity = civilization, paganism = savagery*, from not but ensue abominable colonialist and racist victims were to be the Indians, the Yellow people

That being settled, I admit that it is a good thing to blend different worlds; that a particular genius may be, a civilization that with its atrophies; that for civilizations, exchange is oxygen; the good fortune of Europe is to have been a crossroad; it was the locus of all ideas, the receptacle of a meeting place of all sentiments, it was the locus of redistribution of energy.

But then I ask the following question: has placed civilizations in contact? Or, if you prefer establishing contact, was it the best?

I answer *no*.

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without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies.

Pursuing my analysis, I find that hypocrisy is of recent date; that neither Cortéz discovering Mexico from the top of the great teocalli, nor Pizzaro before Cuzco (much less Marco Polo before Cambuluc), claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order; that they kill; that they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, cupidities; that the slaving apologists came later; that the chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity = civilization, paganism = savagery*, from which there could not but ensue abominable colonialist and racist consequences, whose victims were to be the Indians, the Yellow peoples, and the Negroes.

That being settled, I admit that it is a good thing to place different civilizations in contact with each other; that it is an excellent thing to blend different worlds; that whatever its own particular genius may be, a civilization that withdraws into itself atrophies; that for civilizations, exchange is oxygen; that the great good fortune of Europe is to have been a crossroads, and that because it was the locus of all ideas, the receptacle of all philosophies, the meeting place of all sentiments, it was the best center for the redistribution of energy.

But then I ask the following question: has colonization really placed civilizations in contact? Or, if you prefer, of all the ways of establishing contact, was it the best?

I answer no.

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colonization and *civilization* there is an
of all the colonial expeditions that have
all the colonial statutes that have been
memoranda that have been dispatched by
could not come a single human value.

First we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism; and we must show that each time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, each time a little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, each time a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread; and that at the end of all these treaties that have been violated, all these lies that have been propagated, all these punitive expeditions that have been tolerated; all these prisoners who have been tied up and "interrogated," all these patriots who have been tortured, at the end of all the racial pride that has been encouraged, all the boastfulness that has been displayed, a

poison has been distilled into the veins of Europe and, slowly but surely, the continent proceeds toward *savagery*.

And then one fine day the bourgeoisie is awakened by a terrific boomerang effect: the gestapos are busy, the prisons fill up, the torturers standing around the racks invent, refine, discuss.

People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: "How strange! But never mind—it's Nazism, it will pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.

Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler *inhabits* him, that Hitler is his *demon*, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is *the crime against the white man*, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa.

And that is the great thing I hold against that for too long it has diminished the rights of those rights has been—and still is—narrow: complete and biased and, all things considered,

I have talked a good deal about Hitler. he makes it possible to see things on a large fact that capitalist society, at its present establishing a concept of the rights of all men incapable of establishing a system of individual likes it or not, at the end of the blind alley of Europe of Adenauer, Schuman, Bidault, and Hitler. At the end of capitalism, which is there is Hitler. At the end of formal human renunciation, there is Hitler.

And this being so, I cannot help think of the following: "We aspire not to equality but to the domination of a foreign race must become once again agricultural laborers, or industrial workers eliminating the inequalities among men by making them into a law."

That rings clear, haughty, and brutal, the middle of howling savagery. But let us

Who is speaking? I am ashamed to be a *humanist*, the "idealist" philosopher. That is an accident. That the passage is taken from a *intellectuelle et morale*, that it was written at a time when France had represented as a war of civilization against barbarism, us a great deal about bourgeois morals.

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And that is the great thing I hold against pseudo-humanism:
 that for too long it has diminished the rights of man, that its concept
 of those rights has been—and still is—narrow and fragmentary, incom-
 plete and biased and, all things considered, sordidly racist.

I have talked a good deal about Hitler. Because he deserves it:
 he makes it possible to see things on a large scale and to grasp the
 fact that capitalist society, at its present stage, is incapable of
 establishing a concept of the rights of all men, just as it has proved
 incapable of establishing a system of individual ethics. Whether one
 likes it or not, at the end of the blind alley that is Europe, I mean the
 Europe of Adenauer, Schuman, Bidault, and a few others, there is
 Hitler. At the end of capitalism, which is eager to outlive its day,
 there is Hitler. At the end of formal humanism and philosophic
 renunciation, there is Hitler.

And this being so, I cannot help thinking of one of his state-
 ments: "We aspire not to equality but to domination. The country
 of a foreign race must become once again a country of serfs, of
 agricultural laborers, or industrial workers. It is not a question of
 eliminating the inequalities among men but of widening them and
 making them into a law."

That rings clear, haughty, and brutal, and plants us squarely in
 the middle of howling savagery. But let us come down a step.

Who is speaking? I am ashamed to say it: it is the Western
humanist, the "idealist" philosopher. That his name is Renan is an
 accident. That the passage is taken from a book entitled *La Réforme*
intellectuelle et morale, that it was written in France just after a war
 which France had represented as a war of right against might, tells
 us a great deal about bourgeois morals.

The regeneration of the inferior or degenerate races by the superior races is part of the providential order of things for humanity. With us, the common man is nearly always a déclassé nobleman, his heavy hand is better suited to handling the sword than the menial tool. Rather than work, he chooses to fight, that is, he returns to his first estate. *Regere imperio populos*, that is our vocation. Pour forth this all-consuming activity onto countries which, like China, are crying aloud for foreign conquest. Turn the adventurers who disturb European society into a *ver sacrum*, a horde like those of the Franks, the Lombards, or the Normans, and every man will be in his right role. Nature has made a race of workers, the Chinese race, who have wonderful manual dexterity and almost no sense of honor; govern them with justice, levying from them, in return for the blessing of such a government, an ample allowance for the conquering race, and they will be satisfied; a race of tillers of the soil, the Negro; treat him with kindness and humanity, and all will be as it should; a race of masters and soldiers, the European race. Reduce this noble race to working in the *ergastulum* like Negroes and Chinese, and they rebel. In Europe, every rebel is, more or less, a soldier who has missed his calling, a creature made for the heroic life, before whom you are setting a task that is contrary to his race, a poor worker, too good a soldier. But the life at which our workers rebel would make a Chinese or a fellah happy, as they are not military creatures in the least. *Let each one do what he is made for, and all will be well.*

Hitler? Rosenberg? No, Renan.

But let us come down one step further. And it is the long-winded politician. Who protests? No one, so far as I know, when M. Albert Sarraut, the former governor-general of Indochina, holding forth to the students at the Ecole Coloniale, teaches them that it would be puerile to object to the European colonial enterprises in the name of "an alleged right to possess the land

one occupies, and some sort of right to remain in which would leave unutilized resources to lie in the hands of incompetents."

And who is roused to indignation when a colonialist assures us that if the goods of this world "remain indefinitely, as they would be without colonization, answer neither the purposes of God nor the justice of human collectivity"?

Since, as his fellow Christian, the Rev. Mullens, says, "humanity must not, cannot allow the incompetence and laziness of the uncivilized peoples to leave idle the wealth which God has confided to them, charged to serve the good of all."

No one.

I mean not one established writer, not one a preacher, not one crusader for the right and for the "defender of the human person."

And yet, through the mouths of the Sarrauts and the Mullens and the Renans, through the mouths of the colonialists considered—and consider—it is lawful to apply to the peoples "a kind of expropriation for public purposes of nations that were stronger and better equipped than they." Hitler speaking!

What am I driving at? At this idea: that a civilization which colonizes with impunity, which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies its existence and therefore force—is already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, in its development or progress, tends to destroy itself and to destroy the civilizations to which it is applied, calls for its punishment.

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one occupies, and some sort of right to remain in fierce isolation,
which would leave unutilized resources to lie forever idle in the
hands of incompetents."

And who is roused to indignation when a certain Rev. Barde
assures us that if the goods of this world "remained divided up
indefinitely, as they would be without colonization, they would
answer neither the purposes of God nor the just demands of the
human collectivity"?

Since, as his fellow Christian, the Rev. Muller, declares: "Hu-
manity must not, cannot allow the incompetence, negligence, and
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preacher, not one crusader for the right and for religion, not one
"defender of the human person."

And yet, through the mouths of the Sarrauts and the Bardes, the
Mullers and the Renans, through the mouths of all those who
considered—and consider—it lawful to apply to non-European
peoples "a kind of expropriation for public purposes" for the benefit
of nations that were stronger and better equipped, it was already
Hitler speaking!

What am I driving at? At this idea: that no one colonizes
innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either; that a nation
which colonizes, that a civilization which justifies colonization—
and therefore force—is already a sick civilization, a civilization which
is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one conse-
quence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean
its punishment.

Colonization: bridgehead in a campaign to civilize barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilization, pure and simple.

Elsewhere I have cited at length a few incidents culled from the history of colonial expeditions.

Unfortunately, this did not find favor with everyone. It seems that I was pulling old skeletons out of the closet. Indeed!

Was there no point in quoting Colonel de Montagnac, one of the conquerors of Algeria: "In order to banish the thoughts that sometimes besiege me, I have some heads cut off, not the heads of artichokes but the heads of men."

Would it have been more advisable to refuse the floor to Count d'Hérisson: "It is true that we are bringing back a whole barrellful of ears collected, pair by pair, from prisoners, friendly or enemy."

Should I have denied Saint-Arnaud the right to profess his barbarous faith: "We lay waste, we burn, we plunder, we destroy the houses and the trees."

Should I have prevented Marshal Bugeaud from systematizing all that in a daring theory and invoking the precedent of famous ancestors: "We must have a great invasion of Africa, like the invasions of the Franks and the Goths."

Lastly, should I have cast back into the shadows of oblivion the memorable feat of arms of General Gérard and kept silent about the capture of Ambike, a city which, to tell the truth, had never dreamed of defending itself: "The native riflemen had orders to kill only the men, but no one restrained them; intoxicated by the smell of blood, they spared not one woman, not one child. . . . At the end of the afternoon, the heat caused a light mist to arise: it was the blood of the five thousand victims, the ghost of the city, evaporating in the setting sun."

Yes or no, are these things true? And the nameless delights that send voluptuous shiver Loti's carcass when he focuses his field glasse of the Annamese? True or not true? And if th no one can deny, will it be said, in order to these corpses don't prove anything?

For my part, if I have recalled a few de butcheries, it is by no means because I take a m but because I think that these heads of men, th these burned houses, these Gothic invasions, these cities that evaporate at the edge of the s easily disposed of. They prove that colonizatio izes even the most civilized man; that colo enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based native and justified by that contempt, inevit him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, wh conscience gets into the habit of seeing the ot accustoms himself to treating him like an anima to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this r effect of colonization that I wanted to point c

Unfair? No. There was a time when the source of pride, and when, sure of the morrow, words. One last quotation; it is from a certain an *Essai sur la colonisation* (Paris, 1907):

The new countries offer a vast field for indivi ties which, in the metropolitan countries, we certain prejudices, against a sober and orderly cc which, in the colonies, have greater freedom to quently, to affirm their worth. Thus to a certain

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Yes or no, are these things true? And the sadistic pleasures, the nameless delights that send voluptuous shivers and quivers through Loti's carcass when he focuses his field glasses on a good massacre of the Annamese? True or not true? And if these things are true, as no one can deny, will it be said, in order to minimize them, that these corpses don't prove anything?

For my part, if I have recalled a few details of these hideous butcheries, it is by no means because I take a morbid delight in them, but because I think that these heads of men, these collections of ears, these burned houses, these Gothic invasions, this steaming blood, these cities that evaporate at the edge of the sword, are not to be so easily disposed of. They prove that colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out.

Unfair? No. There was a time when these same facts were a source of pride, and when, sure of the morrow, people did not mince words. One last quotation; it is from a certain Carl Siger, author of an *Essai sur la colonisation* (Paris, 1907):

The new countries offer a vast field for individual, violent activities which, in the metropolitan countries, would run up against certain prejudices, against a sober and orderly conception of life, and which, in the colonies, have greater freedom to develop and, consequently, to affirm their worth. Thus to a certain extent the colonies

can serve as a safety valve for modern society. Even if this were their only value, it would be immense.

Truly, there are sins for which no one has the power to make amends and which can never be fully expiated.

But let us speak about the colonized.

I see clearly what colonization has destroyed: the wonderful Indian civilizations—and neither Deterding nor Royal Dutch nor Standard Oil will ever console me for the Aztecs and the Incas.

I see clearly the civilizations, condemned to perish at a future date, into which it has introduced a principle of ruin: the South Sea Islands, Nigeria, Nyasaland. I see less clearly the contributions it has made.

Security? Culture? The rule of law? In the meantime, I look around and wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, "boys," artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business.

I spoke of contact.

Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses.

No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.

My turn to state an equation: colonization = "thingification."

I hear the storm. They talk to me about progress, about "achievements," diseases cured, improved standards of living.

I am talking about societies drained of their traditions, religions trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, magnificent artistic creations smashed, ordinary possibilities wiped out.

They throw facts at my head, statistics, miles and railroad tracks.

I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed in the harbor of Abidjan by hand. I am talking about the torn from their gods, their land, their habits, from the dance, from wisdom.

I am talking about millions of men in whom cunningly instilled, who have been taught to be complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave.

They dazzle me with the tonnage of cotton exported, the acreage that has been planted with vines.

I am talking about natural economies that have been replaced by harmonious and viable economies adapted to the needs of the colonies—about food crops destroyed, malnutrition introduced, agricultural development oriented to the benefit of the metropolitan countries; about the looting of raw materials.

They pride themselves on abuses eliminated.

I too talk about abuses, but what I say is very real—they have superimposed other tyrants. They talk to me about local tyrants brought in, that in general the old tyrants get on very well and that there has been established between them and the people, a circuit of mutual services and

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When colonized there is room only for forced labor, the police, taxation, theft, rape, commerce, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, lies, degraded masses.

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Colonization: colonization = "thingification." They talk to me about progress, about "achieved" standards of living.

I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out.

They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks.

I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo-Océan.² I am talking about those who, as I write this, are digging the harbor of Abidjan by hand. I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life—from life, from the dance, from wisdom.

I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkies.

They dazzle me with the tonnage of cotton or cocoa that has been exported, the acreage that has been planted with olive trees or grapevines.

I am talking about natural economies that have been disrupted—harmonious and viable economies adapted to the indigenous population—about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries; about the looting of products, the looting of raw materials.

They pride themselves on abuses eliminated.

I too talk about abuses, but what I say is that on the old ones—very real—they have superimposed others—very detestable. They talk to me about local tyrants brought to reason; but I note that in general the old tyrants get on very well with the new ones, and that there has been established between them, to the detriment of the people, a circuit of mutual services and complicity.

They talk to me about civilization, I talk about proletarianization and mystification.

For my part, I make a systematic defense of the non-European civilizations.

Every day that passes, every denial of justice, every beating by the police, every demand of the workers that is drowned in blood, every scandal that is hushed up, every punitive expedition, every police van, every gendarme and every militiaman, brings home to us the value of our old societies.

They were communal societies, never societies of the many for the few.

They were societies that were not only ante-capitalist, as has been said, but also *anti-capitalist*.

They were democratic societies, always.

They were cooperative societies, fraternal societies.

I make a systematic defense of the societies destroyed by imperialism.

They were the fact, they did not pretend to be the idea; despite their faults, they were neither to be hated nor condemned. They were content to be. In them, neither the word *failure* nor the word *avatar* had any meaning. They kept hope intact.

Whereas those are the only words that can, in all honesty, be applied to the European enterprises outside Europe. My only consolation is that periods of colonization pass, that nations sleep only for a time, and that peoples remain.

This being said, it seems that in certain circles they pretend to have discovered in me an "enemy of Europe" and a prophet of the return to the pre-European past.

For my part, I search in vain for the place where I could have expressed such views; where I ever underestimated the importance

of Europe in the history of human thought; where I ever claimed that there was a *return* of any kind; where I ever claimed that the

The truth is that I have said something very different. The great historical tragedy of Africa has been that it was too late in making contact with the rest of the world in a manner in which that contact was brought about. It was too late to "propagate" at a time when it had fallen in the hands of most unscrupulous financiers and captains of industry. It was our misfortune to encounter that particular European and that Europe is responsible before the human race for the highest heap of corpses in history.

In another connection, in judging colonization, that Europe has gotten on very well indeed with the lords who agreed to serve, woven a villainous cover that rendered their tyranny more effective and more durable. It has actually tended to prolong artificially the system in their most pernicious aspects.

I have said—and this is something very different—capitalist Europe has grafted modern abuse onto ancient racism onto old inequality.

That if I am attacked on the grounds of imperialism, that colonialist Europe is dishonest in trying to justify its activity *a posteriori* by the obvious material progress it has achieved in certain fields under the colonial regime. *Change* is always possible, in history as elsewhere; at what stage of material development these societies have been if Europe had not intervened; since it has introduced its technology into Africa and Asia, their administrative system, in a word, their "Europeanization," was (as is the case with Japan) in no way tied to the European model.

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The truth is that I have said something very different: to wit, that
 the great historical tragedy of Africa has been not so much that it
 was too late in making contact with the rest of the world, as the
 manner in which that contact was brought about; that Europe began
 to "propagate" at a time when it had fallen into the hands of the
 most unscrupulous financiers and captains of industry; that it was
 our misfortune to encounter that particular Europe on our path,
 and that Europe is responsible before the human community for
 the highest heap of corpses in history.

In another connection, in judging colonization, I have added
 that Europe has gotten on very well indeed with all the local feudal
 lords who agreed to serve, woven a villainous complicity with them,
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I have said—and this is something very different—that coloni-
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 racism onto old inequality.

That if I am attacked on the grounds of intent, I maintain that
 colonialist Europe is dishonest in trying to justify its colonizing
 activity *a posteriori* by the obvious material progress that has been
 achieved in certain fields under the colonial regime—since *sudden*
change is always possible, in history as elsewhere; since no one knows
 at what stage of material development these same countries would
 have been if Europe had not intervened; since the introduction of
 technology into Africa and Asia, their administrative reorganization,
 in a word, their "Europeanization," was (as is proved by the example
 of Japan) in no way tied to the European *occupation*; since the

Europeanization of the non-European continents could have been accomplished otherwise than under the heel of Europe; since this movement of Europeanization was in progress; since it was even slowed down; since in any case it was distorted by the European takeover.

The proof is that at present it is the indigenous peoples of Africa and Asia who are demanding schools, and colonialist Europe which refuses them; that it is the African who is asking for ports and roads, and colonialist Europe which is niggardly on this score; that it is the colonized man who wants to move forward, and the colonizer who holds things back.

To go further, I make no secret of my opinion that the barbarism of Western Europe has reached a high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed—by the barbarism of the United States.

And I am not talking about Hitler, or the adventurer, but about the “decent fellow,” the member of the SS, or the gangster, or the bourgeois. In a time gone by, Léon Bloy is important over the fact that swindlers, perjurers, procurers were given the responsibility of the example of Christian virtues.”

We’ve made progress: today it is the perverts, the “virtues” who intrigues—with no small success—in administering overseas territories according to the interests of forgers and torturers.

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To go further, I make no secret of my opinion that at the present time the barbarism of Western Europe has reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed—far surpassed, it is true—by the barbarism of the United States.

And I am not talking about Hitler, or the prison guard, or the adventurer, but about the “decent fellow” across the way; not about the member of the SS, or the gangster, but about the respectable bourgeois. In a time gone by, Léon Bloy innocently became indignant over the fact that swindlers, perjurers, forgers, thieves, and procurers were given the responsibility of “bringing to the Indies the example of Christian virtues.”

We’ve made progress: today it is the possessor of the “Christian virtues” who intrigues—with no small success—for the honor of administering overseas territories according to the methods of forgers and torturers.

A sign that cruelty, mendacity, baseness, and corruption have sunk deep into the soul of the European bourgeoisie.

I repeat that I am not talking about Hitler, or the SS, or pogroms, or summary executions. But about a reaction caught unawares, a reflex permitted, a piece of cynicism tolerated. And if evidence is wanted, I could mention a scene of cannibalistic hysteria that I have been privileged to witness in the French National Assembly.

By Jove, my dear colleagues (as they say), I take off my hat to you (a cannibal's hat, of course).

Think of it! Ninety thousand dead in Madagascar! Indochina trampled underfoot, crushed to bits, assassinated, tortures brought back from the depths of the Middle Ages! And what a spectacle! The delicious shudder that roused the dozing deputies. The wild uproar! Bidault, looking like a communion wafer dipped in shit—unctuous and sanctimonious cannibalism; Moutet—the cannibalism of shady deals and sonorous nonsense; Coste-Floret—the cannibalism of an unlicked bear cub, a blundering fool.

Unforgettable, gentlemen! With fine phrases as cold and solemn as a mummy's wrappings they tie up the Madagascan. With a few conventional words they stab him for you. The time it takes to wet your whistle, they disembowel him for you. Fine work! Not a drop of blood will be wasted.

The ones who drink it straight, to the last drop. The ones like Ramadier, who smear their faces with it in the manner of Silenus;³ Fontlup-Esperaber,⁴ who starches his mustache with it, the walrus mustache of an ancient Gaul; old Desjardins bending over the emanations from the vat and intoxicating himself with them as with new wine. Violence! The violence of the weak. A significant thing: it is not the head of a civilization that begins to rot first. It is the heart.

I admit that as far as the health of Europe concerned, these cries of "Kill! kill!" and "belched forth by trembling old men and educated by the Jesuit Fathers, make a more impression on me than the most sensation occur in Paris.

And that, mind you, is by no means an

On the contrary, bourgeois swinishness on its trail for a century. We listen for it, we sniff it out, we follow it, lose it, find it again day it is more nauseatingly exposed. Oh gentlemen does not bother me. I do not merely examine it. I note it, and that is all it for expressing itself openly and appearing sign. A sign that the intrepid class which or is now hamstrung. A sign that it feels itself it feels itself to be a corpse. And when the you get this sort of thing:

There was only too much truth in the Europeans who, *in the century of Columbus, re fellow men the degraded inhabitants of the new gaze upon the savage for an instant without written, I do not say upon his soul alone, but of his body.*

And it's signed Joseph de Maistre.
(That's what is ground out by the myst)
And then you get this:

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I admit that as far as the health of Europe and civilization is
concerned, these cries of "Kill! kill!" and "Let's see some blood,"
belched forth by trembling old men and virtuous young men
educated by the Jesuit Fathers, make a much more disagreeable
impression on me than the most sensational bank holdups that
occur in Paris.

And that, mind you, is by no means an exception.

On the contrary, bourgeois swinishness is the rule. We've been
on its trail for a century. We listen for it, we take it by surprise, we
sniff it out, we follow it, lose it, find it again, shadow it, and every
day it is more nauseatingly exposed. Oh! the racism of these
gentlemen does not bother me. I do not become indignant over it.
I merely examine it. I note it, and that is all. I am almost grateful to
it for expressing itself openly and appearing in broad daylight, as a
sign. A sign that the intrepid class which once stormed the Bastilles
is now hamstrung. A sign that it feels itself to be mortal. A sign that
it feels itself to be a corpse. And when the corpse starts to babble,
you get this sort of thing:

There was only too much truth in this first impulse of the
Europeans who, *in the century of Columbus, refused to recognize as their
fellow men the degraded inhabitants of the new world.* . . . One cannot
gaze upon the savage for an instant without reading the anathema
written, I do not say upon his soul alone, but *even on the external form
of his body.*

And it's signed Joseph de Maistre.

(That's what is ground out by the mystical mill.)

And then you get this:

From the selectionist point of view, I would look upon it as
unfortunate if there should be a very great numerical expansion of

the yellow and black elements, which would be difficult to eliminate. However, if the society of the future is organized on a dualistic basis, *with a ruling class of dolichocephalic blonds and a class of inferior race confined to the roughest labor, it is possible that this latter role would fall to the yellow and black elements.* In this case, moreover, they would not be an inconvenience for the dolichocephalic blonds but an advantage. . . . *It must not be forgotten that [slavery] is no more abnormal than the domestication of the horse or the ox.* It is therefore possible that it may reappear in the future in one form or another. It is probably even inevitable that this will happen if the simplistic solution does not come about instead—that of a single superior race, leveled out by selection.

That's what is ground out by the scientific mill, and it's signed Lapouge.

And you also get this (from the literary mill this time):

I know that I must believe myself superior to the poor Bayas of the Mambéré. *I know that I must take pride in my blood.* When a superior man ceases to believe himself superior, he actually ceases to be superior. . . . *When a superior race ceases to believe itself a chosen race, it actually ceases to be a chosen race.*

And it's signed Psichari—soldier-of-Africa.

Translate it into newspaper jargon and you get Faguet:

The barbarian is of the same race, after all, as the Roman and the Greek. He is a cousin. The yellow man, the black man, is not our cousin at all. Here there is a real difference, a real distance, and a very great one: an *ethnological* distance. *After all, civilization has never yet been made except by whites.* . . . If Europe becomes yellow, there will certainly be a regression, a new period of darkness and confusion, that is, another Middle Ages.

And then lower, always lower, to the bottom than the shovel can go, M. Jules Romain, of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. (It doesn't matter that M. Farigoule changes his name once again and Salsette for the sake of convenience.)⁵ The essence of Jules Romain goes so far as to write this:

I am willing to carry on a discussion only with a view to posing the following hypothesis: a France that had cultivated ten million Blacks, five or six million of them on the Garonne. Would our valiant populations of the Midi have been touched by race prejudice? Would there have been the slightest apprehension if the question had arisen of giving over to these Negroes, the sons of slaves? . . . I once saw a row of some twenty pure Blacks. . . . I will not give Negroes and Negresses for chewing gum. I will not think that this movement has the effect of emphasizing the racial associations which come to mind evoke the equality of the procession of the Panathenaea The blacks produced, will never produce, an Einstein, a Stravinsky.

One idiotic comparison for another: since the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and other places invites comparisons between "widely separated" things, may I be permitted to think (no one being master of his free voice) that the voice has less in common with the rustling of the leaves or even the vibrations of the cauldron—than with the Missouri ass.⁶

Once again, I systematically defend our old French as they were courteous civilizations.

So the real problem, you say, is to return to the beginning. We are not men for whom it is a question of "ei-

ents, which would be difficult to eliminate. If the future is organized on a dualistic basis, *brachycephalic blonds and a class of inferior race labor, it is possible that this latter role would fall to the Negroes*. In this case, moreover, they would be for the dolichocephalic blonds but *not for the forgotten that [slavery] is no more abnormal than the horse or the ox*. It is therefore possible that the future in one form or another. It is probably will happen if the simplistic solution does—that of a single superior race, leveled out

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And then lower, always lower, to the bottom of the pit, lower than the shovel can go, M. Jules Romain, of the Académie Française and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. (It doesn't matter, of course, that M. Farigoule changes his name once again and here calls himself Salsette for the sake of convenience.)⁵ The essential thing is that M. Jules Romain goes so far as to write this:

I am willing to carry on a discussion only with people who agree to pose the following hypothesis: a France that had on its metropolitan soil ten million Blacks, five or six million of them in the valley of the Garonne. Would our valiant populations of the Southwest never have been touched by race prejudice? Would there not have been the slightest apprehension if the question had arisen of turning all powers over to these Negroes, the sons of slaves? . . . I once had opposite me a row of some twenty pure Blacks. . . . I will not even censure our Negroes and Negresses for chewing gum. I will only note . . . that this movement has the effect of emphasizing the jaws, and that the associations which come to mind evoke the equatorial forest rather than the procession of the Panathenaea The black race has not yet produced, will never produce, an Einstein, a Stravinsky, a Gershwin.

One idiotic comparison for another: since the prophet of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and other places invites us to draw parallels between "widely separated" things, may I be permitted, Negro that I am, to think (no one being master of his free associations) that his voice has less in common with the rustling of the oak of Dodona—or even the vibrations of the cauldron—than with the braying of a Missouri ass.⁶

Once again, I systematically defend our old Negro civilizations: they were courteous civilizations.

So the real problem, you say, is to return to them. No, I repeat. We are not men for whom it is a question of "either-or." For us, the

problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism. Nor is it the present colonial society that we wish to prolong, the most putrid carrion that ever rotted under the sun. It is a new society that we must create, with the help of all our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days.

For some examples showing that this is possible, we can look to the Soviet Union.

But let us return to M. Jules Romain:

One cannot say that the petty bourgeois has never read anything. On the contrary, he has read everything, devoured everything.

Only, his brain functions after the fashion of certain elementary types of digestive systems. It filters. And the filter lets through only what can nourish the thick skin of the bourgeois's clear conscience.

Before the arrival of the French in their country, the Vietnamese were people of an old culture, exquisite and refined. To recall this fact upsets the digestion of the Banque d'Indochine. Start the forgetting machine!

These Madagascans who are being tortured today, less than a century ago were poets, artists, administrators? Shhhhhh! Keep your lips buttoned! And silence falls, silence as deep as a safe! Fortunately, there are still the Negroes. Ah! the Negroes! Let's talk about the Negroes!

All right, let's talk about them.

About the Sudanese empires? About the bronzes of Benin? Shango sculpture? That's all right with me; it will give us a change from all the sensationally bad art that adorns so many European capitals. About African music. Why not?

And about what the first explorers said, what those who feed at the company mangers! But Marchais, the Pigafettas! And then Frobenius! No, he was, Frobenius? And we read together: "Civilization of their bones! The idea of the barbaric Negro invention."

The petty bourgeois doesn't want to hear it. At a twitch of his ears he flicks the idea away.

The idea, an annoying fly.

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 he was, Frobenius? And we read together: "Civilized to the marrow
 of their bones! The idea of the barbaric Negro is a European
 invention."

The petty bourgeois doesn't want to hear any more. With a
 twitch of his ears he flicks the idea away.

The idea, an annoying fly.

Therefore, comrade, you will hold as enemies—loftily, lucidly, consistently—not only sadistic governors and greedy bankers, not only prefects who torture and colonists who flog, not only corrupt, check-licking politicians and subservient judges, but likewise and for the same reason, venomous journalists, goitrous academics, wreathed in dollars and stupidity, ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of Nietzsche, the paternalists, the embracers, the corrupters, the back-slappers, the lovers of exoticism, the dividers, the agrarian sociologists, the hoodwinkers, the hoaxers, the hot-air artists, the humbugs, and in general, all those who, performing their functions in the sordid division of labor for the defense of Western bourgeois society, try in diverse ways and by infamous diversions to split up the forces of Progress—even if it means denying the very possibility of Progress—all of them tools of

capitalism, all of them, openly or secretly, supporters of colonialism, all of them responsible, all hateful, henceforth answerable for the violence of revolution.

And sweep out all the obscurers, all the imbeciles, the charlatans and tricksters, the dealers in glibness who do not seek to know whether personally these exploiters are good or bad faith, whether personally they have good intentions. Whether personally—that is, in the private life of Paul—they are or are not colonialists, because their highly problematical subjective intentions are irrelevant to the objective social implication of their performance as watchdogs of colonialism.

And in this connection, I cite as examples (from very different disciplines):

—From Gourou, his book *Les Pays tropicaux*: certain correct observations, there is expression, thesis, biased and unacceptable, that there is no tropical civilization, that great civilizations come in temperate climates, that in every tropical climate a civilization comes, and can only come, from outside the tropics, and that if the tropical climate is the biological curse of the racists, there at the same time, with the same consequences, a no less effective civilization comes.

—From the Rev. Tempels, missionary and philosopher, “as slimy and fetid as one could get,” very opportunely, as Hinduism was discovered to counteract the “communistic materialism” which threatens to turn the Negroes into “moral vegetarians.”

—From the historians or novelists of colonialism (nothing)—not from this one or that one, but from all of them.

capitalism, all of them, openly or secretly, supporters of plundering colonialism, all of them responsible, all hateful, all slave-traders, all henceforth answerable for the violence of revolutionary action.

And sweep out all the obscurers, all the inventors of subterfuges, the charlatans and tricksters, the dealers in gobbledygook. And do not seek to know whether personally these gentlemen are in good or bad faith, whether personally they have good or bad intentions. Whether personally—that is, in the private conscience of Peter or Paul—they are or are not colonialists, because the essential thing is that their highly problematical subjective good faith is entirely irrelevant to the objective social implications of the evil work they perform as watchdogs of colonialism.

And in this connection, I cite as examples (purposely taken from very different disciplines):

—From Gourou, his book *Les Pays tropicaux*, in which, amid certain correct observations, there is expressed the fundamental thesis, biased and unacceptable, that there has never been a great tropical civilization, that great civilizations have existed only in temperate climates, that in every tropical country the germ of civilization comes, and can only come, from some other place outside the tropics, and that if the tropical countries are not under the biological curse of the racists, there at least hangs over them, with the same consequences, a no less effective geographical curse.

—From the Rev. Tempels, missionary and Belgian, his “Bantu philosophy,” as slimy and fetid as one could wish, but discovered very opportunely, as Hinduism was discovered by others, in order to counteract the “communistic materialism” which, it seems, threatens to turn the Negroes into “moral vagabonds.”

—From the historians or novelists of civilization (it’s the same thing)—not from this one or that one, but from all of them, or

you will hold as enemies—loftily, lucidly, aristocratic governors and greedy bankers, not and colonists who flog, not only corrupt, and subservient judges, but likewise and famous journalists, goitrous academics, stupidity, ethnographers who go in for those Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals of the thigh of Nietzsche, the paternalists, upstarts, the back-slappers, the lovers of the agrarian sociologists, the hoodwinkers, the humbugs, and in general, all those functions in the sordid division of labor for bourgeois society, try in diverse ways and by splitting up the forces of Progress—even if it is the possibility of Progress—all of them tools of

almost all—their false objectivity, their chauvinism, their sly racism, their depraved passion for refusing to acknowledge any merit in the non-white races, especially the black-skinned races, their obsession with monopolizing all glory for their own race.

—From the psychologists, sociologists *et al.*, their views on “primitivism,” their rigged investigations, their self-serving generalizations, their tendentious speculations, their insistence on the marginal, “separate” character of the non-whites, and—although each of these gentlemen, in order to impugn on higher authority the weakness of primitive thought, claims that his own is based on the firmest rationalism—their barbaric repudiation, for the sake of the cause, of Descartes’s statement, the charter of universalism, that “reason . . . is found whole and entire in each man,” and that “where individuals of the same species are concerned, there may be degrees in respect of their accidental qualities, but not in respect of their forms, or natures.”⁷

But let us not go too quickly. It is worthwhile to follow a few of these gentlemen.

I shall not dwell upon the case of the historians, neither the historians of colonization nor the Egyptologists. The case of the former is too obvious, and as for the latter, the mechanism by which they delude their readers has been definitively taken apart by Sheikh Anta Diop in his book *Nations nègres et culture*, the most daring book yet written by a Negro and one which will without question play an important part in the awakening of Africa.⁸

Let us rather go back. To M. Gourou, to be exact.

Need I say that it is from a lofty height that the eminent scholar surveys the native populations, which “have taken no part” in the development of modern science? And that it is not from the effort of these populations, from their liberating struggle, from their

concrete fight for life, freedom, and cultural salvation of the tropical countries to the colonizer—since the law states that the elements developed in non-tropical regions will ensure the progress of the tropical population and a higher civilization.”

I have said that M. Gourou's book contains observations: "The tropical environment and he writes, drawing up the balance sheet, suffered from the introduction of techniques, from *corvées*, porter service, forced transplanting of workers from one region to another in the biological environment, and special conditions less favorable."

A fine record! The look on the universal on the cabinet minister's face when he released his leash; now we're in for it; he's beginning: "The typical hot country with the following dilemma: economic development of the natives or temporary economic development of the natives." "Monsieur Gourou, this is a solemn warning: in this game it is at stake." So our Gourou chooses to back up by saying that, if the dilemma exists, it exists only in the mind of the existing regime; that if this paradox exists, it is only the iron law of colonialist capitalism that is not only perishable but already in

What impure and worldly geography

If there is anything better, it is the plunder and torture in the Congo, let the

activity, their chauvinism, their sly racism, refusing to acknowledge any merit in the black-skinned races, their obsession for their own race.

Historians, sociologists *et al.*, their views on the past, their investigations, their self-serving generous speculations, their insistence on the inferiority of the non-whites, and—although in order to impugn on higher authority and thought, claims that his own is based on their barbaric repudiation, for the sake of the statement, the charter of universalism, that is true and entire in each man,” and that “where races are concerned, there may be degrees of mental qualities, but not in respect of their

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In the case of the historians, neither the case of the Egyptologists. The case of the latter, the mechanism by which it has been definitively taken apart by Sheikh Said in *Nations nègres et culture*, the most daring and one which will without question mark the awakening of Africa.⁸

To M. Gourou, to be exact.

From a lofty height that the eminent scholars have taken no part in the science? And that it is not from the effort of their liberating struggle, from their

concrete fight for life, freedom, and culture that he expects the salvation of the tropical countries to come, but from the good colonizer—since the law states categorically that “it is cultural elements developed in non-tropical regions which are ensuring and will ensure the progress of the tropical regions toward a larger population and a higher civilization.”

I have said that M. Gourou's book contains some correct observations: “The tropical environment and the indigenous societies,” he writes, drawing up the balance sheet on colonization, “have suffered from the introduction of techniques that are ill adapted to them, from *corvées*, porter service, forced labor, slavery, from the transplanting of workers from one region to another, sudden changes in the biological environment, and special new conditions that are less favorable.”

A fine record! The look on the university rector's face! The look on the cabinet minister's face when he reads that! Our Gourou has slipped his leash; now we're in for it; he's going to tell everything; he's beginning: “The typical hot countries find themselves faced with the following dilemma: economic stagnation and protection of the natives or temporary economic development and regression of the natives.” “Monsieur Gourou, this is very serious! I'm giving you a solemn warning: in this game it is your career which is at stake.” So our Gourou chooses to back off and refrain from specifying that, if the dilemma exists, it exists only within the framework of the existing regime; that if this paradox constitutes an iron law, it is only the iron law of colonialist capitalism, therefore of a society that is not only perishable but already in the process of perishing.

What impure and worldly geography!

If there is anything better, it is the Rev. Tempels. Let them plunder and torture in the Congo, let the Belgian colonizer seize all

the natural resources, let him stamp out all freedom, let him crush all pride—let him go in peace, the Reverend Father Tempels consents to all that. But take care! You are going to the Congo? Respect—I do not say native property (the great Belgian companies might take that as a dig at them), I do not say the freedom of the natives (the Belgian colonists might think that was subversive talk), I do not say the Congolese nation (the Belgian government might take it much amiss)—I say: You are going to the Congo? Respect the Bantu philosophy!

"It would be really outrageous," writes the Rev. Tempels, "if the white educator were to insist on destroying the black man's own, particular human spirit, which is the only reality that prevents us from considering him as an inferior being. It would be a crime against humanity, on the part of the colonizer, to emancipate the primitive races from that which is valid, from that which constitutes a kernel of truth in their traditional thought, etc."

What generosity, Father! And what zeal!

Now then, know that Bantu thought is essentially ontological; that Bantu ontology is based on the truly fundamental notions of a life force and a hierarchy of life forces; and that for the Bantu the ontological order which defines the world comes from God and, as a divine decree, must be respected.⁹

Wonderful! Everybody gains: the big companies, the colonists, the government—everybody except the Bantu, naturally.

Since Bantu thought is ontological, the Bantu only ask for satisfaction of an ontological nature. Decent wages! Comfortable housing! Food! These Bantu are pure spirits, I tell you: "What they desire first of all and above all is not the improvement of their economic or material situation, but the white man's recognition of and respect for their dignity as men, their full human value."

In short, you tip your hat to the Bantu! to the immortal Bantu soul. And that's all admit you're getting off cheap!

As for the government, why should it c Tempels notes with obvious satisfaction, "fr the white men, the Bantu considered us fr that was possible to them, the point of view c and "*integrated us into their hierarchy of life*

In other words, arrange it so that the w the Belgian, and even more particularly Al place at the head of the hierarchy of Bantu done the trick. You will have brought this *god will take responsibility for the Belgian Bantu who dares to raise his hand against i*

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Follow him step by step through the conjuring tricks, and he will prove to : colonization is based on psychology, tha groups of men who, for unknown reason be called a dependency complex, that the cally made for dependence; that they nee crave it, ask for it, demand it; that this is colonized peoples and with the Madagasc

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rageous," writes the Rev. Tempels, "if the whites insist on destroying the black man's own, which is the only reality that prevents us from being an inferior being. It would be a crime on the part of the colonizer, to emancipate the black man which is valid, from that which constitutes traditional thought, etc."

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Bantu thought is essentially ontological; based on the truly fundamental notions of a hierarchy of life forces; and that for the Bantu the world comes from God and, as expected.⁹

gains: the big companies, the colonists, and only except the Bantu, naturally.

is ontological, the Bantu only ask for a spiritual nature. Decent wages! Comfortable life! If you are pure spirits, I tell you: "What they want is not the improvement of their condition, but the white man's recognition of them as men, their full human value."

In short, you tip your hat to the Bantu life force, you give a wink to the immortal Bantu soul. And that's all it costs you! You have to admit you're getting off cheap!

As for the government, why should it complain? Since, the Rev. Tempels notes with obvious satisfaction, "from their first contact with the white men, the Bantu considered us from the only point of view that was possible to them, the point of view of their Bantu philosophy" and "*integrated us into their hierarchy of life forces at a very high level.*"

In other words, arrange it so that the white man, and particularly the Belgian, and even more particularly Albert or Leopold, takes his place at the head of the hierarchy of Bantu life forces, and you have done the trick. You will have brought this miracle to pass: *the Bantu god will take responsibility for the Belgian colonialist order, and any Bantu who dares to raise his hand against it will be guilty of sacrilege.*

As for M. Mannoni, in view of his book and his observations on the Madagascan soul, he deserves to be taken very seriously.

Follow him step by step through the ins and outs of his little conjuring tricks, and he will prove to you as clear as day that colonization is based on psychology, that there are in this world groups of men who, for unknown reasons, suffer from what must be called a dependency complex, that these groups are psychologically made for dependence; that they need dependence, that they crave it, ask for it, demand it; that this is the case with most of the colonized peoples and with the Madagascans in particular.

Away with racism! Away with colonialism! They smack too much of barbarism. M. Mannoni has something better: psychoanalysis. Embellished with existentialism, it gives astonishing results: the most down-at-the-heel clichés are re-soled for you and made good as new; the most absurd prejudices are explained and justified; and, as if by magic, the moon is turned into green cheese.

But listen to him:

It is the destiny of the Occidental to face the obligation laid down by the commandment *Thou shalt leave thy father and thy mother*. This obligation is incomprehensible to the Madagascan. At a given time in his development, every European discovers in himself the desire . . . to break the bonds of dependency, to become the equal of his father. The Madagascan, never! He does not experience rivalry with the paternal authority, "manly protest," or Adlerian inferiority—ordeals through which the European must pass and which are like civilized forms . . . of the initiation rites by which one achieves manhood . . .

Don't let the subtleties of vocabulary, the new terminology, frighten you! You know the old refrain: "The-Negroes-are-big-children." They take it, they dress it up for you, tangle it up for you. The result is Mannoni. Once again, be reassured! At the start of the journey it may seem a bit difficult, but once you get there, you'll see, you will find all your baggage again. Nothing will be missing, not even the famous *white man's burden*. Therefore, give ear: "Through these ordeals" (reserved for the Occidental), "one triumphs over the infantile fear of abandonment and acquires freedom and autonomy, which are the most precious possessions and also the burdens of the Occidental."

And the Madagascan? you ask. A lying race of bondsmen, Kipling would say. M. Mannoni makes his diagnosis: "The Madagascan does not even try to imagine such a situation of abandonment. . . . He desires neither personal autonomy nor free responsibility." (Come on, you know how it is. These Negroes can't even imagine what freedom is. They don't want it, they don't demand it. It's the white agitators who put that into their heads. And if you gave it to them, they wouldn't know what to do with it.)

If you point out to M. Mannoni that he nevertheless revolted several times since then, again recently in 1947, M. Mannoni, fait expliquer to you that that is purely neurotic madness, a running amok; that, moreover, the question of the Madagascans' setting out is not but an "imaginary security," which obviates the oppression of which they complain is an illusion clearly, so insanely imaginary, that on the monstrous ingratitude, according to the Fijian who burns the drying-shed of the him of his wounds.

If you criticize the colonialism that drives populations to despair, M. Mannoni will tell you that all, the ones responsible *are not the colonized* Madagascans. Damn it all, they too are expected of them everything one expects of them.

If you think the treatment applied to them was a trifle rough, M. Mannoni, who has a sense of humor, will prove to you that the famous brutality has been very greatly exaggerated, that it is all imaginary tortures applied to them. As for the French government, it is moderate, since it was content to arrest them when it should have *sacrificed* them, if it had the laws of a healthy psychology.

I am not exaggerating. It is M. Mannoni.

Treading very classical paths, these Mannoni turn their saints into martyrs, their saviors into scoundrels.

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If you point out to M. Mannoni that the Madagascans have
 nevertheless revolted several times since the French occupation and
 again recently in 1947, M. Mannoni, faithful to his premises, will
 explain to you that that is purely neurotic behavior, a collective
 madness, a running amok; that, moreover, in this case it was not a
 question of the Madagascans' setting out to conquer real objectives
 but an "imaginary security," which obviously implies that the
 oppression of which they complain is an imaginary oppression. So
 clearly, so insanely imaginary, that one might even speak of
 monstrous ingratitude, according to the classic example of the
 Fijian who burns the drying-shed of the captain who has cured
 him of his wounds.

If you criticize the colonialism that drives the most peaceable
 populations to despair, M. Mannoni will explain to you that after
 all, the ones responsible *are not the colonialist whites* but the colo-
 nized Madagascans. Damn it all, they took the whites for gods and
 expected of them everything one expects of the divinity!

If you think the treatment applied to the Madagascan neurosis
 was a trifle rough, M. Mannoni, who has an answer for everything,
 will prove to you that the famous brutalities people talk about have
 been very greatly exaggerated, that it is all neurotic fabrication, that
 the tortures were imaginary tortures applied by "imaginary execu-
 tioners." As for the French government, it showed itself singularly
 moderate, since it was content to arrest the Madagascan deputies,
 when it should have *sacrificed* them, if it had wanted to respect the
 laws of a healthy psychology.

I am not exaggerating. It is M. Mannoni speaking:

Treading very classical paths, these Madagascans transformed
 their saints into martyrs, their saviors into scapegoats; they wanted to

wash their imaginary sins in the blood of their own gods. They were prepared, even at this price, or rather *only at this price*, to reverse their attitude once more. One feature of this dependent psychology would seem to be that, since no one can serve two masters, one of the two should be *sacrificed* to the other. The most agitated of the colonialists in Tananarive had a confused understanding of the essence of this psychology of sacrifice, and they demanded their victims. They besieged the High Commissioner's office, assuring him that if they were granted the blood of a few innocents, "everyone would be satisfied." This attitude, disgraceful from a human point of view, was *based on what was, on the whole, a fairly accurate perception of the emotional disturbances that the population of the high plateaux was going through.*

Obviously, it is only a step from this to absolving the bloodthirsty colonialists. M. Mannoni's "psychology" is as "disinterested," as "free," as M. Gourou's geography or the Rev. Tempels' missionary theology!

And the striking thing they all have in common is the persistent bourgeois attempt to reduce the most human problems to comfortable, hollow notions: the *idea* of the dependency complex in Mannoni, the ontological *idea* in the Rev. Tempels, the *idea* of "tropicality" in Gourou. What has become of the Banque d'Indochine in all that? And the Banque de Madagascar? And the bullwhip? And the taxes? And the handful of rice to the Madagascan or the *nhaqué*?¹⁰ And the martyrs? And the innocent people murdered? And the blood-stained money piling up in your coffers, gentlemen? They have evaporated! Disappeared, intermingled, become unrecognizable in the realm of pale ratiocinations.

But there is one unfortunate thing for these gentlemen. It is that their bourgeois masters are less and less responsive to a tricky argument and are condemned increasingly to turn away from them and applaud others who are less subtle and more brutal. That is

precisely what gives M. Yves Florenne a chance neatly arranged on the tray of the newspaper: offers of service. No possible surprises. Compromised proven efficacy, fully tested with conclusive form of racism, a French racism still not very promising. Listen to the man himself:

"Our reader" (a teacher who has had the irascible M. Florenne), "... contemplative girls, her pupils, has a *sense of pride at the feeling measure of integration with our French family.* ... be the same if she saw, in reverse, France by a black family (or the yellow or red, it makes no difference, say, becoming diluted, disappearing?"

It is clear that for M. Yves Florenne it is biology and the foundations of the nation are biological genius, are made of a thousand-year-old equilibrium, same time vigorous and delicate, and ... imbalances of this equilibrium coincide with dangerous infusion of foreign blood which over the last thirty years."

In short, cross-breeding—that is the essence of crises! No more economic crises! All that is of course, humanism loses none of its prestige (in the world), but let us understand each other:

"It is not by losing itself in the human world and its spirit, that France will be universal, it is by that. That is what the French bourgeoisie has conceived of since the defeat of Hitler! And it is precisely in that defeat that the argument lies: to be condemned, returning to its original vice, to chew over Hitler's vomit.

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precisely what gives M. Yves Florenne a chance. And indeed, here,
 neatly arranged on the tray of the newspaper *Le Monde*, are his little
 offers of service. No possible surprises. Completely guaranteed, with
 proven efficacy, fully tested with conclusive results, here we have a
 form of racism, a French racism still not very sturdy, it is true, but
 promising. Listen to the man himself:

"Our reader" (a teacher who has had the audacity to contradict
 the irascible M. Florenne), "... contemplating two young half-breed
 girls, her pupils, has *a sense of pride at the feeling that there is a growing*
measure of integration with our French family. ... Would her response
 be the same if she saw, in reverse, France being integrated into the
 black family (or the yellow or red, it makes no difference), that is to
 say, becoming diluted, disappearing?"

It is clear that for M. Yves Florenne it is blood that makes France,
 and the foundations of the nation are biological: "Its people, its
 genius, are made of a thousand-year-old equilibrium that is at the
 same time vigorous and delicate, and . . . certain alarming distur-
 bances of this equilibrium coincide with the massive and often
 dangerous infusion of foreign blood which it has had to undergo
 over the last thirty years."

In short, cross-breeding—that is the enemy. No more social
 crises! No more economic crises! All that is left are racial crises! Of
 course, humanism loses none of its prestige (we are in the Western
 world), but let us understand each other:

"It is not by losing itself in the human universe, with its blood
 and its spirit, that France will be universal, it is by remaining itself."
 That is what the French bourgeoisie has come to, five years after the
 defeat of Hitler! And it is precisely in that that its historic punish-
 ment lies: to be condemned, returning to it as though driven by a
 vice, to chew over Hitler's vomit.

Because after all, M. Yves Florenne was still fussing over peasant novels, "dramas of the land," and stories of the evil eye when, with a far more evil eye than the rustic hero of some tale of witchcraft, Hitler was announcing: "The supreme goal of the People-State is to preserve the original elements of the race which, by spreading culture, create the beauty and dignity of a superior humanity."

M. Yves Florenne is aware of this direct descent.

And he is far from being embarrassed by it.

Fine. That's his right.

As it is not our right to be indignant about it.

Because, after all, we must resign ourselves to the inevitable and say to ourselves, once and for all, that the bourgeoisie is condemned to become every day more snarling, more openly ferocious, more shameless, more summarily barbarous; that it is an implacable law that every decadent class finds itself turned into a receptacle into which there flow all the dirty waters of history; that it is a universal law that before it disappears, every class must first disgrace itself completely, on all fronts, and that it is with their heads buried in the dunghill that dying societies utter their swan songs.

The dossier is indeed overwhelming.

A beast that by the elementary exercise and sows death—you remember that history of this fierce archetype that capitalist society has the best minds and consciences.

Since then the animal has become and hide is no longer glossy, but the ferocity has with sadism. It is easy to blame it on Hitler. and the others. On the SS.

But what about this: "Everything in the newspaper, the wall, the countenance Baudelaire said that, before Hitler was Which proves that the evil has a deep And Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautr

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The dossier is indeed overwhelming.

A beast that by the elementary exercise of its vitality spills blood
and sows death—you remember that historically it was in the form
of this fierce archetype that capitalist society first revealed itself to
the best minds and consciences.

Since then the animal has become anemic, it is losing its hair, its
hide is no longer glossy, but the ferocity has remained, barely mixed
with sadism. It is easy to blame it on Hitler. On Rosenberg. On Jünger
and the others. On the SS.

But what about this: "Everything in this world reeks of crime:
the newspaper, the wall, the countenance of man."

Baudelaire said that, before Hitler was born!

Which proves that the evil has a deeper source.

And Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautréamont!¹¹

In this connection, it is high time to dissipate the atmosphere of scandal that has been created around the *Chants de Maldoror*.

Monstrosity? Literary meteorite? Delirium of a sick imagination? Come, now! How convenient it is!

The truth is that Lautréamont had only to look the iron man forged by capitalist society squarely in the eye to perceive the *monster*, the everyday monster, his hero.

No one denies the veracity of Balzac.

But wait a moment: take Vautrin, let him be just back from the tropics, give him the wings of the archangel and the shivers of malaria, let him be accompanied through the streets of Paris by an escort of Uruguayan vampires and carnivorous ants, and you will have Maldoror.¹²

The setting is changed, but it is the same world, the same man, hard, inflexible, unscrupulous, fond, if ever a man was, of "the flesh of other men."

To digress for a moment within my digression, I believe that the day will come when, with all the elements gathered together, all the sources analyzed, all the circumstances of the work elucidated, it will be possible to give the *Chants de Maldoror* a materialistic and historical interpretation which will bring to light an altogether unrecognized aspect of this frenzied epic, its implacable denunciation of a very particular form of society, as it could not escape the sharpest eyes around the year 1865.

Before that, of course, we will have had to clear away the occultist and metaphysical commentaries that obscure the path; to re-establish the importance of certain neglected stanzas—for example, that strangest passage of all, the one concerning the mine of lice, in which we will consent to see nothing more or less than the denunciation of the evil power of gold and the hoarding up of money; to restore

to its true place the admirable episode of the to find in it very simply what is there, to wi picture of a society in which the privileg refuse to move closer together so as to make And—be it said in passing—who welcome callously rejected? The people! Represente Baudelaire's ragpicker:

Paying no heed to the spies of the o
He pours his heart out in stupendor
He takes great oaths and dictates su
Casts down the wicked, aids the vic

Then it will be understood, will it not Lautréamont has made *the enemy*, the cannibal "Creator," the sadist perched on "a throne of ment and gold," the hypocrite, the debaucher "the bread of others" and who from time to time "drunk as a bedbug that has swallowed three the night," it will be understood that it is not one must look for that creator, but that we find him in Desfossés's business directory and an executive board!

But let that be.

The moralists can do nothing about it. Whether one likes it or not, the bourgeoisie to take responsibility for all the barbarism of the Middle Ages and the Inquisition, warn to the *raison d'Etat*, racism and slavery, in which it protested in unforgettable terms attacking class, it was the incarnation of h

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 to find in it very simply what is there, to wit, the scarcely allegorical
 picture of a society in which the privileged, comfortably seated,
 refuse to move closer together so as to make room for the new arrival.
 And—be it said in passing—who welcomes the child who has been
 callously rejected? The people! Represented here by the ragpicker.
 Baudelaire's ragpicker:

Paying no heed to the spies of the cops, his thralls,
 He pours his heart out in stupendous schemes.
 He takes great oaths and dictates sublime laws,
 Casts down the wicked, aids the victims' cause.¹³

Then it will be understood, will it not, that the enemy whom
 Lautréamont has made *the enemy*, the cannibalistic, brain-devouring
 "Creator," the sadist perched on "a throne made of human excre-
 ment and gold," the hypocrite, the debauchee, the idler who "eats
 the bread of others" and who from time to time is found dead drunk,
 "drunk as a bedbug that has swallowed three barrels of blood during
 the night," it will be understood that it is not beyond the clouds that
 one must look for that creator, but that we are more likely to find
 him in Desfossés's business directory and on some comfortable
 executive board!

But let that be.

The moralists can do nothing about it.

Whether one likes it or not, the bourgeoisie, as a class, is condemned
 to take responsibility for all the barbarism of history, the tortures of
 the Middle Ages and the Inquisition, warmongering and the appeal
 to the *raison d'Etat*, racism and slavery, in short everything against
 which it protested in unforgettable terms at the time when, as the
 attacking class, it was the incarnation of human progress.

The moralists can do nothing about it. There is a law of *progressive dehumanization* in accordance with which henceforth on the agenda of the bourgeoisie there is—there can be—nothing but violence, corruption, and barbarism.

I almost forgot hatred, lying, conceit.

I almost forgot M. Roger Caillois.¹⁴

Well then: M. Caillois, who from time immemorial has been given the mission to teach a lax and slipshod age rigorous thought and dignified style, M. Caillois, therefore, has just been moved to mighty wrath.

Why?

Because of the great betrayal of Western ethnography which, with a deplorable deterioration of its sense of responsibility, has been using all its ingenuity of late to cast doubt upon the overall superiority of Western civilization over the exotic civilizations.

Now at last M. Caillois takes the field.

Europe has this capacity for raising up heroic saviors at the most critical moments.

It is unpardonable on our part not to remember M. Massis, who, around 1927, embarked on a crusade for the defense of the West.

We want to make sure that a better fate is in store for M. Caillois, who, in order to defend the same sacred cause, transforms his pen into a good Toledo dagger.

What did M. Massis say? He deplored the fact that “the destiny of Western civilization, and indeed the destiny of man,” were now threatened; that an attempt was being made on all sides “to appeal to our anxieties, to challenge the claims made for our culture, to call into question the most essential part of what we possess,” and he swore to make war upon these “disastrous prophets.”

M. Caillois identifies the enemy no differently. It is those “European intellectuals” who for the last fifty years, “because of

exceptionally sharp disappointment and lessly “repudiated the various ideals of the so doing maintain, “especially in Europe,

It is this malaise, this anxiety, which means to put to an end.¹⁵

And indeed, no personage since the Enlightenment has ever surveyed history with a conscience clouded with doubt.

His doctrine? It has the virtue of simplicity.

That the West invented science. That to think; that at the borders of the Western shadowy realm of primitive thinking, which of participation, incapable of logic, is the very

At this point one gives a start. One remembers a famous law of participation invented by Lévy-Bruhl himself; that in the evening to the world that he had been wrong in “characteristic, that was peculiar to the primitive was concerned”; that, on the contrary, he that “these minds do not differ from our view of logic. . . . Therefore, [that they] contradiction any more than we can. . . . That as we do, by a kind of mental reflex impossible.”¹⁶

A waste of time! M. Caillois considers and void. For M. Caillois, the true Lévy-Bruhl who says that primitive man

Of course, there remain a few small facts. To wit, the invention of arithmetic and geometry. To wit, the discovery of astronomy by the

to nothing about it. There is a law of
in accordance with which henceforth on
oisie there is—there can be—nothing but
l barbarism.

l, lying, conceit.

ger Caillois.¹⁴

, who from time immemorial has been given
d slipshod age rigorous thought and dignified
re, has just been moved to mighty wrath.

betrayal of Western ethnography which,
ation of its sense of responsibility, has been
late to cast doubt upon the overall supe-
ation over the exotic civilizations.

is takes the field.

ity for raising up heroic saviors at the most

our part not to remember M. Massis, who,
on a crusade for the defense of the West.
: that a better fate is in store for M. Caillois,
the same sacred cause, transforms his pen
er.

say? He deplored the fact that "the destiny
and indeed the destiny of man," were now
pt was being made on all sides "to appeal
nge the claims made for our culture, to call
essential part of what we possess," and he
these "disastrous prophets."

is the enemy no differently. It is those
who for the last fifty years, "because of

exceptionally sharp disappointment and bitterness," have relent-
lessly "repudiated the various ideals of their culture," and who by
so doing maintain, "especially in Europe, a tenacious malaise."

It is this malaise, this anxiety, which M. Caillois, for his part,
means to put to an end.¹⁵

And indeed, no personage since the Englishman of the Victorian
age has ever surveyed history with a conscience more serene and less
clouded with doubt.

His doctrine? It has the virtue of simplicity.

That the West invented science. That the West alone knows how
to think; that at the borders of the Western world there begins the
shadowy realm of primitive thinking, which, dominated by the notion
of participation, incapable of logic, is the very model of faulty thinking.

At this point one gives a start. One reminds M. Caillois that the
famous law of participation invented by Lévy-Bruhl was repudiated
by Lévy-Bruhl himself; that in the evening of his life he proclaimed
to the world that he had been wrong in "trying to define a charac-
teristic, that was peculiar to the primitive mentality so far as logic
was concerned"; that, on the contrary, he had become convinced
that "these minds do not differ from ours at all from the point of
view of logic. . . . Therefore, [that they] cannot tolerate a formal
contradiction any more than we can. . . . Therefore, [that they] reject
as we do, by a kind of mental reflex, that which is logically
impossible."¹⁶

A waste of time! M. Caillois considers the rectification to be null
and void. For M. Caillois, the true Lévy-Bruhl can only be the
Lévy-Bruhl who says that primitive man talks raving nonsense.

Of course, there remain a few small facts that resist this doctrine.
To wit, the invention of arithmetic and geometry by the Egyptians.
To wit, the discovery of astronomy by the Assyrians. To wit, the

birth of chemistry among the Arabs. To wit, the appearance of rationalism in Islam at a time when Western thought had a furiously pre-logical cast to it. But M. Caillois soon puts these impertinent details in their place, since it is a strict principle that "a discovery which does not fit into a whole" is, precisely, only a detail, that is to say, a negligible nothing.

As you can imagine, once off to such a good start, M. Caillois doesn't stop half way.

Having annexed science, he's going to claim ethics too.

Just think of it! M. Caillois has never eaten anyone! M. Caillois has never dreamed of finishing off an invalid! It has never occurred to M. Caillois to shorten the days of his aged parents! Well, there you have it, the superiority of the West: "That discipline of life which tries to ensure that the human person is sufficiently respected so that it is not considered normal to eliminate the old and the infirm."

The conclusion is inescapable: compared to the cannibals, the dismemberers, and other lesser breeds, Europe and the West are the incarnation of respect for human dignity.

But let us move on, and quickly, lest our thoughts wander to Algiers, Morocco, and other places where, as I write these very words, so many valiant sons of the West, in the semi-darkness of dungeons, are lavishing upon their inferior African brothers, with such tireless attention, those authentic marks of respect for human dignity which are called, in technical terms, "electricity," "the bathtub," and "the bottleneck."

Let us press on: M. Caillois has not yet reached the end of his list of outstanding achievements. After scientific superiority and moral superiority comes religious superiority.

Here, M. Caillois is careful not to let himself be deceived by the empty prestige of the Orient. Asia, mother of gods, perhaps. Anyway,

Europe, mistress of rites. And see how w hand—outside of Europe—ceremonies o their "ludicrous masquerade, their coll alcoholism, their crude exploitation of a other hand—in Europe—those authentic and was already celebrating in his *Gén* dogmas and mysteries of the Catholic symbolism of its sculptors and the glory

Lastly, a final cause for satisfaction:

Gobineau said: "The only history is w observes: "The only ethnography is white. the ethnography of the others, not t ethnography of the West.

A cause for the greatest jubilation, is

And the museums of which M. Caill minute does it cross his mind that, all t have been better not to have needed then done better to tolerate the non-Europe leaving them alive, dynamic and prospera lated; that it would have been better to l themselves than to present for our admi dead and scattered parts; that anyway, nothing; that it means nothing, that it ca self-satisfaction rots the eyes, when a s withers the heart, when racism, admitted that it means nothing if its only purpos vanity; that after all, the honest contemp fought Islam but respected it, had a bette do our contemporaries (even if they ha graphic literature), who despise it.

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 ent. Asia, mother of gods, perhaps. Anyway,

Europe, mistress of rites. And see how wonderful it is: on the one
 hand—outside of Europe—ceremonies of the voodoo type, with all
 their "ludicrous masquerade, their collective frenzy, their wild
 alcoholism, their crude exploitation of a naïve fervor," and on the
 other hand—in Europe—those authentic values which Chateaubri-
 and was already celebrating in his *Génie du christianisme*: "The
 dogmas and mysteries of the Catholic religion, its liturgy, the
 symbolism of its sculptors and the glory of the plainsong."

Lastly, a final cause for satisfaction:

Gobineau said: "The only history is white." M. Caillois, in turn,
 observes: "The only ethnography is white." It is the West that studies
 the ethnography of the others, not the others who study the
 ethnography of the West.

A cause for the greatest jubilation, is it not?

And the museums of which M. Caillois is so proud, not for one
 minute does it cross his mind that, all things considered, it would
 have been better not to have needed them; that Europe would have
 done better to tolerate the non-European civilizations at its side,
 leaving them alive, dynamic and prosperous, whole and not muti-
 lated; that it would have been better to let them develop and fulfill
 themselves than to present for our admiration, duly labelled, their
 dead and scattered parts; that anyway, the museum by itself is
 nothing; that it means nothing, that it can say nothing, when smug
 self-satisfaction rots the eyes, when a secret contempt for others
 withers the heart, when racism, admitted or not, dries up sympathy;
 that it means nothing if its only purpose is to feed the delights of
 vanity; that after all, the honest contemporary of Saint Louis, who
 fought Islam but respected it, had a better chance of *knowing* it than
 do our contemporaries (even if they have a smattering of ethno-
 graphic literature), who despise it.

No, in the scales of knowledge all the museums in the world will never weigh so much as one spark of human sympathy.

And what is the conclusion of all that?

Let us be fair; M. Caillois is moderate.

Having established the superiority of the West in all fields, and having thus re-established a wholesome and extremely valuable hierarchy, M. Caillois gives immediate proof of this superiority by concluding that no one should be exterminated. With him the Negroes are sure that they will not be lynched; the Jews, that they will not feed new bonfires. There is just one thing: it is important for it to be clearly understood that the Negroes, Jews, and Australians owe this tolerance not to their respective merits, but to the magnanimity of M. Caillois; not to the dictates of science, which can offer only ephemeral truths, but to a decree of M. Caillois's conscience, which can only be absolute; that this tolerance has no conditions, no guarantees, unless it be M. Caillois's sense of his duty to himself.

Perhaps science will one day declare that the backward cultures and retarded peoples which constitute so many dead weights and impedimenta on humanity's path must be cleared away, but we are assured that at the critical moment the conscience of M. Caillois, transformed on the spot from a clear conscience into a noble conscience, will arrest the executioner's arm and pronounce the *salvus sis*.

To which we are indebted for the following juicy note:

For me, the question of the equality of races, peoples, or cultures has meaning only if we are talking about an equality in law, not an equality in fact. In the same way, men who are blind, maimed, sick, feeble-minded, ignorant, or poor (one could hardly be nicer to the non-Occidentals) are not respectively equal, in the material sense of

the word, to those who are strong, clear-sighted, intelligent, cultured, or rich. The latter have greater rights; by the way, do not give them more rights but cancel them. Similarly, whether for biological or historical reasons, the present differences in level, power, and value between cultures. These differences entail an inequality of rights which may justify an inequality of rights in favor of the weaker peoples, as racism would have it. Rather, the additional tasks and an increased responsibility

Additional tasks? What are they, if not the tasks of the weak? Increased responsibility? What is it, if not the responsibility to the world?

And Caillois-Atlas charitably plants his foot on the neck of the weak and once again raises to his sturdy shoulder the burden of man's burden.

The reader must excuse me for having talked at such length. It is not that I overestimate the intrinsic value of his "philosophy"—the ability to judge how seriously one should take a claim to be dedicated to rigorous logic, since prejudice and wallows so voluptuously in cliché worth special attention because they are significant.

Significant of what?

Of the state of mind of thousands upon thousands of men, or, to be very precise, of the state of mind of the bourgeoisie.

Significant of what?

Of this: that at the very time when it is said that the word, the West has never been further from humanism—a humanism made to the measure

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by the way, do not give them more rights but only more duties. . . .
Similarly, whether for biological or historical reasons, there exist at
present differences in level, power, and value among the various
cultures. These differences entail an inequality in fact. They in no
way justify an inequality of rights in favor of the so-called superior
peoples, as racism would have it. Rather, they confer upon them
additional tasks and an increased responsibility.

Additional tasks? What are they, if not the tasks of ruling the world?

Increased responsibility? What is it, if not responsibility for
the world?

And Caillois-Atlas charitably plants his feet firmly in the dust
and once again raises to his sturdy shoulders the inevitable white
man's burden.

The reader must excuse me for having talked about M. Caillois
at such length. It is not that I overestimate to any degree whatever
the intrinsic value of his "philosophy"—the reader will have been
able to judge how seriously one should take a thinker who, while
claiming to be dedicated to rigorous logic, sacrifices so willingly to
prejudice and wallows so voluptuously in clichés. But his views are
worth special attention because they are significant.

Significant of what?

Of the state of mind of thousands upon thousands of Europeans
or, to be very precise, of the state of mind of the Western petty
bourgeoisie.

Significant of what?

Of this: that at the very time when it most often mouths the
word, the West has never been further from being able to live a true
humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world.

One of the values invented by the bourgeoisie in former times and launched throughout the world was *man*—and we have seen what has become of that. The other was the nation.

It is a fact: the *nation* is a bourgeois phenomenon.

Exactly; but if I turn my attention from *man* to *nations*, I note that here too there is great danger; that colonial enterprise is to the modern world what Roman imperialism was to the ancient world: the prelude to Disaster and the forerunner of Catastrophe. Come, now! The Indians massacred, the Moslem world drained of itself, the Chinese world defiled and perverted for a good century; the Negro world disqualified; mighty voices stilled forever; homes scattered to the wind; all this wreckage, all this waste, humanity reduced to a monologue, and you think all that does not have its price? The truth is that this policy *cannot but bring about the ruin of*

Europe itself, and that Europe, if it is not the void it has created around itself.

They thought they were only slaughtering or South Sea Islanders, or Africans. They laid one after another, the ramparts behind which they could have developed freely.

I know how fallacious historical parallels are. I am about to draw. Nevertheless, permit me to quote Edgar Quinet for the not inconsiderable evidence it contains and which is worth pondering.

Here it is:

People ask why barbarism emerged all at once. I believe I know the answer. It is surprising that it is so obvious to everyone. The system of ancient civilization, a certain number of nationalities, of countries, seemed to be enemies, or were even ignorant of one another, supported, and guarded one another. When the Roman Empire undertook to conquer and destroy them, the dazzled sophists thought they saw at the end of the triumphal march in Rome. They talked about the dream; it was only a dream. It happened that these nations, the bulwarks protecting Rome itself. . . . Thus was the triumphal march toward a single civilization, the other, Carthage, Egypt, Greece, Judea, Persia, and Transalpine Gaul, it came to pass that it broke down the dikes that protected it against the human ocean. They perish. The magnanimous Caesar, by crushing the way for the Teutons. So many societies, so many cities, rights, homes annihilated. Rome, and in those places which were not in the path of barbarism was born spontaneously. The vanquished, Bagaudes. Thus the violent downfall, the

Europe itself, and that Europe, if it is not careful, will perish from the void it has created around itself.

They thought they were only slaughtering Indians, or Hindus, or South Sea Islanders, or Africans. They have in fact overthrown, one after another, the ramparts behind which European civilization could have developed freely.

I know how fallacious historical parallels are, particularly the one I am about to draw. Nevertheless, permit me to quote a page from Edgar Quinet for the not inconsiderable element of truth which it contains and which is worth pondering.

Here it is:

People ask why barbarism emerged all at once in ancient civilization. I believe I know the answer. It is surprising that so simple a cause is not obvious to everyone. The system of ancient civilization was composed of a certain number of nationalities, of countries which, although they seemed to be enemies, or were even ignorant of each other, protected, supported, and guarded one another. When the expanding Roman Empire undertook to conquer and destroy these groups of nations, the dazzled sophists thought they saw at the end of this road humanity triumphant in Rome. They talked about the unity of the human spirit; it was only a dream. It happened that these nationalities were so many bulwarks protecting Rome itself. . . . Thus when Rome, in its alleged triumphal march toward a single civilization, had destroyed, one after the other, Carthage, Egypt, Greece, Judea, Persia, Dacia, and Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, it came to pass that it had itself swallowed up the dikes that protected it against the human ocean under which it was to perish. The magnanimous Caesar, by crushing the two Gauls, only paved the way for the Teutons. So many societies, so many languages extinguished, so many cities, rights, homes annihilated, created a void around Rome, and in those places which were not invaded by the barbarians, barbarism was born spontaneously. The vanquished Gauls changed into Bagaudes. Thus the violent downfall, the progressive extirpation of

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individual cities, caused the crumbling of ancient civilization. That social edifice was supported by the various nationalities as by so many different columns of marble or porphyry.

When, to the applause of the wise men of the time, each of these living columns had been demolished, the edifice came crashing down; and the wise men of our day are still trying to understand how such mighty ruins could have been made in a moment's time.

And now I ask: what else has bourgeois Europe done? It has undermined civilizations, destroyed countries, ruined nationalities, extirpated "the root of diversity." No more dikes, no more bulwarks. The hour of the barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian. The American hour. Violence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, conformism, stupidity, vulgarity, disorder.

In 1913, Ambassador Page wrote to Wilson:

"The future of the world belongs to us. . . . Now what are we going to do with the leadership of the world presently when it clearly falls into our hands?"

And in 1914: "What are we going to do with this England and this Empire, presently, when economic forces unmistakably put the leadership of the race in our hands?"

This Empire . . . And the others . . .

And indeed, do you not see how ostentatiously these gentlemen have just unfurled the banner of anti-colonialism?

"*Aid to the disinherited countries*," says Truman. "The time of the old colonialism has passed." That's also Truman.

Which means that American high finance considers that the time has come to raid every colony in the world. So, dear friends, here you have to be careful!

I know that some of you, disgusted with Europe, with all that hideous mess which you did not witness by choice, are turning—oh!

in no great numbers—toward America as upon that country as a possible liberator.

"What a godsend!" you think.

"The bulldozers! The massive investment. The ports!"

"But American racism!"

"So what? European racism in the colonies. And there we are, ready to run the game. So, once again, be careful!"

American domination—the only domination that never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers.

And since you are talking about factories, do not see the tremendous factory hysteria in the heart of our forests or deep in the production of lackeys; do you not see the mechanization of man; the gigantic ruins undamaged, undefiled that, despoiled as it has still managed to preserve; the machine, the machine for crushing, for grinding.

So that the danger is immense.

So that unless, in Africa, in the South (that is, at the gates of South Africa), in the gates of America), Western Europe initiates a policy of *nationalities*, a new policy for peoples and cultures—nay, more—undoing cultures or raises up new ones, undoing countries and civilizations (this being account the admirable resistance of the symbolized at present by Vietnam, but the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain)

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applause of the wise men of the time, each of these edifices, once demolished, the edifice came crashing down; of our day are still trying to understand how such edifices have been made in a moment's time.

what else has bourgeois Europe done? It has destroyed nations, destroyed countries, ruined nationalities, destroyed diversity." No more dikes, no more bulwarks. The barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian. The violence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, vulgarity, disorder.

Senator Page wrote to Wilson:

The world belongs to us. . . . Now what are we doing for the leadership of the world presently when it clearly belongs to us?"

What are we going to do with this England and France, when economic forces unmistakably put the world in our hands?"

. And the others . . .

do you not see how ostentatiously these gentlemen carry the banner of anti-colonialism?

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in no great numbers—toward America and getting used to looking upon that country as a possible liberator.

"What a godsend!" you think.

"The bulldozers! The massive investments of capital! The roads! The ports!"

"But American racism!"

"So what? European racism in the colonies has inured us to it!"

And there we are, ready to run the great Yankee risk.

So, once again, be careful!

American domination—the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred.

And since you are talking about factories and industries, do you not see the tremendous factory hysterically spitting out its cinders in the heart of our forests or deep in the bush, the factory for the production of lackeys; do you not see the prodigious mechanization, the mechanization of man; the gigantic rape of everything intimate, undamaged, undefiled that, despoiled as we are, our human spirit has still managed to preserve; the machine, yes, have you never seen it, the machine for crushing, for grinding, for degrading peoples?

So that the danger is immense.

So that unless, in Africa, in the South Sea Islands, in Madagascar (that is, at the gates of South Africa), in the West Indies (that is, at the gates of America), Western Europe undertakes on its own initiative a policy of *nationalities*, a new policy founded on respect for peoples and cultures—nay, more—unless Europe galvanizes the dying cultures or raises up new ones, unless it becomes the awakener of countries and civilizations (this being said without taking into account the admirable resistance of the colonial peoples primarily symbolized at present by Vietnam, but also by the Africa of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain), Europe will have deprived

itself of its last *chance* and, with its own hands, drawn up over itself the pall of mortal darkness.

Which comes down to saying that the salvation of Europe is not a matter of a revolution in methods. It is a matter of the Revolution—the one which, until such time as there is a classless society, will substitute for the narrow tyranny of a dehumanized bourgeoisie the preponderance of the only class that still has a universal mission, because it suffers in its flesh from all the wrongs of history, from all the universal wrongs: the proletariat.

AN INTERVIEW WITH AIMÉ

Conducted by René Depestre

Comment on the main
generalization of the book
"The Revolution is a process
that is not a single event
but a continuous struggle
of the people against the
oppressive system."
The book is a very good
analysis of the situation
in the Caribbean and the
world.