



The Adversary's Reasons, Albert Camus

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Before coming, if not to the solutions of the Algerian problem, then at least to the method that might make them possible, I must first say a word to Arab militants. I must ask them, too, not to simplify things and not to make Algeria's future impossible.

I know that, from my side of the divide, those militants are used to hearing more encouraging words. If I were an Algerian fighter and received assurances of unconditional support from the French side, I would of course eagerly welcome that support.

But being French by birth and since 1940 by deliberate choice, I will remain French until others are willing to cease being German or Russian. I will therefore speak in accordance with what I am. My only hope is that any Arab militants who read me will at least consider the arguments of a person who for 20 years, and long before their cause was discovered by Paris, defended their right to justice, and did so on Algerian soil, virtually alone.

I urge them first to distinguish carefully between those who support the Algerian cause because they want to see their own country surrender on this as on other fronts and those who demand reparations for the Algerian people because they want France to demonstrate that grandeur is not incompatible with justice. Of the friendship of the former, I will say only that it has already demonstrated its inconstancy. The others, who are and have been more reliable, surely deserve not to

have their difficult task rendered impossible by mass bloodshed or blind intransigence.

The massacres of civilians must first be condemned by the Arab movement, just as we French liberals condemn the massacres of the repression. Otherwise, the relative notions of innocence and guilt that guide our action would disappear in the confusion of generalized criminality, which obeys the logic of total war.

Since August 20, the only innocents in Algeria are the dead, whatever camp they may come from. Leaving them aside, what remains is two types of guilt, one of which has existed for a very long time, the other of which is of more recent vintage.

To be sure, this is the law of history.

When the oppressed take up arms in the name of justice, they take a step toward injustice. But how far they go in that direction varies, and although the law of history is what it is, there is also a law of the intellect, which dictates that although one must never cease to demand justice for the oppressed, there are limits beyond which one cannot approve of injustice committed in their name. The massacre of civilians, in addition to reviving the forces of oppression, exceeded those limits, and it is urgent that everyone recognize this clearly. On this point, I have a proposal to make concerning the future, and I will do so in a moment.

The question of intransigence remains. The farsighted militants of the North African movement, those who know that the Arab future depends on rapid access to the conditions of modern life for Muslim peoples, at times seem to have been outstripped by another movement, which is blind to the vast material needs of the ever-

increasing masses and dreams of a pan-Islamism that is more readily imagined in Cairo than in the face of historical reality.

This dream, which in itself is worthy of respect, has no immediate future, however. It is therefore dangerous. Whatever one thinks of technological civilization, it alone, for all its weaknesses, is capable of bringing a decent life to the underdeveloped countries of the world. Materially speaking, the salvation of the East will come not from the East but from the West, which will then itself draw nourishment from the civilization of the East. Tunisian workers saw this clearly and supported Bourguiba and the UGTT rather than Salah ben Youssef.

The French to whom I referred earlier cannot in any case support the wing of the Arab movement that is extremist in its actions and retrograde in its doctrine. They do not regard Egypt as qualified to speak of freedom and justice or Spain to preach democracy.

They are in favor of an Arab identity for Algeria, not an Egyptian identity. And they will not become champions of Nasser and his Stalin tanks or of Franco as a prophet of Islam and the dollar. In short, they cannot become enemies of their own convictions or their own country.

The Arab identity will be recognized by the French identity, but for that to happen it is necessary for France to exist. That is why we who are today demanding that the Arab identity be recognized also continue to defend the true identity of France, that of a people who in their vast majority, and alone among the great nations of the world, have the courage to recognize the reasons of their adversary, which is currently engaged in a struggle to the death with France.

This country, which it is repugnant to call racist because of the exploits of a minority, today offers the Arab people their best chance of a future, and it does so in spite of its errors, the price of which has in any case been far too many humiliations.

The End