

**A Black Paper on French  
Repression in Algeria\***

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Algerian National Movement wishes respectfully to address itself to a serious matter affecting a recent demarche by France involving the dignity of the United States of America, the freedom of the American press and French colonial repression in Algeria.

According to our information, subsequently confirmed in a report in the New York Times, the French Government, at the request of its Minister of Interior, has made representation to the United States Government, on the one hand, questioning the accuracy of the information at the disposal of the U.S. Government regarding Algeria; on the other hand, the French have protested reports by the American press on their repression campaign in Algeria, particularly during the month of August, resulting in the massacre of thousands of Algerian men, women and children.

Since the French demarche basically challenges the veracity of these reports, the Algerian National Movement deems it necessary to submit its views on the matter. In the Attached memorandum entitled "A Black Paper on the French Repression in Algeria", we have compiled evidence, factually borrowed from authentic French sources, which constitute a refutation of the French disavowal and which bring to the Government and people of the United States the full picture of the scope, cruelty and horror of the French colonial repression.

The Algerian National Movement, Mr. President, is not calling this matter to your kind attention in order to score a point in polemics with the French Minister of Interior. The cause and the struggle of the Algerian people is unchallengeable one; nor will the most cruellest repression affect their already proven determination to live as free men or die as martyrs.

In submitting this shocking record of inhumanity and crime against the Algerian civilian population, we trust in your repugnance to any act of injustice inflicted anywhere in the world, and in your undoubted concern that such barbarism should be the mark of an Ally associated with the United States through N.A.T.O. in this strategic area.

Although we are aware, Mr. President, that the United States delegation to the United Nations has chosen to side with the French version of its colonialism in Algeria, we nevertheless are confident that you will not divest yourself from the humanitarian aspect of this tragic issue. We are confident furthermore, that you will receive, with sympathy, this representation on behalf of a people who so gallantly fought against the common enemy under your historic wartime leadership then, and who look to your world moral leadership today.

Accordingly, Mr. President, the Algerian National Movement respectfully appeals for your personal intervention to express to the French Government the grave concern of the American people over these atrocities and to help bring to an end a repression which is assuming a genocide character

With my highest esteem, Messali Hadj, President of the Algerian National Movement

\* This document is submitted to the Hon. Dwight Eisenhower the President of the United States of America by Messali Hadj, leader of The Algerian National Movement from Angouleme, France, in September 20, 1955.

## Document

### **A Black Paper on French Repression in Algeria**

Paris, Aug. 25 – French diplomatic representations are expected to be made in Washington to line up United States support for France's North African policy.

The Minister of Interior, Maurice Bourges-Maunoury asked Premier Edgard Faure last night for such representations because he feels the United States is not getting an accurate picture of what is taking place in Algeria.

Officials at the ministry said today that they were incensed at what was reported to them to be American press emphasis on French repression. The officials asserted heatedly that the barbarism was all on the Moslem side. (*The New York Times*).

“Barbarism was all on the Moslem side”, asserted French officials who are “incensed” at the American press emphasis on the French repression! This is cynicism reminiscent of the sanctimonious indignation for the Nazi leaders when their crimes were exposed. It is a challenge the *Algerian National Movement* feels bound to take up.

French repression of the Algerian people is not only a fact but one of the darkest pages in colonial history.

In exposing this black record we not only set the record straight, but for the sake of American conscience we hope also to expose the perpetuation of this injustice by some Western Governments who support French colonialism even though the full facts of this repression have always been known to them.

Barbarism was and is on the side of France, a member of the United Nations and of the Atlantic Alliance, and we shall prove it with facts, facts often borrowed from French sources. For, unfortunately, to some powers, and even to some newspapers, a French official statement is “biblical truth”, while even adduced of a Nationalist movement is “propaganda”.

The charge of barbarism was made in connection with reports in the American press of the bloodbath of August 20-27, which resulted in the massacre of some ten thousands Algerians, including women, children and elderly persons; the French officially acknowledged only 2000-half of their contribution to the Korean war.

But even before their American colleagues did so, French Journalists put the “barbarism” stamp on their own country’s military and police. While the attacks of the nationalists were chiefly centred” on police posts, military barracks, poste office and railways stations”, (Le Figaro, August21), the French retaliatory action aimed only at the helpless population was openly reported: “yesterday morning nine villages have been systematically destroyed by our armed forces,” Hundreds of women, children and elderly persons died under the artillery fire amidst the ruins of their clay houses.

In *Le Monde* \_August 25 M. George Penchemier wrote:

“The details given Monday by Radio-Alger on the annihilation of ten villages had had the effect of inducing the men of other villages to escape to the mountains. The troops yesterday (Tuesday) found these villages sheltering only women, elderly persons and children.

I did not have the possibility of participation in all the operations but I can at least bear witness to what happened to the village of “carriers Romaines” located 5 kilometres from Philippeville.

Fifty elderly persons, women and children have been killed, but the men had escaped the night before. I do not know a spectacle more tragic, that I have ever witnessed after the departure of the commandos, walking between burned walls, greeted by the cries of chained dogs, the only survivors of the massacre”.

The cynicism of the Minister of Interior in requesting that representation be made to the U.S.Government against the American press is further seen in the fact that the protests against the barbaric repression originated first with the French themselves.

The Comité Directeur of the French Socialist Party issued a communiqué on August 29, in which it “condemns the repression whose wide dimensions and character have increased fear and hatred in the Constantine”. On August 31, a delegation of that party, called on Premier Edgard Faure; its leader, Mr. Guy mollet, informed the press that “we drew the attention of Mr. Edgard Faure to the situation in Algeria; we denounced the repression”.

French public opinion was incensed to be sure, not at the American press reports, but rather at the ruthlessness of French troops and militia against which even the pro-colonialist Algerian raised their voices. After meeting the French Prime Minister and minister of Interior, a delegation of “elected” Algerian Moslems headed by Mr. Bendjelloul, said in a communiqué September 3, which they “expressed deep emotion and indignation in the face of the recent massacres of Moslems, particularly in Philippeville, Ain-Abid...” and demanded “very energetically the immediate halting of that hateful repression.”

In its issue September 4, *Le monde* said:

“The events which followed the uprisings of August 20, notably in the Constantine region, have caused emotion among Moslem representatives of all factions.

Individual acts of reprisal, striking down innocents, have been brought to the attention of the Government.”

The August repression was not exceptional. It is the latest manifestation of a permanent policy, which goes back to the early days of the French conquest. Between 1830 and 1881 some 2,000,000 Algerians fall victims of a military repression which according to Marshall Bugeaud had for its single-minded objective the creation of “some kind of security for our citizens in that hostile land.” Thus the leading Paris Weekly, *L'Express* could write, July 2, 1955: “The witnesses all agree on one point: there is in the Constantine region a tension which one must go back to 1871 to find an equal climate.”

“In 1871 the Constantine rebellion found in Algeria 80,000 soldiers in the course of the year. The repression was as some irresponsible French mayors would wish it to be today-as it will soon become if this infernal cycle is not stopped in time.

“Today we have 125,000 soldiers in Algeria: as our troops land, the (Algerian) Maquis grow and the rebels organize themselves. Recently, in desperation, in the region of Philippeville, we resorted to air machine-gunning, typical procedure of blind repression since one cannot distinguish between innocents and guilty persons.

“if the rebellion were confined to the Constantine and the Aurès; if the borders could be absolutely sealed, if neither Morocco nor Tunisia would show solidarity with the (Algerian) agitation; if no aid were given by the (Algerian) population; in short if this chain of unrealistic hypotheses were realized, it might well be in fact that a spectacular repression, like the one of 1945, might lead to some years of calm. Ten or fifteen thousand dead might secure five or six years.

Even then it would be left to us to confront world public opinion and our own public opinion.”



Since this prophetic but ignored warning was given , the French have indeed, carried out in the Constantine, an 1871-like repression with the predicted outrage of “ten thousand dead”, with the predicted outrage of world and French public opinion.

Only the prediction that the “spectacular” repression might secure for the French some years of “calm” did not materialize; for the following week the rebels were back in action. On August 25, *Le Figaro* reported “51 rebels’ killed and 95 prisoners” during engagements in many areas in the Constantine.

*L’Express* referred to the spectacular repression “of the type of 1945”. The date is important, because it marks for the civilized world the defeat and disintegration of the philosophy of rule by force, hatred and genocide. For hundreds of millions this date of Allied victory hopefully meant the transition from colonial serfdom to the principles of the Atlantic charter and its lofty promises of self-determination.

On V.E day on May of that year the Algerian nationalists, considering it their victory too, staged a demonstration at Setif to celebrate Hitler’s defeat. Some of 175,000 Algerians had fought on the side of the Allies-their casualties, estimated at some 45,000 dead and 28.000 disabled, and represented proportionately higher sacrifice of life than any other Western allied nation.

The French colonial authorities, who themselves had been aligned with Vichy and had tried to resist the American landing in North Africa in 1942, sent troops and gendarmes to break up the demonstration. Two Boy Scouts fell under fire. In a moment of outrage the Algerians retaliated, killing 165, according to official French information.

Instead of bringing to justice those responsible for that bloodshed, the French used the event as a signal to restore France’s fallen military prestige.

Equipped with lend-lease arms, French Forces launched an air, sea and land attack against the whole of the Constantine Department. Although both British and U.S. military authorities declined to lend their Bombers to the French, the Union of South Africa obliged. French “militia” was mobilized overnight for what the governor of Constantine officially ordered to be: “la chasse à l’arabe” (hunting Arabs).

The Mediterranean edition of *Stars and Stripes* in June 1945, broke the news and reported 10,000 persons massacred. In 1946 French members of Parliament admitted that the “punitive” slaughter had caused the death of some 40,000 men, women and children. The newspaper, *La République Algérienne*, reported in addition the strafing or bombing of hundreds of homes; some sixty villages destroyed and 200,000 people arrested.

Complete details of that inglorious colonial adventure are registered in the minutes of the French parliament. In February 1946, the then U.S. Minister to Egypt relayed to Abdel Rahman Azzam, Secretary General of the Arab League, that State Department reports counted the dead at “much higher” than 40,000.

This genocide act went unnoticed by a western world rejoicing over Hitler’s defeat—even as Hitlerism was being surpassed by the French colonialists. Only French and Arab public opinion, directly affected, expressed indignation.

The silence of the Western powers encouraged the French to proceed with their historic determination to crush a people who after one hundred years still refuse to yield. Fate, ironically, was also on the colonial side—for since the bloodshed of 1945, the western powers closed their eyes to French colonial blunders in exchange for French support in the “cold war” against International Communism. The Western powers did not foresee

That by such compromise they would place themselves as a partner of internationalist communism and prepared the ground for

anti-Western or neutral Asia and Africa, and for the Indochina debacle.

Accordingly the French regime of permanent repression, continued in Algeria:

1. in 1947, the region of Borj Menail, abbo, Dellys and Mirabeau was the theatre of fast vandalism, pillage and destruction by French troops.
2. In 1948, the region of Haussonvilliere met the same fate.
3. In 1949, 600 houses were wiped out, 7000 persons expelled, women raped and elderly persons tortured, in Sidi Ali Bounab; 100 Algerians were wounded and one killed at Mascara by the French Legion.
4. In 1950 and 1951, several repressive expeditions were savagely launched against the population of the Aures.
5. In 1953 and in 1954, the Kabylie and Aures regions, now significantly the centers of the national rebellion, were subjected to similar treatment.

**THIS** is the past, and it is important because it helps to understand better the grim events of the last months. Starting from November when the Algerian Nationalist Movement decided again that no alternative but war was left, to up hold their rights to freedom and human dignity. We have in other documents dealt fully with the aspects of that war which in its seventh month has compelled the French to bring to Algeria some 10 fully equipped divisions(three of them equipped and trained by N.A.T.O.) to resist the challenge of the 3.000 armed forces of the Algerian Nationalist Movement.

Citing French newspapers such as *Le Monde* we have shown that not a single day passes without a series of engagements between the Algerian patriots and the French “Hessian” troops, without

economic sabotage of French farms and live stock which are the agriculture basis of colonial wealth. It is entrenched colonial wealth which alone prevents a just democratic and friendly settlement of the Algerian question.

We must emphasize that this is a war, and in accordance with the principles governing warfare developed in the Nuremberg trials, the Algerian Nationalist forces are directing their operations strictly against military objectives—barracks, police posts, or strategic buildings such as railway stations, post offices, bridges or colonial-feudal industrial and economic interests, and against Algerian informers or traitors.

On the other hand, French military forces are not confined to the Nationalist army. Infuriated by resistance they center their fire against a helpless population, while the police carry out a wave of terror, arbitrary arrests, illegal searches, corporal punishments, and starvation of prisoners, crimes for which top Nazi leaders were tried and condemned.

One week after the outbreak of the rebellion, inhuman warfare, including napalm bombs, was inaugurated. It was a colonialist newspaper, *Dernières Nouvelles*, published in Algiers, that disclosed in front-page five-line headlines, November 8, that:

“It is a wide offensive that is being prepared in the Aures. Dropped spectacular napalm showers by the Air Force.”

On the ground, the “offensive was carried out with Churchill tanks, anti-aircraft tanks,

Armoured cars, paratroopers, infantry; but the only party victimized was the helpless population. The late distinguished reporter, Andre Leveuf, wrote in *Le Monde*, November 16:

“the second phase of the offensive was the systematic occupation of the Aures, with encirclement movements, mopping up

operations, and making contact with the rebel bands...planes machine-gunned the ridges of the mountains where the presence of armed groups was signalled, and if some innocents had to suffer in their flesh, one must, alas! See in these isolated cases the consequences of modern warfare”.

The French troops were instructed that all living persons or standing walls in the village were “Algerian not French.” Thus *France –Soir* of Paris could report on November 10, that “a shell of a tank-destroyer hit the school of Yabous, near Fom-Toub, completely demolishing the building.”

Simultaneously with these operations the French authorities launched a massive police repression. As admitted by *Le Figaro*, January 17:

“The recent engagements in the Aures were costly in human lives for the meagre result obtained and to avenge their defeats by a handful of nationalists, the French troops turned against the helpless population.”

The then governor General, M. Mitterrand, had frankly warned in a statement reported in *Le Figaro*, November 30<sup>th</sup>, “we do not want to strike at the population of the Aures, but this population must understand that it must help us. We will crush the guilty ‘i.e. Algerians who do not actively help in the annihilation of their own people and defenders.” An ironic echo of the warning of the German Kommandatur issued to the population of Paris.

On November 23, *Le Monde* reported:

« The Population of the Aures have not complied with the order to evacuate...and the French authorities set into motion their plan of popular repression.”

M. Mitterrand said two missions fall on the French forces,” to carry on the war against the rebels and also, alas, execute a mission of repression.”

The French colony was armed and mobilized into militia units. *Le Monde* wrote “All the civilian (French) population has been armed”.

Thus began the infernal cycle of a multiple repression in which civilians were pitted against civilians with a cruelty, ruthlessness, and refinement reminiscent of the Middle Ages, and 19<sup>th</sup> Century colonialism.

The full expose of this campaign of repression would fill volume. It has been aired to some extent by the French Press with its peculiar candor where the French conscience is concerned. Some 12,000 Algerians were forcibly evacuated from the Aures in a maneuver that could add a Circle to Dante’s inferno.

In the *Alger Republicain*, a correspondent December 4, tells the story: “This is how the ‘refugees’, I saw at Toufana, Arris, Fom –Toub were forcibly expelled:

“The forces of repression made a massive entry in the village of Ichmoul; sometime later twenty houses were burning...

In the village of Zalatou, mines were put under the walls. After the explosion there was nothing left; ten houses were destroyed; twenty houses were wiped out in the same manner in the neighboring village.

But the people did not bend; and the expelled persons found shelter in other huts...then the armoured cars returned and the troops invaded the villages.

On December 1, 1954 *Alger Republicain* reported:

“Saturday nine planes machine-gunned the village of Taghit... Mme.Zaaf Essaouba, a 60 –year old woman, a 16-year old girl, Latrethe Khaekha, were hit twice with bullets.... The village had no doors, no windows left. In 90 minutes thousands of bullets riddled everything and all the cattle were killed.”

The senseless cruelty of this repression was challenged by *Le Monde* which wrote in January 2; under the by line of Andre Leveuf:

“It is disputable that certain actions of the armed force have without question added fuel to the necessity of certain military ‘demonstration’ such as the Aloes operation conducted last December, we are obliged to admit that we often went , in this kind of business, against the sought objective.

Massive mopping ups are, whatever the allegations of the official circles, exasperating more than reassuring to the population.

For a military operation to succeed, its objective must be clearly defined to the troops. Unhappily it seems that this rule has not always been observed in Kabylie”.

Six months later the repression against the population continued. According to the rightist Parisian newspaper, *L’Information*, of June 25: “It is in the Philippeville region that the repression has been the most spectacular and the most violent.The Air Force launched the operation by bombarding and machine-gunning the villages in the suburbs of the city.

Then the Naval Forces went into action. A ship landed a few kilometres from Philippeville, groups of commandos who systematically wiped out the cap Kalaas, on the western side of the city....several houses have been destroyed by the artillery.”

On June 6, *L'Humanite* reported the destruction of the villages of Boumidoune and D'Arrat, in retaliation for the killing by the rebels of a pro-French Algerian Caid, Ahmed Laissoub, the day before

“The security forces gathered all the cattle which was then taken to Djidjelli and after emptying all the houses of their foodstuffs, clothes and food supplies, set them on fire while the inhabitants watched helplessly in the streets...after the fire the troops used successfully dynamite, shells and tanks to erase the remaining standing walls.”

*Le Monde*, in June 27:

“After the mopping –up operation in the Philippeville area, where the air Force, paratroopers and marine units intervened to control each village, the police continued its action in the cities of Bone, Constantine, and Algiers.

Several thousands of persons, according to *France-Presse* Agency, have been arrested.”

The “spectacular operation” referred to by *L'Information* reached the summit of barbarism in the case of the village of Ouled Fadhel, near Ain-El-Ksar. In its issue of May 25, which was seized by the police at the news-stands, *Alger Republicain* reported: “Under the pretext of an identity check up, a military unit (chasseurs Algerians) under the command of a Lieutenant has executed 14 Algerians among whom was Medjourdi Ben Salah, 60-year old and his 15-year old son, Mohamed, a young Sheppard; Ghodhane Aissa Ben Abdacem and his 12 –year old son, while many others were wounded. Most of the dead were buried with their clothes, without the traditional Moslem rites.”

### *Collective Reprisals*

Unable most of the time to reach the guerrillas because of their mobile tactics, the French troops and police turned their fire against



the rebels' relatives. The French newspaper, *L'Humanite*, shed some light on this retaliatory campaign. On June 20, the newspaper said in an undenied report:

"After arriving at Conde-Smendou paratroopers began their operations by attacking the property of the family of Boulala Ali Ben Mohamed. They entered the farm and houses searching everywhere and breaking everything, they molested the women, and stole their jewels and new clothes.

"Other patrols operated in the same fashion. At night they entered and pillaged the homes. The mill of M. Boudersa worth less than \$8,000 was destroyed as well as many houses. Troops were forbidden to touch the contaminated food supplies because the explosion was done with dynamite.

"These two families have respectively one and two relatives in the maquis (with the rebels).

"Fourteen cows belonging to M. Boudersa were machine-gunned and some of them were taken away by the troops.

"The family of Rikouh' also with a relative in the maquis, has been subjected to violence by the army. 18 mules were shot down and all food supplies burnt.

"During the night, June 11-12, a patrol operating in the village of m'Jabria encountered three harvesters (Moslems) going early to their work: all three were shot down, without warning two were killed and the third wounded was taken prisoner."

Crimes of this kind are daily executed throughout the country and reported by the French press.

French official findings amply substantiate French press reports.

According to the Paris edition of *The New York Herald Tribune*, July 1:

“In an extraordinary document of cold-blooded self-criticism regarding French rule in Algeria was submitted June 29, by five—members of a Parliamentary mission to Algeria.

“In such grim report the deputies declared that France could not condone collective reprisals ‘for humane as well as political reasons’, saying that the experience we had in Indo China have proven that such actions created more hatred than fear and turned finally to the advantage of the rebels.”

Unfortunately as the August 20, bloodbath has shown, even the advice from a Parliamentary body representing all leading French political parties (except the communists) was not headed. The phrase “collective reprisals” is too collective to convey a crime associated with the most brutal episodes in history and condemned in modern times by international morals and world public opinion. Only specific instances convey some measure of the horror to which an innocent population is being subjected. In addition to the tragedy of Conde-Smendou, related in the previous page, we cite this classical Nazi’ incident’ in the Constantine. Again we shall return to French sources.

In its issue *L’Observateur*, reports:

“On June 17, a group of legionnaires proceeded to the summary execution of several hostages. This execution followed the assassination, on the same day, of Adjudant Victor Dupuy and his son, by the guerrillas.”

The crime was profoundly shocking, but significant is the listing of the victims, disclosing the brutality of colonial justice. The victims, listed by the distinguished newspaper are:

Khezzar Ben Abderahman, 52-year old, ex-prisoner of war, five years in German prison camp, and father of five children;

Khezzar Belgacem Ben Abderahman, 28 year-old, father of three children;

Khezzar Hachemi Ben abderahman, 50 year-old, veteran of 1939-45 world war, father of six children;

Khezzar Omor Ben Mohamed Ben Abderahman, 26 year-old, father of one child

Khezzar Said Ben hachemi, 17 year -old;

Khezzar Slimane Ben Mohamed Taieb, 23 year-old;

Belkadi Smael Ben Zarrouk, 20-year old, father of three children;  
Belkadi Ahmed Ben Sedki, 20-year old, father of one child;

Belkadi zarrouk Ben Belgacem, 65-year old;

Belkadi Abdallah, 28-yearold father of one child;

Benabid Mohamed Salah Ben Mohamed cherif, 47-year old father of four children.

But if this is not enough to expose the cynicism of the French Minister of Interior in protesting to the United States Government American press reports on the repression, we shall add more.

The conscience of the freedom loving American people, their distinguished Government committed to the principles of the four freedoms, the Atlantic and United Nations Charters, will demand the whole truth. These facts are relevant to the policy –makers of the United States who must soon make a crucial decision involving the whole of North Africa, its moral world leadership and its enlightened interests.

There were also the crimes of the Batna region, -all reprisals against a helpless population. In its issue of June 20, *L'Humanite* reported:

“There were not only arrests. The repression is a sinister machine, with infernal gears.

“There were all dead at Sidi-Manoudi. They were digging a ditch, a plane machine-gunned them. The night before armed guerrilla groups have attacked Ain-Naga. We revenge ourselves as we can.

“There is also the mystery of the ruins of Timgad. Sixty persons have disappeared...nobody is authorized to get close to the area. For many days the buzzards have been flying over!

“”There are the 18 houses burned in El-Oualdja. There is Massaouda, an insane 16 –year old girl who lives in El-Milia. When they (the soldiers) came to arrest her father and brother, she went to get them a loaf of bread. When she returned she found two corpses. The soldiers had shot them down. I saw her. She can no longer talk. Her look is empty; she is like a dead person.”

The French Minister of Interior did not deny the report. It should also be stated emphatically that *L’Humanite* is by no means the most consistent reporters of French atrocities. We have already noted the candor of the French press. If this seems surprising, it is only to those who do not realize that in the Algerian situation, as in that of Indo China, a large segment of the population is opposed to colonialism and colonial practices which they feel put to shame the principles of freedom and human rights that are the legacy of the French Revolution and the true spirit of France.

The French colonialists resort to repression for the time-honored reason that the military has always resorted to repression: bankruptcy of political and military policies.

Even though the French have in Algeria some 150.000 troops, two-thirds of them ”Hessian” troops, equipped with American weapons and arms, the French authorities were compelled to resort to” psychological” means to meet the unshaken resistance of

thousands of armed patriots. The latest colonial medicine is to promote fratricidal feuds among the Algerians. How?

A report in *Le Monde* of August 19, under a headline “Correction by Constantine Deputies regarding incidents in Beni-Tleline’s market place, the newspaper wrote:

“A France-Press Agency dispatched recently reported an engagement which took place, August 7, in the market place of the village of Beni-Tleline.

“According to this information, the fellaghas opened fire on the security forces, killing one soldier while the fellaghas suffered 17 casualties (eight killed and nine wounded).

“This version was today contested by four elected leaders, Mr. Mostefai Bendhamed and Doctor Bendjelloul, deputies of Constantine, as well as Messrs. Grid Boudjamaa and Boussof, ‘Conseillers Generaux’.

“In a letter to the French Prime Minister, these personalities gave the following report about the event:

“On August 7, a bus with passengers going to the weekly market of Beni-Tleline was stopped by the Military at the exit of the village of Catinat. The passengers (Algerians) were stripped of their clothes which the soldiers put over their uniforms. On their arrival at the market, the soldiers began shooting in air and on the crowd, creating panic.

The personalities affirmed that all the victims were well-known as peaceful persons and free from any possible suspicion whatever. We emphasize that the soldier killed was disguised as an Algerian and was shot down by mistake by his comrades!”

The plight of the Algerian people and the immensity of the colonial repression can not be fully appreciated without briefly recording the part the police are playing. The French record of 125

years of “civilizing” Algerian by police is common history; therefore we shall only deal with events in recent months, again from French sources. This aspect for the problem has not even been superficially touched by the American press, thus the French Minister of Interior will have to direct his energy to explain, not to Washington but to Paris. Only French newspapers and leaders are used here!

In its report to the National assembly, June 29, already cited, the five-member Parliamentary mission to Algeria observed:

“A special problem is raised with relation to repressive justice. It appears that this justice did not adapt itself to circumstances. It is often too stern in some cases, and insufficiently expedite in others, the distinction between a suspect and a guilty person is not marked enough. The current system corresponds neither to justice nor to efficiency”

These frank charges levelled by French political leaders against French justice in Algeria call for supporting evidence. Police repression has long been a basic feature of colonial administration in Algeria- and its brutality and inhumanity are common knowledge in France.

As far back as January 6, 1955, *L'Observateur* sums up the whole situation as follows:

“We reported the day following the events of November, which the Algerian (French) police had inflicted terrible tortures on nationalist militants who were arrested. These revelations which have not been hitherto denied seem to have impelled the police and Department of Territorial Security to observe some cautiousness, at least for a time.

“However, since the last ten days, the police posts in Algiers are again the scene of the worst violence

“In contempt of the law (which requires that none could be held more than twenty-four hours by the police), the accused persons have appeared before the Judge five days after their arrest. This delay is considered indispensable to erase the most visible marks of corporal punishment (although the torture by the bath-tub and the electric belt do not leave marks) several of the accused have nevertheless wound marks on their body. This was notably the case of Mr. Abdelaziz and Mr. Laichaoui.

“These facts are well-known by the Government... the minister of Interior, responsible for order in Algeria, MUST say whether he approves or disapproves the use of torture, and in the second alternative HOW LONG is he going to tolerate it?”

The civilized world has heard with shock and indignation of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against their helpless victims. But colonial authorities in Algeria have proved they have no peer in brutality and mass marder. In all fairness it must be stated that some strong protests have been made in the French Parliament and in the liberal French press.

The horrors of the French Gestapo methods used to make political prisoners talk are described in detail by Mr. Moulay Merbah, Secretary General of the Algerian Nationalist Movement who recently underwent some of the tortures himself. Mr. Merbah reported prisoners underwent the following physical and mental trials during interrogation:

1. Starvation for several days while undergoing uninterrupted questioning.
2. Beating with a bull whip to the limit of physical capacity. The performance is repeated daily until the prisoner has broken down and “confessed”.
3. Hanging by either his feet or one hand for hours.

4. “The water cure”, being bound and held motionless while water is sprayed full-force over nose and mouth until virtual drowning ensues.
5. Strangulation by a rubber inner tube being wrapped around the waist and pumped up until breath is practically extinguished.
6. Electric shocks applied to genital organs and other unspeakable practices to induce agony.
7. Prisoners are forced to spit on a picture of Messali Hadj, the Algerian Nationalist leader, simultaneously shouting “down with Messali, vive la France”.

It is not surprising that these barbarian police repressions aroused deep emotion and genuine protests of the finest intellectuals in France. It was Mr. Francois Mauriac, Nobel Prize winner, who first in *Le Figaro* raised an indignant protest. Another great French author, Albert Camus wrote in *L'Express*, July 9: “we must speak with greater force against that repression, blind and stupid Collective responsibility- we paid dearly to learn- is a totalitarian principle. It is incredible that it should be proclaimed by Frenchmen.”

The national Assembly echoes with the protests of outraged Deputies. Before the National Assembly, on July 29, Mr. Benbahmed, a Socialist deputy citing several instances of police repressions disclosed:

“A father has been compelled by the French forces to take away the remains of his son (butchered by them) in a basket. Another Algerian has been shot down near his house with his three children.”

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, the same deputy told the Assembly:

“The situation is becoming more and more grave. Tortures, reprisals are being committed in the name of France. Only recently,



in the Constantine region, one Algerian protesting against the burning of his house by the French Gendarmes has been thrown in the fire, and died. Such acts will lead us to catastrophe”

On July 29, addressing the National Assembly, Mr. De Chevigne opined:

“The consequences of the rotting situation are: The French authorities are losing contact with the Moslem population; they are resorting to a repression no longer controlled, but ignominious.”

On July 30, Mr. Vallon, deputy, warned the Assembly that:

“When such a policy of repression is being pursued, it is not for defence of France but for the protection of colonial firms.”

Mr. Naroun, Independent Republican deputy, reported to the French Parliament that:

For several weeks we have been receiving from layers in Algeria, from families of prisoners (political) and from the prisoners themselves, distressing letters regarding the repression procedures. We are representing a population (Algerian) united in distress who is asking you to protect it against the abuses of a blind repression which threatens to transform our unfortunate region (Constantine) into a grave of innocents.

The police repression is not recent, as might be implied in these protests. It was set into motion at the earliest outbreak of the Nationalist rebellion when similar denunciations were made. In January, 46 out of the 60 members of the Algerian Assembly (Moslem College) adopted unanimously a resolution stating:

“The delegates of the Second College ...protest energetically, the illegal search, the arbitrary arrests, the inhuman tortures inflicted upon individuals whom the law considers innocent until proved guilty, and also against excessive sentences.”

In a moving act of human solidarity and brotherhood, leaders of the Catholic Church joined the protest of these high Moslem personalities.

The same day, a sermon by Monseigneur Duval, Archbishop of Algiers, was read in all the churches, quoting his Holiness the Pope:

“The gravity, the dignity of justice and of public authority, requires the respect of moral principles and, in particular, the respect of human person.

“It is not admissible that even the most suspect person could be arrested arbitrarily

And then sent to jail. Judicial action must exclude physical and mental torture.”

Mr. Christian Pineau, a French deputy and former Cabinet Minister wrote a penetrating commentary on his country’s ruthless “employment of force” with pertinent military observations in *Paris-Press* of July 27, 1955.

Mr. Pineau said:

“There are many French who see the “use of force” as the sole means for ending our troubles in North Africa....

“What do they mean, actually?

“Not operations to maintain order, but offensive stands against the native populations, intended to intimidate them and to subjugate them, since one has given up trying to convince them...

“It is ‘use of force’ in the sense intended, when French planes bombard a native village

On the pretext that the population has shown some sympathy for the rebels, or when Europeans are permitted to attack the natives without police interference.

“In Indo China, during a long period, our expeditionary force devoted itself to actions of reprisal, destroying villages, punishing suspects, terrorizing the population. The failure of this method has been complete.

“Has France the means to employ force over a long, not only in Algeria and in Morocco, but in all the overseas territories where the native population agitate and rebel in varying degrees.

“Can she contemplate a rule forever by terror over millions of men, while assuring the security of her own frontiers and maintaining her economic equilibrium?”

France, and apparently the United States, now identifying itself with such totalitarian policy, has not heeded the lessons of Indo China. I, Algeria, just as in Indo China, French soldiers and American arms allied against Algerian nationalism, are effectively paving the way to chaos and communism. Surely, the Moslem Algerians will not surrender to colonialism.

The warning is given also by a French leader.

In *Le Monde*, July 12, Mr. Robert Barrat said:

“To the question as to whether one can crush the Algerian uprising by classical colonial methods of military repression, the answer is ‘no’. The presence of 125,000 troops or tomorrow of 200,000, or even of 500,000 will not now settle the problem of the Algerian maquis.

“To believe on the other hand, the punishing expeditions against innocent people would impress the men of the maquis is a gross error. One must remember that the executions of hostages at Chateaubriant, the massacre of Aradour, during the German

occupation of France have but doubled the fighting will of the resistance. (In Algeria) one hostage executed, a village become hostile; one village wiped out, it is the whole commune which is lost.”

## CONCLUSION

Such is the black record of the French colonial repression in Algeria. It may come as a shock to the Government and people of America and to the United Nations. But shock of conscience is a significant only when it is directed to the correction of crime through justice. The atrocities detailed here would be of world concern, even if France had no international commitments. As it happens, she occupies a key position in a Western Alliance which makes her crimes in Algeria a matter of moral and political interest to every member of that Alliance. Inevitably, world indignation against France in this case will touch the moral position of the whole Western world allied with her in an area which is an integral part of their strategic interests.

This paper is a challenge to the West and the Free World. They cannot fail to meet this challenge.