

Apology for the Algerian insurrection

Jaime Semprun

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I

Quevedo said about Spanish people: “ they haven’t been able to be historians but they deserved to be “. This is still right concerning the 1936 Spanish revolution: others have written the history of the events. It’s too early to write the history of the insurrection that started in Algeria during spring 2001, but it’s not too late to defend it; in other words to fight the deep indifference, puffed up with historic recklessness, as we see it in France.

To illustrate the importance and the significance of this uprising, one just need to relate the acts and declarations of the insurgents. Put together according to their most universal and true meaning the facts gives a picture of the situation from which a terrible morality is emerging: The dignity, the understanding and the courage of the algerian insurgents condemns the abjection in which people of the modern countries are living, their apathy, their petty worries and their sordid hopes.

The young rioters fought police and gendarmerie [military police] forces during several weeks shouting: “ You cannot kill us we are already dead! “. Treated as half dead by the Algerian society they knew that they had to destroy it to start living. (“Our answer to the nothingness will be to destroy its sire,” declared one of them in July.) Since April 21st, mainly in Kabylie, but also since June 10th in Kenchela (in the Aures), since the 11th in Skikda (north of Constantine) and since the 16th in all the eastern part of the country (at Oum El Bouaghi, Batna, Tebessa, Biskra, El Tarf etc.), they erected barricades, cut roads, assaulted gendarmerie and police stations; they attacked a prefecture headquarters (in Tebessa, two ministers were inside the building), burned or vandalized many courthouses (in Ouacifs the ‘Justice Court’, recently built, was reduced to ashes), some tax offices, post offices and state corporation offices, political parties headquarters (at least thirty two), banks, social security offices, communal parks, etc. The list is of course uncompleted, and even if it were complete, it would only give a vague idea of the scale of the movement. At least we see that the insurgents undertook to clear the land from all “material expressions of the State”. (The ‘Monde Diplomatique’ had the civic stupidity to suavely blame the rioters for finishing off the “public services” and the newspaper asked if, by doing so, “the crowd of the castoffs of society” is not participating in “its own weakening”.)

When Peoples are recovering from submission, things that were usually supported are not anymore. After some many other killings committed by police and the military, the murder of the student in Beni Douala, on april 18th , provoked three days later the first riots. In Amizour, near BejaÃ- a, the population start insurrection on the 22nd after the arbitrary arrest of three students. In Khenchela, on the 10th of June, an officer who shows off, driving a large car, calls a young woman with contempt. Attacked by the young people who ran to defend the women, he cries out: “But what is going on with you today?” and the answer is “Everything changed.” He get a good hiding, his car is destroyed. One hour later, he comes back with thirty soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, armed with automatic rifles. After a pitched battle, the soldiers have to retreat, but the riot spread in the whole town: barricades are erected, the city hall, the tax office, Sonelgaz corporation’s headquarter, the prefecture and two chain store are turned upside down by the people shouting: “this is the way for Chaouis! “ The whole city is devastated.

When the routine of oppression is not tolerated anymore, the extraordinary becomes normal. During these weeks, these months, nearly everyday a gendarmerie brigade was attacked or harassed; and usually several at the same time. Military barracks were besieged; a blockade was imposed to the gendarmes who were forced to launch raids for supplies. Those who accepted to

have any relation with them, even strictly commercial, were boycotted, put in quarantine and punished. Some hotels were burned, as well as villas, cafe, restaurants, and stores, targeted because they belonged to dishonest officials or various wheeler-dealer-businessmen. There were numerous destructions but it seems that there has been few looting. Thus, for example, in Kher-rata on may 23rd the large stock of goods found in the house of a gendarmerie ex-officer were immediately burned. Everyone expressed its grievance, it's concerning housing, water, industrial nuisance, monopolizing of all sorts that the corrupted were systematically exposed to public condemnation and treated as scoundrel. To start dealing with the vital problems posed by dilapidated state of the country, it was necessary to fight firstly those who prevent the people to take care of the problems.

The population settled the authority hash, with officials close at hands, the mayors were mainly targeted. Beyond those skirmishes, the project of a complete expropriation of the expropriators was taking shape. Still marked by ambiguities, that ended when the movement broke with the labour unionists, a declaration of the popular comity from Bejaï'a's Wilaya (prefecture) declared to the political power on July 7th : "Your gendarmes, symbols of corruption, are only useful to kill, repress and traffic. That is why they have to leave immediately. Concerning our security, our brave vigilance committees are perfectly dealing with it: they are our pride." It goes on, reminding that the citizens' problems "are assumed by our neighbourhood and villages' delegates and by labour unionists delegates who are working in an assembly called popular comity. Isn't it Direct Democracy? "

The insurrection, or at least its more advanced organisation, was limited to Kabylie. Nevertheless, it has to be called Algerian insurrection because the Kabyle insurgents themselves called it Algerian and tried to extend it and they refused the berberist identity argument in which their enemies wanted to disguise them.

It is useless to raise interrogation, as a governmental "inquiry commission" and moralist journalists did, to know if provocative activities of the gendarmerie could have provoked the riots; as if the existence of algerian State and its bloody repression is not a permanent provocation; and as of the population need special justifications to revolt. The insurgents took up the term "hogra" by which the Algerians name the arbitrary of authority, its privileges and corruption, its contempt. In fact fighting the hogra, meant fighting the State itself. What would be left of a state without privileges or corruption, a state that could not use arbitrary and scorn? In Algeria more than anywhere else, nearly nothing: the only public service that really worked in this country, since forty years, is torture and political assassination. While conspiring one against the other in order to appropriate power and oil income, the State gangs never stopped conspiring together against the people.

As declared one of these political decision-maker after the repression of October 1988 riots: "During thirty years, we were able to tear each other apart, to fight each other. However, we never abandoned an expelled leader, even by simply visiting him. Because we were united by the certainty that our children have to take over from us. We knew that if this law was broken off, it would be the end for us, because the street would not be satisfied with one head but would take all." (Cited by Jose Garçon in the preface of Djallal Malti's book: *La Nouvelle Guerre d'Algerie*, 1999)

Through so many purges, eliminations, manipulations, so many negotiations "where they were at daggers drawn", so many covered up executions and mass killings, the real and unique con-

tinuity of Algerian State (in continuity with the FLN¹) is police. As early as 1956, the forming bureaucracy organized itself around the FLN's secret services (base of the coming 'Securite Militaire').

The assassination of Abbane Ramdane in December 1957 points out their definitive victory over those, who wanted to use ideology to control the masses and to justify the coming bureaucratic and dictatorial system. Since then in this mixture of police terrorism and "revolutionary" phraseology, there is less of the second and more of the first one. The execution becomes the usual procedure to solve conflicts, not only against the M.N.A of Messali Hadj, but also inside the F.L.N itself. Since 1958, the officers of the services were formed in KGB schools in Moscow. [Former President] Boumedienne had himself been assistant of Boussouf, the organizer of FLN's interior police. And we know that the generals, who are part of the Mafioso authorities in Algeria, most of them "deserters of the French Army" (in other words very lately converted to the anti-colonial struggle) went during the sixties in Moscow to gain other skills (at KGB or Frounze academy) ; with this double formation, by colonialism and Stalinism, they kept their methods of pacification (or eradication), in the tradition of the worst atrocities of the French colonial army, and their manipulation and provocation techniques. It is well known in Algeria but not in France, because the Algerian state as all sorts of collusions, especially in the medias, where it is not necessary to hire all journalists to propagandize: the false left conscience and the "complex of the colonizer" are sometimes enough, even if the Algerians Services largely bribe and not only political parties.

For the bureaucrats who cynically glorified the masses in their slogans ("Only one hero, the people"), the Algerian masses have only been human material available for their operations and scheming, cannon fodder, sent to be massacred by the French army and then directly massacred. The intact resolution of the rioters, when they already had dozens of dead in their rank, gives a clear testimony of the hatred accumulated years after years in Algeria (and particularly in Kabylie) against the repressive state. "No forgiveness, never!" has been the most popular slogan. The claiming platform adopted at El-Kseur required "the immediate leaving of gendarmerie brigades" from kabylie. According to *Le Monde Diplomatique* , it was the only "clear" claiming of the rebels. But even in that case it would have been a sort of program for an Algerian revolution. Such a requirement completed by the demand for the "effective control of all state executive functions and of security corps by the democratic elected institutions", was giving the movement the goal to dismantle the "special armed detachment" which are the main "material expression" of any State, and that is in Algeria, nearly the only functional "expression".

To effectively dismantle, to organize the retaking of state power by the people, by the masses "who substitute their own force to the force organized to oppress them" (Marx about La Commune). Even if only accomplished on a part of the territory, it cannot be accomplished without a revolution in all aspects of social life. And this was what the insurgents tended to do when they besieged the gendarmeries, isolated them and put them in quarantine, separated them from society in order that society separates from them. This is the example of separatism that Kabylie gave to the rest of Algeria.

¹ FLN: Front de Liberation Nationale – Main Algerian Party, Nationalist. Supposedly democratic, in fact THE party of the highly corrupted ruling class. The role of the FLN is to control, at any price, the vital resources of the country (mainly oil) for its interests and for the interests of Oil and Gas industry.

Historically, the FLN manipulated the memory of the fight against French occupation. Leaders were Nationalist with Stalinist influences. Now working for privatization with capitalist global institutions.

The existence of such a movement in itself disclaims all the stinking political lies omnipresent in Algeria since so many years. The real subversion started to dissipate the sticky haze of police fictions and to put everybody in its place: “we refuse to show solidarity with those who are destroying state property” declared a representative of F.I.S. (Islamic Salvation Front.)²

In Portugal in 1974, people used to say, “truth is like oil”. Today in Kabylie we say: “Truth is like a cork.”^P Direct antithesis of any state lie, the insurrection was not satisfied in asking the truth (the conclusions of governmental enquiry commissions were denounced by advance, and their dissolution was one of the claim of El-Kseur platform), it imposed the truth every time possible by denouncing the imposture “live”. Regarding that aspect, one of the most beautiful moments, was the women demonstration in Tizi-Ouzou on May the 24th . The women demonstrating started by rejecting the very official “association of widowed and daughters of the martyrs of independence war” to join to their demonstration, then they expelled by insulting her Khalida Messaoudi, adviser and in her own words “militant companion” of Bouteflika [president-dictator]. She just left the R.C.D and pretended to come here to get a new political image: “As she was trying to slip into the procession, jeering raised. “Khalida out”, shouted some women. “Khalida Lewinski” screamed others. She had only just been evacuated to Alger.” (Liberation, 26th-27th may 2001.) Finally, after manifesting in such a way their contempt for the media-democratic auxiliaries, they did not save the berberist and they also prevented followers of the autonomy of Kabylie to join the demonstration.^P The dismissal of all the political representations was constant during the insurrection, and it was one of the most slandered aspects of it. The offices of the two parties (RCD³ and FFS⁴) that could hope to get a profit from such a movement were among the first to burn in Tizi-Rached, as well as the bank, the social security building and the tax office, on April 26th . And even during the June 25th demonstration in Tizi Ouzou, for the third anniversary of the execution of the singer Lounes Matoub, we heard among the slogans besides “a kabyle is a kabyle, its enemies are the gendarmes”, “no F.F.S, no R.C.D”. The most discredited was for sure the R.C.D, despite its resignation from the government in the end of April (RCD’s leader Sadi qualified the entry in the government in December 1999 as a “political event constituting at the same time a success and disruption”) it was impossible to forget its long time collaboration with the military clan of the ‘eradicators’. Concerning the FFS, less compromised with the authorities, it opened people’ eyes by presenting, on the 12 of may, to Bouteflika, to the army chief of staff and to the chief of D.R.S (former Securite Militaire), a ‘memorandum’ that consisted of offering their services to organize a “democratic transition”.

² FIS: Front Islamique du Salut – Islamic Salvation Front – Islamic Populist Party. It was the main opposition to the corrupted FLN. They won local elections and legislative elections in December 1991, the generals refused the democratic results and organized a coup. FIS leaders and activists were arrested, many tortured for months, some killed, the villages and cities who voted for FIS were victim of State Terror: police and services arrested, killed and tortured, many tortured people who survived went with the islamist terrorist guerrilla to protect themselves from the army and/or to get revenge.

³ RCD: Rassemblement Culture et Democratie – Berberist Authoritarian Party – Presented the Insurrection in Kabylie as a “cultural” insurrection.

⁴ FFS: Front des Forces Socialistes – Authoritarian Socialist Party

II

The most outstanding aspect of the Algerian insurrection is its self-organisation. The hostility toward political parties and “any proximity with power”, the distrust with any uncontrolled representation, the refusal to be, once more, rank and file for political schemes; all that resulted in the spreading and coordination of villages and neighbourhood assemblies, rapidly recognized by everybody as the only authentic expression of the movement. As early as the 20th of April, the delegates of the forty-three villages of Beni Douala daǻ-ra (sub prefecture) organized into coordination and called for a general strike. The following days, villages’ committees and coordination formed in the whole wilaya of Tizi-Ouzou. May 4th, in the city of Tizi-Ouzou itself, posters are calling for a six days general strike; it comes from a neighbourhood temporary coordination, “according to unknown sources in Tizi-Ouzou”, as written in may 5th edition of the newspaper *Liberte*. It reveals, the day after, the anxiety of the parties leadership, caused by these forms of self-organization. On may 6th is announced for the 10th a meeting in Beni Douala with assembly delegates of Tizi-Ouzou, Bejaǻ-a and Bouira’s wilayas, to create a coordination for the whole Kabylie and to adopt a plat-form of claims. A delegate declares: “the parties, nobody believes in it anymore here.” (*Liberte*, may 7th) That meeting in Beni-Douala takes place as expected, but there’s only the delegates (200) of a majority of the villages of Tizi-Ouzou’ wilaya: journalists are attacked, the press broadcasted a false communique announcing the postponement of the meeting (this is just the beginning of a growing campaign of disinformation and slanders); a mayor, pretending to remind to the assembly the respect of legality has to leave the meeting: “we don’t need a mayor here or any state representative” declares a delegate. (eight days later in Illoula, another mayor has to leave the meeting, despite the fact that he is also a village delegate).

The concern for autonomy of the movement and the will to control closely its delegates are marking all the decisions; for example, the decision to create a committee head-quarter in Tizi-Ouzou to spread the information for the next delegates meeting: the assembly made sure to forbid to the committee the right to speak in the name of the movement. (No declaration to the media etc.) It is impossible to make a detailed reconstitution of the extension of the assembly movement to the whole Kabylie and to the rest of Algeria; firstly because the Algerian “independent” press (and the French press) insisted on the need of an urgent “democratic” modernization but mentioned very partially the activities and declarations of the assemblies, or they slandered it.

We can nevertheless point out the main developments of self-organization, that progresses as well as riots are spreading throughout the country. On may 18th in Illoula, a delegates meeting of Tizi-Ouzou region adopts a first claim plat-form (among the claims, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all gendarmerie brigades) and calls for a march on Tizi-Ouzou. May 21st, that march brings together hundreds of thousands of demonstrators (“the black march” was organized by the coordination of villages committees and political parties had no visible presence” noted *Le Monde* in May 23rd edition). Then the succession of delegates meetings lead to the formation of an interwilayas coordination (Tizi-Ouzou, Bejaǻ-a, Bouira, Setif, Boumerdes, Bordj-Bou-Arredidj, Algiers, and the ‘Comite collectif des unversites d’Alger’) and to the adoption, on June 11th at El-Kseur, of a plat-form of common claims. The march on Algiers, on June 14th, was the peak of that first stage of the movement.

The meaning of this march, despite the fact that the organizers didn’t have a full consciousness of that, was to spread subversion in Algiers itself and to confront the state ‘at home’: this was the equivalent of an attempted insurrection. Indeed, going to the presidency to bring the plat-form

of El-Kseur (the official goal of the march), with hundred of thousands or millions of demonstrators in the street, it allowed to speak in front of the State, power to power, and to proclaim to the Algerian people that the time came to end the oppression going on since 1962. One more day of agitation in Algiers was needed for the entire population, seeing the power faltering, to go into the fight. The Power saw clearly that it had to prevent, at any cost, the subversion to come to Algiers, and whatever was its state of paralysis, it had enough forces to avoid the danger, because of the superiority of its defensive position: thus it used effectively all the repressive tools, splitting up the demonstrators from Kabylie, blocking most of them ten kilometres from downtown Algiers, isolating rioters groups and launching provocateurs, recruited among local gangs, on the crowd. Among the favourable circumstances for the Power, there was the demoralization and fear among people living in Algiers who suffered the most during the “dirty war”. They just started to get out of it since the student agitation that started in early may; and since the demonstration called by the FFS on the 31, that allowed a first junction with the insurgents of Kabylie. The declaration of Algerois, reported in the press, expressed quite fairly the situation at that time, as since one week spontaneous demos were forming every day in Algiers (and also Oran, Setif, Boumerdes) with hundreds or thousands of demonstrators:

“We shout “pouvoir assassin”. We are beaten. Then we go home and we watch, on French TV, the real riots in Kabylie, just one hour from here. But today we’ll know better what is going on, if we go into the war or if we stay outside.”

“We were afraid to get out of the neighbourhood because of assassinations, policemen, terrorists and all that. Now, I think ‘it’s our time, we have to go. But I’m very confused.”

“Who in Algeria, doesn’t feel injustice and deep discontent? Who doesn’t want to end that ? However, Algiers is not Kabylie. There it is very tough but they know each other, they are all together, with a culture, strong structures that resisted despite war. Here, our only political education comes from Egyptian TV soap. After years of brainwashing, G.I.A (Islamic Armed Groups)⁵ bulletins looking like science fiction, our brains were like pulp. In a big city, any provocation or dirty trick can happen.” (Liberation , May 31st 2001)

⁵ GIA: Islamic Armed Groups – Fanatic armed groups who are using 2 types of armed struggle: regular fighting against the army and terrorism and mass murder of Algerian civilians. Many of the IAG are in fact manipulated by the Algerian intelligence services and the army generals (who are the real leaders of the country).

In addition, some terror acts who are attributed to the GIA are in fact committed by army commandos dressed like islamist terrorists. For instance they go into villages who voted for the FIS (main opposition to the FLN) and they kill people, they torture, they rape women, they burn babies in front of their parents etc. Of course western intelligence services (specially French Services) are aware of the Algerian state terrorism, but they support it, as a mean of social control and local stability.

With the same logic, one of the GIA strategy is to murder civilians in false army checkpoints.

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