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WATCH OVER AFRICA

By the same Author

THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

REGENERATION

THE CHRIST AT CHARTRES



Howard Carter

GENERAL DE GAULLE

WATCH OVER AFRICA

By

DENIS SAURAT

LONDON

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PART I
THE GENERAL

PART I

THE GENERAL

GENERAL DE GAULLE

The general said to me: 'I know that you may think Brazzaville unimportant, but I attach the greatest importance to——' He spoke with that mixture of shyness and power which is uniquely his. The power comes from him, the shyness from his deep respect for the inner liberty of the person he is addressing. That is how I went.

I REMEMBER

Should I see him again? He, too, was travelling—and much further than I. My mind naturally went back to the 19th of June 1940, when I first saw him.

At 10 30 p.m. on that day a certain captain had taken me to the top flat of a house in Seamore Place. The general asked us into his bedroom. It was the only place he could see people in, as there was no black-out anywhere else. He sat on the bed and made us sit in the only two chairs while he talked. He was very tall and very calm. Standing by the door, an even taller lieutenant gave dignity to this very informal meeting, which was to us the beginning of a new France.

Our hearts were full of rage because Pétain had asked for an armistice. The unbelievable was happening. France was beaten, France was acknowledging defeat.

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The general's heart was not full of rage. For him France was not beaten, only Weygand, France was not acknowledging defeat, only Pétain.

AN ENGLISH LORD

'The war is not lost,' the general told us. 'Not even France is lost. The sea will stop the Germans. England will stop the Germans. We shall win the war. It is a matter of will—*la volonté*.'

'Can I ask an English friend of mine to come?' I said 'I want him to hear you.'

So I telephoned to a certain club, and then explained to the general that this friend of mine was a lord, and one who loved France.

The English lord came. He was young and tall and thin. We gave him one of the arm-chairs and I took a stool and the general sat down again on the bed, and once more the lieutenant stood guard by the door. The English lord put a few questions, only the general spoke. In his deep, powerful voice, so calm and so simple, he explained how England could win this war.

No one dared to interrupt. Hope was reborn.

PÉTAİN

A few very long days went by while the general awaited results. What was Noguès doing? And Mittelhauser in Syria? Would none of the leading French generals come forward? And what of the Fleet?

The general waited. Ten times a day he would repeat. 'If *any one* of influence would come forward! In Morocco or in Algiers. I shall ask the English for

THE GENERAL

a plane I shall go to Noguès, report for orders, ask for a regiment, and fight again. Any one—any one!' But there was no one.

'Pétain,' the general said. 'Don't I know Pétain! I have always seen that Pétain was a man without a heart That explains his actions now. Now his mind has gone, and as he has no heart there is nothing left Nothing That is why he is acting as he is Nothing left'

WEYGAND

'After fifty,' the general said, 'a man ceases to change his ideas. Those ideas may still coincide with realities, and then they may still be worth something. But *when things keep changing and the man cannot change* his ideas, then that is the end. From the very first day of the battle of the Somme it was obvious that Weygand's ideas no longer coincided with the realities of the war Because he could not change his ideas he wanted to capitulate. Every day he wrote to say that all was lost, that we must give in. But nothing was lost—except his ideas!'

BY ENGLAND—AND BY US

A man came one day from a Power not supposed to be friendly to France, and certainly not friendly to Britain. But actually this Power did not wish to fight the French, especially now that the French were down—a thing to be remembered later, and for a long time.

I took this man to the general, and they talked. At the end the man said:

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'Yes, all this is all right, but the English? Will they fight? To the end? Will they hold out?'

'Yes,' the general said, 'the English will fight, and to the end. But there is not only the English, there is England, there is nature. The Channel is not the Meuse. England will hold out, and if England does hold out, the war will be won by England——' The general looked this man in the eyes and, calmly, his deep bass going several tones deeper, he added '—and by us.'

The visitor left in silence, and a minute later, in the street, he said to me: 'He will do. He is much better than ——' And the stranger mentioned a big name.

FORMIDABLE

A day came when things seemed so bad to me that I went to see the general at six in the morning. He was in his pyjamas. There had been an air raid, and he had been obliged by the hotel people to go to the shelter. He was troubled, but he was not in a black mood. I have never seen him in a temper, though I have spoken with others who have.

He sat in his pyjamas on the edge of the bed in his tiny room, and listened very attentively.

I explained the circumstances. He took it all in, and he saw that he would be unable to do anything about it. He turned it over in his big head for a while in silence, and then said:

'Il va se passer des choses si formidables.' 'Formidable things are going to happen, such formidable things, on so catastrophic a scale! What will it matter then——?'

But he was wrong that time. It did matter—a little.

THE GENERAL

LAND

'Give me some land,' the general kept saying, 'some land that is France. Anywhere. A French base. Somewhere to start from. Then we can begin. Then we can help the English. Then we shall exist again.'

This led to Dakar and a first failure. It led also to Duala and a first success.

It was Élboué, a negro, who was to give de Gaulle the first land from which England could be helped, from which soldiers could march out, from which France could be reborn.

THE MASSES

One day I asked the general, naturally enough: 'What of France when we get back?'

'I know,' he said, 'we are all thinking of that all the time. It is not so much, as people say, a question of regime. It goes deeper than that. Nor even a question of morals, public or private. The problem is with the masses. It struck me most of all when I came to England this year. I had not been in England for thirty years or so. I had a clear memory of London sights. I was struck at once by a fundamental difference in the crowd. Thirty years ago there was infinitely more variety among the people. The number unlike one another was proportionately very high. This time all were more or less alike. The differences in clothes corresponded to categories, not to individuals. The differences in the faces of the men and women were attenuated. All were tending to become alike. I soon noticed that they all had more or less the same pleasures, the same work, the same routine—the

WATCH OVER AFRICA

differences were not essential. Most people, most jobs, most personal relationships even, were interchangeable, within some special categories, of course

'Now this homogeneity of the masses is our trouble. They will soon all feel alike, think alike, act alike. Of course it is the same in France; only one notices it more in a new or strange country. I know Germany is terrible from that angle. You can see Hitler has banked on that: made them all Nazis. Every one fell in. Mechanize the lot

'Now that is *our* problem—*sauver l'esprit*.' He insisted on this: *save the spirit*.

'The homogenization of the masses destroys—anyway tends to destroy—the spirit. Exceptional individuals are the means of spiritual advance. The tree grows by the delicate tips, and by the tenuous outer layer thinly alive between the wood and the bark. Those are the really living parts. Our tree is becoming all wood. No flowers, no fruit, no growing tissues. All wood, and soon all dead wood

'*Sauver l'esprit*. What are we to do? Well, first we must have healthy wood. The wood of the tree is, of course, the basis, the support of the whole. The masses must all be fed, housed, clothed, given facilities for travel, and so on, on a decent standard of living. That is the first thing. Otherwise we can do nothing, for the tree falls

'Technocracy. Organize the material elements in our civilization so that all get their wants attended to. It is not very difficult really. If one really wills it.

'But do not interfere with liberty. On the con-

THE GENERAL

trary. What liberty there is among the people, what sap runs through the wood, encourage it, liberate it, accelerate it.

'The principle is easy. Because your trains run well and to time you need not oblige all your passengers to be at the station at the same time. You should have trains for them whenever they choose to come.

'The Nazi mistake, the Fascist mistake, is to think that in order to run a country well you must force every one to obey orders. Thus they kill the spirit. On the contrary, adapt your machinery to the people's needs and then every one can be free. Our civilization can produce enough trains, enough of everything for every one.

'The essential Nazi mistake is to destroy liberty in order to get organization. On the contrary, if you get good organization then you can leave the people free, you can give them more freedom.'

Here he looked at me.

'Then your job begins, Monsieur le Professeur education. When the masses are fed and free you have to offer them spiritual food of all kinds, from cinemas to politics and mathematics—food that appeals to them. Not forcible feeding. Let them choose what they want, and give it them—a little better than they expect, every time. Thus you will lift them up. Each time some of them will follow you a little further than the mass.

'*Sauver l'esprit*. Develop individualities in the different countries, in the various provinces, as varied as nature, in the men and in the women.

'Give God a chance in every being. *Sauver l'esprit*.'

WATCH OVER AFRICA

PHILOSOPHY

One day he said to me: 'What use is it to talk about regimes? How can we lay down a new constitution? One constructs a constitution out of the materials in hand. What materials shall we find in France when we get back, after this world-wide deluge in which the whole world is going to be wrecked? It is too early yet to think of a constitution.

'But a philosophy—it is not too early to have a philosophy.'

That is how, after he had discussed and approved a detailed plan, I came to write *Regeneration*. But he would not commit himself to saying he approved of my ideas.

'Every man is free,' he said, 'even I!

'Il n'y a pas plus indépendant que votre serviteur,' he said, with his formidable irony, which is so quiet that for the most part people fail to see it.

So he wrote the letter shown on the opposite page for *Regeneration*.

CATHOLICS

One day I said: 'Now, general, I am always being asked this, and I want an answer. What is your religion?'

He did not like this. He lowered his head and said gruffly: 'Every man is free—I am a Catholic.'

'But, of course,' I said, 'one of a liberal tendency, broad-minded?'

He repeated, with a sort of sullenness: 'A Catholic.' Then he caught fire and threw this at me: 'Mind you,

LE GENERAL DE GAULLE

—o—
ETAT-MAJOR
BUREAU

NO

OBJET

QUARTIER GENERAL LE 15 Août 1940.

Professeur Denis Saurat,

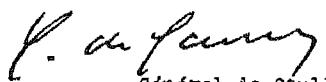
Mon cher Professeur,

Vous êtes un analyste. Mais vous savez faire des synthèses. Comment, en vous lisant, ne pas trouver dans votre-pensée mille atomes qui font que l'on pense soi-même?

Et ne croyez-vous pas que le malheur du monde vient de ce qu'il a, - ici par force, là peut-être par négligence -, trop oublié de penser.

Le monde fut fait par des idées. Nous le referons de même.

Je suis votre ami dévoué,


Général de Gaulle.

You are an analyst. But you are also a synthesist, and no one can read your work without finding in it a thousand grains of thought to make him think for himself.

And do you not believe that the calamities of the world are the result of our having too long forgotten—in some countries under pressure, in others perhaps through carelessness—to think?

The world was made out of ideas. We shall remake it from the same material.

WATCH OVER AFRICA

the Catholics have not behaved any better than any one else!’

I know that he is a deeply religious man, but to him religion is inner liberty, the very core of a man that must not be tampered with even by his most intimate, his most closely related associates.

AN ENGLISH NAVAL OFFICER

He was one high in the hierarchy, so high that I cannot give his rank. He said to me: ‘All the way to Dakar we kept looking at him and wondering: Is he really a great man? Well, that evening at Dakar, when no one else knew what to do—— You see, it is easy to be great when you succeed, but to be great when you fail, through no fault of your own—that is greatness. That evening, and ever after, we would have laid our bodies on the ground before him, and allowed him to walk over us.’

A CHAUFFEUR

For a part of this time I had a chauffeur. It was an honorary position, for I could not pay him, nor even provide petrol. But we did a lot of work. At least we went about and talked to a lot of people who did not always quite understand

My chauffeur, of course, waited at many doors, and one day said: ‘That general of yours, he must be a strong man. I have noticed that when I take you to him depressed or moody, and you have been half an hour, or even a few minutes, with him, you come out cheerful and full of strength again. He must have strength to give away.’

THE GENERAL

AN OLD WOMAN

I knew an old French peasant woman, whom the tide of war had, astonishingly, cast up in London. She used to say to her son: 'You will let me hear your general if he speaks to-night on the wireless, won't you? I like that better than eating *J'aime ça mieux que le manger.*'

That is why I took that boat.

PART II
THE BOAT

PART II

THE BOAT

THE PILOT

The pilot was certainly drunk—a little. I do not say what pilot, nor where; should any pilot recognize himself in this portrait, I hereby certify that I am not speaking of *him*.

Being innocent of the ways of sailors, I did not even begin to suspect him until later, when he tried to buy two bottles of whisky from the captain.

The pilot felt at once—with that uncanny intuition of the drunk which makes them sense at once what every one else can see very plainly—that we were uninitiated. What he said to us was roughly this:

‘Many people in peace-time, you know, pay a lot for what you are going to see. The Norwegian fjords by moonlight in winter, the midnight sun in the summer, and all that.’

My fellowpassenger, an engineer in the North Nigerian mines, and I, a naive professor, looked at each other in dismay. We were both in a great hurry. Tin was waiting, and the University of London looked with mistrust at the final date attached to my leave of absence.

Besides, weren't the Germans——?

THE PILOT'S CABIN

The point was that on this cargo boat there was no accommodation for passengers. So the engineer and

WATCH OVER AFRICA

I had been given the pilot's cabin. It seems that each boat has to have a cabin kept free for the pilot when he has to spend a night on board. However, war is war, and this pilot had to sleep on a very hard divan in the officers' mess-room. Being a perfect gentleman, in the English way, he resented this only subconsciously. He was charming to us. But he scored over the Norwegian business' thus was harmony restored.

LES FLAMANDS

The third engineer said to us: 'This trip I shan't bother to drag my lifebelt about. I've been sunk three times. Now I am safe. Therefore the ship's safe. Don't you worry I was once thirty hours in the ice water off the North Cape. And I didn't even catch cold!'

But then I tentatively approached the second mate about this. He laughed in his Flemish way. As Victor Hugo says:

*Car il faut de grosses choses
Pour faire rire un Flamand*

THE CAPTAIN

The captain had the soul of a fighter, but he was a pessimist. He had never come across anything in the world that was properly managed—not even in Belgium. He was inclined to put it all down to women. At the end of his numerous tales there was always a woman—and then the tale went wrong. The expression 'brother-in-law' had taken on with him a very wide meaning, like the word 'brother' in many negro tribes.

THE BOAT

If you had a female acquaintance on intimate terms with an important man, technically that important man became your 'brother-in-law,' and you could apparently make him do anything you liked.

But in this mythological world of his he had no 'brothers-in-law.' He was, I gathered from his stories, a comfortably married man with one daughter, whom he idolized. From this inner kernel of happiness sprang all his misfortunes. As, owing to the highly cherished virtue of his womenfolk, he had no influence at court, he was always given commands far below his merits.

AN INFERIOR SHIP

This time he had had a violent quarrel with the chief engineer of his previous ship because this chief engineer had given a champagne party on the news of France's armistice. But that ship had such peculiar engines that only that one chief engineer could work them, and even then they often went wrong. Therefore he, the captain, had, by a monstrous injustice, been given a far inferior ship. He suspected that the chief engineer, besides being such a good engineer (that could apparently not be denied), had a 'brother-in-law' somewhere.

THE GERMANS

He was, however, a very lovable man, with a great and simple sense in all political matters. The tragedies of the royal house of Belgium had cleft his soul profoundly. I found this to be the case with all the Belgians I met. Also all the Flemings were beginning to realize that the Germans had cunningly exploited

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the perfectly legitimate aspirations of the Flemish-speaking peoples, to produce chaos in Belgium. In the end the Flemings will hate the Germans with their most obstinate hatred.

THE BELGIANS—AND MATADI

The Belgians suffer much from being too conscious of the small size of their country. The many admirable things they have done seem to them of small value, and they have a constant tendency to belittle themselves.

This was marked by a saying common on the ship. 'It will be worse in Matadi.'

Matadi is a lovely equatorial city with a splendid port, one day's voyage up the Congo, at the point where the river ceases to be navigable owing to the rapids. There is a first-class grand hotel, and the railway starts from there for a lovely day's journey to Leopoldville.

Naturally Matadi is rather hot, but the Métropole Hotel is large, quiet, and cool, and the beer is a great treat.

Yet when my friend the English engineer and I made some innocent remark, such as 'It's very cold to-day,' which really means no reflection on the weather but is a mere affirmation of good-fellowship between speaker and listener, we were met with the sarcastic rejoinder: 'Ah! but wait, it will be much worse in Matadi!'

How Matadi could be colder than Iceland and hotter than Freetown we could not make out. Having both of us semi-scientific minds, we tried to argue it out

THE BOAT

with the Belgians. But they had an answer on every point; obviously they had practised on other passengers.

THE DEVIL'S CAULDRON

On the third day or so out we began pitching a good deal. Then the second mate told us that just before you get to Matadi there is a bend in the Congo River where the bottom drops out and the current is so terrific that ships are tossed about much worse than in the North Atlantic.

It would be worse in Matadi.

They call that under-water cataract the Devil's Cauldron. Need I say that when we passed it in due time it was as smooth as the Serpentine?

THE GREEK

The captain thought the convoy system dangerous. We had a Greek ship next to us, which was supposed to run a course parallel to ours but didn't. Once it came within fifty yards of us in the middle of the night. Our captain was furious, and let the Greek know it.

At breakfast the captain said, in answer to my question. 'No, the Greeks really are very good sailors, full of pluck and cunning, but they do need the whole sea to themselves!'

Therefore, when the convoy was dispersed, the captain was happy: no more Greeks!

DANGER—AND PYJAMAS

One evening at dinner time the captain said: 'Tonight will be a really dangerous time, but if we are

WATCH OVER AFRICA

through by daybreak the odds will be in our favour. Sleep this once in your clothes. You may have no more than twenty seconds to get into the boats.' So the English engineer and I lay down on our bunks fully dressed, with life-belts and tin helmets ready to hand.

Whoever designed the central heating on that ship, however, had had a genius for heat distribution. Under both our beds ran boiling-hot water-pipes, and about midnight the English engineer, who was a docile soul and did not wish to be a lonely rebel, said to me: 'Do you really think it is as dangerous as all that?'

I understood and said: 'I think these Belgians are trying to pull our legs. I'm going to get into pyjamas.'

So we both had a good sleep in comfort, knowing that Matadi could be no hotter than our cabin.

SUNK—BY RADIO

One evening the cook reported to the steward, who reported to the captain, that the Brussels wireless announced that we had been sunk, with forty planes on board, by three bombs. The wireless operator and the head steward both tuned in to the next announcement period and also got the news.

My English friend and I were inclined to be amused, and to marvel at the lying capacity of the Germans.

The mate, however, rebuked us, saying: 'Now all our families in Belgium believe that we are dead.'

And the crew wore sullen faces all day.

THE CREW

The crew were a great treat. They had never carried passengers before, and looked at us covertly, avoiding

THE BOAT

rudeness. We were much less polite and openly stared at them as they went about their work. It was a perpetual miracle to me, because I kept thinking: How could *I* do it? Which, considering everything, was not quite fair to myself.

THE DOG

They kept two dogs, which had come aboard at Liverpool—how, those who knew did not tell.

One stayed all the time on the poop deck, where the gun was. Some mistaken notion of safety first, no doubt.

The other followed his adopted master everywhere—a piratical-looking sailor with a crooked smile, and a red handkerchief round his neck (Perhaps after all, Stevenson did tell the truth?)

This persistent dog had many adventures. The stairs from one deck to another were more like ladders than stairs. The dog learnt how to go up them soon enough. But his coming down became a parable.

At first he would stand at the top, put one paw down, turn his head right and left, and withdraw the paw. One day he put both paws on the second step; then he got frightened, and by a miracle of energy managed to jump back to the safety of the upper deck. But he tried again, and found himself committed with all four paws on the top steps of the swaying stairway, when a lurch of the ship sent him down to the bottom on his head with a great bump. He gave a howl and scuttled to his quarters under the poop amidst the laughter of the crew.

But the next day he was at it again, he had many

WATCH OVER AFRICA

falls, many bumps, but each time he got a little nearer the bottom before he fell. In the end he ran down those dreadful steps quicker than the sailors, and quite safely.

THE PARABLE

Now this is the interpretation of the parable: The dog is England, of course. (Let me say at once he was not a bulldog, but some awful mixture. I am sorry.) His first paw on the top rung is the expedition to Norway. He withdrew quickly, with some wriggling.

The he committed all four paws to the ladder. A bump at the bottom, a nasty bump, but not fatal. That was the Low Countries—Dunkirk. Several other bumps follow (but prophecy is elastic). Greece, Crete, and so on. And some occasional good hits—Cyrenaica, Abyssinia.

But in the end the dog learns the trick, and runs all over the ship. He gets up to the captain's bridge even. The sailors laugh. The captain also.

Beware of the dog.

PS. This story is entirely true. I hate made-up stories, which can, obviously, carry no value or meaning. A whole company of Belgians and one English engineer were witnesses.

THE CAT

The ship's cat, who had just had kittens, went for the dog every time he came on the officers' deck, which was the cat's deck.

The dog never fought back: he would roll on to his

THE BOAT

back, wave his four paws about wildly, and yell for help. The sailors were so helpless with laughter that he had to wait a little.

This is more difficult to interpret as an omen it might be a spiritual picture of the Chamberlain period. Perhaps the gods laughed and were helpless, like the sailors.

TOAST

One morning at breakfast the captain held his piece of toast delicately balanced between forefinger and thumb above his cup of *café au lait*—and he looked at me. So I laughed, and said: 'Carry on, captain, I know!'

So he dipped his toast into his coffee, and there was peace.

Hugo again.

Ces Flamands, dit le 101, il faut que cela mange.

We left cold and fog behind, we were sliding towards the happy south. The English engineer and I had a competition. How many murders a day could we compass? We found the ship was stocked with six-penny detective novels, meant for the troops. Mass murders were not allowed. In one day the engineer went through the narration of sixteen murders. I never reached a higher number than eight.

A PLANE

A sailor suddenly said to me: 'A plane,' and pointed to the horizon. I could see nothing. 'English?' I asked. 'How can one tell at that distance?' he said. 'We shall soon know.'

WATCH OVER AFRICA

The sailors began running to their various posts—machine-guns, boats, and so on

The English engineer and I, who had nothing to do, watched the plane drawing nearer, while we discussed the probabilities. I said, meaning no harm: 'Aren't you going to fetch your helmet and life-belt?' He said: 'What about you?' And we both went on watching.

The second officer rushed by us, calling out that the machine-gun was jammed. The boatswain stood with us, watching. All his men were at their posts—but what could be done?

The mate was on the captain's bridge trying to focus his glasses. The plane made for a point ahead of us, then turned towards us. The boatswain said: 'Now for it. They always do that to attack.' We could see the big bombs hanging below the plane.

But the plane crossed our line of travel, and fetched a great semicircle to come back over us. The boatswain said: 'He means to hit us sideways, with a torpedo. Now for it!' But the plane swerved to our rear a hundred yards away from us, and now even we could see plainly that she was British. A man leant out and waved to us, and then they circled round us at some distance.

'Ah, but I did feel hot,' said the boatswain, 'when I saw her take that turn towards us! I thought we were done for.'

By then the plane was going away, several hundred yards away, and suddenly our machine-gun started! The man had got it working at last—working too well, in fact.

THE BOAT

'Bit of luck the fool didn't let off while the plane was near,' said the English engineer. 'What would have happened then? Now the plane's out of hearing.'

We all laughed then except the boatswain, who kept saying in a resentful manner: 'Ah! but I did feel hot when he took that turn!'

ANOTHER PLANE

The next day another plane came. But it had no success. We were used to it now. The English were looking after us; there was no emotion except the pleasure of seeing a friend and waving to him.

A SUBMARINE

Another day the captain said: 'They've signalled there's a submarine fifty miles south of us.'

'What will you do?' I asked.

'Nothing,' he said. 'It would take her five hours to get here. In five hours, where shall we be? Not here. And they must be after her now, since they signalled us. She'll be kept well off our course. We'll just zigzag, that's all.'

RUST AND BLOOD

I discovered that sailors suffer from four kinds of mental disease—washing the decks, painting the ship, telling lies to passengers, and not knowing the stars.

The least offensive is telling lies to passengers, who get used to it and tell the sailors even bigger lies—and pretty soon too, for sailors are as a rule ignorant and credulous.

WATCH OVER AFRICA

But washing the decks and painting the ship are both awful diseases. A beautiful brand-new sun helmet that I had bought in Piccadilly was spoiled for ever through our sailors' washing the captain's deck. The whole ship was made exclusively of iron. She had been built in the last war, with no hope of surviving for more than a few months, so frequent were the sinkings at the time. Yet here she was, twenty years later, carrying planes in another war. But she was wonderfully rusty, and when the sailors washed the captain's deck above us drops of rust water fell on us, unavoidably, wherever we might be, even in our cabin. After a while my lovely helmet seemed to have participated in some battle where blood dropped from the heavens.

In Brazzaville I derived great prestige with the negroes from my blood-stained appearance.

It seems that you cannot clean rust off helmets.

PALM-TREES

Freetown was a great treat.

The captain had told us a tale. Once upon a time a captain fell ill at sea. The mate had to take over. He had never had full responsibility before, but he took over bravely, and made for Freetown. He got near there at night—a great mistake. Suddenly in the dim light he saw a palm-tree. At once he shouted: 'Reverse engines! Drop anchor!' and perspired profusely.

The next morning the pilot came aboard and congratulated him on choosing the best anchorage outside the roadway, and in the dark, too!

THE BOAT

THE MASTERS OF THE SEA

We saw the famous palm-trees, which greet you fairly in daylight, and the first hills of Africa. These look wild and animal-like, huge recumbent monsters, covered with rough, short, thick hair. Quite savage. With bush fires scattered about

In the estuary more than forty ships were at anchor. The next morning twenty more filed in, full of troops, accompanied by big warships. A whole division, we were told, and two thousand French soldiers with them.

So the English *were* masters of the seas; and so the French were beginning to be a nation again!

I called on a French major in the town. The French flag with the Lorraine cross flew over the building. He was very busy. I was glad.

PART III
CONTACT WITH AFRICA

PART III

CONTACT WITH AFRICA

THE FIRST NEGRO

The first negro I met man to man came on board at Takoradi with a gang of some sixty blacks who were to load and unload the ship at Boma and at Matadi in the Belgian Congo, then at Libreville in the Gaboons, and to be shipped back. It seems that these blacks from West Africa work better than the equatorial negroes.

They love these long sea trips, when they are paid all the time, and well fed, according to their notions of food, on the way.

Our gang set up a regular negro village with tents and mats on the middle deck below us, and in another port another contingent occupied the fore-deck. The officers' deck, as higher neutral ground, separated the two villages. The negro is dreadfully parochial, and contact between the two villages might have bred fighting. As only one steam cauldron existed on the fore-deck, a young French negro from the Ivory Coast had right of way through us and the foreign village. He was the after-deck cook, and was called Louis.

The other negroes regarded him in peace. The food taboo, understood by all, was upon him.

WATCH OVER AFRICA

A BLACK LEADER

Louis heard from my accent that I was French, and not Belgian. Merely overhearing me talk to the officers while he crossed our deck without, apparently, listening, was enough for Louis. So one morning a man, who was an obvious leader, came and asked to speak to me. He wanted to report that in all villages of the French Ivory Coast there was hunger and discontent. All who were able to do so were crossing into the Gold Coast colony to find work under the English. All the negroes were in their hearts with de Gaulle, and wished he would come; they were ready to fight for him.

The man was polite, intelligent, virile in attitude and speech. He spoke for ten minutes without a single mistake in his French or a lapse of taste in his speech. Personally he had nothing to complain of or to beg for: he had a good job, and was quite comfortable. The second mate photographed us during this palaver.

ANOTHER CAPTAIN

A third negro clan was formed on our ship at Takoradi, where a very small tug was hoisted on board. A tall negro walked up to the captain's deck (where two passengers had been made to feel at home) and introduced himself thus: 'Captain, I am the captain.'

This tug, or launch, was specially built to handle tree trunks, and was to help in loading the ship with special woods at Libreville.

The Belgian captain, not at all put out, said merely: 'Good day, captain, where is the chief engineer?'

The negro then walked back to the deck stairs and

CONTACT WITH AFRICA

signalled a second negro up. This was the chief engineer; and a third negro was the crew.

YET ANOTHER CAPTAIN

But the next day, at the last moment, as we were getting ready to start, another negro walked up to the captain and said. 'I am the captain,' producing his papers with the Elder Dempster agent's signature.

'How many captains have you in that tug?' asked the Belgian captain.

The chief engineer of the tug, who fortunately had not changed, explained. The first negro captain was the brother of the second, and had come to represent him—probably unasked. All negroes are brothers, and you never know, the whites are so crazy that something may always be picked up on a ship. So any occasion to go on board anywhere is good enough.

Would the white captain be angry? He was not.

The three black sailors, the captain, the chief engineer, and the crew, kept themselves to themselves, despised all the other negroes, and spent their time, the crew in cleaning the tug, the chief engineer and the captain in sleeping and eating.

THE BONNY RIVER

Thus at last we reached Matadi.

We sailed up the Congo River—a great and welcome change from the Bonny River, apparently so named by some drunk and demented Scotch second engineer. This Bonny River lies in the fold of Africa, just as an ulcer might lie in the arm-pit of a doomed negro.

WATCH OVER AFRICA

That spot on the captain's map bore the words: 'Low mangrove swamp' And so it was. We had watched this low mangrove swamp for many miles on both sides slimy, impenetrable low scrub, of which the black, loathsome lower stems live half the time in the filthy water. We thought of the first seamen, Portuguese perhaps, whose stout hearts had not quailed when they went up this waterway, probably because it was very wide, and because water is a clean, comfortable, human element, a good protection against devils. But certainly their hearts must have quailed later when, during the night, they had heard the infernal tom-toms spreading bewitched vibrations through the foul air, and transforming all the twisted branches into unearthly monstrous snakes. Certainly they must have turned back those nights and made for the open sea through the worst mosquito barrage in the world. And yet the lovely site of Port Harcourt was waiting on the other side of the low mangrove swamp islands.

And now a railway starts from Port Harcourt, and it took my friend the English engineer up to a wonderful plateau, at a decent altitude, where everything that is European grows and the climate is kind to Englishmen, and where there are 'pagans' who go naked—and also tin mines.

But a week after that we reached the Congo River.

THE CONGO

None of that 'Bonny' touch about the Congo. A noble river, with decent hills and lovely woods and a great expanse of obviously flowing water.



GENERAL DE GAULLE IN GABON

CONTACT WITH AFRICA

FRANCE

Some days earlier, from miles out at sea, I had seen through the captain's glasses Cape Lopez, that hides Port Gentil of the Gaboons. This was where France was now, in March 1941.

NEGROES BEGIN AT CALAIS

Forty-one days by sea from Liverpool. Negroes. And France used to begin at Calais, one hour's sailing from England. Now negroes—and France—begin here, forty-one days from Liverpool.

THANK GOD FOR DE GAULLE

The friendly Belgians were very kind. The fall of France has filled Africa with awe. De Gaulle has filled Africa with hope. The friendly Belgians said to me: 'With a German commission at Brazzaville what could we do? On the other side of us is ex-German South-West Africa. Rhodesia and the Cape were in danger. We were lost.

'Thank God for de Gaulle.

'Watch over the Chad, the first fort of defence for Cape Town.'

THE BLACK SENTINEL

The administrator lent me his car. With his flag flying on the bonnet we came to a splendid new bridge beyond the great hills over a splendid torrent. Ten yards away from the bridge a black sentinel, as splendid as the torrent and the hills, lowered his bayonet against us. My host said: 'Let us get out of the car. Orders

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are orders. I might be able to override him or I might not. In any case he would not understand, and then, some other time, what would happen? So many bridges have been blown up in the Low Countries by men who flew Allied commanders' flags.'

We got out. The negro lowered his bayonet still more, pointing to our feet. No doubt in his kindly soul he meditated crippling us, not killing us. We made him understand we would come no nearer, admired the view, admired him, and went away.

Our black chauffeur was indignant. He would have gone over that bridge. That is why white men are necessary here.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE

Next I spent a day by myself in a reserved first-class railway carriage, going from Matadi to Leopoldville. A tête-à-tête with the land. Was I getting deeper into the soul of Africa, or merely having a good rest from the heat, sitting at the open window in a pleasant draught, comforted with sandwiches and beer, entertained by the landscape and the numerous negro villages along the line?

The blacks are not nearly black enough. Who has found negroes in Africa? I vow I did not see a single one. Their colour varies from that of dirty milk to that of a beverage made up of half coffee and half milk. Real black is found only in the vegetable kingdom, in solid ebony, in black coffee. I was told that the Bantu races, who came down from Egypt and occupied the whole of Africa except the extreme west and the north, had among their ancestors some Caucasian tribes,

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and are thus nearer to us Europeans than any of the Semitic peoples. It happened very long ago—but anyway, I never saw a real black man, such as you can see on any fine day in the streets of Bordeaux.

ANIMALS

My second disillusion was with the animals. The Belgian captain failed to produce a single crocodile lying on any one of the many sandbanks visible when we went up the Congo River for a whole day. Lions, panthers, giraffes, and even elephants are also much more frequent in cages in the great cities of Europe than along the railway line from Matadi to Leopoldville.

I inquired for serpents everywhere, but none could be found for me. I began seriously to consider adopting a belief I had seen expressed in *The Times Literary Supplement* that serpents as a branch of the vertebrates (if that is their legal status) are on their way to annihilation, and that a few more million years will see the end of them.

The mosquitoes and the trees alone lived up to their reputation. Those are obviously the destined companions of mankind when all the wild animals are dead.

UNFRIENDLY CREATURES

Of course I realize that a day's railway journey into Africa gets you nowhere inside, but nevertheless it allows plenty of room for any European ladies who might object to very wild animals. I was told also that the other side of Africa and the tropics, north or south, are much better equipped with wild and creepy things than the western equatorial regions. This was

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obviously in the nature of an apology. But I did not really want to see all those unfriendly creatures

A LION

Nevertheless, I saw a small lion, as big as a terrier, in the drawing-room of the education officer in Brazzaville. This pretty little wild beast was extremely timid, and bolted when I came in. It went and hid behind an arm-chair.

When it was fully convinced that I would not eat it, it came out and began to play. It was only a few weeks old, I believe. It had teeth, and duly chewed up all the table legs, chair legs, human legs it could get at. When it approached you with these playful intentions it was best to give it a smart tap on the side of its babyish head, and then the affronted and whining little beast would run away and hide again. But it did not learn its lesson, so guests at meals were advised to put on top boots to be chewed. I understood that it was under the mental delusion that it was chewing up the bottom of tree trunks in some ancestral jungle.

The education officer's wife was delighted with her nurseling. She fed it out of a huge milk bottle with a big teat, like a true baby.

It was very pretty to look at when it was not trying to chew you, and it is very difficult to get one. When they become older you have, of course, to get rid of them—and some say that the affectionate creatures then die of heart-break.

My own feeling is that you should not interfere too obviously with the processes of nature. I even disapprove of cutting flowers.

CONTACT WITH AFRICA

'BRAZZA' VERSUS 'LEO'

The Stanley Pool, which separates Leopoldville from Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo, is crossed in less than half an hour. When the Belgians want to have a good time they go to 'Brazza', when the French want to, they go to 'Leo'—a much bigger town. Each clan is persuaded that the other side of the river is much pleasanter. If you turn round and round three times on the boat deck when you are in the middle of the pool, you cannot tell the difference.

TORNADO

Hospitality under the equator is on the grand scale. I was to be put up by the general. I was given a whole house to myself complete with black servants and a black chauffeur—a clever man with a good car. Servants sleep out, and during the first night alone in that huge house I was awakened by a truly terrifying noise from the whole atmosphere gone mad: the wind was indescribable, the windows, doors, and walls seemed to me to be dancing about, the cataracts of heaven were obviously unloosed. I got up, I put on some sort of garment, and enjoyed the show, wondering a little. I noted that no one, negro or other, was about: so obviously this was not the end of the world. I noted also that the house seemed made of some elastic substance, not completely waterproof, but sufficiently so. Apart from a shutter or two, nothing actually blew off.

When I had come to the conclusion that there was no danger, I crept back into bed under my mosquito net and took off the garment.

I learnt the next day when Masamba, the negro boy,

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appeared with breakfast that there had been a tornado during the night, and that there is generally one every day at this season.

The season is the hot season, when it rains. During the dry season the weather is cooler. This seemed to me completely absurd, but such is the equator.

PART IV
THE FREE FRENCH IN AFRICA



GENERAL SICÉ

PART IV

THE FREE FRENCH IN AFRICA

GENERAL SICÉ

General Sicé received me on my first evening. He is French Equatorial Africa. He is a tall spare man, with black-and-white hair, well over sixty, and a great doctor, the head of the medical and welfare services. Of his greatness as a doctor I have heard much, but am incompetent to do more than record it. Typhoid does not exist in his dominions, which are several times the size of France. Sleeping sickness has been vanquished (on my way back I travelled with a hydrographer who had recovered from it and was perfectly normal).

I was struck by the dauntless personality of the man. He had been with de Gaulle from the first, and he was looking at the world chaos with the same eyes that had looked for thirty or forty years at Equatorial Africa as a whole, a battlefield where diseases strange and potent were to be conquered. Now the diseases of the world were to be diagnosed, controlled, and conquered. The Germans or the trypanosome—the idea is the same. Common sense, science, and a broad vision can conquer any enemy of mankind.

Since the evil thing is really condemned in the eyes of God it will be conquered. The man is deeply religious. But evil has to be driven out of the would-be conqueror first.

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He spoke calmly, but with unexpected outbursts of passion and shame. He came from some province deep in the heart of France. He had come out so many years ago to serve mankind and God—and where was France now?

I felt that France was here—in this simplicity and in this power. If de Gaulle has many men like this one behind him, he will win. Too many of the best of the French were out in the wide world; and now are not imprisoned under Hitler.

GENERAL DE LARMINAT

General de Larminat gave me a dinner the next day. A very different man—young, very active, obviously an athlete, very good-looking in a bronze way, very tall too. So many of de Gaulle's men are tall. Has some ancient race waked up in France in answer to France's need? General de Gaulle is himself a very tall man. I believe—I am not sure—that he springs from the Boulonnais. He was born in Lille. Now a chain of small hills in northern France, known as 'les collines du Boulonnais,' produces that salient of Cap Gris Nez that advances to meet England. It is a fairly large region, with a peculiar geology of its own, and it produces a race of horses famous for their tremendous size. They are giants among horses, and great for the plough or for pulling enormous weights in huge carts. The geology must have produced men of that size too. Towns in the plains north of this region, such as Douai and Lille and other Fleming towns, all have legends of ancient giants that protected or despoiled at will—legends handed down from pre-

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historic times, when probably the huge men of the Boulonnais came down with their huge horses and could not be resisted. Processions still take place in the northern cities, in which wicker-work giants covered with painted cloth are carried through the streets to deliver the people from their foes.

I knew them in Douai in my schooldays—Gayant and Binbin—and the people of Douai, I am sure, pray to them still in their dreams to come and drive out the Hun

De Gaulle is the answer to that prayer

GIANTS

Gayant is a huge giant, as broad as a house Binbin, his son, is as tall, but thin by comparison De Larminat plays Binbin to de Gaulle's Gayant. De Larminat is tall and thin, and a pleasure to look at. Quick in bodily movement, quick in thought and decision, his whole being is directed to the war. He governs both Equatorial Africa and the French Cameroons as high commissioner for de Gaulle, and the fate of Africa is in his hands He is the watch over the Chad, the first sentinel to protect Rhodesia and Cape Town from Hitler. He is the fighting man, while Sicé is the scientist and the father of the people. He needs the qualities he has: courage of the mind, vision of the spirit to grasp the situation of a continent in his keeping, strategic ability to foresee and to foil any enemy moves. If Hitler strikes south from Cyrenaica, he meets de Larminat as his first adversary, as he met Wavell when striking east.

De Larminat's soldiers have already struck and moved forward half-way across the desert that stretches

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from their borders to Benghazi, and occupy Kufra, the key of the southern route.

I only know de Larminat to look at and to talk to—but here again I can say that de Gaulle has a second worthy of his cause. There are enough men round de Gaulle now to take France in hand in the hour of victory, and make her into a great nation again. They have been sifted through a sieve, they have had to come over a line of fire, physically and mentally, in order to reach de Gaulle's camp, and obviously many of those who have come through that sieve have been purified of the useless husk.

Madame de Larminat had just joined the general after escaping, at the risk of her life, from a concentration camp, where she had been put after a first failure to leave France.

HIGH POLICY

General de Larminat rather felt that I might cause trouble as the author of the short book *Regeneration*, in which I expound the view that 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,' and that something should be done about it.

But I am a civilian with no responsibilities. The High Commissioner, whose mind is on war, wants peace within his army and his dominions.

Hence this document, which states very clearly the position of the Free French in February 1941. One Shakespearian sentence must be made to stand out from it.

We refuse, during this crisis, to weaken ourselves further by looking into the responsibilities for this disaster; the

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political disorders that have brought it about belong to the region of death—France is still alive—we are fighting men

Here is wisdom, and not of the pedestrian and terrestrial kind. The search for responsibilities belongs to the region of death. The future is to be opened by fighting, now, in union with all who will fight on our side.

THE POSITION OF THE FREE FRENCH AS REGARDS NATIONAL PROBLEMS

By GENERAL DE LARMINAT

(High Commissioner for Free French Africa)

Original French is given in Appendix II

Recent information comes from France which has enlightened us as to the arguments used against us by our enemies. It is necessary to look into those arguments and confute them so that no fundamental subjects of quarrel should subsist between patriotic Frenchmen. On the day when victory and freedom are obtained we must have motives only of union, and none of quarrel among ourselves. One of the most frequent arguments used against us is that we are supposed to be in favour of the parliamentary system and political habits that prevailed before the war, that our aim is to re-establish them as they were and that the camp we hold forms a refuge for the worst elements in the former political life of the nation. But our position is that of Clemenceau when he took over in 1918. Our only business is the war. Our motto, 'Honneur et Patrie,' excludes political ideologies of any

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kind Our only aim is to win the war and give back to our country its independence and its greatness We want to liberate France, not in order to re-establish or establish in France this or that political regime, but so that France may recover the freedom and the power from which its regeneration will come. It is France herself who will then find the principles, the men, the institutions, that will bring about this regeneration

We know only too well that a nation does not undergo calamities such as ours without deep causes We know that it is necessary to investigate those causes; we know that radical reforms will be necessary in our country.

This is not at present our business. When the house is on fire that is not the moment to try to lay down new foundations, even if the foundations of the house are faulty. First of all the fire must be put out. Once the main building is saved, then the architect is called in to rebuild, and to rebuild from the foundations if it proves necessary.

The German danger is that fire which threatens to destroy the whole of our country We are to put out the fire, so we call to all men of goodwill We do not ask them to justify their opinions either political or religious; we do not investigate their race. All we want from them is the will to serve, unconditionally, in the cause of saving the freedom of our country. We refuse, during this crisis, to weaken ourselves further by looking into the responsibilities for this disaster; the political disorders that have brought it about belong to the region of death. It is too late to do anything about it. While France is still alive, while

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France is in great danger, France must be saved. Such is our position. We are fighting men, who look solely to the means of conquering the enemy. The French in France can no longer fight, they are forced to be passive, and we understand that they perhaps may have time to think over the causes of what has happened to them. Such thinking is certainly necessary. But we beg them not to forget that all their thinking will be useless if the enemy conquers and forces us to obey his laws, for his laws will annihilate any possibility for us to choose our destiny.

Let no one forget that our enemy became strong again because he took advantage of our internal quarrels, that in June 1940 with diabolical ingenuity the enemy succeeded in breaking down completely our will to resist, exploiting through his accomplices inside France the political quarrels of the French, causing whatever was left in us of fighting power to be used in the search for responsibilities. Let no one forget that whatever can be done to weaken or embarrass the enemy is a thousand times more important for the salvation of our country than the best-grounded criticism of the causes of our downfall and the working out of the best-balanced political systems. The French in France have a Government whose chief is highly respectable, and of which certain members are undoubtedly patriotic and honest. Nevertheless, whereas we say nothing of previous French Governments, devoting no attention to them since they are gone and are now powerless, we attack with vigour this Vichy Government because the Vichy Government is in power now, and its decisions can sway in a terrible and perhaps decisive manner the

WATCH OVER AFRICA

destiny of our country, in so far as directly, or indirectly, they help our enemies.

As to the reforms within France proper now being carried out by the Vichy Government, who seem to think that such reforms are essential, we pass no judgment on them, for we are too far away and not well informed. But we think that this is an unfortunate time in which to reform the structure of the country, when the enemy is in occupation of the largest, the richest, the best-populated part of the country, when the enemy holds captive some two million of the best of the French, when the enemy agents have power over the whole of our life even within the councils of the Vichy Government.

Such a Government as now must exist in France should look upon themselves as temporary administrators, whose sole ambition is to look after what can still be preserved in spite of the enemy's hold over us. Were they to understand their function in this way we should respect and admire them; but we cannot admire the Vichy Government. We may respect the intentions of those among them who are honest and disinterested, but we cannot respect the principles on which they act.

Joan of Arc has been made our national saint because in her is symbolized the rebellion of the national soul against a foreign king brought into power by the highest authorities in the kingdom. The popularity of Gambetta and of the men of the 'Défense nationale' in 1870 came from the fact that in them came to life our will to resist the conquering Prussian who had brought down the legal Government. Joan of Arc,



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and also the Republicans of 1870, fought without any outside help, with very weak inside forces. St Joan conquered. Gambetta and his men saved the honour of France, and prepared a national rebirth.

Our aim is also to save the honour of France, and to conquer with the alliance of the powerful British Empire. This is an honourable and reasonable enterprise. It is sufficient for our strength. Let us be free of Machiavellian and far-fetched ambitions. Sufficient unto the day is the labour thereof.

Another accusation which is raised against us is that we are playing the British game, and that the British game is opposed to French interests.

We must not be surprised by this; another diabolical ruse of the Germans has been, with the help of their accomplices inside France, to divert towards the British the anger of the French people when they saw they had been beaten. Nevertheless, we know that the overwhelming majority of the French people are profoundly convinced that the victory of the British Empire will be the salvation of France. We are the faithful children of France. In no way do we look upon ourselves as rebels. We are disobeying the Vichy Government in order the better to save France. We are in the situation of the more courageous son who leaves a ruined family and who goes to a new country to acquire the means of re-establishing honour and wealth in the family. His father may curse him for going away, his brothers most likely will envy his courage even if they cannot imitate him. He knows that he is going away from his family in order to help his family better. Such is our relationship to metropolitan

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France. In no way do we wish to separate from France, our feelings are those of dutiful sons. Our only claim is to be free to fight for the liberation of our country

Our relationship to Great Britain is exactly that which would have been established if a metropolitan Government in June 1940 had organized itself in Africa and continued the war. Such a Government would have entered into arrangements with Great Britain in the economic, financial, and military fields so as to be able to live and fight. That is exactly what we have done.

No one would have for one instant thought of accusing such a Government of selling itself to Great Britain, and so separating itself from France. No one accused France or England of wishing to annex Poland on the day when France and England took over the reconstitution and maintenance of Polish forces. The situation is perfectly clear. Each country has kept its national sovereignty, but the resources of all the Allied countries, such as they were, have been pooled in the common fight. Some say that should an English victory have the effect of reconstructing in France too weak a nation, and of once again leaving it, when established, helpless to face a German state which the conqueror will propitiate, then it would be better for France to come to an arrangement with Germany at once, and to submit to the German law. The men who think in this way cannot forgive England for not having understood in 1918 that the period of French imperialism in Europe was closed, and that now German imperialism was to be feared and to be fought.

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It is true that this was a tragic error, but the British have now understood

They have understood so well that Winston Churchill was able in June 1940 to propose to France that the two nations, France and England, should be united as one nation. This bold formula was not meant to provide a temporary expedient, it was the sign of a revolution in the ideas and feelings of Great Britain. The British have realized that their duty is to organize Europe after this war, and to ensure their own safety—the safety of European civilization—to which they are passionately attached. Their interest forbids them to fail in this duty, and they will not fail. A European order based on respect of the true liberty of man excludes totalitarian states. France must learn to indulge no longer in civil factions and civil strife. A united France alone can collaborate efficiently with Great Britain, and it is only through the collaboration of France that Great Britain can establish a new order on the Continent. Therefore to Great Britain in her victory, the re-establishment of France, in all its prerogatives as an independent State and in its full national strength, is a vital necessity.

By the side of Great Britain we shall help to rebuild Europe against totalitarian barbarism. In this way France will fulfil her historic function. We, the Free French, want to prepare this resurrection of our country by refusing to make any pact with the barbarians, however powerful they may be materially; we want to fight for those values from which peace will be born in justice, justice both international and social.

PART V
BANTU MIXTURE

PART V

BANTU MIXTURE

WITH DIGNITY

The lady who had just been appointed Directress of Secondary Teaching had escaped in June 1940 from a big university town where the rector of the university assembled all his personnel and said to them. 'The Germans are arriving they must be received with dignity' This active and still young lady decided that she would not receive the Germans at all. She packed a bag and got on a bicycle, rode seventy kilometres to a Channel port, found and bought a small motor boat with the help of several other non-collaborators, and reached the Channel Islands. Thence London, thence Brazzaville

BLACK VERSUS WHITE

The education officer (whose wife kept the lion cub as a pet) had come to the country in a totally different way. He was an old *broussard*, a bush-man, as his kind call themselves, and had taught the blacks in West African villages—real blacks, those—before he had joined de Gaulle and tried to whitewash the Bantu races. He was by instinct a big game hunter, and found this country far tamer than the Guineas or Senegal.

But he had over-exerted himself, inspecting and

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directing bush schools over immense territories, and he was paying the penalty in sickness and suffering. The equator is kind only to the lazy or to the very wise.

He believed in the future of the black races. He was the first white man to startle me with the theory that the blacks are potentially wiser and cleverer than the whites. I met several experienced administrators later who held the same view. But others held that the education officer's views were produced by the fact that he had to do only with very young negroes. In their later youth blacks degenerate. The education officer, while admitting this, maintained that this early degenerescence is not a necessary phenomenon, but is due to causes that can be removed, nor is it universal; many negroes do not so degenerate, but those keep out of our way. Town negroes are inferior to the mass of their races, and should not be taken as fair specimens. The true negroes remain in their bush villages.

All the administrators who had lived for long periods in the bush and had become intimate with the negroes held much the same views as the education officer, though many thought of the fully developed intelligent negroes as exceptions in a mass of rather inferior people. But then is not this also the situation among the whites?

All agreed that a true system of education could produce results that would astonish Europeans, and that since in this climate black bodies were in every way better than any white physique, the future of equatorial countries went with the future of the black races. Wisdom for us in this matter consisted in educating the negro so that he could utilize the amazing wealth of the land and lift himself to a higher spiritual

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level. The two things often do go together And the land is rich.

But a bad problem was the situation of the women. The blacks look upon work on the land as being the special task of the women. Here is a great complication. A negro will consent to be trained to be a gardener to a white man, but send him back to his village trained as a gardener and he will merely sink back into apathy and make his women work in the fields in the old-fashioned futile way.

Other trades, however, the negro will take up with pleasure. He will work wood and iron, drive machines of all kinds, be a tailor. Will he in due time work the land? For the white man, yes, under orders and with pay. But for himself?—all shook their heads.

A BISHOP

I went to see a bishop. He was a much overworked man, with a long beard and a frail face. Rather young, and I liked him. His beard was blond, and he came from Alsace. He was very kind, but he did not trust me at all. I hoped in due time to overcome his mistrust. Bishops are slow creatures. If they were made generals this war would never end.

MISSIONARIES IN FRANCE

We discussed missionaries. I tried to flatter this missionary bishop a little, and said that I had noticed in France that the missionary spirit was lacking among the clergy.

He looked at me suspiciously.

'Well,' I said, 'allow me to express an opinion. In

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your Church *séminaires* you do not bring up your future young priests properly. You teach them theology and all that, I have no doubt. But then you send your young priest, say, at twenty-two, into a village where the mayor is a Socialist, the State teacher a rabid anti-clerical, and the peasants don't care anyway. Your young priest is completely nonplussed. He can visit a dozen or so pious young ladies, and he will always be given a meal at the nearest château. But put him in front of a mistrustful peasant or a Communist workman. What impression will he produce on them? None. St Thomas is no good to them. When they get to know him they think him a mild, well-intentioned lunatic. Before that they think him a hypocrite, a man who says he believes things which are unbelievable—the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and so on.

'Now make up your mind that a very large section of the people of France are pagans. The workmen are materialists, mostly; the peasants are anti-clericals, mostly. The *bourgeois* pretend to be Christians, but really they don't believe in your fairy tales. They merely think that your preaching will help them to keep their money. Therefore your young priests in France must be brought up as missionaries, as men who will have to carry Christianity to people who do not know it. Until you change your education system within the Church you will get nowhere.'

The bishop thought a little, and then said: 'Perhaps you are right. I have noticed during my stays in France that parishes entrusted to priests who had been missionaries were more flourishing spiritually than the

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others. But I feared I was making a mistake, and had a natural prejudice in favour of missionaries. But you have given me an explanation. Perhaps you are right.'

MISSIONARIES IN AFRICA

Then the bishop warmed up a little and said 'You see, you State teachers from France have made a mistake here too. You are trying to bring up negroes to be good agnostics, good atheists, to have what you call scientific minds. Therefore you do not teach them anything about religion; only arithmetic, and history, and geography, and physiology, and all that. You remain strictly non-religious. What do you get? The negro acquires as much as he can of your learning. But all he wants it for is to get on in your scheme, so as to become a well-paid parasite in your administration. Meanwhile, he keeps all his beliefs. Witchcraft still rules over Africa. We could tell you tales—you think you rule the blacks. You do not. The witch doctors do. They now avoid the practices that would openly bring your police upon them, but mostly you do not find them out. You just teach them hypocrisy. The murders that are committed—that you do not know about. The witchcraft ceremonies. What the women do—what is done to the women. Arithmetic and history cannot help you there at all.

'You must get at the negro's soul, not so much at his mind. If you teach him religion is all moonshine he just grins, and thinks that you are a fool. You must teach him a *new* religion, a better one. His soul accepts and longs for exactly what your Communist workman or your sordid peasant will not accept—the

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Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and all that. The black man has powers of faith that you have lost. He would rather have the Virgin Birth than a cheap and dirty primer on physiology. Now teach him a *new* and a *wonderful* religion, full of mysteries and miracles, and he can come to love it, and look to the missionary as his father, and reject utterly the witch doctor and his degraded witchcraft. Because the need of his soul that they filled wickedly will be filled splendidly. Then you will have a new point of departure for the black races and for Christianity.'

Thus the bishop turned the tables on me. The theology of St Thomas might be no good to the French workman. But then Herbert Spencer was no good to the French negro.

THE BISHOP WAKES UP

'Keep up the old customs of the blacks?' he said. 'You do not know those customs. Rule through the chiefs? You do not know those chiefs. The witch doctor runs the customs, the witch doctor runs the chiefs. Christianize Africa, slowly, gently, persistently. Give orders to your administrators to work with my missionaries. Wean the negroes away from witchcraft, not by force—that makes them hypocrites; not by science—that does not touch their souls. By Christ, by what they can receive of Christ. Later, they will receive more.'

'Do you know,' the bishop said, 'what would happen if you really did teach them that there is no religion, that there is nothing? Nothing to believe in? They would die. Just die.'

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'They need a more wonderful world, not a less wonderful one. And do you know, besides, why France is dying? For the same reason. Because you have taught France that there is nothing to believe in. No one to believe in. No Christ. No Resurrection. No Virgin Birth. Then France has decided, deep in her soul, that life is not worth living. Live? What for? To make money?—to eat?—to drink? Why have children if there is no Virgin Birth? If in every human birth there is not a virgin birth, if in every human conception there is not an immaculate conception, in some degree at least, some particle of the divine in human life, then it is not worth while living.'

He looked me straight in the eyes.

'Then it is not worth while fighting the Germans, if that is what *you* care about.'

I had to beat a hasty and total retreat. I told the bishop, of course, that I agreed with him. But, nevertheless, I held to my first point: that there were not enough people like him in France to convince the people of France, not to mention the *instituteurs primaires*.

In short, our whole system of education must be reformed; both in the Church schools and in the State schools, both for the whites and for the negroes.

Curious that the same problems should exist in France and in the Congo, or rather the reverse sides of the same problem: too much belief for the blacks; not enough belief for the whites. And so they meet. How can they come together? If they could the problem would be solved.

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THE IVORY MAN

A black man—not so black either, more like ivory that is not very white—came to sell me ivory curios. He said he made them himself. All my friends told me this was not likely; but then some of them saw him and said he probably did—he was not a Hausa, he was not a trader; he was willing to do work on instructions received. The work never quite tallied with the instructions received. He came to see me several times, although I bought very little from him. The English authorities had allowed me to take ten pounds in all out of England. The ivory man did not seem to mind, and Masamba, my head boy, stated once at breakfast that the ivory man was a great friend of his, and very wise.

MALE OR FEMALE

One day the ivory man was introduced by Masamba while I was having breakfast. He showed me some ebony busts, of which I bought two for a very fair daughter I have, who adores black things. They were really hideous, according to all our standards, but wonderfully realistic, and perhaps great art, as great art goes nowadays. He said that one was male and one female. I could not tell. So I asked which was which. Masamba was shocked at my stupidity, but enlightened me (he thought) by saying: 'Of course the pretty one is the female.' I looked, and looked again, and said, 'Oh! of course.' But yet I could not tell which: to me their hideousness was perfect in both cases, and it would have seemed invidious to distinguish between them.

So I left it at that, hoping my daughter would know.



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MASAMBA

One day Masamba said to me: 'The ivory man has had a dream about you, a dream connected with ivory. He does not dare to tell you about it. But I think perhaps it would interest you.'

I thought this was a dodge to sell me more ivory, but Masamba said no; business was over now, and the ivory man was very wise. Besides, would I look at him—he was not really a black man. He came from another race altogether; not a white race, either. I suggested had he a Chinese strain? For I had noticed some Mongolian features about, even among villagers. But Masamba said 'no' the ivory man belonged to a much older and wiser race, connected with ivory and dreams—not black, not white, not yellow, but very wise.

A little tired of Masamba's wisdom, I said, all right, let him come.

SHAMED

He came, then, as a visitor, and I asked him to sit down. This was apparently a breach of etiquette, for he said he would be 'shamed'—'honteux' was his word. In the end, on Masamba explaining my good faith, the ivory man sat on the floor, and Masamba remained standing. Sitting on the floor is not sitting down. They both spoke atrocious French, but understandable once you got used to it. Points were made perfectly clear really.

A DREAM

So what he said, translated and simplified and put in order, came to this. He, in a dream, had seen me.

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I was profoundly asleep. Several thousand years asleep, he said.

Here I interrupted him, for the first of many times. 'What does it mean, several thousand years asleep? Had I been asleep for several thousand years?'

'No,' he said, 'but in sleep you can go to a great distance; if you sleep deeply your spirit can travel several thousand miles or many thousand years; it is the same.'

Therefore I had been asleep to a depth of several thousand years. Now in that sleep some very ancient spirits had come to visit me.

I interrupted again. Did that mean that this happened several thousand years ago? I thought I had had a brain-wave.

No, he said patiently. It happened now. So I was baffled and listened again.

The ancient spirits were white on black. They belonged to his race. What did that mean, white on black? Here he unexpectedly produced from some pocket two pieces of ivory sculpture stuck on pieces of dark-brown wood, not ebony.

So I thought. After all, this is business. But he surprised me again, and I could see Masamba was grinning. The ivory man said: 'These are now yours. The spirits give them to you, you must not offer to pay me for them.' So I was baffled again.

Now it seems that these spirits, ivory white on black, came quite near to me; just to have a good look at me, and make a pact with me.

What pact? He did not know, and waved my interruptions aside somewhat impatiently, but not



IVORY FACTS AND EBONY BUSTS,
WITH A SNAPSHOT OF THE AUTHOR ON THE WAY OUT

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impertinently. I had had a good look at them too, and they had floated away again, one by one, changing their faces as they drifted off. That was very important, their faces had changed in outline, while I was watching them receding, but always they were ivory-white on black, like the sculptures.

I was not frightened—I was profoundly astonished, because I had never, even in my deepest sleep, seen spirits as old, and I had made a pact with them. As each one went by I had said, in French, 'Ave Maria. Je vous salue, Marie.' That was the pact.

I am not known, even to myself, as a particularly devout Christian. So I asked the ivory man: 'Why should I say Ave Maria to ivory spirits? Was I praying to them? or to be protected from them? How is that a pact?' He said: 'Now what I say was not in the dream. It is only what I say. But I know about dreams.' Masamba chimed in again: 'He knows about dreams. He is very wise. He is very old.' And Masamba grinned. The ivory man did not seem to be particularly old. Thirty or so, I would have said. However, I did not raise the point, but said: 'Go on, tell me.'

So the ivory man said: 'The pact was this. You are a great white.' (I learnt later that *un grand blanc* means a white man from France, a man who is superior to the whites in Africa, such as a minister, an inspector, a metropolitan official higher in the hierarchy than colonials.) 'You must teach Christianity to the ancient spirits, who were here before the negroes.'

'How?' said I.

'By teaching it to the negroes; then the ancient

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spirits can see it in the minds of the negroes, and learn.'

'How is that a pact?' I said 'What do I get?'

'In exchange the ancient spirits and the negroes of to-day will help you against your enemies. They will fight for de Gaulle. They came from many thousand years to look into your mind to see what Christianity was, to see if they wanted it. So you said Ave Maria to them. So they saw that it was good. So they made this pact with you. That is why their faces changed as they went away. Christianity will change them.'

Here Masamba grinned again, and interrupted again and said 'I told you so; he is very wise, he is very old.'

MASAMBA GRINS

Masamba was grinning practically all the time. I came to think this was his natural state, and not an expression of opinion. When by chance he was serious, that must have been an expression of opinion.

A PACT

Still this matter disturbed me. 'How do you know,' I asked the ivory man, 'that I accepted this pact?'

'Because you said Ave Maria,' he said, and I could get no further in that direction.

So I asked him: 'Of course you are a Christian? Who taught you?' He answered: 'No one, I have always been a Christian. I know more about Christ than the bishop with his long beard. I found it out by myself, in my dreams, as I found out about you.'

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IGNORANCE OF BISHOPS

Of course this was irresistible, so I said: 'What do you know of Christ that the bishop does not know?' So he told me only too willingly.

'I met a man at the foot of a big waterfall'

'Where?' I said

'In a dream,' he said. 'This man was on a horse. So was I. We waited a long while, and then we jumped into the pool at the foot of the waterfall. Then we were two fishes, with big round heads and small tails, like two tears that drop, only made of light. So we got out of the water, but underneath the water, under the earth, in the light. There there were many hundreds, or thousands, of others. But we fell faster and passed them all. Then we saw the tops of trees, like a forest from a high mountain. But we fell through them, and they had no stems. Between the tops and the roots there was nothing but light, a cloud of light. Then we passed the roots and went through the earth, and the earth became rock, but we went on. Then the rocks became coloured like the rainbow, and we were going down through the rainbow. Then we saw that the rainbow was the head of God, who was sitting in the centre of the world. God was sitting, very sad. Christ was dead, and His body, all clothed in white and very stiff and straight, was stretched across God's knees. Then all at once we saw the dead stiff Christ begin to turn from left to right on God's knees, like a gate swinging. And it banged against something that we could not see, that stopped it, and, like a gate that will not shut, it banged three or four times, and then swung back again as it was at first. Then all was quiet

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and the time of the Resurrection came Christ sat up slowly and beautifully by the right hand of God, and God was glad, and God disappeared—there was only Christ, sitting in the centre of the world with the rainbow round His head. He held the Cross in His right hand. On the Cross was the image of Christ suffering.

‘Suddenly a wild beast, a leopard or a panther, sprang at the Christ on the Cross, and tore it down. It was terrible. The body came down, only the nails held it by the feet. Some terrible people came and took it away, and skinned the leopard and nailed his skin on the cross and worshipped the leopard. All the time Christ was sitting on the throne in the centre of the world, with the rainbow round His head, looking on unmoved while all this was going on on the Cross. He was holding in His right hand. Then some good people came, with a ladder. They took off the leopard’s skin, with pincers, pulling out the nails, standing on the top of the ladder. Then they nailed a white lamb’s skin on the Cross, where the leopard’s skin had been worshipped by the bad men. Then Christ was pleased. But all the time He was sitting in the centre of the world, with the rainbow round His head, holding the Cross in His right hand, taking notice of what men did with the Cross, but doing nothing.

‘So the other man and I, who had been together at the waterfall, were very happy.

‘Now do you think the bishop knows all this?’ said the ivory man.

And I had to admit that I believed the bishop did not. Masamba was still grinning. He had won.

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THE WRONG SIDE

Then the ivory man added, as an afterthought: 'While Christ was trying to sit up to take His place at the right hand of God, there came out of His body several little Christs, all white and stiff, that went away floating in the air to all parts of the world. Those are all the wrong religions of the world. Perhaps the bishop was one of them. And the Christ banging stiff and dead like a gate on the wrong side, that was another wrong religion, too '

Masamba no longer grinned. I did not dare to grin myself. I never saw that ivory man again, except perhaps in my dreams. I brought back as very precious objects the two pieces of ivory stuck on black wood. They are two faces—and here again I cannot tell which is male and which is female.

I never dared to ask Masamba.

I never dared to tell the bishop, either. So now I hope he will read this book

ADMINISTRATEUR

I soon had a permanent guest in my big house. At least he stayed for a week. He was an old *administrateur*, who had at one time governed the Chad when it was not so important. Now the de Gaulle people—whom he had joined at once—were sending him to South Africa on a very useful trade mission. He was not really interested in trade, but he had wrecked his health working too hard, like all of them, and the governor-general had found this kind way of sending him into a good climate for a while.

I discovered he came from the Pyrénées, from a little

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village near mine, but from Protestant stock. He was powerfully built, short and rather fat, with a very thick grizzled beard.

He looked at me with some suspicion because he had read a book of mine which seemed to him too religious. He was a fierce anti-clerical. I soon won his heart by asking him about the negroes. He loved them, and told me endless stories of them. He had lived for thirty years in the equatorial forest. He told me endless stories to their honour.

'White people,' he said, 'people who live in Brazzaville and degenerate places like that, will tell you that the blacks are thieves and liars, have no gratitude, and so on. It may be true of the sort of blacks they breed in towns. Black men should not live in towns. Nor should white men, if the truth were known. Of course all the blacks here are parasites, bred to live on the whites, of course they become thieves and liars. But in the bush it is not so. A man can go through the forest for a thousand miles, through Bangi to Fort Archambault, and sleep in the forest every night, and if he behaves honourably he will not be molested by man or beast, and no one will tell him a lie or steal from him. He will be received hospitably and treated with respect wherever he goes, and he will be happy.

'Once I went for an eight days' ride on horseback to relieve a man who was sick. I found on getting to the post that he was better. I stayed for a while to make sure, and meanwhile heard by messenger that I had been transferred to a new post. A month later, stopping for the night in an empty hut that had been built for travellers in a deserted part, I found some boxes

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which I thought I recognized. On investigating I discovered they were mine: all my things had been sent after me. The negroes in charge had carried them about from place to place, then lost me, then become discouraged, and gone home to their respective villages. But they had dumped all my things in a guest house in the thickest forest, knowing that sooner or later some white man would come, see my name written on the boxes, and get them to me somehow. And it happened that I had come myself. Not a thing was missing. All the negroes were gone beyond recall. No one even knew who they were, since they had been changed several times. They could have taken everything and never been found again.

'Another time a friend and I, riding through the forest, met a caravan of negro porters all by themselves. Their white man had fallen sick a week before, and had sent them on. They were carrying small heavy boxes of gold coins, going to Fort Lamy. The boxes had been badly made, and many had become disjointed after weeks of hard handling. Pieces of gold had fallen out, and had been picked up by the negroes, and were taken out from all possible pockets and piled before us. All the negroes could have stolen gold and not been found out. When the sum was counted at Fort Lamy at the end, perhaps a dozen pieces of gold were missing, not having been retrieved from the grass.

'Once, when I was young and foolhardy, I went into a marsh with a dozen policemen one night to apprehend a malefactor in hiding. We did not find him. Next morning we saw a boat making for the Belgian side of the river. My man was in it, alone, and was

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soon overtaken by my big police boat. He was brought to me, and I sat in judgment. He said to me: "White man, you looked for me all night in the marsh; you did not see me, but I saw you. Look! My assegai was within a hand's breath of your chest—had I thrust, so, you would have been dead."

'I said: "You knew what I would do to you when I caught you. Why did you not thrust?"'

'He would not tell. He was ashamed. At last he said: "Because you are white."

'Now this was a murderer, condemned to death. Yet he would not save himself by killing a white man. He was sentenced, but not executed, and, as a prisoner for life, leads really quite a happy existence working for the Government. We do not work them too hard nowadays. You know very often the most reliable man in a gang of prisoners working out a sentence is the man who is condemned to death. He is often the boss: as a rule he has killed his victim for a perfectly honourable reason. We have to condemn him, but we do not kill him. All the blacks understand. It does not in any way incite to crime, it makes them respect us.

'At one time I lived with the young daughter of a chief—the usual arrangement. I was kind to her, and she was loyal. I had occasion to go over to a chief who had proved unable to deal with some small rebellion. He had several times promised me to send his young men to deal with the dozen or so recalcitrants who had migrated to another part of the forest for some silly reason or other—taxes or something; really to show the chief that they felt nothing but contempt

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for him. The chief took no action, because of their families, and wanted me to take action. So I came over with a dozen *tirailleurs*, and made the chief call and arm all his young men, and we went and rounded up the hotheads. Of course they wanted a fight—that was the whole idea, really. They ambushed us and arrows began to fly. I made my headquarters inside a half-ruined hut, and they were shooting at me while I waited before ordering my men to fire. Suddenly my black girl, out of breath, sprang in front of me. She had run out from among the porters when she had heard of the fight. So I spoke roughly to her. "What are you doing here—go away." "You stupid white man," she scolded, "do you not see that they are shooting at you? They will hurt you. I must be here to stand in front of you. You are my white man."

'Annoyed at the whole lot of them, I ordered my *tirailleurs* to shoot, but to try not to kill. Then the rebels decided it was time to give in, and the chief's young men tied them all up for trial.

'But, you see, that girl was grateful, and had honour in her. Of course you understand that love does not come into this at all. Only honour. She was the daughter of a chief, and I was her white master. It was dishonour to her that I should be hurt while in her keeping. Perhaps also gratitude—because I had been kind to her.'

CHRISTIANITY

General Sicé also thought the blacks should be christianized and should not be brought into towns. He said: 'Their women are beginning to practise birth

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control and abortion—things utterly unknown to these races. What are we teaching them? But before we christianize them, should we not christianize ourselves? Are we not worse than they? What have we made of Christianity in two thousand years? Perhaps Christianity was made for the negroes. They have many Christian qualities. After two thousand years of training they will probably be much better Christians than we have been. Perhaps then they will come and convert Europe to Christianity. Teach us faith. Teach us hope. Teach us charity. As it is now they have more faith and more hope and more charity than we have. Pray God that our teaching and our example do not take those away from them.'

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

A negro never starves unless there is famine throughout the land. The negro has no social problems. While there is food in the village all have it. A negro can travel alone through the whole country. He will be fed at every village he goes through. He can stay as long as he likes, if he is a nice man he is welcome. The negroes have no conception of what tramps and beggars are—in the bush. In our towns they have acquired all our problems.

What has been our gift to them, then?

Chiefly the cessation of their endless wars between tribe and tribe, village and village.

CANNIBALS

My friend the hydrographer had marked the routes of ships all up the Congo and the Ubangi, putting

up at the proper places the signs that tell the captains of the river steamers the depth of the water, the force of the current—making their travels safe and quick.

Once his headman, from a good hard-working tribe of former cannibals, passing one of their villages, had brought him an old man who remembered the good old days.

The old pagan pointed to a large sand-bank in the middle of the river, and said: 'We used to meet by appointment, once a moon. Two villages, one from each side of the river. On the sand-bank we fought, the men of one village against the men of the other, till the sun was right over our heads. Midday, then the fight stopped. Each side prepared, cooked, and ate the enemies they had killed. Sometimes when the battle had been specially fierce each party had succeeded in keeping their own dead. That was more honourable. But then at the midday halt each village ate their own relatives. That was all right, of course, but the feeling of triumph was absent from the meal. The right thing to do was to eat the man you had killed yourself. Any other arrangement was really not quite regular.'

SAVAGES OR CHRISTIANS?

'Well,' said the general, 'we have, anyway, stopped all that. Let us beware, lest we bring them something worse. Also we can rid them of a good many of their illnesses. But the evil influence of the sorcerers over them is their worst illness, and is behind most of the murders or poisonings. We shall never overcome the sorcerers while our policy is to respect the native

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customs. Must we then respect cannibalism? Naturally we must go slowly and not destroy their spirit. All could be done by really well considered and State-supported missionary work on a large scale.

The lay teacher can deal only with one half of the negro mind — reading, writing, arithmetic, manual work—very good. But the sorcerers? You cannot teach the blacks scepticism. They have to believe in something: it is a need of their nature at its deepest. Probably it is also a need of ours. You could teach them that all their beliefs were false, but if they listened to you they would die. But they do not listen to you. From your non-religious elementary schools they go back to their sorcerers, their witch doctors, perhaps even, when you do not know it, to their cannibalistic rites, which are so often grounded in religious beliefs.

‘I know that Shaw has said that the conversion of the savages to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to savagery. But Shaw is a superficial thinker. Into what have *we*, the whites, converted Christianity? Perhaps the blacks will do better with it.’

I congratulated the general on his knowledge of English literature, and on his critical spirit. This assessment of Shaw in Brazzaville delighted me. I remembered all the bishop had told me. Here was the doctor saying the same things.

DEVILS

The hydrographer said: ‘They are ready to worship us rather than worship nothing. Once, on a particularly difficult bit of the Ubangi, my men refused to go into a nasty stretch. A devil lived there, they said,

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who caught hold of the poor blacks and held them under the water until they died.

'But it was deep water there, good going for steamers though the passage had to be marked. So I said: "Never mind that devil; I shall deal with him."

'They thought it out, they talked it out. Then they came. They said to me: "We follow the white man; the white man greater than the devil." That time the devil kindly refrained from taking any lives.'

The general said: 'Be careful lest they come to say: "The white man worse than a devil." Let us give them at least a Christian devil, and teach them that the Christian devil can be defeated, and how.'

The hydrographer spoke again of devils. 'On my beat once,' he said, 'several blacks came to me. They wanted to be released from their contract and go home. Why? They had found drops of blood on the decks. No one had been wounded—no loss of blood from any one. A devil had visited the ship that night and these were traces of his passage. I promised to look into the matter. I tried to, but could not find the source of the blood. Then I took the only course. I collected the crew, and made a speech: I said that it had been found that a devil visited the ship nightly. But now that he had been discovered no one need be afraid any more. I would stand guard, I would catch the devil if he came again, I would make him prisoner, I would torture him, and finally I would roast him in our fire and then boil him in our boiler. They trusted me. They consented to wash the blood off the deck. They consented to sleep again on the boat, and the devil never came again.'

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'Of course one of them had done it on purpose—to frighten the others, to acquire power, to play a trick on me by losing me my workers. But he lost his nerve when he heard what I would do to that devil, and became afraid of being caught.'

FREEDOM

Sometimes a negro comes to his white master and says: 'I must go home.' His village is perhaps hundreds of miles away through the jungle. The master asks why, but the negro is homesick, neurasthenic, tired, fed up—what you will—he must go home. It is no good insisting: he would pine away, if you could stop him, and die. So he will spend weeks and weeks in the forest, sleeping in a new village every night, welcome everywhere, fed by the chiefs, and telling the villagers the most unbelievable stories of what the white men do, how they plant sticks in rivers with charms that destroy the evil spirits, and even frighten the crocodiles. After three months of travel, your man will reach his village, make his stories taller and broader, spread himself for a fortnight, be fêted by all, then declare in his grandeur that his white master cannot do without him any longer, and go off again.

So, sometimes six months, sometimes a year after losing him, his master sees him reappear and say: 'Here I am, I am all right now, ready to work again.' And he starts with a new will. Happy for another year perhaps. Then he does it again.

Love of liberty, love of his own kind, love of the land and the forest, love of wandering—good things all. The negro is a man, and his own master in his own

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land. A precious spirit is in him, and must not be broken

NOT A CONQUERED LAND

The general said. 'Always remember that this has never been a conquered country. We are here because the blacks wanted the things we brought them—cheap things, little things, but the blacks liked them. Then our towns, our engines, our cars, our electric lights. They trusted us, they liked us. We had, we still have, a chance of getting to their souls. The Germans in the Cameroons never understood this. To the amazement of the blacks they began to bully and torture them. Why? Why? The blacks never understood this. Devilishness. The only explanation. The blacks are ready to fight the Germans.'

CORPORAL DE GAULLE

At Pointe Noire a tall sergeant of the *tirailleurs*, whose face showed intelligence and humour, told me what de Gaulle meant to the blacks. He came from a village in the mountain jungles of Mayombe, the thickest jungle on earth. This is what his people in the village told him. What he told them he did not say.

De Gaulle was a corporal, and had been dead five years. Two handicaps, you would say. Not for the blacks. A corporal is a pretty high officer in villages where even a *tirailleur* is a great power. Of course the sergeant knew better. Again, being dead is rather an advantage. A spirit can do much greater things than a living man.

Corporal de Gaulle, then, in his grave, after five years,

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heard through his sleep that a German corporal, whose name is unknown, had taken Paris. Indignation. Corporal de Gaulle, lifted by the spirit, emerged from his grave and said: 'Now then, I am a general from now on. The war is now about to begin.'

And the black sergeant grinned in pleasant anticipation

A KING

The King of Loango—the Ba-Loango—shook hands with us. 'How are you, Ba-Loango?' the *administrateur* asked him. With dignity he said he was well. In Equatorial Africa only kings shake hands with white men.

The kingdom of Loango had a very simple constitution. The king had a right to claim for his own anything he could see. It was given him at once. His budget was therefore permanently well balanced. As the king could always be poisoned if he went too far, this kingdom worked well.

Then came the whites, in big ships, on the sea. The king's councillors, naturally, were quicker-witted than the king. They thought things out. If the king should ask them for one of those big ships, what could they do? So they took advantage of the king's stupor of wonderment at the white prodigies, and amended the constitution. They put a royal taboo on the sea. The king had no right to look at the sea.

The king looks at the sea as much as he likes. No one cares. Or rather, they like to see the king look at the sea, since the king cannot ask to be given anything that is on the sea: that would be admitting that he has broken the taboo. He would not be the king any longer.

BANTU MIXTURE

GOOD DAY, SIR

'I was taking the Upper Ogowe for de Gaulle,' the *administrateur* told me. 'My adversary, the Vichy man, told his blacks that the English were coming to take their country. The blacks, in this far distant inland part of the Gaboons had never heard of the English, and though that the word "English" was an adjective applied to all who wanted to fight the Germans. The Germans they had heard of because their reputation for ferocity had been spread all over Central Africa by the negroes who had run away from torture in the Cameroons. These blacks knew of me because I had been in charge of a district near theirs. Therefore they got a retired clerk who was living in peace in one of their villages to write me the following letter:

COLONIE DU GABON
MOKOKOU

A Monsieur le Chef des Anglais
Mister the chief of the English

Good day sir,

Oh! sir, we write you because we are now in danger because of our Commandant here. We call you to take him away. We now need of you. He breaks our heads every day because he no understand the world English. When one of us mentions English, he hit. Ah! sir, believe not a word he send you. He is cunning. Come here, take him away, or send for him. We want you to be our Commandant. That all, sir.

COLONIE DU GABON
MOKOKOU

Monsieur le Chef des Anglais

Bonjour Monsieur,

Ah! Monsieur nous vous ecrivons car nous sommes danger maintenant pour le Commandant qui est chez nous — Nous vous appelons pour lui oter chez nous, nous sommes besoin maintenant que vous — Il nous frappe les tetes tous les jours

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parce qu'il ne veut pas compris le monde Anglais, s'il comprend quelqu'un parle un mot des histoires des Anglais, il lui frappe

Ah! Monsieur n'est faut pas entrer les paroles qu'il vous enverra — c'est les paroles des ruses, si vous ne voulez pas venir ici pour lui enlever, vous devez le convoquer la bas — Nous voulon maintenant que votre commandant c'est tout Monsieur!

THE MAYOMBE

The most amazing thing in Africa, say the negroes, is the railway from Brazzaville to Pointe Noire. Through the Mayombe mountains a cutting has been made one hundred yards wide, so that falling trees cannot obstruct the line. From the *mic heline* you can watch at leisure the vegetation rising like a solid wall on either side, so thick, so absolute, that animals cannot live in it. The panther cannot fight its way through, nor the small beasts get past the yard-long bayonet-like sharp thorns that protect the soil. The vegetable kingdom in its pride admits no animal life. It just tolerates the monkeys in the upper branches, the vermin of the woods, and their colleagues the birds. A man trying to hack his way through might at any moment hack his way into a chasm forty or a hundred feet deep, since hardly a square yard is level ground.

The rain is practically unceasing. Heavy clouds cover the hill tops, and the terrible vertical sun above the clouds transforms the whole region into a dream-land of vapours and unearthly greenery.

The *mic heline* takes you out of this enchanted region, down a track made of figures-of-eight, so that you see from the top of a hill just below you the railway station that you will pass half an hour later.

BANTU MIXTURE

Then you follow a wild river, which has worked its way through the jungle, making a deep twisting rut, through geological centuries. Occasionally you catch a glimpse of a tributary joining the main stream from a hole under the vegetation like the opening of some limitless cave. The mountain, of course, oozes out in streams. Also the river carries gold—hardly touched as yet by man.

PART VI
HEART-SEARCHINGS

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PART VI

HEART-SEARCHINGS

BIG RIVER TO CROSS

A famous American writer comes into the picture. I may as well give his name in a book which has been so far, perhaps, all too reticent. Ben Lucien Burman has written a magnificent book, *Big River to Cross*, about the Mississippi and the people who live on it. Not a novel—a book. (Borrow asked who would call his book a *novel* if he could call it anything else!)

Ben Lucien Burman, having fought in the last war, had come over to the Congo, he said, to see what he could do in this one. But I told him that the angel who presides over the Mississippi had boasted in heaven about Ben Lucien Burman and the angel who presides over the Congo River had grown jealous and lured Ben Lucien Burman over the Atlantic to get a book written about the Congo River. Moreover, Ben Lucien Burman had brought with him his wife, a lady from the southern states, who was clever with her pencil, just to catch and fix on paper the incredible profiles of the Bantu.

The heat meant nothing to them. They moved slowly and talked slowly, in a queer way, which I believed (wrongly, perhaps) to be the famous *southern drawl*.

WATCH OVER AFRICA

TWO CHICKENS

Ben Lucien Burman was delighted. One day he said to me: 'My! I came here having made up my mind to find everything was O.K., and, oh my! now I find everything is O.K. They are just grand Sicé, Larminat, all of them! Tell the world—that's me.'

So I arranged for him to go and see the Fulakari Falls, half a day's trip into the forest, well known to a few people. And a tribal chief came and offered two chickens to the great white chief of the de Gaulle army. And the great white chief was Ben Lucien Burman, and he got the two chickens. Ben Lucien Burman was delighted.

WHY?

But he was very shrewd. One day he said to me. 'Why are these French people always ready to quarrel among themselves, professor? Explain it to me.'

So I said: 'You see they have their big river to cross; they have not built the bridges yet. The French are two tribes who have not yet fused together. Perhaps this war, this calamity, is meant to fuse them. That is what de Gaulle, Larminat, Sicé, all the great ones, are working at.'

'What two tribes?'

'*Le rouge et le noir*—The right and the left. The clericals and the anti-clericals. They camp each on one side of their big river, and they have no bridges yet. Rabelais and Calvin, Bossuet and Voltaire, Victor Hugo and Napoleon the Third, the Freemasons and the Jesuits.'

'But what is the quarrel about?'

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'The soul of France. Some want it black, some want it red. Some want it Catholic, some want it atheist.'

Then Ben Lucien Burman said to me 'Why can't they let each man think as he likes, so long as he is loyal to France?'

I could only answer: 'That's just it. They haven't learnt that yet.'

Then I turned the tables on him.

'Isn't it the same everywhere?' I said. 'How many tribes are you in the U.S.A.? Two? or seven or eight? Is there any point on which a majority of you agree? Except on the principle of leaving each other alone. But that does not solve problems: it makes them worse. And what of the English? They have decided not to fight it out in the open any longer, but——'

'All right,' he said, 'I give in. But will the French find a solution?'

'No,' I said, 'but God will, with the help of Hitler. The world is going to be polarized against Hitler and all that Hitler implies. Then it will find, in action first rather than in thought, and then in thought, its principle of union. The French perhaps will find it first, because they have had the hardest lot to bear. "*Avant-garde de Dieu qui devance ses pas*," said Lamartine. "God's advance guard, in the front line, bearing the brunt of the fight."'

'How can they find it first?' Ben Lucien Burman said doubtfully.

'Well,' I said, 'England is going to win this war, to win a victory, with all her institutions apparently intact—the Banks, the House of Lords, the Midlands, London society, and so on. Oh, the temptation for

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England to say, on the day of victory. "What is wrong with us? The Lords are all right, the Dominions are all right, the society ladies are all right, the banks are all right. All have done their utmost." And it will be true. All have. Then comes the temptation to make no change. And then England is lost. That is how France was lost. In 1919 France said. "What is wrong with me? My soldiers were good, my political men were good, Clemenceau himself, who had been a scamp all his life, proved to be sublime. Very well, we've won. No change." And then France was lost. But now there will be nothing left in France, nothing but the people. Therefore France may find the principle first of all the nations.'

Said Ben Lucien Burman thoughtfully: 'As France has done several times already. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Charlemagne. At the peak of the Middle Ages, Saint Louis and the Crusades. In 1789 the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*, "*Tous les hommes naissent libres et égaux en droits*.'" And he added, timidly, like all Anglo-Saxons when speaking of France 'Is not that the French solution? They started it in 1789, but it is still in the future for them. All men are born free and with the same rights: free to think red or black, as they like, with the same rights for the Freemasons and the Jesuits: just let each respect the other's rights. Let them first be united, in action, against Hitler, then they may learn, later, to be united in feeling; then, later still, they may find some common principle in their thinking.'

'What a slow business,' I said. 'Will Hitler last as long as all that?'

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And Ben Lucien Burman at last grinned and said: 'No he won't I'll see to that. We'll fix the French some other way. Maybe God will help.'

ANOTHER BISHOP

The *administrateur* took me to see yet another bishop. This one lived in a clearing near Loango Bay, within reach of a great chasm cut in some red substance, half clay and half rock, several miles across, two or three hundred feet deep. One of those geological miracles which transport a lunar landscape suddenly to this earth. The black women went down into it, by paths so steep that to look at them made me dizzy, just to fetch water.

The bishop had a dozen missionaries with him, and they lived in a dozen roomy wooden buildings, one of which was a chapel, with a number of blacks.

I was trying to arrange that the missionaries should be put in charge of elementary teaching in the village schools, where generally a black monitor takes care of a dozen children, but needs a white man to direct him. One white teacher can efficiently supervise dozens of these schools. But the war had taken white teachers away, and I was hoping that the missionaries would be able to take over. As a bribe I was offering evangelization of the blacks in wide regions which had been in the hands of our lay teachers so far, and had thus not been christianized, for the French official policy being *neutre* took no concern for religion at all.

This bishop was very old. He had been, he thought, badly treated by the Republican regime. He was

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afraid of walking into a trap. I explained to him that he would not win his war that way. I hope I convinced him. His beard, too, was very long, and mostly white. He was very tired.

I had to come back to Europe before the bishops had made up their minds. In my next book, or in my next reincarnation, I shall tell what happens. I think the war will be over before the blacks hear of the Trinity

AN INTELLIGENT POPE

An old canon, belonging to a not very famous cathedral (more than that, really, a *primatiale*), once said to me: 'Sooner or later we shall have an intelligent pope. The Church is eternal, it can wait. Then all that will be seen to.'

I must have stared a little. So he continued: 'Oh, you have no idea how free we are when we *talk*, among ourselves. *Verba volant*, luckily'

'Intelligent?' I said, 'you mean wise?'

'No,' he said. 'Wise? They are all too wise. Nor do I mean a saint. You know, in a way, there are never enough saints. But in another way——'

An intelligent pope—for once?

This was before the war—before the *last* war.

QUARRELS

'The Jesuits——,' said the bishop.

And I said to the bishop: 'Whenever I have taken a single step in the direction of the Church, the Church of Rome, I have found that I should be getting involved in some quarrel between this and that party in the Church, that I should not be enrolled in a crusade

against the unbeliever, but in a fight against, say, the Jesuits, or some such gang.

'Just as there are men who have joined up to fight the Germans, and in the end find themselves in an office, fighting the man who sits in the office next door. So I keep out'

'And the Protestants?' said the bishop. 'How are the blacks to understand why there are Protestants and Catholics? It makes untold trouble: some tribes are Protestant, some are Catholic. What can they make of it?'

'I can't imagine,' said I. 'Why don't you exchange your Protestant missions against Catholic ones withdrawn from mainly Protestant countries—in Nigeria, for instance? That would be more tidy. One country, one state, one religion, fewer quarrels. Or are the blacks also to have liberty of thought?'

'Well,' said the bishop, 'I assure you they have it. What they must think of us, those that think——'

'I don't believe,' I said, 'they would notice the difference if one day they were told that henceforward they were all Catholics in French Equatorial Africa and all Protestants in Nigeria. They might even like a bit of a change'

'Alas,' said the bishop, 'the only difference they notice between us is that we teach them to hate the other party. Perhaps that is all we do teach them, sometimes. But when you look at those whom you bring up to have no religion at all—well, those get to hate you, really.'

With a political twinkle in his eye, the bishop continued: 'Just think what an opportunity for your

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enemies, Communists or even Germans—propaganda, you know. Any one may be a missionary. Any one may be a negro; from Angola, from Senegal, from Vichy, from Berlin. Are some tribes disaffected?’

The old bishop seemed rather to enjoy all our troubles. He was a great patriot, really—but he was old.

THE BISHOP BECOMES FRIENDLY

In the end the bishop became friendly, on the understanding that we did not ask him to do anything, and were willing to do what he wanted us to do. So we had him to lunch, and he brought with him a much younger missionary who was a captain in the army, and who wanted to do what *we* wanted. Perhaps one day *he* will be the bishop; but by then he may have become very wise and very careful. Nevertheless, we talked; or rather *we*—the administrator’s wife, the administrator, and myself—*we* listened, and the bishop talked.

And the bishop said many things.

‘In this Africa of the blacks they have perhaps no very clear idea of God, but, anyway, they never blaspheme against Him. The worst fault of the black man is his amazing memory. He thinks he is learning something when he is merely accumulating sounds in his animal memory. Then, sometimes, he develops a good head for figures. Black accountants work all the trade in West and Central Africa. But they have no intellectual curiosity. Once a cruiser came to Libreville and, at night, played her searchlights over the shore. The negroes went panicky, and hid in any hole they could find. The next day, in the market place, they asked the sailors: “What was that?” “A

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lamp " "Ah, a big lamp, and what is it for?" "To show the ship her way. It is a big ship, it needs a big lamp." "Ah, of course. But can it hurt? Is there a gun in it?" Once reassured, they became at once over-confident. Whenever they met any of the ship's crew they said: "Work your lamp again to-night, won't you?"

(I did not quite see why this proved the blacks had no intellectual curiosity. But I was beginning to discover that one does not argue with bishops. So I let it pass.)

'The blacks have little will power. I knew one who was called Justin. He was the chief accountant in a trading station. He had been married for twenty-two years to *Marguerite*, a woman of his own race, faithful and devoted, he lived in a comfortable house in the European way. The missionaries looked upon him as a model Christian, one of their great successes. One day, without a quarrel in his household, without a penny missing from his cash box, Justin just disappeared. He had gone off—back to his village in the jungle, where he was discovered, a good while later, by one of our missionaries, in rags, scabby, in a state of idiocy. To the priest's fatherly questioning he replied merely: "I got tired." His will power had come to an end. He had dropped back to savagery. And he was enjoying it.'

(I again wondered—I remembered those happy negroes who had gone to the hydrographer and asked for a year's holiday. Perhaps—— But I said nothing. Perhaps that negro had passed judgment on our civilization.)

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WIVES—OR A WIFE?

I said to the missionary (the young one who had come to lunch) 'What about marriage? Do you really achieve the abolition of polygamy? Do you ever really manage to make a negro into a faithful husband "until death us do part," having nothing to do with any other woman?'

And the missionary said: 'Well, you see, they realize that marriage is a sacrament, and that we do not allow divorce. When they do marry in church it is for life. Therefore they are very careful. In short, as in the Bible they have one wife and several concubines. Or several concubines and no wife. What can we do? On the whole they are pretty honourable, according to their lights. They are even making some progress, according to ours. But our worst problem is miscegenation of black and white. Coloured children from white fathers. Polygamy is not only a practice of the blacks. Many white men here desire to preserve that particular negro custom, anyway. Then what happens to the children? The father moves off to another post, generally to a better one. How can he take them? Their mother then generally takes up with some other white man, and does not want them either. They just grow up—or die—somehow, in that odd no man's land of civilization—shall we call it civilization?—thanks mainly to the innate generosity of the blacks, who will let a child feed itself and grow if it can, as it can, even if it has no parents, with all the other children. There is always something to eat somewhere, or to steal; or some sort of odd job to be found. Even an unpaid job, which gives you a chance

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to eat sometimes. We receive them in our mission schools, and try to look after them. Then we are accused of exploiting child labour. And the girls? The sisters do their best. But as soon as the half-white girls leave the sisters, what happens? What else can happen? The white man is waiting for them.'

A NEW PEDAGOGY

Of course I was interfering in business not my own. General de Gaulle had asked me officially to go out and organize secondary teaching for white children who could no longer be sent to school in France.

I had evolved in my forty-seven days on the boat a new system of pedagogy, inspired by the wide sea and a large map of Equatorial Africa. Why cause the children to congregate in their numbers in barrack-like buildings?—a most unnatural and immoral way of dealing with the young, obviously the source of many vices, mental, moral, physical. Wherever fifteen children could come together in an ordinary room in an ordinary house, I would send them out a teacher, sometimes two, men who would accept the responsibility of bringing up the children in every way; real masters, whose individuality would act on the children's individualities, in ways mental, spiritual, physical. And let those houses be in the woods, in the fields, in the open, with full contact with nature; and let the principal part of the education be the teaching of how to have contact with nature, in every way.

At a later period, with older children, we would tackle the work of picking out and training our future specialists. From nine to fifteen let the children grow,

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naturally, under the direction of a real human being, into human beings. The ordinary child should not be a specialist, nor trained by specialists. Specialization of teachers in separate subjects has been a mistake, for *very young children*.

Now this Africa could prove an ideal ground for all this. Most of the older children were in boarding schools in France, but here remained all the children who, in 1939, had been too young to be sent home. They were all about eleven or twelve years old, and reminded me of that little girl aged seven who wanted to have seven children all aged seven.

Well, their elder brothers and sisters were lost, under who knows what Vichy system. Let us begin with these eleven-year-olds, begin from nothing, and train them in a new way for a new world, since the old one had perished partly because its training had been evil. Therefore I had opposed the idea of building a huge boarding school in Brazzaville or elsewhere, and promised to find and send teachers to five or six centres where the children would be taught within reach of their families.

MORE FREEDOM—AND NATURE

Parents had been rather surprised at all this, but in the end their natural feelings, and the mothers' rooted objection to having children taken out of their supervision, brought them to see that I was only preaching reason.

It is obvious that our educational system is fundamentally wrong. It is obvious also that this system is one of the main factors in the diseases of our civili-

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zation It is obvious that drastic change must take place.

Finally it is obvious that the change must bring about more freedom, more naturalness, not less.

For the child Also later for the man and woman.

The world will solve its present problems by giving individual human beings more liberty, not by putting them under any system

Of course liberty is only possible through good organization, but it is the material things that have to be organized food, clothing, housing, transport, medical care, and so on. The spirit has to be liberated, not organized So also with the children. So first of all with the children.

CROCODILES

There was a young man who had just arrived from Vichy. He was actually a member of Parliament, and that still counted for quite a lot in Vichy. He had given himself the job of looking for land in Africa for the Lorraine peasants expelled by the Germans.

One day, as he was bathing in a river between the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast, crocodiles had taken him away, much against his will, by the belt of his bathing suit, and deposited him, unharmed, on a nest of white ants on the English side of the river. He was really frightened that time, but he brushed off the white ants and rushed into the arms of some British officials who happened to be negro customs officers acting on behalf of His Majesty King George. They did not exactly imprison him, but fed him, dressed him, housed him, offered him feminine comforts which he refused

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—having been carefully brought up—and denied ever having seen him when a black ambassador from the French side came grinning to inquire after him.

The negroes on both sides, who are, of course, good friends, had been watching him for two weeks, wondering when he would do it.

A REVOLUTION IN BRAZZAVILLE

A lieutenant came to see me, a sturdy northerner, weighing some fifteen stone, mostly bone. He turned out to be an old school friend of mine, from a village on the Belgian border where I had lived for ten years. Of course we could not know each other, but we knew a whole countryside in common. He had married a girl from the same village, and over a splendid dinner we had a regular very small-town talk: So-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so.

He told me the gossip about the conquest of Equatorial Africa for de Gaulle from the angle of a former non-commissioned officer promoted to commissioned rank. The Vichy general, who was very cunning, had taken away all the ammunition from all the battalions. The *tirailleurs* had only their bayonets. Therefore no one could attack headquarters, where there were machine guns. But my school friend the lieutenant and a friend of his went and stole three big boxes of cartridges, and armed their two companies. The blacks were so pleased at having cartridges given them again that their souls went over to de Gaulle on the instant. When the time came the headquarters machine-gunners, also blacks, were shown the cartridges, and told that their officers were liars since the existence of cartridges

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was denied. This so demoralized the machine-gunners that the Vichy general found himself wrapped up in a blanket without a shot having been fired by any one. Then, concluded my school friend triumphantly, we fetched General de Larminat over from Leopoldville, and he was able to forgive them all.

COCHONS

But in the Gaboons things had been rougher. In the first place, that was wild country. Then the men were very tough: wood-cutters, pirates, all sorts. Not a place for a decent professional soldier. Nevertheless he had marched through perfectly impossible jungles, eaten perfectly impossible things, naturally fallen ill—the liver or something—and had waked up in hospital to hear that Lambarene had been taken at the cost of half a dozen lives.

Well, that was all right, and he soon got better and was sent back to Brazzaville to recuperate and keep his professional eye on the Vichistes.

His great complaint was that Brazzaville had nothing that could be called a jail. How is a man to keep order in a jailless town? He was longing for the day when he would be well; then he would become a captain and go to the front, to Sollum or to Syria, or to persuade the French Somalis to come over to de Gaulle.

He was perfectly unable to understand how any one could be a Vichiste. He felt that his presence and a little argument should be enough to make a Gaulliste out of any one who was not a born *cochon*. I entirely agreed with him.

WAICH OVER AFRICA

RECALLED

There came a day when General de Larminat handed me a telegram from London. I was to go back as speedily as possible. This meant *Ponte Noire*, and a ten days' wait for the next quick boat.

Those ten days were the richest for me. Again I had a huge house all to myself, near the sea. I used to get up at six and enjoy a walk along the shore. The hour from six to seven was passed in fairyland. Never have I seen breakers so high and so powerful, not even on the beaches of Long Island.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL ÉBOUÉ

One day the *administrateur* said to me: 'This is a great secret. Éboué is coming through to-night, incognito. But he will see you and hear your plans.'

Then his wife said: 'Yes, it is a great secret! The station master's wife told me yesterday at tea, and my cook knows it already!'

'No matter,' he answered, 'it is a great secret all the same. Since every one knows it is a great secret no one will go and bother Éboué. That's all we want.'

Like that case of the King of Loango. No one was allowed to admit that he knew that Éboué was coming incognito; otherwise he became liable to be shot for high treason.

THE 'VIKING'

Éboué came into port at night, on the *Viking*.

The *Viking* is a small warship, which, in the dark, looked like a monstrous hedgehog, or sea-hog, emerging from the water and gliding to the land. When near,

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the prickles of the hedgehog were seen to be guns, machine guns, bomb-throwers, and many such engines of war whose use was unknown to me—for submarine chasing, I supposed. But the *Viking* carried more armament to the square inch than anything I have ever dreamt of

Black soldiers in splendid uniforms presented arms and Éboué landed and walked to the *mic heline* between hedges of vertical bayonets on which dim lights played like electric witchcraft

Éboué is a black man of heavy build and great majesty, much blacker than any of his subjects in Equatorial Africa. He was born in the West Indies, acquired his status as a French citizen, passed all his examinations like any Frenchman, and ran up the gamut of the colonial administration.

He was governing the Chad when France crashed. He was the first governor to join de Gaulle, and he gave the white race an example of integrity, courage, and decision that will go down the centuries to the honour of the black races, and to the honour of that France that gave them their chance

A REAL NEGRO KING

He saw me alone for half an hour, and allowed me to talk without restriction. I had to admire him as a human being, the rapidity of his intellect, the wisdom and equilibrium of his feelings, as revealed on his face and in his eyes, the rapidity of his decision once thought had had its chance.

I was happy to tell him, as a polite conclusion to our interview, that I had been much impressed by the deep

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feeling of respect and affection with which all his subordinates (all white men, by implication) looked upon him. He answered with kindness and dignity: 'I have no subordinates, I have only collaborators. To tell the truth, I look upon them as my children.'

I went down to the platform again and enjoyed the scene. the pride of the black sentries, the clear night, the huge lithe warship, the presence of this great black chief in the luxurious, most up-to-date machine in the railway world, the booming of the terrible sea.

I had a quiet half-hour while the *administrateur* had his turn with Éboué, and then we watched together the Diesel engine and the two coaches race out of the station towards the jungle, carrying a real negro king to the Mayombe mountains and beyond, to Brazzaville and General de Larminat.

The watch over Africa is well and truly kept.

A WIFE

The administrator's wife was, nevertheless, slightly peeved because I had seen Éboué and she had not. She was inclined to suspect that some other functionaries' wives had been allowed on the platform. I was able to reassure her more completely than her husband could. So she told me, as a reward, of many of her own adventures in the jungles, where she had borne a child, acted as midwife to numberless negro women, nursed the most cruel diseases, been balanced in carrying chairs across abysmal rivers on rickety bridges. She looked so young and white and pink—she was a Pole by birth—it was difficult to believe her, but it was even more difficult not to believe her. She



GOVERNOR-GENERAL F. BOUÉ

HEART-SEARCHINGS

confirmed the absence of wild animals. Spiders were her real horror, in the jungle also.

She scored over her husband on one point. While he was working on the Haut Ogoué, where she would have been in the way, she had seen de Gaulle, and he had never seen the Chief. So she described how the women had broken the police cordon and mobbed him, and how mad with joy every one had been.

Also she sent my breakfast across to my huge lonely house every morning: two black boys came, one to carry and one to watch. I have never felt so at home anywhere except in my own house as in this wild corner of Africa—and that was certainly the doing of this Polish lady and her French husband.

But the light over the sea at dawn, the silver in the air, I certainly had known for thousands of years.

A MAJOR

They told me the tale of a major who took a leading part in the de Gaulle rally. He had a rickety plane that could carry four soldiers, so he took three trips to an aerodrome that guarded a vital point of the coast where there was a Vichy submarine and a battalion of Vichy *tirailleurs*, that is, black soldiers with Vichy officers.

When he had his twelve men on the deserted aerodrome he lined them up, marched them in twos and advanced on the *tirailleurs* from the back. They had been ordered to shoot at any one coming from the direction whence he should have come by road, but they had no orders about the road from the aerodrome of which no one had thought.

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So the *tirailleurs* turned and stared. The major raised his voice and said severely: 'What, have you forgotten how to salute officers here?' So the *tirailleurs* saluted or presented arms. Then he forgave them magnanimously, and said to them: 'All right, now shoulder arms and fall in behind my men.' And they obeyed and fell in behind the twelve.

He marched at their head to the house where the officer in charge, a captain, was entertaining the submarine commander. He lined them up outside the door, a mere thirty men in all, but, in the dark, a great array. Then he threw open the door, and said to the astonished diners: 'I am in charge here, for General de Gaulle. I have my battalion with me. Look!' And they saw files of black soldiers lined up right into the black night.

'Shall we fight or do you give in?'

The submarine commander got up hastily from table and said: 'My duty is with my ship, I am going.'

The Vichy captain said: 'Very well, I am your prisoner.' So four of the twelve led him away—later he joined de Gaulle too—and a thousand black soldiers were rallied to de Gaulle.

The submarine disappeared.

PART VII
THE WORLD

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PART VII

THE WORLD

UN SEIGNEUR

The naval forces at Point Noire were very kind. I discovered later that one of their commanders was the son of a famous archaeologist. They gave me a dinner, at which we were rather the eaten than the eaters, because of the extraordinary virulence of the mosquitoes. But the drinks were good.

I paused to look at a large-size photograph of Admiral Muselier on the mantelpiece. The commandant said: 'Ah! ça, c'est un Seigneur!'

I had never heard the expression before—nor can I find an English word for it. But it carries its meaning to English people. I found afterwards that it is in use for exceptional leaders in the French Navy.

I did not know Muselier, and I admit, was somewhat surprised at the enthusiasm which these comparatively young men showed about him. They told endless tales of his deeds in the other war; of his audacity when escaping from occupied France in this one; of his courage when he joined de Gaulle; of his moral force. They knew his first *ordre du jour* by heart, and recited it, ending on the noble-sounding phrase: '*Je prends la responsabilité personnelle des ordres que je viens de donner*' (I assume personal responsibility for the orders I have just given). Could not all leaders,

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I wondered, be made to bear the responsibility for all their orders?

ANOTHER SHIP

I had come out on a genuine, completely cargo-like cargo boat, all rusty. My ten fruitful days of waiting at Pointe Noire brought me a splendid *mixte*, a Belgian ship that could do sixteen or eighteen knots, and carry eighty passengers in luxury cabins. The officers did not dip their toast in their coffee in public, and consequently had a tendency to melancholy.

We were only seven or eight passengers (one went ashore at Freetown), and were the natural victims of the officers' humour. For instance, they would assure us solemnly that we were being pursued by a submarine. That was all right, however. The submarine could only do twelve knots against our sixteen, and could not come within torpedo range. But let us pray lest our Diesel engine should fail!

We never were able to ascertain whether this story was true. The ship's doctor, who was an Englishman, and acted as a buffer state between us and the officers, believed it.

TWO SAILORS

I found that among my fellow passengers were two young giants; but my perspective went wrong. The first one I met was about six foot high, but his quality came out more sideways. He was huge all round, and looked formidably tough. When he looked at you he lowered his head and directed on you the two best-natured eyes I have ever seen.

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But when his friend appeared the first one became a small giant. The second was taller by a head, and as big all round. He did not look tough, but good-natured all round too. Whereas the first was good-natured only in the eyes, the second, the big giant, was good-natured in his very flesh and bones and movements. He was the slower one of the two

They had both escaped from Martinique, and were hoping to go back and conquer it for de Gaulle, or Muselier—they did not mind so long as they could take it away from its present powers, whom they called *des vaches*. They were petty officers in the submarine service, and ready for anything. I had never before met French naval men who were not officers, and these two delighted me. It was quite impossible to say when they were telling the truth or when fiction ruled.

THE GALIPÉTAÏN

They had invented the Odyssey of a marvellous boat which they called the *Galipétain*. There was no limit to what the *Galipétain* could do. It would even fly, not on the principle of the aeroplane, but in the way in which flying fish fly. It jumped out of the water at will, staying in the air for one mile at a height of two hundred feet when at its highest. Of course it was also a long-range submarine, totally impervious to torpedoes, depth charges, shells, or bombs. But chiefly it possessed a quality so far rare in ships—it could turn somersaults both in the air, on the surface of the sea, and in the depths, both endways and sideways. The crew, of course, had to be specially trained

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Galipette is rather low French for somersault. I suppose that the temptation of the *Pétain* ending had been irresistible to the sailors. Pétain led to *Galipette*, and the somersaulting qualities of the marvellous boat had been the starting-point of her adventurous career, in which satire, the first impulse, had finally been swamped in sheer fun.

A CHILEAN

They had a friend called Alberto—a mere soldier whom they had adopted. This man was born of French parents in Chile, and had taken months on an extraordinary trip via Panama to join de Gaulle in Africa. For some obscure bureaucratic reason he was being sent to London. In normal company he would have been thought tall, but seen between the small giant and the big giant he seemed merely normal, though over six foot. He was an ordinary man over six foot. The small giant was slightly shorter than Alberto; but then he belonged to the breed of giants, not of normal men.

In order not to be put in the shade completely by the uproarious small giant and the overwhelming big one, he exhibited a redoubtable sense of fun. At least equal to theirs, and more original. He invented a wonder elephant with whom he caused a small monkey to fall in love. The adventures of this non-matrimonial couple were strictly not for publication. Some of us protested that this Chilean-born soldier of de Gaulle could not know anything about elephants, since it is well known that there are no elephants in Chile. Here the submarine giants came nobly to the rescue of



ADMIRAL MUSLLIR

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their friend, and bore witness that their *Galipétain* had taken that elephant on board in South Africa and carried her and the monkey to Chile via Iceland and New Zealand. Our astonished inquiries elicited the fact that from Iceland the *Galipétain* had by-passed Siberia under the Arctic ice, then gone through the Bering Straits, destroyed the Japanese navy just to befriend the U.S.A., called on the New Zealanders, rallied Tahiti to de Gaulle, and landed the elephant in Chile.

In Chile, however, the monkey had not been allowed to land, because to land in Chile you had to be properly married. So the small disconsolate monkey had come back, and was now on our very ship. As a matter of fact Alberto produced a very small monkey that one of the crew kept on board.

TEN SECONDS

The hydrographer, with his wife and his sixteen-year-old son, also came on board at Pointe Noire. He was being sent to London, where he had to put some ideas about submarines before the Admiralty.

He worked every night on figures and plans and reports, into the small hours. I am sorry to report that at Lime Street station in Liverpool much of his work was stolen by a station thief who made away with the suit-case that contained most of the reports.

We became fast friends, and when the nights grew wickeder and wickeder as we made our way northward, he was more and more concerned about my safety. He counted that we would have ten seconds to rely upon between the torpedo hitting us and the time we

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should be in the boats ready to be lowered. He devised a plan of action by which, being waked up in the night by the explosion, we could within ten seconds be in our places in the boats. *One* · we sat up—the electricity was already out of action. *Two* · we lighted a match (he provided us with a box of matches each). *Three* · we set alight a torch made of paper, which he placed sticking out of a drawer every night. *Four* · we put on a thick overcoat. *Five* · we grabbed our life belt with one hand and a suit-case containing our most precious things with the other (our shoes were tied to this and also some outer garments). *Six* · out of the cabin. *Seven* · across the deck. *Eight* and *Nine* · up the ladder to the boat deck. *Ten* · in our seats. Then, at leisure, being mere passengers, we put on our shoes while the sailors lowered us into the sea.

We practised this again and again. Alberto was the only one who did do it, once. The two giants, the small one and the big one, maintained that they could be so quick that they had time to turn two somersaults across the deck, and yet be in their seats before us. But they couldn't.

However, there is no doubt that the hydrographer was right, and that we acquired method and celerity. We might have been in place within thirty seconds, had anything happened.

But nothing did.

A CHARM

One night a friendly but unknown hand put this charm into my cabin—an easy task, as in the heat we all slept with our doors open and a net curtain

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only for privacy. It was written on a single sheet of paper

Let us praise Saint Elizabeth, Queen of Ageria, Saint Matilda, Saint Bridget, who have revealed unto us all things concerning the Passion of our Lord, in this very special orison

Be it known unto you, my beloved, said Jesus, that the armed soldiers who attacked me were 200. Those that took me away bound numbered 100. They kicked me 105 times, they hit me 108 blows on the chest and in the face, 80 blows on my shoulders. I was either dragged along, by ropes, or pulled along the ground by my hair. I received during the day 6,666 blows

I had 100 wounds over my body, on my head 20 bruises, caused by the blows of a hammer in the hand of an unknown man

I was kept hanging on the cross during two hours that first day, and then dragged along the ground by my beard on twenty-three occasions

On my head were 100 thorn pricks, 3 fatal ones on my forehead. The armed soldiers inflicted 508 wounds upon me. The drops of blood that came out of me in my agony were 4,380

Any one who carries this orison on his body will never be drowned, nor die accidentally, nor catch any contagious illness, nor be struck by lightning, or the plague, he will be protected from his enemies and from false witnesses.

My only happiness is in prayer.

This was signed with an unknown name, and a note added to this effect, in a different handwriting:

This orison was given to a Marine on the 15th of August 1917, and comes from a holy book in the Vatican. It has protected me for twenty-four years—may it protect you and yours. I give it you on this day when the first mate has warned us to take all precautions, as two ships on our route have just been reported sunk by submarines.

The next morning I showed this to the hydrographer. He had had one given him too. I said that the most curious thing about this document was in the peculiarity of the numbers given. He agreed that the

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numbers must be the numbers of creation, God having created the world with words that were sounds that were vibrations that were numbers, and the agony of Christ being the creation of the world.

So we put the document away with due respect.

INCIDENTS

One day the hydrographer and I spent two hours watching a queer sort of cloud that came out of our funnel, failed to rise, barely missed the decks, and settled on the water some fifty yards astern and stayed there. Our ship, of course, was zigzagging every few minutes so as to avoid direct torpedo hits, and this cloud made quite a pattern of patches on the sea.

We stopped the first mate and asked him what this meant, but he said it was nothing, it was quite natural, something in the engine, he said, or the oil.

Of course we did not believe him.

One day the short giant shouted: 'Here is the *Galipétain!*' pointing to port, where some sort of whale was in the act of blowing a fine water spout.

One day we saw several empty rafts floating a short distance from us.

The officers shrugged their shoulders, and said the people had probably been rescued.

THE SON OF A LORD

The passenger who went ashore at Freetown was the son of a lord. He was young, a fine soldier, and he had a Racine with him. He was a poet. He read me some of his poems one was a masterpiece. Every poet should write at least one masterpiece.

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Having thus established confidence, he too asked me what the French were always quarrelling about, and why no Government ever lasted in France.

So I told him that the constitution of the Republic in 1875 was drawn up by Royalists. Their pretender at the time, having some sense, refused to come back and start another revolution. So the Royalists devised a constitution that gave no power to the President and that made it easy for the Cabinet to be turned out. The Royalists sincerely believed that the majority of the country was with them, and thus on any favourable opportunity for the king to come back, they could, at a moment's notice, turn out the Cabinet and take over. But no opportunity really came—or else the various pretenders were always too wise. A fatal illness had, however, been inoculated into the Republic at its birth—and deliberately.

Actually the vote on the constitution passed it by only a majority of one. But no one ever dared to touch it again. And as the great bulk of the people of France are genuine democrats, the Republic was safe—until the Germans came. Safe—but rickety. It can be understood that it is particularly bitter for the democrats to hear Maurras, the Royalist leader, so violently attack the Republic for precisely those faults which the Royalists purposely inserted into the very fabric of the constitution.

The son of a lord was a true democrat, and sympathized with us.

He was going to East Africa to fight. I told him, too, what I had told Ben Lucien Burman about why the French quarrel among themselves. He said he

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would remember, and he gave me a letter of introduction to his father.

Which was a proof of good faith.

I wish I could print his poem here. But that would be, no doubt, giving away information that might be of use to the enemy.

A POEM

So we wrote a poem together. I contributed the old-fashioned Victor Hugo tone, and the first line from Baudelaire, who would have been pleased. He contributed a timid kind of encouragement, as poets do.

Actually we were rather proud of the expression 'fleuves provisoires,' which we thought was a good lesson in strategy for generals and journalists, and a new association of words.

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer.
Tu te rappelleras, au jour de ta victoire,
Qu'à la mer seulement doit revenir la gloire
D'avoir épouvané les grands monstres de fer,

Que la France, écrasée aux champs et dans les airs,
Voyant ses ennemis passer et Meuse et Loire,
Et ne se fiant plus aux fleuves provisoires,
Trouva la citadelle où rassembler ses pairs

Au delà de la mer que garde l'Angleterre,
Et que les fils de Gaule ont retrouvé leur mère
Assise dans l'exil au milieu des déserts,

Gardée des seuls canons que Neptune tolère
Les canons des Anglais favoris de la mer
Homme libre, à jamais tu chéris l'Angleterre

FRANCE

A Belgian officer, who had had one beer too many, said. 'Do you know there are some people in England, in high office—and I could name some of them—who

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do not want France to be present at the peace conference? They think France is going to be a third-rate power after this war'

And he looked at me

So I said: 'Those people have forgotten several things Saint Louis, for instance. Also the English people, who have a soul Also de Gaulle'

Then he said: 'I know I am a Belgian I know which way I have always looked But believe me, keep your eyes open. Tell the world. People in offices can always be baffled if you tell the world what they are after.'

STRATEGY—THE MAP

The Belgian officer, when he was sober, and he generally was sober, was a great strategist He had in his cabin, or rather in his office—for to tell the truth he was the purser—a lovely map of the world which I envied him. One day he took a long pencil and he showed me on the map that the distance from Somaliland to Bombay was exactly the same as the distance from West Africa to Brazil 'So,' he said, 'people keep saying that whoever holds West Africa can invade South America. Don't they see that whoever holds Somaliland can invade India? By air? Of course. Well, aren't the Germans very good in the air? Can you say that the enterprise is beyond them if you let them take Africa? The Germans want to conquer the whole world. In order to baffle their strategy we must look at the world as a whole. Now the Germans have the mastery of Europe The vital areas of the free world are now in America and in Asia. Look at the map of

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Africa. It is the heart of the world. People have always noticed since they knew Africa that Africa has the shape of a heart. Africa is the heart of the world in strategy also. The fact that it is comparatively empty of population and especially of technically trained population would make it an easy prey for Germany. As you know, we are now running the gauntlet of those latitudes that run through French West Africa and French North Africa. We have to keep well away at sea in order to be comparatively safe from possible dangers from that huge area. Of course, the Vichy French who now hold French West Africa are more or less helpless for the moment. But suppose the Germans decide to come over in strength via Spain and Morocco. Perhaps then a powerful enemy will dominate the eastern shores of the southern Atlantic. Please note that the road to India via the Cape will then be cut by a submarine barrage between Liberia in Africa and the bump of Brazil—a narrow part of the sea, the Straits of Liberia we should call them, a mere thousand miles wide—and there may be a German air base on the other side too. Now look at the heart of Africa. The Free French under General de Gaulle hold what is at present the key to Africa. Just as it was said that whoever holds the mountains of Bohemia holds Europe, it may be said that whoever holds the Chad holds Africa. Provided, of course, there is sufficient military force to hold it. But if the Germans held the Chad you may rely upon it that there would be sufficient forces there to rule over the whole of Africa. Are you—the Free French and the British—in a position to say that you have enough

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forces between the Tibesti Mountain and Lake Chad to hold it against any possible German attack from the north? For, remember, the Germans are also in Cyrenaica, within four hundred miles of your first outposts of Kufra, which you wrenched from the Italians. That was your first great victory, you Free French, that was the first great service that you did the British Empire. But does the British Empire understand? If the Chad country were to fall into German hands, German planes would soon command the Congo River. A German authority established in Brazzaville would direct intrigues throughout the Belgian Congo and have us Belgians helpless in a few weeks. Have no illusions about that. German emissaries would then join hands across the Portuguese territories of Angola with their friends in South-West Africa, and with some of the disaffected Boer elements. Remember also the untold mineral wealth of Katanga and of Rhodesia. You would have war and also civil war right down to Cape Colony. No wonder Field Marshal Smuts is busy; he has good reason to be.

'I shudder to think,' said the Belgian officer, 'how easily the tide of war might go against us, and the Germans rule over Africa. Isn't it a question of the number of planes? Think further and look further east. Africa in German hands means that you are cut off from India, doesn't it? Would you be in a position to prevent German planes from Somaliland and German submarines dominating the Arabian Sea? Injuring India? And suppose again that the Germans by that time also hold some large part of Russia, some part of Turkistan, and can act on India also from the

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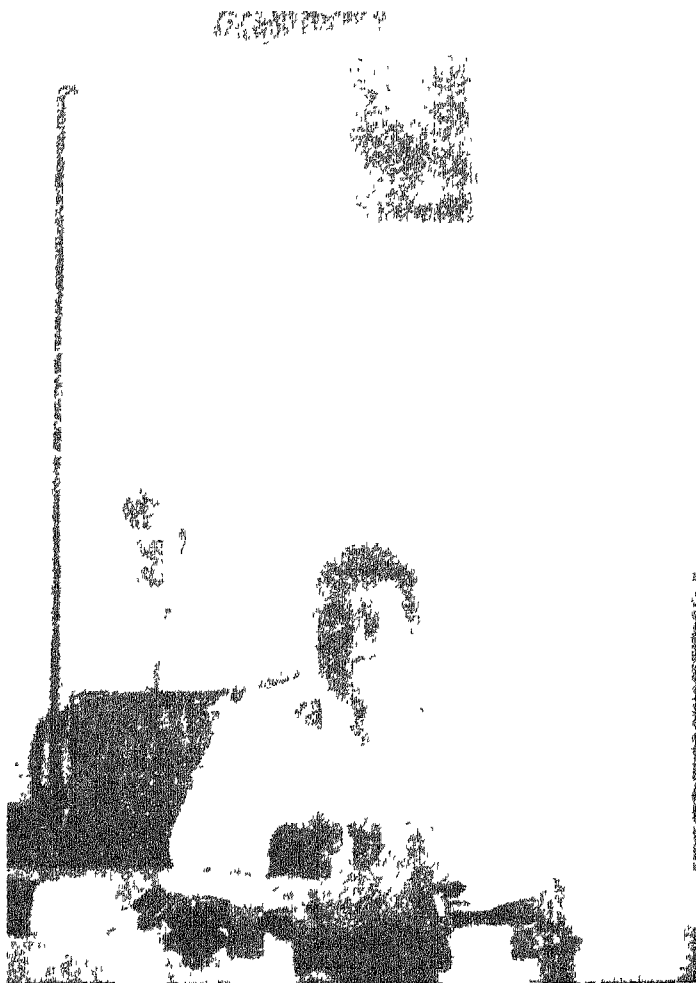
north? The battle of the world would be going against you, then. I think and think, and wonder, about Governor-General Éboué, the black man. You have seen him. Isn't he very black, much blacker than our negroes of the Bantu races ever are? Alone he had the character and the brains to seize the Chad country for us. He was the first, the first man of importance among the French, to come over to de Gaulle, with a whole country twice or three times the size of France, and occupying the key position of Africa, and Africa is a key position of the world. Certainly de Gaulle and Larminat fully understood, since, as soon as they could, with a small number of men and, of course, with British help, they boldly took the offensive and went through one-half of the Libyan Desert and occupied Murzuk and Kufra half-way between their own Tibesti Mountains and the Mediterranean. Those are now the outposts of the British Empire, the outposts of civilization.'

The purser looked at me anxiously and added: 'Do you realize all that? Do the British realize all that? Will they act in time? Once the Germans attack it is too late. You must prevent the Germans from attacking. How? By accumulating sufficient forces at vital points, so that it is hopeless for the Germans to attack.'

The purser was a great strategist.

FRANCE

We were in the bar. When the purser had said that, about France being a third-rate power, the chief mate actually blushed, but he said nothing and went on with his beer.



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I could see the doctor (he was partly Scotch) gathering impetus, and then he broke out heatedly. 'If *that* were to happen, if France were to be allowed to sink to the third rank of powers, then reckon that our civilization is at an end! France is the fountain-head of culture in Europe, the home of the freedom of the spirit. If there is no longer any France there can be no Europe.'

The *sous-mariniers* gathered vaguely that something was wrong, and the doctor in danger of losing his temper, so the small giant began singing softly his favourite song:

C'est une Lilloise,
Elle s'appelle Française.

Perhaps that was the right answer to the purser's statement; but the doctor glared and the sailor subsided. It seems he had really no right in the first-class bar, but no one minded, of course. In the second-class bar he would have sung his song at the top of his voice; but even so it calmed the doctor, who went on in an expository tone: 'A nation cannot lead spiritually if it isn't fully independent; and none but the first-class powers are fully independent. But then, look at the map. A land that abuts on three of the main seas of the world—the North Sea, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean—clearly bounded by two huge mountain ranges—the Alps and the Pyrenees—and open to the mass of Europe on the north-east, *must* be a first-class power because of its position. If you were to populate France with negroes even, after a while they would be a first-class power. Besides, the land would make them intelligent. Haven't you been to France and eaten the

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things that grow there? Intelligence comes from the things you eat straight out of the ground, the vegetables, the meat, the fish, the fruit, the wine.

'Look here! Where do you find the earliest monuments of human art? In the caves of the Dordogne and the Pyrenees, fifty thousand years ago. Magnificent modelling, sculpture of the first order, wall paintings. And where are the latest monuments of human art? In Paris, the Rodins and the Cézannes. I am a doctor, and who is the god of my trade? A Frenchman, Pasteur. Don't talk to me! Those who say that France is dead are fools; and some of them are knaves as well!

'And look at the people, the peasants who can cook, and the workmen who can carve. Artists, all of them, each in his way. And their courage! I was with them in the last war. The people—they have been gagged and bound, doped and stunned systematically by German-paid sneaks and German brutes. Advantage has been taken of all their best qualities. They were easy-going, they would see no evil, they would tamper with no one's liberty because they would allow no one to tamper with their liberty. The *douceur de vivre* in France, the sheer pleasure of being alive among people who respected your liberty in the sunshine, and were curious about you in a nice human way—that has been taken advantage of. While the French people, the peasants, the workmen, suspected no evil, intrigue and self-interest and stupidity and folly delivered them over to a cunning and brutal gangster, a master of bribery and corruption, who lived next door to them, just across the Rhine.

'I tell you that if France is allowed to sink there will never be any true democracy in Europe. What other country on the Continent is democratic in her soul? You, the Belgians, know very well you are only *bourgeois*, not real democrats, and the Dutch and the Scandinavians too. You are too few, anyway. There are the Czechs, of course, but where would they be, alone in the centre of Europe? All the other nations are, largely by their own choice, under some form of autocracy—Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland even—and the rest.

'No. Either France leads on the Continent or else democracy is dead in Europe—and I don't mean just the *form* of democracy—that does not matter much—that often endangers democracy, as it did in France—but the *spirit* of democracy, the feeling that one man is as good as another, essentially, in spite of fortune, position, intellect, in spite of everything: a soul is a soul, and no one has power over it. The people of France feel like that; and perhaps they are the only people in the world who really feel like that. If that dies, everything goes.'

We were all rather embarrassed, and we all agreed with him. The doctor did not know how to rid himself of his own eloquence. His bad temper had quite worked itself out. The Scottish part of him was exhausted, and the English part of him began to be ashamed, so he stopped a minute, and then turned on the unfortunate pursuer. 'Have another beer,' he said, 'you have made me thirsty, you ass!'

The pursuer thought this out for a bit. Then the big giant began to laugh, and said: 'Ah, but, doctor, we

are going to get into touch with our friends on the *Galipétain*, and they will see to it. While the *Galipétain* exists France will be a great power, and we shall always be there to build a new and even better *Galipétain*.'

More beer, however, made the purser more serious, and he turned on me. 'I don't like Victor Hugo,' he said 'I was brought up by the Jesuits, and I don't like Victor Hugo.'

By now the doctor was laughing too, and he said: 'All right, you may have Victor Hugo, but why don't you like him?'

The serious purser, who was, as I discovered, a really cultured man, went on: 'Well, now, it's like this. Victor Hugo has all the faults of the French. I love the French too, and you are in the right in all you say about them, but haven't they got faults too? Now Hugo is a humbug. He is not a bit sentimental really, he has not much feeling, in fact, except about children. But he is always mouthing it, and pretending he is in love with this, that, and the other, and he isn't, you know. He is pretending. He talks too much—he never leaves off.'

Here the purser left off, and looked at me, begging me with his eyes to contradict him.

So I said: 'Of course, I agree with you—he talks too much. But we all do, don't we? Hugo was a very great man, but he came in a bad period, when they were all sentimental; that was the fashion a hundred years ago. He has all the faults of the French, but he has their qualities too. As the doctor said, they can't bear to be interfered with, and they don't want to interfere with others. For Hugo, cruelty was the only crime, tyranny the only unforgivable misdemeanour. Pity

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was the real virtue. Read *Les Misérables* over again. Tolstoy said not one of his novels was half as good as *Les Misérables*—because never has pity for human suffering or respect for the liberty of the human soul been better expressed than by Hugo. Remember Javert, the police officer, his sense of duty, and how wrong he is. How he has to condemn himself in the end, and commit suicide because he has been too much in the right! Perhaps Pétain is such a man as Javert; perhaps there are too many Javerts in the French Fleet and the French Army. But the soul of France condemns them—men who do their duty against humanity, against reason. Victor Hugo condemns them. He has the qualities as well as the faults of the French. He sees the faults of the French and condemns them. Is that not great?’

The two giants, however, were getting bored with our discussion. It had never occurred to them that France could be other than a great power, even though the Boche had her now. That was an accident, soon to be put right. It had never occurred to them either that Hugo was not a great man. And Alberto said that in Chile everybody was made to learn Victor Hugo by heart in the schools, with *La Fontaine*. That settled it, and we all had another beer in peace.

I discovered later that the doctor was engaged in an attempt to translate *La Fontaine's Fables* into English. He had great trouble with the rhymes.

FRANÇOISE

One day we made the small giant tell us about Françoise. He was very willing. He explained in

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sonorous verse—and I believe he sang very well—how he was a sailor, and had met girls everywhere—Marseilles, Bordeaux, Le Havre, Dunkirk, and so on—the song ran exclusively on French girls. None had engaged his profound affections until he met Françoise, who was from Lille. What got him was her language—'*Elle dit m pour moi, li pour lui, ti pour toi*'—and to be addressed as *ti* instead of *toi* was too much for the sailor. So he took her to Monsieur le Maire and Monsieur le Curé, and married her properly. And when she says *ti pour toi*, she can get anything out of him. Besides, they have a little daughter by the end of the song, and the little toddler already, like her mother,

C'est une Lilloise,
Elle s'appelle Françoise

Such is the sailor's bliss.

THE DOCTOR

The doctor's life seemed to me an enviable one. He was a cultured man, had a good number of excellent books, and very few patients. He had held his own against champions at chess, and beat all the officers easily.

He extracted a jigger flea from my foot, and a molar from my jaw, just to show he was a ship's surgeon. He had great skill. On land, his skill found its use in archery. He was an amateur champion in this and a great believer in the bow and arrow. He told me many surprising things. It appears that the author of *Ivanhoe*, in which arrows play such a part, knew nothing of archery. It appears that an expert can kill a man at

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three hundred yards with an arrow. It appears also that the last man who can cut such bows out of properly selected wood is dying of old age without a successor

ASTRONOMY

The doctor was an expert also in astronomy. The ships' officers, in answer to my persistent questioning on the voyage out and back, had shown me such obvious things as Orion, with Procyon on one side and Aldebaran of the Bull on the other. From Procyon, a right angle gives you Alphard and Regulus of the Lion, whom you can always check up on, because Regulus is part of an absolutely clear mark of interrogation in the sky. Then, of course, there is always Sirius, who balances Aldebaran on the other side of Betelgeuse. Procyon, Betelgeuse, and Sirius make a lovely triangle with its point to the south leading on to Canopus, if you are far enough south.

The sailors also spoke of Achernar, Vega, and Fomalhaut, but never could produce them, not at 10 p.m. anyway.

I kept inquiring for Spica of the Virgin; by bad luck none of the officers could ever find it, and I was beginning to become sceptical of the Virgin, when one evening at dinner, as I was giving expression to some of my disillusion, the doctor offered to show me Spica. The easiest star to find in the sky, he said.

So we went out on deck, and he started from the Southern Cross, still quite plain once you had learnt to distinguish it from three or four similar quadrilateral formations, all irregular

Right above the Southern Cross Corvus is shaped

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like the hilt of a dagger—if you will kindly consent to admit it. The point of the long dagger is Spica.

Once you have seen Spica you can never forget it. Spica gives away the position of Arcturus on your left, and from Arcturus an elegant curve is made by the horses of the Great Chariot. Arcturus is really, far ahead of them, and leading them towards their own left, and towards the right of the oncoming Virgin, the leader of the horses of the Great Chariot.

So from the Southern Cross to the Great Bear, as some call the Chariot, the heavens were put in order for me by the doctor.

MORE ASTRONOMY

Now it was revealed to Victor Hugo in Jersey, near the sea—even as things had been revealed to John at Patmos, near the sea—that when Christ ascended into heaven, and disappeared from the eyes of the disciples, he went to play his part in a cosmic drama and to die again, eternally on the Southern Cross.

Christ is eternally dying and being born. Corvus is really the Holy Ghost in the form of a bird, hovering over the Southern Cross, and directing Christ from the Cross again to Spica, the Virgin. And Arcturus, of Boötes, is really St Joseph, who leads the patient oxen (or horses, how could the Greeks know?) of the Great Chariot (and they thought it was a bear) from which Christ taught the world, not only the earth that time.

Hence the mark of interrogation on the right-hand side, of Regulus the Roman, who could not understand, and the subservient position of Orion, surrounded by a whole menagerie, the Great Dog with Sirius, the Little

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Dog with Procyon, the Bull with Aldebaran—angels of the pagans, our domestic animals.

On the left-hand side, listening to Christ from afar, but also to be saved in their due time, are the creeping things, the devils of the Christians, the Scorpion with Antares, the Serpent held by Ophiuchus, the Eagle, and the Swan. Then comes Aquarius, who gives baptism to the whole creation, and you are back again. You can see Orion on the other side. Thus, round Christ and the Virgin, turns the whole world, led by Orion the Hunter. The kings of Orion are the powers of this world, the Caesars unto whom we are to give what is theirs so long as we give God what is His

MORE THAN ASTRONOMY

The peasants of Provence say that the so-called horses of the Chariot are in fact the three kings from the east, who first of all went north, until directed by Herod's evil men. They are going to find Joseph (Arcturus), who will in time take them to the Virgin. Their chariot is full of gifts for the Babe.

When they come to Spica of the Virgin they shall all turn towards the south, and they shall see the Christ on the Cross. All blessed souls turn south, when they come to the Virgin, and they know the spot.

But the peasants of Provence do not know of the Southern Cross, and theirs is a blind faith. Yet their souls have to take the journey to get to heaven. They follow the Three Kings, whom they know, and try to get into the Chariot and be carried as a gift, with all the essences of the world, to the Babe, trusting in St Joseph to direct them to the Virgin, to open for them, at the

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turning of the heavenly road, the gate to the temple of Christ.

The peasants of Provence are first cousins to the ivory sellers of the Congo River. The Congo River also takes an immense turn to the south before it can find the sea. Now I come to remember it, *the ivory man* had said something about Mary and a star. I wish I had asked *him* about Spica.

ETERNALLY: HUGO

Then I remembered the amazing phrases. 'We have had enough of the sun. To the stars! to the stars!'

'Have you never turned a corner and unexpectedly come upon God as against a sheer cliff? Have you not gone through tempests in the constellations, and suffered shipwreck among the stars? Has not your flying raft just sheered off Saturn and then been stranded upon the sandbanks of the Milky Way?'

And I felt I had done all that, for the sake of the last vision.

'In the very centre of the heavens, in the cyclone and the glory, in the midst of the driving clouds and the leaping flames, the great sun, Jesus Christ, hangs on the magnificent nails of the Southern Cross, eternally.'

THE POLAR STAR

A night came when the polar star was practically at the zenith. The doctor called me out to show it me, and even the Belgian officers could no longer maintain honourably that we were still south of the equator, nor even of the tropics.

To get a little of their own back they warned us

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officially that we had to sleep in our life-belts as we might be torpedoed any moment now. But we had heard that one before

When we got back to England we stood them all drinks, to prove there was no ill feeling. They were lovable men, all of them had worked themselves to exhaustion in watching over our safety. They were justly proud of their ship and of their service. I think you get to know more of human nature by observing a Belgian than from any other specimen of our race

The French are too tense, the English are too slow, except when in immediate danger, when they wake as animals do in the wilds; the Belgian has just the right dose of cynicism to be aware of danger; of obstinacy to pull through any enterprise; of kindness to help every human being. But there are not enough Belgians in the world, and consequently, I think, the Belgians are inclined to be pessimists.

LIME STREET STATION

Liverpool had been terribly bombed again and again while we were away. How we all admired the English! Everything was in order, the docks worked, the police worked, Lime Street station worked. From Brazzaville I arrived in London on time—not one minute late. England will win.

THE WATCH OVER AFRICA

We lost the Battle of France. We won the Battle of England.

This is a world war. There will be a Battle of Africa, and a Battle of Asia, and if the Germans do not fail,

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there will be a Battle of the Atlantic, not only of the North Atlantic, and there will be a Battle of America.

The key position of the world is Africa

If you hold Africa you can attack, you may master, America on one side, India and Asia on the other.

The key position of Africa is the southern centre of the Sahara Desert. If you hold the Chad, Dakar can be yours when you like, and the Congo is yours, and then Africa is yours

Hence the importance of the watch over the Chad—the watch over Africa.

But the future of the world, too, not only of this war, has a nodal centre in Africa. The wealth of the future is waiting there. Asia is exhausted. Africa is new, and full of unexploited strength, which only collaboration between black and white can bring out.

Blake said:

Thou art the image of God who dwells in darkness of Africa—I know thee, I have found thee, and I will not let thee go

Do not let Africa go, either now to the Germans, or in the future to the godless.

Keep the watch over Africa.

MAP AND APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

A BROADCAST GIVEN FROM BRAZZAVILLE

ON 4TH APRIL 1941, 9.45 P.M.

by PROFESSOR SAURAT

Monsieur le Gouverneur Éboué aura la gloire d'avoir pris l'initiative qui a fondé l'Afrique française libre; il aura aussi la gloire d'avoir indiqué les principes d'où doivent partir les reconstructions spirituelles. Je veux vous relire quelques phrases de son admirable circulaire du 19 1.41

Nous avons tous trouvé, dans des doctrines religieuses et philosophiques qui pouvaient paraître divergentes, le motif à une même pensée et l'énergie de prendre une initiative identique. Il y a là une grande leçon, dont il est indispensable que nous fassions notre profit. Si nous avons su dénouer, avec cette simplicité d'ensemble, ce qui fut pour d'autres une si grave crise de conscience, c'est qu'il y avait un fonds spirituel national auquel, avec des différences d'expression, nous pouvions faire et nous fîmes tous le même appel. C'est ce qui a permis le Mouvement, c'est ce qui doit le maintenir et le rendre toujours plus efficace.

Nous abdiquerons donc tout esprit de secte pour ne considérer que notre point de départ et notre but communs. Personne parmi nous ne sera reproché pour ses opinions philosophiques ou religieuses, puisqu'il a découvert, dans ces opinions, la clef du problème qui se posait à sa conscience de Français.

Demain, nous rentrerons en France, et nous risquons d'y trouver, avec les ruines entassées par l'ennemi, de profonds sujets de discorde intérieure. C'est alors qu'on connaîtra la nécessité et le prix d'une rénovation spirituelle où chacun de

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nous, ayant détruit la racine de tout sectarisme, apportera le fruit d'une longue méditation

Dégageons, des aujourd'hui, notre âme de modes étroits et agressifs, de façon à être dignes et capables de refaire demain la France jusqu'au fond de l'âme

C'est là l'affirmation essentielle des deux principes qui referont la France la liberté, et l'union dans la liberté C'est là ce qui nous différencie profondément de nos ennemis qui ont su faire leur union avant nous, mais en supprimant la liberté, c'est là ce qui nous unit à nos alliés, qui luttent comme nous pour sauvegarder ce principe de la liberté.

Je suis venu en A.E.F. pour y aider, dans la mesure de mes moyens, à l'organisation d'un enseignement secondaire. J'ai trouvé déjà de belles choses faites ou en train, et j'ai admiré l'œuvre de M Chambon, le Directeur de l'Enseignement, et de ses collaborateurs, qui, avec des moyens très réduits, ont mis en œuvre des principes d'une justesse certaine avec un dévouement sans limites. Les idées appliquées ou à appliquer de plus en plus dans l'enseignement sont celles que M le Gouverneur Général Éboué a énoncées pour la politique générale. la liberté, l'union Notre problème pédagogique est d'abord de donner à tous une base commune de culture qui soit dans notre ligne nationale et serve de fondation à l'union; et *ensuite* d'assurer la liberté de développement des enfants suivant les dispositions de chacun.

D'abord, il faut refaire par l'école l'unité spirituelle de la nation. Les vieilles querelles sont périmées: pourquoi continuer à se battre pour défendre d'un côté un matérialisme maintenant détruit par la science, de l'autre un dogmatisme qu'on ne rencontre plus chez

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les hommes vraiment religieux? Ce qu'il faut faire, c'est rendre clairs à tous les enfants, dès leur jeune âge, ces principes communs d'action dont Monsieur le Gouverneur Général Éboué nous parle. Par exemple, à l'heure où l'aumônier ou bien le pasteur viennent enseigner aux élèves la religion choisie par les parents, que les enfants dont les parents le préfèrent entendent le Directeur ou la Directrice de l'établissement leur faire une heure de vraie morale non plus ces ennuyeuses théories que nous avons souvent connues dans notre enfance, mais des leçons tirées de l'expérience de la vie d'aujourd'hui, de la patrie, de la famille, du monde. Que tous les enfants, catholiques, protestants ou autres, apprennent d'une façon vivante les mêmes principes de la morale pratique, du patriotisme vécu, de la collaboration loyale entre hommes et nations. Que chacun aussi apprenne à connaître les autres. J'ai remarqué dans l'enseignement organisé par M. Chambon, l'étude attrayante des légendes et des croyances indigènes. Dans l'enseignement secondaire, nous donnerons à tous les enfants des notions simples sur les religions du monde, sur les musulmans, sur les bouddhistes, sur les hindouistes; ce n'est pas dans l'Empire, où on a l'habitude de vivre avec des hommes de religions si différentes, que l'on pourra trouver, mauvaise cette innovation. c'est bien plutôt une désastreuse lacune que nous comblerons, avec la plus complète impartialité. Qui de nous n'a quelque chose à apprendre des autres?

Ces enseignements auront pour effet d'amener une collaboration que pour ma part je désire totale entre les Pères et les maîtres de l'État. Je sais qu'en A.E.F.

cette collaboration existe: j'ai parlé déjà à M Chambon et aux Pères, et j'ai vu les enfants des écoles chrétiennes jouer en nombre dans les cours de l'école de Bakongo Nous établirons, je l'espère, ici, une union de fait entre les deux enseignements, une union basée sur le respect mutuel, qui pourra servir de modèle peut-être même jusqu'en France

Voilà ce que nous désirons faire pour contribuer à l'union spirituelle des Français, non seulement de France mais de tout l'Empire Parlons maintenant du développement de l'enfant lui-même.

Avouons d'abord nos fautes récentes. La troisième République avait organisé un système d'enseignement qui faisait l'admiration du monde Je connais directement l'enseignement en Angleterre et en Amérique, et j'ai souvent parlé à des professeurs allemands, belges, hollandais, scandinaves Nulle part n'existait un système égal au nôtre, et l'afflux des étudiants étrangers à Paris et dans d'autres de nos universités démontre ce fait. Cependant, notre enthousiasme même pour l'enseignement nous avait conduit à diverses erreurs.

D'abord, c'est un fait connu de tous que, quelques semaines après leurs examens, nos enfants avaient oublié la plus grande partie de ce qu'ils avaient provisoirement appris. Quelle banqueroute pédagogique! Il faudra donc alléger les programmes, et s'étendre davantage, plus à loisir, sur ce qu'on enseignera

Ensuite, il faudra rétablir un contact plus humain entre les maîtres et les élèves, et redonner aux maîtres des responsabilités qu'ils n'avaient plus, et que personne n'avait reprises.

Enfin, il faut se rendre compte que tous les enfants

n'ont pas les mêmes aptitudes, et adapter l'enseignement à l'enfant et ne plus essayer d'adapter l'enfant à un enseignement uniforme

Reprenons ces points.

L'élément humain me paraît le plus important. Trop souvent le maître était devenu un ouvrier qui venait en classe faire son travail, puis, le travail fait, s'en allait. il faut avouer aussi qu'on le chargeait de trop d'élèves, de trop de programmes, de trop de classes, et qu'il ne pouvait guère davantage. Il est lamentable de rassembler les élèves en groupes trop nombreux. En cela, les circonstances ici nous favorisent: en A. E. F., les enfants sont dispersés, les groupes à rassembler peu nombreux. Nous allons essayer pour le moment d'amener le maître aux élèves plus que les élèves aux maîtres. Ainsi, par plus petits groupes, la responsabilité de chaque maître sera plus grande: il pourra tenir en main et suivre les enfants. De ce qui semble une infériorité, la dispersion, nous allons tirer un grand avantage.

En particulier, les maîtres surveilleront eux-mêmes les devoirs donnés par eux. La vieille pratique du devoir que l'enfant fait à la maison est une hérésie pédagogique: nous savons tous comment le père ou la mère ou l'aîné remplacent le maître absent tant bien que mal, et parfois se substituent à l'élève même en faisant, aussi tant bien que mal, le thème latin ou le problème d'arithmétique. Chez nous, les études surveillées par les professeurs aboliront ce mal. L'enfant à la maison doit être libre: s'il a du temps, s'il s'intéresse à un sujet donné, s'il préfère lire des livres qu'on lui indiquera, qu'il soit libre. L'enfant a aussi

besoin quelquefois de ne rien faire, de laisser germer en lui des idées, de s'assimiler des connaissances dans la tranquillité.

Enfin, principe essentiel et méconnu tous les enfants ne sont pas doués de même. Un enfant très intelligent peut ne pas mordre au latin ou aux mathématiques. Développons l'intelligence qu'il a; donnons-lui des instruments de culture qu'il gardera pour son plaisir et son profit toute sa vie, et non des chaînes qu'il rejettera dès qu'il le pourra.

Évidemment, un certain minimum de tout est nécessaire à tous: les deux ou trois premières années secondaires donneront une base commune. Mais s'il n'y a que 10 per cent qui vraiment mordent au latin, pourquoi, vers la 3^e année, forcer tout le monde, au détriment des bons, qui feraient beaucoup plus s'ils étaient seuls? De même en mathématiques, vers la 4^e et la 3^e nous donnerons donc plus de choix aux enfants et aux familles, les maîtres pourront alors donner des conseils éclairés sur ce que peut l'enfant—les parents décideront. Je vois au moins quatre subdivisions principales au baccalauréat, suivant les carrières possibles. l'enseignement classique surtout pour les futurs professeurs, légistes etc.; l'enseignement moderne surtout pour les administrateurs; l'enseignement des sciences d'observation surtout pour les futurs médecins, agriculteurs, etc.; des sciences expérimentales ou mathématiques surtout pour les futurs ingénieurs. Mais la souplesse de notre système permettra aux familles tous les choix désirables. Aussi les arts, de la musique à la sculpture, et les métiers, de la terre au fer et au bois, seront parmi nos préoccupations les plus sérieuses. Ainsi nous

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espérons mettre enfin l'enseignement au service de l'enfant et de sa liberté spirituelle, au service de la famille, au service de l'unité de la nation

* * *

To Governor-General Éboué belongs the glory of taking the initiative that founded Free French Africa, also the glory of having made clear the principles on which national reconstruction can be based. I want to read to you a few sentences of his admirable proclamation of 19th January 1941:

All of us have found, in religious and philosophical beliefs that might not appear to harmonize together, motives for the same thought and the energy necessary to the common decision. Here is a great lesson by which we needs must profit. Since we have been able to unravel and, as a whole, very simply what was for so many others a very serious moral crisis, there must have been a spiritual fund in our nation to which, in spite of differences in formulation, we all could and did appeal. This has made our movement possible, this must maintain it and make it more and more real.

We shall give up any kind of sectarian spirit and think only of our common starting-point, and of our common aims. No one amongst us will be reproached for his philosophical or religious opinions, since he has discovered in those opinions the key of the problem that has been put before his conscience as a Frenchman.

Soon we shall re-enter France, and it is only too likely that we shall find in France, together with the ruins heaped up by the enemy, subjects of profound internal discord. Then we shall realize the necessity and the value of a spiritual renovation to which each of us, having destroyed to its roots any sectarian spirit, will bring the results of a long meditation. From to-day onwards let us liberate our souls from any narrow and aggressive mood so as to be able and worthy to-morrow to reconstruct France to the innermost part of her soul.

This is the essential affirmation of the two principles on which France will be reborn, liberty and union.

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Here lies the profound difference between ourselves and our enemies, who have reached their union before we have, but at the cost of suppressing liberty. Here is the principle which unites us to our allies, who fight as we do, to save this principle of liberty.

I have come to French Equatorial Africa to help to the fullest extent of my powers in the organization of secondary teaching. . . . The principles to be applied in teaching are those which Governor-General Éboué has expressed for our general policy of liberty and union. Our problem in pedagogy is first to give to every one a common basis of culture that runs along our national traditions, and can be made the basis for union, and then to make sure that the children shall develop each according to his or her own nature and talents, in the fullest possible liberty.

First of all we must create again, through schools, the spiritual unity of the nation. The old quarrels are now obsolete. Why go on fighting for the defence on the one side of materialist theories that have been destroyed by science, on the other side of dogmatic views which are no longer found among truly religious men? Our task must be to make all the children realize from an early age those common principles of action to which Governor-General Éboué refers. For instance, during those hours in which the *aumônier* or the *pasteur* come to teach the children the religion chosen by the parents, let the children whose parents prefer it listen to the head master or the head mistress on morality and behaviour. I do not mean those boring lessons in ethics which made our childhood weary, but lessons from the life of to-day, from the life of the

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country, of the family, of the world. Let all children, whether Catholic, Protestant, or anything else, learn in a real way those common principles of practical morality, of true patriotism, of just collaboration between men and nations. Let every one also learn to know all the others. We shall try to give to all our children elementary information on the chief religions in the world, on the Mohammedans, the Buddhists, the Hindus, and so on. Is there any one of us who has not much to learn from others?

. . . On those lines we shall try to contribute our utmost to the spiritual union of all French citizens, not only in France, but in the whole empire. Let us speak now of the development of the child himself. Let us first admit our mistakes. The Third Republic had organized a teaching system which was admired throughout the world. . . . The number of foreign students in Paris and in our other universities is sufficient proof of this fact. Nevertheless, our very enthusiasm for teaching had led us into various errors.

First of all, it is a well-known fact that a few weeks after their examinations our pupils had forgotten the greater part of what they had temporarily learnt. This points to a pedagogic failure of the first order. The curriculum will have to be lightened, and what we decide to teach must be taught more at leisure.

Secondly, we must re-establish a more human contact between the masters and the pupils. We must give to the masters responsibilities which have been taken away from them and entrusted to no one else.

Lastly, we must realize that all children do not possess the same talents. We must adapt teaching to

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the individual child and no longer try to adapt every child to a uniform system of teaching. Let us go over these three points.

The human element seems to me the most important one. Too frequently the teacher has become a sort of specialized workman who comes into a class-room, does his work, and, the work done, goes away. We must admit also that he has been given too many pupils, too many subjects to teach, too many classes, and that he could do no better. It is a deplorable thing to collect pupils in groups that are too numerous. In this matter circumstances favour us here in A.E.F. Our children are scattered over wide areas. The groups that we shall collect here and there are not very large. We are going, for the time being, to bring the teacher to the child rather than the pupils to the teachers. In charge of smaller groups of children the teacher will have a much greater responsibility. He will have to influence the children and follow their development closely. From this apparent disadvantage, dispersion, we shall derive a very great advantage.

More especially the masters will watch over the work that they have set to children. The old practice of homework is a heresy in pedagogy. We all know that the father, or the mother, or the elder brother or sister, take the place of the absent master as far as they can; often take the place of the pupil himself in doing as well as they can the translation from the Latin or the problem in arithmetic. This however will be suppressed by putting upon the teacher the responsibility of directing the children's work during class or study hours, as the child's time in the home must be

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free. If he has some time to himself, and takes an interest in a given subject, if he chooses to read books that he has heard of, let him be free. The child also must sometimes have time to do nothing to allow his own ideas to grow in him, to allow what he has learnt to sink into the peace of his soul.

Lastly—and this is an essential principle too often not recognized—all children do not possess the same gifts. A very intelligent child may not be any good at Latin or at mathematics. Let us develop whatever kind of intellect a child has. Let us give him instruments of culture that he will keep by him for pleasure and profit throughout his life. Let us not load him with chains that he will cast off as soon as he is able to.

Obviously a minimum amount of all-round knowledge is necessary to every one. The first two or three years of secondary teaching should be given to all. But since there are only roughly 10 per cent who absorb Latin properly, why, after, say the third year, oblige all the pupils to carry on to the detriment of the gifted ones who could achieve much more if they were taught apart? Similarly as regards mathematics; during the third or fourth year we would leave the choice to the families and the children, the teachers would then give competent advice on the children's possibilities and the parents would decide. I can see at least four main divisions in the final secondary school examination according to possible careers: the classics, mainly for future teachers, lawyers, and so on; modern culture, mainly for civil servants, the natural sciences for future doctors, agriculturists, and so on; experimental and

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mathematical sciences especially for future engineers. Nevertheless, our system must be elastic enough to allow families to make any desirable choice. Besides this, all the arts, from music to sculpture, all the trades, from land work to working in iron or wood, will count among our main preoccupations. Thus we hope at last to make our teaching of real service to the child and to the spiritual liberty of the child, to the family, to the nation.

APPENDIX II

GENERAL DE LARMINAT'S PROCLAMATION

Brazzaville 18th February 1941

POSITION DES FRANÇAIS LIBRES

VIS-À-VIS DES PROBLÈMES NATIONAUX

*Par le Général de Larminat, Haut Commissaire de
l'Afrique Française Libre, membre du Conseil de Défense
de l'Empire*

Des renseignements récents, venus de France, nous ont éclairés sur certains arguments que nous opposent nos ennemis, désireux d'enrayer le mouvement qui pousse irrésistiblement le cœur des Français patriotes et de bonne volonté vers les Français Libres.

Ces arguments sont faciles à réfuter, car ils reposent sur des malentendus, voulus ou non, relativement à notre position et à nos buts. Il est nécessaire que nous les fassions tomber, car il ne faut pas qu'un écran se forme entre Français patriotes.

Il faut qu'au jour où nous nous retrouverons tous dans la victoire libératrice nous n'ayons que des motifs de nous unir et aucun de nous diviser.

L'un des arguments que l'on utilise contre nous le plus volontiers est que nous serions les partisans du

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régime parlementaire et des mœurs politiques d'avant-guerre, que notre but serait de les rétablir tels quels, que nous serions le refuge du personnel politique le plus décrié, le plus funeste au pays.

Nous avons déjà fréquemment marqué notre position à ce sujet. C'est celle de Clemenceau, quand il prit le pouvoir en 1918: 'Nous faisons la guerre, rien que la guerre,' et que symbolise notre devise:

'HONNEUR ET PATRIE'

qui exclut toute idéologie politique.

Notre seul objectif est de *gagner la guerre* pour restituer à notre Patrie son indépendance et sa grandeur. Nous concentrons tout notre effort sur cet objectif, nous négligeons tout ce qui peut nous en détourner ou nous affaiblir.

Nous voulons libérer notre Pays, non pas pour y restaurer ou instaurer tel ou tel régime, mais pour qu'il recouvre la force et l'indépendance d'où naîtra sa rénovation. C'est le Pays lui même qui trouvera alors en lui les principes, les hommes, les institutions propres à le rénover.

Nous savons très bien qu'une nation ne subit pas un désastre comme le nôtre sans qu'il y ait à cet effondrement des causes profondes. Nous savons que la connaissance de ces causes est nécessaire, nous savons qu'il faudra des réformes radicales pour régénérer le Pays.

Mais ceci n'est pas notre affaire en ce moment. Quand la maison brûle, ce n'est pas le moment de reprendre les fondations vicieuses. Il faut d'abord éteindre le feu qui menace de tout dévorer; c'est seule-

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ment quand le principal du bâtiment est sauvé que l'on fait appel à l'architecte pour reconstruire, en partant de la base s'il le faut.

Le péril allemand est l'incendie qui menace de tout dévorer de notre Pays. La mission que nous nous sommes donnée est d'éteindre cet incendie. Et pour cela nous faisons appel à tous les hommes de bonne volonté. Nous ne leur demandons pas de justifier de leurs opinions politiques, de leur religion ou de leur race, mais seulement de leur *volonté de servir* sans conditions, pour sauver l'indépendance du Pays.

Nous refusons de nous affaiblir en une pareille crise en distrayant notre attention et notre énergie sur la recherche et la poursuite des responsabilités du désastre. Les désordres politiques qui ont engendré ce désastre *appartiennent au domaine de la mort, il est trop tard pour rien y faire, alors que la France vit, et qu'elle est en un grand péril dont il faut la sauver.*

Voilà notre position, c'est celle de combattants qui, les armes à la main, refusent de s'occuper d'autre chose que de l'ennemi et des moyens de le battre.

Les Français de la Métropole ne peuvent plus se battre. Ils doivent subir en ce moment et nous comprenons qu'ils aient le temps de réfléchir sur ce qui leur est arrivé. Ces réflexions sont certes utiles et profitables, mais nous leur demandons de ne pas perdre de vue qu'elles ne serviront à rien si l'ennemi est vainqueur et nous impose sa loi, car cette loi anéantira chez nous toute possibilité de choisir notre destin.

Qu'ils n'oublient pas que cet ennemi n'a repris sa force qu'en profitant de nos querelles intérieures, et qu'en juin 1940 il a eu le génie diabolique de briser

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complètement notre volonté de résistance, en exploitant par ses complices de l'intérieur cette intoxication politicienne des Français, en dérivant sur la recherche des responsabilités ce qui nous restait d'esprit combattif. Qu'ils n'oublient pas que le peu qu'ils peuvent faire pour affaiblir et gêner cet ennemi, est aujourd'hui mille fois plus important pour le salut du Pays que la critique la plus pertinente des causes de notre effondrement et l'élaboration des systèmes politiques les mieux équilibrés

Ces Français ont un gouvernement dont le chef est hautement respectable, dont certains membres sont indubitablement patriotes et honnêtes. Et cependant alors que nous négligeons les gouvernements antérieurs, parce que négligeables puisqu'ils sont défunts et impuissants, nous attaquons vivement ce gouvernement de Vichy, car lui est actuel, et ses décisions peuvent peser d'un poids terrible dans les destinées de la Nation pour autant qu'elles favorisent directement ou indirectement nos ennemis.

Quant aux réformes d'ordre intérieur auxquelles procède ce gouvernement et qu'il paraît considérer comme l'essentiel, nous n'avons pas à les juger car nous sommes trop éloignés et mal informés. Mais nous pensons que c'est un moment très mal choisi pour procéder à des réformes de structure que celui où l'ennemi occupe la plus grande partie de notre territoire, la plus riche, la plus peuplée, où il tient en captivité les deux millions de Français les meilleurs, où ses agents qui pénètrent jusque dans les conseils du gouvernement, contrôlent notre vie nationale.

Il fallait à la France submergée un gouvernement

pour traiter avec l'ennemi qui foulait son sol. Il lui fallait pour cela des hommes durs, courageux et ayant de l'autorité; mais des hommes qui restreignent leur mandat aux nécessités immédiates; c'est-à-dire à protéger le territoire qui ne pouvait échapper à l'ennemi, et ne se reconnaissent pas le droit de traiter pour ce qui restait libre; des hommes qui réservent l'avenir national au lieu de le sacrifier à un hypothétique plat de lentilles. Ces hommes devaient se considérer comme gérants de séquestre sans autre ambition que de conserver tout ce qui pouvait l'être dans les prises de l'ennemi.

De tels hommes, nous les respecterions et les admirerions. Nous ne pouvons admirer nos gouvernants de Vichy, et si nous respectons les intentions de ceux d'entre eux qui sont honnêtes et dépourvus d'ambitions personnelles, nous ne pouvons respecter les principes de leur action. *

Jeanne d'Arc a été faite Sainte de la Patrie parce qu'elle a symbolisé la révolte de l'âme nationale contre le roi étranger régulièrement intronisé par les plus hautes autorités du royaume. La popularité de Gambetta et des hommes de la Défense Nationale est née de ce qu'ils ont symbolisé la volonté de résistance de la Nation contre le Prussien vainqueur du gouvernement légal. Jeanne d'Arc et eux se sont battus sans alliés, avec de faibles forces. L'une a vaincu, les autres ont sauvé l'honneur et préparé le renouveau national.

Nous prétendons sauver l'honneur et vaincre dans l'alliance du puissant Empire Britannique. C'est une entreprise honorable et raisonnable. Elle suffit à nos

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forces. Que l'on nous dispense de vues plus machiavéliques et lointaines A chaque jour suffit sa peine.

L'on nous accuse aussi de rompre l'unité nationale pour faire le jeu d'intérêts britanniques traditionnellement opposés aux intérêts français.

Nous ne devons pas nous étonner de ce reproche, puisqu'une autre habileté diabolique des Allemands, en cela encore puissamment aidés par leurs complices de l'intérieur, a été de détourner contre les Anglais la rage du peuple français vaincu.

Mais il nous fournit l'occasion de définir avec netteté notre position vis-à-vis de la France de Vichy, vis-à-vis des Britanniques, et de dire pourquoi nous avons la conviction, à vrai dire partagée d'instinct par l'immense majorité des Français, que la victoire de l'Empire Britannique sera le salut de la France.

Vis-à-vis de la France nous sommes des enfants fidèles. Nous ne nous considérons nullement comme des rebelles. Et si nous désobéissons au gouvernement de Vichy, ce n'est que dans le but de mieux servir la France.

Nous sommes dans la situation du fils plus hardi qui quitte le giron d'une famille ruinée et accablée de dettes pour chercher en des pays neufs les moyens de rétablir l'honneur et l'aisance du foyer familial. Son père le maudira peut-être de s'expatrier, ses frères timides ou empêchés envieront son audace, mais lui sait bien qu'il ne se sépare des siens que pour mieux les aider.

C'est ainsi que nous nous concevons par rapport à la France métropolitaine. Et nous désirons rester en contact avec elle. Ce n'est pas nous qui coupons les

ponts, qui arrêtons les lettres et les télégrammes, ceux qui font cela sont les agents du gouvernement de Vichy.

Il n'y a pas une once de séparatisme dans notre cœur, il n'y a que des sentiments filiaux. Nous ne revendiquons que la liberté de lutter pour délivrer notre pays

Vis-à-vis de la Grande-Bretagne, notre situation est exactement celle qu'aurait eu le gouvernement Français de juin 1940, s'il s'était replié en Afrique du Nord pour, continuer la guerre. Ce gouvernement aurait conclu avec l'Angleterre des arrangements économiques, militaires, financiers, destinés à lui permettre de vivre pour combattre. C'est justement ce que nous avons fait, et ces arrangements ont été conclus par un Conseil de Défense de l'Empire régulièrement reconnu par la Grande-Bretagne comme apte à traiter des intérêts de la France.

Nul n'aurait songé à reprocher à ce gouvernement français d'aliéner la souveraineté nationale, ni à le taxer de séparatisme. Pas plus que nul n'a songé à reprocher à la France ou à l'Angleterre d'avoir des visées impérialistes sur la Pologne le jour où ces deux pays ont pris à leur compte la reconstitution et l'entretien des forces polonaises. Tout cela est net, loyal, clair, les souverainetés nationales restent entières, toutes les ressources sont mises en commun pour combattre l'ennemi commun.

Le roi d'Angleterre et ses ministres ont affirmé à plusieurs reprises et de la manière la plus solennelle que la Grande-Bretagne s'engageait à rétablir après la victoire la France dans son indépendance et sa grandeur.

Cela ne suffit pas à certains, qui s'en vont répétant que ces engagements sont nés du besoin et que le besoin cessant, la Grande-Bretagne reprendra sa politique isolationniste et impérialiste traditionnelle, et qu'en admettant même qu'elle restaure la France dans son intégrité, elle n'en pratiquera pas moins à son égard la méfiance qui a pesé d'un poids si lourd sur l'évolution de l'Europe de 1918 à 1938.

'Si la victoire anglaise, disent-ils, n'a d'autre effet que de reconstituer une France trop faible et mal soutenue en face d'une Allemagne ménagée par le vainqueur, alors il vaut mieux composer tout de suite avec l'Allemagne et subir sa loi.'

Ces hommes reprochent à l'Angleterre de n'avoir pas compris en 1918 que le temps de l'impérialisme français en Europe était passé et que c'était l'impérialisme allemand qui était à craindre et à combattre. Ce reproche est fondé et les Britanniques eux-mêmes sont les premiers à se l'adresser aujourd'hui. Car ils ont compris, et c'est un peuple qui réalise pleinement, fortement et durablement ce qui lui apparaît évident.

Nous ne devons pas commettre la même faute, qui serait pour nous de méjuger les Anglais. Certes nous n'avons pas le droit de nous en remettre uniquement à leurs déclarations et à leurs engagements, mais nous avons le devoir de comprendre quels sont leurs intérêts et en quoi ces intérêts nous garantissent une collaboration effective et profitable.

En 1918 l'Angleterre était encore victorienne, c'est-à-dire occupée avant tout d'étendre et d'enrichir son Empire. L'Europe continentale n'était à ses yeux qu'une réunion de voisins gênants, parmi lesquels il

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suffisait de maintenir une convenable division pour pouvoir tranquillement vaquer aux affaires sérieuses. La guerre contre l'Allemagne qui se terminait avait été un très désagréable épisode, car il avait fallu sérieusement payer de sa personne. Mais après tout les guerres contre Napoléon avaient été pires et l'on en avait retiré un siècle de paix et une prospérité étonnante. Il suffisait d'appliquer la même formule à une Europe non fondamentalement modifiée et, en conséquence, le danger allemand écarté, veiller à ce que ne renaisse pas le danger français.

Erreur tragique dont les Anglais sont entièrement revenus. Ils sont cette fois devenus Européens et, d'un seul coup, sont allés dans cette voie au point où Churchill a pu proposer à la France en Juin 1940 une union des deux États. Formule étonnante de hardiesse qui n'était pas un expédient mais le signe d'une révolution dans les idées et les sentiments.

Les Britanniques ont compris qu'ils ont le devoir d'organiser l'Europe après la guerre, pour leur sécurité propre comme pour celle d'une civilisation à laquelle ils sont passionnément attachés. Leur intérêt leur interdit de faillir à ce devoir : ils n'y faillront pas.

Cet intérêt les attache à la France. Car un ordre européen basé sur le respect des justes libertés de l'homme exclut les états totalitaires. Seule la France, corrigée par l'épreuve de son goût des luttes intestines, peut collaborer avec la Grande-Bretagne. La rétablir dans toutes ses prérogatives d'État indépendant, favoriser la reconstitution de sa force, autant de nécessités vitales pour la Grande-Bretagne victorieuse.

En aucun point cela ne signifie que l'Angleterre

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prétende nous imposer un régime politique donné. Par définition l'esprit britannique comprend et respecte le particularisme. Sachant que nous communions dans le même idéal de civilisation basé sur le respect de la dignité humaine, il ne peut nous demander que d'être efficaces et forts dans notre génie propre.

L'Europe de demain, quel que soit le vainqueur, sera organisée et dirigée, car l'anarchie européenne ne peut se perpétuer sans amener la ruine de notre continent.

Si l'Allemagne était victorieuse, le nouvel ordre serait la pire barbarie d'où sortiraient de terribles convulsions, car on ne comprime pas l'individu sans provoquer l'anarchie à un moment donné. La civilisation anglo-saxonne est exactement la nôtre, la civilisation gréco-latine christianisée, polie et affinée au cours des âges et des luttes. Cette civilisation doit stabiliser et sauver le monde. Nous en sommes par tradition les meilleurs champions, nous ne pouvons lui manquer aujourd'hui

C'est aux côtés de la Grande-Bretagne que nous referons une Europe contre les barbaries totalitaires. La France y retrouvera son rôle historique.

Nous autres, Français Libres, nous prétendons préparer cette grandiose rentrée en scène de notre Pays en refusant de pactiser avec les barbares, quelle que soit leur puissance matérielle, en combattant pour les valeurs spirituelles d'où naîtra la paix dans la justice internationale et sociale

Brazzaville, le 18 Février 1941

APPENDIX III

BROADCAST BY GENERAL DE GAULLE, FROM RADIO
BRAZZAVILLE, ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION
OF FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Tuesday, 26th August 1941

Nous annonçons à la nation française qu'aujourd'hui, 26 août, toute la partie de son empire qui s'étend des frontières de la Libye jusqu'au Congo et de l'Océan Atlantique jusqu'au bassin du Nil et qui comprend le Tchad, le Cameroun, le Gabon, l'Oubangui, le Moyen Congo, a célébré dans la fierté et l'enthousiasme l'anniversaire du jour où elle a décidé de continuer la guerre pour la libération de la France.

Ce mouvement de salut eut lieu sous l'impulsion de chefs, d'officiers ou de gouverneurs nommés Larminat, Éboué, Sicé, Leclerc, Marchand, Ornano, Saintmart, Parant, Boislambert. Depuis cette date, Ornano et Parant sont morts pour la patrie, Boislambert est détenu par les collaborateurs de l'ennemi. Mais les autres sont toujours à l'œuvre, secondés par une équipe admirable de discipline et de dévouement et suivie par une pure et magnifique jeunesse.

Nous pouvons dire à la nation que d'autres parties de son empire se sont unies aujourd'hui à l'A.F.L. dans une seule et même pensée : la libération de la France. Ainsi, les états de la Syrie et du Liban qui

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avec notre aide et sous notre protection organisent leur indépendance. Ainsi, la Nouvelle Calédonie, les Nouvelles Hébrides, Tahiti, les Archipels Océaniens, nos Établissements des Indes. Des officiers, hauts commissaires, gouverneurs, nommés Catroux, d'Argenlieu, Legentilhomme, Sautot, Bonvin, Hackin, Genin, ont sauvé ces portions de l'empire du contrôle de l'ennemi et ses collaborateurs. Hackin et Genin sont morts pour la patrie, mais les autres sont à leur poste, soutenus par la confiance ardente de tous ceux qui ont charge de diriger ou d'administrer.

Nous assurons à la nation que sur les quarante navires de guerre français commandés par Muselier, comme sur les cent navires de commerce français qui naviguent pour la guerre, parmi les deux mille aviateurs qu'organise Valin, comme chez les soixante mille soldats que mènent nos jeunes généraux, il n'y a qu'un rêve et une volonté: la libération de la France.

Nous rendons compte à la nation de notre volonté inflexible de continuer la lutte de toute notre âme et de toutes nos forces jusqu'à ce que les ennemis soient vaincus, les traîtres châtiés, les martyrs vengés.

La France avec nous.

We want the French nation to know that to-day, 26th August, that part of the French Empire which stretches from the borders of Libya to the Congo River and the Atlantic Ocean and to the Nile country, which includes the Chad territories, the Cameroons, the Gaboons, the Ubangi, and the Middle Congo, has celebrated with pride and enthusiasm the anniversary of the day when it decided to carry on the war for the

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liberation of France. This liberating movement took place under the inspiration of leaders, officers, and governors whose names are Larminat, Éboué, Sicé, Leclerc, Marchand, Ornano, Saintmart, Parant, Boislambert. Since then, Ornano and Parant have died for their country, and Boislambert has been imprisoned by those who are collaborating with the enemy. But the others are still at their posts at the head of a team which is admirable for its discipline and its devotion to duty; behind them is the youth of a nation, united in single-minded and splendid self-sacrifice

We want the French people to know that there are other parts of their empire which have now joined with Free French Africa with the one aim of liberating France herself. The states of Syria and the Lebanon, with our help and under our protection, are organizing their independence. New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, Tahiti, our possessions in the South Sea Islands, our settlements in India are with us. Officers, high commissioners, and governors, Catroux, d'Argenlieu, Legentilhomme, Sautot, Bouvin, Hackin, Genin, have saved these parts of the empire from the power of the enemy and of those who are collaborating with the enemy. Hackin and Genin have died for their country, but the others are still at their posts backed by the enthusiastic devotion of all those whose task is to direct or administrate the peoples of the empire. We can affirm before the nation that on the forty warships commanded by Admiral Muselier, on the hundred trading ships that are helping in the war effort under the French flag, among the two thousand airmen organized by Valin, as among the sixty thousand

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soldiers led by our young generals, there is only one ideal and one will the liberation of France

We want to report to the French nation that we are animated by an inflexible will to continue the war with all our soul and with all our strength until the enemy is conquered, the traitors punished, the martyrs avenged.

France with us.

