
A World without Empire?

Encounters and connections
between African, European,
and Soviet Communists,
1920s to 1970s



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edited by
Silvio Pons



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In memory of Andreas Hilger

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A World Without Empire?

Introduction

The history of communism has in recent years become part of the intellectual rethinking of the past century as global history, especially conceived as an emphasis on cross-national flows and interactions rather than inward-looking national narratives. Such a perspective contributed to remove the teleological narratives and the views of an “anomaly” or a “parenthesis” in history’s course – both widely diffused after the end of the Cold War. Communism’s history has been instead increasingly reconstructed as a web of planet-wide connections that acted according to a logic of their own, interacted with various actors, and generated sometimes enduring consequences that helped shaping the globalised world. This vision shows significant conceptual implications, in that it demands that we analyse the ambivalent influence of state and political factors in creating or destroying transnational connections. This, in turn, may help us to capture global phenomena in their full complexity, beyond their mere economic aspect.

The encounter between global history and the history of communism has above all taken place at the level of narratives. Numerous scholars have approached the subject of communism in its global extensions, in terms of multifold transnational, social, economic and cultural aspects, with the objective of overcoming the national and “internalist” visions that have largely dominated past historiographical traditions, especially as regards the Soviet Union. Significant contributions have analyzed the connections between the Soviet Union, the “socialist camp”, and the Global South, employing the notion of transnationalism in various ways. At the same time, it is obvious that we are still in an initial phase of studying the global history of communism, as it demands a refinement of our methodological and conceptual tools, and a much wider development of our explorative and research work. We know that communism had a global dimension, but we must better understand how it took on such a dimension over a relatively brief time, what were its points of strength and weakness, and the deeper factors behind its dissolution in the second half of the century. A better analytical understanding of

the communist project's genesis, endurance, and decline can make an important contribution to the global history of the 20th century.

Between 1919 and 1943, the Comintern promoted the formation of ruling classes, the organisation of parties, and the constitution of networks of political and trade-union cooperation in every part of the world. While the results that the Comintern achieved during its own existence were modest as compared to the ambitious project of promoting a world revolution, it developed encounters and contacts with socialist, anti-imperialist, nationalist, anti-racist and indigenous movements, and also helped to activate and mobilise them. Communist networks made use of material, cultural and symbolic resources directed at building their own hegemony over a vast world of revolutionary movements. The Leninist principle of peoples' self-determination revived in the anti-colonial struggles which took place in Asia and Africa during the entire interwar period. An interdependence developed between the pattern of state-led industrialization in revolutionary Russia and the idea of an "alternative modernity", that sustained the legitimacy of communism as a global project. Notwithstanding the strongly hierarchical discipline of the communist movement, such intensive and tumultuous activity did not only play out in terms of the relations between centre and periphery. It also involved a criss-crossing of transversal links and a combination of different logics, able to give rise to various conflicts and forms of influence that did not necessarily reflect the actors' own intentions. In this sense, the focus of our historical reconstruction tends to shift away from the classic theme of the subordination/insubordination of national parties with regard to Moscow's strategy, and concentrate more on the multiple implications, meanings and practices that the communists' activity promoted on a global scale.

The ambition of the Comintern to build revolutionary networks against the Western colonial empires was constantly constrained and even contradicted by the imperatives of Soviet security and foreign policy interests. The destructive consequences of those imperatives dramatically emerged in the late 1930s, in the aftermath of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Nevertheless, when the Comintern dissolved in June 1943, it bequeathed a political and organisational capital that historians have not thus far done enough to bring to light. World War Two laid the bases for an enormous qualitative leap of the communist movement, which acquired unprecedented mass dimensions in both Europe and Asia. The communists' participation in Europe's anti-fascist and in Asian anti-imperialist resistance movements represented the source of a new legitimacy, strengthened by the prestige of the Soviet Union in the aftermath

of its military victory over Nazism. This new legitimacy revived the idea of a subject bearing a non-capitalist “alternative modernity” now founded on the creation of a powerful “socialist camp” – and even more so in the aftermath of the Chinese Revolution of 1949. The point here is that such new mass dimension of international communism also relied on the existence of leaders and cadres who had survived both Stalinist terror and anti-communist massacres; on the accumulation of transnational links that were never completely interrupted; and on the capacity to integrate class and national discourses directed at offering credible bases for young generations and the postwar reconstruction.

The papers gathered in this volume propose to observe the history of international communism over a much longer period than that of the Comintern’s existence, pushing forward as far as the completion of the decolonisation processes in the 1960s. They intend to test the possibility of tying some of the spatial, cultural and biographical threads that emerged in the earlier period anti-colonial struggles to the later phase of decolonization. At the same time, by analysing communist projects, networks and practices, the papers shed light on some crucial factors and moments of the history of 20th-century Africa. The volume mainly focuses on the relations built between communists in Europe and revolutionary subjects – anti-imperialist activists, political militants, trade union organizers, socialists of various kinds – in different colonial and post-colonial countries of Africa.

There are many serious motivations behind the choice to investigate the connections between European and African communist and anti-imperialist actors. Despite their importance to the decolonisation context, African socialisms are less studied and well-known than Asian communism. Yet communists and Marxists had much wider influence in Africa than their numbers may suggest. They offered a varied panorama of the overlaps and aporias between internationalism and nationalism, precisely because the identification between nation and socialism was historically less direct than in the case of Asian communism. Most importantly, the history of African socialisms involved a direct relationship with Europe up to a very late phase of 20th-century history and allows us to capture the triangular transnational relations between European and Soviet communists and the revolutionary subjects in the colonial and post-colonial world, in a longer-term perspective. This history moreover intersects not only with the theme of nationalism, but also with the question of racism and blacks’ rights, thus offering a transnational perspective on the circulation of ideas and militants along the African-American axis.

Global communism maintained Eurocentric limitations as it constantly proposed its own model of centralised leadership and an “harmonisation of diversity”, even though dealing with the heterogeneity of cultures, religions, societies and races. This model was at the basis of the reorganisation of territory and authority within the USSR, through the massive use of state violence, while it proved inadequate to grasping the peculiarities and varieties that shaped the colonial universe and post-colonial trajectories, particularly in Africa. The communists did not dissolve the aporias constitutive of the relationship between class and nation, which were instead intensified by anti-colonial projects and interactions with the nationalist elites of the Third World. In Africa, the link between socialist calling, nation-building, and modernization took various and hybrid forms which need further investigation as they interacted, clashed and even marginalised the communist networks while also allowing the building of alliances with the Soviet Union. The emergence of Third Worldism coincided with the wave of African decolonization and interacted with the communist movement in many ways, but mainly in terms of conflicts overlapping with the competition between Soviet orthodoxy and Maoism. And it was precisely in Africa that the model of single party, state-led development revealed how incongruous it was as an “alternative modernity”, in its competition with Western development models.

The communist “global moment” in the post-Stalin era very soon revealed its limitations, especially on account of the Sino-Soviet split and the subsequent fractures of revolutionary cultures and experiences. The failure of a united front against empires exposed even more deeply the long-standing contradiction between Soviet imperial projects and the development of anti-imperialist movements – a contradiction that became the leitmotiv of Maoist propaganda. Communist legacies shaped nonetheless the fate of post-colonial Africa overlapping with the geopolitics of the Cold War. In the aftermath of 1968, the multiple fractures between diverging anti-imperialist projects, Cold War-inspired visions, bloc policies and non-aligned actors would become even more visible. They clearly affected the rise and fall of so-called Marxist-Leninist African regimes. This volume intends to provide a contribution to our understanding of the rise and fall of the communist “global moment”, and of how the antinomies of its trajectory may help shedding light on wider historical processes of the last century.

Memories of the Future. Decolonisation, the Algerian War of Independence, and the Italian New Radical Left

But only Revolution saves the Past

Pier Paolo Pasolini¹

From the early 1950s through the 1960s, decolonization struggles and the end of colonial empires put Asia and Africa at the heart of the world political agenda. In a historical and geopolitical context determined by the Cold War, the decolonizing countries became the privileged battleground between the two blocs, but at the same time progressively jammed the bipolar mechanism. Indeed, the so-called “third world” – to employ the expression coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952 – imposes itself not only as a geographical and economic category but also as an alternative political project. This was African socialism’s big moment, which ended up destabilizing – at least in part – that “peaceful coexistence” on which were based both the Cold War partitioning of the world and the future. Not only because African socialism represented a third political pole between the US and the USSR, but also because it introduced a political horizon that was still in the making and not directly traceable to the Soviet Union. To quote the concluding lines of Sauvy’s famous article, «this Third World ignored, exploited, despised as the Third State, wants, too, to be something».² It was in this context that in the summer of 1961, responding to a reader of the communist magazine *Vie Nuove*, Pier Paolo Pasolini wrote: «Bandung is the capital of three-quarters of the world: it is also the capital of half of Italy», in reference to the Indonesian city where 29 Afro-Asian countries had gathered in 1955, laying the foundations of the Non-Aligned Movement.³ Ernesto De Martino, who had in 1962 reviewed for *Paese Sera* Fanon’s *The Damned of the Earth* with a short paper with an unequivocal title (*The Awakening of the Third World*) and who in those years was engaged in the great

¹ «Ma solo la Rivoluzione salva il Passato»: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La rabbia*, in *Per il cinema*, ed. by W. Siti-F. Zabagli, t. 1, Milano: Mondadori, 2001, p. 384. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

² A. Sauvy, *Trois Mondes, une planète*, «L’Observateur», 14 August 1952.

³ P.P. Pasolini, *Bandung capitale di mezza Italia*, «Vie Nuove», 29 July 1961.

research workshop on cultural apocalypses (with a planned chapter on “apocalypse and decolonization”), writes:

the ‘little brothers’ are emancipating themselves, and in the course of the process of emancipation they have grafted into the traditional themes in their cultural life a discourse that has for its subject precisely the ‘limits’ of the ‘big brothers’ and their culture. Thus has arisen for Western man a possibility of reflecting himself in an entirely obsolete self-image, and returning to himself by paths not yet travelled by his consciousness.⁴

Long neglected by a deeply Eurocentric historiography, the historical relevance of Africa and “third-worldism” has only begun to find adequate consideration in recent years. With the new millennium, a season of scholarship has blossomed that has embraced the need to «provincialize Europe», to borrow the particularly apt title of Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty’s book, first published precisely in 2000.⁵ In academic *newspeak*, this shift in perspective increasingly goes under the category of “global history”.⁶ Beyond fashion, the Global 1960s lens is an approach that can be useful especially insofar as it helps us visualize history differently by placing other *spatialities* and points of contact and confrontation alongside more usual categories and dimensions, such as those of area studies or national histories. Indeed, a comprehensive perspective on the Long Global 1960s does not aim at an all-encompassing narrative (of the “world history” genre), but rather aims to read together key events that are normally studied (and taught) separately, such as decolonization on the one hand and the “1968 years” on the other. If we assume such a perspective, it becomes possible to view these two episodes as parts of the same «cycle», in the sense Braudel ascribed to it, namely a decisive historical sequence located at an intermediate level, where the «foam» of events finds a point of contact with the profound mutations of «structures».⁷

⁴ E. De Martino, *Promesse e minacce dell’etnologia*, in *Furore simbolo valore*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2002 [1962], p. 108; for the review of Fanon’s work see *Il risveglio del terzo mondo*, «Paese Sera», 10 July 1962.

⁵ D. Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe. Postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁶ For a critical overview see A. Brazzoduro, *Oltre la storia nazionale? Tre risposte alle sfide della global history*, «Passato e Presente», 37/108, 2019, pp. 131-148.

⁷ F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II*,

Although Braudel (mistakenly) overlooked the events, 1960 can be taken as a strongly characterizing moment for this conjuncture.⁸ In April, at the conclusion of the *Frammento alla morte* [*Fragment to the death*] dedicated to the poet Franco Fortini, Pasolini wrote: «ah, the desert deafened | by the wind, the stupendous and unclean | sun of Africa that illuminates the world. || Africa! My only | alternative».⁹

«Without Africa, there will be no history of France»

In fact, 1960 is the “year of Africa”, with the independence of as many as 17 nations – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Somalia, Tchad, and Togo. They had all but three belonged to the French empire, the exceptions being Congo, which was a Belgian colony, and Nigeria and Somalia which had been under British rule.

Following the half-coup of May 1958, General de Gaulle is recalled to power in France.¹⁰ Increasingly bogged down in the Algerian War, where the bulk of its forces are concentrated, France endows itself with a new Constitution (imposed by the General) that realistically aims to peacefully “manage” African demands through the expedient of the French Community to replace the French Union, created by the Fourth Republic in 1946. But the *imbroglio* soon becomes apparent and in 1960, one after another, the countries choose independence and thus put an end to a “Community” that while in theory affirms the desire to establish an equal relationship, in reality instead keeps all strategic

Paris : A. Colin, 1966; on which see for instance I. Wallerstein, *Braudel, le «Annales» e la storiografia contemporanea*, «Studi storici», 21/1, 1980, pp. 5-17.

⁸ On the “return of the event” see F. Dosse, *Renaissance de l'événement. Un défi pour l'historien: entre sphinx et phénix*, Paris: Puf, 2010.

⁹ «ah, il deserto assordato | dal vento, lo stupendo e immondo | sole dell'Africa che illumina il mondo. || Africa! Unica mia | alternativa»: P.P. Pasolini, *Frammento alla morte*, in *La religione del mio tempo* (1961), now in *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by W. Siti, Milano: Mondadori, 2003, p. 1050; on which see G. Trento, *Pasolini e l'Africa. L'Africa di Pasolini. Panmeridionalismo e rappresentazioni dell'Africa postcoloniale*, Sesto San Giovanni (MI): Mimesis, 2010.

¹⁰ For a detailed account see Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IV République*, vol. 3, *La Fin. La République des Tourments (1954-1959)*, Paris: Fayard, 2008, pp. 708 ff.

sectors (foreign policy, defence, economy and management of raw materials) firmly in the hands of the French.

The sinking of the dream of “*la plus grande France*” represents for the ruling classes and to some extent also for large sectors of French society a traumatic event and therefore largely immediately foreclosed. In 1957, future President of the Republic François Mitterrand – then Minister of Justice – does not mince words: «Without Africa, there will be no history of France in the 21st century». ¹¹ And the more the empire sinks, the more the war instead escalates to preserve Algeria, «the jewel of the empire»: in France, in fact, 1960 is the «year of the manifestos». ¹² As many as eighteen petitions concerning Algeria were published in *Le Monde* in 1960 (out of sixty-two published between the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958 and the end of the war in 1962). Of all of them it is surely the so-called *Manifesto of 121* that marks a discontinuity, later becoming one of the most striking examples of *engagement* of intellectuals after World War II. ¹³

On 6 September 1960, a news article in *Le Monde* on the back page reports that «121 writers, academics and artists have signed a petition on the right to disobedience in the Algerian war». The newspaper also reports the three programmatic points with which the manifesto closes: firstly «We respect and consider justified the refusal to take up arms against the Algerian people». Secondly, «We respect and consider justified the behaviour of the French who think it their duty to offer aid and protection to the oppressed Algerians in the name of the French people». And third, «The cause of the Algerian people, which contributes decisively to the destruction of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men». ¹⁴

Among the 121 first signatories – others would be added in the following months – we find many leading figures in the intellectual life

¹¹ Quoted in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 178.

¹² Catherine Brun and Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, *Engagements et déchirements. Les intellectuels et la guerre d'Algérie*, Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe – Paris, Imec-Gallimard, 2012, p. 153.

¹³ See, in Italian, N. Pianciola, *La guerra d'Algeria e il «manifesto dei 121»*, Roma: Edizioni dell'Asino, 2016. In French the chap. *L'intouchable* in Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre. 1905-1980*, Paris: Gallimard, 2019 (new edition), pp. 694-752.

¹⁴ This short piece (only seven lines) is in the article *Le procès des membres du «réseau Jeanson» est appelé devant le tribunal militaire*, «Le Monde», 6 Septembre 1960.

of the twentieth century: writers (Marguerite Duras, Robbe-Grillet), poets (André Breton), partisans (Vercors), academics (Pontalis, Vidal-Naquet), publishers (François Maspéro, Jérôme Lindon), militants (Anne and Daniel Guérin), filmmakers (many *nouvelle vague*, but not Godard), *Les Temps modernes* (Sartre, Lanzmann), and then, *en vrac*, Michel Leiris, Edouard Glissant, Pierre Boulez... In France, however, the full text of the manifesto (written by Maurice Blanchot) has a clandestine circulation (it will be published instead abroad: in Belgium, in the United States, and in Italy by *Tempo presente*, Chiaromonte and Silone's magazine): *Vérité-Liberté*, which publishes it in the September-October 1960 issue, is immediately seized by the censor, and the editor in charge denounced for incitement to desertion; *Les Temps modernes* of 14 October comes out with two blank pages because at the last moment the printer refuses to print the manifesto that was to appear in it. Censorship will be followed by particularly severe repressive measures, with the denunciation of twenty-nine signatories and the imprisonment of one, journalist Robert Barrat. Instead, everyone is barred from public radio and television, while officials are suspended (this is the case with Vidal-Naquet) or even fired (like Laurent Schwartz, a professor at the Polytechnic). So if it seems that de Gaulle, referring to Sartre, tells his interior minister «you don't put Voltaire in prison», for many of the signatories the price to pay is nonetheless high: the loss of their jobs and the impossibility of finding another one, at least in the public sector. This material aspect is generally overlooked in this affair, which is read as a purely idealistic tussle, but will instead contribute powerfully to amplifying the international reception of the “manifesto”.

Quite different is the reception given to the *manifesto of the French intellectuals*, which responds to that of “the 121”, accusing them of being «professors of treason» and «apologists for desertion». Indeed, on 7 October 1960, the new manifesto is published in full by both *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* with all 185 names of the signatories, and partially by *Combat* and *Paris-Presse l'Intransigeant*. These “French intellectuals” railed against the «scandalous statements» of the previous month, which «constitute the logical consequence of a series of actions carefully prepared and orchestrated for years against our country, against the values it represents – and against the West. These are the work of a “fifth column” that takes inspiration from foreign propaganda when not from international watchwords brutally dictated and slavishly applied. Such conduct did not begin with the war in Algeria. It is clear that the Algerian war represents but one episode; there were others yesterday; there will be more tomorrow». The Algerian War is «but one episode» of a

much larger conflict. Should the message and the terrain of confrontation not be clear, the *manifesto of the French intellectuals* closes with this explicit call to arms: «It is still not too late. But it is urgent for the country and the public authorities to open their eyes to the form of war being waged against us: a subversive war, waged, armed and financed by the foreigner on our territory, and aimed at the moral and social disintegration of the nation». The theme of civil war is omnipresent even though the phrase is never uttered.

Who are the 185 first signatories of this second manifesto? They are basically right-wingers, almost all academics but also writers and lawyers, most of them with solid careers behind them (Sorbonne, Institut, Académie française...: they all declare their titles, unlike the “121” who signed only with their names). If the “121” are destined to become famous *maîtres à penser*, in 1960 it is clear that the signatories of the *manifesto of French intellectuals* represent the opposite: the intellectual group which is not only a numerical majority, but above all the one that firmly holds the cultural institutions in its hands and against which the heirs to “121”, i.e., the generation of 1968, will soon be unleashed. The battle for or against “French Algeria” represents in some respects a dress rehearsal for May.

In an issue of *Combat* devoted to the “121” *affaire* (6 October 1960), Roland Mousnier, historian and among the future signatories of the *manifesto of French intellectuals*, writes:

France is at war. Some French departments, those that make up Algeria, are being attacked by factionalists, instruments of the foreigner, especially Marxist-Leninists, who practice all the methods of subversive warfare: slander, denigration, demoralization, massacre, torture, terror. The duty of every Frenchman is to fight on all fronts, for the freedom of France and the integrity of its territory. The call to insubordination and desertion is an act of treason that must be punished as such. Long live French Algeria!¹⁵

Indeed, it should not be forgotten that the context in which these two manifestos intervene, in the fall of 1960, is strongly determined by the trial of the so-called “réseau Jeanson”, namely the illegal network

¹⁵ Quoted in J.-F. Sirinelli, *Guerre d'Algérie, guerre des pétitions?*, in Id.-J.-P. Rioux (eds.), *La guerre d'Algérie et les intellectuels français*, Bruxelles : Complexe, 1991, pp. 292-293. See also A.-M. Duranton-Crabol, *Combat et la guerre d'Algérie*, «Vingtième Siècle», 1993, n. 40, pp. 86-96.

supporting the struggle of Algerians organized in France around the figure of the Sartrian philosopher Francis Jeanson. On 3 October 1960, fourteen young militants of the “reseau” were thus sentenced to «148 years and 8 months in prison in 125 minutes», as *l'Humanité* headlined.

The Algerian War, “one episode” of the global civil war

In the global framework of decolonization struggles, the Algerian war is a crucial junction also because in France – but not only in France – it contributes to reactivating the memory of the «European civil war» (Traverso) in a proactive and not merely commemorative tone. This perspective quickly enters into controversy with the traditional parties of the “old” left who stand as patent guardians of that memory, while they wage a war without quarter in Algeria.¹⁶ The “new” left is also born out of this turn of events which have their roots in decolonization and which, against the preservation of the status quo that legitimizes the Cold War, see the figure of the partisan re-actualized by the fighters of anticolonial liberation struggles: “Jeune Résistance” was the name of the first opposition group active in France against the war.¹⁷

While it remains difficult to assess the real impact of the “battle of the manifestos” in the autumn of 1960, it is clear that the Algerian uprising brought France to the brink of civil war.¹⁸ The ground of the conflict was in fact not only ethical-political, and shortly thereafter the heinous OAS attacks would demonstrate it unequivocally: among the many attacks on publishing houses and leftist intellectuals, the plastic bomb of 7 February 1962, which was supposed to hit André Malraux and instead scarred forever four-and-a-half-year-old Delphine Renard, would re-

¹⁶ See E. Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco. La guerra civile europea, 1914-1945*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2007.

¹⁷ See A. Brazzoduro, “Se un giorno tornasse quell’ora”. *La nuova sinistra tra eredità antifascista e terzomondismo*, «Italia contemporanea», 2021, n. 296, pp. 255-275; N. Lamri, *Antifascisti e antifasciste italiane di fronte alla guerra di decolonizzazione algerina*, in *Antifasciste e antifascisti: storie, culture politiche e memorie dal fascismo alla Repubblica*, ed. by G. Fulvetti-A. Ventura, Roma: Viella, 2024, pp. 345-360.

¹⁸ See G. Anderson, *La guerre civile en France, 1958-1962. Du coup d’état gaulliste à la fin de l’OAS*, Paris : La fabrique, 2018. J. Jackson also uses the expression “civil war”: *A certain Idea of France. The Life of Charles de Gaulle*, London : Allen Lane, 2018, pp. 536 ff.

main in the memory. But it was especially in Algeria that the balance of the war was dramatic, and quickly became itself a terrain of conflict. The only casualties on which there are reliable figures are French military personnel. There were 2.5 million soldiers who left for Algeria; of these, 1.2 million were conscripts. 30,000 died: a considerable figure even when compared with the American war in Vietnam (which lasted the same number of years and claimed 58,000 lives, but out of a population of 216 million Americans, while there were 44 million Frenchmen at the time). The dead *pieds-noirs*, on the other hand, are still the subject of contention concerning both their number and those responsible. Especially in the last phase of the war, with the tragic chaos of the evacuation of the French army, and then with the equally chaotic showdown that characterized some areas of Algeria after independence, it is sometimes difficult to attribute these deaths accurately either to Algerian independence fighters, or to the indiscriminate terrorism of the OAS that wanted to make Algeria “scorched earth”, or to the French armed forces. Among the *pieds-noirs*, the dead were probably between 4-4,500. Appropriately fueled by the entrepreneurs of memory, the battle of the numbers is central to the rhetorical device of those – such as, to be precise, some associations of *pieds-noirs* – who have made accusations France’s abandonment of them into an element of their very identity.

Even less consensus exists about the *harkis*, the Algerians who fought alongside the French army: according to some of the organizations representing them their dead number 150,000, while historical research speaks more realistically of a figure as low as between 5-6,000 or as high as 60-75,000, numbers in any case far from negligible.¹⁹ In Algeria the count is even more uncertain. The official version of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) claims 1.5 million «martyrs», while more serious historiography puts the figure at 250-500,000 Algerian dead.²⁰ That we should stick to a hypothetical accounting speaks volumes about the structural violence that characterized “French Algeria”: the life of a “Muslim” had to be worth infinitely less than that of a “European” if it could be so easily lost without a trace.

¹⁹ Cfr. F.-X. Hautreux, *La guerre d’Algérie des harkis 1954-1962*, Paris : Perrin, 2013.

²⁰ See also J. McDougall, *A History of Algeria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 232-233.

The Italian “translation” of the Algerian War of Independence

In Italian public opinion, an echo of the war had arrived at least as early as 1956, with the translation of Colette and Francis Jeanson’s investigation-denunciation, *L’Algeria fuorilegge*, published by Feltrinelli (with a splendid cover designed by Albe Steiner), and then even more explosively in 1958 with the terrible testimony that Henri Alleg, a survivor of torture by paratroopers, had smuggled out of prison through his lawyer and which Einaudi promptly had translated (by historian Paolo Spriano) and published in the “white books” series directed by Raniero Panzieri, politician, Marxist theoretician and founder of *operaismo*.²¹ Then in October 1960, it was *Tempo Presente*, the magazine founded by activists and writers Nicola Chiaromonte and Ignazio Silone, that translated the 121 *Manifesto* and disseminated it, presenting it to readers as «a document of great importance».²² But *Tempo Presente* did not merely revive the appeal of the 121. In the next issue of the magazine (November 1960), a «Declaration of Solidarity with French Intellectuals» appeared, drafted by Nicola Chiaromonte and Elio Vittorini – another key writer and editor of those years –, and signalled by a conspicuous call-out on the front page, setting the tone of the initiative: «Right to Resistance».²³ In a brief editorial introduction, the journal clarified how they had «felt that the 121 Manifesto demanded that intellectuals in other countries take a stand on the very principle it proclaims and because of which its signatories were indicted: the right to disobedience».²⁴ In record time Chiaromonte and Vittorini managed to collect the signatures of over a hundred intellectuals. The Italians (it is impossible to list

²¹ C. et F. Jeanson, *L’Algeria fuorilegge*, it. tr. A. dell’Orto, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1956 (original French edition *L’Algérie hors la loi*, Paris: Seuil, 1955); H. Alleg, *La tortura. Con uno scritto di Jean-Paul Sartre*, it. tr. P. Spriano, Torino: Einaudi, 1958 (original French edition *La Question*, Paris: Minuit, 1958). See A. Brazzoduro, *La gauche italiana e la guerre d’indépendance algérienne. Voir/ne pas voir la guerre*, in *La guerre d’Algérie revisitée. Nouvelles générations, nouveaux regards*, ed. by A. Kadri et al., Paris: Karthala, 2015, pp. 331-338.

²² *Dichiarazione sul diritto all’insubordinazione nella guerra d’Algeria*, «Tempo Presente», 5 (September-October 1960), nn. 9-10, pp. 707-709: 707.

²³ On which see C. Panizza, *Nicola Chiaromonte. Una biografia*, Roma: Donzelli, 2017, pp. 276 ff.

²⁴ *Diritto alla resistenza. Dichiarazione di solidarietà con gli intellettuali francesi*, «Tempo Presente», 5 (November 1960), n. 11, p. 785.

them all here; the signatories comprise mainly very prominent figures: art historian Giulio Carlo Argan, composer Luigi Dallapiccola but then also composer Luciano Berio, writer Italo Calvino, poet Giuseppe Ungaretti...) were joined by the British (Isaiah Berlin, Bertrand Russell...) and Americans (Hannah Arendt and her friend Mary McCarthy, but also Harold Rosenberg and Mark Rothko...).

At the heart of the Declaration lay the explicit reference to fascisms and World War II, re-proposed as a warning in a framework of antifascism re-actualized by the Algerian War:

When we see intellectuals persecuted for proclaiming the right of the good citizen to refuse obedience to unjust commands, we cannot fail to remember that fascism, Nazism, the last war, the post-war period in many countries both here and beyond the so-called Iron Curtain and, by contrast, the Nuremberg judgment, have abundantly demonstrated how blind execution of orders, prone obedience, conforming to authority just because it is so can be criminal, while refusal of obedience can become not only a right but a first duty. The barbaric norm that recommended serving the country whether right or wrong should have been buried in the death camps along with the victims of those who could not choose between obedience in folly and disobedience in reason.²⁵

The anti-fascist reference also appeared in the title of a large collective work exhibited in Milan six months later, on 5 June 1961. At the Brera Gallery there had been the vernissage of the third exhibition of the "Anti-procès" group, whose manifesto was illustrated by the Large Collective Antifascist Painting by six artists: Enrico Baj, Roberto Crippa, Gianni Dova, Errò, Jean-Jacques Lebel and Antonio Recalcati.²⁶ In a 2001 article, Baj recalls that the painting «was produced by a spontaneous creativity and convergence germinated by a sincere spirit of adherence to the civic commitment of the "121". The work, which measures five by four meters, was painted on the spot in 1961, before the opening of the exhibition».²⁷ Referring in particular to the figure of Breton («a champion of anti-fascism and anti-totalitarianism»), Baj emphasizes how «the Manifesto of 121 immediately transcended the Algerian mo-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 786.

²⁶ See R. Fleck-A. Gouedard, *Tableau d'Histoire ou histoire d'un tableau?*, in E. Baj et al., *Grand tableau antifasciste collectif*, ed. by L. Chollet, Paris : Dagorno, 2000, pp. 65-130.

²⁷ E. Baj, *Un quadro e il suo sequestro*, «MicroMega», 16/1, 2001, p. 79.

tivations from which it originated to situate itself in the general thought and struggle against fascism, by fascism meaning the spirit of death, war, aggression, violent totalitarian oppression, practiced through the systematic use of torture, police brutality and terrorism».²⁸

Indeed, on this large canvas with expressionist features, one could clearly read, in the lower right-hand corner, «Manifesto of the 121» and, separated by a swastika, the names of the cities of «Sétif» and «Constantine» (symbols of the fierce French repression that, in these Algerian localities in 1945 and then 1955, had left thousands dead).²⁹ On the pretext that religious symbols figured in it (the Madonna and Child in the mouth of a general, and Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Ottaviani stood out in particular), the police seized the work for ... «public vilification of the state religion» (and «preserved» it – «brutally crumpled», Baj laments – in the basement of Milan police station until 1987).³⁰

Pier Paolo Pasolini, who also does not appear among the signatories of the Declaration promoted by *Tempo Presente*, writes in *Contemporaneo* (October-November 1960) a Testimony for the 121 in support of the call of French intellectuals to sabotage the war against the Algerians. In this short text the poet clearly takes sides, though without neglecting the complexity of the situation: «I am wholeheartedly for the Algerians», he writes, «I would be ready to take any responsibility, on their behalf. But even here the problem is not simple, if, as is well known, there are one million French people in Algeria». Then he praises the courage of the French intellectuals' gesture, «the result of a difficult choice, in which even so, doubts cannot but remain. And for this all the more admirable». Finally, Pasolini closes with a «bitter consideration» that is a summons to Italian intellectuals: «Would 121 intellectuals capable of such an act of courage be available in Italy – not literary, for there is far too much literary courage! – but political and civil? No: I say they would not be found: perhaps not even a third».³¹

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁹ See J.-L. Planche, *Sétif 1945: histoire d'un massacre annoncé*, Paris: Perrin, 2006; C. Mauss-Copeaux, *Algérie, 20 août 1955: insurrection, répression, massacres*, Paris: Payot, 2010.

³⁰ E. Baj, *Un quadro e il suo sequestro*, p. 80.

³¹ *Testimonianza per i 121*, «Il Contemporaneo», 3 (October-November 1960), nn. 30-31, now in P.P. Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e la società*, ed. by W. Siti-S. De Laude, Milano: Mondadori, 1999, pp. 738-739.

Pasolini's La rabbia: memories of the future

Algeria will be given an exceptional place – for space and intensity – in the poetic video essay Pasolini works on in 1962-1963: *La rabbia* [*Anger*]. A document of great relevance also and particularly if considered from the perspective of a social and cultural history of politics. Indeed, cinema was one of the key cultural infrastructures of the Long Global Sixties.³² And – as historian Benjamin Stora pointed out – the Algerian Revolution was the first modern war to also be a *war of images*.³³ The Global Sixties were indeed a revolutionary turning point for cinematic language as well. In the laboratory of the film *La rabbia*, Pasolini experimented for the first time with a form that was different from both the traditional cinematic narration and the conventions of documentary films. He sought to create, in his own words, «a new cinematic genre. To make an ideological and poetic essay with new sequences».³⁴

La rabbia is, in fact, a found footage film: a film purely composed of archival footage related to international events from the past decade, from 1945 to 1962, the year of the Algerian independence. The technique used is quite similar to that which Guy Debord – the «*soi disant cinéaste*» – was employing during the same years.³⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, *La rabbia*, according to Pasolini, was meant to be «An act of indignation against the unreality of the bourgeois world and its consequent historical irresponsibility. To document the presence of a world which, unlike the bourgeois world, deeply possesses reality. Real-

³² See M. Salazkina, *World Socialist Cinema. Alliances, Affinities, and Solidarities in the Global Cold War*, Oakland: California University Press, 2023. For a social history of cinema and audiences, see A. Gelardi-L. Peretti, *Di film festival e terzomondismo*, in 'Nostra patria è il mondo intero'. *Per una storia sociale dell'antimperialismo in Italia*, ed. by S. Bacchini-A. Brazzoduro-G. Fugazzotto, «Zapruder», n. 66, 2025, pp. 168-179. The special issue as a whole proposes a social history, “from below”, of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in the Long Sixties, taking Italy as a case study.

³³ B. Stora, *Imaginaires de guerre. Les images dans les guerres d'Algérie et du Viêt-nam*, Paris: La Découverte, 1997. See also A. Bedjaoui, *Cinema and the Algerian War of Independence. Culture, Politics, and Society*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2020.

³⁴ P.P. Pasolini, intervista con M. Liverani, «Paese Sera», 14 April 1963, now in P.P. Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, cit., p. 3067.

³⁵ See *Guy Debord (contro) il cinema*, ed. by E. Ghezzi-R. Turigliatto, Milano-Venezia: Il castoro/Biennale di Venezia, 2001.

ity, that is, a true love for tradition, which only revolution can give».³⁶ In other words, it is a critique of the unreality of the *society of the spectacle*, where the arrival of television in homes marks a turning point in the colonisation of consciousness – a key scene in both *La rabbia* and Chris Marker's *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (1977).

In this sense, Pasolini constructs his video essay – this «new cinematic genre» – as a vector for a new kind of political imagination, namely *memories of the future*. A task that Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard would also attempt to take on in those works where they too will attempt to empty cinema as a specific device of memory – capable of revealing the complex and ever-changing tension field that binds past, present, and future.³⁷ Hence, while on the screen we see the images of the coronation of the masters of the earth (Elizabeth II in London and Eisenhower in Chicago, at a Republican convention), the “voice in poetry” reads: «We find ourselves at the start of what will probably be the ugliest epoch in the history of man: the epoch of industrial alienation. When the classical world is exhausted, when all the peasants and all the craftsmen have died, when the industry has made the cycle of production unstoppable, then will our history be over».

Born in Bologna in 1922 and murdered in Rome in 1975, Pasolini was a writer, poet, and director: undoubtedly one of the most influential Italian intellectuals of the second half of the 20th century. Having moved to Rome in 1950, he began an intense cinematic career, first as a screenwriter and then as a director, creating films such as *Accattone* (1961), *La Ricotta* (1963), *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), *The Hawks and the Sparrows* (1966), *Oedipus Rex* (1967), *Medea* (1969), *Salò* (1975)...³⁸

La rabbia, released on April 1963, consists of two parts: the first directed by Pasolini and the second by Giovannino Guareschi. Both parts are roughly fifty minutes long. However, this two-part structure was created in a surreptitious manner. The fact is anecdotal only if it does not reveal a characteristic feature of a world riven by irreconcilable oppositions. Originally, Gastone Ferranti, the obscure producer of

³⁶ P.P. Pasolini, intervista con M. Liverani.

³⁷ On Marker see G. Fofi, *Prefazione*, in C. Marker, *Scene della terza guerra mondiale 1967-1977*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1980; on Godard see A. de Baecque, *L'histoire-caméra*, Paris: Gallimard, 2008.

³⁸ On Pasolini see B.D. Schwartz, *Pasolini Requiem: Second Edition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017.

the newsreel *Mondo Libero*, had decided to use his newsreel archives, asking only Pasolini – who was already a well-known writer but still a debuting filmmaker, having made at the time only *Accattone* (1961) and a short episode for the collective Ro.Go.Pa.G., *La ricotta* (1963) – to create a documentary film using the footage.³⁹

When the film Pasolini had made was deemed too left-wing by the producer, production was halted. Ferranti insisted on cutting the film in half and asked the writer-director Giovannino Guareschi (the popular author of the novel *Don Camillo*), a humorist very much aligned with the far-right, to create a second part to “balance” Pasolini’s work with that of an author with opposing views. Pasolini, who had initially accepted the premise, upon seeing Guareschi’s film, realized he had fallen into an ambush and refused to let his film be presented in this way.

The polemic between the two escalated to virulent proportions, with Pasolini stating on 13 April 1963 after the first public screening of the movie: «If Eichmann could rise from the grave and make a film, he would make a film like this. Through a proxy, Eichmann made this film».⁴⁰ It is perhaps worth remembering that Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi logistics specialist responsible for planning the extermination of European Jews, had been tried and hanged on the 1 June 1962.⁴¹

Film critics, for obvious reasons, have always focused solely on Pasolini’s part. However, while from a cinephilic perspective it is right to want to restore the original version edited by Pasolini (as Bertolucci did in 2007 for the Cineteca di Bologna, Laboratorio L’Immagine Ritrovata), from a less authorial but more social-historical perspective, it should not be forgotten that the film was conceived by the producer as a two-part project, a «cinematic duel» (Tatti Sanguineti).⁴² Two parts opposed to each other. They express, in their own way, the fault lines that ran

³⁹ On the history of the film and its genesis see R. Chiesi, *Il “corpo” tormentato de La rabbia. La genesi del progetto, la “normalizzazione” del 1963, l’ipotesi di ricostruzione del 2008*, «Studi pasoliniani», 1/3, 2009, pp. 13-26.

⁴⁰ P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia (1962-1963)*, in Id., *Per il cinema*, p. 3068.

⁴¹ On the trial, see H. Rousso, *Judging the Past: The Eichmann Trial*, in *The Trial That Never Ends. Hannah Arendt’s Eichmann in Jerusalem in Retrospect*, ed. by R.J. Golsan-S.M. Misemer, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017, pp. 22-42.

⁴² T. Sanguineti, booklet, in P.P. Pasolini-G. Guareschi, *La rabbia. Versione completamente restaurata da negativo originale dalla Cineteca di Bologna, con le sequenze inedite a colori dei dipinti di Renato Guttuso*, ed. by T. Sanguineti, Roma: Rarovideo, 2016, no pagination.

through Italy and the world during this pivotal moment of the Sixties. Expressing an *ethical divide* that is both the fracture and the fabric of the Global Sixties.⁴³

The duel in which Guareschi (from the right) and Pasolini (from the left) participated has little to do with the noisy, fruitless televised brawls to which we are accustomed today. The duel fought by Guareschi and Pasolini is instead one in which positions are still firmly taken. One where people take sides. For or against the struggles for decolonization. For or against the struggles of the oppressed and the exploited. Let us not forget that Guareschi – and the entire old, petit-bourgeois Europe along with him – openly despised “blacks”. As Pasolini himself, trying to withdraw his part, denounced:

It is not just a qualunquist, or conservative, or reactionary film. It is worse. There is hatred against Americans and the Nuremberg trial is called a revenge. There is talk of John Kennedy only showing his wife as if he did not exist. There is hatred against the blacks, and the only thing is missing is that they must all be put up against the wall. There is a white girl who gives a flower to a negro, and immediately afterwards the speaker covers her with insults for this. It is said that because the Italians were forced to leave the colonies, the balance in Africa is broken. There is a hymn to the ‘paras’ extolled as magnificent troops. There is an anti-communism that is not even *Missino* [of the neofascist party Movimento sociale italiano], it’s from the Thirties. There’s everything: racism, the yellow peril, and the typical procedure of fascist orators, the accumulation of indemonstrable facts.⁴⁴

Indeed, in Pasolini’s film, the struggles for decolonisation – Cuba, Vietnam, Congo, and especially Algeria – play a central role, shaping the political agenda of the present.⁴⁵ And these struggles, which decisively characterize the urgencies that Pasolini seeks to address, are interpreted

⁴³ See A. Brazzoduro, *Algeria, Antifascism, and Third Worldism: An Anticolonial Genealogy of the Western European New Left (Algeria, France, Italy, 1957-1975)*, «The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History», 48/5, 2020, pp. 958-978.

⁴⁴ Quoted in A. Barbato, *Pasolini non vuole firmare* La rabbia, «Il Giorno», 13 April 1963.

⁴⁵ On this interpretation see N. Perugini-F. Zucconi, *La rabbia: Pasolini’s Color Ecstasy*, in *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Framed and Unframed. A Thinker for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by L. Peretti-K.T. Raizen, London: Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. 99-110.

through the «comprehensive perceptive filter» of the mortal combat between fascism and anti-fascism.⁴⁶

This is an aspect that, in my view, has not been sufficiently emphasised: *La rabbia* is undoubtedly many things, but it is also, in effect, an anti-colonial film, in the sense that Pasolini recognises the crucial historical significance of the decolonisation struggles and accordingly devotes substantial space to them. With the specific aim, on the one hand, of documenting them, and on the other, of supporting them. Indeed, *La rabbia* is also one of the first film to explicitly – rather than implicitly – evoke the Algerian War for Independence.⁴⁷

Yet it is precisely in its anti-colonial stance that *La rabbia* also emerges as an eminently anti-fascist film, in the sense that it deliberately invokes that memory. For Pasolini – and for an entire generation of left-wing militants alongside him – anti-fascism is not a memory consigned to the past, but a living possibility, still to be pursued.⁴⁸

In the film, the struggles for decolonisation are, in this sense, *memories of the future*: a prefiguration of the world to come. A historical imagination.

But they also represent a reactivation and fulfillment of the anti-fascism of the 1930s and, above all, the 1940s. Of the *spirit* of the anti-fascist Resistance.

From this perspective, at the heart of Pasolini's intellectual operation, some have plausibly identified a strong influence of, or at least a proximity to Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Concept of History*.⁴⁹ This proximity is not without

⁴⁶ For the expression “perceptive filter” see P. Terhoeven, *Hitler's Children? German Terrorism as Part of the Transnational 'New Left Wave'*, in *Revolutionary Violence and the New Left. Transnational Perspectives*, ed. by A. Martin Alvarez-E. Rey Tristan, London: Routledge, 2017, p. 129.

⁴⁷ See A. Brazzoduro, *Il nemico interno. La guerra d'Algeria nel cinema francese*, «Passato e Presente», 27/76, 2009, pp. 127-142.

⁴⁸ On this see also A. Rapini, *L'antifascismo. Una tradizione generativa (1945-2025)*, Roma: Donzelli, 2025.

⁴⁹ See S. Monti, *La rabbia (1963): il film-saggio e la funzione-Benjamin nel cinema di Pasolini*, «The Italianist», 41/2, 2021, pp. 308-322. Monti identifies as the earliest studies on the relationship between Pasolini and Benjamin those by R.S.C. Gordon, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, and F. Trentin, “Organizing Pessimism”: *Enigmatic Correlations between Walter Benjamin and Pier Paolo Pasolini*, «Modern Language Review», 108, 2013, pp. 1029-1035.

textual evidence, considering that the first Italian edition of the *Theses* was published precisely in 1962 by Einaudi, edited and translated by Renato Solmi.⁵⁰ Which means exactly when Pasolini was working on the creation of *La rabbia*.

For Benjamin, in fact, the historical materialist must be capable to «blast open the continuum of history» (*Thesis XVI*), that is, breaking the sequence of chronological and linear time – past, present, future – in order to grasp, in the moment of the now (*Jetztzeit*), that specific «constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one» (*Thesis XVIII*). In this sense, for Benjamin – as also for Pasolini in *La rabbia* – the past is not a fixed datum, once and for all, but a «spark of hope» (*Thesis VI*) that is ignited when a moment of the present is brought into proximity with a moment of what-has-been, in a constellation saturated with tensions.

In *La rabbia*, Pasolini directly engages with both the technique of montage and Benjamin's theory of history, likely finding in them a possible path toward a non-dogmatic Marxism. In this sense, Pasolini juxtaposes – or rather, *cites* – moments from the past within the present, in order to create new layers of meaning. As in the sequence on the Hungarian refugees, where he says:

These snows, are they from last year
or from before a thousand years, before every hope.

[...]

These are our mothers, our children and grandchildren,
our old relatives, these figures of semblance,
survivors of the days of tears – who cry.
Forty-three, forty-four,
years of the same whiteness,
of this emigration! They had not passed,
they were here, with their ineffaceable snow,
with their hereditary tears.⁵¹

⁵⁰ W. Benjamin, *Tesi di filosofia della storia*, in *Angelus Novus. Saggi e frammenti*, Torino: Einaudi, 1962.

⁵¹ «Queste nevi erano dell'altr'anno, | o di mille anni fa, prima di ogni speranza. | Dove le abbiamo conosciute, queste nevi, | queste nevi che incorniciano giorni di pianto? | [...] Sono madri nostre, figli, nipoti, | vecchi parenti nostri, queste figure identiche, | sopravvissute dai giorni del pianto – che piangono. | Il quarantatré, il quarantaquattro, essi | sono gli anni di questo biancore, | di questa emigrazione! Non

To weld two temporally distinct and distant events into a single constellation – thus rendering them present by revealing their secret yet unequivocal connection – is the operation Pasolini proposes to carry out with history. Convinced, as he says while images of the Soviet ballerina Ulanova appear on screen, that «only Revolution saves the Past». It is not difficult to recognise in this expression the influence of Benjamin's political messianism, for whom, if «nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history», «only a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments» (*Thesis III*). That is, not only the past of victors, but also that of generations of the exploited and the defeated.

«*The days ... in which the Resistance plants roots and founds the future!*»

La rabbia is an anomalous filmic object in Pasolini's œuvre, a 'singular creation' constructed with a skilful editing of only archival materials into which is interwoven the 'voice in poetry' (*voce in poesia*) of the novelist Giorgio Bassani (who dubbed Orson Welles in *La ricotta*) and the prose commentary (*voce in prosa*) of the painter Renato Guttuso who read Pasolini's text.⁵² The poet is "disgruntled" and speaks his anger in the face of post-war problems. Prominent among these is colonialism, «anachronistic violence of one nation on another, with its trail of martyrs and deaths».⁵³ In two of several sequences devoted to Algeria (LII and LIV), Pasolini traces Paul Éluard's celebrated poem *Liberté*, published clandestinely during the Nazi occupation of Paris (1942). So as a «series of photographs of tortured and tortured» Algerians scrolls across the screen, the "voice in poetry" reads:

erano trascorsi, | erano qui, con le loro indelebili nevi, | con le loro ereditarie lacrime»: P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, p. 370.

⁵² Z. Baross speaks of «singular creation» in *In Praise of (La) Rabbia*, «La Rivista», 2015, n. 4, p. 90. On the differences between the «magnifique et douce» *voce in poesia* and *voce in prosa*, see G. Didi-Huberman, *Rabbia poetica. Note sur Pier Paolo Pasolini*, «Poésie», 37/143, 2013, pp. 114-124.

⁵³ *Appendice a La rabbia*, in P.P. Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, p. 408. See also P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, ed. by R. Chiesi, Bologna: Cineteca di Bologna, 2009.

On my dirty rags
 on my skeletal nakedness
 on my gypsy mother
 on my sheepish father
 I write your name.

On my first marauder brother
 on my second slovenly brother
 on my third shoeshine brother
 on my fourth beggar brother
 I write your name.

On my underworld comrades
 on my kept comrades
 on my unemployed comrades
 on my fellow laborers

I write your name

freedom!⁵⁴

This is followed by a contrasting sequence of images devoted to the pro-Algeria French putsch (13 May 1958) led by Massu, the butcher of the so-called “Battle of Algiers” (“black rally”, *comizio nero*, says a subtitle), and de Gaulle’s subsequent return to power (with the sibylline «I got you», *je vous ai compris*, 4 June 1958). Then, again we see an unbearable sequence of Algerian men and women raped, tortured. Pasolini-Bassani continues:

On the nomads of the desert
 on the laborers of Medina
 on the wage earners of Oran
 on the little clerks of Algiers

⁵⁴ «Sui miei stracci sporchi | sulla mia nudità scheletrica | su mia madre zingara | su mio padre pecoraio | scrivo il tuo nome. || Sul mio primo fratello predone | sul mio secondo fratello sciancato | sul mio terzo fratello lustrascarpe | sul mio quarto fratello mendicante | scrivo il tuo nome. || Sui miei compagni della malavita | sui miei compagni mantenuti | sui miei compagni disoccupati | sui miei compagni manovali || scrivo il tuo nome || libertà!»: P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, p. 394.

I write your name.

On the miserable people of Algeria

on the illiterate peoples of Arabia

on the poor classes of Africa

on the enslaved peoples of the under-proletarian world

I write your name

freedom!⁵⁵

It is not of interest here to discuss Pasolini's possible "heretical" or "corsair" Orientalism, although this does not fail to question our gaze today.⁵⁶ It is perhaps of greater interest to emphasize, through Pasolini's work, the centrality of decolonization, and of Africa and Algeria in particular, for the new political cultures that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This is an inescapable centrality for those who want to grasp the discontinuity expressed by those political and cultural ferments, with respect to which the discovery of "Colour", a "new extension of the world", marks a point of no return, even in the rereading of revolutionary classics, Marxism *in primis*.⁵⁷ As the terrible images of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, tied up like an animal, shortly before being murdered, scroll across the screen, the "voice in poetry" declaims: «A new problem is born in the world: it is called colour».

Indeed, Pasolini, and with him the generation of the New Radical

⁵⁵ «Sui nomadi del deserto | sui braccianti di Medina | sui salariati di Orano | sui piccoli impiegati di Algeri | scrivo il tuo nome. || Sulle misere genti di Algeria || sulle popolazioni analfabete dell'Arabia | sulle classi povere dell'Africa | sui popoli schiavi del mondo sottoproletario | scrivo il tuo nome || libertà!»: P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, p. 395.

⁵⁶ On which see L. Caminati, *Orientalismo eretico. Pier Paolo Pasolini e il cinema del Terzo Mondo*, Milano: Mondadori, 2007. For a harsh "postcolonial critique": G. Giuliani, *Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Decolonizing/Postcolonial Subaltern: for a Post-colonial Critique*, in *Cinema italiano postcoloniale*, ed. by L. Caminati-V. Deplano-D. Garofalo-L. Peretti, «Cinema e Storia», 13/1, 2024, pp. 173-204.

⁵⁷ P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, cit., p. 371. See also M. Mellino-A. Ruben Pomella (eds.), *Marx nei margini. Dal marxismo nero al femminismo postcoloniale*, Roma: Alegre, 2020.

Left, connects in an ideal constellation the partisans of the European Resistance to Nazi-Fascism, the struggles of decolonization, and the subalterns of an «Africa» that «begins on the outskirts of Rome, includes our Meridione, part of Spain, Greece, the Mediterranean states, and the Middle East».⁵⁸

As says Pasolini-Bassani commenting in *La Rabbia* on images of Algerians celebrating the liberation of their country:

Coloured people, it is the days of victory
of all the partisans of the world!

People of colour, these are the days of victory
in which the Resistance plants roots and founds the future!⁵⁹

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⁵⁸ P.P. Pasolini, *La resistenza negra*, in *Letterature negra*, ed. by M. De Andrade, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1961, p. xxiii.

⁵⁹ «Gente di colore, sono i giorni della vittoria | di tutti i partigiani del mondo! || Gente di colore, sono i giorni della vittoria | che la Resistenza pianta le radici e fonda il futuro!»: P.P. Pasolini, *La rabbia*, p. 396. On the “moment 1962” see M. Rahal, *Algérie 1962. Une histoire populaire*, Paris : La Découverte, 2022.

This volume is the outcome of a PRIN 2017 research project devoted to reconstructing the political, ideological, cultural, and socio-economic networks through which the international communist movement engaged with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements in Africa from the 1920s to the early 1970s. Bringing together national case studies and transnational perspectives, the essays examine encounters and strategies, contradictions and failures that shaped the project of an 'alternative globalization' embodied by communism across a historical period marked by the world wars, the Cold War, and decolonization.