



THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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Editorial Book Review

A Nightmare Of The Human Spirit

THE QUESTION. By Henri Alleg. George Braziller Inc. 123 pages. \$2.95.

IN 1943, in the Rue Lauriston (the Gestapo headquarters in Paris), Frenchmen were screaming in agony and pain. All France could hear them. In those days the ordeal at the hands of the "parrots" (paratroopers). It is a part of the record, a part of the history of the Algerian war and a part of the shame of France.

So begins Jean-Paul Sartre's introduction to this tautly told tale of terror from the torture chambers of Algiers. It is an introduction to a nightmare. For, as Sartre points out and Alleg graphically illustrates, there is no such word as "impossible." That men and women are tortured regularly and systematically by French paratroopers in Algiers is no longer even regularly and systematically denied. It is a part of the record, a part of the history of the Algerian war and a part of the shame of France.

This small volume—only 123 pages—is an amazingly lucid and calm account of Alleg's own ordeal at the hands of the "parrots" (paratroopers). It is a revolting book. Only readers with strong stomachs can tolerate its coldly clinical detailing of man's inhumanity to man without sickening. Yet it is a book that should be read, and widely read, because its significance transcends the terrible pangs of France's travail and affects the whole human family.

PUBLISHED in France a few months ago, THE QUESTION has already had a fantastic history. The French government banned it on political grounds—the first such banning since the 18th century—after some 60,000 copies were sold. Although still illegal, its sales have soared over the 150,000-mark in France alone. A petition protesting its seizure and "the use of torture" has been initiated by four of France's most distinguished literary figures with political commitments ranging from the Right to the Left—Sartre, Andre Malraux, Francois Mauriac and Roger Martin du Gard. Alleg is a Frenchman who edited the suppressed ALGERIA REPUBLICAN in Algiers. He had gone into hiding to avoid internment. Last June he was arrested by Gen. Massu's paratroopers on a charge of "endangering the safety of the state" as a Communist. He was "questioned" for months by officers and men in the grips of a violent and anonymous hatred. His description of those pain-wracked days and nights of senseless violence is at once incredible and strangely convincing. Sartre set the stage. The torturers, as they themselves promised, "looked after him": Torture by electricity, by drowning as in the time of Brinville, but with all the perfected technique of our time: torture by fire, by thirst. We fascinate ourselves with the white pool of inhumanity, but it only needs a man, hard and stubborn, obstinately doing his duty to his fellow man, to save us from vermin. The "Question" is not inhuman, it is simply an ignoble and vicious crime, committed by men against a man and that another man can and must rebuke.

ALLEG did not break under the torture. Eventually, his torn and singed body was delivered to civil authorities and he is still behind bars in Algiers. The manuscript he smuggled out of his cell contains precise, coolly candid descriptions of this admittedly mad experiment.

"I... smiling at the time, dangled the clasps at the end of the electrode before my eyes. These were little shining

steel clips, elongated and toothed, what telephone engineers call 'crocodile' clips. He attached one of them to the lobe of my right ear and the other to a finger on the same side.

"Suddenly, I leapt in by bonds and shouted with all my might. C— had just sent the first electric charge through my body. A flash of lightning exploded next to my ear and I felt my heart racing. I struggled, screaming and stiffened myself until the straps cut into my flesh. All the while the shocks controlled by C—, magneto in hand, followed each other without interruption. Rhythmically, C— repeated a single question, hammering out the syllables: 'Where have you been hiding?'

WHAT GIVES THE QUESTION universal significance is the universal nature of torture as an institution. As Sartre so eloquently laments, torture is senseless violence born of fear. The purpose of it is to force from one's tongue the secret of everything. It was not invented by Europeans, the white race and certainly not by the French paras in Algeria. Nor is it always a physical thing. Torture is a systematized form of hatred that creates its own instruments. Mental torture, practiced behind a facade of democratic legality, is one of the more exquisite forms of race hatred practiced in the South today. The sadists have many weapons and an enormous capacity for invention.

Does torture always have the same causes? Certainly not, says Sartre, but everywhere it betrays the same sickness. The title of the book itself comes from a police term used to describe legal torture employed long before the French Revolution as a means of producing evidence.

The "Question" in Algiers is no less vile. It is still senseless violence. Sartre explains it well:

"Whether the victim talks or whether he does not, it is always somewhere else and out of reach. It is the executioner who becomes Sisyphus. If he puts the question at all, he will have to continue it forever."

"It is normal for us to kill each other. Man has always struggled for his collective or individual interests. But in the case of torture, this strange contest of will, the ends seem to be radically different: The torturer pits himself against the tortured for his 'manhood' and the duel is fought as if it is not possible for both sides to belong to the human race."

ANTI-Communists can share Comrade Alleg's sense of triumph over bestiality that is all too well documented. Yet they cannot help remembering that members of the Communist Party have been consenting parties to atrocities fully as revolting as those committed at the "centre de tri" of El-Bir. It is not that Alleg appeals to humanity with "dirty hands." It is just that the tragedy is all-embracing, that violence begets violence and the tortured become the torturers.

We have a terrible irony, described on today's editorial page in Joseph Alsop's dispatch from Algiers, of Gen. Massu, "a deeply religious man," ordering torture because it was "unavoidably necessary to extirpate terror."

Consequently, THE QUESTION is as fresh as today's headlines. And the challenge it poses for the human spirit, we fear, be mirrored in headlines next week, next month and next year.

THE QUESTION should be read and remembered. In its own ghastly way it may contribute a new awareness of the need for a return to decency in the family of man.

People's Platform Were Suspended Officers Victims Of A 'Feud'?

Charlotte

NOTICE in The News that two gentlemen for whom I have a high regard have been ordered suspended from the Charlotte Police Department. I have no criticism to offer against anyone who may be responsible for their suspension until all matters concerning them have been cleared up. However, I do wish to state that Allen White's father at his death was holding the clerk's job, and his son, Allen, 18 years ago succeeded him and during my six years as solicitor of the City Court I found this man ever loyal to the Police Department, faithful in the execution of the duties of his office and courteous and fair to all.

As to Capt. Henkel, he is a poor man who has little of this world's goods; he has a lovely family and grandchildren. He has lived as best he could on a policeman's salary. He cannot be held responsible for the fact that these good men are to some extent the victims of an apparently never-ending feud that has kept the police department at odds for many years.

— MERCEUR J. BLANKENSHIP

Geographical Limits On Academic Lore?

Charlotte

NOTICE that one of your staff members has received a fellowship to study the South's economic and social problems at Harvard.

It probably figures that if you want to learn about the South, you should go to Harvard and if you want to be an expert on the even more northern situation, you should go to the University of Mississippi.

— W. M. FOWLER

Negro Vote Is Vital In Primary Run-Off

Rock Hill, S. C.

Editors, The News:

THE FOREMOST Reconstruction period historian, Prof. C. Vann Woodward of Johns Hopkins University, wrote in his latest book, *South Carolina Gov. Wade Hampton urged Negro votes to support his administration.*

In a total vote of nearly 340,000, Johnston won over 20,000 votes. The Negro vote, which Reconstruction came close to 10 percent of the total registration of over 500,000. If the Negroes voted the same proportion as the whites their total vote should be near 35,000. A swing of half these votes to either candidate would assure victory.

Two alternatives face the two remaining candidates. They can hope to win the Negro vote or if the race gets desperate claim that

the opposition will win the Negro votes thereby hoping to alienate the straggling 50,000 white Johnnies voters. In either event it is possible the balance of power rests in the Negro vote.

Similar situations have cropped up in northern cities. Negro votes in northern and western cities have swayed the election. It will be interesting to see how the candidates handle the situation.

— G. W. JONES

U.S. Flag Evolved With The Country

Charlotte

LIKE THE land it represents, our flag has grown in beauty and significance through the years until today, wherever unfurled, it stands as an indestructible symbol of hope, a promise to all of our strength, a better tomorrow, in freedom under law.

On this flag, there may be some interest in the evolution of the flag. Few people realize that at one time there were nearly as many versions of the U. S. flag as there were flagmakers. Due to a resolution passed by the Continental Congress, this was true for 136 years.

Casually, and without inspiration, Congress passed the following resolution: "Resolved that the Flag of the United States be 13 stripes, alternate red and white; that the Union be 13 stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

The resolution said nothing concerning where the "out there" flag was to be made. Imaginations ran wild. Citizens at home and soldiers in the field began enthusiastically designing their own flags. Stars had from five to eight points each. They were arranged in rows, circles and semi-circles. Some designers used a blue field in the form of an arch; others chose a square or rectangle. Each flagmaker proudly proclaimed that his version was the intended one.

One version is the flag the North Carolina troops displayed in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15, 1781. It has 13 stripes and 13 stars. And it has blue stars on a white field. Each star has eight points.

When the Revolutionary War ended, we still had no standard flag. In 1795 Kentucky and Vermont came into the Union and the flag was enlarged to 15 stars and 15 stripes. This was the Star-Spangled Banner which inspired Francis Scott Key to write his famous hymn. The 15 stars, 15 stripes flag flew without controversy for more than 30 years. It was the flag carried by Lewis and Clark in their expedition across the continent, and the flag planted by them on the shores of the Pacific in 1805. It was the same one which flew during the entire war of 1812.

In 1818 more states were admitted to the Union: Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana and Maine. This created an immediate problem. Should a stripe and a star be added for each new state? It was decided to reduce the number of stripes to their original 13, and to add a

star for each new state as it was admitted.

This was acceptable. From then on, as states were admitted, stars were added. But still in no orderly manner. By 1912 the stars had increased to their present 48.

Finally President Taft ended the

confusion that had been plaguing flagmakers since 1777. On Oct. 29, 1912, 138 years after the birth of our nation, a presidential order was issued specifying in detail how all future flags must be made.

Your flag and my flag, let us love it, respect it, and defend it against all enemies.

— MRS. WILLIAM P. MCCLAREY, President, Junior Committee of National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution

'I Think We're Beginning To Get The Picture'



Backstage In Algeria After Terror Came Torture

By JOSEPH ALSOP

UNTIL YOU have lived a little in this fantastic Algerian atmosphere, even a word used to appear either incomprehensible or downright incredible. So perhaps it is more useful to try to convey the atmosphere than to analyze the individual events.

What, then, makes the atmosphere so fantastic? For one thing, of course, Algeria has been at war for more than three years. All wars have a way of heightening experience—even experience from the front line—so that even the diners on the peaceful, lamplight terrace of the Hotel St. George have a little of the excitement of the front line. It is dancing at the Duchess of Richmond's famous ball before Waterloo.

The civilians, God knows, are far sadder than they would be in any automobile on any major highway. But the scene acquires its own inevitable drama because one sees the young officers who are also enjoying their meals in the bright evening air, and one knows they will be off on operations tomorrow and dead the next day.

POLITICAL DRAMA

To this natural drama has now been added a political drama of surprising fascination. And the essence of the drama is an immense moral choice by the professional officers of the French Army. Other, more sordid, actors also stage the drama. There are the Algerians of French extraction, of course, who have great interests at stake. Also more important, there are also the group of men from metropolitan France who have claimed the leadership of what they call "the Algerian revolution."

This second group, headed and wholly controlled by the dark, at times Jacques Soustelle, has expressed a most bitter disappointment. They clearly thought they would be called to leading posts in the new government of Gen. de Gaulle. They now know that they can hope for nothing of this sort.

Before de Gaulle was legally voted into power, these same men were orchestrating the shouts of the mob. The paratroopers to Paris? The paratroopers were then ready to obey the call and they could then have taken Paris with ease. How contrasting, therefore, for this same little group to



DE GAULLE IN 1944
Fermant In The Army

try to set the stage for a renewal of the former outcry! How they must long to fly to Paris with the paratroopers, now chanting a pious new slogan: "We must rescue de Gaulle!"

But the complex interplay of civilian interests and civilian ambitions sinks into insignificance beside the ferment in the French Army. If the Army does not march with the civilians, the latter will shortly cease to have very much importance. But what will be the Army's choice?

Ten years of unceasing, bitter, fruitless war have made of most of these French professional Army officers a new breed of men, quite different from any one has seen. Consider, for example, the following intonations to the famous "affair de torture":

MASSU'S ORDERS

The use of a grim third degree was unavoidably necessary to achieve the intensity of living can easily and rapidly lead to the Fascism so many of them fought in the resistance years. Add that their own experiences have quite naturally filled them with a leathery of the parliamentary weaknesses of the Fourth Republic. Add further that they have an almost religious faith in the unequalled integrity of France in the unequalled integrity of France. Add that they are now "compromised" of Algeria's wretched Muslim masses.

Add finally that they have begun to feel a little of the desire to take the whole enormous step that they desire, precisely because the vast majority of Frenchmen of France do not desire it. One can then understand the inner ferment that caused the officer members of the Committee of Public Safety to sign the subordinate manifesto that the Algerian Committee of Public Safety addressed to Gen. de Gaulle. A high authority has said this was more "spume on a great wave of change." But it is not spume, it is a symptom, rather, of a choice in the making. For what that may be worth, his reporter remains convinced that the men of the French Army will finally make the right choice, to return to the discipline proper in the Army of a great country. But it has to be added that the final outcome is not certain yet.

From The Richmond News Leader

DIARY FOR A SPRING DAY

A LITTLE after 5 o'clock, we began to hear the thunder rumbling far away, in long little drum rolls that came from the river, echoed across the Eastern Sky. "Shall we sit outside for a while," you asked, "and watch the storm come up?" And this was how it was.

It had been sunny all afternoon, with stretched cottony clouds straggling about a pale blue sky, but now the clouds had turned a soot gray, the drab gray of old dust clouds and wipe rags, and their edges waved forlornly in the east. Against the gray horizon, the trees were oddly sharp and green, dark green, and now the limbs were still, now trembling, and then suddenly shaken by a wind.

dry, and she felt them, and looked again at the sky, and you knew she was thinking: If I leave them out they'll get rained on, and, like that much better, but there's no place to hang them inside. But finally she gathered them in, and there was no whiteness left against the sky: Almost no motion, only the occasional shaking of trees, high up, and the hurried flight of a sparrow.

All the while the thunder muttered and grumbled, first in hollow sounds and then in more solid chords and octaves, arpeggios of thunder, deep in the bass clut, good Sibelius thunder. Then came, like a flash bulb, and the trees and roofs black against a bruised and ominous sky; and children shrieking and scampering home, a cymbal crashing clap of thunder—

"Here it comes," you said, and there were the first heavy drops spattering on the walk, drops as big as silver dollars, two, six, a dozen, a score, and a wind of relief, of tension breaking a cool wind, wet against one's cheek, the Spring rain, the rain of growing things, and as we went in, the trees danced and the limbs reached up and danced, and the rain fell in drenching sheets. "Don't close the windows all the way," said the boy. "I like to hear the storm."

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

WASHINGTON

THE most important conclusion a newspaperman can draw from the new, more potent Iron Curtain is that the United States has to take the offensive for peace. Instead of talking about war and letting our missile program lag, we've got to keep the missile program strong, as an insurance policy, but nevertheless work at peace.

Initiative Stolen

The Soviet-bloc countries have taken the initiative away from us in no uncertain terms when it comes to people-to-people friendship. This policy, officially proclaimed by Nikita Khrushchev

U.S. Must Take Offensive For Peace

WASHINGTON

summit conference in 1955, and re-emphasized by him as the official policy of the United States in 1956, has now been adopted by the satellites. They are not merely talking, they are acting. Like the U.S. they are out to win friends and influence people.

Complete Reversal

There is a complete reversal of the old days when the Iron Curtain was a damnable tight-rope. The only way you could get anything into Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary was by balloon. In contrast to the drizzly Cold War, this policy, which carried Nasser from Moscow to Cairo, but they didn't like pictures taken

everywhere in the satellite countries. Though my newspaper has been in the State Department "not valid for travel in Hungary," this made no difference to the Hungarians.

One Objection

The only thing they objected to was taking pictures of an old man sweeping up cigarette butts with a dilapidated broom. The only report they had no objection to my taking pictures of a Hungarian honor guard welcoming Col. Nasser or of the big Russian jet which carried Nasser from Moscow to Cairo. But they didn't like pictures taken

of an old man sweeping cigarette butts with slow-motion inefficiency.

Two Developments

Reason for the lifting of the Iron Curtain is easy to understand and extremely important. It results from two significant developments: 1.—The governments of the Soviet bloc are no longer afraid to let people witness their domestic situation. The old inferiority complex is gone. They have made progress and are proud to have people see it. 2.—The governments of the satellite countries are no longer afraid their people will desert to the west because of comparisons with the west.