
Algeria: The Realities. *Germaine Tillion.* Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y. 115 pp. \$2.50. Translated from the French by *Ronald Matthews.*

This book about Algeria was written for the people of France, but it presents with great clarity the problems confronting the world of "haves" and "have nots." It portrays the catastrophe of those peoples who have existed with (and perpetuated) archaic cultures, i.e., $\frac{3}{4}$ of the human race, in this period of expansion of the industrialized western world, i.e., $\frac{1}{4}$ of the human race.

The author is a French woman, a sociologist and teacher at the Sorbonne. She saw this catastrophe overtake a small community in Algeria where she lived 1934-1940 and knew then every individual in the region. They were all very poor, but they had enough to eat, and were pleasant, good natured, warm-hearted people, enjoying, ". . . a well-balanced existence, thanks to the unlimited mutual aid that linked the inhabitants of a village or a group of tents, the pride they took in the solidarity, the enormous fun they got out of playing dirty tricks on their neighbors and the relative harmlessness of these pranks."

"When I saw them again, between December, 1954, and March, 1955, I was thunderstruck by the change they had undergone in less than fifteen years, and for which the only word I can find is "pauperization." These men who fifteen years before had been living sparingly but reasonably, and in conditions that were more or less the same for everyone, were now split into two unequal groups. In the smaller group, it is true, people were richer than in the old days, but in the other group no one could be sure how he was going to exist between December and June. In the old days, after a good harvest, even the poorest man would put the surplus by for

consumption over the next three years, for centuries of experience had taught everyone the need for providence. Now nine families out of ten were living from hand to mouth."

"What lay behind it all? There is no lack of explanations—shiftlessness, Moslem fatalism, French colonialism, the shrinkage of culturable lands caused by sand-laden winds and/or goats.

"France's contribution" to the country was, to all appearances, conspicuous by its absence—not a single teacher, an empty road, no medical officer, no nurse, no sort of emissary of "civilization." At the most it had amounted to a few good intentions, which had never followed up."

"The appearances, however, were completely misleading. "France's contribution" was everywhere, invisible but omnipresent, and was distributing good and evil with an open hand. Good and evil, however, are a little difficult to distinguish here."

"True there are no regular medical rounds, and therefore no periodical distribution of aspirins or lozengers, but plague and cholera had gone before 1940, and malaria, typhus and typhoid (rampant in 1940) had disappeared by 1954. Famines and tribal wars were becoming mere legends."

The population had shot up to four or five times that of 100 years earlier, and the rate of increase is still going up. "As the people have been multiplying, their flocks and farms have been expanding and have reached and then passed what might be called the danger line, beyond which the soil is irreparably exhausted, springs dry up, and forests vanish once and for all."

"... meantime—the peasants have stopped reckoning in loads of barley and are counting in francs; they have passed almost unawares from a barter economy to a market economy."

"This (vicious) cycle, starts when the peasant is forced to sell his produce immediately after the harvest in order to pay off his debts—to sell at the bottom price. It continues when five or six months later he is compelled to buy the same produce back at the top price—so he gets deeper and deeper into hopeless difficulties."

"The sudden and unprecedented increase in population, the simultaneous dwindling of resources, the collapse of the economy, and contact with the heart-breaking superiority of foreign techniques are rocking to their foundations the archaic civilizations that have been subjected to this combined offensive. Everything they could boast of is dying or on the point of death; art, techniques, and all the ingenious devices that permit a human community to live in something like peace. In every field the seedy and the sordid are on their way to replacing the splendid survivals of the past."

"The new era (emergence from the Middle Ages) began with the enormous development of mechanization, the huge expansion in trade and the increased speed of transport, and above all, with the great medical discoveries. Along with these phenomena went universal education, the increase of technical skill, and a regular increase in wealth."

"All this—the *world-wide* stamping out of epidemics, the *world-wide* commercialization of resources, the *world-wide* dissemination of ideas, discoveries, and news—has resulted in the transforming of the human biological environment all over the world."

"Now, part of mankind has adapted itself to the new environment and has gained handsomely from it. The rest of the people did not succeed in adapting themselves at once, and thus started to fall behind, and so every year it is becoming a little harder for them to catch up with their rivals. One of the symptoms of this backwardness is an extravagant increase in population."

"The unadapted peoples are living in archaic agricultural civilizations the adapted peoples in civilizations of the industrial type. Individually, men are neither less intelligent nor less good and certainly not less happy in a so-called "backward" society than in our own, so long at least, as no one has tampered with the centuries-old empirical balance that has allowed man to gain a living in that society.

"Each of the two civilizations has its own individual type of birth rate, but—as soon as the two societies come into contact, they tend to have the same type of death rate. The result, for the archaic communities, is a sudden and extravagant increase in their population.

"The two civilizations not only have different types of birth rates. In the economic field, they display fundamentally different types of productivity.

"In archaic societies, . . . resources remain more or less stationary. With good luck they may increase a little, but they tend to diminish once they have reached a ceiling. The inevitable result of this simultaneous growth of population and diminution of resources is a constant, tragic, progressive, and inexorable fall in the standard of living.

"In industrial civilizations, the increase of wealth is swift and, as far as one can judge, without any limit, while the figure of the population changes little, sometimes not enough. The result is the exact opposite of the trend in archaic societies, and we see a constant and substantial rise in the general conditions of the population's existence.

"When the mean individual income in each sector is worked out it will be seen that the standard of living is falling faster in the so-called underdeveloped countries than it is rising in modern ones. Now, as soon as the economy of an archaic country begins to collapse, a parasitic class comes into being which corners an increasing share of the national income. Their digestion of these only whets the parasites' appetite for the absorption of the other resources of the country. About one-fourth of the world's population is growing steadily richer while three-fourths is becoming pauperized."

Pauperization of these three-fourths is the crime of the 20th Century.

This brief book should be read by everyone who can read.

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