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Will Africa Be the Last Oil Frontier?

31 October 2021, by **Lee Wengraf**

The company, Reconnaissance Energy Africa—known as ReconAfrica—has a plan objectionable to virtually everyone except its investors and Namibian and Botswanan government partners who have granted permits for exploratory tests: it promises to unleash untold levels of pollution, destruction of water supplies and farmland, permanent harm to animals including endangered species and the eviction of residents from their land. ReconAfrica's rush for what they are calling "largest oil play of the decade" is nothing short of devastating, profit-fueled extraction, with strong echoes of Africa's colonial past.

Yet Big Oil is on the ropes. Pushed by mass resistance and calls for climate justice, oil, gas and mining companies are facing an unprecedented crisis. Environmental activists have long denounced extractive industries for their climate-destroying capabilities, demanding a transition to sustainable energy sources and that fossil fuels be left in the ground. Since the passage of the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015, calls for governments and multinational corporations to take urgent action have accelerated. As this article was going to press in June 2021, a series of major statements and rulings compelling a curb on fossil fuel production have shaken the industry to its core. In this context, with the contradictions of destructive extraction laid bare, how can we understand this aggressive push by

ReconAfrica into one of the largest protected wildlife regions on the globe? Part of the answer lies in the "solutions" on offer. Claims of a path to "net zero" put forward by major firms such as BP and Shell paper over a global contradiction: achieving net zero on their terms means that ordinary people of the Global South will pay the price as nations of the Global North "export" their carbon footprints. This struggle cannot be seen more clearly than in the fight for the future of Okavango.

ReconAfrica: Drilling at Any Cost

In 2014, representatives of a Canadian "junior" oil company called Reconnaissance Energy Africa signed a lease to a 13,000 square mile, 8.75-million-acre area approximately the size of Belgium, in Namibia and Botswana. According to the company's website, they hold a 90% interest in the 6.3-million-acre Namibian section, with the national oil company, NAMCOR, holding the remaining 10%, and a full 100% of 2.45 million acres in adjacent Botswana. ReconAfrica secured extremely favorable terms from the Namibian government: a 5% royalty fee and 35% corporate tax. If the oil exploration is commercially viable, the Company is entitled to a

25-year production license. After a series of delays, ReconAfrica obtained permits to explore, raising enough capital to drill three exploratory wells with an IPO of \$23 million in 2020 and beginning drilling in January 2021, in Kawe, Kavango East, in an elephant habitat. The company has long predicted a major find, up to 31 billion barrels of oil. [1] Upon the April 15 announcement that "the first of a three well drilling program, provides clear evidence of a working conventional petroleum system in the Kavango Basin," their stock prices surged. Company statements brim with enthusiasm for this "last great oil find" with geological conditions ostensibly similar to the Texas Permian basin. "We know we have discovered a new sedimentary basin. It's up to 35,000 feet deep and it's a large and very expansive basin. Every basin of this depth in the world produces commercial hydrocarbons. It just makes sense," ReconAfrica co-founder Craig Steinke told CNN. [2] Drilling in the second well was underway in Mbambi, also in Kavango East, as New Politics went to press.

It's difficult to overestimate the destructive potential in ReconAfrica's plans. Investigative journalists, area residents, and activists have accumulated a vast body of evidence of the dangers to Okavango, demolishing the company's claims to adequate safety measures. As a result, resistance to the drilling plan is

growing. National Geographic launched a series of articles in the fall of 2020 condemning the immense threats posed to the wildlife, livelihoods, and environment in the region. Among the most serious is the potential for water contamination in an area with scarce water supplies. The Okavango is a wetland fed by an inland delta, the region's major water source. As the magazine describes, "any contamination to the aquifer will be all but impossible to contain and clean up." [3] ReconAfrica's license to explore lies adjacent to the main river of the Okavango Delta and exploratory drilling is being carried out 160 miles upstream. Critics of the project have raised serious concerns about the lack of analysis in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the impact on ground and surface water, especially given the vast amount of water that drilling requires. The dangers posed to the water supply actually affect roughly half the population of Namibia, a mainly arid country, as the Okavango River supports the water security of more than one million people. [4] Namibia has already experienced frightening degrees of warming, at a rate outpacing that of other regions.

The National Geographic series has laid out in painful detail the danger posed to the area's wildlife: "The Okavango region is home to the largest herd of African elephants left on Earth and myriad other animals—African wild dogs, lions, leopards, giraffes, amphibians and reptiles, birds—and rare flora....including important migratory routes for the world's largest remaining elephant population....Wild animals use the entire region, which is why Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have created the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, or KAZA for short. Bigger than Italy, it's the largest conservation area on the continent. ReconAfrica's licensed areas overlap with this huge international park." [5] The region is also home to six wildlife conservancies and is typically described as "the largest terrestrial transfrontier conservation area in the world."

Shockingly, while Recon Africa has a license to explore, as critics have

pointed out, not all required permits were obtained for the testing of the wells. The company has made a series of promises and claims that have failed to materialize: they pledged to line pits for the safe disposal of well-water yet photos clearly show that that promise has been broken. ReconAfrica claims that they are using water that is "organic" and "100% safe to the environment" for drilling yet waste from drilling fluids is extremely hazardous and potentially radioactive. Namibia's Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform has stated that the company wasn't consulted on permitting. [6] Likewise, as activist Ina-Maria Shikongo of the organization Fridays For Future Windhoek pointed out, permits were never granted for the road-building to the second drill site conducted by ReconAfrica, despite the immense pollution and noise disruption to residents and wildlife caused by the construction. These serious questions notwithstanding, the drilling of boreholes has gone ahead. "It's called greenwashing," said Shikongo describing company misrepresentations in an interview. "This should be a crime." [7]

The danger that the company could frack in the Okavango looms large. ReconAfrica has not received a license to frack from the Namibian government, and earlier references to the possibility of using "unconventional methods" (i.e., fracking) have disappeared from their website. Now, company spokespeople insist, fracking is off the table. Yet a number of senior executives made their reputations by fracking, such as CEO Scot Evans, formerly of Halliburton. Drilling operations are headed up by none other than the geologist credited with developing the fracking method, Nick Steinsberger, described by an industry publication as "one of the men who made the American shale boom happen." In an interview, Steinsberger captured the hubris of drilling at any costs that characterizes the project: "I am honored to have been responsible for completing the first 25 horizontal shale wells ever drilled in [Texas's Barnett] shale patch. This is indeed where modern-day fracking began. Now, I'm hoping for something just as exciting in Namibia's Kavango

Basin.... I could have gone pretty much anywhere, but we all want something big. The next big find. And they don't happen very often these days—at least not onshore. We're looking for the next American shale boom, and Africa's got the most potential." [8] South African geologist Jan Arkert believes, however, that fracking will be required to extract the oil from the soil, and that harmful emissions will inevitably be released into the atmosphere. [9] Despite the dangers, company representatives joyfully declare the potential for 120 billion barrels of oil equivalent, numbers potentially "laughable because they are so high." [10]

But it's not only the exploratory glee that mimics the tone of colonial adventurers of over a century ago. ReconAfrica public relations spin comes with promises for the people of Namibia and Botswana and supposed improvements in their way of life, including jobs. But as with many extractive projects, drilling is not labor-intensive so the project is not expected to lead to many new jobs, and the skilled jobs onsite are mainly held by workers from Canada and the United States. In fact, jobs for residents in the region have been mainly limited to short-term manual labor and in some cases, workers have been fired after a brief stint and pay withheld; according to Shikongo, when the labor commissioner went to investigate, he himself was slapped with a lawsuit by the company. In fact, ReconAfrica has taken pains to emphasize their ostensible "strong social license" and eagerly talk up their efforts at community engagement through a series of public meetings in the region. But as a number of accounts have described, their outreach was fraught with problems: public notices were only distributed in English, a language not spoken by a majority of the residents, and the sessions themselves, limited due to COVID-related restrictions, only included a small number of people.

The company's behavior has been so egregious that a lawsuit has been brought by the family of Andreas Sinonge in Mbambi whose farm is located near the second borehole. According to National Geographic,

over 600 working farms lie within ReconAfrica's exploration area, some irrigated with water from the Okavango River. [11] Intending to bring the company and several government ministries before the Namibian High Court, they argue that they never consented to the drilling and that ReconAfrica is squatting illegally. "The law is clear in its intent. Communal land is not to be turned over to private companies for the sake of profit-seeking. We already had land rights and were in occupation of that piece of land by the time Recon came and started drilling for oil and gas extraction. We were forcefully and unlawfully evicted from our land," stated the filings. [12] Other reports assert that the area wasn't included in the original EIA [13] and "[r]eports of bullying of community leaders who have spoken out against oil drilling have surfaced." [14] The right to "free, prior and informed consent" and "the right to say no" are recognized global principles for local residents in the face of community-destroying extraction, and ReconAfrica to date has, in practice, trampled on this fundamental notion.

Indigenous Resistance and Community Organizing

In the face of this corporate aggression, the indigenous San people of the Okavango have mobilized and spoken out in protest. A statement to the Namibian and Botswanan governments from the San people explained that:

We note that as the custodians of this land for thousands of years, and the rightful current inhabitants and custodians of this land, we have never been consulted, nor have we given the go-ahead to any entities to prospect for oil and gas in this our lands. We depend on the presence of the animals for food as well as to attract tourism from which we derive an income. In this way we will be prevented from hunting and gathering food, collecting medicine and performing our cultural practices and sacred rituals—in short

it will prevent us from being San. [15]

They argue that the area should be protected under UNESCO commitments to the "cultural landscape" accompanying its designation as a World Heritage Site. Further, they continue, the exploration violates the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the commitments to protect the environment enshrined in the Namibian constitution. As a result of protest against the violation of the site, ReconAfrica was compelled to accept an exemption for the Tsodilo Hills of the UNESCO-designated area, a victory but a small section of the exploration area.

Activists have been moving into action both locally and internationally. Fridays For Future Windhoek, Frack Free Namibia and Botswana, the Kavango Alive activist network, and Saving Okavango's Unique Life (SOUL) among others have grown their resistance over the past year through a series of marches on UNESCO offices, the Parliament, and government ministries. In April 2021, on Earth Day—and on the heels of U.S. President Joe Biden's Leaders Climate Summit—protesters in Windhoek delivered letters to the U.S. and German ambassadors. The letter read in part:

We are gravely concerned with developments in northern Namibia, specifically in the region of the Kavango Basin, where the fossil fuel industry's desperate last gasp of air threatens to destroy one of Africa's last lifelines and home to a truly magnificent and unique ecosystem. ReconAfrica, a petroleum exploration company headquartered in Canada, is currently engaging in oil and gas exploration in the Kavango Basin, the watershed of the famed Okavango Delta. This very delta, home to the last great herd of African elephants, recently confirmed to be dangerously close to extinction, is protected by US Public Law...known as the "Defending Economic Livelihoods and Threatened Animals Act" or the DELTA Act [asserting U.S. commitment to conservation in the region]When President Biden said yesterday, "We have to move. We have to move

quickly to meet these challenges," surely this meant stopping even the slightest damage to one of the world's most delicate and magnificent surviving eco-systems, especially in the name of dirty energy!

The struggle to save the Okavango is gathering steam internationally, with a March 2021 protest by Extinction Rebellion at ReconAfrica's now-shuttered Vancouver office and mobilizations in South Africa, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. A petition drive calling on Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has gained wide support.

In the face of activist assertions of their right to say no, the regional governments have instead insisted upon their "right to explore." Notwithstanding strong environmental protections in the Namibian constitution, and the fact that both Namibia and Botswana are parties to the Paris Agreement, aspirations for resource nationalism on the part of both have remained firm. In a joint government-company press release, Namibian Minister of Mines and Energy Thomas Alweendo extolled the initial drilling results as a "great period for the people of Namibia," hinting at hypocrisy in the idea that the Global South should be denied any developmental potential extraction offers. Meanwhile, activists critical of the government's actions are branded as "outsiders" and hostile to the opportunities on offer for indigenous people, said Ina-Maria Shikongo. ReconAfrica, for their part, has welcomed the government as "one of the friendliest regimes for explorers." [16] An investigative piece by the Globe & Mail has revealed close ties between a company consultant and Namibia's President Hage Geingob. [17]

Extraction in Africa and the "Net Zero" Era

The oil industry is in a race against time. The calls for net zero emissions and curbs on fossil fuel exploitation have created contradictions where the world's oil companies face urgent

demands to transition to sustainable fuel sources, at the same time as oil is becoming profitable again. During the pandemic, prices crashed globally because of a glut in supply, even dipping into negative territory in the early stages of the crisis. Today, a new oil boom could be around the corner, with prices creeping upwards. But even in the downturn of 2020, consumption still averaged 91 million barrels a day — more than the world consumed daily in 2012. [18] The world's largest banks have provided \$3.8 trillion to fossil fuel companies since 2016, when the Paris Agreement took effect; [19] global banks provided \$750 billion in financing to coal, oil, and gas companies in 2020 alone. [20] At the same time, costs for a "sustainable transition" are enormous, where energy investment will need to rise to \$5 trillion a year by 2030 to achieve net zero from \$2 trillion today. [21]. These tensions exert contradictory pressures on the fossil fuel industry in a number of directions, a product of a wider capitalist economy inextricably tied to competition and profit: how to invest in new technologies while maintaining a way to profit through extractive industries. These tensions are currently unfolding on a global scale, with the struggle over the "transition" and who will pay setting companies on a competitive crash course. Likewise global powers claiming the mantle of "net zero" aspirations are embarking on a new period of "green imperialism." These are the dynamics of the "sustainable transition," and activist forces and the left must understand this new terrain as one we are compelled to fight on.

ReconAfrica is on a no-holds-barred drive to extract profit for as long as that window of opportunity remains open. And because of mounting pressures on the industry, their tendency to cut regulatory corners, as reported by environmentalists and activists—no matter the cost to communities and wildlife—will only intensify. On the one hand, a small, "junior" oil company like ReconAfrica cannot go it alone: as the company itself has stated, they will need the bigger resources of an oil major to step in and pull off the exploration success they claim lies in the Okavango. Given these pressures,

when National Geographic revealed on May 21 the existence of a whistleblower Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) complaint against the company—citing more than 150 instances of false and misleading statements to investors—the news was shocking but not entirely surprising. In response, ReconAfrica hurriedly filed 22 amendments with Canadian securities regulators and lashed out at the magazine for running "false" statements and a "hit piece."

On the other hand, in the "net zero" landscape, Big Oil needs "wildcatters" like ReconAfrica: small companies willing to take risks in "unexplored" territory, who can continue to deliver a return on investment in fossil fuels in less heavily-regulated regions of the world. In this context, oil majors might be more compelled to sell off their assets to producers more willing to buck the pressures towards "greening" their enterprise. In late May, 2021, an avalanche of change—from stockholder rebellions at Shell, Exxon, and Chevron to a ground-breaking court ruling in the Netherlands compelling Shell Oil to slash emissions by 45% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels—are only the latest developments for high profile companies like BP and Shell who had already made "net zero" commitments.

The fossil fuel industry is fighting for its future in Okavango and other extraction "hot-spots" across the continent. Extraction continues under the guise of these "new finds" by companies like ReconAfrica opting to violate regulations and human rights. With historically weaker regulatory enforcement, countries of the Global South will be likely destinations for these "last great discoveries." As Francois Engelbrecht of the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa explained to CNN, "The big risk is that the global North makes the transition, and that Africa becomes the dumping ground for the world's fossil fuel technologies — the last place where this kind of energy is being pursued." [22] A 2020 study, for example, found that European oil exported to Nigeria exceeded EU pollution limits by as much as 204 times. [23] Ina-Maria Shikongo describes the stakes well:

You cannot be talking about cutting emissions on your side of the planet but then you are coming to release 1.4 billion tons of CO2 on our side....How is it that you can literally put [jeopardizing] our lives before this company? People need to understand that reaching these targets globally, [what that looks like] is that companies are coming to Africa to cause more emissions and it's not fair. More climate refugees will be created, more crimes against humanity, and for what? So we can continue feeding this greed. It's slavery on another level, it's a continuation of colonialism. The transition has to be about saving lives, so everyone has a fair share. We have all of the raw materials but we live in poverty, but it's an imposed poverty. [24]

Conclusion

On May 18 the International Energy Agency (IEA), an organization representing rich countries, dropped a bombshell declaration in their "Net Zero by 2050" report: all new fossil fuel extraction needs to halt after this year to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, and investors must not take on any new projects. [25] In this unprecedented call for change, the IEA insisted that current targets are insufficient to avert the climate emergency. "The number of countries which have pledged to reach net zero has grown, but even if their commitments are fully achieved, there will still be 22 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide worldwide in 2050 which would lead to temperature rise of around 2.1C by 2100" [26] — well above the 1.5C aspirational goal of the Paris Agreement.

While Big Oil and governments of the Global North advocate for market-based, "net zero" so-called solutions to the crisis, front-line struggles underscore the actual stakes: the oil industry—super-majors and "junior" operators alike—will not leave the fossil fuel world stage quietly. Fortunately the global resistance continues to grow, accelerated in no small part by struggles like the one in Okavango that is helping to reshape the terms of this fight beyond its borders. The coalitions knitted together to stop ReconAfrica in

Namibia and Botswana both put the worst, most outrageous abuses on full display in southern Africa and likewise provide strength and insights for the wider movement. As Ndaundika Shefeni of SOUL remarks, “As opposition grows across the region and world, unlikely alliances are forming of spiritual leaders, cultural organizations, conservation charities and grassroots community groups. [27]

These are the forces that will most decisively stop extraction and avert a

climate emergency, on terms to meet the needs and interests of ordinary people, including those currently in the cross-hairs of profit-fueled extraction. And this is the strategic vision embraced by activists across the continent and beyond, some fighting for decades, as they continue to challenge disastrous oil exploration, from Nigeria’s Niger Delta region—the site of drilling for three-quarters of a century—to the new East African Crude Oil Pipeline planned to run through Uganda and Tanzania,

home to world-famous wildlife preserves. As Nigerian environmental activist Nnimmo Bassey puts it, “Now is the time for ReconAfrica to spare Okavango, the people of Namibia and Africa the avoidable harms which will result from their mindless pursuit of profit at the expense of the people and planet. Anything less will be nothing other than willful climate and ecological crimes.” [28] The global movement will not let them get away with it.

Source: [New Politics](#)

Far from Spring

30 October 2021, by **Joseph Daher**

On 22 September, the Tunisian head of state formalised his institutional coup d’état by promulgating emergency provisions strengthening his powers to the detriment of the government and parliament, which he will de facto replace by legislating by decrees. President Saïed had declared that these decisions were of a temporary nature and were aimed at “the establishment of a true democratic regime in which the people are effectively the holder of sovereignty and the source of the powers they exercise through elected representatives or by referendum.” A few days later, to form a new government, he appointed as Prime Minister Najla Bouden, the first woman in the history of the country to reach this position, whose prerogatives he nevertheless considerably reduced.

Democratic framework at risk

But since his institutional coup, Saïed has made dozens of arbitrary arrests, house arrests and travel bans, as part of his “anti-corruption crusade.” This has not prevented the president from maintaining close relations with the employers’ association UTICA, which for many activists is one of the main

sources of corruption.

In mid-September, the secretary general of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), Nouredine Taboubi, warned the president for the first time, saying: “If you try to deviate from the path of a civil and democratic state, then the union is there, ready and experienced in struggle.” The trade unionist also denounced the “seizure of power.”

No improvement in living conditions

Saïed’s authoritarian coup initially received quite significant popular support, because of the frustrations accumulated by broad sectors of the popular classes at the increase in social inequality, poverty, unemployment and the negligence of the ruling parties, against the backdrop of the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic. With nearly 24,500 deaths, Tunisia recorded the highest number of deaths per capita in the Arab and African regions. The country also recorded 7,773 social protests in the first six months of 2021, compared to 4,566 for the same period in 2020, according to recent statistics published by an NGO, FTDES.

The Islamic fundamentalist Ennahda movement, in power for 10 years through various government coalitions, was in particular the target of protesters who took to the streets to support the Tunisian president’s measures. Ennahda has encouraged neoliberal policies, privatization and austerity measures, further impoverishing the popular classes. Successive Tunisian governments have become increasingly indebted to foreign creditors. The foreign debt accounted for about two-thirds of public debt in 2020, which raised many questions about debt servicing, sustainability and public resources that will be redirected towards its repayment rather than towards more productive objectives or the social protection system. Similarly, the movement’s record on democratic issues is far from positive, with significant crackdowns on social movements and opposition to gender equality.

Kaïes Saïed, an alternative?

The responsibility of Ennahda and other parties in power since 2011 is clear in the country’s socio-economic and political crisis. That said, Saïed is by no means a progressive alternative,

quite the contrary. As Hama Hammami, the general secretary of the Parti des travailleurs tunisien (Tunisian Workers' Party), said, "the war between Saied and the political parties is not a war over different approaches to Tunisia's economic problems, but over power." Similarly,

Saied is deeply conservative, opposed to equality between men and women in inheritance, the decriminalization of homosexuality and the abolition of the death penalty. Finally, his actions constitute a step backwards in the defense of the democratic rights of the popular classes.

We must oppose the authoritarian drift of President Saied, while supporting the progressive and democratic alternatives that confront Ennahda and the other parties in power, to prevent the return to a status quo which is unbearable for the Tunisian popular classes.

A Lucky Break from Populism?

29 October 2021, by **Andre Kaspas**

Babiš Ousted by the Right

"We made it, we made it!" shouted in unison the swanky youngsters assembled at the Prague headquarters of the SPOLU ('Together') coalition made up of three right-wing conservative parties. After trailing in the ballot counts during the whole of Saturday afternoon, they were lifted to a suprising victory at the finish line by the urban vote that came in the evening. With close to 28% of the vote, SPOLU overtook the ruling ANO party of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, who got just a little over 27%. The latter still received one more seat than its rivals, but he has virtually no chance of building a parliamentary majority anymore.

Indeed, the third party, a more liberal coalition built by the centre to centre-left Pirate party and the centre-right Mayors and Independents (STAN), received over 15% of the vote and the two coalitions are set to build a large coalition government. On the very evening following the elections, the two coalitions met and presented the public with a signed memorandum expressing interest in forming a government and pledging not to engage in negotiation with any other party. In doing so, they wanted to cut short to any efforts by Babiš to try to lure SPOLU or one of its parties into a new government.

They also wanted to send a strong signal to president Miloš Zeman, a

declared ally of the Prime Minister, who is responsible for entrusting the elections' winner with the formation of a government. Zeman had previously declared that he considered coalitions a scam and that he would only recognise the strongest party as the winner, in this case the ANO party. Following the results, Babiš and his troops have indicated that they are expecting to be entrusted with forming a government by the president, but it is already clear that they have little hope of achieving anything. On Sunday morning, after meeting with Babiš, President Zeman had to be urgently brought to the hospital and his faltering health could delay negotiations.

Not Much to Celebrate

SPOLU's victory can be interpreted as the success of the conservative anti-Babiš programme it offered, but the elections themselves can hardly be considered as anything more than a lucky break for liberal democracy in the country. Despite all the scandals hitting the Prime Minister, the Pandora Papers revelations only adding another layer a few days before the vote, and despite the catastrophic mismanagement of the pandemic, the opposition coalitions could not gather a majority of votes. Gaining a parliamentary majority only thanks to more than a million votes (over 20%) 'thrown away' to smaller parties failing to enter parliament,

their 'triumph' is no more than a lucky break.

As a matter of fact, it would have been enough for two of those smaller parties, the social-democrats (ČSSD) and the 'Oath' (Přísaha) party, to gather twenty thousand votes more each and Czechia would have woken up with quite a different outlook. Indeed, the two so-called democratic coalitions would have not obtained a majority of seats and those smaller parties could have been tempted to join Babiš instead of the old neoliberal right-wing forces. After all, the social-democrats have brought Babiš to power in 2013 and kept the alliance going after the 2017 elections. And the 'Oath' (Přísaha) led by a former anti-corruption police officer played on the same populist tropes as Babiš in the past and could have also been tempted to choose the oligarch maverick over the old elites.

The Shadow of a Far-Right Coalition

Even worse, it wasn't before more than 75% of ballots were counted that the nightmare scenario of Babiš allying with the far-right Freedom and Democracy Party (SPD) started withering away. For the whole afternoon, it seemed like ANO and the SPD had the 101 seats necessary to build the next government and it would not have been such a surprise to see the Prime Minister enter such a

Faustian pact, since he built his campaign on anti-migrant and anti-EU rhetoric. Even before the vote, some ANO figureheads were already talking about a post-electoral alliance with the SPD. Finally, the SPD received a little under 10% and lost two seats, but mostly because of smaller far-right parties cannibalizing its voter base.

The real message of the elections is not that Czechs want to turn the page on the oligarchic populism of Andrej Babiš, but rather that they are a majority ready to support political projects based on the kind of populist, authoritarian and radical right ideas that have become mainstream. Babiš's sharp turn towards the far right during the campaign hardly cost him any votes: quite the opposite. And the main opposition forces did not stand up against the anti-migrant rhetoric; they just argued that it was not a relevant topic. Even Babiš's self-proclaimed democratic opposition is far from liberal ideals, with the ODS (Civic Democratic Party), the main party of the Spolu coalition, being filled with conservative homophobic and xenophobic deputies. Their leader, and probably next prime minister, Petr Fiala, is not even convinced that climate change is a human-made disaster.

A Leftist Phoenix?

Part of Andrej Babiš's defeat comes from the assisted suicide committed by left-wing parties together with the

oligarch billionaire. Both the ČSSD and the KSČM kept Babiš in power since 2018 and failed to show any tangible results from this collaboration. Unable to push through any real left-wing agenda and even tamely watching by as ANO passed some anti-social legislation with the help of the right and far-right, they became entirely discredited and irrelevant. Especially as politics became increasingly divided between a pro- and an anti-Babiš camp, it made more sense to support Babiš's than to support his allies or to vote for parties who really opposed him. Trying to campaign by criticising the ruling party they kept in power didn't work out for the ČSSD and the KSČM, strangely enough. As soon as it became clear that the two parties had missed the electoral threshold, both of their leaders resigned and it is unsure whether they will recover from this historical knock-out.

While the old left parties were heading towards the dustbin of history, there was some hope that the liberal Pirate party with some centre-left tendencies could represent some kind of watchdog in the new anti-Babiš coalition. Running in a coalition with the centre-right Mayors and Independent (STAN), they nevertheless had a disappointing result (15,6%) and, worst of all, saw the system of preferential voices [29] push forward most STAN candidates in front of theirs. As a result, the Pirate party ends up with only 4 of the 37 deputies elected on the coalitions'

list, despite being the senior party in the alliance. The PirSTAN coalition has announced that it will nevertheless continue advancing as a united group with a common programme, but it is unclear if the Pirates will really be able to make their voices heard in the announced right-wing coalition. Especially since their four deputies will not be necessary for the new government to maintain majority.

As Czechia moves on towards a future that strangely resembles the past, with roughly the same political forces taking over after socio-economic turmoil, as they did in 2010 after the financial crisis, it remains to be seen whether the same mistakes will be repeated. In 2010-2013, the right-wing government imposed brutal austerity measures that triggered mass protests, but it was Babiš, and not the social movements, that gained political capital from this wave of discontent. Will this government be more careful to avoid mass protests? And will left-wing grassroots movements be able to provide other alternatives than a populist oligarch, an authoritarian former cop, or some other far-right projects? It is definitely a historical opportunity for a new Left, but it will be difficult considering the shift of the entire political scene towards conservative, (far-)right positions.

15 October 2021

Source: [LeftEast](#)

Haitian migrants brutalised and deported at US-Mexico border

28 October 2021, by **Malik Miah**

In mid-September, nearly 15,000 Haitian migrants, peacefully camped under a bridge on the Mexico-Texas border, were rounded up by US border patrol agents on horseback, some using their reins as whips.

They were dragged onto buses and planes and deported without due process.

Haitian migrants simply want a chance to live and work in the US. They arrived as word spread that the

Biden administration would extend special immigration status to Haitians inside the US, following the recent earthquake. There are already 100,000 Haitians with this status inside the country.

Stay out!

However, they were mistaken. The US policy towards new migrants and asylum seekers is, simply, “stay out”.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported that it flew 2000 migrants back to Haiti in one week. Thousands more have been deported since. Most did not know where they were going, until they landed in the capital, Port Au Prince.

Haiti suffered a magnitude 7.2 earthquake on August 14. A month earlier, Haitian president Jovenel Moise was assassinated. While Haiti’s new government is unstable and seen as illegitimate, the Biden administration has given it support.

Hiding behind a “health mandate” used by former president Donald Trump, the DHS has the power to exclude all migrants and asylum seekers from the US.

A federal court has ruled the imposition of this mandate is a violation of US law. The Biden government has appealed that ruling and continues to apply the exclusions arbitrarily.

Trump blamed the country’s woes on so-called “illegals”, as well as legal immigrants, particularly Brown and Black people. Biden refers to migrants crossing the border as “non-citizens” — and would have us believe this reflects a more humane response.

However, the cruelty at the Texas border exposes how meaningless a word change can be.

Nerlin Clerge, a Haitian migrant who was at the camp with his wife and their two young sons, told Reuters: “The government of the United States has no conscience.” He is now considering applying for the right to stay in Mexico.

The brutality and speed of the deportations exceeded the Trump and even Barack Obama administrations.

Outrage

The outrageous footage of agents on horseback brought to mind old photos of white slave owners going after runaway slaves. While some commentators dispute the use of whips, a vicious hit by reins can be painful and potentially deadly.

Cat Brooks, an Oakland-based activist, playwright and co-founder of the Anti-Police-Terror Project, wrote an opinion piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on September 23, which expresses the anger and disbelief of the scenes under the bridge:

Over 12,000 Haitians trekked thousands of miles, across countries and continents, through horrific conditions, including starvation, sickness, rape, and sodomy to get to the US for sanctuary.

The wealthiest and most resourced country on the planet told them to go home.

Not just told them — screamed it at them — laced with vile, race-based obscenities, manifesting in arguably the largest and fastest mass deportation since the [last time we expelled Haitians](#).

The last thing America wants is more Black people.

The images are grotesque. Black folks being herded like cattle. Like dogs. Whipped with horse reins. Charged by cops on horses. Huddled under a bridge. Sweltering in 104-degree heat.

Humans seeking asylum and the American dream.

What a nightmare.

Systemic racism. That is the truth of Biden’s immigration policy: “Don’t come here. You are not welcome.”

Pressure is mounting from immigrants’ rights groups that want Haitians to be treated like the new

refugees from Afghanistan.

Afghan refugees must be interviewed and vetted. They must also be quarantined then vaccinated. They are slowly being relocated to communities around the country. Army veterans who served in Afghanistan are organising for more to be settled in the US.

Yet, few Haitians and other asylum seekers and refugees are given that same pathway. Historically, Black migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum have been treated worse than non-Black migrants.

Haiti is in deep political and economic trouble. The US and United Nations have provided little aid.

The thousands of people deported to Haiti have few opportunities and many hold papers from other Latin American countries and are planning to leave. Some lived and worked in Brazil, Chile and other countries suffering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and deepening economic problems.

Most of these Haitians left after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, in which a quarter of a million people died.

Black Americans outspoken

The immigrant rights movement is pressuring the Biden administration to follow the law and stop the deportations and police brutality at the border.

African Americans are the most outspoken against Biden’s immigration policy. The *Black Wall Street Times* editor [Nehemiah Frank](#) explained that this opinion is so strong because “Black Americans share a common bond with all Black people in the African diaspora that is composed of North and South America and the West Indies.”

It is more than identity and solidarity. It is an acknowledgement that the type of police brutality against Black people is common — as the Black Lives Matter movement showed last year.

What happened to Haitians at the Texas border is, unfortunately, not

unusual.

Source [Green Left](#).

29 September 2021

The past haunts the present in Haiti

27 October 2021, by **Karol Péralte**

The Republic of Haiti was born under unique circumstances. The resistance of the slaves who confronted the masters, or *maroons*, the word for those who escaped to the mountains, never ceased. It led, following the Bois Caïman ceremony, to a general uprising in the North in 1791, which led to “independence” in 1804. But “independence” had no material basis and very few means to impose the new nation on its enemies.

In 1804, Haiti was a war-torn territory. The economic infrastructure, including plantations, ports and towns, had been destroyed by fire. The situation was worse in human terms. Most of the colonists and their supporters, both civilian and military, had perished or fled. The slaves, whose number is estimated by historians at half a million, fell en masse during the war. The survivors refused the return to the plantations and the forced labour regime that the new masters resulting from the insurrection wanted to impose on them.

A birth by forceps

Unlike other colonies on the Continent, it was not the colonists who gained independence, but rebellious slaves, 60 per cent of whom were born in various parts of Africa. They arrived on the island without a common language or culture, but managed to free themselves from the main European power, tearing apart, admittedly with the support of yellow fever, about 30,000 soldiers of the best army in the world, commanded by Leclerc, Bonaparte’s brother-in-law. This was far more than the revolution just before in the United States or France.

The European states, like the United States, which had gained its independence ten years earlier, were very hostile to the young republic. The first victory of this magnitude of a slave revolt and the first black republic was treated as a pariah state to be put down, whose example threatened the stability of the colonial world and capitalist accumulation. It was not until 1862 that the United States recognized the Republic of Haiti, after the liberation of the slaves, following the victory of the industrial North over the agricultural South enriched by the slave plantations.

France’s hostility to Haiti’s independence was even greater, because the colony that was called Saint-Domingue was the richest in the Americas. The tobacco planting colonists, who had been ruined by competition from Virginia at the end of the 17th century, left the field open for the development of large plantations of indigos and especially sugar cane. On the eve of the 1791 uprising, with nearly 800 sugar factories, the colony known as the “Pearl of the Antilles” was the world’s largest sugar producer. The enslavement of half a million Africans in the production of sugar and indigo, then coffee and cotton, made the colonists, merchants, shipowners, bankers and French ports rich. Hence Bonaparte’s attempt to re-establish slavery, and then after his defeat and independence, to re-establish colonial rule.

Debt or invasion

Faced with the threat of a new French intervention, the young state occupied the eastern part of the island, a Spanish colony, in 1822, particularly

its ports, to confront the threat of invasion and free the slaves. France and President Boyer negotiated an agreement on the recognition by France of the independence of the Republic of Haiti. In 1925, Charles X imposed his text of agreement under the threat of a squadron of 12 French warships equipped with 500 cannons. The agreement included a 50 per cent reduction in customs duties on French goods, a form of re-establishing the colonial trade regime. Above all, it included a debt of 150 million gold francs, reduced under Louis-Philippe to 90 million, a considerable sum. The debt intended to “pay” for the lost land and the “loss” of slaves would hamper development throughout the 19th century.

First decolonized and recolonized

The payment of the debt was based on a tax on coffee exports and, for this, President Boyer imposed a rural code (1826), the basis of a “legal apartheid” between the urban and rural populations. In order to pay off this debt, and then others, the Haitian state accumulated loans. After paying the independence debt, it had to continue to enrich the French banks. One of them created a bank in Haiti that was described as a “rascal” and a state within a state. The debts to the French banks were paid off in 1922, thanks to a large loan from Wall Street under pressure from the US occupiers.

The Independence debt was estimated during the presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide at \$21 billion today. His campaign for repayment may have been a factor in his overthrow in 2004. Between war, militarization in the face

of the threat of war by France, and ruin by finance, Haiti has not become economically independent. The first decolonized country in what would be called the Third World, Haiti remained isolated and was also the first country to be neo-colonized.

But the worst, if it is possible, came in the 20th century, with the military occupation by the United States, which ushered in more than a century of imperialist domination, which still lasts.

Prisoner of imperialism to this day

In the 1870s, following the collapse of coffee prices, and with debt servicing accounting for 40% of state revenues, foreign companies intensified timber exploitation. At the beginning of the 20th century, US investments in Haiti (e.g. banks, railways, urban transport) were competing with those of Germany. American financiers said they were prepared to invest if Washington took control of business in Haiti. Using serious political unrest as a pretext, the US invaded the country in 1915. Taking advantage of the First World War, they ousted the Germans, whose property was confiscated. They took direct control of the country and its finances. Haiti had never had economic independence. It then lost its legend of political independence. It should be remembered that at the time the United States, inspired by the Monroe Doctrine, increased its imperialist interventions: Cuba and Puerto Rico (1898), Panama (1903), Honduras (1909), Nicaragua (1912), Mexico (1914), Dominican Republic (1916).

The entire administration of the country passed into the hands of the occupiers. In 1917, they created a military corps under their direction, the Gendarmerie. The armed resistance (the "Cacos"), led by Charlemagne Peralte, was defeated in 1920. He himself was assassinated in 1919. Peasants were bombed and massacred, thousands were put in prison or locked up in a camp.

In the service of Wall Street

The 1805 law prohibiting foreigners from owning land is abolished. Many peasants are dispossessed in favour of North American companies. The exploitation of wood and deforestation accelerated. The authorities reintroduce a long-abandoned *corvée*, which is just as heavy and sometimes even heavier than the rural codes of the 19th century. Forced labour was mainly used for the construction of roads essential for exports. Trade was redirected from Europe to the United States. New taxes were created, which, in addition to customs duties, ensured the repayment of debts to US banks.

The year 1929 was marked by a high school and student movement, which triggered martial law, and then by the Marchaterre massacre. But 1929 was also the year of the Great Depression, which diverted President Hoover's attention and led to the departure of the Marines in 1934. In 1936, in a statement to a US Senate committee, Major Butler, former High Commissioner to Haiti, illustrated Lenin's thesis on finance capital in his book *Imperialism, the Supreme Stage of Capitalism*: "I served for 30 years in the most combative units, the Marines. I believe I acted as a highly skilled bandit in the service of Wall Street big business."

Two centuries of fierce class domination

Built shortly after independence, a grandiose citadel stands on a rocky outcrop in northern Haiti. It was built under Henri Christophe, one of the main generals of the revolution, who soon proclaimed himself king. The monument is a source of national pride and shows the determination to protect Haiti from a possible French invasion. The downside is that of the twenty thousand peasants and soldiers who helped build the citadel, two thousand are thought to have died in the process. It seems that they were

forcibly conscripted. Reproducing the model in force in the colonial powers, King Christophe created an aristocracy composed of members of his family and military leaders who received state lands as gifts.

The mass of former slaves and their children were subjected to iron discipline and were required to cultivate the large plantations to which they had been chained before the revolution. Christophe ruled the northern part of Haiti until 1820. In the south a republic was established. But there too, the military leaders appropriated much of the colonists' land, which was nationalized after the revolution. Thus, throughout the country, the mass of former slaves were stripped of the land that was theirs. They were also stripped of the fruits of their labour. It was they who struggled to pay the debt of independence.

The peasantry did not like to continue working on plantations that did not belong to them, as in the days of slavery. They wanted their own land. Some cleared unused land in the mountains. Others paid a rent (up to half of the harvest) for plots of land on the estates of large landowners and the state. Others illegally scooped up plots of land from these estates. Others managed to buy plots. On several occasions, the peasants' resistance led to major revolts.

An unfinished revolution

The system established at the beginning of the 19th century continued for a long time. At the top was the head of state, usually the President of the Republic (sometimes for life). Below him were the dignitaries of the regime, who received state land as gifts. Among them were the generals, who commanded a huge army responsible for controlling the peasantry. There were many divisions within the officer caste. A merchant bourgeoisie, initially stunted, completed the picture of the ruling classes.

The Haitian revolution remained unfinished. It was very soon

confiscated by small minorities who fought each other. Christophe had carried a project of national, economic and social development (as did his predecessors Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines). He founded factories and opened many schools. The same was not true of the military-rental class that followed. The modernization of the country was the least of their concerns. It is true that the national budget was heavily burdened by the payment of the Independence debt. But while the state was squeezing the peasants, what was the contribution of the large landowners?

The narrow social base of the ruling elites and their internal divisions made them unable to stand up to international finance and the threats of the great powers. As they went from crisis to crisis, the plundering of public finances soon became one of their *raison d'être*. This activity has remained a characteristic of Haitian political power and a great obstacle to development to this day.

Over the years, a business bourgeoisie became more and more important. Coffee exports were the basis of many fortunes. They enriched large traders, mostly foreign, who settled in the ports. They also became importers and creditors of the state, without ever investing in Haiti. The intermediaries who collected coffee from the peasants and a host of small bankers, loan sharks and brokers profited from the transactions. A whole world that lived as parasites on the backs of the peasantry.

Lumpen bourgeoisie

The US occupation in 1915 opened a new era that is still going on. It was marked in particular by the transformation of the ruling classes and the agrarian crisis. The weight of the big landlords has diminished. In fact, it seems that in Haiti, land ownership has never been sufficient to build very large fortunes. The same has not been true for the commercial and financial sector...not to mention the activities related to cocaine trafficking.

Let's take the example of one of the pillars of the Haitian oligarchy, the Brandt dynasty. It is of foreign origin like most of the very rich families in Haiti. Its founder, an Anglo-Jamaican, arrived during the American occupation. A minister of finance, who had known him during his exile in Jamaica, placed him at the head of a bank. A great schemer close to the government, Oswald Brandt was able to benefit from the nationalization of the assets of German citizens. He soon became a coffee and import-export magnate. Unlike the merchants of the 19th century, the Brandts invested in everything: food factories, land purchases, the creation of a bank, etc. No lucrative sector has been neglected: a few years ago a family offspring was accused of being at the centre of a kidnapping ring. Nevertheless, apart from a few food factories, the Haitian oligarchy has concentrated on finance and import-export. It has remained above all parasitic.

Capitalist globalization

Deforestation and soil degradation began under decolonization. With precarious access to land, very little income, no public investment, and no credit at a reasonable rate, small farmers have always lived from hand to mouth. They have had to make do with archaic tools. They tried to compensate for this handicap with innovative agronomic techniques. But their inventiveness had its limits. As the population grew, new land had to be cleared, reclaimed from steep slopes by slash-and-burn. Fallow periods were shortened to save time, so that during heavy rains there was not enough vegetation to hold the land. During the 20th century, soil erosion and depletion accelerated.

During their occupation of Haiti, the Americans established some large plantations for export commodities. Thousands of peasants were driven off their land. Many went to cut sugar cane in Cuba or the Dominican Republic. The occupiers' plan met with strong opposition and remained unfinished. In the early 1980s, at the end of the Duvalier dictatorship

(1957-1986), it was updated by international financial institutions. One of the basic ideas was that Haitian agriculture was not very productive, so it would be wise to leave it to the United States to sell Haitians food. The farms were too small and should be replaced by large estates growing tropical products for the North American market. As cheap and docile labour, the excess peasants were to be overexploited in huge subcontracting workshops for multinational textile and electronics companies. One of the free trade zone projects was even called the Hong Kong of the Caribbean.

In fact, because of Haiti's poor infrastructure and unstable political situation, the assembly plants have created only a few tens of thousands of jobs throughout the country and their numbers have fluctuated greatly over the past 40 years. On the other hand, the sabotage of peasant agriculture has taken place. As one example, the US got President Aristide to reduce tariffs on imported rice to almost nothing. The Haitian rice sector went into crisis as rice imports from the US soared.

From agrarian crisis to ecological disaster

The consequence of the agrarian crisis was a massive exodus to Port-au-Prince. The city grew from 136,000 inhabitants in 1950 to 900,000 in 2009, and more than 1.2 million today despite the deadly earthquake of 2010. The metropolitan area is home to 2.8 million people (about a quarter of the total population) in deplorable environmental conditions. Thus the agrarian crisis has led to an urban crisis, which has greatly aggravated the ecological crisis.

The Haitian state has not managed to escape the fate of a neo-colony. Since the beginning of its history, Haitian society has been marked by great inequalities. Today, both in urban and rural areas, large sections of the population are in a very vulnerable situation. In addition to chronic poverty that affects all aspects of daily

life, they are periodically confronted with shocks of all kinds that threaten them and that the predatory state does not provide them with the means to deal with: natural shocks (hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, droughts), epidemics, sudden price rises, political conflicts, riots, and the actions of armed bands.

A unique fate in the Americas

Why is Haiti the poorest country in the Americas?

- In the wake of the independence of the United States (1781), the independence of almost all the countries of the continent was the result of the colonists' desire to rid themselves of colonial exploitation by the metropolis. These countries inherited rulers from the wealthy class, sometimes already from a nascent bourgeoisie. In Haiti, on the other hand, the settlers left the country. The ruling class came from the war for the liberation of the slaves.

- The Republic of freed slaves was immediately placed on the list of

nations by the slave powers. Under threat, it had to buy its international recognition from France at the cost of a gigantic debt that hampered its development.

The question remains: how to explain the contrast between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which share an island the size of Ireland? In 2020, in the UN Human Development Index, the Dominican Republic is ranked 70th and Haiti 170th (out of 198 countries). In 2019, the DR's GDP per capita is seven times higher than Haiti's at \$7,700.

The Spanish colony (two-thirds of the island in area) became the Dominican Republic in the mid-19th century. Since then, the performance of the two countries has diverged. First there were long periods of instability and then, in the early 20th century, an occupation by the United States. In 1930, General Trujillo, at the head of a National Guard set up by the United States, installed a dictatorship (1930 - 1961). Thirty years later, it was Haiti that experienced the Duvalier dictatorship (Papa Doc, from 1957-1971, then Bébé Doc until 1986). Under Trujillo, the Dominican economy experienced a major

agricultural boom supported by a policy of major works and the reception of refugee communities. On the other hand, under the Duvaliers, the economy, already in crisis, was abandoned and declined. It remained focused on low-yield agriculture. Skills and investors fled the country. The situation is further aggravated by the economic embargo imposed by the UN after the military coup against Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991.

At the same time, investors were attracted to the Dominican Republic, particularly in tourism and, secondarily, in the assembly industry, after fleeing Haiti, which was hit by poverty and the associated political instability. The Dominican economy then managed to partly dominate that of its neighbour, through its exports, certain services and especially the exploitation of Haitian immigration. For decades, the overexploitation of Haitian immigrants in the sugar cane fields, and later in almost all agriculture and construction, was one of the sources of accumulation of capital invested in other activities.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **L'Anticapitaliste la revue**.*

The Zemmour moment

26 October 2021, by **Stathis Kouvelakis**

Let's briefly summarize what these trends are. Since the period of Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency in 2007-12, the center of gravity of French public debate — or rather, what we have instead of public debate — has radicalized to the right. Themes that used to be the sole preserve of the far right are today saturating mainstream media's political discourse. They cover a space that runs from the (supposedly) "republican" left of former Socialist Party prime minister Manuel Valls and Laurent Bouvet's Printemps républicain to **Marine Le Pen's National Rally** (RN), as well as the bourgeois right and the

representatives of Emmanuel Macron's government. For these forces, too, have rallied to the fight against so-called "**Islamism**" and Muslim "**separatism**." These themes are articulated around a now-unabashed racism, fierce in its Islamophobia, and which ends up in the myth of the "great replacement" — a myth full of potential for exterminatory violence.

Éric Zemmour is one of the most prominent names in this fascisization dynamic. His ubiquity in French media is the culmination of a process that has been underway for many years. It is an accompaniment of this process,

but also one of its most effective catalysts.

Changed Context

This might tempt us to dismiss the rise of Zemmour as an epiphenomenon — a surface effect, a simple polling bubble or a "**media creation**." Yet his passage from the status of a hypermediatized polemicist to that of a potential presidential candidate — one whom, **some polls tell us**, even has a good chance of reaching the second-round— is hardly automatic. Just a few months ago, who would really have

thought that could happen? Who foresaw that Zemmour would be able to destabilize Marine Le Pen and her party — a force that has been solidly established in the far-right electoral niche for four decades, already reached the second round of the presidential elections twice, and, according to polls not so long ago, was even [closing the gap](#) with Macron for the second-round contest in 2022? To put it another way, if the Zemmour phenomenon cannot be understood apart from the long-term dynamics underpinning it, the more strictly political path it seems to be taking would have been impossible without the change of circumstances in recent months.

For “something” did happen, or more precisely became visible, during the regional elections in June, with the National Rally’s worse-than-expected result and its inability to conquer, or even seriously challenge for victory in, a single French region. Such a failure — despite a high score at the national level — augured badly for the presidential elections, as it made it clear that, whatever the matchup in the second round, the RN is bound to lose. That this has been acknowledged signals the failure of the so-called “detoxification” strategy that Le Pen has been pursuing for many years. For this only makes sense as a “second-round strategy,” aimed at gathering a majority after Le Pen has already reached a presidential run-off (something itself taken for granted).

This quest for respectability is, moreover, an avenue that simply must be taken by any formation that seeks to manage the bourgeois state and the affairs of capital — hence the RN’s multiple pledges to the French and European ruling classes over recent months (the abandonment of any idea of an exit from the European Union [EU], the commitment to repaying France’s public debt, the claimed compatibility of the party’s “national priority” policy and the essential EU framework). In early 2021, the RN seemed to be on the verge of succeeding in its transformation into a potential “party of government” and its arrival in power — no doubt in alliance with a part of the bourgeois right — was widely considered a credible hypothesis.

Yet the party’s poor performance in the regional elections has deeply shaken this approach — prompting or accelerating the departure of elected representatives, cadres, and activists. We then realize that, despite its polling scores and its influence in the most decisive sectors of the electorate (young people, the working-age population, the popular classes), the RN’s party apparatus and electoral machine remain rather modest. Such a party is thus particularly vulnerable to an electoral setback, and this also affects Le Pen, whose role is decisive in a political current so centered on the leader figure. The effect is amplified by the organizational amateurism and nepotism that characterize the RN’s handling of its internal affairs. In a context where the very possibility of winning power is at stake, its (relative) electoral setback thus becomes a strategic failure.

Entering the Fray

But how should we explain this setback? This is where the “Zemmour factor” comes in — or more precisely, his transition from media advocate of extreme right-wing ideas to a potential player in the party-political arena. For — from the standpoint of his own political side — Zemmour does offer a pertinent analysis of this failure. Even the day after the regional elections, he [pointed to](#) the combined effect of the “normalization” of Le Pen’s discourse and the turning of the political mainstream toward the extreme right:

In truth, there is no longer any difference today between her discourse and that of Emmanuel Macron or Xavier Bertrand. . . . Marine Le Pen speaks like Emmanuel Macron, Emmanuel Macron speaks like Marine Le Pen, they are already in the second round, since no one is supposed to exist apart from that second round [matchup], and it is clear that voters are refusing to be forced into this choice.

Yet this double banalization of Le Pen’s discourse (she speaks “like

everyone else,” after having led “everyone else” to speak like her) — a paradoxical effect of the “Le Pen-ization of minds” that [Le Pen senior](#) once prided himself on — seriously undermines her ability to channel the anger and various resentments that she had earlier managed to crystallize.

This explains the RN’s failure in the regional elections: Against all expectations, this party’s vote was as much, or even more, hurt by abstention than that of the other formations (apart from La France Insoumise, which suffered even worse). According to an Institut français d’opinion publique (IFOP) [exit poll](#), some 71 percent of Le Pen’s 2017 electorate did not turn out to vote this June. As for the RN’s cadres (or at least a significant part of them), as they see the prospect of electoral victory slipping away, they are increasingly minded to criticize what they see as a softening and gentrification of their party. As a former leader of the party’s Deux-Sèvres federation put it:

The gap has grown deeper over time. We were forbidden from going to the Manif pour tous [a series of protests against same-sex marriage], then from supporting [the neofascist] Génération identitaire. Marine Le Pen says that the “great replacement” is a conspiracy theory, that Islam is compatible with the Republic, that she will not leave Schengen [the space of free movement in the EU] or the European Convention on Human Rights. . . . She is a leftist who grew up in a château and inherited the Le Pen brand.

This is what allows for the “Zemmour moment,” now also on the party-political terrain. Armed with this recognition of failure, and drawing on his own exceptional visibility, which has made him one of the most effective catalysts for the far-right radicalization of French politics, Zemmour seems able to exploit the difficulties of the hitherto legitimate representative of the far right. He can

now present himself as a legitimate spokesperson, in the field of party-political competition, of a radicalization for which he worked so hard in the media.

This is reflected in recent polling data, pointing to the prospective candidate's meteoric rise. Zemmour has managed to attract putative voters from both the established candidates of the far right (Marine Le Pen and her satellite, the "national-conservative" Nicolas Dupont-Aignan) and the classic right. What is more, contrary to what earlier polls suggested, he also seems able to attract a substantial part of the popular (and, to a lesser extent, youthful) electorate. This is an electorate that, let's not forget, has been turning increasingly toward the far right for several years — even considering its high abstention rate. Even before Zemmour's more recent rise, the [polls](#) had suggested a level of far-right penetration among the popular classes apparently surpassing even the record levels we saw in the 2017 presidential election: The three far-right candidates totaled then around 50 percent among "blue-collar workers" and "employees," with the total for left-wing candidates in these same categories ranging between 22 and 25 percent.

The prospect of Zemmour running for the presidency thus outlines the contours of a potentially majoritarian bloc, both extending the far right's influence and uniting it with part of the classic bourgeois right that is now under its hegemony. If this does indeed come to pass, it could accelerate the breakup of the bourgeois right, part of which has already rallied to the president, or is preparing to do so in the coming period, with Macron's former prime minister Édouard Philippe's new party (a split from the Republicans) as the receptacle for these voters.

An Incomplete

Move

If the "Zemmour moment" is indeed the symptom of a fascist radicalization of the political field, it also signals that this process is now overtaking, or at least taking by surprise, those who have thus far been its main vectors and beneficiaries in the field of political representation. More than, as [Ugo Palheta suggests](#), a "bourgeois alternative" — in the sense that the bourgeoisie has fashioned several options so that it can choose the best one (for its own interests) when the time comes — this phenomenon seems like a form of the "autonomy of the political." Or, to put it another way, this is a process that escapes its initiators' own control. In so doing, it acts as a catalyst for the fragmentation, and thus for the instability and unpredictability, of a political field that has lost its structure. Such a development does not necessarily do the bidding of the bourgeoisie, which likes nothing better than order and uncomplicated exchanges of power.

And yet, this autonomy really is relative. Not only in the sense that Zemmour's political options are, quite obviously, as much at the service of capitalist interests as those of the other representatives of the bourgeois bloc. To successfully convert media capital into the field of partisan political competition, one has to be able to pay the entry fee. And this comes at a high price, especially for a presidential campaign: It means not just collecting 500 endorsements from elected officials, but campaign finances, rallies, the need to have at least some limited presence on the ground. The decay of France's political parties surely favors the entry of outsiders into the political arena — Macron's rapid rise to victory four years ago is itself proof of this — and the success of campaigns conducted with an apparatus cut back to the minimum, as in Jean-Luc Mélenchon's 2017 bid. But in both those cases, the

candidates were able to mobilize important resources: In Macron's case, they came from the country's economic elites, and, in Mélenchon's case, as the fruit of a long history within the Left. It remains to be seen whether Zemmour is capable of creating a mobilization of this kind, and this is undoubtedly the reason why he has thus far delayed his decision on whether to run for the presidency.

As an expression of a (relative) autonomy of politics, in the context of an organic crisis of representation and creeping fascisization, the rise of Zemmour's possible candidacy is a sign of both strength and weakness. Strength, in that it shows that this process of fascist radicalization is deep-rooted, that it has reserves and energies that go beyond those deployed by those who have thus far been its legitimate representatives. Weakness, because it remains to be proven that such a candidate is likely to rally more people than Marine Le Pen, and that a far right split into two wings of comparable electoral weight is more credible than the relatively united force that has prevailed up till now.

In which case, the question of *cui bono* inevitably arises. In the end, it may be that this character from the bowels of the reactionary wing of the bourgeois right — a man from the columns of *Le Figaro* — will serve a different function, whether this is his deliberate aim of his or merely his "objective" effect. That is, Zemmour will serve to destabilize the only pole that had hitherto seemed able, given the decay of the Left, to put the bourgeois bloc's candidate in (electoral) difficulty, at the same time as it gave his (fascist) ideas a new level of visibility and acceptability.

In this sense, even if he doesn't go all the way, Éric Zemmour has already won.

Source: translated by David Broder for [Jacobin](#).

Algeria as State and Nation

25 October 2021, by **Correspondents l'Anticapitaliste**

The French right, in the midst of a crisis of representation, is moving further right in the wake of the fascistic far right. The latter has always built its programme on the danger of North African, and particularly Algerian, immigration. Zemmour has only upped the ante on an old discourse. Macron has followed him on the backs of Algerians. This gratuitous aggression runs counter to the history of both countries and to humanity.

The complexity of national construction

In search of a national unity programme against the *hirak* on the theme of an "external threat" to distract from "internal disorder," the Algerian government is outbidding on the theme of Algeria's sovereignty. The defence of sovereignty is just and legitimate, of course even if it is centred around a false debate. Algerians have sufficiently demonstrated throughout the *hirak* their attachment to the sovereignty of their country against any external aggression.

As a result, the debate on nation, history and origins puts the debate on identities back on the agenda abstracted from the issues of the present and the future.

Of course, the Algerian nation-state, with its current territory, is of recent formation, like all humanity.

Let's take Italy as an example. Although Italian society, its territory and language began to emerge in the fifteenth century with the great cultural and aesthetic revolution called the "Renaissance", its completion as a nation is a political fact linked to the dynamic led by

Garibaldi in the 19th century. Visconti's film *The Leopard* tells this well, with the integration of Sicily into the fold of the new Italian nation. Ancient Rome has only a distant and mythical relationship with today's Italy. It is an ideological recovery, hence the term "Renaissance". It is a kind of "memorial rent," that is to say a founding myth. Even the Italian language is not a derivative of Latin. It is a conscious intellectual construction and a critical part of a vernacular of that time.

This is valid for Algeria, *mutatis mutandis*. Of ancient origins, referred to by colonial historiography in the service of its memorial rent as the "Roman era" - understood under Roman occupation - three great empires structured the territories of the Berbers. Punic Carthage, the matrix of present-day Tunisia, Numidia for Algeria, and Mauritania for present-day Morocco. It was not the "Roman era." They were often at war with Rome.

In the Middle Ages, called the "Arab period" in the service of another "memorial rent," there were other empires built on the same matrix. The Almoravids and Almohads unified large Berber territories, from south to north, from east to west, occupying Andalusia. Then came the fifteenth century, the threshold of modernity today and the beginning of decadence.

Facing colonialism

Remembering these origins is not done for glory. There is obviously no direct and continuous relationship between this distant antiquity and the formation of today's nation, as we pointed out in the Italian example. It is an epistemological necessity to deconstruct this historiography of colonial and colonialist origin that presents Algeria as a series of "colonial periods" and erases any

history of the Berbers. The latter are often presented as a people without history fleeing the enemy. Yet, it is enough to recall that Hannibal attacked Rome in its fiefdom and Tarek Ben Ziad gave his name to Gibraltar.

For Gilbert Meynier, it is from the fifteenth century that we can "speak of *Dawla Eldajazâ'ir* (the state-regime of Algiers), and the term was used in the same sense by Ibn Khaldun. In the seventeenth century, we begin to talk about *Watan Al-Djazâ'ir* (the Algerian homeland)."

For the British historian James McDougall, the foundations of Algerian society began to develop in the fifteenth century. "Society was very hierarchical, fairly fragmented between regions, linguistic and genealogical communities, but connected by markets, exchanges, membership of religious education networks, pilgrimages and so on. But it was by no means anarchic or kept in order by this oriental despotism that the stereotypes of the colonial era liked to imagine."

"If France undoubtedly invented 'its' (French) Algeria, Algeria as a territorial unit as it exists today is an older and deeper Algeria, that is to say an Algerian society which the colonists had tried to destroy but which escaped them, and which would eventually dislodge them."

The Hirak, builder of Algeria

On the other hand, the crucial question rarely asked concerns this historical stage of capitalist modernity opened by the fifteenth century. Over the long term, this Algerian fifteenth century, as is true for the Maghreb and the Berbers in general, opens on a period of slow decadence. There is no

equivalent with the European fifteenth century. Here, there is no modern state foundation, no centralized administration and no decisive social, cultural and linguistic change either. Even if the periodization, fundamental trends and historical rhythms of development allow only vague rapprochements, this capitalist modernity caught up with us at the

worst time: the nineteenth century in its colonial form by a West at the height of its power and industrial modernity.

In any case, it was nationalist Algerians who completed the creation of their nation, weapons in hand and under conditions they did not choose, by making their society, which already

existed, a political community, against the will of colonial France, which had denied the right to sovereignty.

It is the defence of this sovereignty and its development, under new conditions, that the *hirak* has now introduced into society, with terms and objectives less reductive than those of the government.

Stora report: a historian at Macron's service

24 October 2021, by **Josie Boucher**

The result is 150 pages of scholarly compilation where everything is said, but nothing is said about the essence: colonization for 132 years by French imperialism, at the end of which the latter suffered a humiliating defeat, was only a series of massacres, tortures and deportations of populations in the name of the greatness of French civilization. In short, a series of crimes against humanity. But even before this report was published, the Élysée made it known that there will be no apologies or repentance! Only symbolic gestures that do not commit to anything and especially not to attract the wrath of reactionaries of all stripes, nostalgic for French Algeria and especially the far right who it seeks to win over with an increasingly authoritarian and racist drift of his government.

No "common memory" between executioners and victims!

With the false naivety of a courtier to the prince, Benjamin Stora, who is not ignorant of this history since he has himself contributed, in the past, to highlighting some of these crimes, suggests that there would be a possible place for a consensual "common memory" of this dark period between the executioners and the victims! An opinion shared even by

some on the left, in particular by Alexis Corbière, one of the leaders of the Parti de gauche, who says in relation to the Stora report: "We must create the conditions for a peaceful dialogue with Algeria. It is a very special colonization with 130 years of common history [...]. We must not consider that the Republic is the mask of a colonizing vision" (*Le Monde* 21 January 2021).

The Stora report is a "final balance sheet" for all the crimes of French imperialism! But, as an Algerian historian Nouredine Amara has rightly said, interviewed on 29 January 2021 by Mediapart on this subject: "Our war of liberation has not broken a bond of friendship with France. Since 1830, France was not Algeria's friend; she was the occupier".

Macron is in continuity with his predecessors, whom Stora salutes for aborted attempts to open the way to a "Franco-Algerian dialogue", the presidential candidate Macron going so far as to speak - in Algiers! - of "crimes against humanity", rephrasing himself more reluctantly after returning to Paris. These loyal servants of French imperialism speak, at best, of the "mistakes" committed by the French state in Algeria for mainly diplomatic and economic interests. And this, without really recognizing the nature of these "faults" and while continuing to practice in France a racist treatment of second-class citizens to the

descendants of the victims of colonial wars, imposing on them in the popular neighbourhoods a police and judicial repression very much inspired by the "time of the colonies".

This Macronist communications coup sounds like a cynical response, not only to the mobilizations of the youth of the popular neighbourhoods to demand justice against police violence and to the decolonial movement for removing the statues of the executioners of colonization, which we have known in France in recent months, but also to the huge popular demonstrations in Algeria of 2019 which expressed a desire to resume the thread of their history. for true independence and for holding accountable those who stole this revolution from them. Relying on the scientific notoriety of a recognized historian, this enterprise of mystification attempts to rewrite the "national narrative" of the magnanimous greatness of France, which reaches out to its victims, those who fight for truth and justice - these young people, mostly descendants of the victims of French colonialism. A legitimate struggle that Stora tries to discredit from his university pulpit: "At a time of competition for victimhood and the reconstruction of fantasized narratives, we will see that freedom of spirit and historical work are necessary firebreaks to inflamed memories, especially among youth". In other words, a "historical work" which, in the midst of a racist

campaign against “communitarianism” and “separatism”, aims to prevent any revolt of young people with an immigrant background!

Colonialism: crimes against humanity!

Neither apologies nor repentance says Macron. But sixty years after the end of this dirty war, the victims of colonization, Algerians but also the French people of Algeria and metropolitan France who suffered and fought against this barbarity, need neither of them, but justice and truth: that is to say the definitive recognition that these are indeed crimes against humanity perpetrated for 132 years, and that they were in order to defend the interests of French imperialism, from the Second to the Fifth Republic. A colonialist and racist system that still persists, in other forms, in the so-called “overseas” territories and departments. And is extended in today’s state racism against racialized populations.

Yes, the archives of both countries must be widely accessible so that those primarily concerned and their heirs, and not only researchers, reappropriate their history. But after years of censorship, even partial truth has already become known, thanks to activists and researchers engaged in the anti-colonialist struggle, whether it is the massacres in Algeria or in France against Algerians. The mobilizations of these young people

that Stora speaks of, around commemorations, such as those of the massacres of October 1961 or May 1945, are not a “fantasy” but a demand for recognition and dignity.

Yes, it is time to officially acknowledge the responsibility of the torturers of the French army in the disappearance of thousands of Algerian nationalist fighters and ban all demonstrations, museums and other commemorative steles of the assassins of the OAS, guilty of the murders of Algerians and French people who opposed their murderous madness, deliberately digging a river of blood between all communities.

Yes, we must pay tribute and never forget all the Algerian fighters who fought for their dignity and the independence of their country but also those who in France and Algeria, admittedly few in number, took their defence, intellectuals like Maurice Audin or Gisèle Halimi but also women and men from the shadows, the “suitcase carriers” of the FLN, in defiance of their lives, and activists like Fernand Yveton, militant of the Algerian Communist Party, a “pied-noir” who took the camp of independence, sentenced to death and executed while the Minister of Justice of the Fourth Republic, fiercely hostile to this independence - just like the social democracy of the time - was a certain François Mitterrand. The same who, at the head of a “left#” government, called, in 1982, for “putting an end to the aftermath of the events in Algeria” by amnestying the generals who, in 1961, had organized a coup d’état to keep Algeria in the

French fold!

Yes, it is time to make it clear that the thousands of conscripts who lost their lives or returned completely destroyed by the acts of barbarism they had to commit, or witness were cannon fodder, sacrificed on the altar of the rapacity of French imperialism! Not to mention the harkis, auxiliaries of the French army, who have been parked for decades in squalid camps in France and have suffered the same state racism as the others.

Justice and truth!

But this conquest of justice and truth has nothing to do with either the “peace of the graveyard” or a so-called “memorial reconciliation” invoked by Macron. And the wounds will not close until things are said. But they will not be said by Macron and other servants of the interests of French imperialism who will not accept any truth that would cast a shadow over its prestige, legitimacy and interests!

History is not neutral, and it can be used and diverted as a support by all governments for their own interests. It is up to all the oppressed and the victims of colonialism and imperialism on both sides of the Mediterranean to write their own history, reappropriating the lessons of the resistances of the past. The battle of remembrance is a living struggle that is part of the struggle of the oppressed for justice and dignity. It is a crucial issue to continue the fight for a more just society, free from capitalist and imperialist barbarism.

The Great Resignation: A Workers’ Movement in America

23 October 2021, by Dan La Botz

Workers are quitting because their wages are too low, because their working conditions are unsafe, or simply because they want a different

life, a better life. They want to be happy.

The cause of this Great Resignation,

as it has been called, was the COVID depression of 2020 as the economy contracted by 32 percent and official unemployment reached 15 percent,

though it may have been as high as 20 percent. Those who still had jobs sometimes worked in unhealthy conditions, without proper personal protective equipment or social distancing, while others worked from home often surrounded by the school-age child at her own computer, the needy child who wanted attention, the crying baby. Some workers in areas where there was high demand, whether high tech or delivery workers, simply burned out and quit. Others sick of their jobs, retired early. Some working remotely and no longer tied to the office, moved out of the cities and into the suburbs or to distant states. When employers called workers back to the office, they quit.

For several months, some unemployed workers received their state unemployment benefits and federal assistance that sometimes amounted to as much or more than their low wages had been. And so, a first for some, they had a paid vacation. In the United States, there is no national law governing vacations. Typically, workers must work one year to earn one week's vacation. After, say, three

years they may get two weeks, after perhaps after ten years they may get three weeks, and sometime after that, at 15 or 20 years, four weeks. Some workers have no sick-days and so use their limited vacation days when they or their children are sick. So, terrible as it was, the COVID recession and the state and federal unemployment benefits gave some workers their first real vacations ever, a taste of freedom.

For millions of U.S. workers, wages are notoriously low. For several years some unions engaged in a fight for \$15 an hour. The demands made on the bosses at particular companies were accompanied by campaigns for legislation to raise the legal minimum wage to \$15 or more in some states and cities, several of which were successful. Still, low wages have been a major source of dissatisfaction leading workers to quit their job.

Who quit? Prior to the pandemic, it was typically young workers in their twenties who quit, but in 2020 and 2021, the 30- to 45-year-old workers have seen a 20 percent increase in voluntary resignations. Resignations

have been high in technology, in health care, and in hotels and restaurants, clearly for quite different reasons. Everywhere one goes, one sees "Help Wanted" signs.

The biggest result of the Great Resignation has been the rise in wages as employers try to entice workers. Wages reached an average of \$31 an hour in August, a yearly 4.3% increase and an all-time high. For twenty-five years, employers would not raise wages, but now from McDonald's to Bank of America they are.

COVID has transformed the American work culture in many ways, and all of the ramifications of remain to be seen. The end of federal assistance programs and maybe one day the end of COVID may transform it again. For now, workers are quitting because they want to be happier at work. Perhaps nothing is more radical, if that desire can be transformed into more conscious, more collective mass action.

Source [*New Politics*](#).

"The police kill": let Darmanin come and get us!

22 October 2021, by **Manu Bichindaritz**

We have to look back at the sequence of events to shed light on the political dynamics that have led the current Minister of the Interior to threaten a presidential candidate, who is also a municipal councillor in a major city.

Dress rehearsal

Last Wednesday (13 October), on France Info TV, Philippe was asked about the words of an elected local councillor of La France insoumise in Cachan (94), Dominique Lanoë: "The purpose of the police is to protect the population, it is not to possess

weapons to kill them." This was in the context of a debate on the use of lethal weapons by the municipal police during a local council meeting at the end of September.

For ten days this provoked agitation from the local right and extreme right, relayed by police unions ... then the controversy broke out by the broadcast of an extract of this council meeting on CNews, going up to Darmanin who, in a letter, denounced "unacceptable comments" ...

Hence the question put to Philippe last Wednesday, who replied: "The police

kill, obviously the police kill". "Steve [Maia Caniço] in Nantes, in Marseille during a demonstration by the Gilets jaunes a lady who was closing her shutters, Rémi Fraisse a few years ago... We would have to see the precise figures, but, in the working class neighbourhoods, it's about fifteen young people who are killed by the police every year", repeating "The police have killed and they kill. Afterwards, we can discuss: assassination, murder, accident or blunder, or self-defence of course"...

The far right at the helm

As soon as the programme ended on Wednesday evening, the police unions were unleashed, reacting to our candidate's remarks on social media. But while it appears that it is indeed the most reactionary who have led the offensive, all of them ended up singing from the same sheet, as shown by the remarks from the various representatives of UNSA-Police or Alternative Police CFDT (unions traditionally classified as close to the Socialist Party) on Thursday on the rolling news channels.

It was (again) on CNews on Thursday morning that a police union representative, Matthieu Valet, spokesman and deputy national secretary of the independent police commissioners' union, who is used to

TV shows, demanded "justice": "We have elected representatives who make police officers a target. We should not have our hands shaking, Mr. Poutou is the presumed author, for me, of an act of defamation. When one says things that are not true to harm the honour and reputation of the police, one must be prosecuted."

And Darmanin obeyed shortly afterwards, announcing in a tweet that he had filed a complaint against Philippe for, according to his entourage (relayed by AFP), "public insult"... followed by the announcement by Alliance police nationale, one of the most extreme right-wing unions, that it would be filing a civil suit... Is this the end of the story?

The fascists are angry, but the

facts are stubborn

As various articles have shown, particularly one published by *Libération* as part of its "Checknews" column (even quoting sourced figures from the IGP (Inspection générale de la Police nationale) which are show more deaths than those quoted by our candidate on Wednesday evening) or the work published by *Bastamag*, Philippe Poutou has only described a sad reality, which has been widely documented elsewhere. Without even mentioning the fact that all this was taking place three days before the 60th anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of Algerians by the French police on 17 October 1961... The reason for the frenzy of the Minister of the Interior, who perhaps tweeted a little too quickly, is therefore to be found elsewhere.

20 October 2021

17 October 1961- fighting for the recognition of a state crime

21 October 2021, by **Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison**

"Organized lynching"

A classic situation, in truth, when the state commits this type of crime where racist dispositions and practices are conjoined, and "methods of mass terror" that violate the democratic principles this state claims to embody. First "established in Algiers by General Massu", among others, these methods "were transplanted to Paris" by "the torturers of Mr. Papon". [30] "The Seine" testifies to this since it "carries drowned people who evoke Colonel Bigeard's shrimps, the drowned of the Bay of Algiers". The raids carried out by the police and the "Palais des sports", where thousands of demonstrators were held in atrocious conditions and sometimes

killed with rifle butts, are reminiscent of the "Vel d'hiv" of 1942. [31] Similarly at the Parc des Expositions where the police continued to wield batons and blackjacks against the internees, long left without care or food. Identified as "ringleaders", some were summarily executed as police officials acknowledge.

These quotes are taken from the November 1961 issue of *Vérité-Liberté*, a clandestine newspaper founded in 1960 with the aim of disseminating information affected by censorship on the Algerian war. We learn a lot about these massacres and about the knowledge that some contemporaries had of them. This is evidenced, in particular, by the "final remarks" written by the historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet. A member of the

editorial board, he notes that while the violence committed by the police in October was not new, it is nevertheless characterized by its "magnitude". So, he does not hesitate to describe them as a "massacre" by recalling that since "the summer of 1961", it "is almost certain that several hundred Algerians have disappeared in the Paris region". For its part, the magazine *Les Temps Modernes* denounced the "raids of harkis", the "organized lynching" of Algerians and, on 17 October, the "cops" unleashed by "the prefect who orders, the minister who authorizes" and the "government that covers the despicable unleashing of racism". [32]

Techniques of Counter- Revolutionary War

This racism is also denounced by the “Appeal to the French People” drafted by the French Federation of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), dated

18 October. As proof, the “special curfew” imposed since 5 October on Algerians alone by Maurice Papon, who “is preparing for a new battle of Algiers”, “monster sweeps” and “the shedding of blood”. [