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Édition de Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi

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CAMUS at *Combat*

Writing 1944–1947

EDITED AND ANNOTATED BY
JACQUELINE LÉVI-VALENSI

FOREWORD BY DAVID CARROLL

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER

P R I N C E T O N U N I V E R S I T Y P R E S S

P R I N C E T O N A N D O X F O R D

November 19–30, 1946
 “Neither Victims nor Executioners”

Camus' contribution to *Combat* in 1946 consisted of just eight articles in the series entitled “Neither Victims nor Executioners,” but this group of articles enjoyed a very special status, as the typesetting emphasized. The first article was preceded by the headline “Today, Albert Camus. The Century of Fear.”

The presentation highlighted the importance of these pieces. They appeared on page one, enclosed in a frame. Their subtitles, in large type, served as headings, and the overall title, “‘Neither Victims nor Executioners,’ by Albert Camus,” was repeated in the center of each text. Publication began on November 19, 1946, and continued on November 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 29, and 30.

Alone among Camus' journalistic writings, these texts were copyrighted.¹ They were also reprinted exactly a year later, in November 1947, in the journal *Caliban* (no. 11), before being included in *Actuelles* with the same overall title and subtitles in a special chapter oddly dated “November 1948.” These articles were clearly conceived as a group that could stand on their own, a short essay inspired by events but relatively detached from the news of the day. They were written with serial publication in mind: even in manuscript, each article begins with an initial title, and the pieces are numbered sequentially and almost equal in length. Each brief chapter contributes to a consistent overall purpose. One passage that would appear in “The Century of Fear” was originally written for the conclusion. The typescript,² with its deletions, emendations, and additions, makes it possible to consider variant formulations.³ It reveals the care taken in writing and editing these pieces. All the corrections contribute to the clarity and vigor of the writing. But the manuscript also reveals that Camus experienced a certain difficulty in saying what he wanted to say, as can be seen, in particular, in the major changes he made to the article “A New Social Contract.” Further evidence of the difficulty he faced can be seen in a note he made in October: “Distress I feel about the idea of writing these articles for *Combat*.”⁴

¹ “Copyright by Albert Camus and *Combat*.”

² Preserved in the Fonds Camus, CMS2, Ae1-01-07; the article of November 19 was written out entirely by hand; the others were partially typed and corrected by hand. The article of November 26, “International Democracy and Dictatorship,” is missing.

³ Only the most important or significant changes are reproduced here.

⁴ *Carnets* II, p. 183. This note was explicitly intended as a “follow-up to the preceding” paragraph, in which he spoke of his profound disarray: “There are times when I don't think I can bear the contradiction any longer. When the sky is cold and nothing in nature sustains us. . . . Better to die, perhaps.” These notes were clearly written between the beginning of October (“October 1946. 33 years old in one month,” p. 180) and October 29, the date mentioned explicitly on p. 185.

Clearly Camus had come a long way from the articles he had written in the grip of enthusiasm some two years earlier. Indeed, his return to the pages of *Combat* after a lengthy absence was dictated by two necessities. First, he hoped to help the newspaper, whose financial position had become quite critical, so much so that Pia envisioned stopping publication. Second, he was determined to sound a cry of alarm and to raise a voice of protest against the reign of terror that was under way around the world and against the legitimation of murder that lay behind it. "Neither Victims nor Executioners" does not stand apart in Camus' thinking; the anxieties it expresses were a constant with him. The themes of these articles are to one degree or another similar to those of "Remarque sur la révolte,"⁵ which appeared in 1946, or the lecture entitled "The Human Crisis,"⁶ which was delivered at Columbia University in New York in March 1946, and the brief article "Nous autres meurtriers."⁷ He developed these themes in "Le temps des meurtriers," a lecture given in São Paulo,⁸ and they are the source from which *The Rebel* sprang. They resonate deeply with *The Plague*. And they echo discussions that Camus had in October with Arthur Koestler,⁹ Manès Sperber,¹⁰ Sartre, and Malraux on the place of Marxism in the new world order. Koestler and Sperber denounced the crimes of the Soviet regime and the "conspiracy of silence" that surrounded them; no doubt they were among the first to do so. Sartre did not want to take sides against the Soviet Union. Malraux worried about the political value of the proletariat. And Camus wanted to place his hope in a modest, relative form of utopia, rejecting both nihilism and "political realism."¹¹ Like *The Rebel*, "Neither Victims nor Executioners" forcefully made the case that nothing can justify murder.

Camus had previously paired the terms "victims" and "executioners."¹² In his article of June 30, 1945, "Images of Occupied Germany," published in *Combat*

⁵ Nothing less than an outline of *The Rebel* (*L'Homme révolté*), this piece appeared in "L'Existence" and was reprinted in *Essais*, pp. 1982–1997. Many notes in the *Carnets* show the degree to which Camus' concerns revolved around the themes of rebellion and murder.

⁶ "The Human Crisis," the French text of which seems to have been lost, was published in *La Revue des Lettres modernes*, Série Albert Camus 5, 1972, pp. 157–176, by Peter Hoy. A French translation appeared in *La Nouvelle Revue française*. In *Albert Camus, voyageur et conférencier, le voyage en Amérique du Sud*, Archives Albert Camus no. 7, 1995, Fernande Bartfeld was able to reconstitute fragments of this text from the lecture on "Le temps des meurtriers" (see the next note).

⁷ Published in *Franchise*, no. 3, November–December 1946, and reprinted in Bartfeld, *Albert Camus, voyageur*, pp. 47–49.

⁸ Published in Bartfeld, *Albert Camus, voyageur*, pp. 50–72.

⁹ Koestler, Arthur (1905–1983). An English-speaking Hungarian, whose book *Darkness at Noon*, published in France in 1946 under the title *Le Zéro et l'Infini*, forcefully denounced the rigged Moscow trials, Koestler had been a Communist and participated in the Spanish civil war.

¹⁰ Sperber, Manès (1905–1984), was an Austrian-born essayist and novelist who published *Analyse de la tyrannie* in 1938. In his work he considered the commitment of intellectuals in the face of totalitarian regimes.

¹¹ See *Carnets* II, pp. 185–186.

¹² This association calls to mind Baudelaire's poem "L'Heautontimorouménos": "Je suis la plaie et le couteau / . . . Et la victime et le bourreau" [I am the wound and the knife / . . . the victim and the executioner.] But Baudelaire has in mind the torments of the individual conscience.

Magazine, he evoked "unhappy, war-torn Europe, divided between victims and executioners."¹³ In September 1945 he made this note: "We are in a world in which we must choose to be either victim or executioner—there is no other choice. And the choice is not easy."¹⁴ The November 1946 articles offered a response to this dilemma in the form of a refusal to choose. Camus here seeks a political and moral way out of what seems to him a historical dead end. In France, the "spirit of the resistance" is a thing of the past, relations with the Communists are beset with conflict, and partisan differences have turned virulent. Churchill had just used the expression "iron curtain" to describe the barrier between the Soviet Union and the West.

Hence these articles were entirely in tune with the news of the day, yet they were written with such lucidity and foresight that they reflect today's concerns and sensibility to an astonishing degree.

November 19, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*The Century of Fear*¹⁵

The seventeenth century was the century of mathematics.¹⁶ The eighteenth century was the century of physical science, and the nineteenth the century of biology. Our twentieth century is the century of fear. Fear isn't a science, you may be thinking. Well, to begin with, science is no stranger to fear, since the latest theoretical advances have led science to repudiate itself, and since its practical applications threaten the entire earth with destruction. Furthermore, even if fear can't be considered a science in itself, there is no question that it is a method.

Indeed, what is most striking about the world we live in is first of all the fact that most people, broadly speaking, are deprived of any future (other than believers of one sort or another).¹⁷ No worthwhile life is possible without projection onto the future, without promise of development and progress. To live with one's back to a wall is a dog's life. But people of my generation and of the generation just now taking its place in factories and classrooms have lived and are living more and more like dogs.

¹³ See p. 229.

¹⁴ *Carnets* II, p. 141.

¹⁵ The original text, entirely handwritten, includes a number of phrases that have been scratched out. No typescript has survived. Several passages from this introductory article appeared in the typescript of "A New Social Contract," which Camus clearly intended originally to be the conclusion. This shows that the whole series was conceived as a single essay.

¹⁶ This observation previously appeared in a footnote to Camus' preface to Chamfort's *Maximes et anecdotes* (Monaco: Incidences, 1944), reprinted under the title "Introduction to Chamfort" in *Essais*, pp. 1099–1109.

¹⁷ *Actuelles*: the parenthetical phrase is omitted.

Of course this is not the first time that people have faced a materially obstructed future. In the past, however, they used to overcome obstacles by speaking out or shouting out their discontent. They appealed to a different set of values, on which they pinned their hopes. Today, no one is talking (apart from those who repeat themselves), because the world seems to us to be led by forces blind and deaf to warnings, advice, and supplications. Something in us succumbed to recent experience. That something is man's eternal confidence, which always fostered the belief that we could elicit human reactions from other human beings by speaking to them in the language of humanity.¹⁸ We have witnessed lying, humiliation, killing, deportation, and torture, and in each instance it was impossible to persuade the people who were doing these things not to do them, because they were sure of themselves and because there is no way of persuading an abstraction,¹⁹ or, to put it another way, the representative of an ideology.²⁰

The long dialogue among human beings has now come to an end. And of course a man who cannot be persuaded is a man who makes others afraid. So that alongside people who stopped speaking because they deemed it pointless to try, a vast conspiracy of silence has arisen and continues to spread, a conspiracy accepted by those who quake in fear and who find every reason in the world to hide their quaking from themselves, and encouraged by those who find it in their interest to do so. "You must not talk about the purge of artists in Russia, because that would play into the hands of the reactionaries." "You must keep silent about the British and American decision to keep Franco in power because to talk about it would play into the hands of communism." As I said earlier, fear is a method.

Between the very general fear of a war for which everyone is preparing and the very specific fear of lethal ideologies,²¹ it is therefore quite true that we live in terror. We live in terror²² because persuasion is no longer possible, because man has

¹⁸ An earlier formulation of this, which appears in the typescript of "A New Social Contract," combined a passage indicated below (see note 22) with the end of this sentence: "Yes, we live in terror because persuasion is no longer possible, because man shrinks from living in a world in which it is no longer possible to hope that we can elicit human reactions from other human beings by speaking to them in the language of humanity." This whole passage was crossed out.

¹⁹ In *The Plague* the scourge is several times compared to an abstraction that has to be combated.

²⁰ In the manuscript, after "ideology" begins a new sentence, with no paragraph break: "And of course . . ." The intervening sentence is omitted.

²¹ Manuscript: the word "lethal" is omitted.

²² Typescript of "A New Social Contract": "Yes, we are in terror because man has been delivered entirely into the hands of history . . . of messianism without subtleties of any kind." The passage then continued: "But we cannot escape from abstraction, and kill the fear somewhat, by means of rational argument modest in its conclusions and the efforts of passion. As restrained as our hopes may be, they justify trying. 'I think that we ought to be fanatical,' a now-fashionable revolutionary once said, 'but that doesn't exclude either wisdom or common sense.' Use common sense, then, in pondering these facts. In the long struggle ahead, we can never have enough of such quiet fanaticism." This entire passage was deleted. The revolutionary alluded to is Saint-Just. Camus quotes this passage in *Carnets* II, p. 162.

been delivered entirely into the hands of history and can no longer turn toward that part of himself which is as true as the historic part, and which he discovers when he confronts the beauty of the world and of people's faces.²³ And because we live in a world of abstraction, a world of bureaucracy and machinery, of absolute ideas and of messianism without subtlety. We gasp for air among people who believe they are absolutely right, whether it be in their machines or their ideas.²⁴ And for all who cannot live without dialogue and the friendship of other human beings, this silence is the end of the world.

In order to escape from this terror, we need to be able to think and to act on the basis of our thoughts. But the problem is that terror does not create a climate conducive to thinking. My view, however, is that rather than blame our fear, we should regard it as a basic element of the situation and try to remedy it. Nothing is more important, for this affects the fate of a large number of people in Europe, people who, having had enough of violence and lies, having seen their fondest hopes dashed, and being loath to kill their fellow human beings even in order to persuade them, are equally loath to see themselves persuaded in the same manner. Yet this is the dilemma that the vast masses of Europeans face, those who belong to no party²⁵ or who are uncomfortable in the party they have chosen, who doubt that socialism has been achieved in Russia or liberalism in America, and yet acknowledge the right of people on both sides to assert their version of the truth while denying those same people the right to impose that truth by murder, either individual or collective. Among those who wield power today, these people are without a kingdom. They will be able to gain recognition for their point of view (without necessarily securing its triumph) and reclaim their homeland only when they can consciously formulate what they want and express this in terms simple enough and strong enough to bind a range of energies. And if fear is not the right climate for proper reflection, then they must first come to terms with fear.

In order to come to terms with fear, we need to understand what it signifies and what it rejects. It signifies and rejects the same fact: a world in which murder is legitimate and human life is considered futile. Therein lies today's primary political problem. Before dealing with the rest, we have to take a position on this. Before we can build anything, we need to ask two questions: "Yes or no, directly or indirectly, do you want to be killed or assaulted? Yes or no, directly or indirectly, do you want to kill or assault?"²⁶ Anyone who answers yes to these questions is automatically caught up in a web of consequences that is bound²⁷ to

²³ Cf. *Carnets* I, p. 152: "Women's faces, joys of sunshine and water, that is what they are killing."

²⁴ In the manuscript, the next three sentences do not appear.

²⁵ Manuscript: who belong to no party, who do not believe that socialism . . .

²⁶ Manuscript: killed or tortured.

²⁷ Manuscript: a web of consequences that is bound (and I was thinking of the socialists) to change the way in which . . .

change the way in which the problem is posed. My aim is to detail just two or three of those consequences. In the meantime, honest readers may wish to ask themselves these questions and answer them.²⁸

ALBERT CAMUS

November 20, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*Saving*²⁹ *Bodies*³⁰

After saying one day that, given the experience of the last two years, I could no longer accept any truth that might place me under an obligation, direct or indirect, to condemn a man to death, various people whose intelligence I respect told me that I was living in utopia, that there was no political truth that might not someday lead to such an extremity, and that one was obliged either to run that risk or to accept the world as it is.

This argument was forcefully presented. But the people who presented it expressed themselves with such force, I believe, because they lack imagination when it comes to other people's deaths. This is one of the faults of our century. Just as we now love one another by telephone and work not on matter but on machines, we kill and are killed nowadays by proxy. What is gained in cleanliness is lost in understanding.

Still, the argument has another strong point, albeit indirect: it raises the issue of utopia. In short, the world that people like me are after is not a world in which people don't kill one another (we're not that crazy!) but a world in which murder is not legitimized. We are therefore living in utopia and contradiction, to be sure, since the world we live in is one in which murder is legitimized, and we ought to change it if we don't like it. But it seems that it can't be changed without running the risk of committing murder. Murder thus leads to murder, and we will continue to live in terror either because we resign ourselves to it or because we seek to eliminate it by means that replace one form of terror with another.

Everyone, in my view, should think about this. For what strikes me amid all the polemics, threats, and eruptions of violence, is everyone's good intentions. Everyone, on the right and on the left, apart from a few rogues, believes that his truth is likely to make men happy. And yet the conjunction of all these good intentions leads to this infernal world, in which men are still being killed, threatened, and deported, preparations are being made for war, and it is impossible to say a word without instantly being insulted or betrayed. One cannot help

²⁸ Manuscript: . . . and answer it. For my part, I have learned over the past two years in particular that there is no truth I would place above the life of a human being.

This sentence was deleted and then inserted at the beginning of the manuscript of the next article, which proves that they were conceived as a whole.

²⁹ Manuscript: in French, *sauvez* instead of *sauver*.

³⁰ Text partially handwritten, partially typewritten.

concluding that if people like us live in contradiction, they are not alone, and those who accuse them of utopian thinking may be living in a utopia of their own, different no doubt but in the end more costly.

We must therefore admit that the refusal to legitimize murder forces us to reconsider our notion of utopia.³¹ In that regard, it seems possible to say the following: utopia is that which is in contradiction with reality. From this point of view, it would be completely utopian to want people to stop killing people. This would be absolute utopia. It is a much lesser degree of utopia, however, to ask that murder no longer be legitimized. What is more, the Marxist and capitalist ideologies, both of which are based on the idea of progress and both of which are convinced that application of their principles must inevitably lead to social equilibrium, are utopias of a much greater degree. Beyond that, they are even now exacting a very heavy price from us.³²

In practical terms, it follows that the battle that will be waged in years to come will not pit the forces of utopia against the forces of reality. Rather, it will pit different utopias against each other as they try to gain a purchase on the real, and the only choice remaining will be to decide which form of utopia is least costly.³³ My conviction is that it is no longer reasonable to hope that we can save everything, but we can at least hope to save the bodies³⁴ in order to keep open the possibility of a future.

We see, therefore, that the refusal to legitimize murder is no more utopian than today's realistic attitudes.³⁵ The only question is to decide whether the latter are more or less costly. This is a question that we need to resolve as well, and that is my excuse for believing that it may be useful, with utopian principles in mind, to set forth the conditions necessary for pacifying minds and nations. If we ponder this matter free of fear as well as pretension, we may be able to help create the conditions for a just philosophy and for a provisional accord among those of us unwilling to be either victims or executioners. Of course the remaining articles³⁶ will not seek to state a definitive position but only to correct some misleading notions that are abroad in the world today and to attempt to state the problem of utopia as accurately as possible. The goal, in short, will be to define the conditions for a modest political philosophy, that is, a philosophy free of all messianic elements and devoid of any nostalgia³⁷ for an earthly paradise.

ALBERT CAMUS³⁸

³¹ Manuscript: After "notion of utopia," a new sentence: "To stay with generalities before moving on to the concrete, we will say simply that . . ."

³² Manuscript continues: "In practical terms, the battle that is now beginning . . ."

³³ Manuscript continues: "We can no longer hope . . ."

³⁴ Manuscript: ". . . save the bodies. We see, therefore . . ."

³⁵ Manuscript: "today's so-called realistic attitudes. It remains to be seen if they are more or less costly."

³⁶ Typescript: "Of course the [three] (crossed out) [four] (crossed out) remaining . . ."

³⁷ Manuscript: "devoid of any notion of an earthly paradise."

³⁸ As with all the articles in this series, the following notice appeared at the end: "Copyright by Albert Camus and *Combat*. Rights of reproduction reserved for all countries." This distinctive feature deserves special mention, as noted earlier.

November 21, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners
*Socialism Mystified*³⁹

If we admit that the state of terror in which we have lived for the past ten years, whether acknowledged or not, is not yet over, and that this is today the single greatest factor in the malaise of individuals and nations around the world, then we need to look at how terror can be combated. This raises the problem of western socialism. For terror can be legitimized only if one adopts the principle that the end justifies the means.⁴⁰ And this principle can be embraced only if the efficacy of an action is taken to be an absolute end, as in nihilist ideologies (everything is permitted, success is what counts) or philosophies that take history as an absolute (first Hegel, then Marx: since the goal is a classless society, anything that leads to it is good).

Therein, for example, lies the problem faced by French Socialists. They have discovered that they have scruples. They have seen violence and oppression at work, after having had only a fairly abstract idea of what those things were. And they asked themselves if they would be willing, as their philosophy demanded, to practice violence themselves, even if only temporarily and for a quite different purpose. In a recent preface to *Saint-Just*, a writer⁴¹ spoke of men who had felt similar scruples in terms dripping with contempt: "They shrank from the horror." Truer words could not be spoken. And for that they earned the disdain⁴² of souls strong enough and superior enough to embrace horror without flinching. But at the same time they gave a voice to the anguished appeal stemming from the millions of mediocre men and women among whom we count ourselves, the people who are the very stuff of history and who must some day be reckoned with, all the disdain notwithstanding.⁴³

A more serious approach, we think, is to try, rather, to understand the contradictory and confusing situation in which our socialists find themselves. It then becomes obvious that not enough thought has been given to the crisis of conscience in French socialism as revealed by the party's recent congress.⁴⁴ It is quite clear that our Socialists, under the influence of Léon Blum and even more under

³⁹ Text partly handwritten and partly typed.

⁴⁰ Camus returns to this point at length in *The Rebel*.

⁴¹ The allusion is to Jean Gratin's preface to the *Œuvres of Saint-Just* (Paris: Editions de la Cité Universelle, 1946).

⁴² Manuscript: "earned the contempt."

⁴³ Manuscript: "even if one is contemptuous of it."

⁴⁴ The 38th Congress of the SFIO (and not the 18th, as indicated in a note in the *Essais*, p. 1513), which took place from August 29 to September 1, 1946, witnessed a clash between Léon Blum's "humanism" and Guy Mollet's "Marxism." In a still-famous speech, Blum attacked the "totalitarian vestiges" in the "slogans rather than convictions" championed by Mollet, and in very Camusian terms called for "democracy and justice," but he was not backed by the majority. Mollet succeeded Daniel Mayer as the party's secretary general.

the threat of events, gave unprecedented priority to moral issues (the end does not always justify the means).⁴⁵ Their legitimate desire was to invoke a small number of principles more important than murder. It is no less obvious that the same Socialists want to maintain Marxist doctrine, some because they believe that it is impossible to be a revolutionary without being a Marxist, others because they are understandably loyal to the history of the party, which persuades them that one cannot be a Socialist, either, without being a Marxist. The last party congress had highlighted these two tendencies, and the principal task of this congress was to reconcile them. But there is no reconciling the irreconcilable.

For it is clear that if Marxism is true, and if there is a logic to history, then political realism is legitimate. It is equally clear that if the moral values favored by the Socialist Party are fundamentally right, then⁴⁶ Marxism is absolutely false because it claims to be absolutely true. From this point of view, the well-known idea that Marxism will ultimately be transcended in favor of a more idealist and humanitarian philosophy is merely a joke, an inconsequential dream. Marx cannot be transcended, because he pursued the logic of his system to the ultimate end. Communists are rationally justified in using the lies and violence of which the Socialists want no part, and they are justified by the very principles, the very irrefutable dialectic, that the Socialists nevertheless wish to maintain. One can't help being astonished by the sight of the Socialist congress ending with a straightforward juxtaposition of two contradictory positions,⁴⁷ the sterility of which was repudiated in the last elections.⁴⁸

In this respect, the confusion persists. A choice was necessary, and the Socialists would not or could not choose.

I chose this example not to condemn the Socialists but to illuminate the paradoxes of our time. To condemn the Socialists, one would have to be superior to them. This is not yet the case. On the contrary, this contradiction seems to me to be shared by all the people I've mentioned, who want a society that is both happy and worthy, who want men to be free in a condition that can at last be described as just, but who still hesitate between a freedom in which they know full well that justice is finally duped and a justice in which they see clearly that freedom is eliminated at the outset.⁴⁹ This unbearable anguish is generally derided by those who know what has to be believed and what needs to be done. But I am of the opinion that rather than mock this unbearable anguish, we should use our reason and insight to understand what it means, to interpret the

⁴⁵ Typescript: "If we grant that the avowed or unavowed state of terror in which we have been living for the past ten years is not yet over, we can understand the legitimate desire of the socialists to refer . . ."

⁴⁶ Typescript: "then the Marxist theory of mystified consciousness is false and with it the whole critique of idealism and Marxism itself [deleted]. From this point of view . . ."

⁴⁷ Typescript: "contradictory positions. In this respect, . . ."

⁴⁸ The reference is obviously to the elections of November 10, 1946 (and not November 1948, as indicated in a note on p. 1513 of the *Essais*), in which the SFIO finished third, behind the Communists and the M.R.P.

⁴⁹ The balance between justice and freedom would become one of the themes of *The Rebel*.

virtually total condemnation of the world that provokes it, and to identify the feeble hope that underlies it.⁵⁰

Indeed, hope resides in this contradiction itself, because it is forcing or will force the Socialists to choose. Either they will admit that the end covers the means, hence that murder can be legitimized, or else they will renounce Marxism as an absolute philosophy and limit their attention to the critical aspects, which is often still valuable. If they choose the first alternative, their crisis of conscience will be over, and situations will be clarified. If they choose the second, they will demonstrate that the end of ideologies is upon us, that is, the end of absolute utopias that destroy themselves owing to the heavy price they eventually exact when they seek to become part of historical reality. It will then be necessary to choose another utopia, one that is more modest and less ruinous. In any case, the refusal to legitimize murder makes the question unavoidable.⁵¹

Yes, this is the question that must be asked, and no one, I believe, would dare answer it lightly.

ALBERT CAMUS

November 23, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*The Revolution Travestied*⁵²

Since August⁵³ 1944, everybody in France has been talking about revolution—and always sincerely, no doubt about that. But sincerity is not in itself a virtue. There are kinds of sincerity so confused that they are worse than lies. What we need today is not to speak the language of the heart but simply to think clearly. Ideally, a revolution is a change of political and economic institutions intended to increase freedom and justice in the world. Practically, it is a series of often unfortunate historical events that brings about this change for the better.

Can we say that this word is used today in its traditional sense? When people in France hear talk of revolution, what they envision, assuming they keep their wits about them, is a change in the mode of ownership (generally taken to be a move to collective ownership of the means of production) achieved either through legislation by the majority or through seizure of power by a minority.

It is easy to see that this set of ideas makes no sense in the current historical situation. For one thing, the seizure of power by violent means is a romantic idea

⁵⁰ Typescript adds: "I have pondered—to put it simply, after a year of journalism—my own inability to have anyone shot in the name of some truth or illusion of truth. Like many other people today, I have concluded that I cannot accept any truth" [the rest of the sentence is missing in the manuscript]. Perhaps Camus noticed that he was repeating a sentence from "Saving Bodies."

⁵¹ Manuscript skips next phrase and continues at "No one, I believe . . ."

⁵² Typescript with some handwritten additions.

⁵³ Typescript: *April* 1944.

consigned to fantasy by advances in the technology of weaponry. The repressive apparatus can avail itself of the force of tanks and planes. Hence it would take tanks and planes merely to equal its power. 1789 and 1917 remain dates, but they are no longer examples.

Yet even if we assume that such a seizure of power is possible, and regardless of whether it is achieved by force of arms or by legislation, it would be effective only if France (or Italy or Czechoslovakia) could put itself in a box and cut itself off from the world. Indeed, in our current historical situation, in 1946, a change in property relations would have such an impact on, for example, American loans that our economy would find itself under threat of death. A right-wing revolution would be no more likely to succeed because of the comparable impediment that Russia creates for us with⁵⁴ millions of Communist voters and with its position as the greatest continental power. The truth—and I apologize for stating plainly what everybody knows but nobody says—is that we, as Frenchmen, are not free to be revolutionaries. Or at any rate we can no longer be solitary revolutionaries, because there is no place in the world today for either conservative or socialist politics within the borders of a single nation.

Hence the only revolution we can talk about is an international one. To be precise, the revolution will either be international or it will not happen. But what can this phrase mean today? There was a time when it was possible to believe that international reform would come about through successive or simultaneous national revolutions—a series of miracles, as it were. If the foregoing analysis is correct, however, the only revolution that is conceivable today is one that would extend an already⁵⁵ successful revolution. This is something that Stalin saw quite clearly, and it is the most benevolent explanation that one can give of his policy (the other alternative being to deny Russia the right to speak on behalf of revolution).

What this comes down to is to look at Europe and the West as one nation, in which a large and well-armed minority might come to power after lengthy struggle. But since the conservative force (namely, the United States) is equally well armed, it is easy to see that the notion of revolution has now been replaced by that of ideological warfare. To put it more plainly, there is no possibility of an international revolution today without an extremely high risk of war. Any future revolution will be a foreign revolution. It will begin with a military occupation, or, what amounts to the same thing, a threat of occupation. It will make sense only when the occupying power has won a final victory over the rest of the world.

Within nations revolutions are already quite costly, but in view of the progress they are supposed to bring, people generally accept the need for the damage they do. Today, the cost to humanity of any war must be objectively weighed against the progress one might hope to see from the seizure of world power by Russia or America. It is of the utmost importance, I believe, that in weighing the pros and

⁵⁴ Typescript: "with *five* million."

⁵⁵ Typescript: "already" is omitted.

cons we use a little imagination for once and try to envision what a planet that holds some 30 million still-warm bodies would be like after a cataclysm that would claim ten times as many lives.

Let me point out that this manner of reasoning is perfectly objective. It takes only reality into account, taking no position for the time being on ideological or sentimental judgments. In any case, it should give pause to those who speak lightly⁵⁶ of revolution. What this word portends *today* must either be accepted or rejected in toto. If you accept it, you must consciously acknowledge responsibility for the war to come. If you reject it, you must either admit that you prefer the *status quo*, which is a completely utopian position insofar as it assumes that history is immobile, or else you must redefine the word "revolution," which means accepting what I shall call a relative utopia. Having thought about the question for a while, I have come to the conclusion that those who want to change the world effectively today have to choose among carnage, the impossible dream of bringing history to an abrupt halt, or the acceptance of a relative utopia that leaves some chance of human action.⁵⁷ It is not difficult to see, however, that the relative utopia of which I speak is the only real possibility, the only one inspired by the spirit of reality. What fragile possibility is there of saving ourselves from carnage? This is the question to which we shall turn in our next article.

ALBERT CAMUS

November 26, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*International Democracy and Dictatorship*⁵⁸

Today we know that there are no more islands and that borders are meaningless. We know that in an ever-accelerating world, in which the Atlantic can be crossed in less than a day and Moscow communicates with Washington in a few hours, we are forced to embrace solidarity or cooperation depending on the situation.⁵⁹ What the 1940s taught us was that harm done to a student in Prague also injured the worker in Clichy, that blood shed on a riverbank in Central Europe could bring a Texas farmer to spill his blood in the Ardennes, a place he had never seen. There is no longer any such thing as isolated suffering, and no instance of torture anywhere in the world is without effects on our daily lives.

⁵⁶ Typescript: adds the word "today" after "lightly."

⁵⁷ The notion of "relative utopia" is central to *The Rebel*.

⁵⁸ There is neither a typescript nor a manuscript of this text in the archives.

⁵⁹ Here and throughout the article it is possible to see a worried anticipation of globalization. Camus also joined the movement in support of Gary Davis, the self-proclaimed "citizen of the world." See the reports on his activities in *Combat* during November 1948, and Camus' two articles, "What Is the UN Accomplishing?" December 9, p. 301, and "Responses to the Incredulous," December 25–26, 1948, p. 304.

Many Americans would like to go on living within the confines of their society, which they judge to be good. Many Russians, perhaps, would like to carry on with their statist experiment separate from the capitalist world. They cannot now and never will. By the same token, no economic problem, no matter how minor it seems, can be resolved today without international cooperation. Europe's bread is in Buenos Aires, and Siberian machine tools are manufactured in Detroit. Today, tragedy is collective.

Hence we all know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the new order we are seeking cannot be merely national or even continental, much less Western or Eastern. It has to be universal. It is no longer possible to hope for incomplete solutions or concessions. Compromise is what we have now, and that means anguish today and murder tomorrow. Meanwhile, history and social change are accelerating. The twenty-one deaf men—future war criminals—who are discussing peace at this very moment are engaged in monotonous dialogues, quietly sitting in the middle of a torrent that is sweeping them toward an abyss at a thousand miles an hour.⁶⁰ Yes, the new world order is the only issue of the day, overshadowing all the disputes about the constitution and the election law. It is the issue that cries out for us to use our intelligence and our resolve to do something about it.

What can we do today to achieve world unity and to bring about an international revolution that will improve the distribution of human resources, raw materials, commercial markets, and spiritual wealth? I see only two possibilities, two ultimate alternatives. The world can be unified from above, as I said the other day, by one state more powerful than the rest. Either Russia or America can play this role. Neither I nor anyone I know has anything to counter the contention of some that both Russia and America have the means to rule the world and to unite it around an image of their own societies. I am loath to accept this as a Frenchman and still more as a Mediterranean. But I will not deal with this emotional argument.

Here is my only objection, one that I discussed in a recent article: such unification cannot take place without war or, at the very least, an extreme risk of war. I will even grant, though I do not believe, that this might not be atomic war. Even so, the war of tomorrow would leave mankind so impaired and so impoverished that the very idea of a world order would surely be anachronistic. Marx could justify the war of 1870⁶¹ as he did because it was the war of the Chassepot rifle and was localized. From the standpoint of Marxism, a hundred thousand deaths are nothing compared with the happiness of hundreds of millions. But the certain death of hundreds of millions of people is too high a price to pay for the supposed happiness of those who remain.⁶² The dizzying progress

⁶⁰ Since July 29, the peace conference that was to define the borders of the countries that had allied themselves with Germany had been meeting in Paris at the Luxembourg Palace.

⁶¹ According to Roger Quilliot, Camus was probably referring to letters from Marx to Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Kugelmann in which he explained that the war had taught the proletariat how to use arms and that the Prussian victory would lead to a "centralization of state power . . . useful to the centralization of the working class." See *Essais*, pp. 1513–1514.

⁶² This would become one of the themes of *The Rebel*.

of armaments—a historical phenomenon unknown to Marx—forces us to look at the means-ends problem in a new light.

In this case, moreover, the means would shatter the ends. Whatever the desired end may be, as noble and necessary as it conceivably is, and regardless of whether or not it seeks to bring happiness to humankind or to establish justice and freedom, the means to that end represent a risk so conclusive, so disproportionate to the likelihood of success, that we objectively refuse to run it. That brings us back to the second means of achieving universal order, which is by mutual agreement of all parties. We will not ask if this possible, because here we take the point of view that nothing else is possible. So first we must ask ourselves what is involved.

This agreement of all parties has a name: international democracy. Everybody at the U.N. talks about this, of course. But what is international democracy? It is a democracy which is international. Forgive me for this truism: the most obvious truths are also the most distorted.

What is national democracy, and what is international democracy? Democracy is a form of society in which the law is above those who govern, the law being the expression of the will of all, represented by a legislative body. Is that what people are attempting to establish today? They are indeed elaborating for us an international law. But that law is made and unmade by governments, that is, by the executive. We are therefore in a regime of international dictatorship. The only way out is to place international law above governments, which means that that law must be made, that there must be a parliament for making it, and that parliament must be constituted by means of worldwide elections in which all nations will take part. And since we do not have such a parliament, the only option open to us is to resist this international dictatorship on an international level using means not in contradiction with the ends we seek.

ALBERT CAMUS

November 27, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*The World Moves Quickly*⁶³

It is obvious to everyone that political thought increasingly finds itself overtaken by events. France, for example, began the war of 1914 with the resources of 1870 and the war of 1939 with the resources of 1918. But anachronistic thinking is not peculiar to the French. For now it will suffice to note that, to all intents and purposes, today's political systems seek to settle the world's future by employing principles shaped in the eighteenth century in the case of capitalist liberalism and in the nineteenth century in the case of so-called scientific socialism. In the former case a philosophy born in the early years of modern industrialism, and in the latter a doctrine contemporaneous with Darwinian evolutionism and Renanian optimism, seek to reduce to equations the era of the atomic bomb, sudden

⁶³ Typescript with handwritten corrections and additions.

upheaval, and widespread nihilism. There can be no better illustration of the increasingly disastrous gap that exists between political thought and historical reality.

Of course the mind is always a step behind reality. History races ahead while the mind meditates. But this unavoidable gap is widening today as the pace of history accelerates. The world has changed far more in the past fifty years than in the previous two hundred. And today we see everyone focused on the issue of establishing borders, when people everywhere know that borders are now abstractions. Yet it was the principle of nationalities that apparently held sway at the Conference of the Twenty-One.

We⁶⁴ must take this into account in our analysis of historical reality. Today we shall focus on the German question, which is a secondary issue compared with the clash of empires that hangs over us. Yet if we were to come up with international solutions to the Russian-American problem, we would still be in danger of being ignored. The clash of empires is already close to taking a back seat to the clash of civilizations. Indeed, colonized civilizations from the four corners of the earth are making their voices heard. Ten or fifty years from now, the challenge will be to the preeminence of western civilization.⁶⁵ It would therefore be better to anticipate this by opening the World Parliament to these civilizations, so that its law will truly become universal law and the order that it consecrates will truly become the world order.

The questions that have arisen lately in connection with the right of veto are misleading, because the opposing sides in the U.N. debate are misleading. The Soviet Union will always have the right to reject the will of the majority as long as it consists of a majority of ministers and not a majority of peoples represented by their delegates and until all nations are represented. If a meaningful majority should ever be assembled, everyone will either have to obey it or reject its law, which is to say, openly declare its will to dominate.⁶⁶

By the same token, if we never lose sight of the acceleration of history, we stand a chance of finding the right way to approach the economic issues of the day. The question of socialism did not look the same in 1930 as it did in 1848. The abolition of private property gave way to techniques for collectivization of the means of production. Those techniques involved not only the fate of private property but also the increased scale of economic issues. And just as there will be no political solution that is not international, so, too, will any economic solution have to deal with international means of production such as oil, coal, and uranium *as a first priority*. If there is to be collectivization, it must deal with the resources that are indispensable to everyone and should in fact belong exclusively to no one. Everything else is just political speechifying.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Typescript: "Well, we must . . ."

⁶⁵ On this point, too, Camus' premonitory clarity of mind is worth noting.

⁶⁶ Manuscript: "will to power."

⁶⁷ This entire paragraph was added by hand.

This approach to the question looks utopian to some, but for those who refuse to accept the risk of war, there is no choice but to embrace these principles and defend them wholeheartedly. How do we get there from here? The only way imaginable is for former socialists to come together with individuals who today find themselves politically isolated around the world.

There is in any case one further and final response to the accusation that these principles are “utopian.” For us, the choice is simple: either utopia or war, which is where outmoded ways of thinking are taking us. The choice today is between anachronistic political thinking and utopian thinking. Anachronistic thinking is killing us. Wary as we are (and as I am), realism therefore forces us to embrace the relative utopia I am proposing. When this utopia has been absorbed into history⁶⁸ like so many others before it, people will no longer be able to imagine any other reality. For history is nothing other than man’s desperate effort to turn his most perspicacious dreams into reality.

ALBERT CAMUS

November 29, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners

*A New Social Contract*⁶⁹

Let me summarize what I have said so far. The fate of people of all nations will not be settled until the problems of peace and world organization have been settled. There can be no effective revolution anywhere in the world until this revolution has taken place. Anyone in France who says anything different today is either wasting his breath or has a personal stake in the outcome. I will go even farther. Not only will there be no lasting change in the mode of property ownership anywhere in the world, there will not even be any solution to the simplest problems—supplying people with their daily bread, ending the hunger that is wracking bellies across Europe, ensuring an adequate supply of coal—until peace has been created.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ In *Actuelles*, the word “history” is capitalized here and in the next sentence.

⁶⁹ Partially typewritten text with handwritten additions and numerous corrections. The text was intensively revised. It was first conceived as a conclusion to the series, and in fact one section was moved to the final article “Toward Dialogue,” for which no separate manuscript or typescript of a final draft exists. Another section, which was at the end of this article, was moved to “The Century of Fear.” See notes 15, p. 257, and 18 and 22, p. 258. Long passages were deleted from the final version. Others are not found in the manuscript (everything from “Any thought that recognizes” to “of a doomed society”). *The Rebel* includes an analysis of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* under the title “A New Gospel” (*Essais*, pp. 523–526).

⁷⁰ In the typescript, this is followed by the following two paragraphs (with a few handwritten corrections): “For people pondering these questions, I therefore see no more urgent need than to commit all their energy, resistance, and time, their ballots (for as little as they are worth), their talent, and their resources to demand a worldwide solution to alleviate the burden of misery and fear. And this movement must

Any thinker who honestly acknowledges his inability to justify lies and murder will be led inescapably to this conclusion if he cares at all about truth. He will have no choice but to assent to the argument as set forth thus far.

In so doing he will acknowledge that: 1. domestic politics taken in isolation is essentially of secondary importance and in any case intellectually incoherent; 2. the only real issue is the creation of an international order, which will finally bring about lasting structural reforms tantamount to a revolution; 3. the only strictly national issues that remain are administrative problems that must be dealt with for now as effectively as possible, until a more general and therefore more effective solution can be achieved.

It must be granted, for instance, that the French Constitution can be judged only in terms of what it does or does not contribute to the creation of an international order based on justice and dialogue. Seen in this light, the indifference of our Constitution to the most basic of human liberties deserves to be condemned. It must be granted that the provisional organization of a more efficient logistical system is ten times more important than the issue of nationalizations or the votes tallied by this or that party. Nationalizations will not endure if they are limited to one country. And while it is true that the logistical problem cannot be resolved within a purely national framework either, it is nevertheless a more pressing issue that calls for expedient solutions, even if they are temporary.

Taken together, these observations may yield the criterion for judging domestic politics that has thus far been lacking. *L’Aube* may well publish thirty editorials a month opposing the thirty editorials of *L’Humanité*, but none of those pieces can make us forget that both newspapers, along with the parties they represent and the men who lead them, agreed to the annexation of Brigue and Tende without a referendum,⁷¹ which means that they were allies for the purpose of destroying international democracy. Whatever their reasons, good or bad, M. Bidault and M. Thorez both opted for the principle of international dictatorship. Hence

develop not only within each country but above all in the international arena, initially by way of preaching. That is the primary task, the most urgent necessity we face, and the only one that can be effective or truly realistic.

“Otherwise, there is little that we can expect from governments, which will find themselves overwhelmed by their burdens until this issue is resolved. And governments themselves are well aware of this. Their primary task seems to be to survive, and then, depending on which parties join in coalition, to give assurances to the foreign power of their choice. On all other matters any possible solutions are therefore provisional. The only two issues that count are that of creating an international order that will at last bring about durable structural reforms tantamount to revolution, and that of devising some temporary system for meeting daily needs and managing the flow of resources. And since those who are in charge of international organization today have managed to get themselves stuck in a dead end, *individuals, working both within their own countries and across borders, must one by one enter into a new social contract that will unite them again in accordance with a more reasonable set of principles.*” The italicized portion of the last sentence was moved to a point later in the text. See n. 73, p. 272.

⁷¹ The Treaties of Paris, signed in February 1947 between the victorious powers and the former allies of Germany, provided among other things for the surrender by Italy to France of the villages of Brigue and Tende. The annexation took place after a referendum at the end of the year.

regardless of how we may judge their decision, they represent not political reality but rather utopian thinking of the most unfortunate kind.

Yes, domestic politics does not deserve to be accorded so much importance. You cannot cure the plague with remedies for a head cold.⁷² A crisis that is tearing apart the entire world cannot be resolved without a universal solution. There must be order for all so that the burden of misery and fear that each must bear can be reduced: that, for now, is our logical objective. This demands action and sacrifice, and that means people. And while there are many people nowadays who condemn violence and murder in their heart of hearts, there aren't many willing to recognize that this obliges them to reconsider the way they think and act. Yet those who are willing to make the effort can expect to find reasonable hope along with rules for action.

Admittedly, not much can be expected from the governments now in power, since these live and act by lethal principles. Hope therefore requires us to take the more arduous path, to start over and build anew a living society within the doomed society we are living in now.⁷³ Hence individuals, working both within their own countries and across borders, must one by one enter into a new social contract that will unite them again in accordance with a more reasonable set of principles.

The peace movement I mentioned should be able to link up with communities of labor inside nations and with international study groups. These working communities, organized in a cooperative way and on the basis of free contract, would bring relief to as many people as possible, whereas the study groups would attempt to define the values on which the new international order⁷⁴ should be based while at the same time advocating for that order at every available opportunity.

More precisely, the task of these groups should be to meet the confusions of terror with clear language and at the same time to set forth the values that a

⁷² Tarron makes the same point in *The Plague*: "They are never a match for epidemics. And the remedies they imagine are hardly up to treating a head cold." (*La Peste*, p. 118.)

⁷³ The passage excised from the manuscript earlier was moved here.

⁷⁴ In the typescript, another sentence was inserted here: "Again, this relative utopia is the only chance." This was followed by a lengthy passage, of which only the last words would make it into the final text. "This, by the way, is so un-utopian that elements of such groups can be seen in the real world today. The example given here is only an example, intended to serve as a general idea of what I have in mind. A good model for the kind of contractual organization that is rethinking our society's mode of production is the working group that Marcel Barbu has established in Valence. In France we have many highly intelligent and distinguished minds, but few, so far as I know, have noticed the importance of Barbu's experiment and its true significance for the present age. He has created a community of 150 men of various beliefs (including Marxists, Christians, and unaffiliated members) who say that they are happy to be there. It has been in existence for eight years. Other, similar communities have been established. People say that they will fail, but for the moment they are surviving, and in any case they will have rescued a few of misery's hostages for at least eight years. This community has not promised all these workers dignity and inner peace within four generations; it has given them these things in the space of a few years. Once again, ultimate liberation depends on international reform. But experiments like Barbu's, which is creating a new type of human relationship based on the free choices of human beings with respect for differences and liberty for all, shows that in the meantime it is possible to make some progress toward overcoming universal disorder and hatred. This progress can be made permanent only when a worldwide organization has been achieved. Until then it is threatened. But it makes hope possible.

world at peace will find indispensable: their first objectives could be to formulate an international code of justice whose first article would abolish the death penalty everywhere⁷⁵ and to give a clear statement of the principles necessary for any civilization based on dialogue. This work would meet the needs of an era that can find no philosophy which offers the grounding necessary to satisfy the craving for friendship that Western minds are experiencing today. Clearly, however, the point of this exercise should not be to elaborate a new ideology. It should be simply to search for a new way of life.

In any case, these are themes for reflection, and I cannot explore them in any depth in the space available. But to put things more concretely, let us imagine a group of people determined, in all circumstances, to set example against power, preaching against domination, dialogue against insult, and plain honor against wily cunning; a group of people who would refuse all the advantages of society as they find it today and accept only the duties and responsibilities that tie them to others; and who would attempt to redirect teaching, above all, and, in addition, the press and public opinion in keeping with the principles of conduct I have just set forth. These people would be acting not in a utopian way but rather in accordance with the most genuine realism. They would be laying the groundwork for the future, and in so doing they would immediately begin to break down some of the walls that we find so oppressive today. If realism is the art of taking both the present and the future into account at the same time, of obtaining the most while sacrificing the least, then who can fail to see that the most unmistakable reality belongs to these men and women.

Whether these people will come forward or not,⁷⁶ I do not know. It is likely that most of them are pondering the situation right now, and that is good. Yet there can be no doubt that the effectiveness of their action depends on their finding the courage to give up some of their dreams for now in order to hold fast to what is essential, which is to save lives. At this point, moreover, before it is all over, it will perhaps⁷⁷ be necessary to raise our voices.

ALBERT CAMUS

"These are the relations that must be extended whenever possible, because what is at stake is the building of a living society within the doomed society in which we are living now. Men who would assert in everyday political debate that the only real issue is to build an international society; who would prove that all other disputes, both constitutional and electoral, are pointless, and who would insist on international solidarity and organization; who would simply define the common and provisional values they find indispensable for rejecting murder and pursuing their goals; who would demand *general abolition of the death penalty* in the West; *who would reject all the advantages of society as they find it today and accept only the duties and responsibilities that tie them to others*, who would in all circumstances prefer *preaching to domination and dialogue to insult*, and who would bring to the press and above all to the schools *the principles of conduct set forth here; those men . . .*"

⁷⁵ Although Camus had often previously expressed his revulsion at the death penalty, this was perhaps the first time he phrased it this way.

⁷⁶ In the manuscript, the phrase "I do not know" was omitted, and the sentence continued with the next sentence as its second clause.

⁷⁷ Manuscript: "it might perhaps be necessary."

November 30, 1946

Neither Victims nor Executioners
Toward Dialogue⁷⁸

Yes, it might be necessary to raise our voices.⁷⁹ I have thus far refrained⁸⁰ from calling upon the power of the emotions. What is crushing us today is a historical logic that we created out of whole cloth, on the knots in which we are about to choke. Emotion is not what is needed to slice through the knots of a logic gone awry. Only reason can do that—reason that knows its limits. Yet I do not want to end with the suggestion that the future of the world can dispense with the powers of indignation and love. I am well aware that it takes a lot to get people mobilized and that it is hard to gird oneself for a battle in which the objectives are so limited and there is barely a glimmer of hope. But the point is not to drag people into acting. On the contrary, the key is that they must not be dragged and that they must have a clear idea of what they are doing.

To save what can still be saved just to make the future possible: that is the great motivating force, the reason for passion and sacrifice. What is required is simply that we reflect and clearly decide whether we must add to the sum of human suffering for still indiscernible ends, whether we must acquiesce while the world blankets itself with arms and brother again kills⁸¹ brother, or whether, to the contrary, we must economize as much as possible on bloodshed and pain simply to give other generations, better armed than we are, their chance.⁸²

I, for one, am practically certain that I have made my choice. And having chosen, it seemed to me that I ought to speak, to say that I would never count myself among people of whatever stripe who are willing to countenance murder, and I would draw whatever consequence followed from this.⁸³ Now I have said my piece, and I shall end. But before that, I would like readers to know something of the spirit in which I have been writing thus far.

We are being asked to love or to hate one or another country or people. But a few of us are only too well aware of our similarity to our fellow human beings to accept this choice. The right way to love the Russian people, in recognition of

what they have never ceased to be—what Tolstoy and Gorky called the world's leavening—is not to wish upon them the vagaries of power but to spare them a new and terrible bloodletting after all they have suffered in the past. The same is true of the American people and of the unfortunate people of Europe. This is a fundamental truth, but of a kind all too often forgotten in the tumult of the day.

Indeed, what we need to resist today is fear and silence and the division of minds and souls that these entail. What we must defend is dialogue and communication worldwide. Servitude, injustice, and falsehood are scourges that interfere with such communication and prevent such dialogue. That is why we must reject them. But those scourges are today the very stuff of history, and many people therefore look upon them as necessary evils. It is also true that we cannot escape from history, since we are in it up to our necks. But we can aspire to do battle within the historical arena in order to save from history that part of man which does not belong to it. That is all I wanted to say. Before closing, in any case, I would like to try to define my attitude, and the spirit in which I wrote these articles, a little more clearly, and I ask my readers to reflect on what I am about to say with open minds.

A vast experiment has now set all the nations of the world on a course governed by the laws of power and domination. I do not say that this experiment should be prevented from continuing. It needs no help from us, and for the moment it cares nothing for those who oppose it. Hence the experiment will go on. I simply raise one question: what will happen if this experiment fails, if the logic of history on which so many people are now relying proves wrong? What will happen if, despite two or three wars, despite the sacrifice of several generations and not a few values, our grandchildren, supposing they exist, find themselves no closer to achieving the universal society? The survivors to the experiment will not even have the strength to bear witness to their own agony. Since the experiment is continuing and it is inevitable that it will continue for some time to come, it is not a bad thing that some people set themselves the goal of preserving, in the apocalyptic period that awaits us, the modest way of thinking that does not claim to solve all problems but is always ready at a moment's notice to ascribe a meaning to everyday life. What is essential is that these people weigh carefully, once and for all, the price that they will be obliged to pay.

Now I can end. What I think needs to be done at the present time is simply this: in the midst of a murderous world, we must decide to reflect on murder and choose. If we can do this, then we will divide ourselves into two groups: those who if need be would be willing to commit murder or become accomplices to murder, and those who would refuse to do so with every fiber of their being. Since this awful division exists, we would be making some progress, at least, if we were clear about it. Across five continents, an endless struggle between violence and preaching will rage in the years to come. And it is true that the former is a thousand times more likely to succeed than the latter. But I have always

⁷⁸ No separate manuscript exists for this text, but it incorporates a passage originally intended for "A New Social Contract."

⁷⁹ Repetition (with slight alteration) of the final clause of the previous article.

⁸⁰ The whole passage from "I have thus far refrained" to "indignation and love" appears in the typescript of "A New Social Contract," where it is followed by a passage that would ultimately appear in "The Century of Fear," which is crossed out and replaced by the heavily corrected handwritten text that is reproduced here, beginning with "I am well aware."

⁸¹ Manuscript: "brother oppresses brother."

⁸² Manuscript: "bloodshed and pain [and] reject terror simply to ensure the existence of other generations that will be better armed than we are." The manuscript ends here.

⁸³ Here again, the affinity with *The Rebel* deserves mention.

believed that if people who placed their hopes in the human condition were mad, those who despaired of events were cowards. Henceforth there will be only one honorable choice: to wager everything on the belief that in the end words will prove stronger than bullets.⁸⁴

ALBERT CAMUS

⁸⁴ These last words inevitably recall the interview that Camus gave to *Demain* in 1957, which appeared under the title "Our Generation's Wager."