

BE OUTRAGED!

(Indignez-Vous!)

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Ninety-three years. I'm nearing the last stage. The end cannot be far off. How lucky I am to be able to draw on the foundation of my political life: the Resistance and the National Council of the Resistance's program from sixty-six years ago. It is thanks to Jean Moulin that all the elements of occupied France—all the movements, the parties, the unions—came together within the framework of the National Council to proclaim their allegiance to Fighting France and to the only leader it recognized, Gen. Charles de Gaulle. I was in London, where I had joined de Gaulle in March 1941, when I learned that the council had put the finishing touches on its program and adopted it on March 15, 1944: a collection of principles and values for Free France that still provides the foundation of our country's modern democracy.

We need these principles and values more than ever today. It is up to us, to all of us together, to ensure that our society remains one to be proud of: not this society of undocumented workers and deportations, of being suspicious of immigrants; not this society where our retirement and the other gains of social security are being called into question; not this society where the media are in the hands of the rich. These are all things that we would refuse to countenance if we were the true heirs of the National Council of the Resistance.

After 1945, after that horrific tragedy, the forces in the National Council of the Resistance achieved an ambitious resurrection for France. Let us remember that this was when the social safety net that the Resistance called for was created: "A comprehensive social security plan, to guarantee all citizens a means of livelihood in every case where they are unable to get it by working"; and "retirement that allows older workers to end their lives with dignity." Sources of energy—electricity, gas, coal—were nationalized, along with the large banks, in accordance again with what the program advocated: "returning to the nation the major means of production that have been monopolized, the fruits of common labor, the sources of energy, mineral riches, insurance companies, and big banks"; and "establishing a true economic and social democracy, which entails removing large-scale economic and financial feudalism from the management of the economy." The general interest had to be given precedence over particular special interests, and a fair division of the wealth created by the world of labor over the power of money. The Resistance proposed "a rational organization of the economy to guarantee that individual interests be subordinated to the public interest, one free of a dictatorship of established professionals in the image of the fascist state." The Provisional Government of the French Republic (1944 – 46)

assumed the task of realizing this ideal.

Genuine democracy needs a free press. The Resistance knew this, and it demanded "the freedom and honor of the press and its independence from the state and the forces of money and foreign influence." Again, these goals were carried forward, thanks to the press laws enacted after 1944. But they are at risk today.

The Resistance called for "the practical opportunity for every French child to have access to the most advanced education," without discrimination—but the reforms proposed in 2008 run counter to this plan. Young teachers have refused to implement these reforms up to now, and I support their actions. They have seen their salaries reduced in retaliation. They got angry, they "disobeyed," they decided that these reforms diverged too far from the ideal of education in a democratic republic, were too deeply beholden to a society of money and failed to develop the creative and critical spirit sufficiently.

All of these social rights at the core of the program of the Resistance are today under attack.

Outrage Inspires Resistance

They have the nerve to tell us that the state can no longer cover the costs of these social programs. Yet how can the money needed to continue and extend these achievements be lacking today, when the creation of wealth has grown so enormously since the Liberation, a time when Europe lay in ruins? It can only be because the power of money, which the Resistance fought against so hard, has never been as great and selfish and shameless as it is now, with its servants in the very highest circles of government. The banks, now privatized, seem to care primarily about their dividends, and about the enormous salaries of their executives, not about the general good. The gap between richest and poorest has never been so large, competition and the circulation of capital never so encouraged.

The motivation that underlay the Resistance was outrage. We, the veterans of the Resistance movements and fighting forces of Free France, call on the younger generations to revive and carry forward the tradition of the Resistance and its ideas. We say to you: take over, keep going, get angry! Those in positions of political responsibility, economic power and intellectual authority, in fact our whole society, must not give up or let ourselves be overwhelmed by the current international dictatorship of the financial markets, which is such a threat to peace and democracy.

I want you, each and every one of you, to have a reason to be outraged. This is precious. When something outrages you, as Nazism did me, that is when you become a militant, strong and engaged. You join the movement of history, and the great current of history continues to flow only thanks to each and every one of us. History's direction is toward more justice and more freedom—though not the unbridled freedom of the fox in a henhouse. The rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 are indeed universal. When you encounter someone who lacks those rights, have sympathy and help him or her to achieve them.

Two Views of History

When I try to understand what caused fascism, the reasons we were overtaken by it and by Vichy, it seems to me that the rich, in their selfishness, feared a Bolshevik revolution. They let that fear control them. Yet all we need, now as then, is an active minority to stand up: that will be enough. We will be the yeast that makes the bread rise. Clearly, the experience of a very old man like me, born in 1917, differs from that of the young people of today. I often ask teachers to let me speak to their students. I say to the students: you don't have the same obvious reasons to get involved as we did. For us, resistance meant not accepting the German occupation, not accepting defeat. It was relatively simple. So was what came next: decolonization and the Algerian War. Algeria had to gain its independence. That was obvious. As for Stalin, we all cheered the Red Army's victory over the Nazis in 1943. Yet, when we learned about the Stalinist mass trials of 1936–38, it became necessary and obvious to oppose this unbearable totalitarianism as well. It was necessary, even if communism was a counterbalance to American capitalism. My long life has given me a steady succession of reasons for outrage.

These reasons came less from emotion than from a will to be engaged and get involved. As a young student in at the *École Normale Supérieure*, I was influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, an older schoolmate of mine. *Nausea* and *The Wall*, rather than *Being and Nothingness*, were important in the formation of my thought. Sartre taught us to tell ourselves, "You as an individual are responsible." It was a kind of anarchist message. Mankind's responsibility cannot be left to some outside power or to a god. On the contrary, people must commit themselves in terms of their personal, individual human responsibility. When I started at the *École Normale Supérieure* on rue d'Ulm in Paris, in 1939, it was as a devoted follower of the philosopher Hegel. I attended the seminars of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His class investigated concrete experience and the body's relationships with sense, with sense as meaning rather than as the five senses. However, my natural optimism, which wanted everything desirable to be possible, led me back to Hegel. Hegelianism interprets the long history of humanity as having meaning: that of mankind's liberty advancing step by step. History is made by successive shocks, of confronting and overcoming successive challenges. Societies progress, and in the end, having attained complete liberty, may achieve a democratic state in some ideal form.

There is, of course, a conception of history that sees the progress of liberty, competition and the race for "more and more" as a destructive whirlwind. That is how a friend of my father described history. This was the man who shared with my father the task of translating Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* into German. I am speaking of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin. He drew a pessimistic message from a painting by a Swiss painter, Paul Klee, called *Angelus Novus*, which shows an angel opening its arms as if to push back or ward off a storm that Benjamin equates with progress. For Benjamin, who committed

suicide in September 1940 to escape the Nazis, history is an unstoppable progression from one catastrophe to the next.

Indifference: The Worst Attitude

It is true that the reasons for outrage today may seem less clear or the world more complicated. Who runs things? Who decides? It is not always easy to distinguish the answers from among all the forces that rule us. It is no longer a question of a small elite whose schemes we can clearly comprehend. This is a vast world, and we see its interdependence. We are inter-connected in ways we never were before, but some things in this world are unacceptable. To see this, you have only to open your eyes. I tell the young: just look, and you'll find something. The worst possible outlook is indifference that says, "I can't do anything about it; I'll just get by." Behaving like that deprives you of one of the essentials of being human: the capacity and the freedom to feel outraged. That freedom is indispensable, as is the political involvement that goes with it.

We can identify two great new challenges:

(1) The immense gap between the very poor and the very rich, which never ceases to expand. This is an innovation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The very poor in the world today earn barely \$2 a day. We cannot let this gap grow even wider. This alone should arouse our commitment.

(2) Human rights and the state of the planet. After Liberation, I had the opportunity to be involved with drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, at the Chaillot Palace in Paris. It was in my capacity as the chief of staff for Henri Laugier, assistant secretary general of the UN and secretary of the Commission on Human Rights, that I, with many others, was chosen to participate in drawing up this declaration. I will never forget the role played by Eleanor Roosevelt and by René Cassin, commissioner for justice and education in the Free French government in exile in London and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968, in formulating the declaration. Nor can I forget Pierre Mendès France, a member of the UN Economic and Social Council, to whom we submitted our text before it went to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee of the General Assembly. This committee included the fifty-four member states of the UN at that time, and I was its secretary. It is to René Cassin that we owe the term "universal" rights, and not "international," as proposed by our Anglo-American friends. For the real issue at the end of the Second World War was to free ourselves from the threats that totalitarianism held over mankind's head, and to do so, the member states of the UN had to commit to respecting universal rights. That is how to forestall the argument for full sovereignty that a state likes to make when it is carrying out crimes against humanity on its soil. That was the case with Hitler, who as master in his own house believed he was allowed to commit genocide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights owes a lot to the universal revulsion against Nazism, Fascism, totalitarianism—but also, thanks to our presence, to the spirit of

the Resistance. I felt that we had to move fast so as not to succumb to the hypocrisy of victors promoting allegiance to values that no one intended to enforce faithfully.

I cannot resist the impulse here to quote Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to a nationality”; and Article 22: “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” Even if this declaration has only advisory, rather than legal, force, it has nonetheless played a powerful role since 1948. We have seen colonized peoples refer to it in their struggles for independence. It fortified their spirits in the fight for liberty. I am happy to see that NGOs and social movements such as the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens, the International Federation for Human Rights and Amnesty International have multiplied and become increasingly active in recent decades. It is clear that in order to be effective today, one has to act in a network and be connected in other ways, taking advantage of modern means of communication. To the young, I say: look around you, you will find things that make you justifiably angry—the treatment of immigrants, illegal aliens and Roma. You will see concrete situations that provoke you to act as a real citizen. Seek and you shall find!

Outrage Over Palestine

Today, my strongest feeling of indignation is over Palestine, both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The starting point of my outrage was the appeal launched by courageous Israelis to the Diaspora: you, our older siblings, come and see where our leaders are taking this country and how they are forgetting the fundamental human values of Judaism. I went to Gaza and the West Bank in 2002, then five more times until 2009. It is absolutely imperative to read Richard Goldstone’s report of September 2009 on Gaza, in which this South African judge, himself Jewish, in fact a self-proclaimed Zionist, accuses the Israeli army of having committed “actions amounting to war crimes, possibly crimes against humanity” during its three-week “Operation Cast Lead.” I went to Gaza in 2009 in order to see with my own eyes what the report described. My wife and I were allowed to enter, thanks to our diplomatic passports, but the people accompanying us were not authorized to cross from Israel into the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. We also visited the Palestinian refugee camps established after 1948 by the UN Relief and Works Agency, where more than 3 million Palestinians—the descendants over the past forty years of the 750,000 driven from their homes by Israel, first in 1948–49, then in 1967—await a return that is no longer possible.

As for Gaza, it is an open-air prison for a million and a half Palestinians. In this prison they must organize to survive. Even more than the physical destruction from Operation Cast Lead, such as the destroyed Red Cross

hospital, it is the behavior of the Gazans—their patriotism, their love of the ocean and the beach, their constant preoccupation with the well-being of their countless laughing children—that haunts our memories. We were struck by their ingenious way of facing all the shortages imposed on them. We saw them make bricks, since they lacked cement to rebuild the thousands of houses destroyed by the tanks. It was confirmed to us that there were 1,400 people killed on the Palestinian side—including women, children and the elderly—in the course of Operation Cast Lead, compared with only fifty Israeli wounded. I share the South African judge’s conclusions. For Jews themselves to perpetrate war crimes is intolerable. Unfortunately, history gives few examples of people who learn the lessons of their own history.

I am well aware that Hamas, which won the last legislative elections, was unable to avoid the launching of rockets into Israeli villages in response to the situation of isolation and blockade in which the Gazans find themselves. Of course I think that terrorism is unacceptable, but we must recognize that when a country is occupied by infinitely superior military means, the popular reaction cannot be only nonviolent.

Did it serve Hamas’s interests to launch rockets into the town of Sderot? No. It did not serve their cause, but the gesture can be understood as coming from the exasperation of the Gazans. In this notion of “exasperation,” we have to understand violence as a regrettable consequence of an unacceptable situation. Terrorism, we might say, is a form of exasperation. And exasperation here is a negative term. What is needed is not exasperation but hope. Exasperation is the denial of hope. It is understandable; I would almost say it is natural. Nonetheless, it is not acceptable, because it does not allow people to achieve the results that hope can achieve.

Nonviolence: The Path We Must Learn to Follow

I am convinced that the future belongs to nonviolence, to the reconciliation of different cultures. It is along this path that humanity will clear its next hurdle. And here, too, I agree with Sartre: we cannot excuse the terrorists who throw the bombs, but we can understand them. In “The Situation of the Writer in 1947,” Sartre wrote, “I recognize that violence, manifested in any form, is a failure. But it is an inevitable failure because we live in a world of violence; even though it is true that recourse to violence to fight violence risks perpetuating it, it is also true that this is the only way to make violence stop.” To which I would add that nonviolence is a surer way to make it stop. One must not support terrorists, as Sartre did in the name of this principle during the Algerian War, or at the time of the attack on the Israeli athletes committed at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. It doesn’t work, and Sartre himself, at the end of his life, ended by questioning the meaning of terrorism and doubting its justification. To say that “violence doesn’t work” is much more important than to know whether or not to condemn those who have recourse to it. In this notion of “working,” of effectiveness, lies a nonviolent hope. If such

a thing as violent hope exists, it is in the poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire (“How slow life is/And how violent hope is”), not in the political realm. In March 1980, three weeks before his death, Sartre admitted, “We must try to explain why the world of today, which is horrible, is only one moment in a long historical development, that hope has always been one of the dominant forces of revolutions and insurrections, and how I still feel that hope is my conception of the future.”

We must realize that violence turns its back on hope. We have to choose hope over violence—choose the hope of non-violence. That is the path we must learn to follow. The oppressors no less than the oppressed have to negotiate to remove the oppression: that is what will eliminate terrorist violence. That is why we cannot let too much hate accumulate.

The message of a Nelson Mandela, a Martin Luther King Jr., is just as relevant in a world that has moved beyond victorious totalitarianism and the cold war confrontation of ideologies. Their message is one of hope and faith in modern societies’ ability to move beyond conflict with mutual understanding and a vigilant patience. To reach that point, societies must be based on rights whose violation prompts outrage—no matter who has violated them. There can be no compromising on these rights.

Toward a Peaceful Insurrection

I have noticed—and I am not the only one—the Israeli government’s reaction to the citizens of [the West Bank village of] Bil’in, who protest the wall each Friday by simply marching to it, without throwing rocks or using force. The Israeli authorities have described these marches as “nonviolent terrorism.” Not bad... One would have to be Israeli to describe nonviolence as terrorism, and above all one would have to be embarrassed by how effective it is in gaining the support and understanding of every enemy of oppression in the world.

The Western obsession with productivity has brought the world to a crisis that we can escape only with a radical break from the headlong rush for “more, always more” in the financial realm as well as in science and technology. It is high time that concerns for ethics, justice and sustainability prevail. For we are threatened by the most serious dangers, which have the power to bring the human experiment to an end by making the planet uninhabitable.

Still, it remains the case that there has been important progress since 1948: decolonization, the end of apartheid, the destruction of the Soviet empire, the fall of the Berlin Wall. The first ten years of the twenty-first century, in contrast, were a period of retreat, explicable in part by the American presidency of George W. Bush, September 11 and the disastrous conclusions that the United States drew from it, such as the invasion of Iraq. We have had an economic crisis, but we have not initiated a new politics for economic development. Similarly, the Copenhagen Climate Conference of December 2009 did not result in genuine political action to save the planet. We are at a threshold

between the horrors of the first decade of the century and the possibilities of the decades to follow. Yet we must keep up hope—we must always hope. The previous decade, the 1990s, brought great progress: UN conferences like the one in Rio on the environment in 1992 and in Beijing on women in 1995. In September 2000, the 191 UN member states adopted the declaration on the eight Millennium Development Goals, initiated by Secretary General Kofi Annan, in which they agreed to cut worldwide extreme poverty in half by 2015. My deep regret is that neither President Obama nor the European Union has come forward with what should have been their contribution to a constructive phase based on fundamental values.

How should I conclude? By recalling again that on the sixtieth anniversary of the Program of the National Council of the Resistance, we veterans of the Resistance movements and the fighting forces of Free France from 1940 to 1945 (Lucie Aubrac, Raymond Aubrac, Henri Bartoli, Daniel Cordier, Philippe Dechartre, Georges Guingouin, Maurice Kriegel-Valrimont, Lise London, Georges Séguy, Germaine Tillion, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Maurice Voutey and myself) addressed an Appeal to the young generation on March 8, 2004, in which we said, “Nazism was defeated, thanks to the sacrifices of our brothers and sisters of the Resistance and of the United Nations against fascist barbarity. But this menace has not completely disappeared, and our outrage at injustice remains intact to this day.”

No, this menace has not completely disappeared. In addition, we continue to call for “a true peaceful uprising against the means of mass communication that offers nothing but mass consumption as a prospect for our youth, contempt for the least powerful in society and for culture, general amnesia and the outrageous competition of all against all.”

To you who will create the twenty-first century, we say, from the bottom of our hearts,

**TO CREATE IS TO RESIST.
TO RESIST IS TO CREATE.**

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