
“If one day that hour returns”.
The New Left between anti-fascist memories and Third Worldism

Andrea Brazzoduro*¹

This article offers a new genealogy of the New Left in Western Europe as it developed from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Differently from prevalent interpretations, it reassesses the historical influence of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), and “Third-Worldism” more generally, in the genealogy of the new political cultures that flourished during the global 1960s. A whole generation of activists appropriated the memory of the anti-fascist Resistance, giving it a function that was not simply defensive but also proactive and merging the myth of the “betrayed Resistance” with the idea of imperialism as the “new Fascism”. The European civil war, which Enzo Traverso has defined the distinctive feature of the first half of the twentieth century, was thus reconfigured worldwide as a “global civil war”.

Key words: New Left, Global 1960s, Anti-fascism; anti-colonialism, Third Worldism, Algerian War of Independence

In 1959, the Italian band Cantacronache recorded the *Canzone del popolo algerino* [Song of the Algerian people], which ended with the following two verses: “Who sent you, soldier, I armed with a rifle? I Who sent you, I young man, to die far away? || Return home, tell, I everything you see: I offended, invaded, destroyed, I the land of Algiers remains standing!”² The text and music were written by Michele Luciano Straniero and Fausto Amodei respectively. In about the same period, the two had written another song, *Partigiani fratelli maggiori* [Elder partisan brothers], commissioned by the National Association of Italian Partisans for a tribute ceremony to the partisans killed in Montoso, a mountain village in the northern Piedmont region.

* Marie Sklodowska-Curie Global Fellow; Università Ca’ Foscari and University of Oxford; andrea.brazzoduro@history.ox.ac.uk

¹ This project received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, under grant agreement No 837297.

² *Cantacronache 4* (A: *Qualcosa da aspettare - Il giuramento*; B: *Il povero Elia - La canzone del popolo algerino*), Italia Canta C 0008, 1959, 45 rpm EP record. Sleeve notes by Maurizio Corgnati. On the Cantacronache see Chiara Ferrari, *Cantacronache 1958-1962. Politica e protesta in musica*, «Storicamente», 2013, n. 42, DOI: 10.12977/stor495 (all consulted websites were last accessed on 2 June 2020).

Michele and I decided to participate — Amodei recalls — with a song written for this specific occasion by two people who had not taken part in the Resistance for age-related reasons, in order to assert our relation of brotherhood, in the sense of “inexperienced younger brothers”, to the former partisans.³

As with the *Canzone del popolo algerino*, the Cantacronache did not hesitate to choose which side to stand on. More importantly, *Partigiani fratelli maggiori* was an explicit and radical break with the spirit of the times. The authoritarian turn of centrism in the 1950s was by no means inclined to pay homage to the partisans, and the song in fact says the following: “If we search through history books, | if we search through the great discourses made of air | we will not find our memory.”⁴ The Italian band therefore presented itself as the heir and faithful custodian of the memory of the anti-fascist Resistance movement in Italy, of which Ferruccio Parri — one of the highest ethical figures of the Resistance — was considered the legitimate representative. In fact, Parri himself wrote the album sleeve notes, which end with an equally explicit *viaticum*: “1945, 1948 left a suspended delivery. Blessed is the one who picks it up. Hope lives in the song.”⁵ The final verse of *Partigiani fratelli maggiori* seals this ideal passing of the baton: “A voice in the hour of the dead | has called us to our flags with Italy | to watch over the flame on the mountains; | but if one day that hour returns, | for the dead you left on the mountain, | partisans, call us once again!” For these young people in their early twenties, the Resistance — retrieved almost secretly from the margins to which the dominant political culture had relegated it — is not a story of the past, but rather a precious indication for the future if not already for the present (“but if one day that hour returns”).

Towards the end of the 1950s, that is, before the tragic events of July 1960 — also narrated by Amodei in his famous anti-war song, *Per i morti di Reggio Emilia* [Song for the fallen of Reggio Emilia] — and the emergence of a new youth movement, for the Cantacronache band there seems to be no doubt that the spirit of the Resistance continued in the struggles of the present, starting with the Algerians’ fight for independence.⁶ Michele Straniero, who after 20 years repropounded the *Canzone del popolo algerino* in a 1979 album, made the following observation:

³ Fausto Amodei, *Nel blu dipinti di rosso*, in Giovanni Straniero, Carlo Rovello (eds.), *Cantacronache: i 50 anni della canzone ribelle. L'eredità di Michele L. Straniero*, Arezzo, Zona, 2008, p. 21.

⁴ *Cantacronache 3* (A: *Oltre il ponte - Tredici milioni*; B: *Partigiano sconosciuto - Partigiani fratelli maggiori*), Italia Canta C 0006, 1959, 45 rpm EP record. Sleeve notes by Ferruccio Parri.

⁵ *Cantacronache 3*, cit.

⁶ *Cantacronache 6* (A: *Il ratto della chitarra - Una carriera*; B: *Ero un consumatore - Per i morti di Reggio Emilia*), Italia Canta C 0016, 1960, 45 rpm EP record. Cover image by Lucio Cabutti.

For my generation, the Algerian war had the same value that the Spanish Civil War had had for our fathers, and that of Vietnam for younger generations: it made us discover oppression and torture, it gave us the moral confidence and conviction that we were on the right side, it helped us to understand the dynamics of history: it was what is generally called “gaining awareness” that helped us to become adults.⁷

In this article, I will present the initial stages of a work in progress, namely the study of the genealogy of the New Left in Western Europe as it developed from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. Conversely from mainstream interpretations, I believe that it is necessary to reorganise European *political* geography in such a way that it also includes the (post)colonial space, hence by reconsidering the historical importance of the Algerian War of Independence — and Third Worldism more generally — in the genealogy of the new political cultures that flourished during the long global 1960s.⁸ My aim is to develop specific approaches to better understand the emergence of the New Left as a complex process that encompassed local, national and transnational dynamics: a process that was thoroughly linked to decolonisation, which it undoubtedly influenced but by which it was also deeply influenced. In sum, the article seeks — at the very least — to contribute to challenging the Western narrative of the global 1960s by shifting the perspective from Berkeley and Paris to Algiers.

“*Sous les pavés, le passé*”

The broad periodisation implied in the very concept of the long global 1960s — which I will here refer to as the global 1960s — has enabled an important development in the understanding of the political and social movements that emerged in the second post-war period.⁹ While various national historiographies have proposed definitions that are particularly suited to specific contexts,

⁷ *Testi delle canzoni con note dell'autore*, in Michele L. Straniero, *La Madonna della Fiat*, Divergo 5335 525 - DVAP 025, 1979, 33 rpm LP record.

⁸ On the term “(post)colonial” see Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016, p. ix *passim*.

⁹ For a general overview of the global 1960s: Jian Chen et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building*, Abingdon, Oxon. and London, Routledge, 2018; Tamara Chaplin, Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney (eds.), *The Global 1960s: Convention, Contest and Counterculture*, London, Routledge, 2018. On the correctness of a “long” periodisation: Daniel J. Sherman et al. (eds.), *The long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013; Philippe Artières, Michelle Zancarini-Fournel (eds.), *68. Une histoire collective, 1962-1981*, Paris, La Découverte, 2008; Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth (eds.), *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, New York and Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and the US, 1956-1976*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1998.

for example “period of conflict” (Vidotto) and “period of social movements” (Gallerano) for the Italian case, or “1968 years” (Dreyfus-Armand, de Baecque) in France, the distinguishing element that is being emphasised here (i.e. the conflict, the social movements or the year 1968) is not entirely adequate to hold together different contexts.¹⁰ If the chosen English definition bends to hegemonic newspeak, at the same time it responds to the desire to be part of both a debate and a strand of historiography that are not tied to a national case. Indeed, the concept of the global 1960s has the advantage of combining an extended chronological scan with a spatial dimension that, without being all-encompassing, is not even limited to the national context; instead, it seeks to visualise the wrinkles and points of contact of complex political geographies. In this sense, the global 1960s aims to break away from a short-sighted approach that tends to focus on the Parisian May or, at best, the Free Speech Movement at the University of Berkeley (1964-1965). In the memorable words of Charles S. Maier, “[f]or those who want to study 1968 more deeply, it will be necessary to understand the grip and the ideological hegemony of the 1950s. *Sous les pavés, le passé*”.¹¹

When I refer to the “New Left”, I propose a functional yet flexible category, comparable to the Anglo-American interpretation of “New Left” as a reaction to both Soviet ‘state socialism’ and the conservative turn of social democracy. It therefore includes all protesters, unlike the *Deuxième Gauche* or the *Nouvelle Gauche* in France, which exclude the student militants of the extra-parliamentary revolutionary Left: the New Left as I understand it in this article contains both but is not limited to them.

In his groundbreaking study of the French case, Christoph Kalter explained that in many Western countries the New Left developed from the mid-1950s onwards, in a period that was deeply marked by decolonisation.¹² In leaving the traditional organisations of the “old Left”, that is, the workers’ movement and political Catholicism, it bitterly opposed the latter; in this generative process, radical anti-colonialism was often one of the qualifying traits of the New Left.¹³

¹⁰ Vittorio Vidotto, *Italiani/e. Dal miracolo economico a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2005 (which proposes the “period of conflict” category); Nicola Gallerano, *La stagione dei movimenti e le sue periodizzazioni*, in Paola Ghione, Marco Grispigni (eds.), *Giovani prima della rivolta*, Rome, manifesto libri, 1998, pp. 33-41; Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Antoine de Baecque (eds.), *Les Années 68. Le temps de la contestation*, Brussels, Complexe, 2000.

¹¹ Charles S. Maier, *1968—Did it matter?*, in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia*, Budapest; New York, Central European University Press, 2011, pp. 413-434. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

¹² See Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c.1950-1976*, Cambridge, UK; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

¹³ See, for example, Fabio Guidali, *Culture and political commitment in the non-orthodox Marxist Left: the case of Quaderni Piacentini in pre-1968 Italy*, “History of European Ideas”, 2020, n. 6, pp. 862-875.

In fact, the New Left saw the anti-colonial struggle as a new type of anti-fascism. Thus, it compared the Algerian liberation movement to the Italian Resistance movement of the Second World War, and their enemies to the Nazis and the Fascists — the Nazis' allies. The strong commitment of French intellectuals to condemn the practice of torture during the so-called “battle of Algiers” (1957) converted the Algerian war into a European ethical divide.¹⁴

The “battle of Algiers” deeply affected the New Left, though perhaps more because of the famous film directed by the ex-partisan and communist Gillo Pontecorvo.¹⁵ A whole generation of militants appropriated the memory of the Resistance, giving it a connotation that was not only defensive but also activist, superimposing the myth of the “betrayed Resistance” — interrupted by the social revolution, hence still to be fulfilled — on the image of imperialism as the “new Fascism”.¹⁶

The European civil war, which Enzo Traverso described as the distinctive feature of the first half of the twentieth century (1914-1945), was thus reconfigured on a global level as a “global civil war”, inaugurated by the Algerian War of Independence.¹⁷ For the militants of the global 1960s, this reactivation of the anti-fascist front had both practical and cultural consequences, and the Algerian Revolution represented a turning point in the political education of many of them. If we recall the “damnés de la terre” from the first line of the French version of *The Internationale*, which Frantz Fanon used for the title of his most celebrated book, *Les Damnés de la terre* (translated in English with the title *The Wretched of the Earth*), in many cases these militants eventually became the “wretched of the revolution”.¹⁸

The reinsertion of the opposition between Fascism and anti-fascism in the framework of a new global civil war provoked an ethical divide. Consequently, the idea of an “absolute enmity against an absolute enemy” emerged, a concept Carl Schmitt had proposed in his *Theory of the Partisan*. Published in 1963, the

¹⁴ Vedi Raphaëlle Branche, *La Torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie 1954-1962*, 2nd ed., Paris, Gallimard, 2016; Catherine Brun, Olivier Penot-Lacassagne (eds.), *Engagements et déchirements: Les intellectuels et la guerre d'Algérie*, Paris, Gallimard, 2012; James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil war. Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria*, foreword by Pierre Bourdieu, Lincoln and London, Nebraska University Press, 2006. In Italian: Cesare Pianciola, *La guerra d'Algeria e il «manifesto dei 121»*, Rome, edizioni dell'asino, 2017.

¹⁵ See, for an overview, Andrea Brazzoduro, *Il nemico interno. La guerra d'Algeria nel cinema francese*, “Passato e presente”, 2009, n. 76, pp. 127-142.

¹⁶ On the extremist interpretation of this aspect, see Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci, *Des usages de l'antifascisme et de la résistance par les Brigades Rouges*, in Marc Lazar, Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci (eds.), *L'Italie des années de plomb. Le terrorisme entre histoire et mémoire*, Paris, Autrement, 2010, pp. 16-35.

¹⁷ Enzo Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco. La guerra civile europea (1914-1945)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007.

¹⁸ See also Angelo Ventrone (ed.), *I dannati della rivoluzione. Violenza politica e storia d'Italia negli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, Macerata, Edizioni Università di Macerata, 2010.

book was deeply influenced by the author’s experience of the Second World War and by the guerrilla warfare that had characterised the recently concluded Algerian war, to which Schmitt often makes reference (especially the trial against Raoul Salan, one of the generals involved in the Algiers putsch).¹⁹ In my opinion, this framework of the global civil war — in which the friend-foe dichotomy, purified of its territorial element (which Schmitt classifies as “telluric”), is reactivated — is an essential feature to explain the new political cultures that emerged during the global 1960s, triggered by decolonisation and the Cold War.²⁰

According to Schmitt, the useful criteria for developing a theory of the partisan are “irregularity, increased mobility of the active combat, and a heightened intensity of political commitment”. He adds a fourth criterion, “one that Jover Zamora has called his telluric character”.²¹ Schmitt explains this concept as follows: “Despite all tactical mobility, this characteristic is important for the basically defensive situation of the partisan, *who changes his essence* once he identifies with the absolute aggressiveness of a world-revolutionary or a technicistic ideology.”²² In the absence of the telluric character, that is, the defence of one’s own territory, the partisan changes his original character. However, this “distortion” is precisely the distinctive feature of civil war as conceived by the advocates of the global revolution. Schmitt continues:

Lenin shifted the conceptual center of gravity from war to politics, i.e., to the distinction of friend and enemy. That was significant and, following Clausewitz, a logical continuation of the idea that war is a continuation of politics. But Lenin, as a professional revolutionary of global civil war, went still further and turned the real enemy into an absolute enemy.²³

Schmitt’s starting point was in fact the guerilla war that the Spanish population fought against the French army between 1808 and 1813, where the Spanish partisan had “risked battle on his own home soil”.²⁴ Hence, what characterised

¹⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen. Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen*, Berlin, Duncker&Humboldt, 1963 [*Theory of the Partisan. Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, translated by G.L. Ulmen, New York, Telos Press Publishing, 2007, p. 89]. Hannah Arendt had suggested the concept of global civil war in the same year: *On Revolution*, New York, Viking Press, 1963. On this debate see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer II. Stasis. La guerra civile come paradigma politico*, in Id., *Homo Sacer. Edizione integrale*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2018, pp. 251-310. For a different reading, focused entirely on a critique of the “theorists of totalitarianism”, see Céline Jouin, *Préface. La guerre civile mondiale n’a pas eu lieu*, in Carl Schmitt, *La guerre civile mondiale. Essais 1943-1978*, Maisons-Alfort, Ère, 2007, pp. 6-27.

²⁰ On Schmitt’s “deterritorialised” reading see also Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930-1970*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. See, for a discussion, my review in “Modern Italy”, 2020, vol. 25, Special Issue 4, pp. 478-480.

²¹ C. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, cit., p. 20.

²² C. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, cit., p. 20. Italics mine.

²³ C. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, cit., p. 93.

²⁴ C. Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, cit., p. 6.

the transition of the European civil war of 1914-1945 to the subsequent global civil war (*Weltbürgerkrieg*) was a change of essence of the partisan, who reconfigured his territorial connectedness by linking it to a much broader struggle.

The *Theory of the Partisan* marked a turning point in comparison to Schmitt's earlier writings. This time, the centre of his reflection was not total war, which exceeds the boundaries of a purely military confrontation to invest all aspects of life (economy and communication, in particular), but the wars of national liberation — above all, guerrilla warfare, which had taken hold from Indochina to Algiers. In this context, the key element is not the fact that the State is “overthrown” (as he wrote, again in 1963, in the new *Foreword to The Concept of the Political*, the famous text originally published in 1932), but rather the impact of the Cold War, hence the division of Europe and the world into zones of influence.²⁵ In fact, the Pax Americana et Sovietica forbade the Communist parties to transform the anti-fascist struggle into a revolutionary war; consequently, Stalin sought to stop any movement in that direction from the Spain of the International Brigades onwards. The decolonisation struggles had the effect of disturbing this balance by putting the civil war and the figure of the partisan — which the Communist parties had conveniently exorcised and embalmed in the wake of the Second World War — back on the agenda.

It is clear, then, why the New Left's militants could not have a direct relationship with the memory of the Resistance. “In a sense, the Communist Party had confiscated its legacy, and our ‘postmemory’” — Traverso wrote in the last, autobiographical pages of the introduction to his book on the European civil war — “in reality reflected a rupture with memory. For us, it was yet another ‘betrayed’ revolution”.²⁶ In the militants' viewpoint, the revival of the Resistance not with a commemorative but an activating function occurred through a classic “return to the origins”: incipient Bolshevism, on the one hand; decolonisation and its triumphant myth, on the other. Both these “invented traditions” hinted at the need to transform the imperialist war into civil war, as Traverso recalled:

As a young militant, I had inherited a set of political categories and, more generally, a lexicon — party, masses, tactics, strategy, insurgency, and so on — that dated back to the time of the European civil war. In the absence of a militia, we demonstrated wearing helmets, accompanied by a military-style security service. Our songs had warlike refrains, calling for arms and sometimes announcing the “civil war”, like the anthem of Potere operaio (Workers' Power).²⁷

Founded in 1967, the revolutionary Workers' Power party had, in fact, endowed itself with an anthem in 1971. Sung to the score of the famous *Warszawianka 1905 roku*, widespread also among the prisoners of the tsarist regime and later

²⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Le categorie del «politico»*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1972, p. 90.

²⁶ E. Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco*, cit., p. 23.

²⁷ E. Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco*, cit., p. 23.

used by the anarchists during the Spanish civil war (with the title *A las barricadas*), a central verse of the anthem read as follows: “Proletarians are ready to fight, | more bread and more work won’t suffice, | they have nothing to lose but their chains | and there is a whole world to gain. | Let’s leave the assembly lines and pick up the gun, | come on comrades the civil war has begun!”

In this article, I use the concept of “global civil war” in this very sense, that is, not as a precise historiographical definition but, rather, as an operational category that undoubtedly has more to do with self-representation. Yet, as the history of mentalities has taught us at least from the *Annales* onwards, cultural frameworks, discursive regimes and repertoires of action are not idealistic prejudices but extremely effective devices in defining the conditions of the possibility of experience — what Koselleck has called the relationship between the horizon of expectation and the space of experience.²⁸

In other words, I am suggesting that the Algerian War of Independence, despite having received relatively little attention in studies of the long 1960s, occupies a key position in the genealogy of the New Left, given that it established the political and conceptual framework — namely the global civil war — through which Castro and Guevara’s victory (Cuba, 1959) or the triumph of the Vietcong (Tet offensive, 1968) would later be read and understood. Although Cuba and Vietnam undoubtedly became essential references in the revolutionary canon, they occurred far from the European continent; it is precisely this geographical distance that enabled Algiers to gradually take their place within the New Left’s pantheon, offering a far more efficient screen on which to project the desires and (exotic) dreams of the nation’s political imagination. Algiers was different not only because of its position on the southern shore of the Mediterranean basin, but also in view of its specific “external interiority” as opposed to European *political* geography. After all, did de Gaulle not say that “the Mediterranean runs through France as the Seine runs through Paris?” It is therefore fair to ask what Europe was — and what it was not — after Algeria became independent, and further still, what Algeria was.²⁹ The perspective that I propose moves away from the usual approaches to the history of political parties or international relations, focusing instead on Jean-François Sirinelli’s definition of the “cultural history of the political”.³⁰

²⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1979.

²⁹ See Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2006.

³⁰ See Jean-François Sirinelli, *Histoire culturelle et histoire politique*, in Christian Delporte, Jean-Yves Mollier, Jean-François Sirinelli (eds.), *Dictionnaire d’histoire culturelle de la France contemporaine*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2010, pp. 398-401; Jean-François Sirinelli, *De la demeure à l’agora. Pour une histoire culturelle du politique*, “Vingtième Siècle”, 1998, n. 57, pp. 121-131; Serge Berstein, *La culture politique*, in Jean-Pierre Rioux, Jean-François Sirinelli

In this regard, it is worth looking at the anti-colonialist militant networks *in* and *between* Italy, France and obviously Algeria (the “Mecca of revolution”, in Cabral’s words), which have been considered a key aspect of the global 1960s.³¹ The chosen periodisation, which is necessarily wide-ranging, takes the “battle of Algiers” (1957) as *terminus post quem* and the fall/liberation of Saigon (1975) as *terminus ad quem* (1975): for the New Left’s transnational audience, the former represents the short circuit between the Algerian war and the memory of the Shoah and the Second World War, whereas the latter marks the end of Third Worldism as a political project.³²

A “comprehensive perceptive filter”

Recently four different historiographical debates have come to intersect with each other, the first of which has accompanied a profound renewal of studies on the European memories of the Resistance.³³ As demonstrated by the extract from the Cantacronache quoted at the beginning of this article, the memories of the Second World War — and in particular of the anti-fascist Resistance — are undoubtedly a key feature of the New Left’s political imagination.³⁴

(eds.), *Pour une histoire culturelle*, Paris, Seuil, 1997; Jean-François Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*, vol. 2, *Cultures*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.

³¹ On Cabral see Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization and the Third World Order*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 3.

³² On the former, see Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 2009; on the latter, see instead Christoph Kalter, *From Global to Local and Back: the “Third World” Concept and the New Radical Left in France*, “Journal of Global History”, 2017, n. 1, pp. 115-136.

³³ See, for a not exhaustive overview, Istvan Deak, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution During World War II*, New York-London, Routledge, 2nd ed., 2018; Olivier Wieviorka, *Une Histoire de la résistance en Europe occidentale*, Paris, Perrin, 2017; Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015; Olivier Wieviorka, *La Mémoire désunie. De la Libération à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil, 2014; Filippo Focardi, Bruno Groppo (eds.), *L’Europa e le sue memorie. Politiche e culture del ricordo dopo il 1989*, Rome, Viella, 2013; Jorg Echternkamp, Stefan Martens (eds.), *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn, 2010; Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, Claudio Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, London, Duke University Press, 2006; Filippo Focardi, *La guerra della memoria. La Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2005; Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Alessandro Portelli, *L’ordine è già stato eseguito. Roma, le Fosse Ardeatine, la memoria*, Rome, Donzelli, 1999.

³⁴ See, for example, García Hugo et al. (eds.), *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present*, New York, Berghahn, 2016; Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest in Western Europe: The Case of Italy*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Philip E. Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; Martin

Nevertheless, while a vast number of studies have drawn attention to this relationship, existing historiography has insufficiently examined the role of decolonisation (especially in the Algerian context) as a stimulus for this reactivation of the past in the present.³⁵ The memory of the anti-fascist struggle — and, accordingly, of the Nazi occupation — has played a key role in the imagination of these transnational networks of militants, acting for a few decades as a “comprehensive perceptive filter”.³⁶ For a generation that considered itself to be part of a revolutionary story, Jean-Paul Sartre’s prison visit to Andreas Baader — the hunger-striking founder of the Red Army Faction — in December 1974 undeniably linked the points of a constellation ranging from the Second World War via the Algerian war to the new anti-fascism — converted to a global civil war.³⁷ Not only powerful images and myths travelled from one point to another within this “invented tradition”, but also what Charles Tilly has called “repertoires of collective action”.³⁸

This conceptual tool allows us to approach the debate on social movements and political violence from a new perspective.³⁹ Indeed, with a few notable exceptions, existing scholarship has underestimated the influence of the Algerian war and decolonisation in the genealogy of the “repertoires” of the New Left, from the sit-in to urban guerrilla warfare.⁴⁰ Consequently, this litera-

Evans, *The Memory of Resistance: French Opposition to the Algerian War (1954-1962)*, Oxford, Berg, 1997.

³⁵ There are, of course, some exceptions: Robert Gildea, Andrew Tompkins, *The Transnational in the Local: The Larzac Plateau as a Site of Transnational Activism since 1970*, “Journal of Contemporary History”, 2015, n. 3, pp. 581-605; M. Evans, *The Memory of Resistance*, cit.

³⁶ Petra Terhoeven, *Hitler’s Children? German Terrorism as part of the Transnational “New Left Wave”*, in Alberto Martin Alvarez, Eduardo Rey Tristan (eds.), *Revolutionary Violence and the New Left. Transnational Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2017, p. 129.

³⁷ See Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre et l’extrême gauche française. Cinquante ans de relations tumultueuses*, Paris, La fabrique, 2011; Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects. Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, London and New York, Verso, 2010.

³⁸ Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard University Press, 1995. See also Cécile Péchu, *Répertoire d’action*, in Olivier Fillieule, Lilian Mathieu, Cécile Péchu (eds.), *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009, pp. 454-462.

³⁹ On this topic, see M. Alvarez Alberto, E. Rey Tristan (eds.), *Revolutionary Violence and the New Left*, cit.; Isabelle Sommier, *La violence politique et son deuil. L’après 68 en France et en Italie*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015; Petra Terhoeven, *Deutscher Herbst in Europa. Der Linkterrorismus der siebziger Jahre als transnationale Phänomen*, München, Oldenbourg, 2014; Guido Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell’Italia degli anni 1960-1970*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009; Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War at Home. The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and the Revolutionary Violences in the Sixties and Seventies*, Berkeley and London, Berkeley University Press, 2004; Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front. Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany*, Durham, NC. and London, Duke University Press, 2012.

ture has only partially managed to explain how and why, towards the end of the global 1960s, a significant number of these militants discovered — “like Fanon’s Algerian peasants”, in Hannah Arendt’s words — that “only violence pays”.⁴¹

Another historiographical trend that we need to weave into this analytical perspective is the one that began to reconsider the “long 1960s” in a less Euro-Atlantic perspective, shifting the focus towards the “Global South” and its interactions with Europe.⁴² Particularly useful in tackling the challenge that this complex simultaneous spatiality poses is the toolbox offered by global history, which does not merely study a generic impact of “Third Worldism” in one or more national cases. Although many definitions of this approach exist, these are often contradictory.⁴³ The most interesting are those interpretations that consider global history not so much as a new disciplinary field but as a mental attitude aimed at casting a light on the transformative dimension of trans-local encounters (and clashes), as proposed by global microhistory (Trivellato), connected history (Subrahmanyam) or micro-spatial history (De Vito).⁴⁴ In other words, it is a question of visualising historical processes not only within the framework of the nation-state, but also in that of “alternative or complementary spaces [...] within which historical actors formed social relationships and interpreted their world”.⁴⁵

This sensibility is even more effective when combined with oral history methodology, as a recent pioneering study on 1968 in Europe has demonstrated.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on East-West exchanges, and in doing so ignore the North-South dimension. Moreover, we need to encompass a global intellectual history and a bottom-up approach by focusing on the cultures and practices of grassroots activists’ networks.

⁴¹ Hannah Arendt, *On violence*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1970, p. 14. On these aspects see the case study of the “Quaderni piacentini” by Fabio Guidali, *Culture and political commitment in the non-orthodox Marxist Left: the case of Quaderni piacentini in pre-1968 Italy*, “History of European Ideas”, 2020, n. 6, pp. 862-875.

⁴² See, for example, C. Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World*, cit.; Françoise Blum, Pierre Guidi, Ophélie Rillon (eds.), *Étudiants Africains en mouvements. Contributions à une histoire des années 1968*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016; Marica Tolomelli, *L’Italia dei movimenti. Politica e società nella prima repubblica*, Rome, Carocci, 2015; Q. Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, cit.

⁴³ Elsewhere I have offered a broad historiographical exploration of global history: *Oltre la storia nazionale? Tre risposte alle sfide della global history*, “Passato e presente”, 2019, n. 108, pp. 131-148.

⁴⁴ See Francesca Trivellato, *Is there a future for Italian microhistory in the age of global history?*, “California Italian Studies”, 2011, n. 1; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Mondi connessi. La storia oltre l’eurocentrismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2014; Christian G. de Vito, *History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective*, “Past & Present”, 2019, n. 242, pp. 348-372.

⁴⁵ C. Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World*, cit., p. 5.

⁴⁶ See Robert Gildea, James Mark, Anette Warring (eds.), *Europe’s 1968: Voices of Revolt*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

New political cultures

In this article, I advance the hypothesis that radical anti-colonialism started to imagine itself as a new type of anti-fascism during the Algerian War of Independence, that is, when it reconnected with a proactive memory of the Resistance. In fact, the Algerian war not only replicated the Second World War, with the roles reversed as the Nazis were replaced by the French; Algeria was part and parcel of the history of the European anti-fascist struggle. Thus, “Algerian” soldiers had fought for the liberation of Europe in the French army, and between 1942 and 1944 — when de Gaulle was in London — Algiers was the capital of the “*France libre*”, under the command of the Comité français de libération nationale.⁴⁷ Looking at the anti-colonialist networks *in* and *between* Algeria, France and Italy, it thus becomes necessary to study the lives, experiences and memories of grassroots militants — men as well as women — who, in different ways, were involved in these networks. Who were they, and how did they become militants? What were their tasks and desires? Which other networks were they involved in? How did they imagine their “enemy”, and how did they see themselves? And 60 years later, how did they reconstruct their memories of this anti-colonial militancy? Could we say that the Algerians, French and Italians share a common ethos? If so, what is this ethos? How did the New Left and the Algerian Revolution mutually influence each other, before and after Algeria became independent?

Many women fought in the Algerian Revolution: were these women influenced by Western models to the same extent that these would influence them, through figures such as Djamila Boupacha? Boupacha was a 22-year-old militant in the groups of the National Liberation Front that were involved in urban terrorist acts during the “battle of Algiers”. She gained international attention after being tortured and raped by the French paratroopers and — for the first time — publicly denouncing these crimes.⁴⁸ Pablo Picasso drew a portrait of her, which was published in 1962 on the front page of *Les Lettres françaises*,⁴⁹ and which was also used in Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi’s book *Djamila Boupacha*.⁵⁰ In the same year, the book was translated into Italian, but with a new title: *I carnefici* [The butchers].

⁴⁷ See Eric Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine*, Paris, Perrin, 2014.

⁴⁸ See Claire Mauss-Copeaux, *La vita vera. Le donne algerine nella guerra d’indipendenza*, “Zapruder”, 2019, n. 50, pp. 16-43; Natalya Vince, *Our Fighting Sisters: Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015.

⁴⁹ See Pierre Daix, “*Les Lettres françaises*”. *Jalons pour l’histoire d’un journal, 1941-1972*, Paris, Tallandier, 2004.

⁵⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha*, Paris, Gallimard, 1962. On Picasso’s lithography, see Laurent Gervereau, *Des bruits et des silences. Cartographie des représentations de la guerre d’Algérie*, in Laurent Gervereau, Jean-Pierre Rioux, Benjamin Stora (eds.), *La France en guerre d’Algérie*, Nanterre, MHC-BDIC, 1992, p. 197.

Although it was undoubtedly meant to draw attention to the scandal of a “female partisan” tortured with methods that were identical to those used by the Nazi-Fascists, it inadvertently ended up overturning the subject of history.⁵¹ What is less known is that, beyond the small circle of music lovers and scholars that surrounded Boupacha, the renowned Italian composer Luigi Nono dedicated one of his *Canti di vita e d'amore* [Songs of life and love] to her in that same year.⁵²

At the end of the 1950s, new communication technologies, the opening of unprecedented media markets and a mobility that would have been unthinkable only a few years before, contributed to radically changing the meaning of the term “world”.⁵³ The texts and images of Fanon, Guevara, Castro, Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh or Boupacha evoked the feeling of a shared — albeit asymmetrical — space in which the Third World had moved from the periphery to the centre.⁵⁴

Located at the crossroads of political and cultural history, the dynamic “political cultures” discipline can help us to better understand this “new world”, which was slowly taking shape. According to Jean-François Sirinelli and Eric Vigne, a political culture consists of “a sort of code” and “a range of referents” that can be “formalised within the framework of a party” or more diversely distributed “within a political family or a political tradition”.⁵⁵ This approach is particularly useful: on the one hand, for the analysis of the interaction between decolonisation and the political cultures traditionally represented by social democracy, communism and political Catholicism in Western Europe during the Cold War;⁵⁶ on the other hand, for the study of the contemporaneous formation — both in and outside political parties — of a new, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ethic.⁵⁷ In this sense, the Algerian War of Independence

⁵¹ Simone de Beauvoir, Gisèle Halimi, *I carnefici*, translated by Gianna Carullo and Carlo Cignetti, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1962. See Andrea Brazzoduro, *Voir/ne pas voir l'Algérie. La gauche italienne et la lutte des Algériens*, in Moula Bouaziz, Aïssa Kadri, Tramor Quemeneur (eds.), *La guerre d'Algérie revisitée. Nouvelles générations, nouveaux regards*, Paris, Karthala, 2015, pp. 331-338.

⁵² See Bruce Durazzi, *Luigi Nono's Canti di vita e d'amore: Musical Dialectics and the Opposition of Present and Future*, “The Journal of Musicology”, 2010, n. 4, pp. 451-480.

⁵³ See Richard Ivan Jobs, *Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968*, “The American Historical Review”, 2009, n. 2, pp. 376-404.

⁵⁴ The relevant bibliography is growing rapidly, but for an example see Matthias de Groof (ed.), *Lumumba in the Arts*, Leuven University Press, 2019.

⁵⁵ Jean-François Sirinelli, Eric Vigne, *Introduction: Des cultures politiques*, in J.-F. Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*, cit., vol. 2, pp. iii-iv.

⁵⁶ See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007; Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

⁵⁷ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture*, in Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and*

also represented a turning point, revealing divisions and discontent within the organisations of the traditional Left that — in the eyes of the anti-colonialist militants — appeared ever more delegitimised, morally speaking. It was the Algerian peasants and Cuban guerrilla fighters, and not the workers and trade unionists of the First World, who represented the real actors of the global revolution that the emerging New Left was dreaming of.

It is clear, then, that Third Worldism represented a political project more than a geographical space.⁵⁸ At the same time, it was an attempt to experiment with other political geographies that destabilised the binary status quo of the Cold War.⁵⁹ Parties that can be considered New Left parties, such as the Unified Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste Unifié) in France or the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria), were born precisely at this political and cultural juncture, conveniently blending this new sensibility with national and local features.⁶⁰

In a diachronic study of how the traditional organisations of the Left reacted to the theme of decolonisation, the key question is, then, as follows: why did this reaction become unsatisfactory for a growing number of militants, subsequently giving birth to what would later be called the New Left? Was the “horizon of expectation” of the Algerian National Liberation Front — and later also of the opposition movements (e.g. the *imazighen* [Berbers], Hocine Aït Ahmed’s Front de forces socialistes, etc.) — influenced by the rise of the New Left (especially through the figures of the *coopérants* and *pieds-rouges*)? If so, how? Using a different perspective than those currently available to us, we must try to visualise and assess the consistency of these new transnational political cultures that, although they still somewhat overlap with the Cold War framework, also progressively exceed it. Furthermore, it is in this framework that we need to reconsider the issue of political violence, namely by attributing the origins of the global civil war to the radicalisation of the repertoires of collective action.

In this context, the importance of an author like Frantz Fanon must not be underestimated. *The Wretched of the Earth*, in particular, was undoubtedly a

Its Political Afterlives, preface by Vijay Prashad, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2nd ed., 2019, pp. 45-68.

⁵⁸ According to Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People History of the Third World*, New York-London, New Press, 2007.

⁵⁹ See Quin Slobodian, *Bandung in Divided Germany: Managing Non-Aligned Politics in East and West, 1955-63*, “The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History”, 2013, n. 4, pp. 644-662.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Aldo Agosti, *Il partito provvisorio. Storia del Psiup nel lungo Sessantotto italiano*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2013; Noëlline Castagnez e al. (eds.), *Le Parti socialiste unifié. Histoire et postérité*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013; Daniel A. Gordon, “A ‘Mediterranean New Left’? Comparing and Contrasting the French PSU and the Italian PSIUP”, “Contemporary European History”, 2010, n. 4, pp. 309-330.

bestseller of the global 1960s.⁶¹ Yet, he was more than a theorist of violence, as a successful yet superficial reading of Fanon has sought to present him; thanks to Fanon, the Algerian War of Independence became comprehensible for the New Left, which conceived of decolonisation also in terms of decolonising itself from a broad and variegated display of power, in both its material and epistemic forms.⁶² Fanon's work, like Marx's *Manuscripts* of 1844, thus became a tool to understand and fight the alienation of capitalism.

Nevertheless, given the very strong involvement of intellectuals in the debate (to the extent that the war has also been called a “*bataille de l'écrit*”), it is worth shifting the focus to less senior figures: the women and men who were active in the trade unions, in party sections, in the church, in universities, in the press.⁶³ This means, for example, taking into account not only Fanon but also the Milanese research centre that was dedicated to him (who its members were, how it was organised, what it focused on),⁶⁴ or studying the solidarity letters that hundreds of Italian militants (male and female) wrote — via the organ of the Italian Communist Party, *l'Unità* — to the companion of Henri Alleg, director of the communist daily *Alger républicain* and author of a pamphlet of denunciation (*La Question*), while he was being held in prison and tortured by the paratroopers.⁶⁵ These two examples — one widespread, the other more specific — are very different expressions of the same phenomenon of “partisanship”, that is, of active support for the Algerian War of Independence.

New Left militants: “dreamers who came to build a more perfect world”

In this last section, I will discuss three apparently anomalous case studies of New Left militants, starting with Elaine Mokhtefi. Born Elaine Klein in modest Jewish circles in New York, she moved to Paris in 1951 — 23 years of

⁶¹ The bibliography is very rich, but two recent works are worth mentioning here: Kathryn Batchelor, Sue-Ann Harding (eds.), *Translating Frantz Fanon Across Continents and Languages*, London, Routledge, 2017; Neelam Srivastava, *Le Fanon italien: révélation d'une histoire éditoriale enfouie*, in Frantz Fanon, *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté. Textes inédits réunis par Jean Khalifa et Robert J.C. Young*, Paris, La Découverte, 2016, pp. 565-583.

⁶² See Nigel C. Gibson, Roberto Beneduce, *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*, London-New York, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017.

⁶³ For a pioneering survey “on a local scale”, see Raphaëlle Branche, Sylvie Thénault (eds.), *La France en guerre 1954-1962. Expériences métropolitaines de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, Paris, Autrement, 2008.

⁶⁴ See Tullio Ottolini, *Dal soutien alla cooperazione. Il terzomondismo in Italia fra il Centro di Documentazione Frantz Fanon e il Movimento Liberazione e Sviluppo*, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, doctoral thesis, 2018.

⁶⁵ See Nicola Lamri, *L'Italia e la battaglia di Algeria*, «Jacobin», 17 September 2020.

age — to “drink at the fountain of the past”.⁶⁶ At the time, her main historical and political reference was the Second World War. Her passionate memoirs open with a reference to the Nazi occupation of France: having grown up during the war, the latter is Elaine’s main reference point on arrival in Paris.

A year later, her so-called “enlightenment” occurred, when she witnessed the brutal police repression of an Algerian group of protesters during the May Day parade.⁶⁷ From 1950 onwards, the Algerians joined the traditional demonstrations of the worker’s movement on May Day and on 14 July, especially in Paris, where they formed a section that the security service positioned at the back of the demonstration; this proves their growing disagreement with the hegemonic Communist Party.⁶⁸ As became increasingly common in the 1950s, the police opened fire. On 1 May 1952, four people were killed in Paris, Le Havre and Montbéliard, in an escalation that characterised the convulsive sequence prior to the uprising in Algeria, culminating in the shooting of six Algerians at the demonstration of 14 July 1953 in Paris.⁶⁹

Elaine Mokhtefi thus discovered the “lie” of the French colonial republic.⁷⁰ She wrote that “[t]he Algerian War became the defining issue of the 1950s in Europe. Everyone took sides, and wherever I lived — in France, Switzerland and Belgium — I became involved, marching in anti-war demonstrations, introducing resolutions, denouncing torture”.⁷¹ For this reason, we could say that Mokhtefi — while born in America — was influenced by the French context and by the Algerian War of Independence to such an extent as to merit an inclusion in the ranks of the militants of the nascent New Left.

After she had returned to New York to work for the delegation of the provisional government of the Algerian Republic, in the summer of 1962 she moved to Algiers. In those years, the city had become a meeting point (and a free trade city) for all kinds of organisations of the revolutionary New Left:

I came to know exiles from Spain and Portugal, opponents of the military dictators Franco and Salazar, as well as others from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Central America, political opponents as well as representatives of guerrilla movements. Ever imaginable liberation organisation had an office in Algiers, from the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (the Vietcong) to the ANC, SWAPO, FRELIMO, the MPLA, student hijackers from Ethiopia, and Palestinian liberation organisations.⁷²

⁶⁶ Elaine Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital. Freedom Fighters, Revolutionaries, Black Panthers*, Brooklyn, Verso, 2018, p. ix.

⁶⁷ E. Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital*, cit., p. 6.

⁶⁸ See Alain Ruscio, *Les communistes et l’Algérie. Des origines à la guerre d’indépendance, 1920-1962*, Paris, La Découverte, 2019, pp. 165-171.

⁶⁹ See Emmanuel Blanchard, *Histoire de l’immigration algérienne en France*, Paris, La Découverte, 2018, p. 64; Daniel Kupferstein, *Les balles du 14 juillet 1953. Le massacre policier oublié de nationalistes algériens à Paris*, Paris, La Découverte, 2017.

⁷⁰ E. Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital*, cit., p. 6.

⁷¹ E. Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital*, cit., pp. 16-17.

⁷² E. Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital*, cit., p. 69.

In 1969 she met Eldrige Cleaver, the Black Panther Party's minister of information who arrived in Algiers in June. Elaine Mokhtefi became a mediator between the Algerian authorities and the Black Panthers, first working as an interpreter and then progressively entering the group as a "comrade". At the end of her memoirs, she described her relation with Algiers as follows: "My story with Algeria has invaded and occupied my being forever. I was one of the dreamers who came to build a more perfect world."⁷³

A second interesting case study is that of Elaine's husband, Mokhtar Mokhtefi, whom she met in Algeria during the Revolution. A butcher's son, Mokhtar Mokhtefi was born in 1935 in Berrouaghia, a town in the present-day *wilaya* of Médéa, about a hundred kilometres south of Algiers. The youngest of six, Mokhtar was the only sibling to continue his studies beyond primary school, thanks to the foresight of a teacher who recognised his extraordinary abilities and managed to convince Mokhtar's defiant father to let his son benefit from the opportunities that the school could offer him. Mokhtar went to high school in Blida, before becoming a *maître d'internat* in Constantine. He eventually discovered metropolitan France in a sort of journey of formation, and when he joined the Algerian Front of National Liberation in 1957, he developed a political and militant awareness in favour of a free, democratic and independent Algeria.

In high school I lived in the midst of the Europeans, I discovered their way of life though without understanding their indifference to anything related to their Algerian classmates. They don't want to know us, they are happy with the prejudices that their parents have instilled in them: they don't realise that ignorance of the other generates fear, that this fear is transformed into the arrogance and racism of the victors. But what pains me most is the trench that has been dug between my parents and me. Without wanting to, I mentally feel very distant from them.⁷⁴

Mokhtar Mokhtefi's biographical path is certainly not representative of Algeria, still a predominantly rural and largely illiterate nation at the time of the war of liberation. Nevertheless, Mokhtefi's story is indicative of a not insignificant minority, which we could define as "exceptional normal", to use the oxymoron introduced by the micro-historian Edoardo Grendi.⁷⁵

In his memoirs, Mokhtefi stressed the important contribution of the Algerian youth and student associations to the struggle for independence, which culminated in the strike of 19 May 1956). Thus, he made the following observation about the quarterly forum of the Algerian Youth Association for Social Action, held in Sidi Ferruch in April 1955:

⁷³ E. Mokhtefi, *Algiers, Third World Capital*, cit., p. 210.

⁷⁴ Mokhtar Mokhtefi, *J'étais Français-Musulman. Itinéraire d'un soldat de l'ALN*, Alger, Barzakh, 2016, p. 128.

⁷⁵ Edoardo Grendi, *Micro-analisi e storia sociale*, "Quaderni storici", 1977, n. 35, pp. 506-520.

In a rural setting, young people coming from all communities, boys and girls, question each other amicably. They belong to the Young Christian Students or the Young Christian Workers (JEC and JOC), to the Union of Jewish students and to various Algerian organisations. They discuss the country's problems without fear of addressing political issues or evoking injustice, repression, the absence of freedom.⁷⁶

Most importantly, Mokhtefi's story fully reintegrates Algeria and its inhabitants into the global 1960s, and not through a diplomatic history or international relations approach, but from the opposite end of the spectrum: through a history of Mokhtar's readings, interests, journeys and encounters. One example of this is when Mokhtefi and his friend Mohamed travelled to France to find themselves at the La Bocca international campsite near Cannes, in the company of French, Dutch and Yugoslavian youngsters.⁷⁷

A third rather unusual story is that of Giovanni Pirelli.⁷⁸ The oldest son of the great Italian tyre maker, Giovanni participated in the Russian campaign and then in the Resistance, two fundamental experiences for the development of his political identity. On 7 May 1946, when his father retrieved the family business from the partisans who had been running it, Giovanni informed him of his decision to join the Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity.⁷⁹ A year later, in May 1947, the anti-fascist front fell apart.

In reaction to this turn of events (i.e. the authoritarian restoration guided by the Christian Democrat party), Pirelli agreed to collaborate with Piero Malvezzi on a study that led to “a priceless document and monument” (Goffredo Fofi): their collection of letters written by Italian partisans on the verge of being executed, the *Lettere dei condannati a morte della Resistenza italiana* [Letters of the Italian Resistance fighters condemned to death] (1952), followed by the *Lettere dei condannati a morte della Resistenza europea* [Letters of the European Resistance fighters condemned to death] (1954).⁸⁰ In the same year that the latter was published, the Algerian War of Independence began. Pirelli, like most intellectuals and Resistance militants, increasingly considered the war as the new front in the anti-fascist struggle. In 1961, he wrote the following:

The wave of anti-fascism provoked by the Eichmann trial? It is useful. Sure, it is also useful. As will be the trial against a Massu or a Salan, in a few decades, for the million Algerians

⁷⁶ M. Mokhtefi, *J'étais Français-Musulman*, cit., p. 123.

⁷⁷ See M. Mokhtefi, *J'étais Français-Musulman*, cit., pp. 136 sg.

⁷⁸ For more information on Pirelli see Mariamargherita Scotti, *Vita di Giovanni Pirelli. Tra cultura e impegno militante*, Rome, Donzelli, 2018. An anthology of texts can be found in Mariamargherita Scotti (ed.), *Giovanni Pirelli, intellettuale del Novecento*, Sesto San Giovanni, Mimesis, 2016.

⁷⁹ See Nicola Tranfaglia, *Vita di Alberto Pirelli (1882-1971). La politica attraverso l'economia*, Turin, Einaudi, 2010, p. 320.

⁸⁰ Goffredo Fofi, *Prefazione*, in Diane Weill-Ménard, *Vita e tempi di Giovanni Pirelli*, Milan, Linea d'ombra, 1994, p. 8.

who died in what is essentially a Nazi war, which is taking place in the present day under our eyes of licensed anti-fascists.⁸¹

In February 1961, Pirelli travelled to Tunisia to visit Algerian refugee camps for the very first time. As he had done for the partisans' letters, he became involved in an extensive project of collecting first-hand evidence, "convinced of the fact that only the Algerians were qualified to talk about their experience, which was quite separate, and *had to be kept separate*, from the experience of the French opponents to the war of Algiers".⁸²

This conviction gave birth to two extraordinary works: in 1962, Pirelli published — together with Jacques Charby — a collection of stories and drawings by Algerian refugee children in Tunisia (published both in Italy and in France, by Einaudi and Maspero respectively).⁸³ This unique work has no equal except in the film *J'ai huit ans* [I am eight years old], directed by Yann le Masson in collaboration with René Vautier and Olga Baidar-Poliakof, shot in the same Tunisian camps and with the same drawings. The following year, an impressive volume of over seven hundred pages was published (again by Einaudi and Maspero). It was edited by Kessel and Pirelli, and the title of the Italian edition — printed on a cover with the colours of independent Algeria — was *Lettere della rivoluzione algerina* [Letters from the Algerian Revolution].⁸⁴ The reference to the aforementioned collections on the Resistance was not only a marketing trick: other than the fact that the context was different (this time the war was still in progress), the working method was identical. A simple sentence on the back cover explains the book's importance: "This book documents how, through countless tragedies and *individual* acts of heroism, a people has grasped self-awareness and a nation has been born." Once again, Pirelli focuses his attention on the real individuals who make history: "An element that all these documents share," we read in a sober note from the editors, "is their personal character. [...] This criterion has led to the exclusion of those texts that, despite their testimonial value, seemed classifiable as journalistic or literary writings, or as texts belonging to a sphere that could be described as official."⁸⁵

Pirelli's "partisan" attitude is the same as that which led him to conduct his research on the anti-fascist struggle at the end of the 1940s. In 1969, in

⁸¹ Giovanni Pirelli, in Ettore A. Albertoni e al. (eds.), *La generazione degli anni difficili*, Bari, Laterza, 1962, pp. 201-202, republished in M. Scotti (ed.), *Giovanni Pirelli, intellettuale del Novecento*, cit., pp. 238-241.

⁸² Cesare Bermani, *Giovanni Pirelli. Un autentico rivoluzionario*, Pistoia, Centro di documentazione, 2011, p. 30. Italics mine.

⁸³ *Les enfants d'Algérie: récits et dessins*, Paris, Maspero, 1962 (translated by Giovanni Pirelli, *Bambini d'Algeria*, Turin, Einaudi, 1962).

⁸⁴ *Le peuple algérien et la guerre. Lettres et témoignages, 1954-1962*, edited by Giovanni Pirelli and Patrick Kessel, Paris, Cahiers libres, 1962 (translated by Giovanni Pirelli, *Lettere della rivoluzione algerina*, Turin, Einaudi, 1963).

⁸⁵ *Lettere della rivoluzione algerina*, cit., p. xxxi.

a new foreword to an edition of the *Lettere dei condannati a morte della Resistenza europea* that was directed at students, he makes the following statement:

Remember that the Resistance did not end with the defeat of Fascism. It continued, and it continues to fight against all that survives of that mentality, of those methods: against every system that gives a handful of people the power to decide for all. It continues in the struggle for real independence by people who are subject to colonialism, or imperialism. It continues in the fight against racism. In sum, as long as there are exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed, people who have too much and people who starve to death, it will always be necessary to choose which side to be on.⁸⁶

Conclusion: “If one day that hour returns”

In these transnational movements of people, ideas and practices that lie at the foundation of the New Left, the networks of anti-colonialist militants that started to emerge in support of the Algerians’ struggle played a key role. Nevertheless, existing scholarship on these informal groups is still in an embryonic stage (when it is not entangled in memoirs), and remains confined to the protagonists of the two main French *réseaux*: one headed by the Sartrean philosopher Francis Jeanson, and one organised around the Egypt-born communist Henri Curiel.⁸⁷

Apart from these (Parisian) intellectuals, the militants who were involved — to varying degrees — in the anti-colonialist networks remain mostly unknown: we know next to nothing of their relations with the Algerians and very little about their contacts with the other networks active in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. What we do know is that many of the elder anti-colonialist militants had fought as partisans in the Resistance, like Francis Jeanson in France or Giovanni Pirelli in Italy.

⁸⁶ *Lettera a giovani che conosco e ad altri che non conosco*, in *Lettere della Resistenza europea*, edited by Giovanni Pirelli, ed. scol., Turin, Einaudi, 1969, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Nils Andersson, *Mémoire éclatée: de la décolonisation au déclin de l’Occident*, preface by Gérard Chaliand, Lausanne, Éditions d’en bas, 2016; Sarah Kaminsky, *Adolfo Kaminsky, une vie de faussaire*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2009; Marie-Pierre Ulloa, *Francis Jeanson: A Dissident Intellectual From the French Resistance to the Algerian War*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 2008; Jacques Charby, *Les porteurs d’espoir. Les réseaux de soutien au FLN pendant la guerre d’Algérie: les acteurs parlent*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004; Hervé Hamon, Patrick Rotman, *Les porteurs de valises. La résistance française à la guerre d’Algérie*, Paris, A. Michel, 1979. For the first in-depth analyses of Italy see: Guido Panvini, *Third Worldism in Italy*, in Stefan Berger, Christoph Cornelissen (eds.), *Marxist Historical Cultures and Social Movements during the Cold War*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 289-308; Tullio Ottolini, *Giovanni Pirelli e la guerra d’indipendenza algerina. Tra attivismo intellettuale e soutien concreto*, in M. Scotti (ed.), *Giovanni Pirelli, intellettuale del Novecento*, cit., pp. 85-110; Massimo de Giuseppe, *Il “Terzo Mondo” in Italia. Trasformazioni di un concetto tra opinione pubblica, azione politica e mobilitazione civile (1955-1980)*, “Ricerche di Storia Politica”, 2011, n. 1, pp. 29-52.

Speaking at a 1967 rally for Vietnam in Florence, Franco Fortini — also a former partisan — said the following: “At the beginning, I asked myself what we were really talking about: and I know that we talked about Vietnam to the same extent that we talked about ourselves, about the violence we are subjected to and the violence we have to enact.”⁸⁸ In this sense, anti-fascism was a shared ethos, all the stronger because it was understood not as a concluded historical event but as a “suspended delivery” (Parri) between one generation and another, that is, between the former partisans (born around the 1920s) and the “inexperienced younger brothers” (born around the 1940s). The example of the “elder partisan brothers” served to indicate what was to be done “if one day that hour returns”. Fortini replicated: “[N]ot war, but guerrilla warfare.” This indication acquires its full meaning when it is juxtaposed with Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan*, where the status quo of the Cold War is disturbed by the eruption of decolonisation struggles. Fortini’s slogan, then, marks the desired end of a cycle dominated first by interstate warfare, and then by the Pax Americana et Sovietica. For the militants of the New Left, the time had come to embrace “a revolutionary project that took the shape of a methodical preparation for civil war”.⁸⁹ Based on the moral absolutisation of the enemy, the civil war of the global 1960s — a guerilla war with varying forms and degrees of intensity — found its role models in the “political” fighters of the anti-colonialist liberation struggles, as if they were new partisans.

⁸⁸ *Intervento alla manifestazione per la libertà del Vietnam*, in Franco Fortini, *Saggi ed epigrammi*, edited by Luca Lenzini, Milan, Mondadori, 2003, p. 1405. On this incident see also Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018, pp. 37-45.

⁸⁹ E. Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco*, cit., p. 24.