



## THE TRUTH ABOUT OCCUPIED PARIS

By Jean Paul Sartre

**M**ANY Englishmen and Americans, on arriving in Paris, were surprised to find us less gaunt than they had expected. They saw dresses that were fashionable and apparently new, and jackets that still looked well from afar; rarely did they encounter that pallor or physiological distress which ordinarily indicates starvation. Disappointed solicitude is readily transformed into resentment; I fear they bore a slight grudge against us for not conforming to the pathetic picture they had formed ahead of time. Perhaps some of them wondered, in their innermost hearts, whether the occupation



had really been so terrible, and whether France ought not regard as lucky a defeat which had knocked it out of the war and would enable it to regain its power without having earned it by great sacrifices; perhaps they thought, with the *Daily Express*, that Frenchmen hadn't lived so badly during these four years, as compared with Englishmen.

It is to such people that I should like to speak. I should like to explain to them that they are mistaken, that the occupation was a terrible ordeal, that it is by no means certain that France can recover from it, and that there is not a single Frenchman who has not often envied the fate of his English allies. But, as I begin, I am aware of the full difficulty of my task. Once before I have experienced this sense of trouble. On returning from prison, I was being questioned about the life of prisoners: how was I to convey the atmosphere of prison camps to those who had never lived in one? A flick of the finger would have sufficed to make everything look black; a touch of the thumb, and everything would have seemed cheerful and gay. The truth wasn't even somewhere in between. A great deal of ingenuity and artistry was needed to express it, and a great deal of good will and imagination to grasp it. Now I am faced with a similar problem: how am I to convey, to the inhabitants of countries that remained free, what the occupation was like? Frenchmen talking among themselves of the Germans, the Gestapo, the Resistance, or the black market understand one another without difficulty; but then they have lived through the same events and have a store of the same memories. Englishmen and Frenchmen no longer have a single memory in common: everything that London experienced with pride, Paris endured in despair and shame. We must learn to speak about ourselves dispassionately; others must learn to understand what we say and, above all, to realize, beyond the realm of words, everything that a gesture or silence may suggest or signify.

If I nevertheless try to give others a glimpse of the truth, I run up against new difficulties: the occupation of France was a vast social phenomenon, involving thirty-five million human beings. How can I speak for all of them? Small towns, great industrial centers, and country places suffered different fates. One village never saw the Germans; another quartered them for four years. Since I lived chiefly in Paris, I shall therefore confine myself to describing the occupation in Paris. I shall ignore physical suffering: hunger, which was real though hidden, the lowering of vitality, the inroads of tuberculosis. After all, these misfortunes, the extent of which statistics will someday reveal, are not without



parallel in England; no doubt the level of existence there remained considerably higher than our own. But England suffered bombings; the V-1, and military losses, and we were not fighting. But there are other trials, and those are the ones I wish to write about. I shall try to show how Parisians *felt* the occupation.

**W**E must first of all rid our minds of fanciful notions. No, the Germans did not run about the streets with clenched fists. No, they did not force civilians to make way for them, or to step off the sidewalk when they approached. In the subway they offered their seats to old women; they became maudlin over children and kissed their cheeks. They had been told to behave properly, and they behaved properly—timidly and conscientiously, and out of discipline. They sometimes even showed a naïve good will that found no response. And do not conjure up, in your imagination, Frenchmen of heroic inflexibility, wearing looks of crushing scorn. To be sure, the vast majority of the population avoided any contact with the German army. But we must not forget that the occupation was an *everyday* affair.

Someone who was asked what he had done during the Terror replied: "I lived . . ." That is an answer we might all make now. For four years we lived, and the Germans lived too, in our very midst, submerged and drowned in the common life of the great city. I had to smile recently at a photograph in *La France Libre*: it shows a German officer, with brutal neck and heavy shoulders, rummaging in a bookstall on the quays, while an old secondhand bookseller with typically French goatee looks on coldly and sadly. The German is putting on airs and seems to be pushing his thin-looking neighbor out of the picture. Under the picture, the caption explains: "The German profanes the quays of the Seine, which once belonged to poets and dreamers." I am aware that the photograph is not faked; but it is only a photograph, an arbitrary selection. The eye embraces a wider view; the photographer himself saw hundreds of Frenchmen searching in dozens of bookstalls and a single German, a small figure in this larger picture, browsing in an old book, a dreamer, or perhaps a poet—in any case, an altogether inoffensive fellow. It is precisely this inoffensive air that was worn, at any given moment, by the soldiers who sauntered along the streets.

The crowd opened and closed around their uniforms, whose faded green constituted a pale and modest spot, almost expected in the midst of the dark clothes of the civilians. And then the same daily necessities brought us together



with them; the same collective streams tossed us and rolled us and intermingled us. We crushed them in the subway and jostled against them on dark nights. No doubt we should have killed them mercilessly had we been ordered to do so, and no doubt we remembered our grudges and our hatred. But these feelings had become somewhat abstract, and in the long run a kind of shamefaced and indefinable solidarity had developed between Parisians and these troops who were, fundamentally, so much like French soldiers—a solidarity accompanied by no sympathy, but rather based on biological habit.

At first the sight of them made us ill; then, little by little, we forgot to notice them, for they had become an institution. What put the finishing touch to their harmlessness was their ignorance of our language. A hundred times I've seen Parisians in cafés express themselves freely about politics two steps away from a blank-looking German soldier with a lemonade glass in front of him. They seemed more like furniture than like men. When they stopped us, very politely, to ask for directions—for most of us this was the only time we spoke to them—we felt more annoyed than hostile; in short, *we were uneasy*. We remembered our determination never to address them. But, at the same time, in the presence of these wandering soldiers, our instinctive human obligingness awoke, a survival from our childhood, bidding us never leave a man in trouble. Then we decided according to our humor or the occasion; we said: "I don't know" or "Second street on the left" and, in either case, we walked away displeased with ourselves.

On the Boulevard Saint-Germain, one day, a military automobile turned over on a German colonel. I saw ten Frenchmen rush over to extricate him. They hated him as a member of the occupation, I am sure; and several of them, a couple of years later, were certainly members of the F.F.I., firing along this same boulevard. What then? Was he one of the occupation, this man who lay crushed under his automobile? And what was there to do? The concept "enemy" is fixed and clear only if the enemy is separated from us by a barrier of fire.

**N**EVERTHELESS, there was an enemy—and the most hateful of all—whom we did not see. Or at least those who saw him rarely returned to describe him. I should compare this enemy with an octopus. It seized our best men in the dark and caused them to disappear. People seemed to be silently swallowed up around us. One fine day we telephoned a friend, and the telephone rang for a long time in his empty apartment; we rang his doorbell and



he did not answer. If the janitor forced the door open, we found two chairs next to each other in the hall, and, at their feet, the stubs of German cigarettes. The wives and mothers of those who disappeared, if they were present at their arrest, testified that the Germans who had taken them away had been very polite, like those who asked for directions on the street. And when these women went to inquire about them, at headquarters in the Avenue Foch or on the Rue des Saussaies, they were courteously received and were sometimes sent away with kind words. Nevertheless, on the Avenue Foch and on the Rue des Saussaies neighbors could hear, every day and late at night, howls of suffering and terror, *which compelled some people to move*. There was no one in Paris who did not have a relative or a friend arrested or deported or shot. It seemed as though there were hidden holes in the city, through which it was gradually emptying, as if seized by an internal and indiscoverable hemorrhage.

But we spoke little of these things. Even more so than in the case of hunger, we concealed this continuous bleeding, partly out of prudence and partly out of dignity. We said: "*They* have arrested Kaan or Cavailles," and this "*They*," resembling the one used by madmen in identifying their imaginary persecutors, hardly referred to men, but rather to a kind of living, impalpable pitch that blackened everything, including the light. At night we listened for *them*. Toward midnight passers-by could be heard rushing along the street to get home before the curfew; then there was silence. And we knew that the only footsteps outside were *their* footsteps.

It is difficult to convey the impression made by this deserted city, this "no man's land" outside our windows, occupied by them alone. Houses were never entirely a protection: the Gestapo often made its arrests between midnight and five o'clock. It seemed as if, at any moment, the door might open, admitting a cold draft, a little darkness, and three courteous Germans, armed with revolvers. Even when we did not mention them, even when we were not thinking of them, their presence was among us. We felt it in the way objects were less our own, more alien, colder, somehow more public, as if a foreign eye were spying on the privacy of our homes. In the morning, we again saw on the streets those harmless little Germans, portfolio under arm, hurrying to their offices and resembling lawyers in uniform rather than soldiers. We searched those expressionless and familiar faces for a little of the hateful ferocity we had imagined during the night. In vain. Yet the dread never disappeared; and its very abstractness and intangibility made it all the more trying. Such, at any rate,



is the first result of the occupation. Let us therefore imagine this perpetual conjunction of a hatred which cannot lodge anywhere and a too-familiar enemy whom we cannot succeed in hating.

**T**HIS sense of horror had many other causes. But, before going on, we must avoid a misunderstanding. We must not picture it as a keen or overwhelming emotion. As I said before: *we lived*. This means that we were able to work, eat, talk, sleep, and sometimes even laugh—though laughter was rather unusual and always exploded like an unexpected minor scandal. The horror seemed to be outside, in things themselves. We could find distraction, for a moment, in reading, conversation, or business; but we always returned to it and found that it had not left us. Calm and steady, almost discreet, it colored our dreaming as it did our most practical thought. It was at once the thread of our consciousness and the meaning of things. Now that it is gone, we see it as only an episode in our lives; but, while we were still steeped in it, it was so familiar that we sometimes took it for the natural tonality of our dispositions. It was intolerable, and at the same time we became quite accustomed to it.

Some lunatics, they say, are obsessed by the feeling that a horrible event has destroyed their life. And when they try to understand what gives them this overpowering sense of a break between their past and their present, they find nothing at all. This was virtually the case with us. We had the constant feeling that a tie with the past had been severed. Traditions had been broken, and habits as well. And we couldn't understand the meaning of this change, which defeat itself did not entirely explain. Now I can see what it was: Paris was dead. No more automobiles, no more pedestrians—except at given hours in certain sections. We walked amidst stones, and we seemed to have been forgotten in the wake of an immense exodus. A little provincial life had hung on in the corners of the capital. A skeleton city remained, stately and still, too long and too wide for us: streets, stretching as far as the eye could reach, were too broad, distances were too long, perspectives too vast. We were lost in this Paris, and Parisians stayed at home or in their neighborhood, for they were afraid to move about amidst those great, forbidding palaces that were plunged in complete darkness every night.

Here, too, we must guard against exaggeration. Many of us loved the rustic quiet and old-fashioned charm that this bloodless capital took on in the moonlight. But their very pleasure was tainted with bitterness—what could be more



painful than experiencing the same melancholy joy at walking along our own street, past our own church and our own town hall, as at visiting the Coliseum or the Parthenon by moonlight? There were only ruins: houses occupied since the sixteenth century had their shutters closed. Hotels and movie houses had been requisitioned, as was indicated by those white barriers against which the passer-by stumbled. Bars and shops were closed for the duration of the war, their proprietors having been deported, or having died or disappeared. Pedestals were statueless. Gardens had been cut in two, or disfigured by casemates of reinforced concrete. And the large, dusty electric signs atop the buildings were no longer lit. Passing by shopwindows, we read signs that seemed to have been carved on tombstones: sauerkraut at any hour, Viennese pastry, week end at Touquet, auto accessories.

We too have known all that, Englishmen will reply. In London, too, they had the blackout and restrictions. I am well aware of it. But these changes did not take on the same meaning for them as they did for us. London, though mutilated and dimmed, remained the capital of England; Paris was no longer the capital of France. Formerly, all roads and all rail lines led to Paris. The Parisian was at home at the center of France, at the center of the world. On the horizon of all his ambitions and his affections lay New York, Madrid, and London. Though fed by Périgord, by Beauce, by Alsace, and by the Atlantic fisheries, the capital was not a parasitic city, like ancient Rome; it controlled the trade and the life of the nation, it transformed raw materials into manufactures, it was the turntable of France.

**W**ITH the armistice, all this changed. The division of the country into two zones cut Paris off from the country; the coasts of Brittany and Normandy became restricted zones; a concrete wall separated France from England and America. There remained only Europe. But Europe was a word that inspired dread and signified slavery; the city of kings had lost its political function: a phantom government at Vichy had robbed it. Divided by the occupation into sealed provinces, France had forgotten Paris. It was now a spiritless and useless agglomeration, haunted by memories of its greatness, and sustained by periodic injections. It owed its listless life to the number of wagons and trucks that the Germans admitted each week. If Vichy became a little stubborn, if Laval was unwilling to turn over to Berlin the workers it demanded, the injections were immediately interrupted, and Paris wasted away and yawned with hunger under the open sky. Cut off from the world,



and fed out of pity or by plan, it had only an abstract and symbolic existence.

A thousand times, in the course of these four years, Frenchmen saw, in grocers' windows, rows of bottles of St. Emilion or Meuersault. Drawn by these, they approached the window, only to read a placard: "Window display." So it was with Paris: it was now only a window display. Everything was hollow and empty. The Louvre had no pictures, the Chamber had no deputies, the Senate had no senators, and the Lycée Montaigne had no students. The artificial existence that the Germans still maintained, the theatrical performances, the races, and the wretched and mournful holidays, were merely intended to show the world that France had been spared, since Paris still lived. A strange result of centralization!

The English, for their part, though they did not mind shattering Lorient, Rouen, or Nantes with their bombs, had decided to respect Paris in order to prove to the world that they were sparing their old allies. And so, in this dying city, we enjoyed a funerary and symbolic peace. Around this islet, steel and fire rained; but, just as we were not allowed to share in the work of our provinces, so we no longer had the right to share in their sufferings. This industrious and passionate city had become a mere symbol. We looked at one another and wondered whether we too had become symbols.

**F**OR four years we had been robbed of our future. We had to depend on others. And to others we were only an *object*. No doubt the British radio and press were friendly to us. But we should have had to be conceited or naïve indeed to believe that the British were carrying on this deadly war with the sole purpose of freeing us. Armed and heroic, they were defending their vital interests, and we well know that we entered into their calculations only as one factor among many. As for the Germans, they were pondering the best means of adding our piece of earth to the mass called "Europe." We felt that our fate was out of our hands. France was like a flowerpot, put out on the window sill in fine weather and taken in at night, without any regard for its own wishes.

Everyone knows of those cases of derangement called "depersonalized" that suddenly decide "everyone is dead" because they have ceased to contemplate any future for themselves, and, by the same token, have ceased to be aware of the future of others. What was perhaps most painful of all was that all Parisians had become depersonalized. Before the war, if we came to look upon a child, a young man, or a young woman sympathetically, it was because we had some idea about their future, because we somehow guessed it from



their gestures or lineaments. For a living person is first of all a project. But the occupation robbed men of their future. No longer could we follow a couple with our eye, trying to imagine their future: we had no more future than a nail on a door latch. Our every act was provisional and limited in significance to the day of its performance. Workmen worked in the factory from day to day—the electric power might fail the next day, Germany might stop its shipments of raw materials, it might be suddenly decided to send them off to Bavaria or to the Palatinate. Students prepared for their examinations, but who would have dared assure them that they would be permitted to take them? We looked at one another, and it seemed we were looking at dead men. This loss of the human touch, this petrification of man was so intolerable that many, in order to escape it and rediscover a future, joined the Resistance. A strange future, obstructed with punishments, prison, and death, but one, at least, that we could fashion for ourselves.\* But the Resistance was only an individual solution, and we always knew it. Even without it, the British would have won the war; even with it, they would have lost, if defeat had been in store for them. In our eyes, it had a chiefly symbolic value; and that is why many men of the Resistance were desperate men: symbols once more. A symbolic rebellion in a symbolic city; only the torture was real.

Thus, we felt out of it. We felt the shame of not understanding a war in which we were no longer fighting. From afar, we saw the English and the Russians adapt themselves to German warfare while we were still pondering the defeat of 1940; it had been too rapid, and we had learned nothing. The *Daily Express*, which ironically congratulates us on having escaped the war, cannot imagine how ardently Frenchmen wished to take up the fight again. Day after day we saw our cities ruined and our wealth destroyed. Our youth was wasting away, three million of our people were rotting in Germany, and the French birth rate was falling. What battle could have been more destructive? But these sacrifices, which we should have made willingly could they have hastened our victory, were meaningless and served no purpose, except the Germans'. And this, perhaps, everyone will understand: what is terrible is not to suffer to die, but to suffer and to die in vain.

COMPLETELY abandoned, we sometimes saw Allied planes pass overhead. So paradoxical was our situation that the siren warned us against them as enemies. Orders were explicit: we had to leave offices, close up shops, and

\*If we had to find an excuse or, at any rate, an explanation for "collaboration," we might say that it, too, was an attempt to restore a future to France.



descend into shelters. We never obeyed. We remained in the street, with upturned faces. Nor must this act of disobedience be looked upon as a useless revolt or a foolish pretense of courage. We were looking, in our desperation, to the only friends we still had. That young pilot flying over us in his plane was tied to England or to America by invisible bonds; it was a vast, free world that filled the sky. But the only messages he bore were messages of death.

No one will ever know what faith in our Allies we needed, to continue to love them and to *wish with them* for the destruction they were wreaking on our soil, to greet their bombardiers, in spite of everything, as the face of England. If the bombs, missing their target, fell in a city district, we tried to find excuses; we sometimes even accused the Germans of having dropped them in order to set us against the English, or of having deliberately given the air-raid warning too late. During the period of heavy bombings, I spent several days at Le Harve, with the family of one of my prison comrades. The first night, we were gathered around the radio, while the father was moving the dials with a naïve and touching solemnity, as if he were celebrating the Mass. And, as the BBC was giving us its first news bulletins, we heard the distant roar of planes. We knew perfectly well that they were coming to drop their bombs on us; I shall never forget the mingled terror and delight with which one of the women said, in a low voice: "There are the British!" And for a quarter of an hour, without moving from their chairs, they heard the voice of London to the accompaniment of the nearby explosions; it seemed to them that the voice was all the closer and that the squadrons passing overhead had lent it a body.

But these acts of faith demanded perpetual tension; they often required us to stifle our indignation. We stifled it when Lorient was razed, when the center of Nantes was destroyed, when the heart of Rouen was struck. Perhaps people can imagine how hard we had to try. Sometimes anger won out—and then we had to reason with it. I remember that in July, 1944, the train in which I was returning from Chantilly was machine-gunned. It was a harmless suburban train; three planes passed; in a few seconds the first car had three dead and twelve wounded. At the next station, the passengers, standing up in the train, watched the passing of the litters and of the green station benches, on which, for want of stretchers, they were carrying the bodies. The travelers were pale with emotion and anger. They hurled insults at the British, and reproached them with being inhuman and barbarous. "Why did they have to attack an undefended train? Isn't there enough work on the other side of the Rhine? Let



them attack Berlin! Ah, but they're afraid of the D.C.A.," etc. And then, suddenly, someone hit on the explanation: "Listen, usually they aim at the engine, and no one is hurt. But today the engine was at the rear, so they fired at the first car. Remember: at that speed they couldn't notice the change." Immediately, everyone was quiet: people were relieved because the pilots had not committed an impardonable error, and because we could continue to love the British. But not the least of our misfortunes was the temptation to hate them, against which we had to struggle so often. And I can bear witness to the fact that, on days when with the ironical eyes of our German conquerors upon us, we watched the smoke of the fires the British had started at the approaches to the city we felt completely alone.

**S**TILL, we dared not complain: we had a guilty conscience. It was while I was a prisoner that I first felt the secret shame that tormented us. The prisoners were unhappy, but they could not pity themselves. "Well! What are they going to think of us when we return!" Their sufferings were bitter and unpleasant, poisoned by the feeling that these were deserved. They were ashamed to face France. But France, in turn, was ashamed to face the world. It is comforting to shed a few tears over ourselves. But how could we pity ourselves when we were surrounded by the scorn of others? The Poles in my *Stalag* did not conceal their contempt; the Czecks blamed us for having abandoned them in 1938; I was told that a Russian who had escaped and been hidden by an Angevin policeman said of us, with a good-natured smile, "Frenchmen, rabbits! rabbits!" Nor were the British always kind, and I still remember a certain speech by Marshal Smuts that we had to listen to in silence. After that, to be sure, we were tempted to be stubborn about our humiliation, and to add to it. It might have been possible to come to our own defense. After all, the three greatest powers in the world have taken four years to beat Germany; was it not natural that we should yield at the first violent impact, since we had to sustain it alone? But we did not think of arguing. The best of us joined the Resistance because we felt the need of redeeming our country. The others remained uncertain and ill at ease; they pondered their sense of inferiority. What suffering can be worse than that which we cannot regard as undeserved and yet cannot use as an opportunity for redemption?

**B**UT at the very moment when we were about to abandon ourselves to regrets, the men of Vichy and the collaborators, by trying to drive us to this, held us back. The occupation was not only this constant presence of the



conquerors in our cities; it was also on every wall and in every paper, that vile picture of ourselves that they wished to foist on us. The collaborators began by appealing to our sincerity. "We're defeated," they said; let's show we're good sports. Let's admit our faults." And, immediately afterwards, "Let's admit that the Frenchman is superficial, careless, boastful, and egotistic, that he understands nothing about foreign nations, that the war caught our country in a state of complete dissolution." Humorous posters ridiculed our last hopes; Drieu la Rochelle insulted us in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*.

In the face of such baseness and such crude cunning, we stiffened and determined to regain our pride. Alas, hardly had we raised our heads when we rediscovered in ourselves the true reasons for remorse. So we lived, in the worst possible confusion, unhappy without daring to admit it to ourselves, ashamed and disgusted with our shame. To cap our misfortune, we could not take a step, or eat, or even breathe, without becoming accomplices of the invader. Before the war, pacifists had often explained that when a country is invaded it must refuse to fight and must offer passive resistance. That is easy to say. But, in order that this resistance might be effective, the railway man would have had to refuse to drive his train, and the peasant to till his field. The conqueror might have been inconvenienced—though his own land would have fed him—but the occupied country would certainly have perished entirely in a very short time. Therefore we had to work, preserve a semblance of economic organization, and, despite destruction and pillage, guarantee our country its minimum essentials.

Our slightest activity was of use to the enemy that had pounced upon us and fastened its suckers to our skin, and was now living in a state of symbiosis with us. Not a drop of blood formed in our veins upon which he did not draw. There has been much talk of "collaborators," and certainly there were among them some real traitors. We are not ashamed on their account; every nation has its dregs, that fringe of unsuccessful and disgruntled men who profit for a moment by disasters and revolutions. The existence of a Quisling or a Laval in a national group is a *normal* phenomenon, like the suicide rate or the crime rate.

What seemed abnormal to us was the country's plight, the whole of it resisting and the whole of it collaborating. The Maquis, our pride, did not work for the enemy. But the peasants, if they were to feed them, had to continue raising cattle, half of which went to Germany. Every one of our acts suffered



from this ambiguity; we never knew whether we were entirely blameworthy or entirely praiseworthy. I shall offer only one example: the railway men, chauffeurs, and mechanics were admirable. Their composure, their courage, and, very often, their self-denial saved hundreds of lives and enabled convoys of food to reach Paris. They were resisting, for the most part, and they proved it. Still, the zeal with which they protected our stores served the German cause. Those miraculously preserved locomotives might be requisitioned any day; among the human lives they had saved were those of soldiers returning to Le Havre or Cherbourg; the food trains also carried war equipment. Thus these men, whose one care was to serve their countrymen, were, by force of circumstances, on the side of our enemy against our friends. And When Pétain pinned a medal on their breast, it was Germany that was decorating them. From beginning to end, we could not judge our own acts; we could not hold ourselves responsible for their consequences. Evil was everywhere, every choice was a bad one, and nevertheless we had to choose and accept responsibility. Every heartbeat involved us in a guilt which horrified us.

**P**ERHAPS we might better have borne our degradation had we been able to achieve that unity against Vichy which Vichy constantly demanded. But it is not true that misfortune brings people together. From the first, the occupation scattered families to the four corners of the earth. A Parisian industrial worker had left his wife and daughter in the free zone and could not—at least for the first two years—see them or even write to them except by postal card. His elder son was a prisoner in an *Oflag*, and his younger son had joined de Gaulle. Paris was a city of absent people, and not the least remarkable feature of our condition was the cult of memory that we had practiced for four years and that looked, through our distant friends, to a sweetness and pride in living that had disappeared. Despite our efforts, the memories became paler each day, and the faces faded one by one.

At first, the prisoners were much talked of, then less and less; not that we had stopped thinking of them, but from having been sharply defined figures of sorrow, they had become empty, gaping places and had mingled little by little with the thinness of our blood. They were lacking in the same large-scale and undifferentiated manner as fat, sugar, or vitamins. In like fashion we forgot the taste of chocolate or goose liver, and lost the memories of happy days, of July 14 at the Bastille, of a sentimental stroll, of an evening at the seashore, of France's greatness. Our requirements diminished along with our memory,



and, as people become accustomed to everything, we suffered the shame of getting used to our misery, to the Swedish turnips that were served us, to the minimal liberties still left us, and to the barrenness within us. Each day our ways became simpler, and we finally reached a point where we spoke only of food, less out of hunger or fear of the morrow, perhaps, than because the pursuit of meals was the only activity of which we were still capable.

And then the occupation awoke old quarrels and aggravated the disagreements that separated Frenchmen. The division of France into a northern and a southern zone revived the old rivalry between Paris and the provinces, between North and South. The people of Clermont-Ferrand and of Nice accused the Parisians of coming to terms with the enemy. The Parisians, for their part, reproached Frenchmen of the unoccupied zone with being "soft" and with brazenly displaying their selfish satisfaction at not being "occupied." From this point of view, we must admit that the Germans, by violating the armistice agreement and extending the occupation to the entire country, did us a great service; they restored our unity.

**B**UT many other conflicts continued to exist—that of countryman and city dweller, for example. The peasants, long offended at the scorn in which they thought they were held, took their revenge and made the city dwellers pay dearly; the latter accused them of supplying the black market and starving the city populations. The government stirred up the quarrel by speeches which first praised the farmers to the skies and then accused them of hiding their crops. The insolence of the expensive restaurants set the workers against the bourgeoisie. The truth is that these establishments were frequented chiefly by Germans and by a handful of "collaborators." But their existence called attention to social inequality. Likewise, the working classes could not ignore that it was chiefly among them that "relief" workers were recruited; the bourgeoisie was barely touched, if at all. Was this, as some claim, a German maneuver to sow discord, or was it rather that the workers were more useful in Germany? I cannot say. But—and this is an evidence of our uncertainty—we did not know whether to rejoice at seeing students, for the most part, escape deportation, or to hope, in the spirit of solidarity, that deportation would extend equally to all social levels. We must last of all mention, for the sake of completeness, that defeat aggravated the conflict between the generations. For four years, fighters of fourteen reproached those of forty with having lost the war, and those of forty, in turn, accused their elders of having lost the peace.



LET us not go so far, however, as to imagine that France was torn by conflict. The truth is not so simple. These quarrels appear, above all, as obstacles to a vast and clumsy desire for unity. Never before, perhaps, was there so much good will. Young people dreamed vaguely of a new order; and employers, on the whole, were inclined to make important concessions. Everywhere, when a momentary jostling set two clumsy passengers against each other, or when a dispute arose between a pedestrian and a clumsy cyclist, the same murmur arose from the crowd: "Isn't that a shame! Frenchmen quarreling among themselves! And in the presence of Germans!" But the very circumstances of the occupation, the barriers that the Germans erected between us, and the necessities of the underground struggle prevented this good will, for the most part, from finding an outlet.

So, these four years were a long, impotent dream of unity. That is what lends the present moment its agonizing urgency. The barriers have fallen, and our fate is in our own hands. Which will triumph: old quarrels revived, or this great desire for unity? But of our friends in England and America, we must ask a little patience. The memory of the occupation is not yet eradicated; we are barely reviving. In my own case, when I turn a street corner and meet an American soldier, I start instinctively: I think it is a German. And, on the other hand, a German soldier who had hidden in a cellar and who was forced by hunger to surrender was able, fifteen days after the liberation, to ride down the Champs-Élysées on a bicycle without interference. Such was the force of habit that the crowd *did not see* him. We need a long time to forget, and the France of tomorrow has not yet showed its true countenance.

But we ask you first of all to understand that the occupation was often more terrible than war. For in war everyone can do his duty as a man, while, in this ambiguous situation, we could truly neither *act* nor even *think*. No doubt, during this period France—apart from the Resistance—has not always given evidence of its greatness. But we must remember that the active Resistance was necessarily limited to a minority. And then it seems to me that this minority, which offered itself as a sacrifice, deliberately and without hope, amply atoned our weaknesses. And finally, if these pages have helped you to consider what our country has suffered, in shame, in horror, and in anger, you will feel with me, I think, that it is entitled to respect even in its mistakes.