

Freedom For Sartre In The Third World Revolutionary Historical Context

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Abstract:

The article has as its fundamental purpose to define freedom according to Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1908) in the historical revolutionary Third World context. To do so, it systematizes the main theses of the engagé philosopher related to the Third World, especially the Algerian War (1954-1962), the Cuban Revolution (1959-1961), and the Indochina Wars (1946-1975). Under the “impact of history” and in the wake of the dialectical method, Sartre conceives and positions freedom in its economic aspects (such as development), social aspects (such as justice and equality), political aspects (such as national sovereignty), and cultural aspects (such as humanization, in opposition to torture and racism). The theoretical-methodological framework used comes from Marxism, elucidating particularly the relationships between the individual, society, and history. This frame of reference allows us to consider the changes in Sartre's trajectory within a continuity and his political positions regarding the Third World, considering their historical-social foundation. In the course of Third World events, therefore, Sartre radicalizes his thinking by advocating revolution as a means of an effective rupture with imperialism and socialism as a necessary social form for the accomplishment of freedom.

Keywords: Sartre; Freedom; Revolution; Third World; Socialism.

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I. Introduction

The article aims primarily to define freedom – the central issue in the literary and philosophical work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1908) – within the historical revolutionary Third World context.ⁱ The central thesis endorses that, for the *engagé* philosopher, freedom – laborated under the “impact of history” namely, during the events of World War II (1939-1945), in the “necessary and impossible”ⁱⁱ dialogue with the communists, in the adoption of Marxism as an “insurpassable philosophy” but above all, in the process of national liberation struggles – comes to be conceived and positioned on economic (as development), social (as justice and equality), political (as national sovereignty), and cultural (as humanization, in opposition to racism and torture) levels. In other words, freedom acquires an objective content, situated in the concrete realm of history and class struggles.

In 1960, Sartre already explicitly articulates his new stance regarding the realization of human freedom, “conditioned by proteins” as follows: “I will fight in the name of two principles that go hand in hand: first, no one can be free if everyone is not; secondly, I will fight for the improvement of the standard of living and working conditions. Freedom is not metaphysical but practical; it is conditioned by proteins. Life will be human on the day when everyone can eat and satisfy their hunger, and every man can practice a craft under conditions that suit them. I will fight not only for a better standard of living but also for democratic living conditions for everyone, for the liberation of all the exploited, of all the oppressed.” (SARTRE, 1960 apud CONTAT; RYBALKA, 1970, p. 353)

For Sartre, “the course of events changes men” (SARTRE, 1987c, p. 135). Following his participation in the resistance against the Nazi occupation in France, he founded and directed the magazine *Les Temps Modernes* (TM) in October 1945, centered around the already renowned existentialist group of philosophers and writers from Saint-Germain-de-Prés, notably featuring Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The magazine’s fundamental scope was “to position itself in the political and social events of its time in order to bring about certain changes in the social condition of man and in the conception he has of himself”. Not by chance, “and in a short time, TM established itself as a privileged global observatory for publications of left-wing intellectuality dedicated to the critical study of contemporary themes and problems in literature, philosophy, history, and politics” (ALMEIDA, 2017, p. 69).

But it is, above all, the Algerian War (1954-1962), the Cuban Revolution (1959-1961), and the Indochina Wars (1946-1975) that indeed mobilized Sartre's engagement and gave rise to his political radicalization. In fact,

the Third World updates the expectation of social revolution, once placed and frustrated in Europe due to the counter-revolutionary commitments made between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin (according to the Potsdam and Yalta Agreements signed in 1945), which, as is known, “divided” the world into pro-American and pro-Soviet “spheres of influence”.

The ideas contained in the fragment thus corroborate: “The balance of forces, however, remained temporarily favorable to the West; hence, at this historical moment, revolution became impossible in Europe; neither Churchill, nor Roosevelt, nor Stalin would have tolerated it [...]. Nowadays, everything becomes clear: history was one for the entire world; hence arose this contradiction, at the time indecipherable, that the class struggle gave way to conflicts between nations – thus, to postponed wars. Nowadays, the Third World enlightens us; in 1945, we could neither comprehend the metamorphosis nor admit it. In summary, we were blind” (SARTRE, 1962b, p. 125).

Concretely, Sartre's first interest in the Third World is revealed in 1947 when he writes “Présence Noire” a text introducing the *Présence Africaine* magazine published in Paris by Alioune Diop. The magazine, with sponsorship from figures like Albert Camus, André Gide, Michel Leiris, Sartre himself, among others, stood out as a significant platform for the dissemination of ideas and programs advocating for the liberation of the French colonies with black populations.

Through the greeting to the magazine, it becomes clear that, for the engaged philosopher, the Third World emerges with the issue of colonial violence suffered by black Africans in France. In this context, Sartre wishes that the magazine founded and led by blacks paint an unbiased picture of the condition of blacks in Congo and Senegal, without the need to inject anger or revolt: only the truth. This will be enough for us to receive on our faces the torrid sigh of Africa, the pungent odor of oppression and misery (SARTRE, 1947, p. 29). The warm welcome to black immigrants in the “homeland of freedom” appears to be, for Sartre, a duty, a kind of compensatory policy for the violence they suffered under colonialism, as indicated by the fragment: “every handshake we give here to a black person erases all the violence we committed there (in Africa)” (SARTRE, 1947, p. 28).

Sartre's commitmentⁱⁱⁱ to the “Third World cause” will be examined here through four main aspects: radicalization, intervention, dissemination, and proposition. In other words, Sartre radicalizes his thinking in the course of the wars and revolutions of the Third World, a decisive process for his new stance on freedom. His radicalization, in turn, determines his intervention in the Algerian War, which takes place in various ways, through material support to the clandestine networks of the National Liberation Front (FLN), as well as through the signing of petitions and manifestos, of which undoubtedly the “Manifesto of the 121”^{iv} is the most notable. The set of reports he conducted in Cuba contributed, among other things, to the dissemination of the initial achievements of the “huracán sobre el azúcar” both in Brazil and France. Finally, in a proactive manner, with the Russell Court^v, the established parameters from which the wars in Algeria and Vietnam could be sanctioned as “dirty”.

In summary, for the achievement of the overall objectives, the text is organized as follows: after presenting the research hypotheses and the theoretical-methodological framework (section 2), the historical, political, and ideological origins of the Third World and Third Worldism will be presented (section 3), and Sartre's political positions on the Algerian War (section 4), the Cuban Revolution (section 5), and the Indochina Wars (section 6) will be analyzed, always keeping in mind the *fundamental issue of freedom* for the French intellectual.

II. Hypotheses and theoretical-methodological framework

The theoretical-methodological framework used here comes from Marxism, particularly its contributions to the elucidation of the relationships established between the individual, society and history. This allows us to think of Sartre's trajectory as a “change within a permanence” (MÉSZÁROS, 1991, p. 17) and his conceptions and political positions on the Third World from their social-historical (GOLDMANN, 1970, p. 219 apud LÖWY AND NAÏR, 2008, p. 82-83) foundation, as Lucien Goldmann states when writing: “One cannot properly *comprehend* the relationship between a writer and his time without fully considering the *impact of historical events and social transformations*, even though the necessary reservations must be made, on the one hand, regarding existing overlaps, and on the other hand, regarding the constant 'capillary changes' primarily determined by the internal logic of the chosen theme” (MÉSZÁROS, 1991, p. 89, authors' emphasis).

Our general working hypothesis asserts that there is a tangible connection between the historical context – the post-war world, the struggles for national liberation, the new challenges posed by the emergence of Third World countries – and Sartre's trajectory. Therefore, without elucidating the connection between the historical context and his trajectory, it would not be possible to answer “at what moment, under what circumstances does the sudden alignment between an individual's activity and the deep current of history take place? At what moment and through what mechanisms does it disappear?” (CHESNEAUX, 1995, p. 156) and, likewise, “why, at a certain moment in his trajectory, does Sartre develop a keen interest in the world of politics, especially in the Third World?” (MÉSZÁROS, 1991, p. 98) O possível caminho para a resposta se relaciona à *compreensão e explicação* The possible path towards the answer relates to the *comprehension and explaining*^{vi} of Sartre's political positions.

Based on that general working hypothesis, more specific hypotheses were established, namely:

i. certain events in the history of the Third World – the Algerian War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Indochina Wars – radicalize Sartre's political positions. The array of new issues generated by the emergence of Third World countries in Sartre's political concerns allows him to develop analyses of impressive relevance concerning colonialism, torture, racism, revolutionary ideology, socialism, and intellectuals;

ii. Sartre's political positions on the Third World are indebted to Marxism and its corresponding dialectical method. Therefore, they are not and could not be indebted to his philosophy of freedom and the phenomenological method. This is why the emergence of the Third World in Sartre's political concerns is preceded by his "discovery of Marxism", whose method will be employed in the investigation of imperialism and colonial issues. In other words, Sartre *sets himself* political tasks that require posing different questions to reality and, consequently, a method suitable for the interpretation and resolution of these new tasks;

iii. Sartre's political positions on the Third World express the historical need for intervention that certain intellectuals feel in relation to concrete struggles with equally concrete individuals in society. In France and in various countries, alongside workers, African immigrants, communists, students, and other intellectuals, Sartre participates – directly, that is, without any party mediations, which does not exclude his "necessary and impossible dialogue" with the French Communist Party and his activities within the Russell Tribunal – in debates, conferences, signing of manifestos, petitions, popular tribunals, marches, and *meetings*, all against colonial wars, genocide, and the torture of the colonized. The type of *intervention* carried out by Sartre clearly has a "didactic" character, with the exposition of more objective ideas aimed at instructing and convincing the masses (the proletariat and the petite bourgeoisie) concerning the problem of imperialist wars;

iv. Sartre, along with Fanon and Lumumba, was the disseminator of Third Worldism. According to the philosopher Paulo Arantes, "Sartre would visit Brazil as the main ideologue of the promises of redemption by the Third World" (ARANTES, 1994, p. 29). Michel Contat, in the same vein, summarizes Sartre's preface to Fanon's book, "The Wretched of the Earth": "His preface [...] is one of the most violent texts he ever wrote. In it, you find the most radical and literally effective formulation of a position he had taken since 1959, that of political and practical solidarity with the Algerian fighters. This position is here generalized to the entirety of struggles in underdeveloped countries, and it can be said that, due to its significant impact, Sartre's preface and Fanon's text contributed to the creation, in France, of *third-worldism* among the revolutionary intellectual youth" (CONTAT; RYBALKA, 1970, p. 360-361, authors' emphasis).

v. in conclusion, it can be said that Sartre was a *revolutionary intellectual*, engaged in the transformation of capitalist society, a radical advocate of socialist revolution, the only one that would achieve freedom among people. Sartre did not limit himself to criticizing colonialism and was far from mere "denunciation" of colonial violence manifested through torture, racism, or genocide. *Proactively*, he presented clear and programmatic ideas about the unity of the left in the international collective struggle for socialist revolution, highlighting the need for "solidarity of class interests" between the proletariats (European and North American) and the peasantry of the Third World (Cuban, Algerian, and Vietnamese), all subjected to capitalist exploitation, whether in its colonial or neo colonial imperialist form.

III. The historical, political and ideological origins of Third World countries

The origins of the Third World are of a historical, political, and ideological nature. Historically, the origins of Third World countries trace back to the colonial imperialism of the mid-19th century, where major European powers such as England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy "divide" Africa and Asia among themselves, establishing compulsory colonies to supply essential raw materials for their rapidly expanding industries.

The European colonies, however, from the end of the Second World War, achieve their political emancipations.^{vii}

Which, in broad terms, occurs in two ways: through the grant by imperialist powers, as happens in most of "French Africa" in the year 1960, or through violent struggles, as seen in the Indochina Wars (1946-1975), Algeria (1954-1962), Indonesia (1945-1949), and Malaysia (1948-1957). All former colonies, once independent, would then be referred to, by Alfred Sauvy, as countries of the "Third World".^{viii}

Many elements contribute to national liberation struggles. According to Chaliand, on the social level, the urban petite bourgeoisie becomes the center of opposition to colonial domination. This is because it is familiar with the methods of domination, betrayal, and corruption of the traditional ruling class, feeling and perceiving "the colonial phenomenon with greater acuity and awareness" (CHALIAND, 1977, p. 19). The focus of their opposition necessarily lies in the state apparatus, where certain factions are integrated, especially intellectuals and military personnel.

The petite bourgeoisie, which controls the state apparatus, either through the army and/or the single party, can – in its organic connection with the peasant masses – completely break up with capitalism, as in Cuba and Vietnam, or it can develop, for its own benefit, the capitalist way of production, as happened in the majority

of cases. The weakness or strength of the petite bourgeoisie, the absence or presence of organic ties between it and the peasant masses, and furthermore, the greater or lesser direct intervention of imperialist powers in the process of national liberation struggles, generally determine the “fate” of the movements for political emancipation (CHALIAND, 1977, p. 10). Thus, countries that initiate anti-imperialist struggles, such as Algeria, even after achieving independence, remain bound to imperialism in its neocolonial form. These countries implement nationalist regimes with statist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist tendencies; however, they are concerned with avoiding radical social transformations in society.

It is the petite bourgeoisie intellectual youth who organizes resistance, promotes congresses, directs newspapers, establishes associations (pan-Africanist, pan-Arabist etc.), and leads decisive actions (strikes, attacks, and sabotage) in the struggles against the colonial “metropolis”. The young intellectuals, mostly educated with the culture and language of the colonizer, realize that traditional ruling classes do not provide answers to the serious socio-economic crises, such as contradictions in rural areas produced by the introduction of capitalist relations of production.^{ix} It is important to note that many of these revolutionary young intellectuals from the Third World studied in Europe or at least in its culture: Ferhat Abbas, Jawaharlal Nehru, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Patrice Lumumba, Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and Mahatma Gandhi are notable examples.

Politically, the origins of Third World countries trace back to the Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955. The event involves the participation of many political and intellectual leaders from independent Afro-Asian countries and raises a series of new issues, both from the perspective of international politics and from an ideological standpoint.

From the perspective of international politics, “neutrality” and “non-alignment” seek, in practice, to constitute a third alternative force to the hegemonies of the capitalist bloc (the “First World,” led by the United States) and the socialist bloc (the “Second World”, led by the Soviet Union).

The conference establishes a strategy for intervention in the ongoing process of national liberation struggles. Summarized in some fundamental points, the chosen strategy includes: respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states; equality of peoples and nations; non-intervention in the internal affairs of states; non-use of defense mechanisms that serve the particular interests of major powers; promotion of common interests and cooperation; respect for international justice; assistance to the independence of other countries. Effectively, the principles adopted by the Bandung Conference lay “the foundations for the effective institutionalization of the idea of the Third World”, especially because they introduce the policy of neutrality that encompasses anti-colonial and anti-imperialist ideas. In light of the above, we must understand the Third World as “a broad political category that encompasses different and antagonistic situations” (VIGEVANI, 1990, p. 5-13) but whose central idea is expressed in the attempt to constitute a third force against the capitalist and communist blocs.

Nationalism is, undoubtedly, “the central ideology of colonized countries”, just as “the them VIGEVANI, 1990, p. 19-25 e of the nation is also key to understanding the foundations that shape the concept and praxis of the Third World”. Sartre explains to us in greater detail the trajectory of nationalism, which he considers a revolutionary element: “[...] The current strengthening of national movements is explained by two evident reasons. Firstly, the atomic revolution. With the atomic weapon, the centralism of the Cold War is exerted from Moscow and Washington over nations, not just over provinces. As these nations concern themselves with belonging to one bloc or another, smaller nations that had sought integration regain awareness of their identity. The second reason, linked to the first, is the process of decolonization that unfolded on three continents after the last world war.” (SARTRE, 1987a, p. 239).

Overall, the outcome of the process of national liberation struggles, however, is not very encouraging, as it is consensually acknowledged among scholars that “decolonization” amounted to a mere exchange of sovereignty. That is, the types of economic ties survived, perpetuating the old dependency under other forms and to the benefit of the new local “bourgeoisies” (FERRO, 1997, p. 38, Ferro’s emphasis). In reality, the only way out of economic dependence and underdevelopment, in the era of (neo)colonialist imperialism, is the peasant revolution, as argued by Aijaz Ahmad: “Effectively, in the agrarian economies of the former major colonies, the peasant revolution was the only way to break free from imperialist dependency. The absence of such a revolution was decisive for the failure of the bourgeois national project, the subsequent acceptance of imperialist dictates, and the formation of neoliberal regimes by local bourgeoisies” (AHMAD, 2006, p. 88).

For Sartre, the engaged intellectual contributes to the struggles for the liberation of the Third World by supporting “all movements of the exploited classes by every means at their disposal” (SARTRE, 1966, p. 15), after all, “the great historical fact of the world in the last 20 years is the struggle of the Third World for its liberation: the colonial empires have crumbled, and in their place, sovereign nations have asserted themselves or have continued an old and traditional independence broken by colonization” (SARTRE, 1987d, p. 169).

From an ideological perspective, *Third Worldism* presents itself as the expectation of a tri-continental social revolution, namely, American, African, and Asian, led respectively by Cuba, Algeria, and Vietnam against American and French imperialisms. The belief that the world would be emancipated through the liberation of

peripheral countries from the dominance of core countries became a central focus of Sartre's political concerns. From this, he is convinced that "concrete thought must be born from praxis and turn back to illuminate it" (SARTRE, 2002, p. 31).

In fact, Sartre develops this reasoning since 1960, during the Cuban Revolution, in the analysis of the relationship between ideology and revolutionary praxis. Indeed, "no revolution could have been better designed to attract the left in the Western hemisphere and in the developed countries, at the end of a decade of global conservatism" (HOBSBAWM, 1995, p. 427).

Throughout this period, a generation of left-wing intellectuals places its trust in social revolution. After all, "the Third World could preserve its ideals, while becoming the central pillar of hope and faith for those who still believed in social revolution" (HOBSBAWM, 1995, p. 424). In other words, the struggles and wars of liberation update the idea of a tri-continental revolution, making it feasible thanks to the examples in Africa (Algeria), America (Cuba), and Asia (Vietnam).

IV. The emergence of the Third World in Sartre's political concerns and the algerian war (1954-1962)

The emergence of the Third World in Sartre's political concerns must be *explained* by a dual movement: a) the failure of the socialist revolution in Europe, partly due to the Stalinist counter-revolutionary strategy of containment and consolidation of the socialist revolution "in one country", with the necessary subjugation of European communist parties to Moscow; b) the new revolutionary historical horizon outlined by the emergence of Third World countries through the struggles for national liberation.

Secondly, the emergence of the Third World in the political concerns of the French philosopher must be *understood* in strict relation to his "necessary and impossible" dialogue with the communists and his adoption of the dialectical method in the investigation of colonial problems, as seen in his first and most important essay on the Algerian War, '*Colonialism is a System*' (1956).

The emergence of the Third World thus materializes, for Sartre, the coveted "third force", both in relation to Soviet socialism and American capitalism. Therefore, this allows us to consider his political stance in line with the liberation struggle of the Third World as an unfolding and continuation of his concept of engagement developed in the French political-intellectual scenario in the post-war period (ALMEIDA, 2009, p. 23-32).

Sartre believes that the unity of the Third World is underway "both after and before the independence of all the colonized under the command of the peasant class" (SARTRE, 1968c, p. 140). And he is not alone, as he finds in Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) the same reasoning that Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans must achieve revolutionary socialism together and everywhere. Otherwise, the colonized would be defeated, one by one.

Certainly, the radicalization of Sartre's political positions is not "achieved overnight", but the result of a (perhaps slow) process whose origins date back to World War II and deepen over the years. Thus, it is necessary to consider the terms of Sartre's assertion that "it was the war that blew up the aging frameworks of our thinking" (SARTRE, 1966, p. 22). Absolutely, the historical experience provided by the war is decisive for the evolution of Sartre's political positions. However, the events of the Third World, especially the Algerian War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Wars in Indochina, indelibly contribute to this radicalization processes. Amidst the Algerian War, Sartre defines his concept of colonialism and reveals the dehumanization of the Algerian through colonial violence manifested in racism and torture. His political positions on the event have a significant impact in France. The originality lies not in the fact that he was the first or the only one to observe the dehumanization of the Algerian, as he was not, but in the *radical* nature of his stance.

Sartre *intervenes* against the war, *publicizes* its atrocities, and *proposes* a joint and coordinated political action from the left, involving the French working class and the Algerian peasantry represented by the National Liberation Army (NLA), rallying around a common struggle: the end of imperialist exploitation and oppression.

Sartre characterizes the war as the expression of class struggle between the peasantry, represented by the National Liberation Army (NLA), and the colonialist bourgeoisie pied-noir (French settlers residing in Algeria), represented by the French government. According to Sartre, the period of the Algerian War (1954-1962) is the time when "the will to be free was most conscious", while "the most violent oppression" occurs simultaneously (SARTRE, 1968a, p. 69).

Sartre starts with the definition of colonialism as an economic system. This implies observing that "colonization is not a set of coincidences, nor the statistical result of thousands of individual enterprises" (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 22). In other words, colonialism is a rational enterprise whose origins date back to the Second French Empire (1852-1870) due to the expansion of industrial activities. It operates according to the interests and needs of colonial companies, with the clear goal of systematically exploiting the social and natural resources of the colony for their benefit. If colonialism is a system, a rational enterprise, a historical product of industrial expansion, there is no sense in affirming that there are "good or bad" colonists, as the colonizers themselves might argue.

In summary, for Sartre, the problems engendered by French colonialism in Algeria are: a) of an economic

nature – how to solve the problem of hunger?; b) social – how to increase the number of doctors and schools?; c) ultimately, psychological – how to resolve the inferiority complex of the Algerian? (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 21).

In Sartre's view, the solidarity between the French working class and the colonized Algerians would determine the course of Algeria. Taking a stand in favor of Algerian independence is "the only possible international leftist position, precisely because it concerns relations with a certain nationalism of colonized countries that is awakening" (SARTRE, 1960b, p. 2). Standing alongside underdeveloped countries and their struggle for emancipation is to adopt an internationalist position, thus a vital issue for the French left. One of the main outcomes of colonial violence is the dehumanization of the colonized: "[...] Colonial violence not only aims to impose respect on enslaved individuals but also seeks to dehumanize them. Nothing is spared to eliminate their traditions, replace their languages with ours, and destroy their culture without offering ours in return. If they resist, soldiers shoot, and they become a dead man; if they yield, degrade themselves, they are no longer a man; shame and fear gradually erode their character, disintegrating their person" (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 144).

Even though colonial violence seeks to dehumanize the colonized, as the passage illustrates, in reality, this does not occur. The colonized are not dehumanized because, "unless they were male and free, how could they freely sell their labor power?" (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 143). In reality, they are sub-humanized, that is, "neither man nor animal, here is the native" (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 144). In order to be sub-humanized, he must be, in the first instance, a free man. This is the fundamental thesis of Sartre's philosophy of freedom.

Racism and torture dehumanize the colonized. To enable colonial exploitation, the colonizer reduces the Algerian to the status of a subhuman, and for the same reason, racism is inscribed in colonialism, that is, "in the very facts, in the institutions, in the nature of exchanges and production" (SARTRE, 1968d, p. 43). Racism, therefore, is not a logical consequence or an unfolding, but an immanent necessity of the system. Racism serves the purpose of compensating for "the latent universality of bourgeois liberalism, since everyone has the same rights, the Algerian will be made a subhuman" (SARTRE, 1968b, p. 37). In other words, Sartre continues: "Colonialism rejects the rights of man for men whom it has subjected by violence, whom it keeps in poverty and ignorance by force, thus, as Marx would say, in a 'sub-humanity' state" (SARTRE, 1968d, p. 43, Sartre's emphasis).

Racism, or "racial segregation" is deep down, an economic segregation (SARTRE, 1961e, p. 46). Therefore, the only possible solution against a racial segregation that, ultimately, is economic, is the end of the colonial system that engenders it (SARTRE, 1961e, p. 47). Being a violence that dehumanizes the colonized, racism must, therefore, be fought with violence. For Sartre, in fact, the violence of the colonized is a counter-violence.^x And this counter-violence, it's worth noting, "is not an absurd storm, nor the resurrection of wild instincts, much less the effect of resentment: it is a man himself reassembling" (SARTRE, 1968c, p. 149). Only through this counter-violence can the colonized regain their truly human status, that is, their individual and collective freedoms.

V. The political positions of Sartre on the Cuban Revolution (1959-1961)

At the time of the Cuban Revolution, Sartre was already convinced of the weight of socioeconomic circumstances in conditioning individuals actions. However, simultaneously, he is convinced of the fundamental irreducibility of individuals actions in the historical process, which he defines as *freedom*. For the engagé philosopher, this irreducibility enabled revolutionary action in Cuba. But the "huracán sobre el azúcar" still had an important legacy for Sartre: it showed the possibility of revolution without a pre-established ideology, thus excluding the need for mediation by the communist party.

Sartre's fundamental contribution as an "intellectual-journalist" lies in the extensive series of reports published on the "huracán sobre el azúcar" in France, by the Parisian newspaper *France Soir*, and in Brazil, by the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Última Hora* (ALMEIDA, 2009, p. 39-41). In the reports, he describes the daily efforts of young revolutionaries to build and consolidate society under a logic beyond capital, emphasizing the social achievements obtained by the Cuban people, particularly in terms of the agrarian reform. Sartre's analyses, as well as his descriptions, constitute a rich source for the study of the Cuban revolutionary work, even in its early years. Not surprisingly, Sartre disseminated the Cuban social achievements to the international public. With this, he intends to gather support for the revolution, which is constantly threatened with annihilation by the United States, but also to serve as a model for Latin American countries, particularly Brazil (ALMEIDA, 2009, p. 56-57).

In relation to socialist Europe, Sartre explains: in the Cuban Revolution, one does not find "the contradictions that once bloodied socialist Europe" that is, "the need to work the land in common will not stumble, within the workers themselves, upon the harsh desire to individually possess it" (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 151). In relation to Marxism, the revolution inaugurates a new relationship between ideology and revolutionary praxis. For the Third World, and for Brazil in particular, Cuba establishes a feasible model of successful revolution and agrarian reform that eradicates large estates and, along with them, poverty, hunger, and unemployment.

Hence why, for Sartre, Cuba is the "intellectuals' paradise" because the revolution "accomplishes the

realm of freedom” by solving the problems of the “realm of necessity.”^{xi} Sartre is one of the first European intellectuals to politically align with the Revolution and to undertake a series of reports on the island with specific objectives: to publicize it to the French general public, providing them with historical and economic information that is not usually found in the “mainstream press” (SARTRE, 1960 apud CONTAT; RYBALKKA, 1970, p. 347). To engage world public opinion in the struggle for decolonization and contribute to the recovery of the internationalist tradition of the left, worn down during the Algerian War, as suggested by the following excerpt: “[...] It is a duty for world public opinion to take an active part in the struggle for decolonization. It is the reason why, as they say, I, a Frenchman, speak to you about a national vice that we do not have the right to silence. Us, old Europeans, if we want to keep the friendship of young nationalisms, we must rediscover our tradition of internationalism, although underdeveloped countries can only develop by asserting their own nationalism” (SARTRE, 1960a, p. 4).

Sartre affirms that, up until the 1959 Revolution, the impoverished Cubans had no future. Every year, they anticipated, after four months of work, the return of eight months of unemployment (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 101). Without employment (around three million men), some migrated to Europe, others to the United States, and everything followed its routine: “speculators speculated; traffickers trafficked; the unemployed remained without work; tourists got drunk, and malnourished peasants, corroded by fever and parasites, worked someone else's land day after day” (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 70). The fight of the Revolution, directed against the army and Batista's dictatorship, aims, therefore, to destroy the “semi-colonialist” American imperialism. To destroy it, according to Sartre, it is necessary to engage in economic struggle (for emancipation), social struggle (for an end to poverty, hunger, and unemployment), political struggle (for the sovereignty of the State), and moral struggle (for the honesty of its leaders): “[...] To fight for the independence of the Cuban economy, the sovereignty of its State, and the honesty of its leadership was, first and foremost, to fight against the United States of America. The political objective had faded before the economic objective, and this, in turn, fades before the social objective. The students, the petite bourgeoisie, initially wanted to reform the institutions. But the revolutionaries, in contemplating their reformist demands, suddenly discover the only instrument capable of realizing reforms: the people. And particularly the most numerous and most deprived class: the agricultural workers” (SARTRE, 1961c, p. 13, Sartre's emphasis).

Sartre relates the misery of the Cuban people, the government of Batista, and its corruption to economic dependence. Similarly, he links Cuba's economic independence to the radical change in the old “semi-colonial” structures, facilitated by the Agrarian Reform. That is why he asserts that the fundamental achievement of the Cuban people is the Agrarian Reform: “the essential thing is that Cuba is a country that has achieved its agrarian reform” (SARTRE, 1961b, p. 3).

Sartre reproduces these law points to highlight the key role of the Reform in urban society, that is, the “reform as the fundamental organization of productive forces and production relations” (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 146). For Sartre, the reorganization of productive forces and production relations, carried out by the Agrarian Reform, allows Cuba to break free from North American domination, that is, “semi-colonialist” imperialism, and to develop its production in a way that satisfies the needs of the Cuban people. This creates, therefore, an internal market that allows for the eradication of poverty, unemployment, hunger, related diseases, and illiteracy. According to Sartre, one of the major social problems has been solved: unemployment, after all, “fourteen months after the rebels” victory, 125 thousand unemployed had found work (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 149).

In summary, Cuban social problems were resolved by the Agrarian Reform, which enables full employment and the training of technical personnel to address education and health issues. In the long term, we know that the measures taken were effective; after all, Cuba has become a global reference in public education and health.

However, the greatest social problem addressed by the Agrarian Reform was unemployment. Cuban workers had only four months of work during the sugar harvest period. After that period, they spent eight months unemployed. In need of food, clothing, etc., they incurred debts 'with the village shopkeeper, with the boss. When, eight months later, they return to work, their future payment is already consumed in advance by these loans (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 91). Hence why 'the poor classes were genuinely happy: the new government had done in a few weeks what its predecessors had not been able to do in fifteen years (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 135-136). The measures include the reduction of rents (whose value was set at 50% less than they were), the reduction of telephone and electricity tariffs. Subsequently, these sectors of the Cuban economy were nationalized.

Sartre analyzes the Agrarian Reform from a dual perspective, economic and ethical. From an economic standpoint, it solves the problem of economic dependence by directing production towards satisfying the needs of the Cuban people and creating an internal market. This required breaking away from North American “semi-colonialist” domination. Regarding the second aspect, and linked to the first, is the fact that the Agrarian Reform is just because it ends inequalities and social problems engendered by underdevelopment. The Agrarian Reform: “[...] is a clear example of this: it grants new purchasing power to rural classes and breaks foreign domination by creating an internal market. But at the same time, the Agrarian Reform is just: it eliminates privileges and poverty,

allows the worker to own the land, and build a house. These two inseparable characteristics perhaps constitute the originality of Cuban ideology: the human problem must be resolved in terms of production; the only viable development of production will be one that satisfies all the needs of men in every way” (SARTRE, 1961c, p. 16. Sartre's emphasis).

Sartre's statement that the Agrarian Reform “allows the worker to own the land” does not refer to private ownership but only to an economic, productive issue that indeed liberates man from the “realm of necessity”. Thus, the honesty of the leaders, the sovereignty of the State, the freedom of an entire people “constitute the practical and material aspect of a human and humanistic problem” (SARTRE, 1961c, p. 16). In other words, the *new man, free and honest*, is born with the new society, which is also *free and just*.

VI. Sartre's political positions regarding the Indochina wars (1946-1975)

There were two Indochina Wars: the first, fought against France between 1946 and 1954, and the second, more commonly known as the Vietnam War, against the United States, between 1954 and 1975. Essentially, Sartre's political positions on the First Indochina War can be reconstructed through the document “The Infernal Machine,” published by the Parisian magazine “Défense de la Paix” in 1953. Regarding the Vietnam War, we have abundant and more readily accessible documentation.

Sartre's concern regarding the First Indochina War relates to France's attempt to internationalize the conflict. According to Sartre, this attempt could trigger a third world war: “The internationalization of the Indochina War (is) [...] one of the first things against which we must protest today. The French risk, with their attitude, triggering a world conflict” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 15).

For Sartre, the internationalization of the conflict, the goal of the French government and politics, “is a predictable and necessary development of the Indochina War. Therefore, after 1947, French policy resulted in building a kind of infernal machine. This machine is currently in the last moment of its operation, that is, at the moment of the internationalization of the conflict. So, if we don't want to explode with it, we must turn it off” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 17).

But, what is the “infernal machine”? It is the maintenance of a constant political tension to divert attention, especially that of the French, from the real issue at stake in the First Indochina War: international capitalism in its imperialist colonialist version. According to Sartre, “the only way to hide what it is, by the government and the majority, is to wish that the tension continues [...] the infernal machine works thoroughly”. (SARTRE, 1953, p. 19).

The first revelation of the mechanism used by the French government to mystify its interests in Indochina, according to Sartre, came from a deserter from the French army – Henri Martin.^{xii} – Which gained significant resonance in France. The French Communist Party, intellectuals, and various segments of French civil society organized several protests throughout the year 1951 against the war and the imprisonment of the mentioned soldier. In 1953, at the “necessary and possible” moment of Sartre's rapprochement with the French Communist Party (PCF), the campaign finally succeeded, and Henri Martin was released.

As is typical of his political positions – the anti-fatalist and anti-defeatist proposition – Sartre does not succumb to the observations regarding French imperialism in Indochina. This is because he asserts the existence of “two Frances.” One, capitalist, bourgeois, and imperialist, and the other, popular, proletarian, and of the middle classes, on the one hand, he states that imperialist France, waging wars in the name of capitalism, “lost its face [...] a France that, with stories like those of Tunisia, Madagascar, Indochina, ended up truly deserving contempt” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 21), on the other, he *proposes* that the other France, even though still silent, “can clearly play its role in the battle for freedom and peace, it is the popular France... the proletariat, the middle classes” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 21) the France of hope, for which Sartre fights. As seen, Sartre aims for intervention in the process to inform the masses and mobilize their support against the war.

In turn, the Vietnam War (1954-1975), or the Second Indochina War, is described and denounced by Sartre as a “dirty war”, and therefore morally condemnable. According to Sartre, the bombings “revealed with brutal evidence that the structures of American society rest on imperialism” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 21). Sartre's criticism refers to the “overall policy of American imperialism, in Vietnam, in South America, in Korea, throughout the Third World”. How could imperialist policy be changed? Sartre categorically proposes: only “with the radical transformation of American society's structures” (SARTRE, 1953, p. 21). In other words, Sartre knows that this would only happen through a revolution and the establishment of a new type of society.

Sartre defines the Vietnam War as an imperialist aggression by the United States, whose consistent policy of interventionism is also carried out in Latin America, following the principles of the “Monroe Doctrine”. According to Sartre, American imperialism reveals that the deep structures of American society rest on monopolistic capitalism that incessantly exports its products and capital (SARTRE, 1987d, p. 180). Sartre understands American imperialism against Third World countries as “the transposition, on the international level, of the class struggle and is determined by the structure of the present groups” (SARTRE, 1987b, p. 138). In other words, the struggle of the Third World, and more specifically, of the Vietnamese peasants against the North

American imperialist neocolonialist bourgeoisie.

According to Sartre, the neocolonial war in Vietnam is carried out without reciprocity, that is, without a correlation of economic, material, and human forces. The difference compared to “classic” colonial wars also lies in the fact that in these, the colonial dependence on the abundant supply of labor somewhat limited genocide, unlike the neocolonial war, the “ultimate result of the uneven development of societies [...], *total* war carried to the end *by one party without the slightest reciprocity*” (SARTRE, 1987e, p. 201, Sartre's emphasis).

In summary, the American strategy of “positive *anti-guerrilla*” (SARTRE, 1987e, p. 192, Sartre's notes) consists of mass destruction of the civilian population, torture, and genocide, the only “response of the metropolitans to the uprising of the colonized” (SARTRE, 1987e, p. 192). According to Sartre, from this perspective, the Vietnam War is worse than the Algerian War, whose massacres, ultimately, were limited by the need for obtaining abundant labor. However, in both cases, racist practices were common. According to Sartre, from this perspective, the Vietnam War is worse than the Algerian War, whose massacres, ultimately, were limited by the need for obtaining abundant labor. However, in both cases, racist practices were common.

According to Sartre, racism dehumanizes the Vietnamese, and by dehumanizing them, it justifies the war. In this context, he draws a radical and violent comparison between the extermination of Jews by Hitler, “because they were Jews”, and the extermination of the Vietnamese by the American army, “because they were Vietnamese” (SARTRE, 1987e, p. 200, Sartre's emphasis). The war degrades the Vietnamese, and by extension, aims to degrade everyone; thus, “imperialist genocide can only radicalize itself: because the group one wants to reach and terrorize, through the Vietnamese nation, is the human group as a whole” (SARTRE, 1987e, p. 202, Sartre's emphasis).^{xiii}

Sartre's involvement against the war in Vietnam undoubtedly allows us to assess the core of his philosophy of freedom, as well as explain why the victory of the Vietnamese was crucial. Let's examine the fragment: “[...]The incredible heroism of the Vietnamese and their relentless struggle to regain their sovereignty foreshadows, in the eyes of other peoples, the advent of liberated humanity. And even though we are still far from this advent, the value of Vietnamese independence lies, for us, in being sometimes a symbol, a warning, and – in these dark and confusing times – a step forward: the victory of Vietnam will prove that man is possible. [...] The American undertaking, on the contrary, is primarily the object of a radical condemnation: if it triumphs, it would prove that man is a dream and that in the world there is nothing more than the thing, that is, greed and its servants” (SARTRE, 1987d, p. 182).

The main idea of this fragment is to affirm that the “value of Vietnamese independence”, that is, their freedom, to be achieved through their victory over the United States, “would prove that man is possible.” Such triumph of humanity over things, greed, and its servants, in other words, corresponds to the victory of the “realm of freedom” over the “realm of necessity.”

VII. Conclusion

Sartre's trajectory is characterized, as we have seen, by a “change within permanence”, since, before his “turn to history”, he defines freedom from a theoretical-philosophical perspective, that is, at the ontological level, therefore, abstract and individual. However, in the context of revolutionary third-worldist history, freedom is conceived and *positioned*, politically and historically, at the level of class struggle, therefore, collective and concrete.

During World War II, Sartre begins to consider the human individual no longer in ontological terms of an “original lack” that condemns them to be free, but in terms of their responsibility to society and history. This ethical problem posed to his philosophy, during the Nazi occupation, though inconclusive due to the challenges of his existentialist conception of freedom, resurfaces during the Algerian War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Indochina Wars, particularly the Vietnam War. From the perspective of Marxism and the dialectical method, Sartre seeks to define it in terms of economic aspects (as development, as opposed to dependence), social aspects (as justice and equality, as opposed to inequality), political aspects (as national sovereignty, as opposed to colonial domination), and cultural aspects (as humanization, as opposed to torture and racism).

Sartre condemns the wars in Algeria and Vietnam from a moral standpoint, considering them as “dirty wars”. Nevertheless, he asserts that their origins are economic. According to the engagé philosopher, for effective results, the moral condemnation of wars must come from the European and American masses (the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie). Hence, the importance of the intellectual's intervention in disseminating the atrocities of wars, genocide, torture, and racism among the masses to gain their support against the wars. All these features of the intellectual's engagement have a very precise political goal: the transformation of capitalist society through revolution and the construction of socialism.

The outbreak of the Revolution in Cuba puts an end to the “semi-colonial” exploitation while challenging the “Monroe Doctrine.” Not surprisingly, the United States fears the spread of other revolutions in Latin America due to the “Cuban example.” That's why the United States could not allow Cuba to become “the leader of the masses in Latin America” (SARTRE, 1961e, p. 25). Regarding his visit to Brazil, Sartre *emphasizes*: “the peoples

of these countries are much more sensitive to the fact that Castro was able to shake off American economic tutelage [...] when I went to Brazil, I could see that Cuba was considered as an example, as a pilot country” (1961b, p. 8). For all these reasons, Sartre asserts that “Cuban freedom exasperates the land of freedom” (1961d, p. 198), because it shows that “if the system breaks at one point, then it can break completely” (1961b, p. 8).

In this vein, therefore, for the intellectual from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, only revolution can break with colonial and neocolonial imperialisms, and only socialism can achieve the “realm of freedom” among men. In other words, the “human problem” – that is, *freedom* – must be resolved in terms of production and socialist means of production.

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Notes

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ⁱⁱ "I will say that collaboration with the Communist Party is sometimes necessary and impossible. [...] I reiterate: impossible to collaborate, impossible not to collaborate" (SARTRE, 1962a).

ⁱⁱⁱ For a precise and in-depth definition and characterization of the concept of engagement, I strongly recommend reading Souza's book: *Sartre e a Literatura Engajada* (2008).

^{iv} For further considerations, see Almeida (2018, p. 94-96).

^v Regarding the "ethical-legal activities" and other issues related to the tribunal, see Almeida (2018, p. 152-165).

^{vi} To Lucien Goldmann: "Understanding is the highlighting of a meaningful structure inherent to the studied object [...]. Explanation is simply the integration of this structure, as a constitutive and functional element, into an immediately globalizing structure, which the researcher does not explore in detail but only to the extent necessary to make the genesis of the work he is studying intelligible" (1970, p. 66 apud LÖWY; NAÏR, 2008, p. 27, author's emphasis).

^{vii} Although the processes of national liberation struggles generally developed only after the end of the Second World War. Hobsbawm (2008, p. 202) emphasizes that the millennial milestone in the history of anti-imperialism and the national liberation movements from which Third World countries emerged was the Great Depression (1929-1933). This period promoted the economic and financial weakening of the "metropolitan" powers. Oloruntimehin corroborates Hobsbawm's statement that "the world economic crisis worsened the situation twofold by limiting the resources that allowed colonial regimes to live without subsidies from the metropolis. The general trend was to reduce expenses on services and infrastructure benefiting the colonized, freezing job opportunities without regard for the social impact of unemployment. At the same time, exactions that impoverished the colonies became heavier with increased taxes and the frequent use of cheap and forced labor, in a situation where farmers received ever lower compensation for their raw materials and paid increasingly higher prices for manufactured goods imported from Europe" (2010, p. 672).

^{viii} The term "third world" was coined in comparison to the three estates of the Ancien Régime and was first used by the French demographer and sociologist in the article 'Trois Mondes, une planète', published in the magazine *L'Observateur politique, économique, littéraire*, on August 14, 1952.

^{ix} According to Hobsbawm "the contradiction between the rule of the ruling classes in the metropolises over their empires and their own peoples became insoluble. In the metropolises, democratic electoral politics prevailed. In the colonial empires, autocracy ruled, based on a combination of physical coercion and passive submission to a superiority so great that it seemed unquestionable and therefore legitimate" (2008, p. 122).

^x In this passage, we can establish another analogy with Engels' idea in *A Situação da Classe Trabalhadora na Inglaterra* (2010) regarding the "counter-violence of the Workers". According to Engels, "even the most violent acts of hostility by the workers against the bourgeoisie and its servants are nothing more than the open and undisguised expression of what, covertly and perfidiously, the bourgeoisie inflicts on the workers" (p. 248).

^{xi} Sartre characterizes the revolution as peasant because "the cities remained crushed by impotence. Even before participating in it, the countryside imposed its form on the rebellion (SARTRE, 1961d, p. 116).

^{xii} For further details on the case, see Contat and Rybalka (1970, p. 260-261, authors' emphasis).

^{xiii} Domenico Losurdo refers to this phenomenon as "naturalistic despecification", inscribed both in the logic of the era of "total war" and in the colonial tradition of the Western world (2017, p. 179-226).