An Interview with Henri Alleg

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The journalist Henri Alleg (pseudonym for Harry Salem), a major anticolonial figure of the twentieh century, died on July 17, 2013. A Franco-Algerian citizen, Alleg was born in London in 1921 to a Jewish family—an English mother and a Polish father—who later settled in France. In 1940, at the age of nineteen and by mere chance, Alleg moved to Algeria, where he eventually joined the Parti Communiste Algérien (PCA) and fought for Algeria's liberation from French colonialism. From 1951 to 1955, when it was banned by the French colonial government, Alleg served as the editor-in-chief of *Alger Républicain*, the proindependence newspaper to which Albert Camus and Kateb Yacine occasionally contributed.

After his arrest in 1957 at the home of his friend Maurice Audin (who had himself been arrested the day before and would not be seen again), Alleg began writing his seminal anticolonial work, *La Question*, a firsthand account of the torture he had experienced at the detention center of El-Biar. Bit by bit, this account was smuggled out of prison by Alleg's lawyers and typed in France by his wife, Gilberte Salem-Alleg, who had been expelled from Algeria with their two children. The manuscript, first entitled *Interrogatoires sous la torture*, was picked up and subsequently printed by Jérôme Lindon's Editions de Minuit in February 1958.[1] More than sixty thousand copies of *La Question* were sold within two weeks. The French government's ban of the book a month later (France's first ban since the eighteenth century) promptly triggered a new publication by Nils Andersson, in Switzerland, with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre.

To fully understand the considerable stir *La Question* caused in France, one needs to put it in historical context. In colonial Algeria, torture was a long-standing fact of life, which the press, threatened with censorship, generally avoided mentioning. Anticolonial activists in Algeria knew that their arrest would likely lead to torture. In France, however, torture was largely denied, and most people clung to a vision of that country as a land of civilization. Those who dared denounce torture were considered

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antipatriotic and shunned, whether or not they might have fought against Nazism during the Second World War. When, on rare occasions, the reality of torture in colonial Algeria was evoked, the French government differentiated between the torture inflicted by the French army and that inflicted by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). Torture was framed as a justified response to a barbaric onslaught menacing social order and progress.

Alleg was a well-known journalist affiliated with the Fédération de la Presse, a member of the PCA with many contacts, and the director of a daily that pointed to the injustices and violence borne of (French) colonialism at every turn. His denunciation of the torture that he had suffered at the hands of brutal French paratroopers provided a devastatingly direct yet eloquent testimony, which jolted French society. It gave rise to a greater demand for accountability on the part of the colonial government, blew apart France's ethical pretenses, and initiated the long and sinuous process of historical reexamination that continues to this day.

La Question, which Pierre Vidal-Naquet viewed as one of the two "most beautiful narratives inspired by the Algerian struggle" (1998:132), has retained its evocative and indictive potency, and not just in relation to a French context.[2] Because torture is a universal and recurring issue, new translations of the book appear regularly which apply to new countries and assist in analyzing and combatting it.

Sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for "atteinte à la sûreté extérieure de la France" (violation of the state's external security) and "reconstitution de ligue dissoute" (reconstitution of a dissolved league), Alleg was transferred to Rennes, France, in 1960. After escaping from prison, he rejoined his family and fellow militants in Czechoslovakia. He returned to Algeria after the Evian Accords in 1962 to help rebuild *Alger Républicain*, but after the 1965 military coup that brought Houari Boumedienne to power, the newspaper was closed and Alleg expelled to France.

A journalist for the Communist daily *L'Humanité* from 1966 to 1980, Alleg remained active in political issues throughout his life. An internationalist and pro-Palestinian activist, and strongly opposed to apartheid, he participated in La Fête de l'Huma every September. He was a member of the Bertrand Russell Foundation board, of the Collectif Unitaire National de Soutien à Mumia Abu-Jamal (National Network in Support of Mumia Abu-Jamal), and the Coalition Mondiale Contre la Peine de Mort (World Coalition against the Death Penalty).[3] Alleg was one of the twelve signatories of the "Appel pour la reconnaissance officielle de la torture et des crimes de guerre commis en Algérie" (Appeal for the Official Recognition of the Torture and War Crimes Committed in Algeria), addressed to then President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, and published in October 2000 in *L'Humanité*. He served as a key witness in the 2001 trial of General Paul Aussarresses, the former Head of Renseignements Spéciaux Français (Special Intelligence Service) in Algeria and key aide to General Massu, who played a leading role in the 1957 so-called *Bataille d'Alger* (Battle of Algiers). After the publication of his book, *Services spéciaux, Algérie, 1955–1957*,

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Aussaresses was accused of complicity in justifying war crimes committed in Algeria between 1954 and 1962 and found guilty of "apologie de la torture" (defense of torture) in 2003.

An unflinching witness to his times, Henri Alleg traveled extensively to share his experiences, well into his eighties. He was particularly concerned with opening new conversations on the subject of torture with younger generations of people across cultural, racial, and class lines. Although he was critical of some of the historical decisions of the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français, or PCF), he made no apologies for his Communist affiliation and took responsibility for his choices.

Henri Alleg is the author and co-author of thirteen books, including *Prisonniers de guerre* (1961), *Victorieuse Cuba: de la guérilla au socialisme* (1963), the three volumes of *La Guerre d'Algérie* (1981), co-authored with his wife, Gilberte Salem-Alleg, and four other collaborators, *La grande aventure d'Alger républicain* (1987), co-authored with Boualem Khalfa and Abdelhamid Benzine, *L'U.R.S.S. et les Juifs* (1989), *Requiem pour l'Oncle Sam* (1991), *Quarante ans après la guerre d'Algérie: Retour sur la question* (2001), and *Mémoire algérienne: souvenirs de luttes et d'espérances* in 2005. In 2006 the University of Nebraska Press released a new English edition of *La Question* under the title *The Question*.

I had the privilege of meeting Henri Alleg in April 2007 when my colleague, David Schalk, and I organized his visit to Vassar College. Henri Alleg gave a talk entitled "What is *The Question*? The Use of Torture in Armed Conflicts from the Algerian War of Independence to Iraq." His visit took place soon after after the Abu Ghraib scandal, and everyone in the packed room was searching for clarity and guidance. Henri Alleg's unassuming wisdom, defiant humanity, and incisiveness pulled his audience together. From 2007 to 2012 I met several times with Henri and Gilberte Salem-Alleg when I was in France. Their generosity and intelligence was only matched by their modesty; they believed in making change happen and touched many lives, including mine.

This interview was conducted on April 17, 2007, in the studio of WVKR, Vassar College's radio station. It was aired on April 24 as part of *The Library Café*, Thomas Hill's weekly program about books, ideas, and the formation and circulation of knowledge. The interview offers a wide-ranging perspective on Alleg's work and legacy: his relationships to Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon, the opposition between the Parti Communiste Algérien and the Front de Libération Nationale during the War of Independence, the use of torture and the publication of *La Question*, Cuba and the socialist model, journalism, the left and the far-right in contemporary France, the price of engagement, and family, friendship, and solidarity.

PC: Édouard Glissant was at Vassar College two weeks ago and told me that while the publication of *La Question* in 1958 brought the issue of the French army's systematic torture of proliberation Algerians and their sympathizers to the fore of French and world opinion, it resulted in your being ostracized

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for a very long time by France's political and cultural establishment. Could you please comment on this?

HA: It is true that after the publication of *La Question*, I was never heard on the radio and not invited to speak on television for many years, but at the same time, *La Question* enjoyed much publicity since it raised issues that the French public was interested in having answered. The publication of *La Question* helped the fight for the truth regarding the Algerian War. It called for real answers.

PC: What was your relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre and how did he come to write the preface to *The Question*?

HA: The preface was Sartre's own initiative. At the time when he wrote it, I was in prison and did not know him. The preface to *La Question* was originally an article Sartre had written for the weekly *L'Express*, but the issue the article was in had been seized and its content censured. So the idea came to a Swiss editor in Lausanne to print it as a preface to *La Question*. I did not play any part in this and discovered what Sartre had written a long time afterwards, after *The Question* had also been seized, was circulating illegally, and I had been released from prison.

PC: What role do you think the PCA could have played in an independent Algeria had it not accepted becoming part of the FLN and then been suppressed?

HA: First of all, the FLN was defined as a *front*, which is not a political party but a coalition of many people who have a main objective in common yet do not agree on everything. In the beginning, the Communists and other people agreed on the fight for independence and on the necessity of the complete—economical, political, cultural—liberation of Algeria, but we had different objectives regarding the future. This is where the real conflict between some leaders of the Algerian Front and the Communists arose. After independence, the issue was: What will tomorrow's Algeria be? Will it be just an ordinary country like any other country? Will it be a capitalist country or another type of society? In the FLN, there were people who said: "Well, now that we have independence, we must give our country the same opportunities as other countries such as France and Italy." But the Communists said: "No, we must get rid of exploitation, we must address the fact that there are millionaires and beggars, and that this is not the type of country we want." In a word, we wanted a socialist country.

During the three years after the proclamation of independence, although the Communist Party had been banned, things seemed to move in the direction that most progressive people in the FLN and the Communists had chosen. In practice, there was no action led against Communists, many of whom acted in concert with the Front. Then, the Communists thought

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that the road was open for a socialist Algeria, the model of which—if we could call it a model—was Cuba. The Cuban revolution had also started as a progressive revolution and had been aimed at the creation of a new society. It is therefore difficult to answer your question because the truth is that there were some illusions on the part of Communists who thought that the Cuban and Algerian revolutions would produce the same result.

PC: What was your relationship to Frantz Fanon? Do you agree with his claim that decolonization failed because of the confusion between independence and freedom, and the conflation of nationalism and national liberation?

HA: The conflicts with Fanon, who had lived in Blida, where he practiced psychiatry, came when he left for Tunisia and became an important thinker on different problems concerning liberation, and particularly the liberation of Algeria. The confusion was not only between the Communists and Fanon, but also within the different political parties. The Communists fought for a nation and for the national interest. Yet they did not accept the word "nationalist" as a word that could open the way to a new Algeria. "National" means that you fight for national interests, that the whole population fights for a single national interest, which, at that time, was independence. "Nationalist" means something else: it means that even if you think that your country is not on the right path, you must defend it because you are a nationalist. The Communists did not accept that one should fight *only* for one's nation, and sometimes *against* another nation because "my country first, right or wrong, it's my country," etc. Nationalists, on the other hand, stressed that that was the only way forward. But the real contradiction was elsewhere, *inside* the struggle for Algeria. Fanon wrote and said that all people of European descent—even if their great-grandfather had lived in Algeria, even if they were only workers and had nothing in common with the settlers who made millions and millions of francs exploiting the Algerian people, and even if they were only very simple people—were colonialists and had to be fought as colonialists. The Communists insisted that instead of considering these European workers as enemies, they ought to be made allies in the fight for independence. Whatever their first nationality, and even if there remained in their minds something of the culture in which they had been brought up and they had different religions from the majority, the interest of *all* people in Algeria was to recognize that their presence was important. Fanon and some leaders of the Algerian Front did not understand the necessity of having these people *with* you and not *against* you. That was the great difference between us, not the "national" versus "nationalist" argument, which was secondary.

PC: You have mentioned Cuba briefly, but let me ask another question related to that topic. You have been a careful observer of Cuba's political evolution and have authored *Victorieuse Cuba*, published in 1963. What is your take on Cuba's current situation? Does a so-called Cuban model still matter, and if so, why?

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HA: I arrived in Cuba in 1961, having escaped the French prison in which I was still jailed three or four months earlier. It was still the time of the revolution. People had in mind that they were free, that they could do whatever they wanted, and that Cuba would take the road it had chosen for its people. Of course, many things have changed since then. The incredible feeling of freedom and the thought that everything was possible have been confronted with reality. The revolution did not prove as simple as people had thought when the *Barbudos* [Cuban revolutionaries, or "bearded ones"] came out of the Sierra Madre. There were social, economic, and international difficulties that they did not imagine at that time. We know now that Cuba's difficulties come from its relation with its Big Brother neighbor, from the blockades, etc. Some countries evidently took Cuba as a model (for example, Algeria) and did not envision the problems the island was going to encounter. But one thing is certain: nearly forty-five years after the Cuban Revolution, Cuba continues to symbolize resistance between a small island (with ten or twelve million inhabitants) and a powerful giant (certainly the most powerful country in the world). It resisted and it still resists. Some people say Cuba is a dictatorship, but a dictatorship cannot stand very long if the majority is not behind it. The resistance of Cuba and of its leaders is still an inspiration for all people who fight against those stronger than themselves.

PC: Are you still a member of the PCF? What do you say when some, such as the French sociologist Edgar Morin, reproach you for your "orthodoxy," and others claim that you were not critical enough of the Soviet Union's invasion and repression of Hungary and Czechoslovakia?

HA: It is easy to give lessons about the past. I am of course very sad when I consider some of the things that happened in the Soviet Union at the time of Stalin. Yet I do not agree that what should have been done was to offer an indiscriminate condemnation of the countries that tried to open a new road to humanity, as these people you have spoken about did. I absolutely do not regret my participation in the fight against Nazism, Fascism, and colonialism, nor do I regret having dedicated that time to following the example of socialist countries. This is not at all a way of refusing to consider the errors—and more than the errors, some of the crimes—that were committed in these countries. But I do not accept the idea that because of the errors and crimes committed by some people, the fight for socialism should itself be condemned.

Some people maintain that the French Revolution was at fault because Robespierre sent two thousand people to the guillotine. But that judgment obscures the good things that revolution brought, such as its fight against the aristocracy that had led the country and exploited the French peasants for centuries and its fight for human rights against slavery and the oppressive conditions in France's colonies. One of Robespierre's first tasks was to ask for the abolition of the death penalty. He could not stick to that, not because he was not willing, but because there were adverse forces working against the French Revolution. It is often the fate of a revolution to start

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with great ideals and to have to reckon with what the other party and enemies are doing. Fighting to change the world is a complicated proposition.

PC: What do you think of the state of the left and the far left in France today? What is your opinion of the endurance of the far right in France?

HA: France is currently in a preelectoral campaign, and most people are completely bewildered by what they see and hear. Some proclaim that they belong to the left, yet are divided on issues such as a politically unified Europe.[4] From the United States, it may be difficult to understand why the French who call themselves progressives are against a unified Europe. What happened with the unification of the states and the constitution of the United States of America is not comparable, though. In Europe, states have been unified for centuries, keeping their respective cultures, histories, and different values. Countries such as France or Italy have very important social histories. Some of their citizens do not accept that the positive part of their past should be brought to nothing, nor do they accept that other countries that do not share this important cultural past should intervene.

The other contentious issue is that the Europe that is being built is based above all on corporate interests. The erasure of former national (economic and political) borders benefits corporations that want to continue the way they have always conducted business. French people are aware of this—they voted "no" to the referendum.[5] Yet most French people are not against Europe. They want a Europe made of different people united together, with each nation controlling its own destiny and not having to obey orders dictated by foreign corporations. So it is surprising to see influential people in the Socialist Party behave as if the negative vote at the referendum did not happen. Even politicians on the far left are divided on this question, when they should clearly be representing the working class.

Today, the language of politics has changed to the point that people no longer know who is "left" and who is "right." Some politicians on the right use language that traditionally was that of the left. Quoting Jean Jaurès in a speech, for example, and saying that people who fought during the Resistance must be honored, used to be leftist rhetoric but has now been appropriated by the right. In my opinion, only large mass movements in France will perhaps clarify the situation.

PC: In 1958 Jérôme Lindon took a significant risk in deciding to publish *La Question*. Do you think this kind of courage is possible in the French publishing world today?

HA: I think courage answers to necessity. There comes a time when courageous people who had been preaching in the desert are listened to. Of course, Lindon was courageous, as were other intellectuals such as François

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Mauriac, Roger Martin du Gard—both Nobel Prize winners—André Malraux, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Lindon was a very special editor who published a book he knew was going to be seized. But he did so in a context where many people would rally around and help him. Tomorrow, if things change in France, if people take to the streets or strike, as has often happened in the past, there will be courageous leaders willing to take a stand.

PC: Reflecting on your life, you have said that you do not regret your engagement, which, despite the difficulties you encountered, you say was worth it. Could you shed more light on the meaning of political commitment in your life?

HA: What I just said is part of the answer I can give. Given the same circumstances, I would not have had a different life. There may have been some special genes: I was a young man who did not think that becoming a millionaire would give me the happiness I was looking for. I may also have held some illusions. I am now eighty-six years old. I thought that in my lifetime I would find what I was looking for: freedom and happiness for most people. It did not come as quickly as I had expected. But still, these are ideals worth fighting for. The next generations will continue the struggle and achieve these goals.

PC: Your wife, Gilberte Salem-Alleg, also a Communist, has been an integral part of your struggle. Like other couples, such as Sartre and de Beauvoir, or later, Mongo Beti and Odile Tobner, your commitment to each other has been inseparable from your commitment to a better world. Do you discuss your activism with your children? How do they view their childhood? Do they or did they share your and your wife's ideals?

HA: One of the great sources of happiness of my life is that I can answer positively to your question. Our two sons did not really have a childhood. Their father was in jail for years. The two brothers were separated at different times. At the time of the fascist OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète), the organized army against the Republican power in France, my older son's task was to search for bombs in the stairway of our building every evening. Yet both our sons were very successful in their studies. They did not, as can happen, draw away from their parents. On the contrary, they are very proud to belong to a family that fought for the independence of Algeria and that is still fighting for a better future. Now, of course, they have their own lives and their own understanding of the situation—they are modern people. But they have the same political orientation as the one we had. Both are professors at the Sorbonne. My younger son—he is fifty-five, that is not so young!—is a writer and a philosopher specializing in ancient Greek culture, particularly in—you will be astonished—the Greek materialist philosophers! Our other son is a mathematician specializing in statistical data, a new discipline using mathematics for the study of languages and text.[6]

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PC: You were passionately involved in your work as director of *Alger Républicain* and have clearly relished being a journalist. Please explain what this newspaper, and journalism, have meant for you, and perhaps you could also touch on your later work at the French Communist daily, *L'Humanité*.

HA: For me, there was no dissociation between being a journalist and a militant. I considered that every morning, whether I was writing an article or reading someone else's article, I was doing the same work: I was trying to fight against colonialism and to liberate Algeria from the colonial yoke. Being a journalist, whether for *Alger Républicain* or *L'Humanité*, or even writing a book were never two different tasks for me. I never wrote a book without thinking of its usefulness. If the book did not serve that purpose, I would not write it. All the books I have written are a part of the fight I have chosen. I do not conceive of journalism as ordinary work. There was a significant responsibility involved in talking to people and even more of a responsibility in asking them to follow this or that path to help the Algerian people obtain their independence. Saying "Everything is okay" or "Let's fight against the people who want to change things in Algeria" was also significant. Being a journalist, you are not only giving an opinion, you are also implicating others in some action. As a result of that action, they might experience negative effects, such as being sent to jail, etc. So you have a real responsibility.

I consider writing not just as personal pleasure or cultural involvement, though trying to write as best you can and making things easier for people to understand is certainly worthwhile. For me, writing is part and parcel of my political activism.

PC: How do you analyze the contemporary war in Iraq? Do you think that the use of torture can be understood in similar terms as when it was applied in colonial Algeria by the French?

HA: On a whole, I would answer yes, because what we should concentrate on is not the moral question, i.e., should torture be used or not be used. The real question is: why are people being brought to use torture? There is a parallel to be drawn between what happened in Algeria and what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is why torture is a very sensitive and important issue. The main issue, however, is war and how to stop the war if we want to stop the torture.

Who can believe that the goal of the war in Iraq was helping the Iraqi people find their way to democracy? When you know that in that country, millions of barrels of oil can be produced each day, you find the reason for the war. This is also the reason why the Iraqi people would not accept some other country coming in and showing them what they have to do. Of course, some things that happened in Iraq are very difficult to accept or are not acceptable, but the crux of the matter is foreign intervention.

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If you compare what happened in France at the time of the Algerian war of liberation and what is happening now in America and in other countries related to the war in Iraq, something needs to be noted: at the time of the war in Algeria, the French government and the French army rejected the accusations of torture. They would say: "These are only inventions by the FLN propagandists or the Communists. This does not exist. How can a country like ours do such a thing? How can an army that is comprised of men whose fathers were in the Resistance torture prisoners? This is impossible." My book, *La Question*, aimed at showing what the French government wanted people to believe and aimed at revealing the truth.

The current context is perhaps more insidious. The people who created the war (not only the American government, but also others) have accepted the idea that you can torture under the rule of law. So if you promulgate laws that give permission to torture, people who are ordered to torture will have a quiet sense that they can torture without any problems of conscience. I think it is very, very dangerous for a country to accept that. People who have accepted this principle as it applied to their enemies, to the terrorists, etc., might apply it against their own people too. The Americans, the Israelis, and others should keep that in mind.

PC: Reading your works, one is struck by the importance you attach to friendship and solidarity and to the fact that militancy cannot be disassociated from these values. Would it be fair to say that, for you, political commitment can be conceived of in the broadest sense, as *une aventure humaine* (human adventure)?

HA: Your assessment is correct. Fighting for an ideal creates an exceptional sense of solidarity and fraternity. It is not an adventure for the sake of adventurism or for the sake of doing things other people do not do. I gladly would have avoided what I had to go through if I could have. The *aventure humaine* you are talking about involves knowing that other people have suffered for the same ideals and that they are proud of what they fought for.

PC: Apart from *La Question*, which of the thirteen books you have written or collaborated on has been most important in your eyes, and why?

HA: The three collaborative volumes of *La Guerre d'Algérie* perhaps remain the most useful because it was the first series on the history of the war in Algeria from a variety of points of view. All in all, the history of Algeria had been written by French people, and many accounts of the war in Algeria were authored by Frenchmen who had witnessed it. Some French historians also held a very right-wing view of Algerian history and featured a bunch of rebels opposed to French power, and the French army and

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government fighting for the defeat of these rebels. Algerians wrote from the *Algerian* point of view, but they wrote articles, not books. So we wanted to publish books that looked at both sides together and also confronted the views that Algerian people held of their liberation in relation to the situation in France, where a significant part of the French population at long last accepted the idea that Algerians had to choose what they wanted for their country. Now, if you asked me which book I most enjoyed writing, I would say the last one, *Mémoire algérienne*, in which I tried to look at events in a realistic way. A publisher told me that one should never say: "It will be my last book," and instead say: "This is my new book.". . . Nevertheless, I do not think I will write many books now.

PC: It is a fascinating book, one that hopefully will be translated in different languages. To conclude this interview, I would like to ask you what you would say, in light of your experience, to young and not-so-young people who want to make a difference and bring about more justice in the world?

HA: I would say, as I have heard my friend David Schalk say, that some rights you thought you would always enjoy, such as constitutional rights, could actually be (and have been) taken away from you.[7] When I meet young people, I tell them that they should never think that what their parents or they themselves have gained has been gained forever. There comes a time when what you considered a natural and inalienable right can be questioned. Young people must remain vigilant. However, I also think that the defeats and the steps backwards that a society sometimes takes are not irreversible. Young people should have ideals, and these ideals cannot exist unless they include the well-being, success, peace, and prosperity of all people, and not just those of a small part of humanity. This is what I wish for the young generation to keep in mind.

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Notes

1. Created during the Nazi occupation of France by Pierre de Lescure and Jean Bruller (a.k.a. Vercors), the Editions de Minuit is an independent publishing house with a tradition of resistance and independent thinking. Directed by Lindon from 1948 to 2001, it is best known for its publication of works by Samuel Beckett and *nouveau roman* authors such as Michel Butor, Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Robert Pinget, and Nathalie Sarraute.
2. The other narrative he mentioned was Noël Favrelière's *Le Désert à l'aube* (1960).
3. The Fête de l'Huma is a popular and eclectic weekend event that takes place every September outside Paris. Created in 1930 as a fundraiser for the Communist daily *L'Humanité* (founded in 1904 by Jean Jaurès), it features concerts by national and international musicians, a range of artistic performances, political debates and guest speakers, a book fair, food stands, and children's activities.

   In 1966 Bertrand Russell created the International War Tribunal to investigate crimes committed in Vietnam. Comprising such people as James Baldwin, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Stokeley Carmichael, the so-called Russell Tribunal had no legal status and acted as a court of the people, a "tribunal of conscience." Today, the Bertrand Russell Foundation and its board pursue the same mission, promoting peace and justice in the Middle East, and examining and speaking out against violations of international law, particularly against Palestinians whose right to a sovereign state they support. It is comprised of eminent members from all countries, including Israel.

   The Collectif Unitaire National de Soutien à Mumia Abu-Jamal is an umbrella organization supported by the PCF and fighting for the liberation of Abu-Jamal. It works closely with the Coalition Mondiale Contre la Peine de Mort (World Coalition against the Death Penalty). Mumia Abu-Jamal is an internationally known black writer, radio journalist, activist, and organizer, who has spent the last thirty years in prison in Pennsylvania. A former member of the Black Panther Party and a supporter of the Philadelphia's radical organization MOVE, he was tried for the 1981 murder of a Philadelphia police officer, Daniel Faulkner, convicted of first-degree murder, and sentenced to death in 1982. His death sentence was overturned in 2011 and commuted to life without parole. In 2012 he was transferred to the general population of the State Correctional Institution-Malahoy. His six books, *Live From Death Row* (1995), *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience* (1997), *All Things Censored* (2001), *Faith of Our Fathers: An Examination of the Spiritual Life of African and African-American People* (2003), *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party* (2004), and *Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisonvers v. the USA* (2009) have sold hundreds of thousands of copies and been translated into nine languages. He has also written a great many articles and columns, and participates in Prison Radio. His is a cause célèbre that continues to draw thousands of supporters working in various committees in favor of his release, and his name has become a rallying cry for opponents of the death penalty. A report on Mumia Abu-Jamal compiled by Amnesty International is available at www.amnesty.org.
4. This interview took place one month before the May 2007 French presidential elections which resulted in the election of Nicolas Sarkozy.

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5. This refers to the September 20, 1992, referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Only 51 percent of French voters approved that treaty proposing a greater European integration and a single European currency, the Euro. Interestingly, the opposition to the Maastricht Treaty ranged from far left parties and the PCF to the far right, with the Front National (FN). Strongly "Eurosceptic," the PCF and FN saw Maastricht as a threat to French national sovereignty. The PCF and the far left also considered it as an open door to increasing neoliberal policies in Europe.
6. Jean Salem teaches at Paris I-Sorbonne and is the director of its Centre d'Histoire des Systèmes de Pensée Moderne (Center on the History of Systems of Modern Thought). He is the author of many books, including *Cinq variations sur le plaisir: la sagesse et la mort* (1999), *Le Bonheur ou l'art d'être heureux par gros temps* (2005), and *Lénine et la révolution* (2006). André Salem is a professor emeritus at Paris III-Sorbonne nouvelle and also a prolific author.
7. David Schalk is the author of, among other works, *The Spectrum of Political Engagement* (1979) and *War and the Ivory Tower: Algeria and Vietnam* (2006), and a professor emeritus of history at Vassar College.

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