Europeanising spaces in Paris, ca. 1947-1962
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Chapter 3. The Paris Street as a Europeanising Space

The sense of connection between Paris and Europe is perhaps most obviously experienced in the quartier de l’Europe in the 8th arrondissement around the gare Saint-Lazare. Here twenty-four of the names of the most important European cities adorn the signs of the eponymous streets that surround the place de l’Europe. But how did the Parisian street connect to thinking about Europe in a more rigorous sense, in which its very definition and scope were interrogated? In this chapter the case is made that Europe emerged in the Paris street in this period in direct and indirect ways that derived from the weight of recent history or the urgency of ongoing political concerns.

The chapter will proceed as follows. First, street names are examined in terms of their implications for thinking about Europe at this post-war conjuncture. Second, perceptions of the political affiliations of Paris streets are analysed with regard to their implications for thinking about the continent. The third section examines how the discourse of Europe was implicated in street demonstrations in the French capital, paying particular attention to those in Paris that followed the Soviet invasion of Budapest in 1956, and the march of 17 October 1961, which culminated in the police killing of somewhere between 30-200 unarmed Algerian protestors. Finally, the street wall is examined as a space for discourse, with particular attention to denunciatory graffiti that were placed on the Paris street wall in the aftermath of October 17 and its connection to discourse about Europe.

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1 It is also worth noting the mark in the city of inter-war Europeanism. After the death of Aristide Briand in 1932, a peace neighbourhood was laid out in the suburb of Suresnes with the boulevard Aristide Briand intersecting with that of Gustave Stressemann. See Rod Kedward, La Vie en Bleu. France and the French since 1900 (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 221.
Three core arguments are made in the chapter. First, various explicit and implicit understandings of Europe were expressed and developed in the Paris street. But it was also a forum for its rejection as much as for its defence or reformulation. Paris streets were symbolically appropriated in political ideologies, and by the same token deliberately transgressed by their opponents. The street was thus a forum for ordering and transgressing these contesting positions, including opposing formulations of the meaning of Europe and Europeanness. The left-right political divide in large part dictated the terms of this contestation, though one cannot read off formulations of Europe according to this political spectrum in a completely transparent and direct way. Second, articulations of Europe in Paris were often seen to take on additional significance precisely because they were formulated in the French capital. This connects to the third argument, that Paris was often seen to be the fundamental centre-point of Europe which in turn was the core region of the world. Universalism, then, derived from Europe, which in turn derived from Paris. The stakes being so high, it was all the more damaging when the Parisian streets were seen to be the locus of supporters or perpetrators of violence, which was carried out in part with a certain underlying understanding and advocacy of Europe.

**Europeanising Street Names in Paris**

As we have seen, Pierre Nora’s *Les lieux de mémoire* is recognised as a vastly successful project, but also criticised as a patently ideological one.² Perry Anderson argues that this

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collection was a product of the contemporary hegemonic moment of French liberal ideology. In this regard the inclusion in the collection of a chapter about street names is ironic, since it was also an interest of Antonio Gramsci who, Anderson suggests, would have been fascinated by the entire project. Though innumerable street names in Paris connect to ideas of Europe, the discussion will be limited to those inaugurated in or directly related to the period in question here.

While taking care not to exaggerate the extent of Parisian consciousness of colonialism as a European issue, it is nonetheless true that colonialism always necessarily impacted to some degree on definitions of Europe, which historically had been so interconnected with the practice. Robert Aldrich picks up on the chapter on street names in Les lieux de mémoire to analyse the prevalence and significance of colonial names in Paris streets. He notes the scarcity of street names dedicated to anti-colonial figures, but overlooks the streets renamed after Henri Martin by Paris municipalities. Martin became an iconic figure on the French (particularly Communist) left after his conviction for treason in 1950 for propagandising against the ongoing French war in Indochina, whilst serving there in the French navy. Jean-Pierre Bernard demonstrates the vital place that Martin held in post-war French Communist Party (PCF) culture in the capital. Streets named after him related to Europe in a negative sense, though. His canonical status served more the rejection by implication of the Europe of imperialism. It was also assimilated into that

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broader francocentric PCF culture which was deeply suspicious of contemporary European political integration.

If fascism had in large part prescribed a vision of an integral Europe whilst stripping it of its Enlightenment heritage, this Europe was in turn rejected in the renaming of street names after the liberation in Paris. Rosemary Wakeman invokes Michel de Certeau’s argument in The Practice of Everyday Life that street names are ‘part of a broader discourse of “local authority”’ that creates habitability outside prevailing functionalist discourses. It creates a poetic geography that eludes systematization. Spatial topoi are instead organized on superstition, legend, memory and dreams. They embellish local topography with fantasy, with recollections and stories.⁷

In the post-war years these topoi were characterised to a significant degree by a discourse about the Resistance and Liberation. In effect, this was a rejection of the Europe of fascism, or as Sartre put it, the Europe of ‘Germanism’.⁸ With the help of the Soviet ambassador, the place de la Villette was renamed Stalingrad in honour of the Red Army’s victory. Perhaps in doing so the longstanding problem of the European credentials of Russia was again raised, a question that was only thornier in a time of Cold War. The avenue Victor-Emmanuel III was renamed for the American President Franklin Roosevelt so as to wipe out any urban reference to Italy’s fascism. The rue Henri Heine in the 16th arrondissement had been dejudaised under the German occupation to become the rue Jean-Sébastien Bach. Pressure from the street’s residents persuaded the municipal council to rechristen it for the ‘anti-Prussian’ poet Heinrich Heine. In turn, a street in the 13th arrondissement named for a collaborationist councillor, George Prade, was given Bach’s name.⁹ The expression of the rejection of European fascism in street names

⁷ Wakeman, The Heroic City, 99.
⁹ Wakeman, The Heroic City, 101-102.
also was a source of satisfaction to Paris’s Spanish exile community, as municipalities with heavy Spanish contingents such as Saint-Denis renamed streets to honour Spanish Republican heroes.¹⁰

If Europe retained a presence in the names of Paris streets, its coordinates were deliberately reconfigured. Naming streets in capital cities after leaders or events elsewhere in the world is not peculiarly French, of course. But it is nonetheless significant that the naming of streets inscribed on the city a practical sense of the contingency of Europe. The naming and renaming of streets in accordance with shifting estimations of European fascism, colonialism, democracy and liberation surely suggested to Parisians that any understanding of what Europe signified was itself shifting and historically contested.

Europe and the Political Affiliation of the Paris Streets

As part of his evaluation of the inadequate purging of collaborators after the end of the Second World War, Jankélévitch employed the imagery of the Paris street. The Parisian bourgeoisie that had thrown in its lot with the German occupiers and their New Europe had regrouped and had ‘retaken possession of the boulevard’.¹¹ This Parisian bourgeoisie – as it happened, ‘la plus intelligente, la plus méchante, la plus aggressive et la plus corrompue de l’Europe’ – anticipated Henri Lefebvre’s call for ‘the right to the city’, at least in insisting on its

right to this part of the city, free of un- or anti-European Jewish and Communist elements.\textsuperscript{12} They could reminisce about the occupation years undisturbed: ‘Ah! les beaux dimanches franco-aryens du palais de Chaillot! et la belle musique européenne qu’on faisait alors aux Français!...’ \textsuperscript{13}

It is worth recapitulating Jankélévitch’s case for the universal importance of the Paris street, and thus the gravity of what was represented in them. After all, he and many others considered the city to be ‘le guide de l’Europe et la conscience de tous les hommes libres du monde entier; ce qui arrive sur les rives de la Seine, entre l’Hôtel-de-Ville et la Concorde, a une importance particulière pour l’homme en général.’\textsuperscript{14} Of particular importance was the Champs-Élysées. Jankélévitch reminded his readers that crowds there had acclaimed Hitler in expensive cinemas, and that in 1938 women had celebrated the victory of Deladier by shouting slogans about the need to get rid of Communists and Jews: precisely the parameters of that Europe of Germanism.\textsuperscript{15} These ‘Versaillais’ might have justifiably feared for their future, given the stakes of the recent conflict and their submissive pro-German Europeanism during it. But they could rest assured that the post-war settling of accounts had run out of steam. Consequently, ‘ces familles bien nourries ont retrouvé toute leur assurance du bon vieux temps, du temps où les Champs-Élysées, les bains de mer et la Côte d’Azur étaient à elles.’\textsuperscript{16} They could once again reaffirm their preferred conception of Europe: ‘enfin l’on retrouvait le droit de parler ouvertement du Komintern, comme aux temps heureux du docteur Goebbels et de l’exposition “Le bolchevisme contre l’Europe”. Tout rentrait dans l’ordre. La sainte alliance contre

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 2254 & passim. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 2250. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 2259. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 2254-2255. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 2257.
l’U.R.S.S., voilà ce que, pour tout renouvellement, la France s’est offert à elle-même. The connection between Europe and ‘order’ here is instructive. To a significant degree, the Europe articulated in the Paris streets was retrenched by the call for order and challenged in turn by the transgression of that order. The latter was just as likely to entail a rejection of Europe as a plea to reformulate it.

Nor were the cases that Jankélévitch pointed to the only examples that linked the Champs-Élysées to a Europe of reaction. While we should not at all entertain the idea that enthusiasm for imperialism was distinctive to the French political right, it was nevertheless the case that it utilised the Paris street particularly visibly to express its support for colonial France, and by extension the assumptions about Europe this entailed. As we have seen, the defence of Algérie française was often linked to a certain idea of Europe, undoubtedly represented amongst those who paraded down the boulevard on numerous occasions in defence of French ownership of its North African departments. To take one example, the far right Jeune Nation was central in the anti-government rally on the Champs-Élysées that immediately followed the storming of government headquarters in Algiers on 13 May 1958. This organisation was the most prominent neo-fascist organisation in France in the 1950s and expressly advocated a version of Europeanism defined by anti-Semitism, rejection of American and Soviet imperialism, racial hierarchy, and the construction of a Europe that extended ‘from Narvik to Cape Town, from Brest to Bucharest.’ In this view, the continent was delineated by the western frontiers of the Soviet Union, and an imperial presence overseas was not a supplement to Europe but rather a constitutive element of it. It was on the Paris street that Jeune Nation invested much of its energy

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17 Ibid. The exhibition ‘Le bolchevisme contre l’Europe’ was launched in March 1942 at the Salle Wagram. On its first day alone it drew 10,000 visitors.
in articulating its values of European supremacism and its warning against ‘the immense perils threatening the white civilisation of Europe and France.’ This practice was carried on by one of the group’s offshoots which we will examine in a later chapter: the *Fédération des étudiants nationalistes*. The street would likewise be a recurrent arena in which this student group expressed its radical rightist Europeanist convictions in brawls.

The presence of paratroopers was also a perpetual presence in the French capital, displaying in its streets a bellicosity that derived from their proud self-image as defenders of a beleaguered West – a myth with which they were inculcated in the colonial arena. The Italian observer Alberto Arbasino recorded the agitation that permeated Paris around the time of the *fête nationale* celebrations: ‘The place is swarming with paratroopers…. They have taken possession of the city…. They are amassing in Paris for the great Sunday morning parade down the Champs-Élysées; 14,245 men, 123 planes, 60 tanks, 32 cannon, 377 military vehicles, 415 horses, and they are taking advantage of their free time in their occupied capital.’

Paratroopers were certainly a figure of French national sentiment. Arbasino noted how they were ‘welcomed with enthusiasm as good saviors of a nation in difficulty.’ But the street presence of the paratrooper had a particular importance in terms of spatialising certain conceptions of Europe, and depending on one’s perspective, they exerted either an impressive or intimidating presence in recurrent political demonstrations on the Paris streets, as Arbasino’s account suggests. For Surrealists, the paratrooper was emblematic of the European values and civilisation that they attacked with iconoclastic zeal. *Jeune Nation* quite agreed, but glorified

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20 Ibid., 94.
22 Ibid.
this symbolic function. The ‘dictionnaire du militant’ in the May 1963 edition of *Europe-Action*, a journal of the *Fédération des étudiants nationalistes*, gave a succinct definition of the *parachutiste*: ‘Symbolise les vertus viriles et le réflexe vital de l’homme européen.’ Also, one of the European components of the French Communist painter André Fougeron’s 1953 work ‘Atlantic civilisation’ was a poster of ‘parachutistes coloniaux’. His collage was an indictment of modernity, here represented as a synthesis of French colonialism, German militarism, and American capitalism.

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24 Shields, *The Extreme Right in France*, 94. Shields notes that *Jeune Nation* glorified the army in general as part of its hatred and rejection of the French republic’s parliamentary democracy, in particular the parachute regiments of the Foreign Legion.


26 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 34. Interestingly, André Malraux referred to the idea that Europe was becoming part of the Atlantic civilisation in his 1956 postface to *The Conquerors*. He suggested that this was preferable to the Soviet Union, and did not imply any dilution of Europe, since ‘the Atlantic civilization invokes, and deep down, respects Europe as a culture; the Soviet Union scorns its past, hates its present, and accepts only a future Europe empty of all that Europe was.’ André Malraux, *The Conquerors*, trans. Stephen Becker (London: Journeyman, 1983). 189.
The reactionary advocacy of Europe in Paris also drew from racially focused observations on the streets. Roland Cavalier complained in the far right periodical *Fidélité* that, ‘Il est permis de maltraiter un chrétien, un communiste et à plus forte raison un fascisté, mais les surhommes à peau d’ebène qui défilent sur nos boulevards accrochés au bras de leurs blanches conquêtes sont à classer définitivement dans la catégorie des “Intouchables”.’27 The discourse of Europeanness was indeed often strongly invoked in relation to the issue of mixed couples. It violated the reactionary sense of order which Jankélévitch referred to. *Fidélité* was only an

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extreme example of the widespread reconstitution of imperial attitudes and terms of reference in post-colonial France and Europe, often in terms of (non-)Europeanness.

In his discussion of ‘the man of colour and the white woman’, Fanon notes that ‘the Europeans in general and the French in particular, not satisfied with simply ignoring the Negro of the colonies, repudiate the one whom they have shaped into their own image.’ Again, Rancière’s analysis that we examined in relation to the bidonvilles is useful here. To adapt his argument, the denigration of the black or non-European was not an end in itself, but rather formed part of a broader order of meaning. They might have been repulsive and degenerate, but as such had a place in the social order. More unsettling than their wretchedness would have been a lack of order at all. This was the threat of their partnership with European women, and the attendant conclusion that notions of Europe and Europeanness were indeterminate. For it followed that to the degree that those notions were exposed as arbitrary and contingent, so too, to the same degree, were the hierarchy and privilege that they underwrote. This is plausibly a key reason why, as Ann Stoler shows, such a disproportionate amount of attention was paid by colonial authorities to boundary groups such as mixed couples.

28 Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 64.
A recurring trope in Eric Hazan’s *The Invention of Paris* is the importance of the Parisian barricades of 1848 and 1871 for Europe as a whole. But we have seen here that, in fact, in this period, the right was just as notable for its symbolic appropriation of the city’s streets. In this sense, its message, including the value it placed on the idea of Europe, was both expressed in and fortified by the Paris street. If political identities drew from the city’s streets, though, by the same token it was in those streets that they could be contested.

The Paris Street, Political Transgression, and Europe

In her work on the Popular Front years in France (1934-1938), Jessica Wardhaugh examines the earlier spatial division of the capital between political left and right. She argues that whilst the city’s spatial divisions were well defined, they were also subject to significant challenges. Both the political left and right deliberately crossed sensitive boundaries in provocative attempts to further their own support and develop their identity. Similarly, Danielle Tartakowsky shows how the place de la Concorde was disputed between left and right throughout the twentieth century. These political boundary crossings were also a feature of this post-war period and had implications for discourse about Europe. The Paris street in this sense was both a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic space for political ideologies and their concomitant ideas about Europe.

Some Communists, for instance, were not content to leave the Champs-Élysées to the political right that Jankélévitch depicted, and made a point of according it canonical status in the Paris of which they were so proud.34 Furthermore, several street demonstrations or instances of street violence unfolded in which the PCF was a key component. These were connected to issues which touched on the party’s understanding of contemporary European political integration as a nefarious scheme to the benefit of the United States and an ideologically unreconstructed Germany. Disturbances erupted in 1950 along the Champs-Élysées during a Communist demonstration against *Le Figaro’s* serial publication of a memoire of the former SS commander Otto Skorzeny. Likewise, Dwight Eisenhower was dubbed the general of German rearmament by the left, and so during his visit to the city in January 1951 thousands marched down that most famous of Paris boulevards as part of the PCF’s protest. In late November 1951 German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and General Hans Speidel visited Paris, and this in turn led to street protests and clashes. Although the march was banned, tens of thousands proceeded along the route of the triangle of the place de la République, the place de l’Opéra, and the gare Saint-Lazare. More than seven thousand police congregated along the Champs-Élysées.35 It is noteworthy that Speidel was invoked in 1957 by the Surrealist intellectual Gérard Legrand in the journal *Le Surréalisme même*. His article, ‘Europa Über Alles’, conveyed common doubts about the credentials of the new post-war Europe which was reintegrating a militarised Germany. In a nod to the radical sentiment in which imperial Europe was conjoined to fascist Europe, Legrand remarked that ‘l’Euroafrika, c’était déjà le rêve hitlérien.’36

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34 For example, Pierre Courtade, the USSR correspondent of *L’Humanité*. Cited in Bernard, *Paris Rouge*, 62.
35 Wakeman, *The Heroic City*, 123.
36 Gérard Legrand, ‘Notes: Europa Über Alles’, *Le Surréalisme même* 2 (Spring, 1957), 165. We should note that after 1935, the Surrealists opposed the Communist movement from the left in its rejection of Stalinism, a rupture that is generally dated to the June 1935 International Conference of Writers for the Defence of Culture. See Gérard Roche, ‘Le Surréalisme et le rejet du Stalinisme en Europe (1935-1956)’, *Mélusine* 14 (1994), 223-239.
In a different vein of transgression, Hatmon and Rotmon remark that the director of the publishing house Éditions de Minuit, Jérôme Lindon, rented billboards on the Champs-Élysées to publicise Henri Alleg’s hugely important work of 1958, *La question*. Banned by the French government almost immediately, this work detailed Alleg’s own torture by French paratroopers. There was, then, a certain audacity in placing this advert for this soon-to-be banned testimony in the natural constituency of the right and of support for colonialism. It was a rejoinder to the very prominent presence of paratroopers in demonstrations on the Champs-Élysées during colonialist and anti-communist demonstrations, and also to the broader right that had laid exclusive claim to the western districts of Paris for their defence of France and Algeria. More broadly, it prompted reflection on the nature of contemporary Europe in relation to the legacy of fascism, and in this respect contrasted notably with the expression of Europe in the VE day parade in the city in May in the same year. Wakeman notes that *Le Figaro* reported that, though in the past the day had been celebrated without much enthusiasm, it now took on the passions and urgency of the moment of the Fourth Republic’s demise. She remarks on the sizeable right-wing military demonstrations that took place in the city and the spectacular value and the extravagant gesture of colonial troops in their regalia.\(^{37}\)

All these examples indicate that the political affiliations of the Paris streets gave them a certain symbolic value, but by the same token it was precisely in those streets that that political affiliation was vulnerable to contestation. Challenging these associations as they pertained to the place of Europe in these ideologies, therefore, took on an extra power by transgressing or hijacking these spaces. In a dialectic of power and resistance, to appropriate a space for a vision of Europe was also to offer a target for contestation.

\(^{37}\) Wakeman, *The Heroic City*, 158.
Wakeman argues that post-war Paris street demonstrations must also be understood in the context of the profound political unrest which characterised the French Fourth Republic. She notes that this was marked by a dispersion of political power across the spaces of Paris. She adopts Bakhtin’s phrase of a ‘grotesque symposium’ to characterise the diversity of protests, marches, parades and riots that pervaded the streets of the French capital in these years. Two instances of this symposium are examined here because of the multifarious and contradictory ways they connected to ideas about Europe, while of course they could not be reduced to that. These were respectively the reaction in Paris to the Soviet invasion of Budapest in 1956, and the 17 October 1961 killings of unarmed Algerian demonstrators.

The Paris Street and the Soviet Invasion of Budapest, 1956

The Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 was a watershed in European political and intellectual life. Not least, coming on the back of Khrushchev’s leaked speech from the twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU, it was a major impetus to the creation of a European New Left.

38 Ibid., 107.
39 Ibid.
which irrevocably rejected a Stalinist Europe.\textsuperscript{40} In this they were at one with French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau’s denunciation of the PCF for its defence of the Russian aggression in the National Assembly.\textsuperscript{41} Their shared principles ended here, however; the New Left was sceptical about the 1957 Treaty of Rome that Pineau helped to engineer, and scathing of the Europe he defended in his role in the Suez crisis of 1956.\textsuperscript{42}

But what is particularly interesting about Budapest 1956 for our discussion here is that reactions to it were expressed intensely on the Parisian street. So it is not merely the case that there was much reflection about the Hungarian situation in Paris, but that it prompted activity in the street in which, to some degree, ideas about Europe were contested. As Jean-Pierre Bernard puts it, ‘Novembre 1956 à Paris est un mois rude et funèbre. Les consciences et la rue bougent. L'espace public et l'espace privé de la manifestation s'interpénètrent.’\textsuperscript{43}

In part this was due to the death of the French photojournalist Jean-Pierre Pedrazzini, who was fatally wounded while documenting the unrest in the Hungarian capital before dying back in Paris. \textit{Paris-Match} reproduced a photo (figure 2) attributed to Pedrazzini in its 10 November issue which became an iconic image.


\textsuperscript{42} Recent research indicates an additional Europeanist aspect to the Suez expedition. It has been known since the 1980s that at that time Guy Mollet suggested to Anthony Eden that France join the Commonwealth. Christian Pineau in 1989 downplayed the seriousness of the idea, but the historian Denis Lefebvre suggests that indeed it was seriously considered, and also endorsed by prominent Europeanists such Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi. See Denis Lefebvre, \textit{Les secrets de l’expédition de Suez 1956} (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 2010).

\textsuperscript{43} Bernard, ‘Novembre 1956 à Paris’, 70.
Indeed, Ester Balázs and Phil Casoar maintain that it ‘became an allegory of those turbulent times.’ They trace its widespread use for journalistic documentation both in the West and in communist Hungary. In each case the photo’s meaning was appropriated for political purposes.\(^4^4\) Furthermore, they suggest that in fact the photo had been taken by a Paris-based American photojournalist, but that the attribution of the photo to the deceased Pedrazzini only added to its emblematic status in Paris, where his funeral, itself a public event, took place on 9 November at Saint-Phillipe du Roule in the 17\(^{th}\) arrondissement. His death brought the Budapest street even closer to Parisians; indeed, it transfigured the street into a kind of trans-European space.\(^4^5\)

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\(^4^4\) Balázs & Phil Casoar, ‘An Emblematic Picture of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution’, 1241. Balázs and Casoar also point out that the photo appeared in Jean-Luc Godard’s 1960 film Le Petit Soldat. The film was banned until 1963 on account of its portrayal of a French intelligence officer in Switzerland, and its underlying themes of the situation in Algeria, including the practice of torture. Ibid., 1259.  
\(^4^5\) Balázs and Casoar note that in 1989 at the beginning of the political transition in Hungary, the Austrian Franz Goëss, who worked for Paris-Match in 1956, launched an investigation via a Hungarian journal to search for ex-insurgents who appeared in the pictures of Paris Match journalists during the revolution. He succeeded to a degree, but the identity of the couple in the Paris Match photo remains unknown. They note that he was motivated in his endeavour by ethical concerns relating to the profession of photojournalism, to reconstruct press history, and ‘last
In his examination of that month in 1956 in Paris, Bernard identifies 7 November as the apogee of street disturbances. He details the demonstration in support of the Hungarian people that started on the Champs-Élysées in the early evening. This was organised by various political organisations, youth groups, and war veterans’ associations. A range of national and Parisian political figures took part, including members of the French government in the process of accelerating European political union: among others, Guy Mollet, François Mitterand, Georges Bidault, Robert Schuman, René Pleven, and Paul Reynaud. Both French and Hungarian flags dotted the crowd and calls for the liberation of Budapest were interspersed with denunciations of the PCF. The congregation proceeded up to the Arc de Triomphe where wreaths were laid on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier whilst the Marseillaise was played. In itself this episode demonstrates the difficulty of distinguishing a Parisian European sentiment or consciousness from exclusivist or self-concerned French patriotism, even jingoism.

*Le Monde* reported that at the close of the demonstration, a group of some three thousand young people formed, including uniformed paratroopers. Their chants served to incite an assault on the PCF. This was presumably the spirit the FEN had in mind when its foundational manifesto of 1960 reminded its readers that, ‘à Budapest en 1956, à Alger et à Paris depuis quatre ans, ce sont les jeunes qui sont en tête des manifestations et des insurrections.’ Serious street fighting ensued at PCF headquarters and at that of its mouthpiece, *L’Humanité*. In Bernard’s assessment, though the PCF successfully defended its buildings that night, the victory was bought at the price of the awareness that it no longer had a base in Paris proper since it had

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47 Ibid., 73.
48 EN, 1, dossier 1, *Manifeste de la classe 60*, 12.
only been able to repel the assault by calling in reinforcements from the banlieues, whose distance from central Paris underscored the perpetual pushing outwards of key demographic sections of support for the party. In a sense, the pitched battle also entailed colliding conceptions of Europe – the PCF scepticism about European political integration versus the Europe of the assailants, in which there was no room for Communism or anti-imperialism. Discourse about European integration often invoked the opinion of the man of the street. Though this incident did not necessarily imply any widespread approval among Parisians for confrontational right-wing politics, it nonetheless made it harder for the PCF to maintain that it represented the vox populi of the Parisian street.

What were the implications of these scenes on the streets of the French capital in terms of conceptualising Europe? Bernard notes that part of the emotional impact on the Parisian street during the Budapest crisis was exacerbated by the sense that the Hungarian capital was just a day’s drive from Paris: a journey that a number of Hungarian refugees managed to make in the other direction, and whose reception centres in the capital would incidentally be used a few years later in the logistical operation of integrating repatriated Europeans from Algeria. There are two points to make about the perceived significance of Budapest being only a day’s drive away.

First, it suggests that conceptions of Europe in this period owed as much to changing technology or, rather, the emerging mass availability of that technology, as to multilateral summits and political treaties. Kristin Ross argues that French culture of the 1950s and 1960s reflected the proliferation of car ownership and in turn the altered popular perceptions of time and space that that entailed. It follows that it also reconfigured perceptions of Europe and of

attendant judgments of empathy and solidarity, according to the sense of proximity, in such circumstances as November 1956 in Hungary.\textsuperscript{50}

Second, for those who condemned the invasion of Budapest in the name of a Europe of universalism (whether implied or explicit), the closeness to Budapest by car was a problematic rationale. It was hard to square the commitment to universalism or the rights of man, so commonly invoked in public meetings and the press with regard to Budapest, with an empathy borne of proximity.\textsuperscript{51} To borrow and adapt the argument of the philosopher Alain Badiou, if one’s values and engagements were properly universal, the place of residence of the victims that one championed was unimportant.\textsuperscript{52} Arguably the contradictions of this assertion of this universalism were underscored by the Suez expedition, which, since it was nearly exactly contemporaneous with the Budapest uprising, functioned as a rare historical control. Flanner wrote that as soon as Nasser nationalised the Suez canal (controlled by the Suez Company headquartered in the French capital), ‘Paris was scandalized and disgusted… The most unexpected feature of the Suez crisis has been the continuing lack of nuance in the way the French react to it. Uncharacteristically, all the French seem to have imagined a real union, for once – all militant, aroused, convinced, and all behind the government in its taking of what it openly calls its “extremely firm stand” of being prepared for military action, if necessary.’ Communist dissent aside, ‘Paris is united principally by what it calls “the Munich complex.”’\textsuperscript{53}

In an example of the multidirectionality of the process of making sense of Europe, the analogy of

\textsuperscript{50} See Kristin Ross, \textit{Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture} (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1995). Referring to two works, Sartre also suggested how perceptions of space generally, and of Europe in particular, were altered by developing technology: ‘\textit{Gallant Europe} is the nullification of countries by the railroad; \textit{Nothing but the Earth}, the nullification of continents by the aeroplane’. Sartre, \textit{What is Literature?}, 149.

\textsuperscript{51} As one important example of the linkage between Europe and the Rights of Man, see Robert Schuman, \textit{Pour l’Europe} (Paris: Nagel, 1963), 27-28.

\textsuperscript{52} Alain Badiou, \textit{L’Éthique: essai sur la conscience du mal} (Caen: Nous, 2003), 53.

Paris’s experience of the Europe of ‘Germanism’, then, was drawn upon to defer to a Europe of imperialism. This in turn was much less contested in the city’s streets than the Europe that was divided by the Cold War. For as Flanner describes it, ‘the French feel that, in crushing Hungary, Soviet Russia has destroyed not only Budapest but is own tentative place in civilized European history.’

17 October 1961

One of the particular strengths of House and MacMaster’s *Paris 1961* is its argument for the longer-term context of the police killings of unarmed Algerian demonstrators on 17 October, 1961. Rather than a short-term breakdown in police control or lapse in composure, they show that the targeting of Algerians in the Paris streets was express long-term police policy, which then escalated in the months before October 1961. They note that as early as 1949, colonialist modes of operation were reproduced and refined in the French metropole to manage the Algerian community and the emerging Algerian nationalist movement. They stress the particular importance of the formative work between 1951 and 1953 of the Paris Prefect of Police, Jean Baylot, along with his lieutenant Maurice Papon. This involved an aggressive and concerted

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54 Ibid., 331.
55 For an excellent discussion of the historiography of recent works on French colonial violence in the France and in Algeria, including works on 17 October 1961, see Joshua Cole, ‘Massacres and their Historians. Recent Histories of State Violence in France and Algeria in the Twentieth Century’, *French Politics, Culture & Society* 28/1 (Spring, 2010), 106-126.
56 Papon was later put on trial between 1995 and 1998 for his role in deporting Jews from Bordeaux during the Vichy regime. See Richard J. Golsan (ed.), *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial* (New York: Routledge, 2000). For an analysis of his career as a civil servant, see Stephanie Hare, *Death, Duty and the Republic: The Career*
effort to crush the nationalist movement, which included stop and search in the street and arbitrary arrest of Algerians who were targeted as an undifferentiated group in an attritional exercise of daily harassment.\textsuperscript{57} As one illustrative example, and also as an interesting example of how this policy contributed to trans-European political radicalisation, Niek Pas points to the experience of the Dutch student leader and influential proponent of Third Worldism, Ton Regtien. During a visit to Paris in 1956, Regtien made an Algerian acquaintance who explained the French-Algerian conflict to him in the course of long walks by the Seine. In what was to be a formative political moment for Regtien, one evening near the gare d’Austerlitz, policemen abruptly stopped their car, bundled the Algerian in and whisked him away.\textsuperscript{58}

Furthermore, from 5 October 1961 Algerians were subject to a curfew. K.S. Karol’s description of this in the British weekly \textit{New Statesman} was obviously disconcerting for contemporaries who insisted on the exceptionally democratic credentials of France and Europe: ‘So far as I know, this is the first occasion on which a so-called democracy has denied to a section of its citizens the right to walk the streets at night – and has handed over to the police the authority to decide whether or not citizens should lose this right purely on the colour of their skin.’\textsuperscript{59} Karol noted that, indeed, the Nazis had resorted to such methods during the Occupation, but that this had rightly been condemned as barbarous.

Monique Hervo gives the example of an Algerian man from the Nanterre bidonville of La Folie who had no means except a wheelbarrow to transport his wife to hospital as she went into


labour. He recalled his fear having to wheel her through the streets after curfew, and also his feeling of loneliness and abandonment in the deserted city night.\textsuperscript{60} In an illustrative example of the interconnection of understandings of Europe, existential angst of this kind immediately evokes Sartre. It is curious that one situation for his radical interrogation of freedom in \textit{Being and Nothingness} centred precisely on the implications of choosing to walk the Paris streets after the German-imposed curfew during the occupation.\textsuperscript{61} Furthermore, it was the course of this war that prompted Sartre to rethink his understanding of freedom and political commitment; a reconsideration that would lead into his post-war denunciation of imperialism and his radical critique of Europe.

Police attacks on Algerians in the street tended to target areas of the body that would not leave visible traces, such as the testicles and stomach. Such assaults were usually committed in largely Algerian-populated districts ‘where there were few potential European witnesses who might lodge a complaint’.\textsuperscript{62} Or, the Parisian police might distance themselves from these actions by subcontracting them to harkis. Besides the obvious function of covering their tracks, this suggests a certain degree of concealment and distancing, perhaps indicating at least a degree of compunction or reticence on the part of the Paris police officers. How does this affect our understanding of the extension of this conflict of decolonisation into the French capital, pitting European against non-European? Again, there is a connection to Sartre in terms of his discussion of similar public reactions to violence in Algeria. But he saw these sentiments only as further damning evidence against Europe:

\textsuperscript{60} Hervo, \textit{Chroniques du bidonville}, 226.
\textsuperscript{61} McKenzie Wark, \textit{The Beach beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International} (London \& New York: Verso, 2011), 57.
a few years ago, a bourgeois colonialist commentator found only this to say in defence of the West: ‘We aren’t angels. But we, at least, feel some remorse.’ What a confession! Formerly our continent was buoyed up by other means: the Parthenon, Chartres, the Rights of Man or the swastika. Now we know what these are worth; and the only chance of our being saved from, shipwreck is the very Christian sentiment of guilt. You can see it’s the end; Europe is springing leaks everywhere. What then has happened? It simply is that in the past we made history and now it is being made of us. The ratio of forces has been inverted; decolonization has begun; all that our hired soldiers can do is to delay its completion.63

This background context leads us to the night of 17 October 1961, during which the French police attacked a peaceful march of unarmed Algerian immigrants who were protesting against the ongoing war in Algeria, against racism, and for Algerian independence. The march was also motivated by a collective determination to reassert their pride and dignity in the face of the circle of terror and racist humiliation imposed on them by Papon, who by this time had been promoted to Prefect of the Paris police.64 Casualty figures are inexact, but it is generally estimated that between 30 and 200 were killed; many of whose bodies were thrown into the Seine. It is also estimated that over one hundred people died over the next two days whilst detained by the police, either in police stations or detention centres, including the Palais des Sports, the Coubertin Stadium and the prison at Vincennes.65

House and MacMaster maintain that 17 October was ‘the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history.’66 But beyond this, of what significance is that infamous date in terms of thinking about Europe and Europeanness? After all, if it was at first a French non-event in that it was remarkably inconspicuous in the public sphere, it has since

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64 House & MacMaster, Paris 1961, 1, 112.
65 For a discussion of figures of casualties and the issues of the debates surrounding them see ibid., introduction.
66 Ibid., 1.
been reinstated as a distinctly French tragedy in the context of France’s decolonisation and post-war history generally. Four arguments will be made here.

First, the event had obvious significance for Europe in terms of, as it were, the scene of the crime. Jankélévitch’s point above, about the supplemental importance of Paris to anything that was said and done, is only all the more pertinent. As House and MacMaster remark, this was a turning point in the fall of European colonialism being played out ‘in the streets of a city that stands as a symbol of European enlightenment and civilization.’ ⁶⁷

Second, an express aim of the demonstration that evening was to break the spatial segregation of Paris, to transgress the central boulevards and for the Paris Algerians to manifest themselves there to both Parisians and tourists as a visible community in the French capital. The route of the march was indeed calculated precisely to intersect the Paris as capital of European tourism in order to impact on international opinion. ⁶⁸ The Europe of the grands boulevards, that Jankélévitch indicted and on which the left transgressed, does not seem to figure expressly in FLN thought about the demonstration, but is significant nonetheless. ⁶⁹

To assert their presence in this Paris of European tourism and bourgeois conservatism that was often queasy about the presence of non-Europeans, was also significant in the Rancièrian sense of visibility, and in terms of his concept of dissensus in contradistinction to the consensus ideology found to permeate Nora’s Lieux de mémoire. In Rancière’s concept of the distribution of the sensible, visibility is equivalent to recognition as an equal speaking being in

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⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.
⁶⁹ In a later interview, Papon noted one aspect of his reaction to his discovery of the plans of the march, and of his preparations to counter it: ‘I could just imagine the shops on the Champs-Élysées pillaged’. See Hare, Death, Duty and the Republic”, 205.
the polity. Those who are invisible are, as it were, the ‘part of no part’ with no stake in the existing order, or at most a diminished stake. Dissensus is the act of politics in Rancière’s use of the term, whereby one insists on equality in the polity, or, what amounts to the same thing, insists on one’s visibility. One should bear in mind this double meaning of visibility in considering the statement of an Algerian female resident about the 17 October march and the important Algerian women’s march that followed it on 20 October: ‘maintenant on parle des bidonvilles parce que nous sommes sortis dans la rue. Depuis 6 années que nous vivions dans des baraques infectes et qu’on nous laisse pourrir dedans, personne ne voulait en parler.’

Conversely, the brutality of the clamp-down on the marches can be understood in terms of Rancière’s notion of the police order which opposes politics. House and MacMaster illustrate how this violence was understood by the police as something other than an operational necessity, which in the event might have been excessively executed. Indeed, they argue that the expression of pride and dignity amongst the demonstrators was insufferable to Papon and his lieutenants, and they were determined to punish it. In Rancière’s sense of the word, the intention here was to ‘police’ the Algerians back into their place. If, as Stoler argues, in the colonial arena Europeanness was often a fluid and negotiable category, in this time of war Papon’s force activated a violently rigid division between European and North African French citizens. Yet, this Europeanist vision was not hegemonic in broader French society. Rancière claims that the 17 October demonstrations produced a split in the French nation when Frenchmen and women supported those Algerians killed in their name; unable to identify with those who had been disappeared, they dissociated themselves from the state that had killed them.

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70 Hervo, *Chroniques du bidonville*, 215.
corroborated by Elizabeth Sloan’s survey of the disgust and recrimination engendered amongst Parisian citizens, including social service workers, administrators, teachers, association members, priests and pastors, and political and union representatives in the aftermath of the event, and in light of the wider police violence.\textsuperscript{73}

Third, 17 October had a European importance – limited but real – in terms of the reaction it provoked. Indeed, negative reflection on the massacre, including its implications for Europe, was not limited to France. Writing in the British journal \textit{New Statesman}, K.S. Karol highlighted the exposure of Western double standards by the lack of a formal condemnation of the massacre: ‘the West as a whole will ultimately have to pay the price for the Paris Pogrom.’\textsuperscript{74} Daniel Gordon notes that contemporary commentary pointed out that if the massacre had taken place in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, it would have attracted considerably more coverage and much harsher condemnation.\textsuperscript{75} And if certain conceptions of Europe, especially in Paris, demarcated it from the United States, they were strained by the resonance of René Dazy’s observation about 17 October: ‘c’est l’intrusion de Jacksonville ou de Little Rock en plein Paris’.\textsuperscript{76} Again, however, we should note the problematic sense of ‘en plein Paris’, as if such actions were more appropriate when carried out along the \textit{bidonvilles} on the city’s outskirts, or any less demeaning to Europe when assassinations were undertaken out of view of Europe’s most treasured monuments. Furthermore, the non-European world situated the massacre squarely within European imperialism as an integral whole. A telling example, and also additional weight for the multidirectional Europe thesis, was the Paris-based, Francophone Africa-targeted journal, 

\textsuperscript{73} See Elizabeth Caitlin Sloan, \textit{Welfare and Warfare: Social Action for Algerian Migrants in Metropolitan France during the Algerian War} (PhD dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2012), 207, 216-220.
\textsuperscript{74} Karol, ‘The Paris Pogrom’, 596.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
Afrique Action. Its issue that reported on the massacre featured on its cover a photograph of Portuguese soldiers carrying the head of a decapitated Angolan. The image was reproduced in the important French anti-war journal Vérité-Liberté.\textsuperscript{77}

Fourth, the most direct connection between the killings and Europe lay in the place of the management of the city’s Algerian population and the international politics of decolonisation. This was particularly the case because money compulsorily collected from Algerians in Paris was a major source of funding for the FLN to pursue the war. In this sense, the killings were symptomatic of counter-revolutionary strategy, particularly of ‘guerre révolutionnaire’, and corollary assumptions about Europe. The guerre révolutionnaire ideology held that race and social Darwinism were crucial factors in international affairs. It emphasised that Europe and the West had to guard against both Communism and the teeming hordes of the Third World, of which Mao was a particularly emblematic figurehead. These non-Europeans were typically distinguished by their irrationality, fanaticism, and violence. It is also interesting that one of Nora’s own contributions to his collection is a chapter of the space or realm of a generation.\textsuperscript{78} The concept becomes relevant here in a quite different sense. Matthew Connelly describes how figures like Papon were formed in the 1930s in which visions of Europe and race war had great currency. Now grown to maturity, this outlook found expression in senior police and military circles.\textsuperscript{79}

The self-understanding of the Paris police in terms of this kind of operational necessity, in which local policing was inextricably interconnected with international politics was reinforced

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\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{79} See Matthew Connelly, ‘Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence’, \textit{The American Historical Review} 105/ 3 (June, 2000), 752 & passim.
by the exchange of personnel, which crucially included figures like Papon. Papon had read an article by his political patron, René Mayer, about the Bandung conference and the dangers to the West from growing Third World solidarity. In May 1955 he wrote to Mayer (who, as it happened, from that year until 1958 would preside over the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community) to express the impact that his analysis had made on him, and sent him a copy of his own reflections: ‘Perspectives géopolitiques. Destin de l’Europe’. Following House and MacMaster’s argument that 17 October cannot be explained as a spontaneous and excessive outburst of violence, it is worth reviewing Papon’s ideas about Europe’s place in the world in this key document to understand the ideological basis or requirements for such killing. This is not to claim that the police action was simply a clinically deductive enactment of this Europeanist ideology, but rather that such an act became exponentially more thinkable given the exposure of the police ranks to such a worldview. It is worth quoting Papon at length here to grasp the conjunction of European supremacism and sense of vulnerability and defensiveness. This combination of elements was mutually reinforcing and particularly propitious for the naturalisation of violence.

Ces perspectives ne peuvent que convaincre les nations européennes d’abandonner leurs querelles subalternes, faute de quoi ils ne leur resteraient pas même le choix de la sauce à laquelle elles pourraient être mangées.

Divisées, leur disparition est inscrite dans l’évolution du monde. Unies, leur puissance comptera encore sans doute assez pour sauvegarder la liberté d’un choix, par conséquent, la liberté d’action pour construire un destin. Sans compter que cette intégration des nations

81 Maurice Papon, ‘Perspectives géopolitiques: Destin de l’Europe’. Available online at [http://www.maurice-papon.net/doc-alg/europe.pdf](http://www.maurice-papon.net/doc-alg/europe.pdf). Matthew Connelly notes that it was written in roughly early 1952, and is in the Archives nationals in the René Mayer papers. See Connelly, ‘Taking Off the Cold War Lens’, 752n. Curiously, Stephanie Hare does not examine this document in her study of the career of Papon. This is a particularly problematic omission as one of her core arguments is that scholars have exaggerated the colonialist nature of Papon’s worldview, since he adhered to Republican values and admired Islam. See Hare, *Death, Duty and the Republic*, passim.
européennes au sein de l’unité européenne, serait de bon exemple et servirait l’autorité de l’Europe, hors du continent qu’elle occupe, pour aider les autres à surmonter les maladies infantiles du nationalisme, autrement que par les procédés expérimentes avec succès en U.R.S.S.

Ce destin, en l’an de grâce 1952, c’est celui de nos propres enfants, et non point celui plus ou moins vagues de nos arrières petits neveux. Et il s’agit, aussi bien, des enfants de M. Smith, ou de M. Muller ou de M. Dupont.82

Hobsbawm argues persuasively that violence in the twentieth century was both far more easily imaginable and legitimated against those ‘whose perpetual inferiority is a datum of nature, especially when made manifest by skin colour’.83 Papon’s remarks suggest that this was even more the case in a time of crisis of empire, and in the light of a growing colonial presence in the metropole. To the extent that one can maintain that the Paris police represented a practical carrying out of Papon’s worldview, its propensity for violence seems to have been compounded by an almost apocalyptic tone in which Europe was affronted by those fit only for domination.84

But, it is argued here, although this kind of Europeanist ideology of guerre révolutionnaire included defensive racism, it was also irreducible it. Mathieu Rigouste argues that it was in terms of this logic that such a demonstration as that of 17 October could be so drastically misrecognised as ‘une opération de défense en contexte de guerre totale’.85 He adds weight to Hobsbawm’s argument that the corollary of the notion of total war is the overriding of sensitivity to barbarism in the prioritisation of eliminating a supposed apocalyptic threat.86

84 For an analysis of this kind of mindset in the context of the international politics of the Algerian war, see Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, passim.
Moreover, this total war approach was reinforced by its biopolitical character. Indeed, Rigouste argues that this ‘pourrissement rouge et vert’ was consistently represented in explicitly medical or surgical terms. This cancerous axis of ‘Islamocommunisme’ purportedly threatened to encircle France and Western Europe and, as such, endangered ‘le monde libre.’ Papon himself regularly resorted to such metaphors, and it is interesting to situate his advocacy of ‘guerre moderne’ beside the definition of biopolitics as the very basis of modernity in the work of figures like Foucault and more recently Giorgio Agamben. As Mark Mazower describes it, ‘Once, sovereignty basically resided in the right to put to death. Since the late eighteenth century, though, it has come to mean both the right to “let die” and—rather more importantly for Foucault—the right to “make live”; the state is now concerned not merely with disciplinary effects on individual bodies but on the management of an entire population.’

To adopt these terms, but with care not to exaggerate the point, to the extent that the Paris police force was formed by and permeated by the ideology and culture of guerre révolutionnaire, the killings of 17 October can be understood as an operation that involved a shift of emphasis from the ‘letting die’ – killing – of Algerians to making Europe live. To elaborate on this, European violence in this time of decolonisation was abetted by this biological or scientific discourse. Brutality and barbarism are more conceivable and palatable if they are seen as a technical or operational requisite, rather than an emotive or tribal preference. Furthermore, Rigouste argues that the coding of this threat in terms of the colours red and green facilitated its conceptualisation in biopolitical or surgical terms. As supporting evidence he points to the map below, presented at NATO headquarters in Europe (SHAPE) in Belgium at the conference on ‘les missions de l’armée française dans la guerre révolutionnaire d’Algérie’ in November 1957.

87 Rigouste, ‘Le pourrissement rouge et vert’, 63.
It is a particularly striking representation of a Europe whose foundation must exceed its own limits. Europe here radiates out from Paris to protect the continent as a whole from collapsing under external threats.


To recap, demonstrations and confrontations in the Paris street, such as those after the Soviet invasion of Budapest and on 17 October 1961, drew on ideas about Europe, even if they
were irreducible to these. The streets of the capital were also a space for discourse about Europe in the form of reflections on such encounters, notably in inscriptions on street walls.

The Paris Street Wall as a Europeanising Space

This section will examine how the Paris street wall connected to discourse about Europe with particular reference to a single famous photo related to the events of 17 October. Captured in an emblematic image, in the aftermath of that bloody night a quay by the Seine was adorned with the words ‘ici on noie les algériens’.

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Figure 4. ‘Ici on noie les Algériens’. Google images.

The graffito can be translated in English as ‘here we drown Algerians’, or ‘here we drown the Algerians’. The double meaning is significant since it connotes that in a stroke one massacred Algerians as people, and also their aspirations to peoplehood – a particularly vicious, macabre articulation of the axiom that nationalism was exclusively European, as Papon and the ideology of guerre révolutionnaire tenaciously maintained.

Street wall graffiti in Paris are of course closely associated with the events of May 1968, but their prominence in the course of the Algerian war is generally underestimated.\(^89\) If for

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\(^89\) Kristin Ross points to the limitations of graffiti as a source for the events of 1968, as accounts tend to interpret this in a way that reduces the events of that summer to a few poetic phrases. In this way 1968 has been rendered to a certain 1980s discourse, as represented indeed by Nora in his Les lieux de mémoire, in which the events of that year have been rendered into a 1980s social vision of a society free from archaic conflict and social confrontation.
Bernard the Budapest revolution was a battle of images and historical references, for the historians Vincent Lemire and Yann Potin the Algerian war in the metropole could be described as a ‘guerre des murs.’ They argue that this was initiated in the first instance by the OAS even before the attempted putsch of 24 April 1961, and that the battle was taken up by anti-fascist militants and pacifists thereafter. We should note this battle included posters as well as graffiti – to take two pertinent examples, those of the FEN and the Mouvement contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme, et pour la paix (MRAP). The former invoked a Europe of colonialism, while the latter, whose members were largely of Central European Jewish extraction, explicitly referenced the Holocaust in response to the targeting of Algerians, the implications of which for any invocation of Europe were clear.

The exact origins of the ‘ici on noie les algériens’ graffito are unclear, and the image is perhaps all the more powerful for that. But Lemire and Potin attribute it to the Comité du quartier Seine-Buci. Centred on the bar Le Old Navy on the boulevard Saint-Germain, this was a collective of politically engaged artists and actors. The ‘ici on noie’ graffito was only the most “spectaculaire” of their anti-war actions. Lemire and Potin’s allusion here to Guy Debord’s philosophy of the spectacle is no accident. Various figures in the group had grown out of, and were influenced by, Debord’s circle. Jean-Michel Mension, for instance, cut his radical intellectual teeth in the Lettrist International before splitting from Debord on bad terms. Around

See Kristin Ross, ‘Establishing Consensus: May ’68 in France as Seen from the 1980s’, Critical Inquiry 28/3 (Spring, 2002), 656. In the same way, this suggests that one should analyse the graffiti in this chapter with a degree of caution.


Lemire & Potin, “‘Ici on noie les algériens’”, 159.

Ibid., 160.
the time of the split, his political consciousness was raised by the escalation of the Algerian war and his perception of the timidity of the PCF in that context. Lemire and Potin also point to the central role of the Russian-born Armenian playwright and translator, Arthur Adamov, and his insistence on the importance of the concept of ‘situations’ to the theatre. Strongly influenced by Brecht, Adamov’s art was distinctly politicised. Accordingly, he joined other Parisian intellectuals in signing the 1960 Manifesto of the 121, itself containing a Europeanist element as part of its argument in support of insubordination in the Algerian war: ‘Need we remind you’, declared the undersigned, ‘that 15 years after the destruction of Hitler’s regime, French militarism, in meeting the demands of this war, has re-established torture and made it once again a European institution?’ Incidentally, Adamov went on to publish a play in 1966 entitled *Sainte Europe*.

It was of course common knowledge that graffiti were considered an act of vandalism and, as such, illegal. However, the juxtaposition of this knowledge and the gravity of the denunciatory message of this particular graffito, might well have prompted those who saw it to question the justice of the French state, to ask whether it was not in fact quite arbitrary; scandalously so when one would be more likely to be prosecuted for inscribing graffiti than for having participated in the crime to which it referred. Indeed, as part of the enforcement of his policing of Paris, which as we have seen was underscored in part by a certain Europeanism, Papon was supportive and even encouraging of extra-judicial police violence against Algerians.

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94 ‘The Declaration in Support of Those who Refuse to Fight in Algeria’, *New Left Review* I/6 (November-December, 1960), 41. The reproduction of the manifesto in this British journal arguably contributed to the consciousness of the trans-European importance of the Algerian war.
and in a moment of immoderation during a police funeral in early October 1961 he announced that ‘for every blow received, we will render ten.’

In the case of France there was an obvious pertinence to the concepts of justice and injustice, given the significant shadow the Dreyfus affair still cast in French public life. In one sense, the graffiti seem utterly inadequate as a means to redress the injustice of 17 October, something more like a nuisance incursion against the French state. However, though we should not exaggerate its power since it was quickly removed, the ‘ici on noie’ slogan is a striking example of a certain power of judgement that could be appropriated from the Paris street wall.

Graffiti were in fact an example of the Situationists’ technique of détournement, and it is instructive that Lemire and Potin argue that by writing this graffito after 17 October, its authors in effect hijacked the wall which served as a tribune against the very state whose property it was. The ‘Ici on noie les Algériens’ slogan was reproduced on walls in central Paris, sometimes alternating the les with des. This was a transgression of the order of the French state found to be culpable. And the graffiti could arguably be situated within a trend of perceived injustices on a European scale that were deeply felt or passionately represented in Paris. To situate the action of these intellectuals within Parisian cultural representations of justice and European consciousness, one thinks of the popularity among Czech émigrés of André Gide’s adaptation of Kafka’s *The Trial* for the Paris stage in 1948, the same year as the Communist putsch in their homeland. Likewise, filmed partly at the gare d’Orsay (and incidentally

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95 House and MacMaster note that Papon’s announcement here was a reiteration of the *loi de talion* that had been deployed by the army under his command in the Constantinois region of Algeria when groups of ten hostages were liquidated as a reprisal for FLN actions. House & MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 104.
97 Lemire & Potin, “‘Ici on noie les algériens’”, 160.
98 Flanner, *Paris Journal*, 85. Interestingly, Flanner notes that this was a rather newfound interest since Kafka was traditionally unpopular among Czechs since ‘he wrote in the hated German language’.
employing a number of Hungarian actors besides its star, Orson Welles), the 1962 film adaptation of Kafka’s *The Trial* was timely in a Europe seen to be stained by judicial injustice.\(^9\) In turn there was a certain congruity with the Parisian reaction to the Kafkaesque East European show trials. The editor of *Esprit*, Emmanuel Mounnier, wrote that the Bulgarian politician Nikola Petkov, executed after a blatantly fraudulent show trial in 1947, would haunt Europe.\(^\acs\) Also important was the significant impact in Paris of trials of dissidents in Franco’s regime. Or to cite judicial controversies that prompted a European consciousness nearer in time to the graffito campaign of the *Comité du quartier Seine-Buci*, the importance of the trials of OAS activists in 1962 was undermined by the exile of many of its key figures, notably in Spain, and would soon be even more so by amnesties. We have also seen how the Jeanson network, on trial in 1960 – scandalously according to some, under conditions of excessive leniency for others – was defined by its European scope.\(^\acs\)

**Conclusion**

In his chapter on street names in *Les lieux de mémoire*, Daniel Milo notes that they are undeniably a rich subject, but there is a danger that the historian approaching it can reduce it to charming anecdotes.\(^\acs\) The point extends to the Paris street in general. This chapter has sought

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9 The film in fact can be situated in a certain tradition of collaboration in European film, as it was coproduced by Paris – Europa Productions (Paris), HISA – Films (Munich), and FL.C. IT (Rome).


100 Incidentally, Jeanson would later run as a candidate in the European elections in 1994 on the list ‘L’Europe commence à Sarajevo’ as an offshoot of his advocacy for the Bosnian cause. Again, with such examples one must guard against doing history backwards.

102 Milo, ‘Street Names’, 363.
to go beyond these temptations in examining how Europe was understood and articulated in the French capital’s streets in this period. It has analysed Paris street names, the political affiliation and appropriation of Paris streets, street demonstrations and the graffiti on the street wall. In doing so it has shown that discourse about Europe was expressed in a whole range of ways, many of which were unexpected or made unexpected connections across space or time. What is more, the Europes expressed in the street of the French capital were not merely multifarious but, crucially, contradictory and contested. While all of these sections locate very specific expressions of understanding or contestation of the continent, there are several common threads which run through many of them. First, Europe was often related to a notion of order and, in turn, to transgression. This encapsulated formulations of ideas about the continent, reformulations and also rejections. Second, discourse about Europe in Paris, or action that necessarily impacted on the image or understanding of the continent, was seen to take on additional importance precisely because of their location in Paris. Third, the spatial location of Paris was often understood as extending to global or universal importance via Europe.