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## Time Trends in Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs 'Force of Circumstance'

### Тенденції часу в мемуарах Сімони де Бовуар «Сила Обставин»

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#### Abstract

The conflict of civilizations has not been resolved at the beginning of the 21st century. Attempts to give a worthy place to the dominants of the Indian, African, Arab mentality fill in the gaps in modern literary criticism and reveal the ideas of literary works. Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first to draw attention to the oppression of the colonized peoples in the memoirs 'Force of Circumstance'. The purpose of the article is to investigate the time trends in the memoirs by Simone de Beauvoir 'Force of Circumstance'. The methodology is basically based on hermeneutics approach and biographical method. The most important results are the following. S. de Beauvoir interprets African and Algerian culture in order to refute the myth of the "minority" of the thinking of its bearers, to overcome the "secondary" in accordance with the European worldview. Time trends are non-standard choices of subjects and circumstances that contrast with the views of the "majority". S. de Beauvoir's nonconformist position on "white civilization" demonstrates progressive potential. S. de Beauvoir reproduced the general trends of the time, acted as an analyst of social processes. Many of her observations and conclusions have not lost their relevance today.

#### Анотація

Конфлікт цивілізацій так і не вирішено на початку ХХІ століття. Спроби виокремити гідне місце домінантам індійської, африканської, арабської ментальності заповнюють прогалини в сучасному літературознавстві та розкривають ідеї літературних творів. Однією із перших, хто звернув увагу на пригнічення колонізованих народів, була Сімона де Бовуар у мемуарах «Сила обставин». Мета статті – дослідити тенденції часу в мемуарах Сімони де Бовуар «Сила обставин». Методологія статті базується на герменевтичному підході та біографічному методі. Найважливішими результатами є наступні. С. де Бовуар трактує африканську та алжирську культуру, щоб спростувати міф про «меншість» мислення її носіїв, подолати «другорядність» відповідно європейському світогляду. Тенденції часу є нестандартним вибором предметів і обставин, що контрастують із поглядами «більшості». Нонконформістська позиція С. де Бовуар щодо «білої цивілізації» демонструє прогресивний потенціал. С. де Бовуар відтворила загальні тенденції часу, виступила як аналітик суспільних процесів. Багато її спостережень і

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**Keywords:** 'Force of Circumstance', memoirs, Simone de Beauvoir, time trends, creativity.

висновків не втратили своєї актуальності і сьогодні.

**Ключові слова:** «Сила обставин», мемуари, Сімона де Бовуар, тенденції часу, творчість.

## Introduction

'Force of Circumstance' written in 1963 by the French writer Simone de Beauvoir (Beauvoir, 1963) is defined as memoirs by genre (Kryvoruchko et al. 2021). The memories help to reveal the time trends and tendencies. 'Force of Circumstance' is the example of the writer's reflection of the time in which she lived. In the image of modern times, the publicity stratum is revealed (Kryvoruchko, Rychkova, Karpenko, 2021; Prykhodko & Petrusenko, 2021). She was worried about social issues, by the way, the social component was a matter of semantic aspect of literary existentialism (Arey & Khomenko, 2021). The time reflected in S. de Beauvoir's works is, above all, the result of the fascism policy that has led to famine, post-war poverty (Kryvoruchko, 2019), and litigation in European countries.

Simone de Beauvoir outlines the abyss caused by the war between the majority and a small number of the elect. For example, in Spain, the luxury of the central streets contrasted with the streets of the poor who were starving, and Portugal was a prosperity oasis. In the 1960's, there was poverty everywhere, Spain had little changes, and the quarters became waste pits, in which hungry children, beggars, cripples lived. France, in her opinion, felt a 'minute' of the fraternal unity, when on the Victory Day after the Second World War people walked out into the streets and held their hands. It was an euphoria, in which the long-awaited and unexpected victory has united the entire French nation.

The author thinks Paris is a peculiar center of French politics, which affects the moral choice of an individual. Personality focuses on national awareness, which is in conflict with other countries. The conflict is based on cultural, political and social opposition, which deprives human freedom (Shteinbuk, 2020; Shteinbuk, 2021). The internal relations of the colony and the colonizer – Algeria, France – form the feeling of 'inconvenience' and guilt in personality, the external opposition of Americans and Russians – US / USSR – causes the emotion of abstract fear in an individual everywhere, Soviet 'labor camps' and German concentration camps testify to the return of slavery and the destruction of human freedom. So, many facts, events, details

are reflected in the memories based on time trends.

## Literature Review

A great number of works are devoted to the literary activities of S. de Beauvoir. There are more than 30 French, 70 English works, monographs, these and many articles written by well-known authors. Among them the most famous well-known researchers are N. Bauer (Bauer, 2001), H. Bouchardeau (Bouchardeau, 2007), C. Card (Card, 2003), Ch. Daigle (Daigle, 2009), T. Sandrine (Sandrine, 2010).

To our mind, the research works can be divided into four groups. The works of the first group depict the writer's life, her intimate relationships with well-known and unknown men and women, the vicissitudes of personal 'drama' (Bergoffen, 2002; Calderon, 2003; Ledwina, 2019; Rodgers, 2000).

The second, following group of works is devoted to the study of S. de Beauvoir's influence to the process of female emancipation, which leads to a firm interest in the essay 'The Second Sex' (Björk, 2010; Galster, 2001).

The third group includes the works that consider S. de Beauvoir's place among other existentialist philosophers (Braddock, 2007; Bras, 2011; Cohen & Menschenfreund, 2008; Kryvoruchko & Fomenko, 2019; Seltzer, 2007; Scholz, 2010).

The fourth group, which is the smallest in size, but the most important for us, is represented by literary works that interpret the writer's literary works (Beauvais, 2015; Bouchardeau, 2007). But there is no specific investigation devoted to time trends in S. de Beauvoir's memories.

The **purpose** of the article is to investigate the time trends in the memoirs by S. de Beauvoir 'Force of Circumstance'. It allows a better understanding of the Cold War period in order to avoid mistakes that could be repeated at the beginning of the 21st century. As for the purpose set, we distinguish the following tasks: how it is revealed the mood, some disappointing ideas, characters, and the specifics of the writer's work.

## Methodology

To reach the article purpose the hermeneutics approach and biographical method were used. The hermeneutic method helps to interpret the text of the memories by S. de Beauvoir. The interpretation instrument it is considered the inner world of the person who perceives the memories. In hermeneutic method the historical reconstruction of memories is not so important as well as the consistent alignment of the historical context with the literary work, but the expansion of the reader's awareness, assistance in reader's deeper understanding of oneself and the memories.

At the same time, the method helps the interpreter's statements turn out to be able to be modified, completed, and enriched in various contexts of perception, in particular, in endless series of interpretations as for time trends. As a method of interpreting historical facts based on memories, the hermeneutic method is considered universal for the interpretation of memories. The interpretation of S. de Beauvoir's work teaches to understand its artistic value. The interpretation of historical facts in S. de Beauvoir's work is considered as a derivative of its perception. It helps to determine S. de Beauvoir's value system, her ethical choice.

The biographical method reveals some dominants such as the author S. de Beauvoir as a subject of consciousness, the psychology of historical figures about the period of Cold War for the interpretation of time trends and events. The method helps to trace how it is affected the character, for example, the main character Simona, of the historical illumination by the writer of the events in the XX th century, some famous personalities as Sartre and others, and the author herself.

## Results and Discussion

The leading phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century, to the writer's opinion, was the Cold War of Americans and Russians. In Simone de Beauvoir's 'Force of Circumstance' (Beauvoir, 1963) translation in English divided into two parts (Beauvoir, 1992a; Beauvoir, 1992b) we can see it well. Studying the culture of the United States, the writer notes the general conformism of the Americans. 'Books written by certain American liberals had convinced me that a large section of nation had a clear and serene awareness of its responsibilities. The reality had a great shock to me. <...> It was impossible to dislodge them, even for an instant, from their

convictions; discussion often seemed to me as futile as with advanced paranoiacs' (Beauvoir, 1992a, p. 123). S. de Beauvoir considers the American literature to be 'commitment' politically as works by John Steinbeck, John Doss Passos and William Faulkner demonstrate the state interests' reflection.

For signifying this trend, she introduces the concept of 'Americanism', which is somehow similar to European chauvinism. One of the features of 'Americanism' is the people inactivity who shares limply the official political opinion. 'I was struck by absence even among very young boys and girls, of any interior motivation; they were incapable of thinking, of inventing, of imaging, of choosing, of deciding for themselves; this incapacity was expressed by their conformism, in every domain of life they employed only the abstract measure of money, because they were unable to trust to their own judgment' (Beauvoir, 1992a, p. 124).

In Italy, after the Second World War, in spite of hunger and bloodshed, fascist tendencies continue developing; they have grown into neo-fascism. S. de Beauvoir considers that nationalism in Italy had been formed on fascist grounds. Speaking about Italian writers, the author notes their dislike for each other. The hostility towards the Germans disappeared when the author saw the post-war Germany: ruins, crippling, trouble, hunger, cold. However, the Germans were primarily concerned about the issue of punishment.

During the Cold War for everybody it was common, cosmopolitan fear of atomic weapons: 'The West was shacking with fear because on October 9, 1949, General Bradley had announced that the day of the 'Red atom' had arrived; The U.S.S.R. now possessed atomic bombs. There began to be talk of a new weapon much more powerful even than the atom bomb. In January 1950, on the orders of President Truman, the H-bomb went into production. Its effects were described everywhere at great length; <...> The fear it engendered became cosmic: flying saucers were seen in America and in France, sometimes in the sky, sometimes on the ground; some people had even seen Martians' (Beauvoir, 1992a, p. 203).

The French society, on the one hand, was very afraid of 'red (the communists)', on the other hand, it was traced the hidden US occupation in the country. The feeling of existential fear for the French, whose desire for freedom was

dominated, was reflected in literature, cinematography and painting of that period.

S. de Beauvoir visited Iceland, Norway, Scotland, Yugoslavia, Austria and the Czech Republic. In addition to Europe, the writer draws attention to the culture and traditions of China and especially African countries such as the Republic of Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Tunisia. In all these countries, a white man was perceived as hostile.

The author notes racial discrimination, diseases, and the difficulties in the system of primary education, shows the conflict of civilizations, which is based on the culture difference: 'As I confronted my own civilization with another very different one, I discovered that many traits I had once believed to be common to both not so at all; simple words like peasant, field, village, town, family did not mean at all the same thing in China as in Europe; and this made me see my own environment in a fresh light... <...> this is journey had swept away all my old touchstones. Until then, despite my wide reading and my few perfunctory glimpses of Mexico and Africa, I had always taken the prosperity of Europe and the United States at my norm, and the rest of the world had existed only vaguely somewhere on the horizon. Seeing the masses of China upset my whole idea of our planet; from then on it was Far East, India, Africa, with their chronic shortage of food, that became the truth of the world, and our Western comfort merely limited privilege' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 67). Expressing her views, the writer acts as an insightful and thoughtful publicist, for whom the humanistic aspects are more important than the national, racial and political ones.

The particular attention is paid to the conflict between the Arabs and the French, relevant for that time in France. No doubt, its echoes are felt in the country today. S. de Beauvoir felt herself a stranger in France because of her own views. First of all, she was an individualist who was interested in her own emotions and creativity. But the situation of the 1960's forced her to express her opinion, because the writer felt the general aggressive lies of her compatriots.

In her opinion, racism prevailed in Paris: 'The Black-Food (pieds noirs) were clamoring for integration when the mere idea of a single University was enough to make them recoil in horror' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 87). The police treated neighborhood Algerians, there were searches, raids and manhunts. 'No one made any protest. Torture was being used as the normal and

in dispensable method of obtaining information; it was not a matter of "incidents", of isolated excesses, this was a system' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 89). The cruelty of the French caused the author's sense of shame, which formed a deep psychological conflict in her mind, later it is resulted in depression.

She did not believe the rumors about the probable peace in Algeria, they only annoyed her and turned her away from her own country: 'There were to be no more trips through France. Tavant, Saint Savin, and other places I had no longer held any attraction for me; the present was even spoiling the past for me. From that time on I lived through of our autumns in humiliation, and the sweetness of summer in bitterness' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 178). The writer understood that there would not be any global changes, but tried to help ordinary people who addressed her with requests for protection.

As an example, it was the committee organization for the defense of an Algerian woman, Djamila Boupacha. S. de Beauvoir wrote an article for the French newspaper 'Le Monde', which referred to the cruel abuse of the girl who had been tortured, raped with a coke bottle, pale and emaciated, visibly in a state of shock, she still had burns on her skin and numerous injuries. The article attracted the public attention: someone expressed sympathy, someone considered it as the justice norm, but the writer's greatest indignation was caused by officials who had to take the responsibility, however, they ignored the problem.

During the trial, it was appeared the matter of persecuting the torturers. The delegation of famous intellectuals Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Tillon, Anise Postel-Vinay, both ex-departees Gisele Halimi went to the Minister of Justice E. Michelet as to this issue, but he tried as an ordinary politician to evade the responsibility and promised to consult with M. Patin, whom he considered 'the conscience embodiment'.

The behavior of the French, as the writer remarked ironically, he explained as the proliferation of Nazis infections: 'It's terrible, this gangrenes the Nazis have bequeathed us!' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 224). It was very convenient in the 1960's to hide behind the consequences of the Second World War and to shift the responsibility onto the Germans who even on the edge of the twentieth century felt guilty.

Another topic that has attracted S. de Beauvoir's interest was the African culture. She watched the life and art of the tribes of Lake Chad. She believes that the traditions of the Corbos are quite primitive, but at the same time convincing compared to the achievements of European civilization. The author notes that a very important place in the culture of the African tribes is given to the bow, which facilitates hunting. The bow is like a symbol that reflects the community development. S. de Beauvoir describes the situation, when the tribe has lost its bow, and did not try to find it.

On the one hand, this passivity is an example of a harmonious perception of the surrounding world. On the other hand, it is an indication of the reluctance to develop: 'The neighboring tribes used them; but what's the good? they said. Given these conditions, there was no modern invention capable of dazzling them; automobiles, airplanes: what's the good? Occasionally they would kill birds with stones and eat them. They owned cattle, but the pastures were scarcely more than an imaginary form of wealth. The women did the work of cultivating the land, so naturally all the men were polygamous except one idiot, a bachelor who lived on charity, and one old man better off than the others who explained ... <...> 'I don't need to have more than one wife; I'm rich' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 186).

S. de Beauvoir notes that these people lived without religion and almost without ceremonies, thus, the tribe traditions were forgotten. These cultural observations helped her to derive the existence paradox, which consisted in the fact that those people escaped poverty when they had abandoned their own needs, but on this path they found well-being. Thus, studying the usual way of life and the primitive culture the writer tried to find a philosophical meaning, which would open the way of understanding and existence awareness.

It is interesting she analyzed the African culture not only in Africa, but also watched the evolution of the black race and its integration into South America. S. de Beauvoir's observation on the synthesis of African and Indian traditions in Brazil (it could be observed in the cult of Candomble) was very interesting. It was Afro-Brazilian fetishist cult, in which the reverence of the African pagan gods Orisha took the central place.

Thus, in the 1960's, the writer approached the discovery of the phenomenon 'minority' thinking, which she tried to analyze in the

psychological feelings of the 'weak': women, "blacks" and Indians.

The Bahia population created its own religion, which united the African pagan cults with Catholicism on the background of the foreign Indian symbolism: 'At Recife, an evening's entertainment had been organized for us in which Negroes disguised as Indians danced a number of very sophisticated ballets. <...> At ceremonies all the women dancing fell into trances...> a young Negro woman <...> went into a trance, was led off, and came back transfigured by a mysterious joy; <...> the metamorphosis is as much surprise to them as it is to the spectator <...> a supernatural intervention. <...> The marriage of candomble and Catholicism does sometimes produce individual absurdities; but on the whole, the native peasant fetishism absorbed by the Christian tradition blends very well with the surviving strain of African fetishism' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 241-242).

S. de Beauvoir noticed the social integration of African culture in Itabuna, which was evident in the way of life and food habits. Poverty here, like in Africa, was a leading feature of thinking: 'To get acquainted with a country, Amando was of opinion that one should first of all know what they eat there. He took us to the market: red beans, manioc, bad rice, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, bars of raw sugar that looked like black soap, beef dried in the sun – nothing fresh ... We were in the open air, but it smelled like an old barn' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 243).

Depicting the interior, the writer reveals the social status of those people: 'No water, no light, no heating, no furniture: four walls surrounding a square of beaten earth, a few packing cases. These rooms formed the sides of courtyard where we saw some naked swollen-bellied children and some tattered-looking women dragging themselves about' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 244). When describing the black Cubans who lived in the same poverty, she noticed that their eyes were glowing with Castro's love.

Brazil is not characterized by racism, because, according to the author, most Portuguese have a Jewish origin, moreover, almost all residents have some share of African blood. But instead of racism, anti-Semitism prevails in wealthy circles. S. de Beauvoir has felt the confrontation tendency, as well as the conflict between South America and the United States, but the erudition and sharp minds of Brazilian intellectuals caused her sympathy to them.

S. de Beauvoir defines the USSR as a great imperial state that oppresses other countries, and in the territory of satellite countries (European Eastern countries) creates difficult existence conditions. For example, the attempts to introduce collectivization on the territory of Yugoslavia failed because peasants had committed suicide to prevent the implementation of colonial plans.

The aesthetic problems in the Yugoslav literature were also demonstrative, as most writers felt the creative influence of French surrealism after the war. And in the 1960's they were forced to combine avant-garde principles with folk culture. Thus, the writers faced with a problem that it was impossible to solve in practice to combine surrealism and folklore. A similar situation was also observed in the Czech Republic. This problem is skillfully revealed by M. Kundera in the novel 'The Joke'. The author depicts the interference of political and social systems in the life of the individual, and the symbol of those processes is the proliferation and cultivation of the Czech folklore traditions.

The Soviet writers, who in the majority were forced to adhere to the canon of socialist realism, had to choose, according to the principles of that direction, the leading labor theme. The creative ideology also influenced their private life: they were very reserved it seemed that they had been watched all the time. S. de Beauvoir communicated famous Soviet poets such as Ye. Yevtushenko and R. Rozhdestvensky, and criticized the statements by school teachers who did not understand the creativity of those poets, since their poetry went beyond the allowed literature. The writer discovered the paradoxes of the USSR as for the country that was perceived as a 'new' all over the world, did not perceive the latest trends, for example, the officials interfered with self-realization of Soviet writers and artists B. Pasternak and A. Tarkovsky.

The author was also impressed by the unexplained contrasts of the country such as general poverty, shortage of goods, prostitution, which was officially forbidden, but considered as an elite business; the queues at restaurants and the presence of advanced technology in the space industry. However, the very progressive development of atomic weapons, which had been stopped at some stage, formed a premonition of society peace. S. de Beauvoir made interesting observations on the architecture of the Khreshchatyk Street in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine: 'The Russian still boast about the beauty of Kiev; St. Sophia, which we were taken

to see by Ukrainian poet Bazhan, deserves its fame. But all the mid-town neighborhoods – half the city were pounded into dust by the Germans; Stalin had one of the city's most famous churches demolished, and rebuild Kyiv in the style he loved so much: arcades and colonnades, the main avenue is a colossal nightmare' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 359).

The writer pointed out that the Ukrainians, as well as the French, were inherent in post-war syndrome: 'In Ukraine, too, the people are all obsessed by their memories of the war <...> The Nazis, who had made the total annihilation of Slav culture one of their aims, had deliberately set fire to the Lavra Monastery, a famous pilgrimage site; on the hill above the Dnieper, there is a stretch of painted wall, an onion dome its gold roofs blackened by the flames, and a few charred remnants' (Beauvoir, 1992b, p. 359).

Reflecting about the place of France in the world, the author says, on the one hand, it is developed a cultural and intellectual status, which is the absolutely dependent on the great empires of the United States and the Soviet Union. And on the other hand, the internal political problems with Algeria underscore the failure of an individual who is unable to influence the society, and should obey, despite the national protest spirit. She depicts the manifestations and strikes in Paris that are neglected by authority and political elections which are interpreted as profanation and farce.

Among the era tendencies, S. de Beauvoir notes the cultural phenomenon of the movement of 'Zazou', generated by the war and collaboration. One of its founders was B. Vian. The main driving movement force was the political apathy. 'Golden youth' arranged cool parties in luxurious Paris apartments, while their wealthy parents were having rest in Vichy. At these parties, teenagers drank, smashed the furniture simulating military robberies, and also sold things at the black markets. Their political nature was reflected in the fact that they, despite the long-lasting national conflict between England and France, which had dated back in the Middle Ages, cultivated the Anglophilism, emphasizing its pathetic elegance and using an English accent.

The writer traces the connection between the 'Zazou' and the American culture, which appeared to be similar in particular clothes: jeans and tartan shirts, and, moreover, in a fanatical jazz interest. Those young people were reading prohibited at that time Americans works by E. Hemingway, V. Faulkner, Austro-Hungarian

F. Kafka and the 'undesirable' Frenchman J.-P. Sartre, and after having read them, they were discussing the books in cafes and shops. It should be noted that, later in the USSR, on the same basis principles, the movement 'Stilyagi' was formed. According to Andre Marlaux, such a mythology was introduced by leading political officials so called peculiar 'pagan leaders', and the crowd was repeating the myths after them.

### Conclusions

The peculiarity of S. de Beauvoir's reflection of the time trends searching in 'Force of Circumstance' is determined by the memoirs, interludes, diaries. The structural invariant is formed in a genetically determined complex of established essential features, which goes into the system of the genre matrix, that demonstrates the writer's evolution in particular and the canon of time trends of literary existentialism in general.

The specific of S. de Beauvoir's interpretation of African and Algerian culture introduces the 'minority' thinking of its carriers, which is in conflict with the generally accepted European worldview. The writer's specificity in reflecting the time trends is revealed in a non-standard choice of objects and circumstances that contrast with the accepted interests, statements, views of the 'majority'. S. de Beauvoir's non-conformist position as to the "white civilization" distinguishes the writer from general French culture, reveals her journalistic talent, and proves the 'marginal' of intellectual thinking.

It demonstrates progressive, incomprehensible to contemporaries the potential of the civilization evolution based on time trends. S. de Beauvoir managed to convey not only individual feelings, her own emotions, but also reproduced gracefully and skillfully the general time trends, acted as an analyst of social processes. Many of her observations and conclusions have not lost their relevance today.

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