

THE HEART OF THE DIASPORA:
ALGERIAN JEWS DURING THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE, 1954–1962

by

JESSICA R. HAMMERMAN

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Dagmar Herzog

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Helena Rosenblatt

Date

Executive Officer

Judith Friedlander
Samuel Moyn
Clifford Rosenberg
Gary Wilder

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Dagmar Herzog

This thesis examines the ideas, politics, culture, and memories of French-Jewish individuals during the Algerian War for Independence between 1954 and 1962. By tracing the involvement of a leadership organization, the Committee for Jewish Algerian Social Studies (CJAES), this dissertation argues that over the course of the war, Jews—who were indigenous to Algeria—became more integrated into the Christian settler community. An analysis of Algerian-Jewish perspectives complicates the picture of late-colonial Algeria. As intermediaries between France and Algeria, the Jews' identity determined who would be French and who would be Algerian. Initially, Jewish leaders stood by as they watched the violence unfold. When the war inevitably began to encroach upon Jewish neighborhoods, leaders worried about a resurgence of fascistic violence from European circles. Late 1956 was a significant turning point. In the Soummam Appeal of October 1956, the FLN invited the Jews to become Algerian fighters; the CJAES declined in the name of neutrality. News of the Suez Crisis (December 1956) also impacted Algerian identities, further alienating Muslims from Jews as Middle Eastern politics migrated to Algeria. In the context of the horrendous violence of the following two years,

CJAES leaders welcomed President Charles de Gaulle in May 1958, in a hope that he could pacify the region. It became apparent that De Gaulle did not accept that Jews were like other French citizens; nor did he see a future for France's presence in Algeria. In the final years of the war, Jewish leaders let go of the hope that they could remain in French-ruled, multicultural Algeria. When the vast majority of Algerian Jews immigrated to the French mainland in 1962, Jews had become Pieds Noirs, blending into the formerly hostile European settler population.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Cheryl and Stan Hammerman, who have always supported my intellectual endeavors. On my Bat Mitzvah, I thanked them for helping me with my homework. They have *always* given me the freedom to pursue my academic dreams.

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Introduction

Why pay special attention to Jews during the Algerian War? Jews of Algeria—about 140,000 in 1954—comprised a small percentage of the total population. Many Jews who lived through the war rejected the notion that they were part of a larger identifiable Jewish community. Jacques Lazarus, a Frenchman who led Algerian Jews throughout the seven-year struggle, referred to Algerian Jews as nothing but a collection of individuals.¹ According to Lazarus and other Jewish leaders, Algerian Jews were *French* individuals. Some outside observers, including a handful of Metropolitan Jewish groups, conceived of Algerian Jews as an uninvolved extra party to a war between Algerian nationalists and the French administration, or, in their terminology, “Muslims” and “Europeans.” Others simply incorporated the Jews into the so-called European community, since both had long enjoyed the benefits of French citizenship. Even so, as late as 1959, President Charles De Gaulle counted Jews as one minority among several ethnicities in Algeria. By the war’s end in spring 1962, nearly all of the Algerian Jews repatriated to France, along with the Europeans of Algeria.

While Algerian Jews occupied a relatively small role as combatants throughout the crisis in Algeria, a close analysis of the Jews’ participation in and perceptions of the war nonetheless reveals a great deal about the nature of the conflict itself and the outcomes of the war. As the war worked out issues of national

¹ Jacques Lazarus reminded readers several times that he could not speak on behalf of a collectivity that was diverse and merely a collection of individuals. He wrote, “No Jewish organization, nor any single Jewish personality can claim to speak in the name of a collectivity that—like other ethnic groups—includes a whole variety of opinions.” “Déclaration du Comité juif algérien d’études sociales sur la situation en Algérie,” *Oran Républicaine*, 25–26 Novembre 1956.

belonging, the Jews' racial and ethnic ambivalence meant that they became prime targets for both Algerian *and* French representatives. During the war, political leaders of diverse ideological persuasions fought for Jewish loyalty, debating Jews' ethnic makeup, their legal status, and their historical legacy in the Maghreb. At the war's end, evaluating the place of the Jews was one way to pinpoint who would go to the mainland and who belonged in Algeria. Algerian Jews—both self-selected representatives and discordant individual voices—faced a unique set of challenges. Jewish identity had become politicized during the war, with some Algerian nationalists claiming Jews were innately Algerian, while others insisted that the new Algerians could only be Muslims. There was never a cohesive, uniform population of Algerian Jews, but they shared common challenges, common aspirations, and common histories. As Claude Cohen wrote at the ten-year anniversary of decolonization, "If the debate is still open about a specifically Jewish reaction to the Algerian War, the specificity of their situation, at least on a psychological level, is undeniable."² Half a century later, that debate remains open among surviving political activists and historians.

Anxious about the separate attention that Algerian Jews were receiving, Lazarus and other Jewish men filled the silence by reminding the public that the community was French, that a Jew was no different from any other French citizen. Sponsored partially by the World Jewish Congress, the men belonged to the Jewish Algerian Committee for Social Studies (CJAES), which became the primary

² Claude Cohen, "Un engagement avancé," *Les Nouveaux Cahiers* 29, (Summer 1972): 46–48. (« Si le débat sur la spécificité d'une réaction juive face à la guerre d'Algérie reste ouverte, la spécificité de leur situation, sur le plan psychologique du moins, est indéniable. »)

representative body for Jews within Algeria during the Algerian War. Rabbis and officially religious organizations generally declined to comment, claiming they were only committed to ritual questions. Jews of the far left joined the ranks of the Communist Party or the Algerian National Liberal Front (FLN), rather than aligning with the CJAES leaders. Although they claimed neutrality, the CJAES remained a prominent force in directing the fate of Jews in Algeria. The organization's foundational intent in 1917 had been to defend the rights of Algerian Jews from Christian antisemitism. Forced to disband during the Second World War, the group officially reorganized in 1948.

Even still, Jewish leaders could only understand the Algerian War in terms of World War II. The organization's anti-fascist roots shaped its activities in the postwar period and into the Algerian War. The CJAES was neither religious nor political. The group tried to maintain an academic, even journalistic, distance from its own constituents in the name of neutrality. As we will see, this "neutral" façade often broke down, as some used religious language to "pray" for peace and later to champion De Gaulle. Lazarus was relentlessly political in his many dealings with French government officials and Muslim-Algerian spokesmen. He met with such eminent French leaders as Jacques Soustelle and Guy Mollet, and extended his reach to American politicians and Jewish groups.

Lazarus, Ashkenazic and proudly French, imposed his passion for the liberating powers of the French republic onto the Jewish masses of Algeria. While Lazarus claimed that he could not represent the diverse voices of individual Jews who, as French citizens, were free to choose their camp, the CJAES spoke to both the

French and Algerian governments on their behalf. Under Lazarus, the CJAES bore the legacy of the civilizing mission, coming into Algeria from the French metropole in the tradition of such prominent liberal Frenchmen as Adolph Crémieux and Pierre Mendès France. One of their most salient yearnings, expressed by Jacques Lazarus and many others, was that Algeria would become a multicultural entity.³ It would be peaceful, multifaceted: Jews, Muslims, and Christians would coexist harmoniously. They repeatedly claimed that Jews and Muslims were “brothers,” although this language papered over the decades of tension between the two groups.⁴

At the outset of the Algerian War in late 1954, CJAES leaders silently stood by as they watched the events unfold. When the war’s violence inevitably began to encroach upon Jewish individuals and neighborhoods, leaders and bystanders worried about a resurgence of fascistic violence from Christian European circles. They were looking back beyond the Jews’ loss of citizenship in October 1940, to the preceding decades of anti-Jewish political rallies, publications, and street riots that had been a dominant feature of European culture within Algeria since the early nineteenth century. Until late 1956, neither CJAES representatives nor Jewish leaders throughout the countryside perceived the FLN as a threat—they were more concerned with giving energy to a burgeoning Jewish community, and to protecting the Jews from European antisemites. Correspondences and news clippings from the

³ James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2. James McDougall examines “the place of historical imagination” for Muslims’ visions for what Algeria could become. This dissertation, too, engages with a Jewish vision for the future, especially popular among the CJAES leaders.

⁴ Joshua Cole, “Antisémitisme et situation coloniale pendant l’entre-deux-guerres en Algérie: Les émeutes antijuives de Constantine (août 1934),” *Vingtième siècle revue d’histoire* 108 (October–December 2010): 3-23.

Jacques Lazarus collection reveal that the Europeans of Algeria were still openly antisemitic at this time. The Algerian Jewish leaders—because of the impact of decades of mistreatment by the settlers—were preoccupied with European antisemitism.

I argue that the Algerian War was a crucial turning point in the way that Algerian-born Jews saw themselves as a group and the way they related to Muslims and Christians. Already French citizens, they shared the fate of the European *colons*, despite being the long-suffering targets of their antisemitic animus. Moreover, FLN nationalists invited the Jews to choose Algerian citizenship. During this period, Jewish intellectuals deeply explored their relationship to both France and to Algeria, looking backward over a hundred years to decide where they belonged. Scholars such as Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Susan Slymovics have recently written about Algerian-Jewish cultures under the French empire.⁵ These works have revealed the economic and cultural factors that shaped Algerian-Jewish identities throughout the colonial period. It is equally important to situate Algerian Jews during the war for independence, and to understand how Jewish spokesmen—most notably Jacques Lazarus—eventually determined their fate, and, arguably, influenced the outcome of the war. Lazarus’s negotiations and proclamations throughout the Algerian War established that Algerian Jews would remain French at war’s end, setting the stage for their massive immigration to the metropole in the early 1960s.

Instead of dismissing the 1950s as a parenthesis between the anti-Jewish atrocities of World War II and the emergence of Holocaust memory in the mid-

⁵ Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Susan Slymovics, “Jews and Colonial Algeria,” *Journal of North African Studies* 17/4 (December 2012).

1960s, a study of the CJAES proves that this period was crucial to the way Jews saw themselves and their community in a rapidly changing world. Michael Rothberg has begun to address the importance of Holocaust memory during decolonization, by exploring resonances between the two events.⁶ The first two chapters of this dissertation explore the literal resurgence of fascism and fascist-like parties that directly turned on the Jews, even as Algerian nationalists waged another war against French colonialism. The behavior of the French military and of the Europeans of Algeria reminded Jewish residents of what European Jews had experienced during the Second World War. These bitter reminders drew a very small minority to protest torture by the French Army or even to engage in the nationalist struggle directly, even as the majority defended France and hoped to remain in French Algeria.

Rather than describing the war solely as a nationalist struggle against French imperialism, this study begins to examine the local disputes that fueled much of the violence within Algeria. The French Army's miscalculations were due in part to their ignorance of local dynamics. Algeria was a home to a multiplicity of ethnic tribes, national heritages, and religious denominations. Nonetheless, demographers and residents of Algeria reduced the multiethnic population to only three groups: Christians (known as Europeans), Jews, and Muslims.⁷ These three groups were supposed to account for all of Algeria's residents—the ethnic divisions even caused

⁶ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Kamel Kateb, *Européens, Indigènes et Juifs en Algérie* (Paris: INED/PUF 2001).

historian Charles-Robert Ageron to argue that the Algerian War was a religious war.⁸

These three communities did not always align with three different kinds of ethno-political views. In fact, all three groups fought against presumed uniformity from the very beginning of the Algerian War: Muslims feuded over how best to acquire equal rights (assimilation or independence); Europeans were divided among “ultras,” liberals, and communists; and, like the others, Jews denied any political cohesion among themselves, as some remained committed to French Algeria while others supported independence. As the war continued, however, these religious groupings did eventually give way to politics. It was in this context that the CJAES pushed for unity in their form of a Jewish renaissance, even as they denied any coherent political stance. The French political system sought to appease the European community, to find a middle ground between what mainland residents wanted and what the settlers needed in Algeria. Finally, a Pan-Arab movement—beginning from President Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt—was spreading across the Maghreb to Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, and an Arab-Islamic identity was becoming increasingly influential to the politics of the FLN. The state of Israel was becoming an influential center as well, which promised to root Jewish communities throughout the world. These global political factors, combined with the sociological reality of Algeria, became defining characteristics for an emerging identity politics in France, Algeria, and elsewhere in the world.

⁸ Charles-Robert Ageron, “Une Guerre Religieuse?” *Archives Juives* (1er semestre 1996), 11–14.

Algerian Jews were important to observers precisely because they could be considered among either Europeans or Arabs. Although most Jews, especially in the CJAES, claimed to be comfortably French, few denied that Jews were at a remove from the European community. In 1957, Jean-Paul Sartre observed of the Tunisian-Jewish-French philosopher Albert Memmi, “[he] has experienced a twofold liability, a twofold rejection, in the process that sets colonizers against colonized.... He has understood the system so well because he felt it first as his own contradiction.”⁹ Without articulating it bluntly, Sartre alluded to Memmi’s status as a Jew. He was both colonizer and colonized. This double liability was a lived reality for Algerian Jews. Unlike either Europeans or Muslims, Jews were given a choice of nationality. Their inclusion on either side of the conflict shows the permeability of the two sides. This permeability persevered until the final few years of the war. A close study of the Algerian Jews during the war years illustrates that ethnicity and politics had not always gone together, as historian Todd Shepard illustrated in his work that featured the post-1962 reinvention of decolonization as the inevitable product of a wave of “History” rather than the outcome of bloody struggles.¹⁰ The fact that Jews were given a choice while other groups weren’t, however, is no reason to reduce their wartime situation to one in which they were caught between the Secret Armed Organization (OAS) and the FLN.¹¹

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Introduction” in Albert Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfield (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957, 1991), xxii.

¹⁰ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹¹ Michael Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century* (New York: NYU Press, 1997); Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois Exiles* (Paris: Stock, 2006); and Jacques Lazarus in a conversation with the author.

We now know that the war was far more complex than previously thought. Todd Shepard's study marks a departure from a generation of historians of the Algerian War who had adopted Frantz Fanon's division of wealthy colonizing oppressors versus the oppressed, downtrodden natives.¹² In Fanon's wake, the Algerian War has inspired histories of nationalist movements, the French Army's implementation of torture methods, and dissenters from the mainland.¹³ Shepard has observed that ethnicity and race were defining factors in legally shaping what would become two distinct nations—Algeria and France.¹⁴ Eventually, after 1962, all who were considered "Muslim"—regardless of political allegiance—were expected to remain in Algeria.¹⁵ All considered "Europeans" went to France. His work reconstructs the final months of the French government's decision to pass the Evian Accords, which granted Algeria independence and conclusively divided the two populations. Focusing on just those final months, he argues that decolonization was constructed out of specific, strategic decisions, which older scholars had taken

¹² Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). See Frantz Fanon, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, (trans. *A Dying Colonialism*) Editions Maspero, Paris 1959. Examples of the first histories of the Algerian War for independence include Alastair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace* (New York: NY Review of Books, 1977, 2006) and Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie Contemporaine*, Vol II, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979).

¹³ Some outstanding examples of such work are Raphaëlle Branche, *La Torture et l'armée pendant la guerre d'Algérie, 1954–1962* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN* (Paris: Fayard, 2002); Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire : From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); James LeSueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria*. (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Todd Shepard writes, "In this revolutionary moment, political institutions and the law joined with, reinforced, and sometimes redefined other crucial definitions (scientific, medical, bureaucratic, and cultural, for example) of who was French and how France should be governed, definitions in which race and ethnicity were already explicit." Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 12.

¹⁵ The pro-French Muslims were known as *harkis*. Their trajectory was very devastating, because they were rejected from the new Algeria and from France (as Algerians). Jewish leftists in the 1960s championed their cause.

to be inevitable. Shepard acknowledges that Jews were an important litmus test for the administration's definitions of who would be French.¹⁶

A focus on the war years, 1954–1962, shows how Jewish leaders gradually re-cast their own histories and relationships to other populations in Algeria. Slowing down the chronology of the war years shows the way that local populations—sometimes reluctantly—came to adopt new kinds of politicized language when referring to the alignments among and boundaries between ethnic groups. An analysis of the statements and sentiments of the Algerian Jewish leaders during the war reintroduces the local context into what can appear to be a global, bilateral conflict. Ethnic divides were not predetermined, nor were political allegiances. Locals prioritized personal safety, economic security, and maintaining harmonious relationships with their neighbors.

The tension between ethnic-political groups during the Algerian war brought into sharp relief an internal Jewish struggle. Already in the years before the war, individuals—both religious and secular—struggled to find a compromise between being French and maintaining an identity apart. A deep, searching commitment to redefine the French-Jewish community characterized these years. In the first two years of the war, Jews across the political spectrum shared hopes and fears. The deprivations of the 1940s had emotionally unified them around the concept of the Resistance, whether Communist or Gaullist. Both Communists and Liberals worried immediately about a revival of European antisemitism, especially during the surge of Algerian nationalism in late 1954. By 1957, much had changed. CJAES leaders,

¹⁶ See Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, “Repatriation rather than Aliyah” Ch. 6, pp. 169ff.

notably Lazarus, had declared their neutrality and a veiled support for French sovereignty. Meanwhile, some Jews who had already been active in the Communist Party became advocates for Algerian independence.

After decolonization, historians and sociologists “invented” France in its continental, European form.¹⁷ French thinkers and politicians intentionally tried to “forget” the colonial past, and national histories without the colonies abounded.¹⁸ After Algerian Jews repatriated to France, scholars began writing about a larger “North African” Jewish community, which included immigrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.¹⁹ These new émigrés were collectively known as “Sephardim,” a category that did not exist in colonial Algeria. In recent years, scholarship on the Algerian colony and the war for independence has proliferated, but historians have trouble reconciling the dual position of some 140,000 Algerian Jews, who were at once extremely diverse and still unified by common preoccupations.

Even if there was not a singular “Jewish” reaction to the wartime events, Algerian Jews shared a common political and psychological fate—whether they supported French or independent Algeria. Especially after 1958, French and international observers assumed that the Algerian War was a conflict between “two” populations—“Europeans” and “Muslims.”²⁰ In reaching backward to the later

¹⁷ This is Todd Shepard’s larger point in *Invention*.

¹⁸ This argument was first made in Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l’oubli: La Mémoire de la Guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

¹⁹ For instance, Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983); Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century*; Paula Hyman, *Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

²⁰ Primary documents that draw the Algerian War as a conflict between Europeans and Muslims are ubiquitous. It was a consensus that reached from FLN propaganda to French governmental/

1940s and early 1950s, it is crucial to establish the tri-partite nature of Algerian society.²¹ This dissertation will show how the Algerian Jews evolved from a separate grouping of “Israelite Frenchmen” into *pieds noirs* over the course of the war.

Jacques Lazarus’s archive at the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris has been pivotal to reconstructing the evolving Jewish positions during the Algerian War. It contains a rich trove of correspondences, articles, and declarations. The Jewish press during the 1950s has also been extremely important. Memoirs by participants and bystanders have helped to reconstruct the personal perceptions of events, providing unconventional perspectives. This research also has drawn from official state archives: the military’s archive from the *Armée de Terre*; the French administration’s archives of Algeria from the Archives d’outre Mer (CAOM); and the national archives from Paris.

In seeking to unravel historical fact from postcolonial fiction, this dissertation will analyze a diverse base of proclamations, newspaper articles, and speeches, alongside private correspondences, diaries, and personal memories. Mixing these two source bases—public and private—can help decode the meaning of what people said, and show how both individual bystanders and political groups understood the ever-changing categories throughout the war. It also engages with questions of identity. How “Jewish” did people consider themselves to be? Even in

military propaganda. Jewish leaders—at least those of the CJAES—just asserted that they were members of the French group (and sometimes even called themselves Europeans).

²¹ For an example of these phenomena: Documents Algériens: Service d’Information du Cabinet du Gouverneur Général de l’Algérie, “Les Religions d’Algérie.” *Série Culturelle*, no. 48. July 8, 1950.

the case of atheist or unaffiliated Jews, how much were their political motivations drawn from their Jewish identities?

The first chapter sets the stage for the Algerian War. In that chapter, I seek to explain the Algerian Jews' situation since the nineteenth century, paying special attention to the central role of the 1870 Crémieux Decree conferring full French citizenship in shaping Algerian Jewishness. Granting and subsequently revoking French citizenship during the Vichy Regime led to a population unsure of its allegiances. Antisemitism coming from both European and Muslim populations further confused the Jewish position in Algeria, and often led to vocal support of France, which some saw as a mediating force, capable of sustaining a multicultural, republican vision in Algeria. I contextualize the Jewish advocacy group (CJAES) and most individuals' unwavering support for France during the 1940s and 1950s.

The second chapter focuses on the Jewish leaders' and bystanders' interpretation of events during the first two years of the Algerian War. They were overwhelmingly much more concerned with a possible resurgence of Vichy Algeria than they were with the incipient violence stemming from Algerian nationalists. Jews living in Algeria worried about a future in which they would face prejudice for being Jewish, before the watershed moment of the Soummam Appeal in October 1956. They were still preoccupied with antisemitic movements coming from Europeans, and were less concerned about either Algerian nationalism or Middle Eastern Politics.

The third chapter addresses the mounting tensions toward the end of 1956 that resulted in impasse for the previously much-celebrated Jewish-Muslim

brotherhood. The Suez crisis in Egypt coincided with the FLN's first appeal to the Jews of Algeria in late 1956. Under Lazarus, the CJAES refused the offer. At the same time, however, Israel's covert presence in Algeria led many observers to conclude that Israel and France were united in an anti-Arab conspiracy.

Chapter four addresses the perspectives of Jewish Communists and FLN activists, individuals who accepted the FLN's invitation. Although most considered themselves atheists, they often drew on a specifically Jewish-Algerian cultural heritage in order to justify their nationalism. These individuals departed from the mainstream vision put forth by Lazarus and the CJAES.

Chapter five details FLN attacks on Jewish victims. In 1957, due to internal disputes, the FLN's tone became more Islamist. Jewish leaders were increasingly convinced that the FLN was targeting Algerian Jews. After 1958, Jewish leaders were no longer preoccupied with the European antisemites, as they had been in the war's early years. Now they feared Arab nationalism and the FLN's direct assaults on the Jews of Algeria.

Chapter six begins with De Gaulle's 1958 ascension of power and argues that Algerian Jews "became" *pieds noirs* late in the war. As the Europeans softened their anti-Jewish proclamations, and Jews began to share common ground with the Europeans, the "*pied noir*" community was born. After the ceasefire in 1962, nearly the entirety of Algerian Jews departed to France along with the Europeans.

What follows is a story about the vanishing of a Jewish-Muslim brotherhood in Algeria. It is a story about a transformation, about the factors and choices that led

to a mass exodus. It is the story of an ethnic transformation, as Jews became pieds
noirs.

Fantasies of Redemption: Algerian Jews Envisioning France, 1850–1950

“We are French and we are Jewish”

When French sociologists approached Jews from Algeria for possible interviews, the overwhelming response was, “What is distinct about us? We are French and we are Jewish.”²² As their conversations deepened, however, the interviewees acknowledged that there was indeed something distinct about Jewish-Algerian culture. Nevertheless, their initial assertion—we are French and we are Jewish—had a hundred-year-long legacy. Especially since the Second World War, a large and vocal majority in Algeria asserted the simple truth of their French identity, insisting that Algeria was identical to France.²³ Even those who supported Algerian independence later confessed to having been fascinated with France.²⁴ Henri Chemouilli, an Algerian Jew who became an activist in favor of French Algeria

²² This was the overwhelming response at the beginning of each interview in Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Doris Bensimon. *Les Juifs d'Algérie: Mémoires et identités plurielles*. (Paris: Éditions Stavit, 1998), page 11.

²³ I spoke to an Algerian-born Jewish man, who described Algeria as “exactly like France.” He said Algiers was “no different from Aix-en-Provence.” I looked around Aix-en-Provence, and I saw a multi-tiered fountain, crowded café tables with leisurely patrons, ice-cream shops, and a merry-go-round. When I challenged him, mentioning that the majority of Muslim inhabitants spoke Arabic and were not full citizens, he insisted: Algiers and Aix were identical. He also expressed his frustration with the men he saw wearing a kippah in the Jewish cultural center, indicating that he could not relate with Moroccan Jews, who lived in Jewish religious communities. This man was not religious—he was secular, Jewish, and French—and he happened to come from Algiers, the way someone else may be from Brittany or Lyons. Another Jewish-Algerian woman told me that she resented being identified with other North-African Jews in today’s France. “For me,” she said, “Tunisian and Moroccan Jews are like Arabs. *We are French.*”

²⁴ See for instance in that collection Jean Cohen’s *Chronique d’une Algérie Révolue: “Comme l’ombre et le vent,”* L’Harmattan: Paris, 1997 and Gisèle Halimi, *Milk for the Orange Tree*. Trans. Dorothy S. Blair. London: Quartet Books, 1991.

reflected, “We decapitated our ancestors. We were ashamed of them; they were Arab Jews. We wanted to be French, nothing but French.”²⁵

French and Algerian Jews came together after 1962, but in the 1940s and 1950s, they lived in starkly contrasting societies.²⁶ Each group had an idea—often exaggerated—of what the other group was like. Initial impressions became fantasies that mutually misrepresented the other. The postwar period was, for both populations, a time of repair.²⁷ Jewish leaders endeavored to renew the vigor of their communities, planning to restructure their institutions, social life, and religious life.²⁸ During the period of postwar renewal, Jews reexamined their heritage on French (including French-Algerian) soil, hoping to rediscover their roots and community. In the aftermath of genocide, they aimed to justify their presence inside both France and French Algeria.

Even before they became French citizens in 1871, Algerian Jews initially *needed* France in order to protect them from the unrelenting violence of the European settler population.²⁹ Europeans’ anti-Jewish epithets and ugly caricatures

²⁵ Henri Chemouilli, *Une Diaspora Méconnue*, Paris: Imprimerie Moderne de la Presse, 1976, page 11.

²⁶ After Algerian Jews repatriated to France, scholars began writing about a larger “North African” community, which included immigrants from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. These new émigrés were collectively known as “Sephardim,” a category that did not exist in colonial Algeria.

²⁷ The historian Maud Mandel has concluded that “it was precisely the ‘ashes of Auschwitz’ that had inspired a new rhetoric of solidarity among the previously standoffish Jewish leadership.” (Maud Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, page 167.)

²⁸ Mandel and Laura Hobson Faure trace the history of the CRIF, showing how that institution was born from American funding. Mandel, *Aftermath*, and Faure, “Un plan Marshall juif: la Présence juive américaine en France après la Shoah, 1944–1954,” PhD Diss, 2009, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

²⁹ On antisemitism in Algeria among Pieds noirs, there is a rich literature, encompassing early riots and ending at the Vichy period: Geneviève Dermenjian, *La Crise anti-juive oranaise (1895–1905): L’antisemitisme dans l’Algérie coloniale*. L’harmattan: Paris, 1986; E. Sivan, « Stereotypes antijuifs dans la mentalité pied noir, » in *Les Relations entre juifs et musulmans en Afrique du Nord XIX-XX Siècles*. éditions CNRS, Paris, 1980; Hebey, *Alger 1898*. Michel Abitbol, *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*, Paris : Riveneuve éditions, 2008.

animated full-fledged political parties, culminating in physical assaults throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁰ Algerian Jews thought that “France” writ large could protect them from Europeans’ attacks. They relied on the French military and administration, hoping that the French vision of republicanism would prevail in Algeria, in order to protect them from pogroms, riots, and attempts to undermine their jobs and livelihoods. Their very identities were rooted in French culture, and as children, they thought of themselves as descendants of the Gauls.³¹ Colonizers’ propaganda touted a French administration as superior to the Ottoman power. It especially focused on the *dhimmi* as a miserable status that humiliated the Jews. Although Jews did have to pay higher taxes within the *dhimmi*, and there are some examples of Muslim anger gone awry, historian Joshua Schreier has found evidence that Jews “were a relatively secure and integrated component of Ottoman and early colonial Algerian society.”³²

The French military administration colonized Algeria by drawing on themes of the French Revolution and Napoleonic spread of liberty, equality, and fraternity.³³ By contrast, nineteenth-century Algerian Jews did not look to the French-Jewish community as a model of how their own integration would work.³⁴ Instead, Algerian Jews originally thought they could mix with the other French of Algeria, some of whom did not receive citizenship until long after the Jews did. As we will

³⁰ See for instance, Geneviève Dermenjian, *La Crise anti-juive oranaise (1895–1905): L’antisemitisme dans l’Algérie coloniale*. L’harmattan: Paris, 1986.

³¹ Children in the colonies sang about “Nos ancêtres les Gaullois” and individual Algerian Jews have remembered the day in their childhood when they discovered that this was not in fact true.

³² Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010, p 12.

³³ For this argument, see Schreier, pp. 165–171.

³⁴ Allouche and Bensimon, *Juifs d’Algérie: Identités Plurielle*, page 96.

see, the vast majority of “European” Algerians rejected the Jews—aggressively attacking them physically, and adopting a fiercely antisemitic politics. Antisemitism in Algeria was not a fringe movement; educated professionals, businessmen, workers and politicized women embraced anti-Jewish politics.³⁵ In response, some Algerian Jews idealized what they imagined “France” to be, aspiring to transform Algeria into a more republican French entity. These attitudes, as we will see, prevailed into the 1940s and 1950s. Jewish self-understandings responded to the politics of antisemitism, as much as they celebrated lofty concepts like republicanism, liberalism, or assimilation. A vocal dissenting minority projected a critical view of Algerian-Jewish history.

What had begun as a psychological desire to “elevate” themselves into true Frenchmen and women became a political strategy in the postwar period. This chapter seeks to document this subtle move. In order to contextualize postwar ideas of France, this chapter retraces the nineteenth-century background and the history of Vichy Algeria. It gives examples of Algerian-Jewish paeans to France in the 1940s and 1950s. Finally, it explores both the Jews’ relationship to other residents of Algeria, and how Algerian Jews were seen from the perspective of the métropole.

In addition to sharing a mixed culture that was both French and uniquely Algerian, the Jews of Algeria collectively experienced a trauma when they were denaturalized by Vichy in 1940. These commonalities are numerous enough, I argue, that they can help define a postwar Algerian-Jewish generation, who were the last

³⁵ Michel Abitbol, *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*, page 22.

generation of Jews on Algerian soil.³⁶ In spite of vast differences in political opinion, personal philosophy, socioeconomic reality, age, and religiosity, it is still possible to talk about postwar Algerian Jews as a generation. This was because all viewed the Algerian War through the lens of the particularities of being Jewish in Algeria: namely, they (or their parents) had seen their French citizenship quickly revoked and only slowly returned in 1943. A decade later, many individuals related violent events during the Algerian War to Jewish experiences during World War II.

Colonization, Assimilation, Regeneration

The journey of Algerian Jews toward citizenship began in 1830, when the French military first invaded Algiers. Jews had a symbolic importance for Algerian colonizers long before the passing of the Crémieux Decree in 1870. Schreier argued that they obsessively focused on Algerian Jews in order to explore the “regenerative power” of French citizenship.³⁷ Jews stood out from other “Arabs,” and, from the very outset of French colonization, the military fixated on how poorly the Jews were treated by the Ottomans.³⁸ Focusing on the Jewish minority, officials justified their takeover of Algeria by claiming to bring positive reforms to the local populations.

A series of laws between 1830 and 1871 granted Algerian Jews complete access to French citizenship. At first, Jews were not citizens, but the French

³⁶ Thibaud asked if there was an “Algerian generation” in France. And he concluded that rather than an Algerian generation, he would describe the Algerian Effect (effet Algérie) that impacted French national conscience and redefined political values. I agree that the differences among Algerian populations was too vast to comprise a generation, but the Jews, I argue, shared experiences and values that shaped their later perceptions of the Algerian War. Paul Thibaud, “Génération Algérienne?” in Rioux, ed. *La Guerre d’Algérie et les Français*.

³⁷ Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, page 178.

³⁸ Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 37.

considered them a separate “Jewish nation,” a quasi-legal entity that mirrored the Muslim nation.³⁹ Algerian Jews and Muslims were exceptions to the ideals of French republicanism, as the concept of a “nation” had been decisively eradicated by the French Revolution. Gradually, in Algeria, the Jewish nation fell under the jurisdiction of the French government as imperial authorities subsumed rabbinical legal powers. The French authorities progressively narrowed the communal rights of Algerian subjects, so that the Jewish and Muslim communities lost much of their internal autonomy. The Jewish nation came to preside over private matters, such as marriage and divorce, while public issues, such as property ownership, were exclusively legislated by the French administration.⁴⁰ Jewish autonomy dwindled and was finally abolished in 1841, when the French administration extended its legal powers over the local Jews. By 1847, two French Jews arrived and created a consistory in Algiers, hoping to deepen a connection between the Jewish authorities in France and the Jews of Algeria.

In 1848, Algeria was incorporated into France and its three official *départements*—Oran, Constantine, and Algiers—were integrated into the French Republic. Like Muslims, Jews still were subjected to separate laws—they were *indigènes*. Christian immigrants from Spain, Malta, and Italy, who saw new opportunities in France’s North African expansion, joined French settlers in Algeria.

³⁹ The Jewish population had long been known as a “nation” in this early period. With the French revolution, the idea of the Jewish nation was eradicated. In Clermont-Tonnerre’s “Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions” from 23 December 1789, he declared that, “We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals.” Quoted in *The French Revolution and Human Rights*, translated, edited and with an introduction by Lynn Hunt. Boston/New York: Bedford/St Martin’s, 1996), 86-88.

⁴⁰ André Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*. Trans. Michael M. Bernet. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968; Patrick Weil, *Qu’est-ce qu’un français?*; Joshua Schreir, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*.

The ever-growing group of French settlers viewed both Jews and Muslims as *indigènes*—natives to Algeria who did not deserve to be citizens, and who retained “personal status” that allowed religious laws to dictate many communal matters. French lawyers asserted that Algeria was not a colony, but rather, a part of France.

In 1871, the Crémieux Decree gave French citizenship to all Jews of Algeria and their offspring, leaving Muslims as the only native French subjects. The Decree’s most memorable line is the following:

The indigenous Israelites of the Algerian departments are now declared to be French citizens. Consequently... their actual status and their personal status will now be regulated by French law.⁴¹

The Muslim majority, known colloquially as “Arabs,” spoke a local dialect of Arabic, Djerba, and did not receive citizenship. (Jews also spoke Djerba, and as they became acculturated, they learned French.) Legally, these so-called natives were said to retain their “personal status,” a formulation concocted by French authorities implying that Muslims answered to a religious authority instead of a French authority. French citizenship required a “sacrifice” of personal status—which meant that Jews exclusively answered to French law and French authorities, instead of Jewish law and Jewish authorities. Although some Jews genuinely considered the loss of personal status to be a sacrifice, most contemporaries were aware that French naturalization would improve their lives.⁴² The Crémieux Decree—fostered

⁴¹ Reprinted in Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 188.

⁴² Some nineteenth-century rabbis in Algeria protested the Crémieux Decree, arguing that it took power away from them, or that it dulled Jewish experiences by robbing the Jews of their community and their traditions. Consistory leaders from the métropole took responsibility for “Westernizing” the Arabic Jews from Algeria, they “overrule[d] native rabbis” in order to “guarantee the rapid assimilation of Algerian Jewry.” (Hannah Arendt, “Why the Crémieux Decree was abrogated,” *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1943. Vol VI, number 2. Pages 115–123. (published by the American Jewish Committee, New York, NY), p. 117

by Isaac Adolphe Crémieux, the Jewish Justice Minister of the Third Republic—elevated Algerian Jews to an advantageous position, creating opportunities for education, employment, and participatory democracy. The Decree also instantly increased the French population in Algeria by tens of thousands.⁴³

In Algeria, the settlers' needs threw the native groups into disarray. The military administration allowed settlers to acquire land that belonged to local inhabitants.⁴⁴ Native elites turned against the French. One 19th-century governor acknowledged, "We have completely disorganized the indigenous society so that when we need to act on it we find that we have no grasp over it."⁴⁵ The French colonizers desperately needed new "intermediaries" in order to regain control over tribal Algeria. Nineteenth-century French and British empires strategically appointed *évolués*—a selected group of natives who would keep order over the various colonized tribes and cultures.⁴⁶ In French West Africa, administrators created a class of élite *évolués* for their own benefit. These would be permitted a French education, and they would serve as interpreters and contacts between the indigenous "masses" and the colonial elite.⁴⁷ The Algerian conquest occurred decades earlier, and perhaps it was the Jews who set a precedent for these categories. Initially, Jews became Algeria's *évolués* because they were rooted in Algerian culture and society, yet they profoundly believed in their French identities

⁴³ A similar phenomenon took place in Eastern Europe when those Jews were "emancipated." See Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe* (Modern Jewish History), Syracuse University Press; 1st Syracuse University Press edition (September 1996)

⁴⁴ Marnia Lazreg, "The Destruction of the Algerian Property System" in *The Emergence of Social Classes in Algeria*, Chapter 3.

⁴⁵ Lazreg, p. 48.

⁴⁶ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 119-122.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 121.

as well. Perhaps this explains why Crémieux's proposal was so readily accepted by the French government. The Jewish population of Algeria was manageable; they intermingled with Muslims, and could therefore behave as intermediaries; finally, their numbers were large enough that their reliably republican votes could help sustain the unsteady Third Republic.⁴⁸

In order to justify the much more rigorous process required of Muslims to obtain French citizenship, authorities relied on the notion of personal status, even through the mid-twentieth century. Legal theorists assumed that Muslims preferred to obey the Koran instead of French law.⁴⁹ If the example of Algerian Jews did not prove that it was possible to maintain one's religious identity and also be a French national with full rights, the situations of Muslim citizens in other colonies demonstrated as much. Some Jewish legal scholars, such as André Weiss, attempted to justify naturalizations for Algerian Muslims.⁵⁰ Becoming French "in the status"—that is, while obeying Koranic law—was not a legal impossibility, since it was common in other French territories, such as Senegal and India.⁵¹ Muslims were citizens in these colonies, and they were equally faithful to their religions. The idea that Islam and French citizenship were incompatible was merely a legal strategy to sustain Algeria's ethnic hierarchy set up by the French empire.

Adolphe Crémieux was one of the republican legal theorists who shaped modern imperial laws and he became the first president of the Third Republic's Jewish innovation, the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). In addition to his passion

⁴⁸ Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, pp. 120–21.

⁴⁹ Patrick Weil, *How to become French*. Page 216.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, page 213.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 216-17.

for the French republic, he had a global vision for the future of Judaism.⁵² He was convinced that Judaism and “Western” universal rights went hand in hand. Crémieux and the other AIU leaders believed that Jews everywhere deserved the same privilege that the Algerian Jews had received—the right to emerge as modern, French individuals. But the AIU’s plan was based on a delicate paradox: At once universal and Jewish, it intended to bring French-style “universalism” to every *Jew*, not everybody. Crémieux was an ambitious colonizer.

Crémieux’s vision for Algeria may have succeeded legally; but it also may have caused further problems in segregating Jews from Muslims. Algerian demography was a central preoccupation for the colonial administration, and remained so from the nineteenth century until the end of French Algeria.⁵³ Attempts to understand the demography of Algeria are complicated by linguistic categorizations, legal statuses, and unspoken social norms. For residents of Algeria, living in a patchwork society was something they were used to: the Kabyle mountains, the Arab cemeteries, or the Jewish leather artisan shops. Each group had its own geography, its own place in Algerian society. Most residents of Algeria reduced the vast population differences to three groups: there were Europeans (which primarily referred to the Christians of Algeria, both European immigrants and French settlers), Muslims (including Arabs and Berbers), and Jews (who in fact encompassed a variety of cultures and traditions).⁵⁴

⁵² Crémieux stated before the French National Assembly: “I do not believe there is anyone in this assembly who loves France as I do.” (Bulletin de l’AIU, 1st quarter 1872, pp. 32 & 57)

⁵³ Kateb, p. xxii.

⁵⁴ Of course, this is not a truthful representation of Algeria. As Todd Shepard describes, there were several ethnicities, cultures, and religious variations in Algeria. The idea of “three communities” is a common theme from Jewish writers.

Patrick Weil has observed, “The Crémieux decree that brought about the collective naturalization of Jews might have led to a policy of access to ‘full nationality’ for the Muslims.”⁵⁵ But it did not. Muslims were systematically closed off from French citizenship, and the fact that Jews received citizenship made the hypocrisy of French Algeria so much more obvious. As we will document below, Europeans did not accept Jews as equals, and Jews did not accept Muslims as equals. French colonization had partitioned the Algerian population into three irreconcilable swaths: Europeans, Jews, and natives.

Even a republican administration could not bridge long-held racial views that accompanied Algeria’s rigid social hierarchies. All three groups fought against any kind of uniformity. Muslims debated whether to seek independence or assimilation; Europeans were divided among “ultras,” republicans, liberals, and communists; and, like the others, Jews abjured any kind of political consensus. Even though Jews had attained civic equality, they continued to suffer from the worst kinds of antisemitism, which took political, social, and often violent form.⁵⁶

Algerian Jews imagined that life in France was freer than Jewish life in their colony. A closer embrace of French mores and French philosophy, they thought, would liberate them from antisemitic harassments. Jean Cohen—a philosophy professor who protested the Algerian War—wrote in his memoir that “the Jews of Algeria engaged in a long series of successive assimilations...Only one was accepted,

⁵⁵ Weil page 211.

⁵⁶ C. Iancu, “Du Nouveau sur les troubles antijuifs en Algérie à la fin du XIXème Siècle,” in *Les relations entre Juifs et Musulmans en Afrique du Nord, xix-xx siècles*, Paris, Editions de CNRS, 1980.

desired, required, and that was French assimilation. It was total: exterior and interior, legal and psychological.”⁵⁷

Within a generation after the Crémieux Decree, the Jews of Algeria adopted what they considered to be characteristics of Frenchmen and women, and many of their specifically Jewish Maghrebi attributes faded. Even the French administration remarked on how quickly they had transformed.⁵⁸ By the 1920s, men had shed their headdresses and begun to wear European suits, and women began mimicking trends in French fashion.⁵⁹ French language became more than just the language of communication—it was intimately adopted, replacing Arabic and Hebrew in names as well as in religious customs. Traditional Judeo-Arabic names were translated into their French counterparts. For those born between 1920 and 1945, the most common names were Blanche, Fortunée, Flore, or Violette, and André, Daniel, Georges, or Victor.⁶⁰ (In contrast, Mozabite Jews from Algeria’s southern region, still had names that “sounded Arabic”—Youssef, Aïcha, Brahim, or Guerma.⁶¹) Jewish rituals were translated into French, reflecting *Catholic* rituals. For instance, B’rith Mila became, clumsily, circumcision (*circoncision*) or baptism (*baptême*). Synagogue was *temple*; Yom Kippur was *le Grand Pardon*; *matzahs* were *gallettes*.⁶² Bar

⁵⁷ Jean Cohen, *Chronique d’une Algérie Révolue: “Comme l’ombre et le vent,”* L’Harmattan: Paris, 1997. Page 10. « L’histoire des juifs d’Algérie fut une longue série d’assimilations successives. Toute furent subies. Une seule fut acceptée, voulue, exigée, et ce fut l’assimilation française. Elle fut totale, extérieure et intérieure, juridique et psychologique... »

⁵⁸ Abitbol, pp. 22–23.

⁵⁹ Trends in Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, pp. 25–27, and in Allouche and Bensimon, *Les Juifs d’Algérie: Memoires et identités Plurielles*.

⁶⁰ Ibid, and conference paper at Judaïsmes du Maghreb et France, June 28, 2010 about Moroccan Jewish names.

⁶¹ Quoted in Shepard page 246; Shepard discusses how those Jews had to change their names once they received French citizenship in 1963 and could move to the Métropole.

⁶² There is a chart comparing these in a humorous coffee table, but this information was based on anecdotes by bystanders and interviewees.

Mitzvah was Communion.⁶³ These same rituals, in the métropole, retained their Hebrew or Yiddish names.

Like Jewish communities who had been emancipated across Western Europe, Algerian Jewry was faced with a paradox: the positive reform that granted their dream also set in motion a pattern of racist hostility. As opposed to the Métropole, Algerian antisemitism was overt and sought to oust Jews from their citizenship. Some of the most infamous anti-Jewish tracts in France were written by Algerian ministers of state, such as Edouard Drumont's *La France Juive*. Once Jews officially received citizenship, the European population erupted in antisemitism, which reached a crisis in the 1890s.⁶⁴ Enthusiastic antisemites resided in all of Algeria's major cities, and racialized caricatures appeared in several different newspapers depicting Algerian Jews as Oriental or native-looking. Administrators and writers from the colonial élite enacted antisemitic policies and wrote antisemitic articles. Crowds from working-class *colon* districts joined in massive demonstrations and riots against Jews.

In the first civil government of Algeria in 1871, many people blamed new Jewish citizens for the riots that broke out against them. By the 1880s, Hannah Arendt wrote in 1943, "almost the entire Algerian press...took an anti-Jewish stand and fought against the Crémieux Decree."⁶⁵ Blatantly antisemitic organizations like the Radical Republican Anti-Jewish Committee (Comité républicain radical antijuif)

⁶³ Gil Ben Aych, "Les choses et les mots de Simon," in *C'était leur France*. P. 35

⁶⁴ See for instance Hannah Arendt, "Why the Crémieux Decree was abrogated," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1943. Vol VI, number 2. Pages 115–123. (published by the American Jewish Committee, New York, NY) and Abitbol, *Les Juifs d'Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*.

⁶⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Why the Crémieux Decree was abrogated," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1943. Vol VI, number 2. Pages 115–123.

or the Anti-Jewish League (Ligue antijuive) thrived in Algeria. In May 1898, elected deputies proposed eliminating the Crémieux Decree.⁶⁶

European crowds had shouted “Down with the Jews!” before and after political demonstrations from the late nineteenth century. Throngs of protestors called for “Death to the Jews!” as they also cried “Long live France!” Street riots erupted in June 1895, May 1897, and May 1904. Some Jews responded with “Down with the French!” and when they heard “Dirty Jews,” they defensively responded “Dirty French!”⁶⁷ Multiple generations endured these same epithets.⁶⁸ Memories lived on within families; Europeans adapted hideous stereotypes of Jews, and Jewish families defended themselves by embracing their own redeeming vision of France, at once to disprove the antisemitic stereotypes and to strive to make Algeria more closely resemble France. In this process, their very success also ended up justifying repression of Muslims, who suffered from both colonial racism and legal privations.

Several local histories tell the stories of antisemitic crises throughout Algeria during the Dreyfus Affair.⁶⁹ Some of the worst riots stemming from the Dreyfus Affair occurred in Algiers. During this period in France, Drumont’s popularity peaked in Algeria and riots broke out regularly.⁷⁰ The case, which convulsed France, lasted from 1898 through 1906 before Captain Dreyfus was finally exonerated. In Algeria, the colons were driven by the events to partake in anti-Jewish riots, albeit with a distinct local flavor. Scholars have debated the provenance of these

⁶⁶ Dermenjian page 111-112.

⁶⁷ Dermenjian page 111-112, 133.

⁶⁸ For instance, Chemouilli, *Diaspora Méconnue*, page 162. Interview with Sydney Chouraqui 2008.

⁶⁹ Dermenjian; Hebey, *Alger 1898*; Crises antijuif oranaises

⁷⁰ Ibid.

disorders. Some have argued that they were due to a rise in wine prices, while others blamed the credit crisis for causing them to erupt.⁷¹ However, the most convincing argument (made by scholars who analyzed the situation only after Vichy Algeria) holds that the anti-Jewish campaigns were endemic to Algerian society—that the colonizers insisted upon racial superiority.⁷²

Antisemitism also seemed to have a social function—it bonded together foreign Christians living in Algeria, themselves hardly “French,” with equally tenuous claims to the mainland. These settlers had only been naturalized in 1889. Antisemitism united the disparate cultures and economic classes of the various European settlers of Algeria. In 1898, Drumont declared within Algeria’s Chamber of Deputies: “Sons of France and sons of foreign nations are linked together as one. They are united and they all agree on a common feeling: their hatred of the Jew.”⁷³ Many bystanders, including the poet André Gide, discussed the birth of a new “European” race in the early 1900s, which amalgamated individuals who were French, Spanish, Maltese, and Italian, while excluding Jews and Muslims.⁷⁴ French citizenship alone could not unify such a diverse population, many of whom did not speak French as their first language. They contrasted themselves with Jews. One

⁷¹ Cited by Sivan page 175. Gautier and Martin made the wine argument, while Agéron and Isnard made the credit argument.

⁷² This can be seen clearly in Jonathan Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria: 1930–1954 “Algérianté: The Emergence of a Colonial Identity,”* New York, Routledge, 2002. David Prochaska, “History as Literature, Literature as History: Cagayous of Algiers.” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (Jun., 1996), pp. 670-711, Chouraqui, Ansky, Sivan, Abitbol. Etc.

⁷³ Quoted in Abitbol, *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*, p. 25. “Tous fils de Français et fils d’étrangers, se sont fondus ensemble; ils sont unis entre eux et ils fraternisent dans un sentiment commun: la haine du Juif.

⁷⁴ David Prochaska, “History as Literature, Literature as History: Cagayous of Algiers,” page 675, 675n.

scholar distilled the anti-Jewish stereotype to five traits: Jews were savage, impoverished, squalid, manipulative, and lascivious.⁷⁵

According to former Algiers resident Gabriel Conesa, the enactment of the *Christ Passion* was a much-celebrated annual tradition in his neighborhood of Bab el Oued.⁷⁶ During the performance, the audience would rhythmically stomp their feet and shout “Down with the Jews! Down with the Jews!”⁷⁷ Europeans bonded around their common religion—Christianity—just as they had fabricated a “new race” that excluded Jews and Muslims.

Jews responded in a number of ways: some rejected France; some attempted to demonstrate that they could assimilate into European lifestyles; some attempted to show their superiority over Muslims; some ran for office; some joined the Communist Party.

For many, the Great War emerged as an opportunity to show how French they were. If there had remained any doubt with regard to their legitimacy as French citizens, World War I was the moment when young men demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice everything for France. Algerian Jewish wartime losses were reported at 2,850, or 12 percent of Algerian losses.⁷⁸ Jean Daniel, who grew up in Algeria and moved to France to found *Nouvel Observateur*, recollected that each Jewish family he knew had lost at least one son in that war.⁷⁹ Subsequent generations continued to celebrate their ancestors’ participation in the war despite

⁷⁵ Sivan, “Stéréotypes antijuifs dans la mentalité pied noir,” 161-166.

⁷⁶ On the *Passion* tradition, Harrison, page 87; on Bab el Oued, see Prochaska page 682.

⁷⁷ quoted in Harrison, page 87.

⁷⁸ “Hommage à Adolphe Crémieux,” by Raymond Bénichou, *Information Juive*, #68, July 1955; Doris Bensimon, page 272.

⁷⁹ *C’était Leur France*, Jean Daniel, p. 107.

these casualties, unlike Algerian Muslims, for instance, who later resented their conscription.⁸⁰ Jews of Algeria defended France during the war, adding to the allure that France was a prize worth the sacrifice that each family had made. Yet Algerian society still considered Jews inferior “indigènes.”⁸¹

The Algerian-Jewish novelist, Albert Bensoussan, wrote about his father, who survived the war. For him, France was God-like. His father brought home a “hideous scar on his left bicep.” The scar, his father explained, was like a second circumcision. Just as Abraham had inscribed his covenant with God by removing the foreskin of his penis, France had inscribed its sacrament onto his body, by taking a chunk of healthy flesh from his arm.⁸² More than any other single force, serving in the Great War galvanized a collective love for France. Those Jewish families who had lost fathers, uncles, or brothers later mythologized their losses. Theirs was a dual memory, at once represented by angry antisemitic chants and their prideful participation in World War I. Taken together, these two opposing faces of France—sacrifice and exclusion—shaped Algerian-Jewish culture into the twentieth century.

Vichy—A Generation’s Trauma: Liberation without Restoration

Given the beleaguered status of Algeria’s Jews, Vichy-era antisemitism found fruitful soil there. They were the first Jewish victims of Vichy legislation, losing their citizenship on October 7, 1940, when the Crémieux Decree was officially

⁸⁰ On the Muslims’ resentment, see film *Les Indigènes*, or *Days of Glory*, 2006, directed by Rachid Bouchareb.

⁸¹ On the discussion of the meaning of “Algerian” see Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria: 1930–1954* “Algérianté: The Emergence of a Colonial Identity.” About Jews, he wrote, “Similarly [to Muslims], Jews are excluded from the Algerian social category and relegated to the ranks of indigenous Algerians [in a 1930 novel].” Page 190.

⁸² Albert Bensoussan, *C’était Leur France*, Sebbar, ed. p. 49.

overturned.⁸³ On that day, the law instantaneously expelled children from French schools, and took adults from their jobs as lawyers, government officials, landlords, soldiers, and even ticket collectors at movie theaters.⁸⁴ Despite the universal inclusion that French citizenship had promised, Europeans effectively excluded the Jews of Algeria from society at large. Moreover, the Vichy government denaturalized Algerian Jews in one single law, whereas on the mainland, the administration effected Jewish denaturalization in increments, meeting regularly in the early 1940s to mark individual groups for denaturalization.⁸⁵ Moreover, denaturalization in the metropole was not routine.

Many of Algeria's Europeans rejoiced, believing that the Decree never should have been passed in the first place. Some had long considered the Jews to be part of the indigenous population, undifferentiated from Muslims. Now the new law of Vichy Algeria supported their beliefs.

⁸³ Historiography on Vichy Algeria includes Abitbol and Jaques Cantier, *L'Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2002,

⁸⁴ The Jewish philosopher Raymond Bénichou compared the reversal of the Crémieux Decree to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685—which had granted tolerance to France's Protestants a century earlier. ("Hommage à Adolphe Crémieux," by Raymond Bénichou, *Informaiton Juive*, #68, July 1955.)

⁸⁵ P. Weil, pp. 103ff.

For example, on the front page of the Algerian settler newspaper *Le Pionnier*, on October 11, 1940, a headline proclaimed, “At last, we repealed it!”⁸⁶



A headline proclaims, “At last we repealed it!” referring to the Crémieux Decree. 11 October 1940.

On the next page, the paper published a disturbing drawing of a Jew and a Muslim, each equally hideous, stereotyped to look remarkably similar. Only racialized features indicate that the man on the right is Jewish; no external signs (such as a Star of David or a Kippah) point to his Jewish identity. The Jewish man is exclaiming to the Muslim: “And so, Maksub, now we will have our own status, too!”⁸⁷ The paper was reminding its readers that personal status was a euphemism for deprivation, not something that anyone would desire. The Jewish and Muslim caricatures were portrayed as equally foolish for accepting the substitution. While in the nineteenth century, “personal status” implied communal authority over

⁸⁶ *Le Pionnier*, n. 5, 11 Oct. 1940. From the AIU Fonds Lazarus.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

certain matters, by 1940, the concept was meaningless except as a symbol of subjugation.



Another page of the same paper featured this cartoon, “And so Maksub, we now have our own status too!”

The repeal of the Crémieux Decree devastated Algerian Jews. A Jewish-Algerian child in the 1940s, Colette Ziza-Horvilleur remembered her parents’ strong reaction after she came home early from school on October 11, 1940. Her mother brought her back the next morning, explaining to the principal that Colette’s three uncles had been killed in the First World War, and therefore they had the respected status of veterans. The woman’s efforts were in vain. In a memoir, the author described her parents’ desperation:

Their immense love for their *patrie*—as much as for their child—was gravely offended. My father, who always stood at attention during the *Marseillaise*, stayed seated, weighed down by grief.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Colette Ziza-Horvilleur, “Une Fille d’Alger” in *D’un Temps révolu: Voix Juives d’Algérie*. Jacqueline Sudaka-Bénazéraf, ed. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007, pp. 77ff.

Her mother denied the full implications of their loss of citizenship, insisting that the family was still French. She had always considered Algeria to be fully a part of France—it was painful to even acknowledge her dispossessed status.⁸⁹ Another woman remembered her absolute shock as a child in 1940, when her French citizenship was revoked. Her mother, who had been a schoolteacher, was sent home from school, traumatized. She suffered a miscarriage six months into her pregnancy, which her daughter attributed to the traumatic experience.⁹⁰

Other individuals attempted to use the Vichy Regime’s own racial categories in order to ask for an exemption. A man known only as Mr. Bacrie submitted a letter to the general government on behalf of his son in August 1942. “Mr. Bacrie, a Jew,” he wrote, “seeks to maintain his son in the French high school. His son has two Jewish grandparents, and two non-Jewish grandparents.”⁹¹ The Vichy Government replied two weeks later that “the young Bacrie shall be considered Jewish,” and therefore he would not be permitted to go to the French *lycée*.⁹²

All Jewish high school students were summarily dismissed on the first day of school. Numerous memoirs recount these painful dismissals in which students either switched schools or remained absent. Myriam Ben—who later became an active Communist and FLN militant—described a moment when, at age 14, she studied her new identity card, which read “Native Jew” (“Juive-Indigène”).⁹³ The entire Algerian-Jewish generation of that era shared the experience of this painful

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Interview conducted by authors of *Identités Plurielles*, page 288.

⁹¹ CAOM Archives, Prefecture de Police Constantine, 3G-29.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Myriam Ben, *Quand les cartes sont truquées* (mémoires) page 28?

dismissal. In his essay “Circonfession,” Jacques Derrida (who eventually aligned with Algerian nationalism) famously recollected being thrown out of his French high school in Algiers in 1942.⁹⁴ He described his bewilderment. It was a trauma that activists and intellectuals described as they discussed their later political affiliations. In response, Jewish community leaders created a network of their own schools across Algeria. Archives from the Constantine police department hold hundreds of applications for Jewish teachers, because so many had lost their jobs as a result of the 1940 Statut des Juifs.⁹⁵

As newly designated natives, their story went beyond the personal-emotional trajectories about school dismissals. It also carried a diminished legal status that affected people’s livelihoods, education, and careers. Hundreds of Jewish war veterans, who were also supporters of Marshall Pétain, submitted pleas to the Vichy government, asking for reconsideration. The Vichy government reviewed the applications, listing “rejected” beside each name.

⁹⁴ Bennington and Jacques Derrida, “Circonfession” in *Jacques Derrida Circonfession*, University of Chicago Press, page 58. Hélène Cixous, “L’Affrance,” in *C’était Leur France*, p. 96.

⁹⁵ CAOM Archives, Prefecture de Police, 1940–1942, 3G-29.

SEANCE DU 9 OCTOBRE 1941

RAPporteur: MONSIEUR Michel

X I40/	KORCHIA Eliaou	Rejet	à réserve modif. art. 4
X I41/	BOUBI Jouda		d°
I42/	KEAS Albert	Rejet	
I43/	LAIK Henri	Rejet	
X I44/	LASKAR Yaya	Rejet	à réserve modif. art. 4.
X I45/	ISVI Joseph		d°
X I46/	MEITONIA Israel		d°
I47/	NIARA Nehama	Rejet	
X I48/	BOUCHNINO Jehouda	Rejet	à réserve art. 4
I49/	PACIFICO Marthin	Rejet	
I50/	PARTINER David	Rejet	
X I51/	REBBOAH Abraham	Rejet	à réserve art. 4
X I52/	SADONI Jacob		d°
X I53/	SARDIN Joseph		d°
I54/	SAYAG Ernest	Rejet	
I55/	SILDA Mimoun	Rejet	
X I56/	SAYAG Mimoun	Rejet	à réserve art. 4
I57/	SKWADJE David	Rejet	
X I58/	SIDONI Nessim	Rejet	à réserve art. 4
I59/	SKINAZI Juda		{ Parents cette famille Titres de guerre - Invalides très favorables

The above document from October 1941 lists Jewish war veterans, who requested to retain their French citizenship after they lost it in 1940. A bureaucrat wrote “rejected” after each name.

In contrast to the anxiety experienced by other Jews, Daniel Timsit, a Jewish man who eventually became a bomb maker for the FLN, recalled losing his citizenship with nonchalance. Moreover, he *blamed* the Crémieux Decree for having maintained any segregation in Algeria. In his opinion, Jews never should have become French, and the French government never should have conquered Algeria. His father summarized their Muslim friends’ reaction after the Decree’s abolition: “Alright, it’s done. We’re the same once again. You are like us. You have once again

become like we are.”⁹⁶ This Jewish-Muslim conversation bears an uncomfortable and uncanny resemblance to the stereotyped cartoon above, but Timsit remembered it as a sincere statement of solidarity. For him, Algerian Jews belonged among the indigenous; he claimed he was happy to see Jews once again reunited with Muslims. The Timsit family had made the political choice to focus on the similarities between Jewish and Muslim traditions and languages. These expressions of Arab-Jewish solidarity increased in the postwar period, when some Jews realized that the French government had been manipulative.

Beginning on November 21, 1941, the Vichy government of Algeria authorized an “Aryanization” of Jewish goods, which meant that Jewish business owners lost their possessions to the Vichy State. The office of Aryanization received 6,000 requests to Aryanize—all of them from Europeans (Muslims were neither administrators nor citizens.)⁹⁷ This policy was akin to the land-grab when settlers encroached on Muslim holdings as they colonized Algeria. The Vichy administration kept elaborate records of Jewish individuals, careful to note those who owned property. For instance, a widow, “Madame Parodi,” appealed directly to Xavier Vallat, the French General Commissioner for Jewish Questions, to remove a pair of Jewish landlords who had recently raised her rent. She implored, “I am writing to you, sir, hoping that you will respect a Frenchwoman, that you will not allow some Jews to throw me out on the street.”⁹⁸ The administration paid careful attention to

⁹⁶ Timsit, p. 14. « Bon, ça y est, nous sommes redevenus semblables. Vous êtes comme nous. Vous êtes redevenus comme nous.”

⁹⁷ Bensimon p. 286.

⁹⁸ CAOM, 3G, PARODI, “Je m’adresse à vous Monsieur espérant que vous ferez respecter une française, que vous ne permettrez pas à des juifs de mettre à la rue.”

her note, seeking out the names, addresses, and occupations of these “individuals of the Jewish race.”⁹⁹ However, in this case, Parodi was not successful in her attempt to confiscate Jewish property.

When the Allies liberated Algeria in late 1942, it became the headquarters of the Free French Forces. American and British forces landed on 8 November 1942 in Operation Torch aided by the clandestine efforts of young Algerian Jews.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, eager Jewish recruits were not permitted to join General De Gaulle’s Free French Army, since they were no longer citizens. De Gaulle’s officials explained that they could not risk supporting Jewish war veterans, who might seek benefits once the war ended. They wanted to avoid committing themselves on the issue of Jewish status after the war.¹⁰¹

From exile earlier in 1942, De Gaulle announced that he would overturn all of Vichy’s laws in “Free France.”¹⁰² He assigned General Henri Giraud as high commissioner of North Africa, hoping that he might unify the different strands of the French resistance, who were stationed in Algeria. On March 14, 1943, Giraud officially condemned all Vichy laws there, including the Crémieux Decree. However, the same day that the Crémieux Decree was reinstated, Giraud once again repealed it.¹⁰³ He justified his act by asserting: “In the spirit of eliminating racial

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gitta Amipaz-Silber, *The Role of the Jewish Underground in the American Landing in Algiers 1940-1942*. Gefen, Jerusalem: 1992,

¹⁰¹ Discussed in Stora, *Trois Exiles*, p. 96.

¹⁰² Renée Poznanski, “French Apprehensions, Jewish Expectations: From a social Imaginary to a political Practice,” pp. 34 [25-57] and Patrick Weil, “The Return of Jews in the Nationality or in the Territory of France (1943-73), pp. 58-72, in *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origins After WWII* edited by David Bankier (Bergahn, 2005),

¹⁰³ Renée Poznanski, “French Apprehensions, Jewish Expectations: From a social Imaginary to a

discrimination, the Crémieux Decree, which in 1870 had set up a difference between native Muslims and Jews, has been repealed.”¹⁰⁴ Giraud invoked Muslim equality in order to keep the Jews in their status as *indigènes*. Some saw this as an attempt to enlist Muslims in a campaign to keep Jews in their reduced status. But Muslim leaders recognized Giraud’s strategy as a ploy to drive a wedge between the two communities. Many hypothesized that he was attempting to provoke Muslims, in order to turn them against Jews, in a hope that Muslim leaders would also campaign to keep Jews in the status.¹⁰⁵ Some Muslim leaders, however, understood that Giraud’s strategy was intended to manipulate the two populations, driving them apart. Fehrat Abbas—the Algerian nationalist leader—wrote in 1943: “We are not opposed to the Jews’ efforts to recuperate their rights as French citizens.... We do not want equality by lowering their status to meet ours.”¹⁰⁶ A Muslim lawyer, Ali Boumendjel, also wrote a letter declaring that he had absolutely no objection to the restitution of Jewish rights.¹⁰⁷

In her April 1943 *Jewish Chronicle* article, Hannah Arendt blamed the situation on the European settlers’ historic animosity toward the Jews, citing their consistent need to degrade Jewish Algerians as an inferior race, unworthy of fully

political Practice,” *The Jews are coming back*, pp. 34 [25-57]

¹⁰⁴ Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, “French Jewry Under Occupation,” in *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 47, p. 112.

(Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945–1946.)

¹⁰⁵ As with the Constantine Pogrom in 1934, Many Jewish thinkers argued that antisemites tried to turn Muslims on Jews, as we will see in chapter 2.

¹⁰⁶ Stora, *Trois Exiles* 97. “Nous ne nous opposons pas aux démarches des Juifs pour récupérer leurs droits de citoyens français....Nous ne voulons pas d’égalité par le bas.”

¹⁰⁷ Raymond Bénichou, “Hommage à Adolphe Crémieux,” *Information Juive*, #68, July 1955. Several years later, in the throes of the Algerian War for independence, Muslim activists asked Jews to voluntarily abandon their French citizenship in the Soummam Appeal. This reversal is the subject of subsequent chapters: 3, 4, 5, and 6.

belonging to the French nation.¹⁰⁸ She evoked memories of the violent protests against the Crémieux Decree. Writing during World War II, Arendt still had faith in the redemptive power of French Republicanism. She declared that the colons were more conservative and racist than Frenchmen from the mainland. She asserted that Giraud and his staff had manipulated the French government into maintaining Algeria's Jews as indigenous subjects, rather than citizens. She wrote:

The French colonials... took advantage of France's defeat and of their freedom from the control of the mother country in order to introduce into Algeria a measure which they would never have been able to obtain through legal channels.¹⁰⁹

Because the French republic was weak and under occupation, Arendt surmised, racism flourished in Algeria. She argued that Algeria's political and social structure, not to mention the way in which the Jews received citizenship, made it a susceptible breeding ground for anti-Jewish demonstrations. Years later, she would learn that mainland France was far from innocent.

Arendt composed her analysis at a time when it was still unclear whether the Jews of Algeria would regain their citizenship—a tenuous condition when Jews technically lived in liberated France, but still were not French. Their citizenship was eventually restored six months later when De Gaulle's French National Liberation committee declared that the Crémieux Decree would "remain in force."¹¹⁰ The Jews of Algeria lionized De Gaulle, their true hero, preferring his concept of the "people's France" to Giraud's French nation, which was still tainted with Vichy's racism. Had

¹⁰⁸ Hannah Arendt, "Why the Crémieux Decree was abrogated," *Contemporary Jewish Record* April 1943. Vol VI, number 2. Pages 115–123. (published by the American Jewish Committee, New York).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹¹⁰ Kaplan, *AJYB*, page 112.

Giraud prevailed, the Algerian Jews' French citizenship might not have been restored.

Although the time between the fall of Vichy and De Gaulle's reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree was relatively brief, it was long enough to take a significant psychological toll on a generation of Algerian Jews. They had been abandoned, not just by a single administration, but by two: Vichy France and liberated France. This double betrayal affected the way Algerian Jews experienced both the 1940s and, later, the Algerian War. A considerable majority of Algerian Jews felt the fragility of their citizenship and of the Crémieux Decree itself. Their reaction to the betrayal they had experienced was to cling to France, hiding any trace of difference. They decided that their best option was to defend France and insist on the validity of their belonging.

Postwar Plans

After World War II, Nahum Goldmann, the founder of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), shifted some of his organization's focus from post-Holocaust Europe to North African Jewry. The WJC provided funding to revitalize an advocacy group strictly for Algerian Jews called The Jewish-Algerian Committee of Social Studies (CJAES). The group had been founded in 1915 in order to defend the rights of Algerian Jews against European antisemitism. With the resurgence of fascist antisemitism in the 1930s, a group of intellectuals came together to revive the CJAES in February 1937.¹¹¹ Its members adopted the position that "silence was neither

¹¹¹ Benjamin Stora called it an Algerian CRIF, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 141.

wise nor courageous.” They also vowed to forge closer ties with Muslims, while actively defending themselves against anti-Jewish broadsides from Europeans.¹¹² Many of the members who became powerful leaders during the Algerian War were already actively fighting for a reestablishment of Jewish rights during the Vichy period.¹¹³ Forced to disband during the war, the group officially reorganized in 1948. The organization’s anti-fascist roots shaped its activities in the postwar period and into the Algerian War.

In 1948, Goldmann appointed Jacques Lazarus, a French Alsatian Jew, as the North African liaison to the World Jewish Congress. Lazarus became the public face of the Algerian Jewish “community,” and he founded the *Information Juive* newspaper. Lazarus’s family had embraced a tradition of French republicanism. His parents had fled the Prussian-annexed Alsace during World War I. Lazarus was born in Switzerland in 1916, but his family moved back to Alsace after the war, when the region once again fell under French jurisdiction. A career soldier throughout the 1930s, Lazarus was expelled from the French Army in 1941 by the Statut des Juifs. He then became a leader in the Jewish Resistance army.

Lazarus’s resolute Jewish identity and faith in Algeria’s possibilities must be understood in light of his role in the World War II resistance. While working for the Resistance in mainland France, he was arrested and detained in the French concentration camp of Drancy. There, he shared a cell with others, “whose only

¹¹² Gitta Amipaz-Silber, *The Role of the Jewish Underground in the American Landing in Algiers 1940-1942*. Gefen, Jerusalem: 1992, p. 26.

¹¹³ For instance, letters from André Narboni (1942) and Elie Gozlan (Jan 1942) were found in the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine.

crime,” he wrote, “was to have been born Jewish.”¹¹⁴ In 1942, he was deported on a train toward Auschwitz. With a group of other fighters, he jumped from the moving train. Lazarus’s wartime activism and his family’s background led him to believe in the French republic as a mediating force that could reconcile Algeria’s diverse communities and ethnicities. His dual commitment to both French and Jewish values translated into a position in which he embraced the legitimacy of Algerian Jews’ French identity. He also saw in them the potential for reinvigorating the French-Jewish population. His work on behalf of the community conveyed his love for France, his adherence to the idea of individual liberty, and his civic pride. It also translated into a colonialist stance during the Franco-Algerian War.

Many years later, Lazarus chronicled the story of the young Algerian Jewish resisters who helped the Allied forces in Operation Torch in November 1942. He described “young Jewish Algerians, [who] took up arms as patriots, as Frenchmen and Frenchwomen,” despite the fact that their “national dignity [had been] stolen from them when the Crémieux Decree was repealed.”¹¹⁵ It had been Lazarus’s goal to redeem the “national dignity” of Jews in Algeria. He connected Jewish dignity explicitly to French citizenship. This perspective set the course for his relationship with Algerian Jewry throughout the Algerian War and after the Jews repatriated to France in 1962.

When Lazarus arrived in Algeria as World Jewish Congress liaison, he

¹¹⁴ J. Lazarus, *Juifs au Combat: Témoignage sur l’activité d’un mouvement de résistance*. Paris: Éditions du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1947. p. 183.

¹¹⁵ J. Lazarus, “Notre Résistance Juive,” *L’Arche* 535, September 2002. (“Juifs, se voulant tels, ils prirent les armes en tant que patriots, Français bafoués dans leur dignité de nationaux par l’abrogation du décret Crémieux.”)

became a leader in a revived CJAES that strove not only to respond to antisemitism but to appropriate the strength that Algeria's Jews had shown in the Resistance in the service of Jewish renewal. For Lazarus, Algeria was an ideal place to start.

As Henri Chemouilli observed, "Lazarus was not an Algerian Jew, he was a French Jew...He had never lived an 'Arab' life." For this reason, Lazarus frequently misunderstood the nuances of Algerian history and society; he took seriously republican statements and was unashamed to proclaim that the Jews of Algeria were loyal to France, even if that meant offending Muslim nationalists.

How they looked from the Mainland: Perceptions of community

For leaders like Lazarus, Algeria's Jewish community symbolized a more clearly defined, more pious, and more innocent past. It appeared religious, cohesive, and possessive of its own unique Jewish traditions. These notions of "pure" Judaism, however, were inherently flawed. Segregation in Algeria did not in itself produce a profound Jewish cohesion; it was a product of generations of European antisemitism. On the mainland, prejudice from the authorities stemmed not from race or ethnicity, but from colonial status.¹¹⁶ In Algeria, however, authorities openly discussed ethnic differences among groups of Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Lazarus was not alone in idealizing the Algerian-Jewish experience. In contrast to Algeria, French-Jewish communities were plagued by political problems and communal difficulties. Jewish innovators saw the Algerian model as a solution to this European dilemma. One observer described a complete loss of vitality in

¹¹⁶ Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, page 119.

French Jewish life in 1953—citing conversions, intermarriage, and antisemitic reactions to the policies of France’s Jewish Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France’s policies. A Parisian leader of a Jewish group swooned:

Oh those beautiful North African Jews! So picturesque, so dear to our hearts! So authentic, so attached to beautiful traditions....This new blood [would be] such a vast reservoir for French Jews.¹¹⁷

Two main factors drove French-Jewish leaders to romanticize Algerian Jews in the immediate postwar period. First, Algeria symbolized the Resistance movement, the birthplace of Free France before mainland France was liberated. Secondly, Algeria was still segregated and “Oriental” enough to sustain a distinct Jewish community. The existence of three discrete ethnic “communities” (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) appealed to French Jews who had lost hope in the Republican vision after World War II. Parisian Jewish leaders felt stifled in any expression of Judaism.

Weakened by the war, French Jews who lived on the mainland projected their hope for renewal onto Algerian Jews. Algeria represented a new, post-Liberation hope for their community, a tribal model for how Jews should behave. French Jewish leaders valued ancient ideas of a Jewish community or “tribe,” uncoupled from race. Their difficult experiences under Nazi occupation led them to yearn for something new, and Jewish leaders idealized the communities of North Africa. Algeria, specifically, represented an asylum from the horrors of Europe. Small groups of European Jews—Communists and other resisters—had fled from France to Algeria in the 1940s, creating a base for Jewish resistance.

¹¹⁷ Albert Memmi, “Une Tragédie si quotidienne...” in *Arche* no. 61, February 1962, pp. 18-23, page 19.

Throughout postwar Europe, sociologists saw a Jewish “demographic crisis.”¹¹⁸ Jewish sociologists fretted over the way that people who were born Jewish might deny their background when asked directly. While some Jews longed for more defined communities, they also were afraid to answer open questions about their religion. Sociologists wondered how they might inspire Jews to act openly communal, but it was troubling to even ask people how they described their Judaism.

Nazism had killed, “qualitatively as well as quantitatively.”¹¹⁹ There was no new potential for the Jewish population to expand, as French-Jewish communities had grown through emigration from Eastern Europe in the interwar period, and 80 percent of that influx had been deported.¹²⁰ The irony of romanticizing these 1930s refugees, the majority of whom had been turned over to the authorities by French citizens, was somehow lost on these writers, who were now ten years later looking ahead. In addition—and perhaps more alarmingly, for some Jewish leaders—much of the Jewish population was atheist, or at least completely secularized. There didn’t seem to be any way to replace those who had perished, let alone those who neglected their Judaism. One contemporary described the problem in quite blunt terms: “The historic ‘refreshing’ of community numbers by immigration from East

¹¹⁸ There are many examples of this, but it was articulated only later, in 1962. For instance, *La Vie juive dans l'Europe contemporaine: Jewish life in contemporary Europe; actes du Colloque tenu à l'Institut de Sociologie de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles du 19 au 21 septembre 1962. Papers and proceedings of a conference held at l'Institut de sociologie de l'Université libre de Bruxelles on 19th-21st September 1962.* [Bruxelles]: Institut de sociologie de l'Université libre de Bruxelles.

¹¹⁹ *AJYB* 1952, vol. 53, « France », p. 281.

¹²⁰ Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Europe had become impossible, at least for the now, and there is no new blood to take the place of those lost through intermarriage and assimilation.”¹²¹

In France, intimidated Jews stayed silent, while Algerian Judaism appeared to be thriving—with Lazarus’s newspaper in wide circulation and schools and community centers under construction. The population of Jews in Algeria, which had been proportionately far greater than the population in France even before the war, appeared to be thriving afterward at estimated 140,000, or about 14 percent of the French “European” population of Algeria, and 1.7% of Algeria’s total population. The postwar population of France was 300,000, less than .7% of France’s population.¹²²

Jewish leaders began to look toward immigration from North Africa as a way to “refresh” the Jewish population, both spiritually and physically. The dream came true a few years later when a new North African synagogue opened in Paris on July 24, 1954, although at that time the majority of immigrants came from Morocco or Tunisia. The synagogue’s rabbi gave his sermon in Arabic, urging North African Jews to organize in France into active communities.¹²³ The Grand Rabbi encouraged the French community to visit the synagogue and see how lively and strong its members were.

On the world stage as in France, North Africa represented a promise for a sort of Jewish renewal. In the aftermath of the genocide that had eradicated most of Eastern European Jewry a decade earlier, another French-Jewish writer observed,

¹²¹ *AJYB* 1952, vol. 53, « France », p. 281.

¹²² “World Jewish Population,” in *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1955, vol #56, page 221-222.

¹²³ André Chouraqui, *AJYB* 1955, pages 426–435.

North African Jews now represented one of the densest Diaspora population in the world.¹²⁴ Following the United States and Soviet Union, North Africa contained the third largest Jewish population, and so it was only natural that European Jews would look to them as biological carriers of the next generation.¹²⁵ They were also held up as cultural icons for how to celebrate Jewish rituals. The so-called “dejudaisation” of Algerian Jewry since they began to embrace French mores was particularly troubling to these world leaders, who counted on North African Judaism to pick up where Eastern European Judaism had left off.

Upon visiting Oran, Algeria, in early 1955, Wladimir Rabi, the liberal French-Jewish writer, was leaving a lecture hall where he had given a talk, he encountered a group of young men from Sidi-bel-Abbès. In a private note to Lazarus, he wrote, “They were warm, spoke to me about my lecture, then asked me to come to their town to speak about the Kabbalah. They were proud Jews, the kind you only find rarely anymore.”¹²⁶ These young men seemed anachronistic in the modern world—he had thought that this kind of “proud” Jew had long since disappeared.

André Narboni, an Algerian-Jewish lawyer and leading member of the CJAES, directly juxtaposed French and Algerian Jews: “Even though Europe’s Jews [...] are weak, and Europe has lost its Jewish masses, here in Algeria [...], we live in contact with a lively, warm, numerous Jewish population.”¹²⁷ For one former French

¹²⁴ W. Rabi, “Destin des Juifs en Afrique du Nord,” in *Esprit* 708, July-August 1956, p. 152. “pour le monde juif, elle est importante parce qu’elle constitue le groupement de population le plus dense en Dispersion...”

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Letter Rabi to Lazarus, May 9, 1955. (Lazarus Dossiers)

¹²⁷ Lazarus Dossier I, Narboni’s Speech to the World Zionist Org about Algerian/N. Afr Zionism, Sometime after May 1958. « Chers amis, si le judaïsme d’Europe, à l’exception de quelques Grands Pays, s’est affaibli et a perdu ses masses Juives, nous vivons, en Algerie et en Afr du Nord, au contact

solider, Algerian Jewry was an inspiration. When he arrived in Algiers in 1954, he walked into a synagogue, where he was surprised to see all the women with their children playing, men discussing business, and everybody knew the prayers. “In Algeria, everybody, everybody, everybody was religious!” He went on, “Here in Paris, Judaism was decaying and nobody knew the prayers. There, there was still something.”¹²⁸ Like Lazarus, this man also remained in Algeria and married a Jewish North African woman.

Several global Jewish organizations donated their funds to North African Jewish communities. Motivated to inspire French Jewry, leaders from the World Jewish Congress, the CRIF, the Fonds Sociaux Juifs Unifié (FSJU), and the Alliance Israélite began new publications, new institutions, and new schools, some emphasizing Jewish culture rather than Judaism. They yearned to start a movement that could work outside the consistory, which was a strictly religious institution, and had fallen into disregard.¹²⁹ Like other Jews from France, Lazarus saw a certain freedom in Algeria’s possibilities. “The war and its infinite miseries, its nonstop sufferings endured by Jews of Europe, seem to have only left superficial traces in Algeria,” he wrote in 1948.¹³⁰

In 1955, a new lending library opened in Algiers, and in the following years, new Jewish Cultural centers opened in several Algerian Cities. A new rabbinical school was finished in 1960. To French-Jewish leaders, it was as if the concept of an

d’un Judaïsme vivant, chaleureux, nombreux, prêt à recevoir notre parole, à nous aider et à rejoindre nos rangs. »

¹²⁸ Interview conducted by the author, August 15, 2008.

¹²⁹ Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide*, 162–164.

¹³⁰ J. Lazarus, “Retour de Tunisie.” *Information Juive* 2, 15 November 1948. Page 1. “La guerre et ses misères sans nombre, son cortège de souffrances endurés par les Juifs d’Europe semblait n’avoir laissé en Algérie que traces superficielles.”

authentic Jewish community had never been destroyed in Algeria. Ethnic divisions were still intact, and some metropolitans thought that these divisions brought the Jews closer to one another as a result. Beginning with Crémieux, Jewish leaders had been “civilizing” Algerian Jews; now, they were turning to them for help. Although the mainland Jews saw new hope for an untapped community in Algerian Jews, the latter, ironically, identified as simply French.

Algerian Jews: An Unconditional Love of France

*“Among Algerian Jews, there is an unconditional love of France. Why? Because outside the metropolis, France... represents a certain meaning and direction of history. France represents the guarantee of certain fundamental values, and the promise of robust hope.”*¹³¹

—Wladimir Rabi, July 1956

An overarching argument of this dissertation is that Algerian Jews were not integrated into the large, European settler population until quite late. They were not born, but “became” *pieds noirs*. They were still considered “indigenous” until the 1930s, in spite of their legal status as French citizens. The Crémieux decree had brought civil equality, and Jews changed dramatically as a result. However, Algerian *society* remained segregated into three racial-religious categories: Europeans, “Indigènes”, and Jews. For that reason, the Crémieux decree was fragile—and Algerian Jews’ French citizenship remained so as well. Since the decree’s overturning in 1940—the first new law enacted by the Vichy government—Jews (as a community, as a generation) simply did not recover from the trauma of losing French citizenship.

¹³¹ W. Rabi, “Destin des Juifs en Afrique du Nord,” in *Esprit*, July–August 1956 (152–161), p. 158.

For Jewish residents of Algeria, France in some ways was an imagined blank slate, onto which they could project idealized visions. Crémieux's law distinguished who would be "assimilable" from who would not be.¹³² Daniel Timsit described growing up in "an implicit segregation" of the three communities.¹³³ When chronicling the development of colonial Algeria around the turn of the twentieth century, the late Algerian-Jewish sociologist André Chouraqui wrote despairingly, "Political passions turned the existing religious and ethnic differences between Europeans, Muslims, and Jews into intense segregation, whereas with time and good will these might so easily have been bridged by understanding."¹³⁴

While extremist Europeans, who were known colloquially as "ultras" during the Algerian War, supported a racist form of French nationalism, postwar liberals continued to imagine what Algeria could become; they often celebrated Algeria as a place where the French republic could thrive, in a multicultural, fraternal fashion. In their vision, France could morph into a truly democratic republic, which was at a remove from the nastier forms of "France" that they encountered through the Europeans. The European settlers in Algeria, including the colonial administration, represented one aspect of France, an uglier side that had violently protested Jewish

¹³² Patrick Weil, *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making Since 1789*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Paris: Gallimard, 2005; Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. Page 53.

"The correlation between socialization and nationality was not exempt from ethnic considerations, however; witness the fact that the law, owing to the influence of reps from the colonies, was applied to Algeria, a French territory, only to people who were foreigners in the strict sense, i.e., Europeans; entry into full nationality remained virtually closed to Muslim natives of Algeria, who were French subjects. the law thus confirmed, in Algeria, a distinction between those who were 'assimilable' and those who were not." (53)

¹³³ Daniel Timist, *Algérie: Récit Anachronique*, p. 13

¹³⁴ André Chouraqui, *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*. Trans. Michael M. Bernet. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968, page 152.

citizenship throughout the decades of French Algeria.¹³⁵ But for Algerian Jews, an ethereal, ultra-democratic vision of France persisted. Even as the actual French Algeria—dominated by colons—essentially blocked social progress for Jews, “their France” lay beyond the Mediterranean, laden with possibilities.

Numerous testimonials insisted upon French superiority, French beauty, and, plainly, the absolute truth of French identity. To reconcile these attitudes with the antisemitic settlers of Algeria presented a challenge, because they were the self-proclaimed representatives of France. Some Jews may have insisted on French identity in order to psychologically escape from their past persecutions, with a hope that the philosophy of French republicanism would ensure that they remained French, despite the ambiguous history of the Jews in Algeria. They hoped that France would protect them from their own society’s antisemitism. In this way, the leaders and other liberal Jews at once reviled a past of persecution and hatred while they sought to achieve a future of what France (and French Algeria) could become. They were also blind to Muslim suffering. But their elevation of France came at a price: it meant that Algerian Jews—especially when compared to Moroccan or Tunisian Jews—were less impassioned about their culture. This surprised Lazarus, who had arrived in Algeria with the dream that a Jewish community could thrive there.

¹³⁵ Some of the moments of protests are as follows: In protest of Jews receiving French citizenship under the Crémieux Decree, see Josh Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*; coinciding with the protest of Dreyfus affair see Prochaska, “Cagayous of Algeria” especially pages 694-698; Geneviève Dermenjian, *La Crise antijuive oranaise*; and Claude Martin, *Les Israélites algériens.*, and Pierre Hebey, *Alger 1898: La Grande vague anti-juive*. On the residential patterns of Algerian cities, Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*.

In the newspaper's first issue, published in 1948, Lazarus wrote of his astonishment that such a large community had no means of expression.¹³⁶ He granted that there were excellent Jewish newspapers from France, but argued that those papers did not sufficiently speak to specific, local, Algerian-Jewish problems. *Information Juive*, under Lazarus's editorial eye, immediately established its mission to fill this void. However, some obvious problems were left unaddressed. From the paper's inception in 1948 until late 1954 there was no mention of any kind of political turmoil among Algeria's three religious communities. In fact, the most serious problem that the writers identified was the Jews' general lackluster attitude toward their religion. This may have been because life was relatively peaceful at the time, but it was also because Lazarus did not want to be provocative in his descriptions of tensions. He intended the newspaper to be a celebration of Jewish culture and not another document that was to attest to the lachrymose state of Jewish life.

Lazarus became disappointed in what he perceived to be the Algerian Jews' failure to openly express their faith. He was not alone in his frustration—other Jewish leaders observed a similar phenomenon.¹³⁷ Algeria did not live up to the idealized vision of communal Judaism that Lazarus had imagined before he had become integrated into the Algerian lifestyle himself. Tunis, he wrote, offered a more authentic representation of a proud Oriental community that was immersed in both French and Jewish culture. In Tunis, he “saw young Jews parading down the

¹³⁶ “La Grande Communauté juive d’Algérie se doit-elle de vivre sans organe d’expression?” CJAES editorial staff, *Information Juive*, number 1, October 1948.

¹³⁷ French Grand Rabbi René Sirat asked, “How many fulltime Jewish schools exist? How many parents refuse to send their children to school on Shabbat?” Quoted in Stora, *Trois Exiles*, page 144.

city streets together”; he saw “Jewish newspapers for sale in the central square,” their vendors loudly hawking their wares. “No one,” he wrote, “hid from me or from anybody else, their profound respect for their French or their Tunisian *patrie*, as well as their deep love for the Jewish people.”¹³⁸ Back in Algiers, however, tentativeness and an effort to keep up appearances seemed to dictate every action. A majority of the Jewish population only seemed to remember their origins during times of emergency or fear. There was no pride in being Jewish, only pride in the French *patrie*. Jews in Tunisia, he wrote, inhaled “free” air. No matter what social class they came from, they proclaimed their loyalty and attachment to the Jewish community. Lazarus lamented that while Algeria was the only colony where *all* Jews enjoyed French citizenship, it was also the only one where they were ashamed of their Jewish culture and traditions. Lazarus had come to Algeria from France in pursuit of a fantasy of Jewish renewal. His vision of a harmonious, spiritually cohesive Jewish community quickly deflated as he realized that Algerian Jewry had its own set of problems. The community was in need of political and social advocacy, and he positioned himself to fill that void.

Lazarus’s father-in-law, Haïm Cherqui, decried the apathy he perceived in Algerian-Jewish culture in a 1952 editorial: “In this country, we have one sole problem, the absence of problems.... Our community is dying because we are lacking the spirituality and the habits of our tradition.”¹³⁹ Cherqui asked his readers

¹³⁸ Lazarus, *Information Juive* 1952. “J’avais vu à Tunis défiler des jeunes Juifs à travers les rues de la ville, j’avais vu à Tunis vendre à la criée des journaux Juifs sur les places publiques.... Tous...ne m’avaient pas caché, et ne cachent à personne, leur profond respect pour leur patrie française ou tunisienne, et leur profond amour pour le peuple juif.”

¹³⁹ Haïm Cherqui, “Point de vue sur le judaïsme algérien », *Information Juive*, number 38, October 1952. (« Notre communauté se meurt par manque d’accoutumance au fait spirituel d’Israël. »)

to understand the importance of spiritual revitalization by making global cultural comparisons:

Polish Judaism's resolve came from its spiritual energy and the ugliness of the ghettos. French Judaism is marked by its slow descent; American Judaism is energized by its masses, its dynamism, and, despite the flawed 'melting pot,' for its potential; and Israeli Judaism stands out for its pioneering spirit and its naïve vanity.¹⁴⁰

This list is remarkable and is best described as a fantasy for several reasons. It is extraordinary that Cherqui dared to celebrate the annihilated Polish community. And yet he was critical of the apparently "successful" Jewish communities in the United States and Israel. His analysis culminated in his thoughts on his own community: "Here, in Algeria, we are without any special flavor, and yet we exist, and it isn't possible to elude the problem of our own existence and behavior any longer."¹⁴¹ The development of authentic Jewish culture seemed to depend on adversity, whether that adversity came from the experience of life in a Nazi ghetto or American-Jewish dilution. With the onset of the Algerian War a few years later, perhaps Algerian Jews experienced the defining adversity Cherqui coveted.

By the mid-1950s, the French colony's cultural-ethnic distinctions among the "three communities" were wrought with tension. Political groups of "Europeans," Jews, and now Muslims began emphasizing instead of rejecting their ethnic and religious differences. A small minority of Muslim activists began to demand an

¹⁴⁰ Haïm Cherqui, "Point de vue sur le judaïsme algérien », *Information Juive*, number 38, October 1952.

¹⁴¹ Haïm Cherqui, "Point de vue sur le judaïsme algérien », *Information Juive*, number 38, October 1952

independent Algeria while rejecting any notion of French citizenship.¹⁴² Extremist Europeans touted their “bloodlines” as evidence that they were *more* French than either Jews or Muslims.¹⁴³ Jewish groups—under Lazarus’s leadership—were trying to awaken their community. Paradoxically, this de facto separation among peoples created envy from international Jewish leaders, who tended to romanticize the apparent tribal closeness of what they called the Algerian-Jewish community, in contradiction to Cherqui’s observations that Algerian Jews suffered from “blandness.” For their part, the vast majority of Algerian Jews didn’t see blandness as a problem, and would have preferred to blend in with Europeans. In this way, Algerian Judaism was indeed a mirror image of its French counterpart. The CJAES and Jewish funding agencies, though, were still waging an ideological war against “dejudaisation.”

Algerian Jews eschewed declaring ethnic particularity (despite the urging of the CJAES) because they feared being classified once again as “indigenous.” Ironically, the particularity that Algeria’s Jews feared was one that metropolitan Jews extolled. For Algerian Jewry this vaunted apartness amounted to segregation. They resisted such cohesion in favor of “Frenchness.” They developed fantasies about France rooted in their historical past, in order to reinforce their belonging.

Adolph Crémieux was reborn as an object of fascination for Algerian Jews in the 1940s and 1950s. He was a perfect bridge between the CJAES’s campaign for Algerian-Jewish revitalization and the majority’s adherence to secular French

¹⁴² Messali Hadj led a nationalist movement in the postwar. He was poised to be Algeria’s next leader. As we will see in the following chapters, his movement, the MNA, was vanquished by more extremist visionaries who belonged to the FLN.

¹⁴³ Such as neo-fascist leader Pierre Poujade, as we will see in chapter 2.

republicanism. Crémieux was a freemason—not an observant Jew—and, as we have seen, he was committed to his civilizing mission. He was passionate about emancipating Jews, and bringing them the kind of education that could liberate them. Specifically, he wanted to make them “French.” After his wife and children converted to Christianity in 1845, his commitment to humanistic *laïcité*—secularism—was enhanced. As a founding member of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, he was part of a new generation’s vision for republican Jews, who saw no conflict between French republican ideals and Jewish specificity. Religious tradition played no part in their Jewish identity.

Just before the outbreak of the Algerian War, the organization’s major concerns still lay in the trajectory of a certain kind of Jewish “civilizing mission.” This had been the tradition at the founding of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, during the republican “moment” in nineteenth-century France, whose mission persevered throughout the 1950s.¹⁴⁴ It sought to modernize remnants of the Jewish population in Algeria, who still appeared to dwell in the pre-French past.

In other words, Jewish leaders still cared about Jewish emancipation, and felt there was yet more work to be done in that regard, to achieve what they liked to call “occidental” Judaism. For example, Rabbi Rahmim Naouri wrote an article in July 1953 denouncing the custom of the dowry for Jewish women, which, he believed, degraded the holiness of marriage.¹⁴⁵ Jacques Lazarus originally came to Algeria in order to begin the ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training) schools

¹⁴⁴ Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in nineteenth-century France*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, chapter four, “Jewish Republicanism,” page 64ff.

¹⁴⁵ *AJYB* 1955, page 430.

for boys and girls.¹⁴⁶ The schools instructed boys in auto mechanics, and helped girls to learn sewing—all efforts to improve their socioeconomic status. By 1955, there were 508 students enrolled.¹⁴⁷ In the 1950s, as the general secretary of the CJAES and the North African delegate to the WJC, Lazarus strove to improve the plight of Jews throughout North Africa, fighting to ensure that they were treated exactly like other French citizens. Because they saw Algerian Jews' diminished enthusiasm for their religion, some leaders—such as Lazarus and other CJAES members—felt a need to compensate for the so-called “Westernization” of Algerian Jews. The French Jewish writer Rabi, and others, wanted to preserve North African Jewish authenticity, which they felt was melting away through emigration and modernizations.¹⁴⁸

Another obsession for the CJAES, AIU, and WJC was to acquire citizenship for Jews living in the Algerian Sahara. These lands were acquired after 1871—subsequent to the Crémieux decree. Saharan Jews legally resided in Algeria but they did not have French citizenship. The Alliance Israélite's endless campaigns for French citizenship for the Saharan Jews persevered from the ending of World War II, when the rest of Algerian Jews had theirs restored, to the end of the Algerian War, when nearly all Jews departed.¹⁴⁹

When the Algerian War began in November 1954, Algerian-Jewish intellectuals initially said nothing. Happily reintegrated into the French citizenry,

¹⁴⁶ Personal note from Lazarus to me from summer 2009.

¹⁴⁷ *AJYB* 1957, p. 341.

¹⁴⁸ Rabi to Lazarus, 29 March 1955, AIU fonds Lazarus.

¹⁴⁹ CAOM archives include several panicked letters from AIU representatives to the French administration in 1960-61.

they hesitated to take an official stance on what seemed like small bursts of political protests from Algerian nationalists. Jewish leaders felt that they could wait to see what happened, continuing forward with daily life, working on their goal of unifying Jews throughout Algeria. By focusing on Crémieux, they found a symbol of reconciliation that bridged the paradoxes they faced inside Algeria. They wanted to emphasize that they were French without entirely being absorbed; they wanted to spiritually revitalize their community without being perceived as “indigenous” in the eyes of Europeans. Moreover, celebrating Crémieux was a way to communicate that they believed Algeria should stay French without directly incurring the anger of Algerian nationalist movements.

The year 1955 commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of Crémieux’s death. That year, two important articles brought Crémieux into the foreground of contemporary Jewish culture.

Raymond Bénichou, an elderly philosophy professor from Algiers and veteran of World War I, wrote a laudatory article about Crémieux in the July 1955 issue of *Information Juive*. He showcased commemorative medallions and a portrait of Crémieux, which had been owned by his great grandfather, who knew Crémieux personally. In Bénichou’s eyes, Crémieux seemed to understand something fundamental about bringing the glory and beauty of France to the Jews of Algeria, and he expressed his personal gratitude. He wanted the Algerian-Jewish community to gain strength through Crémieux’s memory, to rekindle his legacy, depicting him as a demigod:

Dear Crémieux, a man who was serious yet cheerful, lucid yet trusting... you who did not want to lose hope in mankind. Your death marked the dusk of

the era of Justice. May these written words by the descendent of one of your loyal friends be a testament to your affectionate memory. In these uncertain times, the Algerian Jewish community is emancipated by your memory; it gives us strength!¹⁵⁰

In his panegyric, Bénichou projected an idealized, nearly 100-year-old image of the French Empire as an “era of justice” which had been interrupted by the two world wars. His elegiac view differs from that of Hannah Arendt or Daniel Timsit, who placed the roots of French antisemitism at the very outset of contact between French settlers and Algeria. Although Crémieux had helped to advance the cause of human rights, his work also facilitated the consolidation of the colonizing authority of the French government. Bénichou was using an image of Crémieux as a symbol of liberation for the Jews of 1955, who were facing new and different problems. It is unclear what forces they needed to be freed from: Was it World II? The new resurgence of fascism? Or Algerian nationalism? Bénichou remained vague in this regard.

In 1955, Algerian nationalists were violently drawing attention to the injustices of the French empire, which were implicit in its very foundations. That year, the Jewish newspaper didn't dare mention the very difficult position that Jews were facing in direct, practical terms. Instead, it looked back eighty years to Crémieux, who was, in fact, a Jewish and French colonizer. Commemorating Crémieux's era as a more innocent time, Bénichou was trying to mask the increasingly violent divisions among Algeria's ethnic populations. He preferred to skip over the two brutal wars that had characterized the twentieth century, and

¹⁵⁰ Raymond Bénichou “Hommage à Adolphe Crémieux,” in *Information Juive*, #68, July 1955.

return to the previous century's civilizing mission. Ironically, the problems of 1950s Algeria were not necessarily rooted in the two world wars; they were buried in the foundation of the Algerian colony—even, some would argue, in the Crémieux Decree itself.

In December 1955, André Chouraqui presented an educational lecture, which emphasized Crémieux's "immense role" in the emancipation of Jews in the nineteenth century.¹⁵¹ Chouraqui too praised Crémieux for his two loyalties. "Crémieux is an authentic Jew," he wrote, "whose family has never forgotten their language. He's an authentic Frenchman, attached to his native land, attached to the centuries-old lineage of French philosophy."¹⁵² Chouraqui presented Crémieux's dual identity as a seamless and natural combination, not as schismatic. Crémieux became a symbol of Jewish belonging, in spite of the fact that he shunned Jewish belief and practice. For his acolytes, he represented the possibility of a synchronous harmony of French-Jewish dual identity. Where Jewish leaders had problems revitalizing spiritual traditions in Algeria, Crémieux represented a secular one: that of Jewish integration into France, even into high offices of government.

The point of both pieces was that Crémieux stood for universal ideals that transcended the components of his personal identity; he was a humanist, not exclusively a Jewish advocate. Postwar Algerian-Jewish intellectuals celebrated the Crémieux Decree as the moment when the French empire approached them personally, bringing them out of their own "Arab" backwardness into the

¹⁵¹ Chouraqui, "Crémieux," AIU dossier EM Lévy, Dec. 22, 1955.

¹⁵² Ibid. "Crémieux est un Juif authentique dont la famille n'a jamais oublié la langue [...] c'est un Français authentique, attaché à la terre natale, à la pensée française par des longs siècles passés en commun avec les autres français."

progressive West. It was the moment of their elevation from *indigènes* into citizens. Ironically, their celebration of universal human rights remained exclusionary. They did not collectively fight for universal Muslim citizenship. Jean Cohen, a Jewish activist for Algerian nationalism in the 1950s, pointed out the depth of this problem:

The French brought not just Frenchness but 'humanity', and to assimilate to France was much more profound than becoming French, it meant becoming human.¹⁵³

Cohen subtly acknowledged the inversion of equating Frenchness with humanity: that to be *indigène* was to be *inhuman*.

Leaders of Algerian Jewry idealized all that was French, and French Jews—interested in reestablishing their damaged Jewish community in World War II's aftermath—idealized Algerian Jews' communalism. Mutually obsessed, the two groups were trapped in a cycle of misunderstandings. Jewish leaders throughout the world not only asserted that the French republican ideal persevered in Algeria, they also denied that there was any separation between metropole and colony. In early 1955, delegates to the World Jewish Congress proclaimed that Algeria was completely integrated into France. In case anyone dared confuse Algeria with the other North African countries, Alexander Easterman (the London-based WJC delegate to North Africa) declared: "It must be remembered that [Algeria] is neither a protectorate nor a colony of France. Algeria *is* metropolitan France."¹⁵⁴ Like countless of his colleagues who lived outside Algeria, Easterman would not

¹⁵³ Jean Cohen, *Chronique d'une Algérie Révolue: "Comme l'ombre et le vent,"* L'Harmattan: Paris, 1997. Page 13. « Les français apportaient non la francité mais l'humanité et, s'assimiler à la France, c'était, plus profondément que devenir français, devenir un homme. »

¹⁵⁴ "Minutes: Meeting of the World Jewish Congress Executive Committee" at the Unesco Building in Paris, January 27, 28, and 30, 1955. "AJA. Page 2.

distinguish metropole from colony; he believed in *Algérie française*. At that same meeting, Rabbi Mordechai Nurock, who was an Israeli politician, chimed in about the importance of staunch Jewish loyalty to France: “France, with her long tradition of safeguarding the liberty and the equality of the human race, is our natural ally in North Africa.”¹⁵⁵

Concluding Thoughts

Desperately seeking relief from the relentless settler antisemitism in Algeria and also seeking to heal from Vichy’s collective denaturalization Algerian Jews looked to France as a savior. France became symbolic of a haven for republican acceptance—a vision for what Algeria might eventually become. Algerian Jews addressed an idealized, projected image of France, while French Jews misunderstood their needs and aspirations. For metropolitan Jews, their Algerian brethren were symbols in their own right. They were supposedly religious and communal, attributes that could help save French Judaism. As mainland French Jews began to pay attention to the Algerian community, they misattributed spiritual cohesion to a group that was only growing more isolated. They saw in Algerian Jews an uncorrupted ancient community that remained untouched by either the Holocaust or Western individualism. Meanwhile, Algerian Jews projected an image of a benevolent, republican mission onto France. This illusion masked the inherent

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Page 6.

contradictions of the colonial structure, even as that edifice was beginning to collapse.

This dynamic—fantasies of mutual redemption—shaped the way that both French and Algerian Jews would react to the Algerian War. Algerian Jews delayed their responses to the nationalists' appeals, and refused to take any stance on the war as Jews. Most Algerian Jews coped with the violent upheavals by staying faithful to the republican vision. Jews were not “Europeans”—as the settlers styled themselves—and this was clear to all observers; it would take several years before Jews and Europeans began to reconcile their differences. A disparity between French and Algerian Jews became sharper, and their mutual misunderstandings became politically charged.

With the onset of the Algerian War, the paradoxical position of the Jews became pronounced. They were confused and disoriented by the chaotic violence that took Algeria by storm beginning on November 1, 1954. The following chapter investigates Jewish perceptions of the new war.

Chapter Two: A War Against the Jews¹⁵⁶: Pied-Noir Antisemitism and the Jewish Perception of “Events” in Algeria, 1954–1956

Prologue

The Algerian War, which unfolded between 1954 and 1962, was bookended by two massacres—the Phillipeville atrocities in August 1955 and the Algiers/Oran killing sprees at the war’s end in summer 1962. Between 1955 and 1962, more than two million soldiers came from France to fight in Algeria.¹⁵⁷ An estimated 24,000 Muslim civilians were killed or “disappeared” in the war, and 3,500 “European” civilians (including Jews) were killed. The war was a battle on several fronts. The two principal areas of conflict involved a struggle between the French Army and the National Liberation Front (FLN), and, simultaneously, internecine strife between rival nationalist groups, the Trotskyist National Movement of Algeria (MNA) and newer, more radical FLN. Late in the war, the European and renegade army militants forged the Secret Armed Organization (OAS), which fought to maintain the French presence and also killed hundreds.

The war can be divided into four phases: November 1954–November 1956; December 1956–April 1958; May 1958–September 1959; and late 1959–June 1962. During the first phase, between November 1954 and 1956, local citizens as well as French officials were still coming to terms with the war’s very existence. During the first three years of the war, members of the FLN sought to vanquish their rival

¹⁵⁶ This is the title of a book by Lucy S. Davidowicz about the Holocaust. It was influential in that it argued that WWII was primarily a war of annihilation of Eastern European Jews. Lucy S. Davidowicz, *The War against the Jews (1939-1945)*. New York, Bantom Books, 1975.

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de la guerre d’Algérie: 1954–1962*. Paris: Collection Reperes, Découvertes, 4ème Edition, 2006, pp. 86–90.

nationalists, notably the MNA. This civil war accounted for 10,000 deaths and 25,000 wounded in both Algeria and France.¹⁵⁸ In August 1956, the FLN organized under the leadership of Abbane Ramdane, and the group announced a detailed political program at the Soummam Congress in an unpopulated valley within Algeria. The Soummam men were known as the “interiors” since they shunned outside influence on the movement for independence.¹⁵⁹ Under this new military program, insurgents from the FLN began to strategically kill individuals using hand-held weapons. The French government had also fallen into crisis, and that year the National Assembly allowed the army “special powers,” under which they had unrestrained control over Algerian matters—civil, political, and military.¹⁶⁰

Historians refer to 1957 as the year of the “cruel war,” and it began in January with the Battle of Algiers, and 8,000 troops flowed into Algeria.¹⁶¹ Their presence in Algeria created an atmosphere of “total war,” eventually marshalling 400,000 troops to suppress the rebellion while the insurgency stubbornly persisted as the FLN’s power grew due to an influx of weapons from Abdel Gamal Nasser’s Egypt. In the following year, the FLN, unable to confront the French military directly, began a campaign of asymmetrical warfare using terror weapons and bombs, supplied by Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Insurgents struck larger establishments, such as bars, nightclubs, and cafés. That year, the war reached all of Algeria’s cities and towns. Outside leaders of the FLN, known as the three Bs (Abdelhafid Boussouf, Lakhdar Ben Tobal, and Belcakem Kricm) convened in Cairo

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 35-36.

¹⁵⁹ Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*. Paris: Fayard, 2002.

¹⁶⁰ Stora *Histoire*, p. 20. Meynier *Histoire* p. 275ff.

¹⁶¹ Stora *Histoire*, p. 20.

in August 1957, effectively reversing Abbane's program and prioritizing military action over politics, and Islam over diversity.¹⁶²

Meanwhile, in the metropole, the army's use of torture became public, causing an influential cohort of intellectuals to rally with Algerian nationalists. The violent atmosphere in Algeria, compounded further by the continuing divisions within the nationalist movements, made French officials and citizens desperate for new leadership. In December 1957, exterior contingents murdered Abbane Ramdane, because they wanted military action and Islamic principals to dictate the nationalist movement, rather than a politics of independence, as Abbane had advocated at Soummam.

Throughout the spring months of 1958, French citizens of Algeria began a series of mass demonstrations against the Government.¹⁶³ They felt that the army was not doing enough to support French Algeria. Meanwhile, ongoing stalemate in the war of attrition provoked a parliamentary crisis on the mainland. The costs of the war had led to a severe economic crisis in which the Franc was rapidly losing its value. These factors, along with the growing disaffection of a conscript army in an unpopular war, led to the fall of the Fourth Republic.

Within Algeria on 13 May 1958, a mass of demonstrators called for a new kind of government. In a brief hopeful moment, it appeared as if Jews, Europeans, and Muslims agreed that they wanted Charles de Gaulle as the Republic's leader. De Gaulle became head of state of the new Fifth Republic and the new constitution gave

¹⁶² Meynier, page 333ff.

¹⁶³ Neil MacMaster, *Burning the Veil: The Algerian War and the 'emancipation' of Muslim Women, 1954-62*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009.

him ultimate power on any decision.¹⁶⁴ However, as Chapter Six will show, this hope proved to be another illusion. From June to December 1958, De Gaulle tried to reconcile the differences between Europeans and Muslims in Algeria.¹⁶⁵ But when this proved impossible, President De Gaulle announced in September 1959 that Algeria would have the right to self-determination, which led to the disaffection of the vast majority of Europeans, including Jews, who lived in Algeria.

In January 1961, the French voted for a referendum approving Algerian independence, and, in April of that year, De Gaulle declared: “Decolonization is in our interest, and therefore it defines our politics.”¹⁶⁶ In response, the OAS movement became much stronger, consisting of ultra rightwing Europeans, as well defected soldiers, responded with a wave of coordinated violence against both Government and the FLN. The movement united Jews and Europeans in the effort to save French Algeria.

Nevertheless, De Gaulle’s government forged ahead and negotiated the Evian Accords which recognized Algerian independence and called for a ceasefire in March 1962. In response, the OAS announced that the French troops were considered as an occupying army, and its forces attacked military vehicles in Bab-el-Oued. As part of its campaign, the OAS attempted to prohibit Europeans from leaving Algeria. The OAS’s tactics were to murder individuals, to hunt down Muslims, and to plant explosives in populated areas. In June 1962, they burned down the Algiers library, creating a dramatic fire that destroyed over 60,000 volumes. In July 1962, mobs of

¹⁶⁴ Specifically article 12 which dissolved the National Assembly and Article 16 which gave the president executive power during “serious circumstances.” Stora, *Histoire*, page 51.

¹⁶⁵ Stora *Histoire* page 51

¹⁶⁶ Stora *histoire* page 58.

Muslims retaliated, invading the European and Jewish neighborhoods of Oran, in an effort to hunt down those who remained. That summer, a majority of pieds noirs departed Algeria, as OAS troops were forced to abandon of their hope of a French Algeria. They relocated terrorist tactics to the metropole, where they continued to conspire to kill De Gaulle.

Initial insurgencies

On November 1, 1954, a handful of nationalist activists staged a series of attacks on various individuals throughout Algeria, including a teacher, a Muslim leader, several French soldiers, and a Jewish taxi driver. There were over 70 assaults that day, but the repercussions were minimal—only about a dozen people were killed.¹⁶⁷ To many nationalists throughout Algeria, these November insurgencies represented a culmination of the previous colonized generations' deepest ambitions.¹⁶⁸ The group coordinating the violence, which called itself the National Liberation Front, had less than 1,000 members at the outset. Its leaders—Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Krim Belkacem, Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, Ahmed Ben Bella, and others—sought to terminate the century of French oppression that led to the debilitating poverty and illness that afflicted the Muslim majority into the 1950s.¹⁶⁹ In fall 1954, France's political elite could not even imagine the possibility of Algerian independence.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Assailants killed a few colonial agents; they only had a handful of arms, some homemade bombs. Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, pages 275, 277.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 277–8.

¹⁶⁹ For the population statistics, See Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, page 17-18; for FLN numbers, Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, 278.

¹⁷⁰ Stora, *Histoire*. page 13.

The insurgents' leaders, who were stationed in Cairo, released a letter stating their goal of national independence, which they planned to achieve by "restoring a sovereign, democratic, and social Algerian state, under Islamic principles."¹⁷¹ In their initial statement, they pledged to respect French cultural and economic interests. However, they declared that citizens who desired to remain in an independent Algeria must forego their French loyalties accept Algerian nationality.¹⁷²

Although the day remains in French and Algerian memory as the dawn of decolonization, these initial attacks, most of which took place in rural areas, did not resonate strongly among the region's Jewish communities.¹⁷³ In fact, the historian Benjamin Stora claims that the November 1954 events were "practically imperceptible" to the Algerian Jews.¹⁷⁴ Insurgents only gradually began to bring the violence to major cities. The FLN lacked a cohesive political goal until the Congress of the Soummam, which didn't take place until August 1956. Instead, at the war's beginning, there was virtually no coordinated armed action; the nationalists consisted of leaderless squads.¹⁷⁵ "This absence of a clear political foundation,"

¹⁷¹ "Texte Intégral de la proclamation FLN, diffusé le 1 novembre 1954" in Yves Courrière, *La Guerre D'Algérie I, 1954-1957*, p. 900. "La restauration de l'Etat algérien souverain démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes islamiques."

¹⁷² Texte Intégral de la proclamation FLN, diffusé le 1 novembre 1954" in Courrière, *La Guerre D'Algérie*, p. 901.

¹⁷³ On Algerian memory, See Benjamin Stora, *Gangrène et oubli*. On the rural nature of these initial attacks, see Meynier, *Histoire Interieure*, p. 276.

¹⁷⁴ "Les evenements de novembre 1954 passent pratiquement inaperçus aux yeux de la masse des Européens comme à ceux des juifs d'Algérie," Benjamin Stora, *Les trois Exiles*, page 139.

¹⁷⁵ Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Interieure*, page 308; Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage et Réalité*. Page 174.

writes historian and former Algerian activist Mohammed Harbi, “tended to personalize the conflicts” among various leaders.¹⁷⁶

The disjointed nature of the nationalist militants confused bystanders, making it very difficult to discern the motives of the attacks. Jewish individuals, in particular, questioned even the sources of the violence and from which direction they were emanating. Publicly, as this chapter will show, Jewish leaders remained focused on building the future of the Algerian-Jewish community, attempting to strengthen the religious identity of increasingly secular individuals. Private letters, World Jewish Congress minutes, and testimonials reveal their *real* preoccupation: that the European antisemites of Algeria were orchestrating the violent atmosphere in order to attack Jews.

During these uncertain years, Lazarus and Algerian Jewish individuals privately expressed their fear that random violent acts were in the service of a neo-fascist, antisemitic French nation. Many Jews had fought in the Resistance during the Second World War, and a decade later in the new war, they were still engaged in an anti-fascist struggle. They were less concerned with the recent outbreak of “Muslim” nationalism. Well into the mid-1950s, a large majority of Algerian Jews feared losing their French citizenship for a second time, a threat they perceived as coming from a revived colonial Right. This fear continued to influence Algerian Jews’ mentalities and organizational policies.

On the eve of the Algerian War, the region’s Jews did not comprise a monolithic group.¹⁷⁷ But there is evidence that across the political spectrum, from

¹⁷⁶ Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage et Réalité*. Page 171.

die-hard Communists to pro-*Algérie Française* activists, Jewish Algerians were apprehensive about their Christian neighbors, who were then known as “Europeans.” Both community leaders and ordinary Jewish citizens worried that European antisemites—perhaps in collaboration with the French Army—would overthrow the current republican French government and prevail in a new version of Vichy Algeria.

Silence is also a response

From late 1954 through the end of 1956, the CJAES, as the representative body of Algerian Jews, intentionally tried to remain outside of the twisted politics of the Algerian War for Independence. In these early years of the conflict, many Jews felt like bystanders to a battle between Europeans and Muslims.¹⁷⁸ As a marginal, uninvolved party, they thought they could remain neutral. One Jewish man from Algiers claimed that “silence is also a response.”¹⁷⁹ A team of scholars has found evidence that some Jewish individuals framed their support for Muslims as an altruistic act of *Tsedakah*, an effort to repair the world.¹⁸⁰ In the first months of the war, Jewish activists fought anti-Arab racism in myriad ways, but very rarely did they see their actions in support of Muslims as acts of war against the French.

For the vast majority of Algerian Jews, French citizenship was essential to their safety. But French Jews did not help Algerian Jews to maintain neutrality or

¹⁷⁷ Stora, *Les trios Exiles*, page 138.

¹⁷⁸ This idea that there was a war between Europeans and Muslims was articulated after August 1955, as we will see.

¹⁷⁹ Anonymous friend quoted in Rabi, “Nos Frères au Coeur du Drame Algérien,” *L’Arche* #30, June 1959, page 29. The context in that case was the 1958 coup d’état.

¹⁸⁰ Allouche-Benayoun and Bensimon. *Les Juifs d’Algérie: Mémoires et identités plurielles*. Paris: Éditions Stavit, 1998, page 309.

silence. Although mainland Jews continued to romanticize North African Jewish life, they did not address the stark reality of living in a war zone. A vocal number of metropolitan Jews instead became more interested in justice for Muslim activists than they were in helping Jewish communities in Algeria.¹⁸¹ Even Rabi, a liberal Jewish activist, admitted to Lazarus, “Our organizations have a tendency to neglect North Africa because the Jewish drama is only an accessory to the larger drama taking place.”¹⁸² When international Jewish leaders did address North African Jews between 1954 and 1956, they referred to the troubles afflicting Jews in Morocco or Tunisia, which had been shaken by nationalist violence.

The Algerian-Jewish historian, Emile Touati, wrote in 1954 that compared with the other two countries, “Calm and visible harmony reign in Algeria. [...] It looks like a haven of peace in the middle of agitation that troubles its neighboring countries.”¹⁸³ One reason that Algeria appeared to be so calm, he thought, was the 1947 initiation of the Statute of Algeria which created an Algerian assembly with two separate electoral blocks: half of the votes went to Algerian Europeans and Jews, the other half to Algerian Muslims. The statute was meant to give Muslims the right to vote while they still maintained their Koranic status under which they were still governed by Islamic law. It was, however, far from representative: the European population (including Jews) made up only ten percent of the Algerian population,

¹⁸¹ For instance, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Jean-Jacques Servan-Scheiber, Jean Daniel, Laurent Schwartz, and Gisèle Halimi were all prominent Jewish writers stationed in the mainland. They campaigned on behalf of the FLN for Algerian independence. For a detailed rendering of this position, see chapter 4.

¹⁸² Letter Rabi to Lazarus October 5, 1955. “Et nos organisations (est-ce que je me trompe ? je le souhaite) ont trop tendance à négliger l’Afrique du Nord parce que le drame juif n’y est que l’accessoire du drame plus vaste. »

¹⁸³ Emile Touati, “Perspectives Nord-Africaines.” *Evidences: Revue Publique sous l’égide de l’American Jewish Committee*. 6ème année. # 42, 1954, page 12.

yet they were entitled to half of the votes. Like other liberal Jews, Touati nonetheless believed that North Africa could become a shining example of multicultural success. He hypothesized that “the solution to the complex ethnic, cultural, economic, and political problems in North Africa can foreshadow peaceful coexistence for other regions which are riddled with the same conflicts—and for old Europe herself.”¹⁸⁴

Rabi asked young Jewish Algerians late in 1954 what they would do in the event that Algeria won its independence, as Morocco, Madagascar, Indochina, and other colonies had done. Their response was, “We are French, French, French. You understand. For us, there is no problem... if France goes, we all go.”¹⁸⁵ When he asked the Jewish leaders whether they had prepared anything yet in the event of Algerian independence, even they “seemed surprised.” A year later, in 1955, he returned and posed the same question. The response was just as stubborn: “You metropolitans, you always exaggerate. But fear not! For now, the only danger is the threat of grasshoppers, and they arrive from the south.”¹⁸⁶

Meeting in private in January 1955, World Jewish Congress delegates hesitantly wondered about the fate of North Africa, but Algeria was the least of their concerns. At that time, Morocco was negotiating for more independence from France, and was taken over by a Muslim government that threatened to restrict Jewish emigration. French colonial authorities also struggled against the Tunisian

¹⁸⁴ Emile Touati, “Perspectives Nord-Africaines.” *Evidences: Revue Publique sous l’égide de l’American Jewish Committee*. 6ème année. # 42, Perspectives Nord-Africaines. 1954, page 1.

¹⁸⁵Wladimir Rabi, “Destin des Juifs en Afrique du Nord,” in *Esprit*, July–August 1956 (152–161), page 158. “Nous sommes Français, Français, Français. Vous comprenez. Pour nous il n’y a pas de problème.”... “si la France s’en va, nous partons tous.”

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., page 158.

Neo-Destour (“new constitution”) movement, which led Tunisia toward independence from France the following year. The World Jewish Congress did not begin to address the Algerian War as a danger in itself until later on.

Lazarus, who was the Algerian delegate, still clung to the illusion that Algeria was just like France. His brief statement at the January 1955 WJC meeting suggested the delicate balancing act involved in the Jewish-Algerian neutral position. He began with a declaration of fidelity. “In the thirteen communities of Algeria,” he declared, “the Jews have always been loyal to France, of which Algeria still forms part.”¹⁸⁷ He outlined two primary concerns for Algerian Jews: first, he addressed the nationalist “revolt against the French,” and he explained that he was awaiting French actions in order to determine a position about the revolt. Next, Lazarus introduced a second theme, exposing his real fear: that some form of antisemitic European governance would reemerge in Algeria. He elaborated, “[W]e find hostility in European circles as well, particularly in the *Présence Française* movement, which follows today the same policy in Algeria as it pursued during the Vichy government.”¹⁸⁸

Although the *Présence Française* movement was a Vichy-like party, antisemitism had nonetheless become more oblique in the decade. Patterns unique to Algeria created a special form of antisemitic action, he thought, in which “Europeans” could coax “Muslims” to besiege Jewish areas.¹⁸⁹ Lazarus brought this

¹⁸⁷ A95/4 Minutes. Meeting of the WJC Executive Committee @ the Washington Hotel in London. January 21 – 24, 1955. Pp. 41 -51.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ See for instance in Joelle Bahloul, *Architecture of Memory*, page 48. “Jews remembered Judeo-Arab discord before the war of independence as provoked by European anti-Semitism.”

hypothesis before the executive committee of the World Jewish Congress when he declared, “Today, [the Europeans] seek to inflame the Moslem masses against the Jews, so that they might step in and establish ‘order,’ with all that it implies.”¹⁹⁰ Not only would Europeans potentially ignite Muslim violence toward Jews, but new Muslim uprisings, Lazarus indicated, would furnish revanchist authorities with an excuse to intervene forcefully.

Algeria was not a mirror image of France, despite French efforts to project the republican ideal onto its colony. While authorities in mainland France kept its citizens from engaging in pogroms, Algerian society still permitted outright racism.¹⁹¹ While there is an emerging body of research about European antisemitism in Algeria in the 1930s and 1940s,¹⁹² antisemitism that persisted into the mid-1950s—along with the intense fear that it generated in Jewish communities—has been overlooked in the service of a larger narrative of decolonization and emigration.¹⁹³

In *Multidirectional Memory*, the literary scholar Michael Rothberg demonstrated that anti-colonial dissidents in France focused primarily on the Holocaust when formulating arguments against French Algeria.¹⁹⁴ Rothberg looked beyond the “competitive struggle for recognition” among Jewish and Muslim groups

¹⁹⁰ A95/4 Minutes. Meeting of the WJC Executive Committee @ the Washington Hotel in London. January 21 – 24, 1955. Pp. 41 -51. -51.

¹⁹¹ Michel Abitbol, *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983.

¹⁹² For example, Joshua Cole, “Antisémitisme et situation coloniale pendant l’entre-deux-guerres en Algérie: Les émeutes antijuives de Constantine (août 1934)” *VINGTIÈME SIÈCLE. REVUE D’HISTOIRE*, 108, OCTOBRE-DÉCEMBRE 2010, p. 3-23; Roberts, Sophie B. “Jews, Citizenship, and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1943,” PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011; Jaques Cantier *L’Algérie sous le régime de Vichy*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002.

¹⁹³ As Todd Shepard argued, Decolonization was a convenient story to tell in the aftermath of the Algerian War, Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*.

¹⁹⁴ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, part III.

as he illustrated the way that many French thinkers framed the Franco-Algerian war in terms of the Nazi onslaught against the Jews.¹⁹⁵ His study centers on the late period of the Algerian war. The FLN and the anti-torture protesters frequently cited the Nazi depredations during the Occupation as the Algerian War grew more brutal in its later years. Even in the early days, dissidents within Algeria invoked World War II when framing the current struggle. But different ethnic groups inside Algeria appropriated the Second World War in different ways.

The new Muslim leaders of the FLN considered the nationalist uprising in Sétif in May 1945 as the impetus of their nationalist struggle. That day, nationalist Muslims marched in protest of the French occupation, and French forces reacted violently, killing thousands. The FLN claimed to be the legacy of that initial uprising, which they remembered as occurring “on the heels of the Second World War.”¹⁹⁶ Jewish writers, on the other hand, hinted that the new war could be a continuation of Vichy’s anti-Jewish measures. Nahum Goldmann foreshadowed these concerns in 1953, when he declared before the World Jewish Congress, “We all pray and hope that future historians will refer to these times as a post-war and not as another pre-war period.”¹⁹⁷ Rabi wrote privately to Lazarus in late 1955 referring directly to the latter’s proximity to the Algerian conflict: “Here you are again, after ten years, once

¹⁹⁵ Rothberg, page 6.

¹⁹⁶ My conclusion about Muslims and Sétif is supported by the Soummam Platform’s concluding statement: « il y a dix ans, au lendemain de la fin de la second guerre mondiale, une formidable explosion a ébranlé l’impérialisme. » Soummam Platform, in Courrière I, page 929. Mameri also discusses the way that Algerian Muslims had a profound psychological turnabout over the course of World War II. (Mameri, Khalfa. *Abbane Ramdane*, Paris: l’Harmattan, 1988, pp. 33ff.)

¹⁹⁷ From a speech delivered at the 3rd assembly of the WJC in Geneva. August 4, 1953. Nahum Goldmann, *Status of Jewry: A Survey*. New York: World Jewish Congress, 1953.

again at the heart of the drama.”¹⁹⁸ The multiple fears of a resurgence of Vichy in the midst of the Algerian War were more immediate and intense than the postcolonial Holocaust resonances described by Rothberg, in which leftists compared the French Army’s torture of Muslims to Nazis’ torture of Jews. Unlike in Rothberg’s study of the early 1960s, Algerian Muslims and Algerian Jews did not refer to the same events of the 1940s when they articulated their motivations or preoccupations in the 1950s.

Jews’ fears of antisemitism were not public. For the development of a purportedly apolitical philosophy, Lazarus relied on the ideas of the philosopher Raymond Bénichou (1890–1955). Heavy with Jewish cultural pride, enthralled with French republicanism, Bénichou had envisioned a peaceful, yet multicultural Algeria. He established an ethics of mutual tolerance and personal responsibility to uphold French-style democracy.

In a 1952 article about Jewish-Muslim relations in Algeria, Bénichou expressed a strong affection for Algerian Muslims, and a bit more skepticism toward other non-Jewish Frenchmen. He called the Jews “autochthonous”¹⁹⁹ rather than using the more controversial synonym that had a specific legal and racial meaning, “indigenous”—a term that was still used in reference to both Muslims and Jews.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Letter Rabi to Lazarus October 5, 1955. From Lazarus Dossier XV. « Vous voici à nouveau, après 10 ans, au cœur du drame, à la pointe du combat, sans qu’individuellement nous puissions vous aider. »

¹⁹⁹ *New Oxford American Dictionary* (2005–2009). “Autochthonous:” (of an inhabitant of a place) indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists.

²⁰⁰ See Pierre Nora’s 1961 *Les Français d’Algérie*, page 161. “L’appellation de musulman est au contraire injurieuse. On classera parmi les musulmans tous les indigenes non juifs, même s’ils sont laïcs, même s’ils n’ont jamais lu le Coran.” (161)

He wrote that Jews were “equal” yet “parallel” to Muslims.²⁰¹ He quoted a saying by Crémieux: “Loyalism toward France, loyalty toward Muslims.”²⁰² *Loyalism* meant purely political loyalty. And *loyalty* was sincere, friendly devotion.

Bénichou did not trust the administration to protect the Jewish population from the antisemites. For instance, he believed that the infamous 1934 pogrom in Constantine, in which 25 Jews and three Muslims were killed, was orchestrated by Europeans—perhaps even by the French administration—who turned the city’s Muslims against Jews²⁰³. In general, Benichou wrote, anti-Jewish “disturbances were, if not provoked by, then at least encouraged by, the upper echelons of administration in the colonialist milieu.”²⁰⁴ He also blamed Nazi propaganda for inciting Muslim anti-Semitism in the 1930s.²⁰⁵ In addition to the administration, Bénichou also blamed European settlers for threatening Algeria’s peace. He thought that local hostility from Muslims was provoked by either antisemitic Europeans or the pan-Arab politics emanating from the Middle East.²⁰⁶ Even so, Bénichou remained optimistic. His respect for Muslims, coupled with his complete faith in the French republican emancipatory project, led him to proclaim Algerian Jews’

²⁰¹ Bénichou, p. 186.

²⁰² Raymond Bénichou, *Ecrits juifs*. “Les Relations Judéo-Musulmans en Algérie”, originally published in *Information Juive*, 1952, p. 187.

²⁰³ For more on the riots, see Joshua Cole, “Antisémitisme et situation coloniale pendant l’entre-deux guerres en Algérie,” *Vingtième siècle*, no. 108 (October-December, 2010), pp. 3-23.

²⁰⁴ Raymond Bénichou, *Ecrits juifs*. “Les Relations Judéo-Musulmans en Algérie”, originally published in *Information Juive*, 1952., p. 189–190.

²⁰⁵ Bénichou, *Ecrits Juifs*, p. 188-191

²⁰⁶ See Bénichou, *Ecrits Juifs*, pages 188–191 for 1930s; see 192- 194 for middle eastern. This may take us back to the exact relation of the Crémieux decree.... The way traditional rabbis stood against it, the way they saw it as undermining their religion, of robbing the Jews of their religion.

happiness and satisfaction as Muslim subjects climbed the rungs of French society.²⁰⁷

Since the nineteenth century, the French administration had intentionally constructed a hierarchy that deprived Muslims of complete equality, using the concept of “personal status” as a rationale. Personal status was intended to project the idea that Muslims enjoyed private, religious rights. Bénichou saw through this façade as a ploy by the colonial administration, in collusion with the settlers, to withhold from the Muslim majority their civil rights. He noted that they harbored a dual racism, against *both* Jews and Muslims. As the violence of the Algerian War escalated in 1954–1955, Bénichou’s followers did not yet understand that it was now too late for the loyalty/loyalism balance.

The Machiavellis

In his article about Algeria, Touati had explained that real anti-Jewish dangers came from “what we call down there the ‘colons,’ French people, and more often ‘neo-French,’ and not some proclaimed natural sentiment of the Arab masses.”²⁰⁸ Touati’s statement harbored an unspoken distinction between the two Frances: one, represented by Algeria’s Europeans, was repugnant and hostile to Jews; the other, represented by France the metropole, was color-blind and amenable.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 196. Aussi haut que les dirigeants responsables des destinées de la France voudront élever celles-ci (les pop. Muslmanes)....aussi grande sera la satisfaction des populations d’origine juive de notre pays....”

²⁰⁸ Emile Touati, “Perspectives Nord-Africaines.” *Evidences*: Revue Publique sous l’égide de l’American Jewish Committee. 6ème année. # 42, Perspectives Nord-Africaines. 1954, p. 12.

Touati's usage of the term "neo-French" reveals his bias against the multiple other nationalities that had come to Algeria: Spanish, Maltese, and Italians among many others, including Turkish, Belgian, German, and Greek. However, to other observers, Jews fit in among the Europeans. Ferhat Abbas, the moderate Algerian nationalist leader, grouped Jews along with Maltese, Spaniards, and others, writing indignantly,

Someone has come between France and us. This someone is the Spaniard, the Neapolitan, it is the Jew, the Maltese. It is the entire emigrant community, made up of persons from all corners of the world and come to Algeria to live an easy life....Amidst [their] wealth and privilege, they deride us with their disgust and their hatred."²⁰⁹

It is clear from these two perspectives that the status of Algerian Jews was malleable, and depending upon whom you asked, they belonged either among the colonizers or the colonized. Whereas the European immigrants were able to assimilate into mainstream French-Algerian culture, a distinction between "Europeans" and "Jews" remained, even though they were all French citizens. Jewish children simply weren't invited into "European" homes. One man recalled, "I was allowed to play basketball with their sons, but I wasn't invited to their surprise parties.... I was an 'Arab Jew.'"²¹⁰ Ironically, the right-wing politician Pierre Poujade blamed Jews for their own isolation, a common anti-Semitic trope. Poujade had accused all Jews of being "true racists" because they didn't mix enough with others. They held onto their "Jewish personality."²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Quoted Gosnell page 162

²¹⁰ Roger Hanin, "A la casbah d'Alger on était riches de notre amour," in *Paris-Match* (24 November 2005). "J'avais le droit de jouer au basket avec leur fils, mais pas de venir m'amuser dans leurs surpris-partis[...]. J'étais un 'arabe-juif.'"

²¹¹ "M. Poujade veut exclure la vie publique les citoyens de 'fraiche date,'" *Information Juive* no. 74, February 1956, page 2.

Taking Bénichou's explanation about 1934 to the next logical step, Jewish leaders hypothesized that Europeans were coercing young Muslims to carry out crimes that they were not brave enough to commit themselves during the Algerian War. Some believed that the French army could be neglecting Jewish areas in its repression of nationalist violence. Jewish leaders were shocked as French authorities ransacked a Jewish community center, searching for evidence of collaboration with the FLN.²¹² Even the international Jewish press neglected to report on European antisemitism that persisted into the 1950s.²¹³

On this point, Lazarus was clear: that certain factions of the Government would once again attempt to excise Jews from French citizenship. Observers from other quarters were equally concerned that antisemites would try to force Algerian Jews from French Algeria. They feared that these antisemites would manipulate angry Muslim nationalists, and turn them against Jews. In a confidential note dated 18 September 1956, André Chouraqui wrote to AIU President René Cassin about the threatening rise of antisemitism from Europeans in Algeria. To Chouraqui, the program of Vichy was continuing in another form:

I must warn you of ... a rebirth of particularly worrisome antisemitism in Constantine. There were terrorist operations against the Jews, a boycott of Jewish businesses—all in Constantine.... I am asking myself if certain Machiavellis are maneuvering to provoke anti-Semitism out of the hostilities that lead to Muslim terrorism. ²¹⁴

²¹² Letter from Lazarus to LaCoste 25 June 1956. AIU JLIII.

²¹³ In fact, no significant articles were specifically written about Jews in Algeria until 1957. The majority of journalistic analysis came in 1961 after the majority of Jews had made their way into France. The evidence of this is found in private Lazarus correspondences, or archives of WJC meetings. Memoirs also attest to these uprisings, as does the American Jewish Year book.

²¹⁴ Chouraqui to Cassin, 18 September 1956. AIU Rene Cassin files.

Here, Chouraqui has echoed the concerns of Bénichou and Lazarus: namely that the same racists and antisemites who had supported Vichy were now joining forces with nationalists in the name of antisemitism. In Chouraqui's rendering, though, these puppeteers were using Algerian nationalist rancor and redirecting it against the Jews. Although the new "Muslim terrorism" was distressing, it was actually the "European" antisemites—other French citizens of Algeria—who were suspected of organizing, encouraging, or channeling Arab antisemitism.²¹⁵

War Begins

To FLN leaders and outside observers alike, August 20, 1955 was the day when the Algerian War began in earnest.²¹⁶ The Phillipeville massacre, in which the FLN murdered more than one hundred people, and the reprisals by the French military were events of dramatic importance, both for proponents of French Algeria and to the quickly evolving FLN. While the FLN killing spree marked the beginning of civilian-focused terrorism, the French retribution marked the onset of the French Army's aggressive repression.²¹⁷ In the small mining town of El Halia that day, the FLN Wilaya Two section—led by Lakhdar Ben Tobbal and Youssef Zighout—recruited several Muslim civilians to terrorize the town of Phillipeville. The FLN

²¹⁵ Later on in the war, however, the situations would be reversed. As Muslim racism became more mainstream, Jews would come together with other French "Europeans" of Algeria. They would ride the same boats toward the métropole as they flowed out of the nation of Algeria back "home" to France in 1961 and 1962. However, in these early years, Jews in both France and Algeria suspected a literal resurgence of fascism; they still feared for their fragile French citizenship.

²¹⁶ Ali Kafi's memoirs reflects this, cited in Meynier page 12. Pierre Vidal-Naquet remembered August 20, 1955, as the day when the war *really* began—not on November 1, 1954. (Vidal-Naquet, *Mémoires*: v. 2. Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1998, page 23.) Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 139. Myriam Ben was traumatized by the French reprisals. (Ben interview, Dore-Audbert, *Femmes Françaises*, page 171).

²¹⁷ B. Stora, *La Gangrène et l'oubli*, page 16.

lawyer Gisèle Halimi described it as a “rampage in the homes and offices of the iron mine, smashing, ransacking, burning, shooting down with rifles or revolvers, sometimes even hacking their victims to pieces with knives, axes, shovels. In the plants, European workmen are similarly butchered.”²¹⁸ The FLN killed 123 people in total—71 Europeans, and 52 “natives,” many of whom were prominent politicians. Among them was one well-known Jewish family from Constantine.²¹⁹

After their killing spree, the rebels had severed the electric wires, so it was impossible to sound an emergency alarm. There have been some speculations as to their reasoning. Some believe that the two leaders wanted to secure their positions within the FLN. Others maintain that they wanted to prevent the moderate nationalists from negotiating with the French government.²²⁰ In any case, they succeeded in spreading the nationalist revolution onto a massive civilian plain, sustaining an atmosphere of violence and generating tension among the three communities.²²¹ The violence spurred by Tobal and Zighout succeeded in quieting competing Algerian nationalist groups (like the Trotskyist MNA, for instance) and consolidating the FLN as the sole voice of the Algerian revolution. Among the French left, the FLN became known as the dominant nationalist group, as of September 15, 1955, when a French journalist published an interview with an FLN fighter. Although the initial insurrections in November 1954 belonged to several groups of Algerian militants, retrospectively (as of 1955), the FLN took credit as the

²¹⁸ As described by Gisèle Halimi, *Milk for the Orange Tree*, page 113

²¹⁹ B. Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 139.

²²⁰ Jacques Duquesne, *Pour comprendre la guerre d'Algérie*, page 49.

²²¹ James LeSueur, *Uncivil War*, page 34.

lone group of nationalist rebels in Algeria.²²² As both Meynier and Harbi have illustrated, tensions within the FLN became pronounced as the war evolved.²²³

The French generals understood the Phillipeville attack as a direct challenge, transforming the civil war from an intra-Muslim dispute that was punctuated by assassinations, into a war between “Europeans,” backed up by the French Army, and “Muslims” defended by the National Liberation Army, the ALN.²²⁴ On 20 August, the retributions by the French military were devastating; the French-estimated Algerian dead were 1,273—if not ten times that number (some current estimates are 12,000). Frantz Fanon later called it “the point of no return.”²²⁵ Jacques Soustelle, the Governor-General of Algeria, until then a Socialist who advocated integrating Muslims into the French Departments along the Mediterranean, was reportedly so shocked by the events, that he “changed sides”—leaving liberalism behind to defend adamantly French Algeria.²²⁶ Soustelle then gave the Army *carte blanche*, and reinforced the number of troops—in November 1954, there had been fewer than 60,000 soldiers in Algeria. By July 1956, there were over 400,000 troops.²²⁷

Even with such chaos unfolding, Jewish leaders publicized the idea that they were laying the foundations for a strong Jewish future in Algeria. Late in 1955, the consistory began constructing Algeria’s very first rabbinical school.²²⁸ Jewish

²²² Stora *Gangrène et Oubli*, page 49.

²²³ Harbi, Mohammed. *Le FLN: Mirage et Réalité. : Des origines à la prise du pouvoir (1945-1962)*. (Paris: Editions Jeune Afrique, 1980). Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure*.

²²⁴ Benjamin Stora, *Gangrène et Oubli*, Harbi, *Le FLN*.

²²⁵ Quoted in Adam Shatz, “The Torture of Algiers,” *NY Review of Books*, volume 49, number 18, 21 November 2002.

²²⁶ Meynier page 20.

²²⁷ Stora, *Gangrène et Oubli*, page 17, 20.

²²⁸ Benjamin Heler, “Une École Rabbinique? Pourquoi?” *Information Juive*, no. 73, Dec. 1955–Jan 1956.

leaders lamented a tragedy that was unfolding in Algeria brought on by the modern “spiritual eclipse” that would be addressed by Algeria’s own rabbinical élites.²²⁹ France’s Grand Rabbi Jacob Kaplan traveled to Algeria in order to ceremonially set the institution’s first brick. Lazarus displayed the rabbi’s photo prominently in the *Information Juive*, a public message that the Jews were here to stay.²³⁰



France’s Grand Rabbi Jacob Kaplan ceremoniously placing the first stone for Algiers’ rabbinical school in late 1955. (“La pose de la première pierre de l’Ecole Rabbinique d’Algérie” *Information Juive*, no. 74, February 1956.)

In October 1955, the Grand Rabbi of Algeria, Maurice Eisenbeth, published a special message for Yom Kippur.²³¹ Acknowledging that it had been a woeful year for all of Algeria’s inhabitants, as blood had spilled in vain, and peace remained elusive, he lamented, “We continue to live through painful and atrocious times,

²²⁹ Benjamin Heler, *Ibid.* and Federation of Algerian Jewish communities, Ecole Rabbinique, first list of enrollment, 20 April 1956 (From LazAIU).

²³⁰ “La pose de la première pierre de l’Ecole Rabbinique d’Algérie” *Information Juive*, no. 74, February 1956.

²³¹ Rabbi Eisenbeth, “Message de Kippour,” October 1955, *Information Juive*, no. 71, p.4.

which result from hatred and fear.”²³² The rabbi then invited all inhabitants of Algeria to meditate on Yom Kippur’s message of forgiveness—and to know that God was merciful and He would forgive. He also prayed for more tangible values that still reflected the Loyalism/Loyalty paradox: respect and human dignity for *all* religions, and the continued prestige and grandeur of France, which, he hoped, would unite all of God’s children on both sides of the Mediterranean. The rabbi, in desperation, tried to sustain an appearance of neutrality and a belief in French republicanism. Like Lazarus, Touati, and Bénichou before him, Eisenbeth put forth a particular vision of France as a protector and savior of all the peoples under its sovereignty. The rabbi’s plea for a more peaceful year went unheeded. Rather, 1956 was filled with more bloodshed, more terror, more afflictions, and more assassinations. In 1955, the Government estimated the total number of attacks at 5,500. The year 1956 saw that number multiplied five times when there were 26,000 total attacks—about 500 to 800 per month.²³³

Unable to find a reassuring response from the French Army—whose job was to protect all French citizens—Jewish victims of violence voiced their growing frustrations to Jacques Lazarus. They wrote in with private complaints, and quite surprisingly, these complaints described disturbances from Europeans or injustices by the French Army, and not from the FLN, MNA, or Muslims generally. Local newspapers described the nature of the new kind of anonymous violence. These local crimes differ from conventional portrayals of the wartime terrorism, such as those depicted in Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle for Algiers*.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ “Chronologie de l’évolution” document found in the CAOM archives, pp. 4–5.

Despite his best efforts to maintain neutrality, Lazarus's actions began to form the basis of an incipient Jewish politics. Algerian Jewry had never before been a political body. Henri Chemouilli credited Lazarus singlehandedly with fostering a Jewish politics:

Algerian Judaism as a political force, we owe this attribution to Lazarus. ... Before him, Algerian Jews organized only in moments of panic or danger. Once the danger passed, each person returned to his own affairs. Algerian Jewry is Lazarus's permanent 'affair.'²³⁴

Bystanders in towns and cities: unclear violence

A look at a few of the cases addressed by Lazarus's office in 1955 can shed some light on what the priorities were for the CJAES and can also indicate common Jewish fears before Lazarus had made any clear declaration. In that year, most cases dealt with harassments from Europeans, either by the general population, or the French Armed Forces, which were then flowing into Algeria. However, when we look at the local newspaper clippings that outline terrorist attacks, quite often there is no clear perpetrator.

On 26 October 1955 in the town of Souk-Ahras in Constantine, a "European" insurance salesman loudly proclaimed, "If we are in this situation in North Africa, it is the fault of the Jews, Mendès France, and co."²³⁵ A Jewish man nearby objected forcefully to the salesman's comment, and this led to a small scuffle between Europeans and "Jews."

²³⁴ Chemouilli, *Diaspora Méconnue*. page 294.

²³⁵ Letter from Jules Cohen to Lazarus, dated October 26, 1955, AIU JL1. « a dit à haute voix et cela pour être entendu de tous, 'Si nous sommes dans cette situation en Afrique du Nord, c'est par la faute des Juifs Mendes France & Co. »

The president of the Jewish community of the town filed a complaint, after which an investigation by the police and the town hall ensued. In a letter to Lazarus, the president wrote with concern: "This incident has made an impression on the peaceful Jewish population of our town, and it is our priority to live on good terms with both the European and indigenous elements (*sic*) of our town."²³⁶ He relied on the CJAES to intervene at a high governmental level, for his biggest fear was that the salesman might provoke further incidents of antisemitism elsewhere in North Africa. This incident in Souk-Ahras is an example of how Jews began to fear that Europeans and Muslims might join forces against them. Lazarus reached out to Soustelle. "French reactionary elements were trying to excite the Muslims, to redirect their resentments against the Jews," Lazarus explained.²³⁷

The general-governor's official statement on the matter was that no further action was necessary, because no one was hurt and the town of Souk-Ahras seemed to be intact. He followed with a promise to Lazarus. "Please know that I will always pay close attention to ensure that there will be no manifestation of racial rivalries in Algeria," Soustelle wrote.²³⁸ The governor's response was intended to reassure Lazarus about what concerned him the most. Lazarus wanted to prevent any kind of Christian conspiracy to turn Muslims against Jews.

²³⁶ Letter from Jules Cohen to Lazarus, dated October 26, 1955, AIU JL1.

²³⁷ Letter dated 1 December 1955 addressed to Soustelle from Lazarus. "elements réactionnaires français visent à exciter les musulmans, à détourner leurs resentiments contre les juifs, comme cela s'est fait dans le passé, en utilisant divers slogans, en exploitant aussi la situation nouvelle dans le Moyen-Orient."

²³⁸ Letter dated 13 December 1955, addressed to Mr. Lazarus from Soustelle. « Croyez bien que je veillerai tjrs avec une attention soutenue à ce qu'aucune manifestation de rivalité raciale ne puisse se développer en Algérie. »

While a street scuffle may not seem like much compared to massacres such as Phillipeville, the fact that the leader of Algeria's Jews had used it to cite his own concerns that Europeans were turning Muslims against Jews, in a letter, no less to the Governor-General, shows that this European-Muslim conspiracy was at the height of his concerns. This episode reveals more about Lazarus's state of mind (and presumably like-minded co-religionists) than it does about any palpable threat to the Jews. While the incident itself was indeed minor, it touched a nerve among the Jewish leaders.

Even though Jews as a unified group preferred to refrain from politics, they were accused of taking down the French empire, for several reasons, not the least of which was their common "origins" with Pierre Mendès-France, France's Jewish prime minister. Mendès-France was responsible for negotiating France's retreat from Indochina in early 1954. He was accused of giving up on the French empire, and, in anti-Semitic language, "selling it off on the cheap." In Algeria, among members of the "ultras," these two themes of empire and disloyal Jews resonated. European extremists loathed his policies; their protests deteriorated into vitriolic antisemitism against Jews in general. Frustrated by the potential loss of their colony, they fell back on accusations of Jewish conspiracy. For example, historian Pierre Birnbaum cited a letter from a French-Algerian to Mendès-France from Oran on 6 May 1955:

You don't give a damn for Algeria because you are a long way away... You are all dirty Jews, you and your whole filthy underworld, all Jews, are the accursed of God.²³⁹

²³⁹ Quoted by Pierre Birnbaum, *Anti-Semitism in Modern France*, p. 291.

An angry crowd of-European ultras demonstrated against the newly elected Socialist prime minister, Guy Mollet, during his visit to Algiers on February 6, 1956. The crowd of “ultra” Europeans, most of whom supported Pujade, disagreed with the fact that Mollet appointed a resident minister for Algeria.²⁴⁰ The move signaled that Algerian policy would be dictated from Paris; Europeans, eager to defend French Algeria, wanted a representative from Algeria. When Mollet appeared at the war memorial in Algiers, the mob of Europeans surrounded him and screamed slogans, hurling rocks and tomatoes at him for nearly two hours.²⁴¹ The day became known as the “Day of Tomatoes.”²⁴² While Algiers was filled with police and army officials, they notoriously treated European uprisings lightly, focusing their energy on suspected Muslims. Protestors were not just anti-Mollet—they shouted anti-Jewish slogans at the rally.²⁴³ As a result of the uprisings, Mendès France retired from his position as Minister of State, and Mollet gave up his neutral stance, committing to peace in Algeria. The entirety of the Socialist administration disintegrated.²⁴⁴ Henri Chemouilli said he felt that at that moment “France, democracy, and socialism” had failed in Algeria.²⁴⁵ The demonstrators that day coined the phrase “Algérie Française!”²⁴⁶ Protests against the government devolved

²⁴⁰ Connelly, page 97.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre*, p 19.

²⁴³ Soummam Appeal, (“Ce n’est qu’après les troubles colonio-fascistes du 6 fev [1956] au course desquels sont réapparus les slogans antijuifs, que la comm. Israélite s’est orientée vers une attitude neutraliste.”)

²⁴⁴ Stora, *Guerre d’Algérie* page 20.

²⁴⁵ Henri Chemouilli, page 270. “Il est vrai que ‘la conduite d’alger’ faite à Guy Mollet le 6 fev 1956 inquiéta la comm. Isr. La France, la démocratie, le socialisme, étaient bafoués en leurs representants les plus éminents. Un grain pointait à l’horizon.”

²⁴⁶ Courriere 629

into familiar calls of “Down with the Jews!” and “France for the French!”²⁴⁷ After the February 1956 rally, Poujade gave a press conference to the foreign press association in Algiers. He demanded that Jews (Israelites) be prohibited from serving in a French governmental position unless their family had been in France for at least three generations.²⁴⁸ While this was presumably a direct sniping against Mendès-France, it was also a racist statement, revealing Poujade’s agenda, for which he gained massive support from Algeria’s Europeans.

After Mollet appointed Robert LaCoste as resident minister of Algeria, he brought a bill of “special powers” before the National Assembly. The bill allowed the government to spend as much as needed in order to modernize Algeria and to fight against the rebels. As had been the case since the French conquest, the Army had special privileges within Algeria.²⁴⁹ He also divided the Algerian territory into three zones: operations, pacifications, and prohibited. Each zone had a committed squad of soldiers in order to keep peace: Operations was for killing the rebels; pacification was for “protecting” Algerian populations by supporting the police and gendarmes; and inhabitants of the prohibited areas were sent to resettlement camps.²⁵⁰ In March 1956, the Assembly passed the bill 455 to 76, and “special powers” now trumped individual rights in Algeria.

For Jewish Algerians, it was not just the European settler population that evoked fears of resurgent fascism—so did the new visible presence of the French

²⁴⁷ Pierre Birnbaum, *Anti-Semitism in Modern France*, p. 281; AJYB

²⁴⁸ “M. Poujade veut exclure la vie publique les citoyens de ‘fraiche date,’” *Information Juive* no. 74, February 1956, page 2.

²⁴⁹ Schreier documents the fact that this had been the case since the French conquest of Algiers, which began in 1830. (Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, chapter one).

²⁵⁰ Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d’Algérie*. page 20

army. In May 1956, six official inspectors raided the Constantine consistory, with no explanation as to what they were looking for. According to the official order, the inspectors rummaged through everything: “the president’s office, desk, chest, cash register, various armoires, the libraries of the cultural commission, the children’s nursery, the Grand Rabbi’s office, the rabbinical court, the local youth lounges, the wine cave, and so on.”²⁵¹ The institution’s Jewish representatives were enraged by the invasion, which evoked memories of the Vichy era. The three-hour hunt of the consistory also shed doubt on the Jews’ loyalties at a time when they were particularly sensitive to having their patriotism to the French Republic questioned. It evoked apprehensions about the future of the community, which had “too often been tragically affected in the past.”²⁵² For the community, it was eerily similar to the random searches that Jews endured during World War II. As a mainstream, centralizing French institution, the consistory’s only defining feature was the fact that it was a place for Jews to gather. Lazarus requested a confidential meeting with Robert LaCoste to express the Jewish collectivity’s shock at the intrusion.

Another case involved a Jewish soldier who had been patrolling a train station in Algeria. When he vanished while on duty, his father wrote a distressed letter to the government. They did not respond after the first letter. When they received the father’s second letter, they described his disappearance as an exceptional situation, but refused to compensate the family, or to conduct a sweeping search for the missing man.

²⁵¹ Letter from Lazarus to LaCoste 25 June 1956. AIUJLII.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

The old antisemitic tropes, in which Jews were blamed for orchestrating Algeria's problems, continued to materialize. Only now Muslims embraced conspiracy theories in addition to European settlers. In September 1956, after the infamous Milk-Bar bombing, which killed three Europeans and injured dozens more, authorities accused a young Jewish woman Emma Nahon of orchestrating the attack. Two months later, an article in *France Soir* claimed that the Muslims of Constantine were upset about Jews vandalizing their shops.²⁵³ Lazarus believed that both reports were actually rumors, intending to alienate Jews by portraying them as enemies—in the first case, against Europeans, and in the second, against Muslims. The loyalty/loyalism balance was disintegrating. Accusing the press and the authorities of antisemitism and conspiracy, Lazarus tried to protect Jews, even those who were suspected of violence or crimes.

Vichy's Rebirth

The success of Pierre Poujade's political party—only two years after the guerilla fighting began in Algeria—pointed to a lingering rightwing nationalism in colony and metropole alike.²⁵⁴ Poujade was a former supporter of Pétain during the Vichy Regime, and he joined up with the De Gaulle's Army later on. An ideology was named after him—known as Poujadism, which held wide appeal for its populism, anti-statism, and stance against taxes. It had echoes of WWII-era fascism, but this was not enough to sustain its strong base of support. Within the entire French

²⁵³ "En réponse à des informations tendancieuses," *Information Juive*, Feb 1957, #85, page 3.

²⁵⁴ Some of the older historiography of about Poujade analyzes his movement as part of a new form of fascism. See for instance, Milza, *Fascisme français: passé et présent*; Paris, Flammarion, 1991; Rioux, *La Révolte de Pierre Poujade*, 1981; Stanley Hoffmann et al, *Le Mouvement Poujade*.

Republic (Algeria included) Poujade's party, the UDCA, won fifty-two seats in Parliament and received over 2.6 million votes in January 1956—about 12% of France's total delegation. Poujadists received 52 out of the 623 seats in the National Assembly—two more than the communists.²⁵⁵ It was extremely popular among Algeria's Europeans. Jews feared that this was due to the same political and ideological factions that had supported the French collaboration in the Nazi genocide fifteen years earlier. The Poujadist agenda for a "really French France" (connected to a "French Algeria") was a barely veiled affront to both Muslim *and* Jewish citizens. In the January 1956 meeting of the WJC, a year after Lazarus's first mention of Algeria, a delegate compared Poujade to Hitler:

Poujade embodies all the typical features of a fascist leader. He is the 'chief,' to whom his followers have to swear allegiance. The actual text of his oath is not known. His ideas are laid down in a book whose title, *J'ai Choisi le Combat*, reminds one of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.²⁵⁶

Others nicknamed him "Pujadolf."²⁵⁷ The potential for a fascist resurgence had become an ongoing obsession among Jewish leaders. "It is terrible to contemplate that such a movement could come into existence and spread successfully only ten years after Hitler's fall," said the WJC delegate. "The fight against Poujadism is a fight against the legacy of Hitler."²⁵⁸ He enjoined Jews all over the world to engage openly in the fight. This candid call for action against Poujadism is diametrically opposed to Algerian Jews' notable restraint toward Muslim/Arab activism.

²⁵⁵ Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie*. p. 19

²⁵⁶ AJA. A95/4 Minutes. Meeting of the WJC Executive Committee @ the Washington Hotel in London. January 21 - 24, 1955, p. 52

²⁵⁷ For example, "M. Poujade veut exclure la vie publique les citoyens de 'fraiche date,'" *Information Juive* no. 74, February 1956, page 2.

²⁵⁸ AJA. A95/4 Minutes, p. 53.

While Poujade's advances came as a surprise to many liberals in the métropole, it confirmed the worst fears of Algerian Jewish leaders.²⁵⁹ Poujade was a reincarnation of some of Vichy's most vicious innovators. While Poujadist anti-Jewish statements were widespread, an ongoing theme emerged, in which Poujadists accused Jews of destroying the French empire. This may have been in order to gain the support of some of the Europeans, who at this point feared the disintegration of the French empire. The most vicious propaganda brought out Pierre Mendès France's Jewish heritage, blaming him—and all the Jews—of ripping apart the French republic.



An April 1956 cartoon from the Poujadist monthly *Fraternité Française* depicted a Jewish caricature as the movement's enemy.

An April 1956 cartoon depicted Pierre Mendès France, or an abstract Jew like him, dressed as a peddler and performer, a street fiddler begging for money. The

²⁵⁹ Douglas Johnson, Obituary, Pierre Poujade, *The Guardian*. 27 August 2003.

caption reads: “Ladies and Gents, give me some change. I am going to play my grand anti-Poujade number for you!” The article below the cartoon discussed the mounting movement against Poujade, accusing Sartre, Mendès France, and others of betraying the French nation: “This man doesn’t know who he is anymore, English, American, or French.”²⁶⁰ The performer, though, embodied a Jewish stereotype. His crime was beyond political; he was a racial aberration. Jews lay outside the “French family”—their bloodlines didn’t match, and therefore they were suspect. This was a troubling repetition of the calumnies visited on Alfred Dreyfus.

The Poujadists did not just consider the Jews treasonous, but believed further that their culture, ethnicity, and their race, did not even belong among French people. Poujadists questioned Jewish loyalties to France in the political sphere, but they did so for racial or ethnic reasons, sarcastically excluding Jews from the French community. The French right—as it had in the Vichy Regime—was rejecting the idea of France the Republic, in favor of a racial regime.

²⁶⁰ *Fraternité Française*, n. 48, 21 April 1956, p. 2.



A *Fraternité Française* illustrated series shows a greedy Jewish spy from Israel (right) collaborating with an FLN militant (left).

A panel from an illustrated strip from the 1956 Poujadist newspaper, *Fraternité Française* concocted a story about a fictionalized Jewish real-estate agent, Claude Zitoun, who was said to belong to Algiers' wealthy bourgeoisie.²⁶¹ According to the tale, Zitoun frequented "chic bars," and in the evening he left his wife and children at home to attend to "mysterious affairs." Above, he is seen in a covert meeting with a Muslim nationalist leader. Zitoun had been arrested for purchasing weapons from Israel and then smuggling them to the insurgents. When asked to explain his motives, he claimed that he wanted to defend the poor, defenseless Israelites, who, in this account, had no nation of their own.

This fabrication came from the imagination of some paranoid Poujadists, who wanted to blame a devious Jew for bringing down French Algeria. It is a contorted portrayal of the precarious position of Algerian Jews; Zitoun was playing a

²⁶¹ Jacques Demolay and Daniel Lamargelle, "Le Caïd des 'Mauser'," in *Fraternité Française* May 12, 1956.

“double game,” at once fooling French settlers by helping the FLN, and also hoarding the weapons for the Jewish community’s use. Because the writers used the term “*caïd*” (a traditional Muslim leader) to define Zitoun’s role, they pointed to his confused ethnic provenance. It was the state of Israel that empowered him with bombs and a network of espionage. This strip was relying upon an antisemitic caricature in order to blame Jews for a fabricated anti-French collusion with the FLN.

The antisemitic propaganda of the Poujadists reinforced the perception that a Vichy front was reemerging. It made Jewish leaders even more ardent in their embrace of multicultural French Algeria. They believed that their vision of France could strengthen Muslim communities, and it could even help the Jewish tribes who lived in the Sahara. They believed that all should have equal rights and that a republican, multicultural, and just French government could repair Algeria. What worried them was the resurgence of France’s nationalistic side, represented by Poujade. Jews were still engaging in a 1940s’-style anti-fascist war.

Terrorism: Who?

From mid-1956, Lazarus began compiling evidence of Jewish victims of terrorism. Because Algerian cities were segregated—non-Jewish European areas, Muslim areas, Jewish areas—it would have been hard to throw a bomb into a random crowd. To him at least, it was pretty clear who the targets were. There were Jewish cafés, Jewish-owned shops, kosher butchers, and of course synagogues

throughout each town. Between 1954 and 1956, the number of attacks increased exponentially.²⁶²

The local press referred to assailants as simply "*hors-la-loi*," or outlaws. Shadowy figures lurked behind assassinations and bombings; perhaps they were young Muslim men, but bystanders often wondered, where did their arms come from? The kinds of weapons used were diverse, and newspaper reporters treated violent acts on a case-by-case basis. In late 1957, the newspapers would begin attributing attacks to the FLN, but in 1956, the initial listings blame grenades, stabbings, and plastique bombs on simply "rebels," "attackers," "terrorists," or "outlaws."²⁶³ These attacks are even more difficult to analyze, given the popular hypothesis that European antisemites were organizing "Muslims" against Jews. Or the popular theory that the patrolling officers were more willing to allow terrorists into heavily Jewish areas. What follows are some examples of attacks that either wounded or killed Jews in 1956.

On 6 April, a man organized an attack against an "Israelite café" on a crowded street in Constantine. The attackers had placed a grenade under a table. Eight were wounded.²⁶⁴

Saturday morning, 27 May, at 10:30am, a grenade was thrown at the door to the Batna synagogue, injuring two men who were standing by. A "jeune israéliite" who witnessed the attack pursued its perpetrators, two Muslims, who were

²⁶² Delegation Generale d'Algérie, "Evolution du terrorisme FLN," dated October 23, 1961, page 13, CAOM 81F.

²⁶³ There are countless examples of this. For instance, "L'Attentat contre le bar Nessim," *Echo d'Alger*, April 7, 1956 referred to "the attacker"; "Deux terroristes capturés après un attentat contre la synagogue," *Echo d'Alger*, May 28, 1956.

²⁶⁴ April 7, 1956: "L'attentat contre le bar Nessim." *Écho d'Alger*.

apprehended by the police. They claimed that their grenade was purchased from a candy salesman in town.²⁶⁵ Was the candy salesman Muslim, Jewish, or European? There is no way to know.

Saturday night, 3 June, at 1 am, a witness saw smoke coming out of Mr. Tordjman's auto-parts store, and called the fire department. Barely back at the station, the firemen got a second call. After smashing in the door to the synagogue, the same terrorists threw a bottle of ignited gasoline inside. Flames quickly spread throughout the building.²⁶⁶

The following day, June 4, in Ain M'Lila, a Jewish medical doctor and a nurse were in their office, finishing the day of patients. The nurse invited two patients into the office, when each man took out a dagger and stabbed the doctor and nurse several times. The doctor was injured in his neck, the nurse in his back. The doctor ran to his desk drawer and took out a revolver, killing both aggressors.²⁶⁷ There was no indication of their ethnicity.

On September 3, a well-known shop-owner was shot in the head as he opened his shop at 7:30 in the morning. The man, Émile Atlan, was Jewish and was vice-president of the Association de 8 Novembre, a political lobby that commemorated the liberation of Algeria from the Nazis. He had also been the recipient of a *croix de guerre* for his service in the war.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ May 28, 1956: "À Batna: Deux terroristes capturés après un attentat contre la synagogue." *Écho d'Alger*.

²⁶⁶ June 4, 1956. "Des terroristes incendient la synagogue d'Orléansville." *Écho d'Alger*. (Orléansville).

²⁶⁷ June 5, 1956. "Poignarde par deux 'clients' dans son cabinet d'Ain M'Lila. Le Dr. Tenoudji abat ses agresseurs." *Journal d'Alger*. (Ain M'Lila)

²⁶⁸ September 3, 1956. "Alors qu'il ouvrait son magasin samedi matin, place de Chartres, M. Emile Atlan VP de l'association des Compagnons du 8 Novembre grièvement blessé par un terroriste." *Journal d'Alger*.

Two of the attacks took place inside or near a synagogue. One of them took place inside a Jewish café. Two (the shopkeeper, the doctor) were premeditated assassinations against Jewish professionals, one of whom was the vice-president to an anti-fascist organization. From this evidence, it would be hard to deny that these attacks were targeting Jews, and some of them targeted specific individuals. Attacks on synagogues were all too familiar for Algerian Jews—especially in Constantine. However, the perpetrators' affiliations were unknown, even though they were caught or killed. Even if the majority were Muslim, because of the FLN's leaderless disorganization, they did not admit that their actions were in service of an FLN mission. What's more, their weapons still may have come from European salesmen. Jewish leaders' hypothesis that the French authorities held ultimate responsibility for Jewish persecution in Algeria continued to appear.

In the shadows of the violence throughout the year 1956, the editorial staff of the *Information Juive* wrote a sad, yet hopeful Rosh Hashanah message:

What can we hope for in these first days of the New Year, when fears for tomorrow, sadness, and, in too many cases, death, reign as queens of our land of Algeria?²⁶⁹

And then, a nod to Jewish tradition: "Isn't it Jewish destiny to pray and hope against all odds?"²⁷⁰ As we shall see in the following chapter, Algerian Jewish leaders did eventually attribute attacks to Algerian nationalists. But the above editorial reflection was vague—exactly who were the Jews fearful of? The first two years of

²⁶⁹ *Information Juive*, no. 80, Aug–Sept 1956, « Que souhaiter en ces premiers jours d'année nouvelle, alors que la crainte du lendemain, la tristesse, et dans trop de cas la mort, règnent en maîtresses sur notre terre d'Algérie ? »

²⁷⁰ *Information Juive*, no. 80, Aug–Sept 1956, "Pourtant, n'est-il pas dans le destin du judaïsme d'espérer envers et contre tout ? »

the war, the FLN was divided into several zones, which did not share a single political agenda. Furthermore, when journalists reported the violence, they did not label the attacks as either “nationalist” or “antisemitic.”

Given the overt antisemitism within Algeria and the successful inroads of the Poujadist party, it is understandable that Jews had not yet taken a unified public stand on the Algerian War. Jacques Lazarus still struggled to bring Algerian Jews together in a shared Jewish consciousness, and he didn’t want to risk proclaiming a Jewish political stance.

The Jews’ hesitation did not pass unnoticed. As the nationalists gained momentum, the FLN emerged as the predominant and “single” voice of the “Algerian” nation. In an attempt to unify all of the factions of Algerian nationalism, the FLN first adopted a socialist, democratic vocabulary.²⁷¹ Throughout the war, various FLN writers drew attention to France’s history of violence and discrimination toward Jews. For instance, an FLN document submitted to the United Nations in 1957 said the following: “Those responsible for the antisemitic crises from which the Jews of Algeria had suffered has always been Europeans, never Moslems.... There was a profound peace between Arabs and Jews in Algeria.”²⁷² In other words, militants from the FLN, whether Jewish or not, *emphasized* the distinctions between Jews and Europeans in Algeria. This did not bode well for the Jewish majority, however, who preferred to sustain a façade of “loyalism” to the French cause.

²⁷¹ Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN, Mirage et Réalité: Des origines à la prise du pouvoir (1945-1962)*. (Paris: Editions Jeune Afrique, 1980).

²⁷² Quoted in UN Background Documents, pp 2-3 but orig from the *American Jewish Yearbook*. Dec 1957.

Conclusion: A different kind of war

In writing about the Algerian War, scholars and journalists have tended to emphasize that the Jewish negotiations with the FLN as the sole interaction that mattered.²⁷³ In seeing the war as a single block, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that a large number of Algerian Jews were wary of their European neighbors, the French army, and Poujade's political party. These groups, Jewish leaders believed, could conspire to bring back a second Vichy Regime. They feared that the antisemites might take advantage of the chaotic atmosphere of the battle for Algerian independence in order to turn Muslims against Jews.

Additionally, the journalistic and historical tendency to refer to the war as a dyad—a battle between “Europeans” and “Muslims”—has neglected to include the Jews. However, as we have seen, Algerian Jews had unique concerns. After two years of attempted Jewish neutrality, both the FLN and the French authorities had become suspicious of the Jews. If time stopped before 1957, one can see how the Jews were lost in the sectarian confusion. Ethnicity did not neatly align with politics; the enemy was unclear—and antisemitism was still a lingua franca among Europeans, regardless of their class or political affiliation.

Until that point, Lazarus's statement at the WJC, in which he expressed the Algerian Jews' loyalty to France, was the only public declaration of a “Jewish” position on the war. At this same time, nationalist leaders were in the process of

²⁷³ For instance, Ayoun, Richard. “Les Juifs d'Algérie pendant la guerre d'indépendance (1954 – 1962).” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29).

developing a political platform. When FLN diplomats searched for a unified “Jewish” position on the war, they unearthed Lazarus’s 1955 speech at the World Jewish Congress. In many ways, this moment set the course for the remaining years of the Algerian War.

Chapter Three

Israelites or Israelis? Algerian Jews between Zionism and Arabism, 1956–58

When Abbane Ramdane, an Algerian nationalist visionary, was released from prison in late 1955, he had a new plan for the FLN. He wanted to organize its political platform, which would legitimize the Front as a governmental entity, rather than an anarchic, Islamist conglomerate. He also planned to assemble all of the various military leaders for the first time.²⁷⁴ On August 20, 1956, in an unknown location somewhere near a valley called Soummam, Abbane (as he was known) presided over the FLN's first official political congress. In their Soummam Platform, which was published in the FLN's newspaper *Moudjahid*, Abbane's group criticized the so-called "exterior" leaders, declaring that neither "Cairo" nor "Moscow" would direct the FLN's activities.²⁷⁵ In contrast to many of the exiled FLN leaders who resided outside of Algeria, the Soummam writers did not support the idea that all "Arabs" should unite against Christians and Jews. Instead, they believed in an independent and democratic Algeria. Abbane was, in fact, an atheist.²⁷⁶

During the Soummam Congress, a defected leader of the Algerian Communist Party, Mohammed Lebjaoui, wrote an entire section devoted to Algerian Jews, whom he invited to join the struggle for nationalism.²⁷⁷ He developed that section into a confrontational letter to the rabbi and the community heads, which was widely

²⁷⁴ On Abbane Ramdane, see Khalfa Mameri, *Abbane Ramdane*, Paris, Harmattan, 1998; Gilbert Meynier, *FLN: Histoire interieure*, page 308.

²⁷⁵ Published originally in *El Moudjahid* and a nearly complete version in Yves Courrière, *La Guerre d'Algérie 1954–1957*, pp. 902–30.

²⁷⁶ Mameri, *Abbane Ramdane*, page 228.

²⁷⁷ Meynier, *FLN: Histoire interieure* page 256. Mameri disagrees, guessing that Amar Ouzzegane wrote that section, Mameri, page 198.

published in both local and French newspapers on October 1, 1956.²⁷⁸ On behalf of the FLN, Lebjaoui expressed the “hope that the leaders of the Jewish community would have the wisdom to contribute to the construction of a free and truly fraternal Algeria.”²⁷⁹

While Jewish leaders preferred to remain silent, they could no longer do so when directly confronted. Even though the letter was not addressed to them, the CJAES responded in the first-ever Jewish Declaration about the Algerian War, which was also published widely.²⁸⁰ They explained that while they profoundly respected Muslims, they would never abandon their French citizenship, reiterating Raymond Bénichou’s commitment to balancing loyalism and loyalty. Together, the FLN’s appeal and the CJAES’s Declaration signaled an end of any true dialogue between Jewish and Muslim leaders in Algeria. While the FLN’s propaganda arm relentlessly pursued the Jewish community until the war’s end, the CJAES continued to “measure each word and each comma.”²⁸¹ The ethnic and legal divisions that had been generated by French colonization became insurmountable in this pivotal period (1956–58).

Despite the inviting tone of the FLN’s Appeal and the CJAES’s carefully crafted response, local Algerian politics began to reflect world events. The Jewish Declaration insisted, “The events that are currently unfolding in the Middle East will

²⁷⁸ The FLN “Appeal to our Israelite Compatriots” was published in many Algerian dailies, including *L’Echo d’Oran*.

²⁷⁹ “Appeal to our Israelite Compatriots”, “C’est parce que le FLN considère les Israélites algériens comme les fils de notre patrie qu’il espère que les dirigeants de la communauté juive auront le sagesse de contribuer à l’édification d’une Algérie libre et véritablement fraternelle.”

²⁸⁰ For instance, “Déclaration du Comité Juif Algérien des Etudes Sociales” in *Oran Républicain*, Sunday, 25–26 november 1956, pp. 1–2.

²⁸¹ Rabi, Nos Frères au couer du drame algérien,” in *Arche* no. 30, June 1959, page 29.

not change the sentiments that exist here [in Algeria] between Jews and Muslims.”²⁸² However, the tense local atmosphere was compounded by the Suez Canal crisis that summer and fall as well as Israel’s involvement in Algeria. As we will see, these events polarized Algerian public opinion along the ideological fault lines of Pan-Arabism and Zionism.

Israel advanced its political agenda into Algeria as well, although—unlike the FLN—it did so covertly. More often than not, Israel’s relationship to France has been viewed from a post-1967 optic, once the alliance had cooled. Between 1956 and 1958, however, the two nations still were so close that France permitted Israel to advance its agenda through de facto agents, and even to test the atomic bomb in Algeria.²⁸³ These diplomatic events disrupted the already frayed local fabric among Muslims and Jews.

A new international dichotomy was emerging. Gamal Abdel Nasser—and his FLN supporters abroad—projected an ideology of Islamism onto Algeria.²⁸⁴ The French military, in its increasingly visible effort to repress attacks, exposed the brutality behind the so-called civilizing mission. In addition, the Jewish Agency, an Israeli organization with a special status inside French Algeria, exacerbated the perception that local Jews would favor *Algérie Française* as opposed to an independent Muslim-majority Algeria. Quasi-legal envoys from Israel intensified an already strained situation. As Matthew Connelly has shown, the Algerian struggle

²⁸² “Déclaration du Comité Juif Algérien d’Études Sociales sur la situation en Algérie” published widely November 1956. “Les événements qui se déroulent actuellement au Moyen-Orient ne doivent pas altérer les sentiments qui existent ici entre israélites et Musulmans.”

²⁸³ On this see Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

²⁸⁴ M. Harbi, *FLN: Mirage et Réalité* discusses at length the struggle between the local FLN leaders and the leaders from the exterior. The former advocated for a democratic and even secular (“laïque”) Algerian government, while the latter supported an Islamist vision.

quickly became a war to gain international support.²⁸⁵ While the French army may have vanquished insurgents, the FLN was winning the propaganda fight for hearts and minds outside Algeria.

Scholars have situated the rupture between Jews and Muslims at various moments in time: Some have claimed that the groups had already drifted apart during World War II; others cite 1948, with Israeli independence; while still other scholars frame the Jewish-Muslim schism as a post-1967 phenomenon.²⁸⁶ This chapter argues that it is important to balance local Algerian dialogues with international politics and diplomacy. Within Algeria, Jews and Muslims were unable to reconcile after 1958.²⁸⁷

To understand the complexity of Algerian Jews' relationship to Israel, it is necessary to study diplomatic archives alongside personal statements both about Muslims and about Zionism. Confidential state archives reveal that Israel had a privileged position inside France; Israeli agents' quasi-legal presence in Algeria provoked Algerian fighters to terrorize local Jews, as if they were responsible for the Franco-Israeli alliance.

Jewish leaders proclaimed that they intended to remain at peace with their Muslim neighbors, even while they supported a dream of multicultural yet French

²⁸⁵ Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origin of the Post-Cold War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

²⁸⁶ A recent argument for the split beginning during WWII is Jeffery Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, (New Haven: Yale, 2009). Maud Mandel, "Transnationalism and its Discontents" (*Diaspora*, 12(3):329-360, 2003) compares Muslim and Jewish volunteers from North Africa during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Joan Wolf, among others, have emphasized 1967 as the moment when Jews and Muslims could no longer overcome differences brought on by the conflict in the Middle East.

²⁸⁷ This is earlier than historian Benjamin Stora's estimate. Stora claimed that Jews and Muslims in Algeria were torn apart definitively in December 1960, after a riotous crowd desecrated Algiers' Grand Synagogue. (Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 156.)

Algeria. For this reason, they adhered to a concept of “psychological Aliyah,” in which they supported Israel but wanted to remain in French Algeria. Even still, anti-Israel politics fueled anti-Jewish violence in Algeria, which set off a pattern of mutual animosity that would remain unresolved until the war’s end in 1962.

Local Dialogues: The Soummam Appeal and Jewish Declaration

Even before the Congress of the Soummam had taken place, the FLN first signed a public letter to the Jews in the Moroccan nationalist newspaper *Al Istiqlal*.²⁸⁸ The writers expressed empathy for the Jews’ predicament. They attributed the Jews’ faith in the French to the manipulative forces of France’s civilizing mission. In this understanding, colonizers had thrust citizenship upon a vulnerable group.

In his book *The Invention of Decolonization*, historian Todd Shepard followed the FLN’s perspective on this, when he noted that the Crémieux decree was proof that the French government had relentlessly pursued assimilation. In his reading, France sought to “civilize,” in order to co-opt the “backward Jewish community.”²⁸⁹ This perspective, as we have seen, is not necessarily true. Indeed, as André Chouraqui argued, the majority of nineteenth-century Algerian Jews welcomed French citizenship, while others shunned it, based on the fact that they were losing their authority.²⁹⁰ As we saw in the previous chapters, many Algerian Jews

²⁸⁸ *Al Istiqlal*, quoted in Richard Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie pendant la guerre d’indépendance (1954 – 1962).” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29), p. 21.

²⁸⁹ Todd Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, page 25. “In the case of the Jewish ‘natives,’ ... assimilation was a constant concern for metropolitan Jewish organizations and their allies in government up until 1962.”

²⁹⁰ Chouraqui, André, *From East to West*. Hannah Arendt, quoted in the previous chapter.

celebrated their French citizenship with pride—even those who subsequently aligned themselves with Algerian nationalism. Even the Muslim nationalists who drafted the June 1956 letter celebrated some aspects of the French influence. They were remorseful at giving up France’s beautiful literature and formidable scientific progress:

For the Jews, the moment of choice [...] has arrived. Since [the Jews’] most tender childhood, [the French] had forced upon them a dirty patriotism, and instilled in them a respect for imperial grandeur. For us Algerians, the choice is clear, because despite Rousseau, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud, despite Pasteur and the Encyclopedists, despite all that we thought we loved, we prefer to listen to the voice of our own obscure and glorious dead.²⁹¹

In his analysis of the FLN appeals between 1954 and 1962, the scholar Richard Ayoun has argued that the FLN needed the Jews in order to make their case more convincing in New York at the United Nations meeting.²⁹² At least initially, however, the appeals represented a much more profound and even genuine invitation. This is why it is important to contextualize each appeal. Gilbert Meynier, too, considers the FLN’s various appeals to the Jews as part of a single strategy.²⁹³ But the first FLN appeal issued from Soummam in 1956 was different from subsequent ones because its authors were committed to politics and democracy, while later leaders sought to use the Jews to enlist international support, with no real intention of integrating them into an Algerian nation.

To be sure, even at the outset, inviting Jews into the ranks may have been a strategic move by some FLN leaders to oust rivals and to gain momentum inside

²⁹¹ *Al Istiqlal*, quoted in Richard Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie pendant la guerre d’indépendance (1954–1962).” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29), p. 21.

²⁹² Richard Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie pendant la guerre d’indépendance (1954 – 1962).” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29), page 21. « On l’a dit : pour rallier l’opinion internationale, celle des Etats-Unis et de l’ONU essentiellement, le FLN aurait ‘besoin’ des Juifs. »

²⁹³ Meynier page 255.

Algeria. Nonetheless, the Soummam appeal was also genuine. As Meynier notes, when addressing Jews, the FLN's language differed from the tone they used to win over Europeans (even sympathizers). They frequently drew on the Jews' common heritage and "*patrie*"—calling them "dear compatriots" or even "dear Semites."²⁹⁴ The FLN emphasized how *different* Jews were from other French citizens—how naturally they belonged in indigenous, independent Algeria. But such distinctions served only to play on the Jewish leaders' own worst fears.

On the one-year anniversary of the Phillipeville battle, the interior members of the FLN met in order to enact "an organized revolution, and not an anarchic revolt."²⁹⁵ Abbane declared the intention of the gathering, which was to proclaim the FLN's political doctrine: "to destroy definitively and without return the odious colonial regime, which is a decadent obstacle to progress and peace."²⁹⁶ The meeting included a detailed outline of military and political tactics for taking Algeria back from the French government.

The Soummam Platform situated Algeria as a local seat of power for a Provisional Government, even as Abbane and the others struggled against the FLN's power base outside of Algeria. A dominant rival group, known as the "exterior" contingent, resided in Egypt and Tunisia. Abbane believed that "if we are someday to form a provisionary government, it will be in Algeria and not elsewhere." He then derided the exterior group: "If you would like to amuse yourselves by forming an

²⁹⁴ Meynier page 255.

²⁹⁵ Plat-Forme de la Soummam," published in Courrière, *La Guerre d'Algérie* tome I, page 908.

²⁹⁶ "Plat-Forme de la Soummam," published in Courrière, *La Guerre d'Algérie*, page 914. "de détruire de façon définitive et sans retour le régime colonial odieux, decadent, obstacle au progress et à la paix."

exterior government, we will be obligated to denounce you publicly and the break will be final.”²⁹⁷

One purpose of the Soummam meeting was to establish the FLN (specifically its so-called interior group) as the sole representative of Algerian nationalists. The platform of the Soummam sought alliances with some groups, including Jews, women, and liberals, while it criticized and rejected other would-be allies—most surprisingly, the Communists and the Messalists, who identified with the MNA. Its purpose was far from religious—Meynier reads an implied *laïcité* in the gathering.²⁹⁸ The Soummam Platform intentionally played down the role of Islam, which became extremely important in later years.²⁹⁹ After the publication of the platform, exterior delegate Ahmed Ben Bella, who was later to become independent Algeria’s first elected president, responded, emphasizing the importance of Islam, which he hoped would shape the future of Algerian institutions.³⁰⁰

Abbane detailed the plans he had for Jewish involvement in the nationalist campaign. Jews, he wrote, were only committed to France because they had been especially vulnerable to the French “campaign of demoralization.” The French had manipulated them into proclaiming an attachment to French citizenship at their

²⁹⁷ Meynier, page 171. “Si nous devons un jour constituer un gouvernement provisoire, il le sera en Algérie et pas ailleurs. Si par Malheur vous vous amusez à constituer un gouvernement à l’extérieur, nous nous verrons dans l’obligation de vous dénoncer publiquement et la rupture sera totale.”

²⁹⁸ Meynier page 192.

²⁹⁹ On the FLN’s Islamist vision, see Gilbert Meynier, “Islam et Islamo-Arabité” in *FLN Histoire Interieure*, pp. 220–222; Neil MacMaster, “The roots of populist Islamic nationalism during the War of Independence,” in *Burning the Veil*, pages 356–359; Marnia Lazreg, “FLN and religion” in *Torture and the Twilight of Empire*.

³⁰⁰ Harbi, page 187

1955 WJC meeting in London.³⁰¹ The Soummam group wanted to establish a common enemy in the Europeans; they connected Algerian colonists to Nazi and Vichy fascists—“colonio-fascists.”

“The moment has come,” the FLN wrote in their open letter from 1 October 1956, “when each Algerian Israelite must, without hesitation, take his part in this grand historic battle.”³⁰² This time, the FLN directly confronted the Jews: “The FLN considers its work today to address the Israelite community directly in order to ask them to affirm their attachment to the Algerian nation.”³⁰³ Lebjaoui made several allusions to antisemitism in Algeria before, during, and since the Vichy era. He hinted that the brewing Poujadist movement symbolized what the future of French Algeria would look like. In contrast, he argued that a new Algerian nation would begin to rebuild the intrinsically connected Algerian brotherhood, which had been ruined by French colonialism.³⁰⁴

Setting the Jews apart from the other Frenchmen upset local Jewish leaders. Once again, Algerian Jews were being treated as if they constituted a distinct community, which—at least according to some outsiders—could easily detach from their French loyalties and join another side. Rather than following one of France’s own most democratic ideals—everything to individuals, nothing to a nation—the FLN treated Jews as a coherent group. Colonialism arbitrarily had offered

³⁰¹“La Quésion de la minorité juive au congrès de la Soummam,” F.L.N. Documents, “Les Juifs d’Algérie dans le combat pour l’indépendance Nationale » brochure compiled by la Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale. Found at the Vincennes archives of Armée de la Terre. Undated, but estimated printed December 1959, page 6.

³⁰² “Lettre aux Israélites d’Algérie,” originally published on October 1, 1956 ; Reprinted in Stora, *Les Trois Exiles* and a longer version by Libre Algérie, June 5–18, 2000 <http://www.algeria-watch.org/farticle/1954-62/israelites.htm>.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, “la fraternité algérienne brisée par l’avènement du colonialisme français.”

citizenship to some, while depriving others, based on a set of criteria that drew attention to a hierarchy. But the Jews perceived the FLN's effort to distinguish them from other French citizens as threatening not because of the nineteenth-century granting of the Crémieux Decree, but because of its recent abrogation during the Second World War.

The day after the letter was sent to Jewish elites, an article in the daily newspaper *France Observateur* expressed its shock at the realization that now the FLN was recruiting beyond their base of Muslims.³⁰⁵ Appealing to the Jews of Algeria demonstrated that the “insurrection was inspired by patriotic motives, and not religious ones. For them, all inhabitants of Algeria—without distinction of race, origin, or religion—would have the right to reclaim the Algerian *patrie*.”³⁰⁶ As Abbane had wished, an appeal to the Jews of Algeria legitimized Algerian nationalism as a *political* movement, which could present itself to the world as democratic and inclusive.

The *France Observateur* article carried an undertone of anxiety that the Jews would succumb to the FLN's appeal. Those who were twenty years old during the Vichy occupation when they were “momentarily” rejected by the “French Community” were especially vulnerable. It also speculated about possible Jewish responses. The article predicted that the Jews' reactions would fall along class and generational lines, with the high bourgeoisie from Oran and Algiers siding with France, and the artisan classes more committed to staying in Algeria. As for the most traditional and poorest, they would “dream of returning to the Promised

³⁰⁵ “Le FLN et les Israélites algériens,” *France Observateur*, 18 Oct 1956. (Laz Dossier XVI)

³⁰⁶ “Le FLN et les Israélites algériens,” *France Observateur*, 18 Oct 1956. (Laz Dossier XVI)

Land.”³⁰⁷ Indeed, perceptions of the war varied based on social class. However, the Soummam appeal remained an élite matter—it was a back-and-forth discussion between two representational groups. The FLN, loosely, represented Muslims, and the CJAES, loosely, represented Jews. The various social classes would later suffer the consequences of this war and of this specific dialogue.

An article in *Information Juive* called the Soummam letter a threat: it interpreted the appeal as a demand, which stated that within 48 hours, either Algerian Jews must choose to align with France, or they must align with the Algerian nationalists. Describing the FLN’s move as an ultimatum, the author—most likely Lazarus—implied that pushing Algerian Jews to decide was ridiculous, since “no other North African community is as assimilated as [they] are.”³⁰⁸ The author commented that while the rebels had not targeted Jews as Jews, he could already sense the arrival of the first “anti-Jewish attacks.”³⁰⁹ “Unfortunately we must wait for rebel activity that is directed against the Jews,” he wrote. He feared that French soldiers were focused on stopping large, urban, unpreventable attacks, and they would therefore neglect “pogroms” that could erupt in smaller villages.³¹⁰ This reading of the Soummam letter was unique—and this idea that Jews could be targeted as such would take on a renewed importance in the ensuing years of the Algerian War.

³⁰⁷ “Le FLN et les Israélites algériens,” *France Observateur*, 18 Oct 1956. (Laz Dossier XVI)

³⁰⁸ “Le FLN algérien menace les Juifs” *Information Juive*, October 1956. « se ranger sous 48 hrs soit aux cotés de la France, soit aux cotés des Algériens nationalistes. »

³⁰⁹ “Le FLN algérien menace les Juifs” *Information Juive*, October 1956, page 1.

³¹⁰ “Le FLN algérien menace les Juifs” *Information Juive*, October 1956, page 2.

Henri Chemouilli has written, “After the Soummam Appeal, it became impossible to continue to close our eyes and plug our ears.”³¹¹ In theory, individual Jews could respond to the FLN’s recruitment. However, although the FLN had initially addressed the rabbis and consistory heads, the CJAES was the only semi-political Jewish group willing to answer the FLN’s appeal. The rabbis and consistoires did not respond, because they were strictly religious organizations, and as such were determined to stay outside of politics. Dissenting Jews who agreed with the nationalists found their place within the Communist party or even within the FLN; as we will see in the next chapter, they sent out alternate responses, but they did not presume to speak for the Jewish community. Financed by worldwide Jewish organizations, the CJAES intended to be a representative Jewish group. Therefore, on behalf of the letter’s addressees, the CJAES sent out a single, unified response. They attempted to leave room for the diversity of Jewish responses, and self-consciously claimed that they could not represent the Jews as a whole. The CJAES’s declaration was also published in several newspapers on 26 November 1956.³¹² It was meant as much to inform individual Jews across Algeria and France, as it was to inform the FLN and the French forces of where exactly the “Jewish community” stood. To write the Declaration, Lazarus recruited the help of a Jewish professor of Islam from the Sorbonne in Paris, Robert Brunschwig, as well as the historian Émile Touati.³¹³

³¹¹ Chemouilli, *Une Diaspora Méconnue*, page 279.

³¹² For example, “Une Déclaration du Comité juif algérien d’études sociales,” *Information Juive*, no. 82, November 1956, page. 1. The *American Jewish Yearbook* has an English translation of the declaration, but most of these translations are mine. “Algeria,” *American Jewish Yearbook* 13, 1959. Pp. 277–278.

³¹³ Letter dated 25 November 1956, from Lazarus to Brunschwig. (AIU JL XIV)

The CJAES began its Declaration by announcing that more than anything, they sought peace for “all of the populations of Algeria.”³¹⁴ Although they may have been anxious about Algerian nationalism, they followed the Jews’ historical embrace of Algeria’s Muslims. They wrote that they felt *equally close* to the two other religious communities of Algeria—Muslim and Christian—and they intended to “remain faithful to the commandments that bind us together.” The writers then recognized their strong feelings toward both Algeria and France. On the one hand, they wrote, the Jews have been so attached to the land of Algeria for over two thousand years, and they have “labored so much” for its “prosperity.” On the other, they remained “profoundly grateful to the French, to whom we owe so much.”³¹⁵ They were attempting to sustain several contradictory positions at once: neutrality, a desire for peace, attachment to Algeria, and a profound indebtedness to France. Their ambivalent balance of viewpoints nevertheless deserves to be taken seriously. Publicly, they entertained the possibility of Muslim-Jewish unity, but their implicit nod toward this so-called brotherhood was not enough for the insurgents. The FLN demanded loyalty; and the CJAES was aware of this. After 1956, the Jewish and Muslim communities of Algeria could no longer maintain this fragile equilibrium. Options were shutting down—one was either with the nationalists, or with the French empire.

Wladimir Rabi criticized the CJAES’s strained logic. He still preferred “eloquent silence” to the Jewish leaders’ exquisite hair-splitting, in which they

³¹⁴ “Déclaration du Comité juif algérien d’études sociales sur la situation en Algérie,” *Oran Républicaine*, 25–26 Novembre 1956.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

“measured each word and each comma, and [it all] ended up meaning nothing.”³¹⁶, The CJAES’s fastidious response notwithstanding, it was clear to the FLN that the Jews were staying loyal to France. The CJAES declaration thus marked a clear turning point on the path of Jewish history in Algeria. If Jacques Lazarus’s statement at the World Jewish Congress meeting in January 1955 was an initial, small step, this letter was a categorical stride into the French camp. It attested to the Jewish leaders’ forthright intention to stay in French-ruled Algeria. The declaration also spoke to the kernel of hope that Jews could help bring about the kind of France they loved—the France that was accepting, multicultural, democratic, and civilized. The CJAES believed that the conflict in the Middle East, with its brutal, defined sides, would not play out in the Algerian context, presumably because French Algeria’s inhabitants were more sophisticated.

There was no immediate rejoinder from the FLN writers. But the Jewish declaration would elicit many responses from both Jews and Muslims over the ensuing years of the war. Now that Algerian Jews had officially broken their silence, people no longer needed to guess about their allegiances. The CJAES declaration filled the Jewish silence. Still, in those autumn months of 1956, another ideological conflict was brewing in the Middle East, which strained the local conversation between Jewish and Muslim élites.

³¹⁶ Rabi, “Nos Frères au couer du drame algérien,” in *Arche* no. 30, June 1959, page 29.

The Mobilization of two worlds: Pan-Arab vs. Pan-Western

Although the Soummam leaders completely ignored the international context of their battle—and they most obviously omitted Egypt’s role—they could not prevent the conflict in the Middle East from influencing the way the war was perceived both locally and internationally.³¹⁷ Adherents of both sides were beginning to frame the mounting crisis as an international battle between empires and colonies. In November 1955, Jacques Soustelle, then the Governor General of Algeria, gave an important speech attempting to mobilize French intellectuals against Algerian nationalism.³¹⁸ He equated the Muslim nationalist movement with the worst kind of racism that he had witnessed: namely, Hitler’s Nazi party and the resulting genocide. Soustelle’s speech claimed that the FLN exterior leader Ahmed Ben Bella—who had set up an FLN base in Egypt—and others like him wanted total eradication of “anything that is European in the Maghreb.”³¹⁹ Seeking to inspire intellectuals to join the French side of the battle, he reminisced about World War II, when they had come together against fascism, which he compared directly to Arab nationalism.³²⁰ As examples of the new kind of Islamic “fanaticism,” he pointed to Algerian Muslim “racial and religious hatred against non-Muslims.” He reminisced about the French Resistance a decade earlier:

³¹⁷ Meynier 192: “Le texte ignorait délibérément le rôle logistique et le poids international dont les égyptiens, notamment, usaient pour aider les Algériens.”

³¹⁸ This was the same year when Soustelle formulated the new category of French citizens, called Français Musulman d’Algérie (FMA) in February 1955. The FMAs could sustain their “personal status” and also enjoy French citizenship. Still, they were a people apart. On this, see Shepard page x, Stora page x.

³¹⁹ Archives de l’armée de terre, Jacques Soustelle, “Action Psychologique,” Nov 1955, speech page 4. Ben Bella was one of the original FLN leaders, and he was stationed in Cairo. Ben Bella travelled between Cairo and France, and in 1956 his airplane was intercepted and redirected to France, where he was sent to prison.

³²⁰ Ibid., speech page 4.

I remember a time when French intellectuals confronted the ferocious Hitlerian darkness, which is without a doubt, of all the recent and contemporary movements, that which is most like the totalitarian absolutism of the [Muslim nationalists]...because of its exclusivity and its contempt for human life.³²¹

With his direct comparison to Hitler, Soustelle was giving voice to a *new* international dichotomy that posited the West against the East, and colonial empires versus anti-colonial nationalists. Intellectuals already accepted the fact that Hitler and fascism had been opposed to democratic values, within France and abroad. Now this new comparison to Hitler was meant to vilify the “Arab world” and to elevate the West’s humanism.

For the first time on record, the FLN was portrayed as a reincarnation of Nazism. Calling for a unified front of the “civilized,” Soustelle was tarring all so-called Islamists with the brush of fascism. Soustelle remained a Socialist. Rightwing Algerian Frenchmen had even accused him of hiding a secret Algerian-Jewish surname, calling him “Ben Soussan.”³²² The right considered Jews and liberals as one entity, another example of the complex entanglements of ethnic origins, individual choices, and international politics.

³²¹ Soustelle, page 4. L’excitation à la haine raciale et religieuse contre le non-musulman, le boycott des Mozabites considérés comme ‘hérétiques’, la destruction systématique des écoles ? [...] je me souviens d’un temps où les intellectuels français se dressaient précisément contre la farouche obscurantisme hitlérien, qui est sans doute, de tous les mouvement contemporains, celui que se rapproche le plus, par son exclusivisme et son mépris de la vie humaine, de l’absolutisme totalitaire du CRUA. » (4) CRUA, Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action, was a predecessor of the FLN.

³²² Soustelle was not Jewish, but, at this early moment in the war, the rightwing Europeans of Algeria who were disappointed with his liberal policies had accused him of being “Jewish (Bensimon, *Juifs d’algérie identités plurielles*) Just a few years later, as Soustelle became vocally anti-Arab, he won the support of the *pieds noirs*.

Many other observers had pointed to the source of this new tone of Muslim nationalism: it was Egypt's nationalist dictator, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Jean Daniel, generally known for his empathy toward Algerian nationalists, likewise compared the new Islamic solidarity to fascism.³²³ Daniel believed that Nasser's version of Arab nationalism was corrupting the Algerian cause. In the pages of the French weekly *Express*, he asserted the singularity of the separate nations that Nasser had hoped to unify: "Not only are Algerians different from Egyptians, and they possessively claim their own identity, but they are even different from Tunisians and Moroccans."³²⁴ At this time, it was possible to support *Algerian* independence, without also succumbing to *Arab* nationalism, as was the case with Abbane.³²⁵

In a speech given from Alexandria on 1 August 1956, a week after he'd nationalized the Suez Canal, Nasser proclaimed his commitment to a worldwide, violent revolutionary struggle against imperialism, which would be fought in the name of Allah.³²⁶ Although Nasser's relationship to Algeria was indirect at this point, his government focused its propaganda effort on North Africa. Moreover, the "exterior" leaders, such as Ben Bella, supported the idea of a pan-Arab struggle.

Although the radio address was about the torments of imperialism, Nasser never explicitly mentioned the large European empires (such as France or Great Britain); instead, he repeatedly condemned Israel as the enemy, labeling Israel as a

³²³ Jean Daniel, "Algérie: Capitale Suez?" in *L'Express* # 268, 10 August 1956, p. 3.

³²⁴ Jean Daniel, "Algérie: Capitale Suez?" in *L'Express* # 268, 10 August 1956, p. 3. ("Non seulement les Algériens sont différents des Egyptiens et prétendent jalousement à une originalité propre, mais ils sont différents même des Tunisiens et des Marocains.

³²⁵ Abbane was anti-Arab. (Meynier, page 192)

³²⁶ Archives de l'armée de terre, "Le Monde Islamique: Discours prononcé par Colonel Nasser à Alexandrie," 1 August 1956.

“creature of imperialism.”³²⁷ Instead of viewing Israel as a newly decolonized state, much like Egypt or Morocco, Nasser portrayed Israel as an engine of future colonization, which was created in order to advance Western imperial power. His explicit goal was to convince his adherents—both within Egypt and internationally—that Israel was the end product of centuries of imperialism. Nasser’s speech reads like a Pan-Arab gloss on Lenin’s aphorism that “imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism;” to Nasser, it was as if Israel represented the highest stage of imperialism.³²⁸ Universalizing Arab experience, Nasser sought to convince sympathetic “Arab nationalists” within Egypt and all over the world that the young state of Israel should be their first target. He reasoned that the imperialists had “established Israel in order to annihilate our nationalism, as it has already annihilated Palestine.”³²⁹

Just a few months before the Soummam Appeal, Nasser’s speech had already captured the attention of French policy makers and Algerian nationalists alike. A few weeks after his August harangue, the French Foreign Minister wrote that Egypt’s actions were “a challenge to the entire Western world, [...] particularly to France’s African interests.”³³⁰ Nasser’s anti-French/anti-Israel assault extended throughout Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Mendès France argued that Nasser was trying to inflame Algerian public opinion in order to perpetuate the war there.

³²⁷ Nasser, *ibid.* page 3. Nasser proclaimed, “We are all working to defend ourselves from imperialism and from Israel, this creature of imperialism. We have all decided to struggle, to combat, and to subject ourselves to a *holocaust* for our country.”³²⁷ (Note that the use of Holocaust with a capital H had not yet emerged. In Nasser’s mind, even unconsciously, he was claiming that Jews had earned their own state by enduring a holocaust.)

³²⁸ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism: the highest form of Capitalism*. Pamphlet first published in Petrograd in 1917. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>

³²⁹ Nasser, *ibid.* page 4.

³³⁰ Pierre Mendès France, “Suez, épreuve pour l’Occident” in *L’Express* #269, 17 August 1956, p. 2.

Nasser was set against the peacemakers. Mendès France called for a unification of *all* Western powers against Nasser's campaign. Whether or not he was aware of it, with this proposal, Mendès France was presenting the opposite side of Nasser's incipient "pan-Arab" Third-Worldism. Dividing the world into West versus East, Mendès France only diminished the chances for peace in Algeria.

Even as late as September 1957, Ferhat Abbas, a moderate FLN leader, claimed he was still neutral, even positive about Israel. Abbas stated: "We do not see a contradiction between friendly France-Israeli ties and Israel's support for Algeria. This can help in bridging the abyss separating Israel from the rest of the world."³³¹ Overall, any perceived "Jewish-Muslim tension" in Algeria was due to the ambiguous and contested status of Algerian Jews, and not primarily to any external diplomatic tensions.

Jean Daniel had spoken to young Algerian nationalists, who claimed that they would not let Israel's politics affect their affiliations with Jews in Algeria. "The sole imperialism that oppresses us is the French colonial system," they claimed, also inviting Algerian Jews to join their movement.³³² "Let there be some Jewish martyrs in our cause." However, the revolutionaries qualified their statement, warning of the larger ramifications in Algeria: "Beware lest Zionist activity draw the Algerian Arabs nearer to the Arabs of the Middle East."³³³

³³¹ *Haaretz*, sept 11, 1957, quoted in Michael M. Laskier, "Israel and Algeria amid French Colonialism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1954-1978," *Israel studies*, vol. 6, #2, pp 1- 32. Page 4.

³³² Jean Daniel, "The Jewish Future in Algeria," in *Commentary*. September 1962, pp. 198-203, page 202.

³³³ *Ibid.*

Israelites or Israelis? Consequences in Algeria

Although Abbane's group attempted to separate Algeria from the international situation, and to create a secular Algeria, the influence of Islam and of Arabism was increasing within the FLN. Already engaged in their own struggle against French "imperialism," many FLN fighters took on Israel as their enemy, along with France. The popular perception was that France's alliance with Israel, when it finally became public, after the invasion of Suez in October, confirmed Nasser's assertion: that Israel and France were united in a new international imperialism designed to destroy Algerian independence. The paratroopers' violence toward Egyptian civilians foreshadowed their abuse of Muslim Algerians. Even some Algerian Zionist leaders were politically ambivalent in their relationship to the Jewish state.

France and Israel's diplomatic relationship became closer in the mid-1950s, as Israel pursued involvement in French Algeria, and as France joined Israel in its aggressive response to the Suez crisis. The nations were responding to Nasser's closing the Canal and the straits of Tiran to Israeli goods. His actions also blocked the Gulf of Aqaba in violation of the international accords and 1949 armistice. Shimon Peres then tried to persuade France with an exchange: Israeli soldiers would spy on the Egyptians in order to assess their relationship to the "Algerian rebels" in exchange for a nuclear bomb, according to the scholar Avner Cohen.³³⁴

³³⁴ From Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, pp. 53–55. This exchange never happened because Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal.

Ben Gurion authorized the “creation of a special intelligence relationship between Israeli military intelligence and its French counterpart.”³³⁵

For many observers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, this alliance began to define the Jewish position—if there was to be one—on the Algerian War. Observers began to see the Algerian war as a “clash of two civilizations,” one European and one pan-Arab. Matthew Connelly illustrates the salience of this idea among French officials and Israeli statesmen in justifying the invasion of the Suez Canal.³³⁶ While the invasion of the canal was brought on by pragmatic considerations, the clash of two civilizations extrapolated from this notion. The public side of the Franco-Israeli alliance began to take shape in September 1955, when Shimon Peres and the French ambassador to Israel were trying to develop a pro-Israeli coalition. The two governments hoped to combine pro-Jewish, Socialist sentiments with French imperial interests in an expansion of the French aerospace and nuclear industries.³³⁷ Mendès France and Peres were both Socialists—it was still possible to be both Socialist and imperialist.

In July 1956, Nasser declared the Suez Canal part of the national territory of Egypt. In response, French, British, and Israeli diplomats secretly agreed to overthrow Nasser in an invasion that went against the United States and the United Nations, called the Protocol of Sèvres. Guy Mollet bought into the idea that Nasser was a “new Hitler” and therefore launched his troops into Port Saïd.³³⁸ By invading various areas inside Egypt, the coalition hoped to open up the canal once again, and

³³⁵ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*. Page 53

³³⁶ Connelly, page 102-109.

³³⁷ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*. Page 49.

³³⁸ Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie*, page 22.

to overthrow Nasser. Under the pretense that they were helping to assuage two warring countries after Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula, the French foreign ministry sent its best battalion of paratroopers to the Middle East—that same battalion would come to Algeria in January 1957 to engage in the Battle for Algiers.³³⁹ The French government hoped that once Nasser was gone, the entire Algerian rebellion would fade into obscurity, and French sovereignty could be confidently restored to Algeria. In late October 1956, the three allies invaded Egypt, pushing toward the seat of power, resulting in massive collateral damage and civilian deaths. The brutality of the invasion gave Nasser and the nationalists further grounds to argue that the “West” treated “Arabs” inhumanely. Journalists from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East expressed their doubts about the moral legitimacy of the invasion.³⁴⁰

The violent nature of the French involvement in Suez intensified anti-Israel ideas among the Algerian fighters who were forced to follow the lines of the “exterior” militants. Nasser’s rhetoric gradually persuaded many that they were part of a “pan-Arab” movement, a brotherhood that extended beyond just Algerian nationalism. However, many FLN Algerians didn’t see a reflection of their own priorities in Egypt’s anti-imperialism. Abbane and the others who met at Soummam argued that “Algeria’s interest [was] to come before all else.”³⁴¹ Nonetheless, the militants relied heavily on Egypt for their arms. The Egyptians controlled the

³³⁹ Stora, *Gangrène*, page x, Morris, *Righteous Victims*, page 298.

³⁴⁰ Suez archives from AT hold several of such articles.

³⁴¹ Meynier, page 175.

shipments diligently, and they withheld arms if the Algerian representatives did not align with them politically.³⁴²

France's accord with Israel mirrored the exterior delegation of the FLN's alliance with Nasser. (The interior delegation—led by Abbane and Lebajaoui—preferred to confine Muslim-Jewish relations to Algeria.) Nasser rewarded these men with arms if they complied with some of his anti-Jewish measures, which the FLN could not influence. Some of his demands included limiting “arms aid from France to Israel and prevent[ing] the mobilization of French Jews for [Israel's] benefit” as well as “preventing North African Jews from emigrating to Israel.”³⁴³ The alliance between France and Israel was so close that Israeli defense minister Shimon Peres even saw the Israeli-Egyptian war as a continuation of the Algerian War. Instead of two separate wars, Peres saw a global war between two civilizations: one “Western,” which included France and Israel; the other “Arab,” which included Egypt and Algeria.³⁴⁴ The Israelis also felt close to the North African Jews—they had a long history of providing weapons and military training to local Jews.

In September 1955, Alliance Israélite delegate André Chouraqui wrote a private note to René Cassin, the Alliance's president. He reminisced about the feeling of empowerment that overwhelmed his whole Constantine community when they banded together in 1934 after the infamous pogroms in that town. He remembered twenty years earlier, “The day after [the pogrom], Jewish Algerians armed themselves immediately. I remember the joy of Yom Kippur in September

³⁴² Meynier, page 308.

³⁴³ Quoted in Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution*, page 103.

³⁴⁴ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, page 53.

1934, when every man in the synagogue in Aïn-Temouchent carried a revolver beneath his prayer shawl.”³⁴⁵ Concerned at the time about Moroccan Jews, Chouraqui wrote, “In the current state of things, the question of the security of our communities overrides all else.”³⁴⁶

Chouraqui’s nostalgic picture became reality once again only a few months later. According to a May 1956 article from *Journal d’Alger*, an organized Jewish resistance existed in order for Jews to defend themselves.³⁴⁷ It is still unclear whether these squads, which were reported as having existed in all three major cities, were organized by locals or by the *Misgeret* (Israeli Mossad). A former Constantine envoy who claimed to belong to the squad later contended that the *Misgeret* created weapons caches just for the Jewish communities. He also said that these same soldiers participated in the French Army’s headquarters as “interrogators” of the FLN suspects. And so they had intimate knowledge of the whereabouts of new suspects.³⁴⁸ The *Misgeret* dispatched disguised guards to synagogues on Saturdays and on Jewish holidays. On Saturday, as Constantine Jews were leaving services for an aperitif, a grenade exploded in a Jewish-owned café. The former Mossad combatants claimed that they opened fire and killed as many as 30 Muslims. Meynier labeled the episode a “Jewish anti-Muslim pogrom.” The French military stepped in, and directed their fire at Muslims, killing 230.³⁴⁹

In the another note from Chouraqui to Cassin, Chouraqui observed:

³⁴⁵ 9 September 1955, Chouraqui to Cassin, handwritten letter, 2 pages. From AIU René Cassin.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Laskier, *History of North African Jews* 321.

³⁴⁸ this testimonial according to Laskier 321; Also recounted by Stora in *Les trois exiles* page 153-54.

³⁴⁹ Meynier page 255.

In Algiers there are Jews in the counter-terrorist movements. They have been the very first to be attacked by Muslims. The situation of the Jews right now in Algeria is extremely difficult. I believe that many people do not know what to do and they feel they must play to a double patriotism about anti-Arab sentiments. A loud Jewish voice must stop these Jews from violence and hatred and must look to recreate an entente if it is still possible. But you suspect that the counter-terrorist movements emanate from the usual reactionary and racist movements.³⁵⁰

It seems that there were then two groups of militant Jews. On one hand, reactionary Jews who were committed to anti-Arab violence, like many of the European incipient terrorist movements. On the other, Chouraqui advocated for a “loud Jewish voice” who would take over and help to silence these reactionaries.

Because the Misgeret was a secret organization, whose members could flow freely from Algeria to Israel, their archives do not exist within French or Algerian sources. However, their action caused journalists to speculate, creating problems for Algerian Jews. In the May 1956 skirmish, the undercover Israeli officers fled Algeria to Israel in order to protect themselves in case any surviving Muslims recognized them.³⁵¹ The same testimony suggested that the Misgeret had prepared a list of FLN enemies, and they tried to protect local Jews from being persecuted for counterterrorist action, emphasizing that they were neutral, not exclusively in support of Algérie Française.

³⁵⁰ Chouraqui to Cassin, 18 September 1956. AIU Rene Cassin files. « La situation des Juifs en ce moment en Algérie est extrêmement difficile. Je crois que beaucoup ne savent où est leur devoir et se croient obligés de surenchérir par un double patriotisme sur les sentiments anti-arabes. Il faudrait qu'une grande voix juive s'élève pour les détourner de la violence et de la haine et chercher à récréer une entente si celle-ci demeure encore possible. Mais tu te doutes que les mouvements contre-terroristes émanent de milieux habituellement réactionnaires et racistes. Je me demande si certains machiavels ne manœuvrent pas pour susciter un antisémitisme comme dérivatif au terrorise musulman.»

³⁵¹ Laskier, *History of North African Jews*, 321.

Speculations: Israelites or Israelis?

In an editorial in the popular French daily *Le Monde* from early November 1956, journalist Eugène Mannoni asked whether the Algerian-Muslim “masses” were smart enough to discern Jews—or “Israelites”—from *Israelis*. Mannoni asked, “Will today’s conflict, which opposes Israel and Egypt, cause a reemergence of violent incidents between ‘French’ Jews and ‘Algerian’ Muslims? It’s not impossible.”³⁵² The article described “confused Muslims” who could mistake Jews for Israelis. Even though the author didn’t maintain that “Israelites” and “Israelis” were the same, his article nonetheless played into the emerging categories of international “Muslims” and global Jews. It suggested that there might be some sort of dichotomy between Muslim politics and Jewish politics, a claim that—whether or not it was true in the Middle East—the Jewish-Algerian leaders wanted to deny.

Mannoni’s article enraged CJAES leaders, who saw it as a deliberate provocation. They argued that the article made Algeria’s Jewish community “susceptible to dangerous consequences.”³⁵³ Jacques Lazarus and Benjamin Heler (another eminent CJAES member) asked France’s newly elected Grand Rabbi Jacob Kaplan to step in and to intercede with the editorial staff of *Le Monde*. Rather than writing directly to the newspaper, the leaders suggested that the Grand Rabbi should take a subtler approach by asking for a meeting with the newspaper’s editors. Private discussions between the rabbi and newspapers became a common

³⁵² Eugène Mannoni, “La masse musulmane algérienne saura-t-elle toujours distinguer entre israélites et Israéliens?” *Le Monde* 3663, Nov. 2, 1956. [Le conflit qui oppose aujourd’hui Israël à l’Égypte est-il à même de faire renaître ici des incidents entre israélites ‘français’ et musulmans ‘algériens’? Ce n’est pas impossible.”]

³⁵³ AIU Lazarus Dossier. Letter dated 7 November 1956 Lazarus and Heler to Kaplan; Kaplan was elected as Grand Rabbi in January 1955. See *Journal des Communautés* Friday, 28 January 1955.

phenomenon in order to mediate the delicate politics of the war. Rabbi Kaplan also met with the editor-in-chief of the *New York Times*, and he obtained a promise from the editors in early 1957 that they would continue to support the French empire during the UN debates about Algeria that year.³⁵⁴ Rabbi Kaplan believed that “the French presence in Algeria was the only barrier to pan-Islamic expansion” in Africa—which would be detrimental to Israel.³⁵⁵

Why would Lazarus and Kaplan prefer to warn newspapers off the record about consequences for Jews? Any mention in the press of a *separate* Jewish population in Algeria threatened to jeopardize their argument that Jews should be viewed just like any other French citizen. Lazarus and Kaplan—although they were official Jewish leaders—could not sign their names to a letter to the editor as representatives of Algerian Jews. Doing so threatened to buttress the logic that the Jews were a unified and separate entity. Lazarus repeatedly defended the Jews’ rights to be as diverse as any other French civilian population, but in order for this defense to work, his involvement had to be covert. He did occasionally write an open letter to newspapers, if only to emphasize the point that Algerian Jews were no different than other French citizens. For instance, in early 1957, he wrote to the newspaper *France Soir* in reaction to an informational article which stated that Muslim shop-owners were protesting damages made to their pillaged property and they had “violently accused the European population, even more so the Jewish

³⁵⁴ Matthew Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution* page 127.

³⁵⁵ Also Professor Connelly’s notes on the archival source from Quai D’Orsay, #207.

minority, of having damaged their shops.”³⁵⁶ Lazarus took the opportunity “once again to deplore” the press’s tendency to draw attention to religion when discussing Jewish French people, without also mentioning French Catholic or Protestant looters.³⁵⁷ Lazarus was fighting against the public’s stubborn proclivity to draw attention to the Jews, as if they were a separate people apart from other French citizens.

Jewish leaders were concealing their allegiance to France. While Kaplan worked to temper public opinion by talking to the press in Paris and New York, Lazarus hesitated before publishing anything overtly political in *Information Juive*, his North African newspaper. In a private letter to Lazarus, Wladimir Rabi advised: “The situation of the *Information Juive* is becoming increasingly fragile. I think that you ought to limit it to news, or to articles that are purely literary, cultural, or sociological.”³⁵⁸ In other words, he advised against taking any political stance, either with regard to Israel or Algeria. Aside from a few monumental political declarations on behalf of the Jewish community, Lazarus complied with this advice for the duration of the Algerian War. His newspaper articles stayed focused on uncontroversial subjects like Jewish culture, books, art, historical essays, and religion pieces.

Rabi, like many others, still had faith in the Jewish-Muslim brotherhood; and he still questioned the motives of the Europeans. He hoped that FLN soldiers would

³⁵⁶ Listed in *Information Juive*, Feb 1957, #85, page 3. “violement accusé la population européenne et plus encore la min. juive, d’avoir dévalisé les boutiques.”

³⁵⁷Ibid. cette tendance trop souvent répandue qui consiste à mentionner la confession lorsqu’il est question de Français israélites alors qu’on ne parle jamais de Français catholique ou protestants.”

³⁵⁸ Correspondence, from Rabi to Lazarus, 8 November 1956. From AIU Lazarus.

protect Jews from European antisemitism. On a trip to Oran in late 1957, Rabi spent Friday night in the Arab quarter. Because of the Sabbath, he was restricted from much travel the following day. One of his hosts told him, "You see, we are in the middle of the Arab Quarter. And, we have never ever had an incident here. On holidays, we ask the neighbors in the café next door to turn down their radio. Spontaneously, they turn it off completely."³⁵⁹ He then remembered a rumor that circulated early in 1957, that there would be an attack on the Jewish neighborhood. Could it have been a rumor begun by the *ultras*, he wondered, in order to escalate violence between Muslims and Jews? Nonetheless, he reported, the FLN kept watch on the Jewish area, declaring, "Don't fall for the trap! Jews are Algerians just like us!"³⁶⁰

Psychological Aliyah

Jews exhibited a wide range of responses to the Suez Crisis. In contrast to Abbane's group of the FLN, that wanted to become more politically oriented and less embroiled in sectarian polemics, the CJAES's attitudes toward Israel were spiritual. Zionism, for Jews throughout Algeria and France, seemed to be grounded more in sentiment than ideology. It was much different in character from the political, Aliyah-centered Zionism that subsequently became generally accepted. This distinction comes to light through personal interviews and as a result of the simple fact that demographic studies show that most Jewish Algerian emigrants left for France rather than Israel in 1961–62. In a 1983 early article, historian Michael

³⁵⁹ W. Rabi, "Nos frères au couer du drame algérien," *L'Arche*, #30, June 1959, page 28.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

Laskier was particularly critical of Algerian Jews for acting so distant from Zionism.³⁶¹ Benjamin Stora has argued that a specific “Jewish-Algerian” sensibility only emerged in France *after* the Six-Day War. The subsequent focus on Israel, he suggested, “functioned as a substitute, a way to forget [what had happened in Algeria].”³⁶²

In the decade preceding the Six Day War, the majority of Jews in Algeria remained publicly silent about the strife in the Middle East over the Suez Canal. They were concerned that the Suez war would disrupt their relationship with Muslims in the area, and clearly they did not want Algerian Muslims to confuse “Israelites” and “Israelis.”³⁶³ Todd Shepard, in his chapter called “Repatriation Rather than Aliyah” wrote that the massive Jewish repatriation to France between 1960 and 1962 was “striking” as it “remains the only example of the flight of a group of Jews where most did not go to the self-proclaimed homeland of all Jews [since the existence of the state of Israel].”³⁶⁴ Rarely did Algerian Jews see their situation as a choice between France and Israel. In 1950s Algeria, it is apparent that although Jews maintained a tacit support for Israel, even self-proclaimed Zionists had no plans to immigrate. Israel was far from a “homeland” to them. The homeland for French and Algerian Jews alike was none other than France. Their French citizenship rooted them in France, granting them benefits such as health care and

³⁶¹ Michael M. Laskier, “The Evolution of Zionist Activity in the Jewish communities of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, 1897-1947” in *Studies in Zionism* no. 8, Autumn 1983.

³⁶² Benjamin Stora, “L’arrivée des Juifs d’Algérie en France,” in *Terre d’exil, terre d’asil: Migrations juives en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles*. Ed, Colette Zytnicki. Éditions de l’éclat, 2010.

³⁶³ “Une Déclaration du Comité juif algérien d’études sociales,” *Information Juive*, no. 82, November 1956, page. 1.

³⁶⁴ Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, p. 181

retirement. But their connection to France, and French Algeria, exceeded these practical concerns. One essayist explained,

Just like Muslims, the Jews of Algeria consider this land to be theirs—here, where they have lived for generations, where their relatives are buried... The idea of a departure is inconceivable to them. And this ancestral attachment explains the very small number of departures for Israel, in spite of a very strong Zionist sentiment in all segments of the Jewish-Algerian population.³⁶⁵

Because they lived in Algeria, and not France, it was becoming crucial for Algerian Jews to emphasize their allegiance to France, and to downplay the idea that immigration to Israel was a possibility. This was the case especially as the ties between Algeria and France began to loosen, as Shepard argued.³⁶⁶

Although there were many shades of political Zionism, Israel remained a spiritual place of redemption, a dreamland, for most. Zionism was a way to redeem Jews spiritually, but not necessarily a place to immigrate to. Israel symbolically functioned either as a new secular haven or as a biblical land where tradition religion could thrive. Saul Lewin, a French scholar, was excited by the possibility Israel offered for a Jewish culture that didn't require religious conviction. He described Israel as the perfect model of a new kind of Judaism, which existed regardless of personal belief, without the rigor of rabbinic imprimatur. He thought that Israel could redefine what it meant to be Jewish.³⁶⁷ Grand Rabbi Kaplan saw a different kind of hope for French Jews in Israel. On the Jewish state's tenth anniversary, he marveled at the miracle of the biblical promise that had now come true. His deepest hope that day in 1958 was that the State of Israel would inspire a

³⁶⁵ R.T., "Lettre d'Algérie," *L'Arche* no. 38, February 1960, pp. 15–19, page 18.

³⁶⁶ Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, p. 181

³⁶⁷ "Israël et la diaspora" Saul Lewin, 25 May 1957. From the Colloque des Intellectuels Juifs de France, pp. 22–33.

new religious renaissance among French Jews.³⁶⁸ With all of the chaos and uncertainty in Algeria, Israel was a beacon of inspiration, but it wasn't necessary to leave France to partake in the psychological catharsis and regenerative possibilities it had to offer.

As the Algerian War grew increasingly violent, the Jewish Agency for Israel began its heightened campaign to win the allegiance of Algerian Jews. Established by the World Zionist conference in 1929, the Jewish Agency's purpose, according to its current web site, has always been to "rescue Jews at risk" and to "resettle" them in Israel.³⁶⁹ In 1956, the Jewish Agency began sponsoring educational programs about Israel in Algeria, which introduced Israel as an option for emigration. The Agency's initiative implicitly acknowledged that Algeria was becoming a place where Jews were at risk.

Jacques Lazarus had asserted before the World Jewish Congress in early 1955 that Zionism was a private or spiritual issue, not a practical one. The funds raised by the World Jewish Congress, he argued, should not be allocated to the costs of bringing North African Jews to Israel, but the money should be spent to educate them. He said, "I believe that aliyah is as much a psychological problem as a final solution (*sic*) for the individual Jew."³⁷⁰ He then articulated a more pragmatic approach: "Young Jews have no feeling for aliyah, but asked us that the money spent on it should be used for the reintegration into North Africa of those who wish to

³⁶⁸ Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, "De la resurrection de l'Etat d'Israël à la renaissance de nos communautés." Speech on 17 April 1958, at the Synagogue of Carpentras.

³⁶⁹ <http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/About/History> retrieved April 30, 2012.

³⁷⁰ A95/4 Minutes. Meeting of the WJC Executive Committee @ the Washington Hotel in London. January 21 - 24, 1955. Pp. 41 -51.

remain. Our task therefore is to make them understand the importance of being a Jew.”³⁷¹ In this way, Lazarus could help younger Jews learn about their religion without redirecting them to Israel. In addition, this was a solution that reconcile their vocal adherence to the French nation and their pride in being Jewish without implying that young Jews had to leave Algeria for Israel. He needed to remind his listeners—albeit subtly—that the notion of aliyah—to ascend, in Hebrew—within an unstable colony was more complex than it was for someone who was secure with their nationality.

“Psychological aliyah” is a phrase that captured this paradox—how to be Jewish but still live in the diaspora; how to support Israel from a safe distance. Nonetheless, Jewish Agency envoys stayed focused on Algeria. Their duties exceeded their stated purpose, which was educating Algerian Jews about Israel’s culture, geography, and future plans.³⁷² The Jewish Agency in Algeria actually operated *as if it was a consulate*. French officials in Algeria granted these Israelis special two-year civil servant visas, allowing them to benefit from the same perks enjoyed by citizens who held French governmental jobs.³⁷³ Their function was to allow the Israelis to give lectures, teach Hebrew, and “simply visit the Jewish-Algerian communities.”³⁷⁴ Other sources claim that these same emissaries’ primary

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² As stated clearly in French-language pamphlets, which were widely distributed to Jews across Algeria. They are currently found in AN FBL.

³⁷³ In January 1955, a representative of the Jewish Agency of Algiers wrote to the Governor-General to ask that the Israelis coming through Algeria be excused from the usual visa process, because so many of them were routinely passing through. (Letter in AN FBL, 19920172, #8, first dossier.)

³⁷⁴ Ibid. « pour donner des conférences, enseigner la langue hébraïque ou former des professeurs d’hébreu moderne, simplement visiter les Communautés Israélites Algériennes. »

task was to oversee Jewish emigration to Israel, even though they neglected to state as much to the French government.³⁷⁵

On May 25, 1957, the minister of Foreign Affairs explained: "I see no objection to giving [these men] a semi-official character, as long as these civil servants reconcile themselves with whatever politics that you choose to adopt with regard to Jewish emigration."³⁷⁶ As the Algerian War progressed, Israelis became dissatisfied with unofficial representation in Algeria, despite their enhanced privileges. The Israeli government requested an official consulate. Although he never acknowledged the fact that the Jewish Agency had privileged access to a visa, the minister justified his denial of an Israeli consulate for two interesting reasons. First, he saw a conflict in the role of a consulate, which was to protect citizens living in a foreign country:

[T]o my knowledge there are not currently any Israeli citizens in Algeria, but there are French citizens of the 'Israelite' religion. An Israeli consulate built in Algiers would have the tendency to spread its protection over all of the Jews of Algeria. This would not conform to the current consulatory regulations of French sovereignty in North Africa.³⁷⁷

The minister toed the CJAES party line in his assessment that Jews did not constitute an entity separate from other French people in Algeria. The minister, in his refusal, delineated between Israelis and Israelites, and feared the former's ability to absorb the latter.

³⁷⁵ Michael Laskier, for instance, states that Hassan was head of the emigration agency. Between Nov 1956 and Nov 1957, 1,092 Jews left for Israel. (Michael Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century*, page 315-16.)

³⁷⁶ Letter in AN FBL, 19920172, #8, first dossier.

³⁷⁷ Letter in AN FBL, 19920172, #8, first dossier.

The minister gave one more diplomatic reason for his decision. Granting a consulate to one young government, he feared, could inspire other less friendly ones to ask for the same treatment. In the minister's words, "[I]t would most likely be impossible to refuse Arab states, such as Morocco, Tunisia, or even Libya, the same privilege that we would have given to Israel."³⁷⁸ Even though the minister was trying to be fair, his statement nonetheless revealed a prejudice and a preference. Admitting that adding consulates in Algeria for newly independent Arab states would be problematic, if not dangerous, for French sovereignty, the minister was divulging his acceptance of the new dualistic worldview. This widely accepted logic divided Western imperial powers—*and* Israel—from the Arab world, in this case meaning newly decolonized North African nations. It also implied that the "Arabs" were trouble for the West.

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*

Targeting Israeli Agents

On February 17, 1958, two Jewish Agency representatives—Jacob Hassan and his partner Raphaël Ben Guerra—were kidnapped and taken to an unknown location. Months later, they were found dead. Sources disagree on the circumstances of their abduction, which had been investigated by several different Jewish agencies.³⁷⁹ Most sources claim that the men had been in a taxi on their way to Afflou, where Jews' living conditions had completely deteriorated. According to these sources, they were planning to gather a group of refugees to send to Israel.³⁸⁰ Other sources claim that they were on their way to Tiaret, and before getting into the taxi, they gave their Israeli passports to the police commissioner for safety. The following day, the car was found burned and the men were missing. Two Mossad agents claimed that the men were abducted and murdered even before the cab was set on fire.³⁸¹ Other sources claim that FLN soldiers had kidnapped the agents and held them hostage for three months. According to this theory, the agents were killed in April 1958, but the killers concealed the murders for several months, claiming that they were being held as hostages.³⁸²

In New York, Maurice Perlzweig (who represented the World Jewish Congress) discussed the kidnapping with Abdel Kader Chanderli, an FLN representative who was in town for the United Nations summit on

³⁷⁹ The World Jewish Congress was part of a Lazarus / Narboni investigation. A man from Bnai Brith did his own follow-up in 1962, as seen in the Label Katz papers from New York, and the Mossad and Jewish Agency investigated on their own.

³⁸⁰ Michael Laskier, *North African Jews in the Twentieth Century*, page 324–5.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² H. Schachter, “Deux Shlichim de l’Agence Juive Assassinés” in *La Tribune Sioniste de France*, page 3. AIU Lazarus Dossier I.

decolonization.³⁸³ Chanderli reassured the Jewish community in June that the two men were still alive, and that they would not be harmed as a “sign of friendship.”³⁸⁴ Perlzweig was skeptical, and after further inquiry, discovered in late June that they were indeed dead. Chanderli denied the accusation. The FLN continued to reassure the Jewish community that the men were alive throughout the summer months. It was not until mid-August—six months after their capture and four months after their murder—that the truth was revealed, and their families could begin to mourn. An FLN representative stated that the two men were killed “about four or six weeks ago.” The nature of their murder remained hazy. Chanderli later claimed that *French* planes bombed the convoy that was transporting the hostages, resulting in their death.³⁸⁵

Historians and journalists, including Lazarus himself, have tended to lump together the brutal assassinations of the Israeli Jewish Agency representatives with other FLN violence against Algerian Jews.³⁸⁶ However, as the above conversation with Chanderli shows, Israelis in Algeria drew more negative scrutiny from the nationalists than did Algerian-Jewish individuals. Lazarus was convinced that Hassan and Ben Guerra were taken simply “because they were Europeans.”³⁸⁷ This reasoning seems convoluted in retrospect. As Israelis, the two men were neither French citizens nor Europeans. However, in the new context that pitted the “West” against “Arabs,” the two men stood out as enemies of Algerian nationalism—not

³⁸³ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria.”

³⁸⁴ H. Schachter, “Deux Shlichim de l’Agence Juive Assassinés” in *La Tribune Sioniste de France*, page 3. AIU Lazarus Dossier I.

³⁸⁵ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria” page 6.

³⁸⁶ Laskier definitely does this, as does Stora, when they talk about a deterioration of the relationship between the FLN and the Jews.

³⁸⁷ Conversation with Lazarus, July 2008.

only because they were Jewish, but because they were Israeli. The FLN kidnapers may have known about the Jewish Agency's special arrangement with France: that, from their perspective, the Agency could serve as an unwelcome quasi-Israeli consulate. Years later in New York, Chanderli—now an FLN envoy to the United Nations—admitted that the FLN was hostile to the Jewish Agency for pushing Algerian Jews toward Israel. He stated that Israel's position was necessarily influenced by the fact that it received military aid from France. But, he claimed, the Israeli government had gone too far in its alliance.³⁸⁸ Israelis appeared to be more supportive of the French empire than French-Jewish citizens in Algeria. Chanderli told his American interlocutors that most Algerian Jews (unlike Israelis) were “on the fence” about their allegiances.³⁸⁹ He elaborated: “With regard to the Algerian Jews, we consider that they constitute a category completely distinct from the European element.”³⁹⁰ Algerian Muslims, according to Chanderli, believed that the Agency was conducting a vigorous campaign to induce Jews to leave Algeria for Israel.³⁹¹ He made his hostility to the Jewish Agency clear, and urged Jewish leaders to stop any emigration from Algeria to Israel. While the violent abduction and murder of Hassan and Ben Guerra alarmed the Jewish community of Algeria, FLN representatives considered it to be a strictly political move. It was an effort to remove Israel's influence from Algeria.

The FLN's internal archives indicate that it clearly distinguished between “Jewish Algerians” and Israeli politics. In a top-secret tract published in early 1958,

³⁸⁸ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria” page 5.

³⁸⁹ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria” pages 1-2.

³⁹⁰ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria” page 10.

³⁹¹ AJHS: Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria”

FLN leaders outlined their new plans for persuading the Jews of Algeria to join in their combat.³⁹² In a way that was strikingly similar to the CJAES, the Liberation Army too sought to emphasize the unique connection shared by Jews and Muslims in Algeria. “We must make an intense propaganda effort in order to reduce to nothing the false concept of ‘Israel as refuge,’” they wrote. “[We must show that] the events in the Middle East will not stop us from creating solid bonds between Muslim and Jewish Algerians.”³⁹³ The FLN hoped that together, Algerian Jews and Muslims could influence the relationship between the Arab states and Israel. They argued that the imperialist nations had created Israel in order to “oppress the Arab peoples.”³⁹⁴ This notion mirrored an earlier idea proposed by Abbane that France and Britain had created the entire concept of “Arabism” in order to show their superiority over the colonies.³⁹⁵

In the aftermath of the abduction in 1958, CJAES leader André Narboni spoke on behalf of the World Zionist Organization when he proclaimed the Algerian Jews’ loyalty to the state of Israel. He balanced this discourse, however, by asserting his profound attachment to France as well as his commitment to peace between Jews and Muslims.³⁹⁶ Before he even discussed the concept of Zionism or any possibility of emigrating, Narboni strongly reaffirmed that Algerian Jews “were French and that

³⁹² Archives de l’Armée de la Terre, Copies of documents confiscated in Beni Sbihi, Constantine, on April 27, 1958. Document no. 3, ALN, “Chers Frères,” pp.2–3.

³⁹³ Archives de l’Armée de la Terre, Copies of documents confiscated in Beni Sbihi, Constantine on April 27, 1958. Document no. 3, ALN, “Chers Frères,” page 2. « C’est un intense travail de propagande que nous devons faire pour réduire à néant la fausse conception du ‘refuge d’Israël’ et pour que les événements du Moyen-Orient n’empêchent pas que se créent les liens solides entre les Algériens musulmans et juifs. »

³⁹⁴ Archives de l’Armée de la Terre, Copies of documents confiscated in Beni Sbihi, Constantine on April 27, 1958. Document no. 3, ALN, “Chers Frères,” page 3.

³⁹⁵ Mameri, pages 226–28.

³⁹⁶ Narboni’s Speech to the World Zionist Org. Undated, sometime after May 1958. (AIU JLI).May 1958).

they intend to stay French, without changing in any way the traditional friendship that unites them to Muslims in Algeria.”³⁹⁷ Even though he was speaking before an audience of Jewish Zionists, he continued to emphasize the loyalism/loyalty compromise. In his following remarks, though, Narboni tried to give a more complete picture, reaffirming for his Zionist audience his continued support for Israel.

During these long, difficult months in Algeria, we have always held strong and amplified our Zionist action ... openly, without succumbing to pressure from the FLN nor to the fears of certain Jewish groups.³⁹⁸

Finally, emphasizing his goals on behalf of Algerian Jews, Narboni revealed his strained logic. His multiple positions were in conflict with one another.

Our only goal has been to show both our friends and our enemies the authentic face of the Jews of Algeria: attached to France, attached to [living in] harmony with Muslims, and, at the same time, profoundly attached to Israel and the World Zionist Organization.³⁹⁹

Narboni’s speech was anachronistic at best, and, at worst, it was a provocation for further anti-Jewish violence. The goals of the Jews hadn’t changed very much since the mid-1940s; however, the world was quickly changing, and it was becoming very difficult to claim both harmony with Muslims and also attachment to both France and Israel.

In 1958, world Jewish organizations increased pressure on Algerian Jews to adhere to Israeli policies regardless of the situation, compounding the dilemma posed by the FLN’s insistence that they take an unequivocal pro-nationalist stance on the Algerian war. A militant Zionist group (the OSF, Organisation sioniste de

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

France) claimed that it was necessary to keep the Jews of Algeria safe and to support *Algérie Française* because if granted independence, Algeria would become a “new bastion for pan-arabism” and it would open up Israel to a new cohort of enemies.⁴⁰⁰

In France, liberal detractors of conventional Zionism followed a small movement begun in interwar Eastern Europe, which they eventually named “diasporism.”⁴⁰¹ An early exponent of the movement’s new manifestation in France, Wladimir Rabi, warned those who defended Algerian colonialism under the pretext of defending Israel that they would only worsen Israel’s relationship with Arab and African states.⁴⁰² Although Jewish Agency representatives and other Zionist groups were exploiting the Algerian War as proof that Jews must move to Israel, the small group of Jewish diasporists took issue with French politics in Algeria, hoping to build a better, freer France. Jean Daniel criticized Israelis and the Europeans of Algeria alike for oversimplifying the complex network of Muslim problems, compressing them into the single issue of Pan-Arabism.⁴⁰³

Still, most Jews in Algeria found it difficult to maintain a pro-*Algérie Française*–yet–liberal perspective without also supporting Israel. The divide between the West and the Arab world was only growing more explicit. Phillip Herreman, a Jewish journalist, observed that the only issue that united the nations of the Arab League was neither one of race nor religion, rather they found common

⁴⁰⁰ “L’organisation Sioniste de France : le sort des juifs d’algerie dépend du maintien de la France » in *Le Monde* 8 October 1959.

⁴⁰¹ Richard Marienstras coined this word and the Cercle Bernard Lazare was a “pro-diaspora” leftist Jewish group that formed in Eastern Europe in 1968. Here, we are discussing its ideological roots. See Judith Friedlander, *Vilna on the Seine*.

⁴⁰² W. Rabi, “Le Monde Juif Entre La Droite et la Gauche,” *Esprit*, November 1959 (pp. 407–506), p. 505.

⁴⁰³ Jean Daniel, “Algérie: Capitale Suez?” in *L’Express* # 268, 10 August 1956, p. 3.

cause in defending both Palestine and Algeria.⁴⁰⁴ The specter of a Pan-Arab entity threatened the possibility of local peace in Algeria.

Conclusion

Because of the standoff between local Jewish and Muslim élites in late 1956, and the harsh ideologies emanating from new incarnations of pan-Arab nationalism and aggressive Zionism, the dynamics among local Algerian populations had changed. The Jewish-Muslim relationship—which many had celebrated in previous years—had become strained. Algerian Muslims, who were drifting from Abbane’s inclusive perspective, became more attached to the idea that the Algerian War was a religious war. This excluded Jews. Some even perceived Jews as enemies of the Pan-Arab movement, because of a presumed connection with Israel.

Jewish leaders became more vocal about their attachment to France, and they needed the French army's presence more than ever in order to secure their safety. The vast majority of Jews still believed that only France could help save them from the violence. Israel’s involvement in Algeria only complicated matters, lending credibility to the idea that all Jews were conspiring with the French. Each group had stopped trusting the other. As the Algerian Nationalist movement grew, its members began to believe that Algerian Jews would never join their side. As terrorist violence increasingly entered Jewish neighborhoods and establishments, Jews no longer felt safe with Muslims.

⁴⁰⁴ Phillip Herreman, “Où en est la Ligue Arabe?,” *L’Arche* 34, October 1959, 33–37.

Chapter Four: Jewish Militants for the FLN

Wilaya 2, Zone November 17, 1957

Dear Compatriot,

We have learned from one of our agents that you have announced your commitment to the FLN and to the National Liberation Army (ALN). We are happy to count you among our Algerian compatriots. ...

We would like to remind you that we have solemnly and publicly proclaimed ...that the Jews of this country will be able to opt for Algerian nationality in an independent and Free Algeria. [Jews] will be considered citizens with all the same rights and duties. We do not see any differences among citizens of the same nation. That is our goal.

—The Commander in Chief⁴⁰⁵

Letters like these circulated in Algeria regularly from late 1956 until the war's end. They appear in the archives, scattered among the FLN's numerous appeals to the Jews of Algeria. These letters addressed Jewish men and women who had responded affirmatively to the FLN's invitations. There is no way to know exactly how many Jews enlisted in the FLN, although some of the organization's writers manipulated their numbers as part of an effort to gain Jewish support.

In his 1959 writings about the Algerian struggle, the theorist of FLN nationalism, Frantz Fanon, presented his version of Algerian-Jewish demography. He criticized Jewish tradesmen and bureaucrats for conspiring with "those [Europeans] who humiliate [Jews], who in turn humiliate Muslims."⁴⁰⁶ In his understanding, these Jews, although they were powerful, only represented a small fraction of the Jewish population. He portrayed 75 % of Algerian Jews as "a floating, imposing mass, arabized to the extreme, speaking French poorly, considered by

⁴⁰⁵ Archives de l'armée de la terre, Document no. 4 of Copies of documents captured in Beni Sbihi, Constantine.

⁴⁰⁶ Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, page 154.

their traditions and sometimes their clothes as authentic *indigènes*.”⁴⁰⁷ Jewish populations, in reality, were urban, fluent in French, and educated. Men’s occupations were as professionals or shopkeepers. A detailed study published in December 1956 estimated that the booming cities of Algiers, Constantine, and Oran had a combined Jewish population of 76,000, or 83 % of the total, and their numbers made up 15 % in the smaller towns. Tribal or rural Jews, according to this demographic study, constituted only 1% of the Jewish population, and not 75 %, as Fanon had asserted.⁴⁰⁸

His characterization of the masses was part of a larger trend, in which activists manipulated Jewish demography, or even Jewish identity. Like other FLN proponents, Fanon depicted Algerian Jews as ethnically similar to Muslims. While the democratic-minded FLN writers, such as Mohammed Lebjaoui and Abbane Ramdane, had focused on the shared histories of the two populations, Fanon emphasized cultural-ethnic markers, such as clothing, language, and religion. He conveyed the Algerian Revolution as a Manichean struggle that pitted the authentic natives against the modern, wealthy colonizers.⁴⁰⁹ He advised Muslims to cling tightly to their traditions, such as the veil, which the colonizers had tried to remove. “Every rejected veil,” he wrote in 1959, “reveals... piece by piece, the flesh of Algeria

⁴⁰⁷ Fanon, p. 119. Fanon: “Les Juifs d’Algérie” in Robert Attal, *Regards sur les Juifs d’Algérie*, Paris: l’Harmattan, 2000, pp. 117-120. Originally published in *L’An V de la révolution algérienne*, Editions Maspero, Paris 1959. “il y a la masse imposante, arabisée à l’extrême, parlant mal le français, flottante, mais se considérant par les traditions et qqfois par l’habillement comme d’authentiques ‘indigènes’.

⁴⁰⁸ Maurice Goldblum and André Zaoui, “Algeria,” in *American Jewish Yearbook 1957*, vol. 58.

⁴⁰⁹ For instance when he wrote, “The phenomena of resistance observed in the colonized must be related to an attitude of counter-assimilation, or maintenance of a cultural, hence national, originality.” Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, page 42.

laid bare.”⁴¹⁰ To fit into this framework, Jews had to become “native,” which they could do by emphasizing a common history and culture with Muslims. Simply renouncing French citizenship was not enough.

While mainstream Algerian Jews did their best to appear neutral, despite their forthright declarations of loyalty to France, a small number of Jewish radicals in Algeria opposed the French, making weapons, planning attacks, or hiding suspects on behalf of the FLN. Although exact numbers for Jewish partisans are hard to come by, anonymous groups of militant Jews proclaimed their loyalty to the FLN.⁴¹¹ Late in life, select individuals have come forward in interviews or memoirs about their experiences.⁴¹² One Jewish activist even kept a diary in prison.⁴¹³ Jewish activists in the FLN often reconceptualized their ethnic-religious identities, transforming themselves from secular Communists into “authentic” Algerians. This chapter will trace this transformation.

These Algerian Jewish militants confronted core issues of identity, reframing themselves as Jewish Algerians as opposed to European Frenchmen. Within Algeria, Jews were fighting for their lives in a different way from those who supported the revolution ideologically in France. As mainland sympathizers on the left, radical Jews in Paris took great risks on behalf of Algerian revolutionaries, yet they still

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ See for instance, Un groupe d’Israélites de Constantine, “Prise de Position des Israélites Contre les Menées Colonialistes,” in *El Moudjahid*, numéro spéciale #4, 17 August 1956, page 73.

⁴¹² A recent literary study of Algerian-Jewish memoirs is R. Watson, “Memories (out) of place: Franco-Judeo-Algerian autobiographical writing, 1995–2010,” in *Journal of North African Studies*, 2011, 1–23.

⁴¹³ Daniel Timsit, *Récits de la Longue Patience*.

maintained their French citizenship and identity.⁴¹⁴ Those who were immersed in the war zone fought a more violent struggle, and they justified—or often participated in—terrorist attacks. Whereas mainland leftist intellectuals deplored their country’s colonizing oppression, they would never have repudiated their citizenship. Algerian activists renounced the French entirely and fought for something larger, whether it was a Communist revolution or an Algerian one. But as a new wave of FLN leaders embraced Islam and Arabism, these militant Jews began to understand that there was no place for them in the emerging movement.

Jewish dissidents resituated the history of French Algeria as one in which the French colonizers had repeatedly betrayed the Jews rather than favoring them with citizenship—which was the Jewish majority’s perspective. Activists also referred to what they saw as the *real* Jewish history of Algeria—the history that mirrored the Muslim experience. They did this by drawing attention to cultural traditions that had been abandoned with French assimilation. Finally, they framed the relationship between Jews and Muslims as “brothers of this land.” They claimed that tensions between Muslims and Jews were orchestrated by the European settlers in order to keep the two groups apart. This was not unlike Raymond Bénichou’s perspective, which he had articulated in the 1940s and early ‘50s.⁴¹⁵ However, claiming Muslims as brothers after 1956 was a much more radical move than it had been during Bénichou’s era. While most Jewish activists became

⁴¹⁴ An excellent intellectual history of French debates about Algeria is James D. LeSueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria*. University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

⁴¹⁵ Raymond Bénichou, *Ecrits juifs*. “Les Relations Judéo-Musulmans en Algérie” (1957), p. 187. Originally published in *Information Juive*, 1952. For a more explicit discussion of Bénichou, see chapter 2.

involved because they “dreamed of a democratic and socialist Algeria,”⁴¹⁶ they began to assert a specifically Algerian ethnicity over the course of their activism.

Because many Jews involved in this radical endeavor remained anonymous, and they were relatively few, scholars have either included Jews among works written about dissenting individuals or they have focused on the FLN’s appeals to the Jews of Algeria.⁴¹⁷ The Jacques Lazarus archives have overshadowed these minority voices; dissidents from the CJAES declaration of neutrality play an insignificant role in the chronicles that Lazarus collected. Colonial records and personal memories reveal that there was a trenchant minority Jewish response that opposed the mainstream directly, and is largely forgotten or treated on an isolated basis.

The FLN, the Communists, and the Jews

Most of the leftist Jews who eventually joined forces with the FLN began as Communists.⁴¹⁸ As children, they watched the Spanish Civil War unfold and were persuaded by the Republican Popular Front’s struggle. Like the other members of their generation, they personally endured the persecutions and French antisemitism during World War II. In their adulthood, they were convinced that Algeria was a strategically important site for a revolution of the proletariat. In this case, the

⁴¹⁶ Bensimon and Allouche, *Juifs d’Algérie: Identités Plurielles* p.314. describing “Maurice G”’s perspective.

⁴¹⁷ Meynier, Harbi, and Mameri all have small mentions of Algeria’s Jews; Stora, *Trois Exiles* and Ayoun focus on the appeals.

⁴¹⁸ Henri Alleg, though not explicitly treated in this chapter, was one of the prominent communists in Algeria, who was also a secular Jew. He did not ever “transfer” to the FLN in the same way as the figures in this chapter, although he did famously endure torture on behalf of the Algerian struggle and then document it in *The Question*. His two-volume memoir describes the events above and the coming of age of a communist. Henri Alleg, *Mémoire Algérienne: Souvenirs de luttes et d’esperances*. (Éditions Stock, 2005).

suppressed Muslim population would be the proletariat. Eventually, these Jews relinquished their Communist affiliations, and joined the FLN. In many cases, their militant engagement with the war emerged at the same time as they reinvestigated their own personal roots. Abandoning their Communist secular personae, and once again taking on their Jewish heritage, these individuals' ethnicities became a political instrument.

Abbane's Soummam platform declared the FLN's decision to invite all the Jews of Algeria to join the nationalist fight against the French, while it renounced the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) for its lack of resolve.⁴¹⁹ This move placed the Jews *ethnically, culturally, and historically* inside the Algerian nation, while questioning the allegiances of the Communist party because its leaders were too European. The purpose of the Soummam was to *reject* some political groups—the MNA, the Communists—even if they supported an independent Algeria. And so, this makes their appeal to the Jews of Algeria even more salient. Jews were special enough to be included, for whatever disputed reasons, and they belonged among the Algerian nationalists. Jews were among the many groups that Abbane yearned to fit into the new, united face of the FLN. Jews belonged, and Communists—several of whom had fought for the Algerian Revolution—did not.

The August 1956 Platform proclaimed:

Let us hope that Algerian Jews will follow in large numbers those others who have responded to our generous *patrie*, giving their friendship to the Revolution and proudly proclaiming their Algerian nationality!⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ This is explicit in the Soummam Platform itself and supported by Meynier, page 183. "Les hommes de la Soummam étaient, certes, anticommunistes."

⁴²⁰ Plat-Forme de la Soummam (telle qu'elle a été établie au congrès du 20 août et publié *par El Moudjahid*," in Yves Courrière, *La Guerre d'Algérie. 1954–1957, volume I*. Paris: Fayard, 2001. Annex,

Among its many goals, the Soummam platform aimed to set the record straight about the Algerian Communist Party (PCA). Even though the French Army and administration understood the FLN as an arm of Moscow, the FLN and PCA engaged in an irreparable rivalry.⁴²¹ The Communist party was ambivalent about Algerian independence, or at least the kind of independence that the FLN insisted upon.⁴²² The Soummam's writers accused the Communists of choosing the wrong battle—they were too concerned with the proletarian revolution, and were neglecting the national liberation of the peoples of Algeria. At the heart of the party, declared the FLN, were “European elements” whose “artificial Algerian national convictions” had become clear when asked to use armed resistance.⁴²³ The new politics of the PCA were becoming “confusing” and their aim was no longer “national liberation” but a communist revolution in France. For instance, FLN activists wondered whether Communists would be capable of killing any European. The Soummam Platform made the PCA illegal in Algeria.

Increasingly, a number of Jewish Communists migrated toward the nationalist struggle, choosing to join forces with the FLN instead of (or as a step toward) fighting for the larger international revolution of the proletariat. The Soummam had introduced a racial element into the FLN's program, although it was more subdued than it would become after 1957. For the FLN, the most troubling aspect of the Communist Party was the Europeans' background and culture. As the

pp. 902–932, (910).

⁴²¹ For the French understanding of the FLN's relationship to Moscow see Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution*, page 84. On the rivalry, see Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure* and Mameri, *Abbane Ramdane*.

⁴²² Evidence of this ambivalence can be seen in Alleg's autobiography page 138. Even though he discusses important political divides, he always alluded to participants as either European or Muslim.

⁴²³ Plat-Forme de la Soummam, in Courrière, page 910.

FLN saw it, “Europeans” simply did not belong to the “peoples of Algeria.” They were not racially, ethnically, or historically part of Algeria; they descended from colonizers. The Europeans—even sympathetic Communists—only had a century of history on Algerian soil. Jews, on the other hand, had been in Algeria even longer than Muslims. Jewish Communists could then easily justify their shift toward the FLN, whereas European Communists had a more intense challenge before them.

Some scholars now believe that the FLN was anti-Jewish from its beginning. Richard Ayoun, for instance, has argued that the FLN strategically intended to isolate Jews, to deprive them of French citizenship as an act of discrimination or violence.⁴²⁴ This argument neglected the shifts within the FLN’s ideology. Under Abbane, the Jews appeared to belong in the FLN, ethnically. As the FLN became Islamist, under the three Bs, the Jews no longer fit into this vision. However, when Abbane’s FLN invited the Jews to join in their fight, many Jews responded affirmatively.

Alternate to the Soummam Response

Jacques Lazarus and the Jewish leaders worked hard to construct a diplomatic response to the Soummam Appeal, one that would gingerly state that they stood with France but wished no harm toward their Muslim “brothers.”⁴²⁵ A few months after that initial “Jewish” response, a secondary one made its way through the Algerian press; it was strident and clear in its support of independence.

⁴²⁴ Richard Ayoun, “Les Juifs d’Algérie pendant la guerre d’indépendance (1954 – 1962).” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29).

⁴²⁵ “Une Déclaration du Comité juif algérien d’études sociales,” *Information Juive*, no. 82, November 1956, page. 1.

It came from an anonymous group, self-described as a “group of Algerian Jews.”

Lazarus, remarking that they were “curiously anonymous,” cast doubt on their legitimacy, suggesting that the FLN had manufactured a Jewish response.⁴²⁶

Whatever the provenance, the letter echoed the Soummam appeal’s tone, reaching back in time to elaborate on the place of Jews in Algeria. This letter is unlike the CJAES Declaration, which dwelled on the present, in order to describe the situation of the Jews during the Algerian War.

This alternate letter, originally published in February 1957, begins with an unambiguous, ethnic declaration: “We are descended, just like the Muslims, from the original inhabitants of [Algeria] and from the Semites who came from the East.”⁴²⁷

The dissenting Jews constructed an ethnic image of themselves, which related their identities to both the land and the Muslim majority. They were transforming the idea of “*indigène*” from a privation into a new source of political capital. It was a positive alternative to French citizenship.

The group’s response coincided with the foundation of a Committee of Jewish Algerians for Independence, which was mentored by Lebjaoui, the same man who wrote the Jewish section of the Soummam Platform.⁴²⁸ They argued that the systemic structural racism of the French colonizers carried an implication of

⁴²⁶ J. Lazarus, “Situation de la collectivité juive en Algérie,” in *Assises du judiasme algérien* (pamphlet, AIU, Laz XVI), Originally delivered 12–13 mars 1958, pp. 7–17, page 11.

⁴²⁷ Response to the Soummam letter by a Group of Jews, originally in *Résistance Algérienne*, February 1957, found in English translation in booklet for United Nations General Assembly, 12th Session. December 10, 1957. Vincennes. (Un groupe d’Israélites de Constantine, « Situation des Juifs d’Algérie à la lumière des événements de 1934 et de 1956” letter originally published in « Al Istiqlal » du 17 août 1956 et dans « El Moudjahid » October 1956. Found in F.LN. Documents, “Les Juifs d’Algérie dans le combat pour l’indépendance Nationale » édité par la Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale. Archives de la Armée de Terre.)

⁴²⁸ Lebjaoui founded the committee in the beginning of 1957, according to Harbi, *Une Vie Débout*, page 201.

violence. Therefore, any expression of violence, and the various clashes between populations, could ultimately be blamed on the French government. It could excuse such Muslim excesses as the 1934 Constantine pogrom.

While mainstream Jewish organizations clung ever closer to Crémieux and what he represented, these dissenters were criticizing his agenda. They were rewriting the French conquest, making Crémieux into a political opportunist who segregated Jews from Muslims to consolidate French power: “In order to perpetuate its oppression and exploitation, colonialism needed to set one element of the population of the country against another.” French citizenship was not a gift, but a coercion: they claimed that their forebears accepted French citizenship, only because “this was the only possibility of modernization allowed to us.”⁴²⁹

They reasoned further that the divisive strategy of the French colonial power had culminated in the Vichy government, where antisemitism had been institutionalized. After World War II, it was only because Muslims and Jews had refused to turn against one another that the French then “directed their fire against the masses of Muslims.” The racist political machinations of Vichy had not been dismantled, but recalibrated toward Muslims. Many individuals in both Algeria and in France began to proclaim that the Algerian War was turning into a second Holocaust against Muslims. This may have been a hyperbolic use of the term. However, the Army’s overtly racist methods of seeking out criminals—not to mention its use of torture, guillotines, and relocation camps—certainly held resonances for some.

⁴²⁹ From *Résistance Algérienne*, Feb 11-27, 1957.

Portraying Jews and Muslims as brothers, like Isaac and Ishmael, remained a common theme. The two groups had only been torn apart by the way that the French presence had arbitrarily given citizenship to Jews, while withholding it from Muslims. This painted a picture of pre-French Algeria as a halcyon time, one in which Jews were far more integrated into Ottoman society than, say, Eastern European Jews had been integrated into European society. Perhaps they were compensating for the miserable way that French imperialists depicted the Jewish dhimmi under Ottoman rule.⁴³⁰ Indeed, according to the new propaganda missives, Muslims and Jews were cut from the same cloth. The group proudly proclaimed, "It is high time for us to return to the Algerian community. We have neither the interest nor the moral right to deny our origins and our past."⁴³¹ While they prohibited Arabic instruction, French schools had indoctrinated its students with French history, convincing them that their ancestors were the Gauls.⁴³² Now, this group, in contemplation of their own genealogy, revealed a different truth:

Can we repudiate our names, which were generally Arab names? Ought we to refuse to understand our parents, who are attached to Algerian customs, traditions, and music? Though the tombs of our ancestors have been in Algeria for thousands of years, should we prefer to become something foreign? For those who meet us when we go abroad... are not mistaken: they see us as Algerians.⁴³³

The solution to the colonial strategy of division was mutual public trust.

⁴³⁰ Joshua Schreier had argued that these misrepresentations were exaggerated by French imperialists in order to justify French colonization of Algeria. (Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith*, 12).

⁴³¹ Un Groupe d'Israelites de Constantine, "Prise de Position... » *Op cit.*

⁴³² Andree Dore-Audibert "Des Francaises d'Algerie dans la guerre de liberation

⁴³³ This was also true of most pieds noirs, as we will see in future chapters. Un Groupe d'Israelites de Constantine, "Prise de Position... » *Op cit.*

One way to work for peace is for all of us—Muslims and Jews—together to publicize any provocations that aim to turn us against one another. Among ourselves, we must enforce a climate of trust and friendship.⁴³⁴

What follows are three biographical vignettes, which illustrate individual paths from Communism to FLN nationalism.

Jean Cohen

Muslim-Algerian nationalists constructed an Arabic history in order to counter the powerful imprint of French history on the colonies. Jewish-Algerian nationalists also reconstructed their own past within Algeria—sometimes this personal reconstruction happened only after the Jews were fighting on behalf of Muslims.

Jean Cohen, a professor of philosophy who grew up in the French-Algerian city of Oran, helped guide the project of reconstructing Arabic history. Although Cohen had been politically active as a Communist, he saw the limitations of Communism's universalist doctrine of an international proletarian revolution in the Algerian context. Communism had failed to address the ethnic nature of the FLN's struggle for independence. Cohen, along with other Jewish radicals, became nationalists and they politicized Muslims' genealogy. Eventually, Cohen was led to explore his own Jewish background through his empathy with the process of rethinking Muslim history in Algeria.

Since the very beginning of the war—before Abbane had set out the Soummam platform—Cohen struggled to give a revolutionary voice to the

⁴³⁴ F.L.N. Documents, "Les Juifs d'Algérie dans le combat pour l'indépendance Nationale » édité par la Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale. Archives de la Armée de Terre.

oppressed Muslim population in Algeria. In a crucial article written late in 1955, Cohen utilized Communist categories in order to describe what, to him, was becoming an ethnic dilemma. He felt that ethnicity and class could be synthesized, and he thought through a new notion: a kind of “racial communism.” Ultimately, this synthesis proved to be a transitory stage in Cohen’s changing landscape of personal and political identity.

“In the world,” he wrote in his November 1955 piece, entitled “Colonialism and Racism in Algeria,” “the two classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie basically look similar; they speak the same language; and they believe in (or reject) the same god.”⁴³⁵ But in North Africa, the situation was different: the two social classes were simply “Europeans” or “Muslims.” (He did not yet include Jews as a separate group, although he implied that Jews in this case were part of the European “class.”) The Muslims, Cohen argued, were “a proletarian race,” an unfortunate identity that was brought on by the unjust colonial structure.⁴³⁶ He elaborated:

Their race, or more precisely their ‘peoplehood’ means that their skin is a bit darker, that they wear a *djebella*, and that they worship Allah. But it is because of their class that that they are poorly dressed, and they sleep on the ground.⁴³⁷

To Cohen’s mind, the Muslims of Algeria were doubly cursed. Because of the hierarchy set up by French colonization, they were both an oppressed “race” and an oppressed class. His new phrase, “proletarian race” made sense in the context of this single article, but it was compromised. What Cohen eventually set out to prove,

⁴³⁵ Jean Cohen, “Colonialisme et Racisme en Algérie,” in *Les Temps Modernes*, November 1955, pp. 580–590, (582).

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, C’est en tant que race ou plus exactement que peuple qu’ils ont la peau plus brune, qu’ils portent la djellaba et adorent Allah. C’est en tant que classe qu’ils sont vêtues de loques et couchent par terre.

by the end of the article, was that the legally endorsed, oppressive structure of colonialism had homogenized the indigenous of Algeria. He sought to recuperate a “Muslim” history, but he repeated the problem, homogenizing the so-called Muslim proletariat. At the time, he also included himself as French, even unconsciously. By addressing the “indigenous” as Muslims, he necessarily excluded the Jews—his vision was not at all similar to the declarations of the Jewish FLN partisans above. As we will see, he only gradually began to reconsider his own Jewish-Algerian identity, much later.

Cohen’s answer to racism was to resurrect Algerian-Arab history, since it had been cut short in the middle of the nineteenth century when the French conquered Algeria. Muslims had lost their human individuality—their “*qualité d’homme*.” Becoming resiliently proud of a particular Algerian culture was, for Cohen, a natural reaction to years of the French empire’s cultural tyranny. Becoming more Muslim was a way for the members of the oppressed “race” to reclaim their humanity. Through Crémieux, France had made him into an individual by offering equality with French citizens. Muslim Algerians, however, had been deprived of that privilege:

The Arab was not human; he wasn’t an individual [...]. All men were Ahmed and all women were Fatima. And everyone addressed them as *tu* even though they called us *vous*.⁴³⁸

If Muslims wanted the right to become human again, the right to their individuality, it was by openly proclaiming their cultural uniqueness. The French, or the Europeans, did not hate Arabs, they simply ignored them, because they dressed

⁴³⁸ Ibid 65

differently and spoke another language. As Cohen reflected on the way that a Communist revolution could transform into a nationalist one, he also became personally closer to the nationalists. He held meetings for FLN members in his university office, listening to their problems and offering suggestions.

Initially, in 1955, he had separated the injustices of being Muslim in Algeria from the kind of hatred he had experienced as a young Jew. Or—in his article—he subconsciously placed Jews among Europeans, although this was historically inaccurate. Cohen later wrote about how his philosophy about Muslim activism made him rethink his own Jewish background. He came to resent the fact that Jews had been forced to blend into the European majority. Islamic nationalism was a way to subvert the same assimilationist path that the Jews had taken. Cohen’s theory was that there were only two possible ways to react to the colonizing pressure—or as he put it, the “colonist negation.”⁴³⁹ The choiceless choice was either to completely erase one’s individuality and assimilate, as the Jewish minority had done, or to celebrate one’s specific traits and to fight to reinforce that which made him unique. This—he observed—was what the Muslims of Algeria were doing late in 1955. Becoming Muslim was a way for them to become human rather than losing themselves to universality and compromising their individuality to French culture. The rapid reinforcing of Islam was nothing more than a self-affirmation, and an awakening of the national consciousness—a reversal of the former “negation.”

⁴³⁹ Jean Cohen, « Colonialisme et Racisme en Algérie ». *Les Temps Modernes* 119, November 1955, pages 580–590. « ou bien il tente d’effacer son individualité et de se perdre dans la masse. Ce fut en Algérie l’attitude de la minorité juive. Ou bien il accuse ses traits et renforce son individualité. Ce fut la réaction des masses indigènes. » (page 590).

Cohen's growing disdain for the implied assimilation that Muslims were encouraged to undergo to achieve equality helped him to clarify what he came to consider his own victimhood as an assimilated Jewish Algerian. In his 1955 piece, he had only alluded to an extreme colonist "antisemitic passion" in the abstract. Instead of discussing how antisemitism had affected him, he used it as a simple point of comparison, so he could note that there was no such overt "anti-Arab passion" among the settlers —only indifference.⁴⁴⁰ Much later, in Cohen's 1997 memoir that was published posthumously, he began to prioritize his own, Jewish experience, in the way that he had earlier urged Muslims to reinvent theirs. For example, he explained that one of his reasons for leaving the Communist party was that he had learned about Soviet antisemitism in the 1950s, although he never admitted it at the time.⁴⁴¹

He had resented his family's Jewish background when he was younger, but as an older man, he reveled in his memory of the elaborate Saturday meals that his mother had prepared for the entire family. He remembered exotic salads made of leeks, artichokes, lemons, oranges, and pineapples, followed by indescribable dishes made with a mixture of vegetables and meats which were cooked in a Jewish-Algerian traditional stew overnight. For dessert, there were almonds and honeys of all colors. However, as teenagers, he and his brothers didn't appreciate these meals. Cohen described chewing his food at the front of his mouth. He did this because "[I]

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. page 585

⁴⁴¹ Jean Cohen, *Chronique d'une Algérie Révolue: "comme l'ombre et le vent."* Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997. page 85.

didn't *want* to like the flavors, because the food ... carried a sign of our origin."⁴⁴²

Although he mellowed about his origins as he aged, the youthful Cohen had conceived of his Judaism as if it were some kind of oppressive predetermination. He summarized his attitude as follows: "I am not the son of Abraham, I didn't kill Jesus, Dreyfus's innocence is not my own. I am neither chosen, nor damned. I have broken the ancient covenant."⁴⁴³

In his memoir, revisiting Jewish-Algerian history, Cohen arrived at an understanding about French influence: With all the benefits that the Crémieux Decree had brought, it had also forced Algerian Jews into almost erasing their unique culture. His generation did so willingly, excising the traces of Jewish-Algerian life and replacing them with French mores. Later, he understood that his connection to Muslims reached even deeper than political empathy. His grandmother, he wrote, spoke only the local dialect of Arabic, Djerba. His mother was fluent in both French and Djerba, but she forbid her sons from speaking it or learning it, a familial taboo. Cohen compared the removal of Arabic from his upbringing to an "exorcism."⁴⁴⁴ Most Algerian Jews in his parents' generation were busy doing the same thing: they added to their renewed legal status as French citizens a willing acceptance of French culture.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² Ibid 16.

⁴⁴³ Ibid 18

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid. 15, "Nous lui barrions volontairement l'accès de nos Oreilles et de notre mémoire... notre ignorance avait le sens d'un exorcisme."

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 23. « L'immense majorité des juifs algériens de sa (his father's) génération partageait la même image de la France et la même volonté de justifier la francisation de droit par une francisation de fait. Seuls la religion faisait la différence. » (23) Also as documented in this dissertation's first chapter.

Cohen's activism with the FLN caused him to reflect on his own family's past and belonging in Algeria. He did not want to be mixed into a homogenized French-Jewish population. As a young man, his identity was overshadowed by the pressure to become more French. Like many Jews of his generation, he initially idealized all that was French. He then turned to Communism, seeking human rights and justice for Algeria's impoverished Muslims. Through helping Muslims reconstruct their history, he grew skeptical of French universalism's ideal. His assertion of Muslim particularity, which began as a Communist desire for socioeconomic justice, led him to appreciate his own ethnic particularity. Jean Cohen left Oran on April 20, 1961, the day of the Putsch. OAS members chased him out.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶ Henri Chemouilli, *Une Diaspora Méconnue*. Paris 1976. page 305



Daniel Timsit, seen above in a 1956 self-portrait he drew in prison, was an active terrorist on behalf of the FLN. As a teenager, he had lost his French citizenship during the Vichy regime, an experience that led indirectly to his activism in his adult life. As a young man in 1944, once he had his citizenship back, Timsit became involved in the Communist Party. Like others in his generation, he remembered his initial impetus as being marked by political and secular humanist concerns and not by Jewish identity: “My political engagement began with anti-

Nazism and anti-racism. I am Jewish, but I was no longer religious, and I wasn't aware that [my Judaism] could have any rapport with my politics."⁴⁴⁷ In his journal, he compared the prisons in Algeria to Buchenwald.⁴⁴⁸

"I am faithful to my family's lineage," wrote Timsit.⁴⁴⁹ As a young atheist doctor-in-training, Timsit remembered his grandfather as he became more involved in Algerian nationalism. His grandfather had been the grand rabbi of Constantine, and had never worn a suit and tie—he never dressed like a European.⁴⁵⁰ None of his grandparents spoke French, Timsit realized. Because of their common language with the Muslims, he thought, Jews and Muslims of that earlier generation were on closer, friendlier terms. Describing his upbringing, Timsit wrote that he "bathed in a culture that wasn't his own, French culture. [He] embraced a history that wasn't [his] own, but which [he] had accepted as such."⁴⁵¹

He wrote that he believed in a world "without any borders"—one in which labels like Jewish, Christian, or Muslim did not exist.⁴⁵² Toward the end of his life, in his 1995 memoir, Timsit would identify Judaism as a crucial part of his impulse to become politically engaged. He came to consider his Jewish background an unconscious motivator for all that he did politically.⁴⁵³ It was as if he had sublimated his Jewish identity within Communism, but the former provided the fervor with which he pursued the latter. This internal sublimation was a theme that

⁴⁴⁷ Daniel Timsit, *Algérie, récit anachronique*. Paris: Bouchene, 1998. page 18.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. Page 51.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. 11.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid 13.

⁴⁵¹ *Algérie, récit anachronique* 18.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ "Je suis juif, mais je n'étais déjà plus religieux et n'avais pas conscience que cela pouvait avoir un rapport avec mon engagement. Mais je sais que cela m'a beaucoup motivé." Ibid. 19.

many militant Jews often repeated.

Timsit was initially among a small group of Communist Jews who supported Algerian nationalism. They never officially departed from the Party, although they did commit to the FLN. He and his brothers were doctors, and they grew up on the edge of the Kasbah. For Timsit, and his brothers, the re-instatement of their French citizenship in the postwar period could never compensate for the betrayal of Vichy. He observed the disparity between the way Muslims and French settlers lived. And he perceived the hypocrisy of lofty French ideals. For Timsit, the problem was not inherent in the Vichy regime alone; it was in the entirety of French civilization.

A Jewish medical student at that time, Daniel Timsit contributed his scientific knowledge and laboratory space to begin making bombs for the FLN to be used in terrorist attacks. He knew chemistry students, and had access to explosive materials. At first he had never envisioned himself as a bomb-maker, but, he reasoned, "I couldn't ask others to make explosives if I wouldn't do it myself."⁴⁵⁴

Timsit was arrested in the fall of 1956, just at the start of the five-year stalemate between the Jewish establishment and the FLN. Timsit spent the rest of the war in prison. But it was only in prison, he claimed, when he began to imagine the "real" Algeria for the first time. His incarceration lent him long hours as he imagined what the Algerian countryside must have been like. Always insulated within his Jewish community, Timsit said he never really got to know what he called "the true Algeria, the Algeria of the countryside, the Algeria of the *fellahs* [Muslim peasants], the Algeria which belonged to those who didn't understand French, the

⁴⁵⁴ Timsit *Algérie, récit anachronique*, 28.

Algeria of those without a horizon.”⁴⁵⁵ He felt a camaraderie with the other prisoners—all of whom were Muslim. These kinds of connections were not possible in the segregated city of Algiers, but in the prison cell, he found new friends and new connections. He spent long hours learning *Djerba* from one of his cellmates, or, as he put it, “I am rediscovering my parents’ maternal language, my language that I have forgotten, my own internal music.”⁴⁵⁶ He exchanged the Arabic lessons for lessons in French and hygiene.⁴⁵⁷

Although he had been atheist for his entire adult life, he observed both Passover and Yom Kippur inside his prison cell.⁴⁵⁸ His motivations were decidedly mixed. He said that he celebrated Passover as a favor to the prison’s director. They paired him with a Jewish beggar from the synagogue, and in his journal he related the story with absolute disgust.⁴⁵⁹ He did not want to be likened to such a man.

On Yom Kippur of September 1958, he decided to honor his tradition by fasting—but he also admitted that he did so for political reasons.⁴⁶⁰ Observing the holiday was his way to show the other prisoners that he wasn’t just any Frenchman, but he was manifestly Jewish, and *therefore* belonged in Algeria. Practicing the rituals was a way of expressing solidarity with the Muslim inmates. Although he deplored what he considered to be the backwardness of his Jewish tradition, he

⁴⁵⁵ Timsit, *Algérie, récit anachronique* 40.

⁴⁵⁶ Timsit, *Recits de la longue patience*, page 35.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, page 79.

⁴⁵⁸ Passover, from *longue patience*, Yom Kippur from *Algérie Récit Anachronique*, page 43.

⁴⁵⁹ Timsit, *Récits de la Longue Patience*, page 57.

⁴⁶⁰ In his memoir, he described his specific motivations for fasting as a way to honor his family. (page 43) In his prison journal from 24 September 1958, however, he described the ritual with more skepticism: “Fasted today. Why this submission to primitive rituals, which is still borrowed from magical fears, of man’s timidity shackled to his spirit before society? I don’t believe in these rituals. I respected this fast with a negative reaction, as always.” (Timsit, *Récits de la longue patience*, 88).

nonetheless described *acting* Jewish as a way to show the others that he was truly Algerian. “What is a Jewish Algerian?” He asked rhetorically in his memoir. “It is an Algerian, in the end... You speak Arabic, you share the same way of thinking, the same musical tastes. The others observe Ramadan, and so I will [fast for] Yom Kippur.”⁴⁶¹ His celebrations were strategic, but there were also clues in his prison diaries of an authentic religious reawakening. Timsit, the former atheist, prayed frequently in Hebrew to God throughout his prison term. Each time a new prisoner was sent to the guillotine, he privately intoned the *Shema* and recorded it in his journal.⁴⁶²

Timsit may have insisted that he was just another prisoner, but he had advantages, not only of French citizenship, but of the new kind of solidarity that the French Jewish community was beginning to champion. Elie Gozlan, an emissary of the AIU, pleaded on behalf of Timsit’s two brothers, who were also doctors, and also involved in what became known as the “doctors’ plot,” most likely an allusion to their activities building bombs. At the trial of the doctors, which took place March 23, 1957, Meyer Timsit was sentenced to 5 years in prison and Gabriel to a year. Jewish archives mention three brothers; however, only Meyer and Gabriel are named.⁴⁶³

In addition, the French lawyer Simone Veil, herself a survivor of Auschwitz, came to Timsit’s cell in the autumn of 1958 to interview him about prison conditions. He told her about the prisoners’ circumstances—the deaths, the

⁴⁶¹ Timsit, *Algerie Recit Anachronique*, page 43.

⁴⁶² Timsit, *Récits de la Longue Patience*.

⁴⁶³ AIU archives René Cassin, Paris, 4 January 1958, Letter from Elie Gozlan to René Cassin.

isolation.⁴⁶⁴ Veil petitioned the French government on Timsit's behalf, which led to his being transferred to a prison in France with much better treatment.⁴⁶⁵ Although Timsit's purpose was to effect a change in the harsh conditions of his fellow Arab prisoners, the result was that he himself escaped them. This was not only an indication of his privileged status, but also of the evolving definition of who was Algerian.

This embrace of Jewish identity was still wrought with complexity. Timsit learned Arabic from cellmates, practiced Jewish holidays for the first time in his adult life, and found a new respect for his parents and grandparents.

Myriam Ben

Myriam Ben was a revolutionary who joined the FLN. Like Cohen and Timsit, she experienced a pivotal empathic moment that began her activism. Her identification with poor Muslims, once the Crémieux Decree was reinstated in 1943, provided the impetus to fight. Ben's involvement with Algerian nationalism proved ultimately deeper and far more protracted than either Cohen's or Timsit's. Rather than emigrating to France after decolonization, Ben retained her position as an integral part of the nationalist movement, eventually accepting a post in the nascent revolutionary government. She was forced to leave Algeria in the 1990s by the Algerian Civil War, but remained committed to justice in Algeria for the remainder of her life.

⁴⁶⁴ Timsit, *Algérie Recit Anachronique*. Page 52-53

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

Ben's personal trajectory differed from those of Timsit and Cohen. Where the other Jewish militants experienced sequential changes impelled as much by theoretical models as by personal experience, Ben's initial motivations remained at the core of her activism her entire life. Timsit, for instance, rejected Communism for nationalism, then later began to embrace his Jewish identity only when he realized that sectarianism was embedded in the nationalist endeavor. For Ben, the competing doctrines of Communism, Algerian Nationalism, and Judaism were not mutually exclusive, and were ultimately the surest vectors of bringing about humanist justice. As a woman, Myriam Ben was already marginalized by Jewish law. Judaism as a religion therefore could not provide the atavistic transcendence Timsit had experienced. The initial spark of her activism was ignited during the Vichy persecution of Jews, but Ben's core motivation was feminism. She hoped that the incipient Algerian government would prioritize equal opportunity education, and that the new Algeria would offer women full participation in society.

Ben was born Marylise Benhaïm in Algiers. Her father had been sent to Russia as a conscripted French soldier, where he experienced the October 1917 Revolution and became a stalwart Communist. Her mother's family, a clan of Andalusian musicians, immigrated to Algeria to escape Spanish persecution in the fifteenth century. Her mother and grandmother raised her with a strong awareness of their Arabic background. Her father was proud to have descended from the first "Judaized" Berbers of Algeria, an ancient lineage rooted in Algeria even before the arrival Arabic culture. Myriam Ben's grandmother spoke only Arabic to her

throughout her childhood, and her father worked as a French-Arabic translator. Myriam Ben said she had always felt at home among Muslims.⁴⁶⁶

Ben's memoir directly relates the trauma of losing her citizenship during World War II. Although Ben spent her entire life in the pursuit of justice on behalf of poor, oppressed Muslims, her memoir, which was written late in life, focuses on her childhood. She explained the moment that she first "discovered" her Jewish roots. She only learned that she was Jewish when her classmates ridiculed her in 1935, calling her a "dirty Jew." "This word—Jew—had penetrated through me as a loss, a loss of my innocence."⁴⁶⁷ A few years later, when she was forced to exchange her French identity card for one that read "Juive Indigène," the loss became more tangible. It appears that Myriam Ben's personal trauma was figuring out how to cope with being deprived of her citizenship. She thought that she alone was Jewish—that the word indicated something appalling about herself; she didn't connect Judaism to her family's traditions. "Jew" was an insult—a state of being that she could not control.

Only after she had experienced an adolescent rejection by the French, was she ready to empathize with Muslims. Ben's memoir traces her decision to commit to the FLN.

She felt isolated, and, in 1940 at age 13, she was dismissed from school. The next day, her father enrolled her in the Ecole Maïmonide, which the Jewish community had established for children who were not permitted to attend French

⁴⁶⁶ MB [a] été élevée dans l'esprit que l'Islam était 'notre' monde et un monde de tolérance." (Achour, page 14)

⁴⁶⁷ Ben, *Les cartes sont truquées* page 27.

schools. In that new school, a girl told her that all of the Jews of Algeria were planning to move to Israel. When Ben went home to tell her father, he immediately pulled her from school. He was anti-Zionist, and he did not want his daughter exposed to Zionist ideas. From then on, she was schooled at home.

The abrogation of her rights wrought a profound transformation that would influence her later activism. Her devastation was so intense that she became physically ill for six months. After the allied landings in 1942, and into early 1943, Ben awaited the day when she would get her citizenship back. At that time, she was fifteen.

She recalled a conversation with her father after receiving her reinstated French identity card. Her father asked, "Do you really think that you're French? Do you believe that your ancestors were the Gauls?"

"Yes," she said.

"Well, they were Berbers, does that shock you?" He asked.

"No, not at all," she replied. "I'm proud to be Berber, in any event, all that has no meaning... Tomorrow, everything will be back in order and the war will be finished."⁴⁶⁸

At that moment, her father brought her to the Muslim quarter. He pointed to a woman and said, "This woman can't eat."

"Why?" asked the young Myriam Ben.

⁴⁶⁸ Tu te croyais française ? tu croyais donc que tes ancêtres étaient des gaulois ? Oui
En bien non ! ils étaient des berbères. Ca te choque ?
Pas de tout. Je suis fière d'être berbère.
De toute façon, tout ça n'a aucun sens. Demain, tout rentrera dans l'ordre, quand la guerre sera finie.

“Because she is very, very poor.”

“And why is she so poor?”

“Because she is Arab.”

Ben also observed children without shoes, whose feet were covered with sores. Her father explained that as long as the woman he'd pointed out still lived in the ghettoized Arabic neighborhood, as long as she continued to have diminished rights, then Jewish rights were also insecure. But when this woman and all of the Arabs could make a living in Algeria, then Ben would also be safe. This moment established the core of her unique activism, in which ideology was always secondary to humanism. Later, in her memoirs, Ben explains that this was the most important lesson that she learned; and that all of her later militancy was inspired by that single childhood experience. During the Giraud months of 1942–43, when Vichy's laws had been overturned but Algerian Jews were not yet sure to receive citizenship, the Communists supported Crémieux decree's reestablishment. They disliked De Gaulle for delaying the issue. The following summer, as all of her male friends and relatives were drafted into the French army to fight in World War II, Ben stayed in Algeria, when she became the first female president of the Young Communists at age fourteen. Anti-fascism initially motivated Myriam Ben's engagement in the Communist Party. It was a desire for equality, a new perspective on the plight of Muslims, and a belief in the potential power of revolution. She was an active member in the Union des femmes d'Algerie (Women's Union in Algeria), a Communist organization.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ Macmaster, pp.32-7.

As part of her activism in the Women's Union in Algeria, Ben became a schoolteacher in a rural area, and she was committed to instructing the Muslim students who usually didn't attend schools.⁴⁷⁰ In an interview published in the early 1980s, she described the meaning of teaching in Algeria: "To our generation of young teachers, our profession was inseparable from the Algerian people's struggle against oppression."⁴⁷¹ They were radical in the way that they educated Muslims, in order to teach them politics and help them to understand their own history, as opposed to the colonial version.⁴⁷² She remembered helping her impoverished students get shoes and clothes before even beginning a lesson.

In the fall of 1954, when the Algerian war broke out, Myriam Ben belonged to a Communist cell known as the "Maquis Rouge."⁴⁷³ She still believed in the power of communism but she also was committed to helping Muslims. -And she came to see the Communist aspiration at odds with the FLN's agenda. While they believed that the FLN's violence translated into a desire for total war, the Communists believed that the conflict should lead to the eventual liberation of the people.⁴⁷⁴

She participated in a political demonstration, alongside Muslim peasants and workers. They met at the prefecture in the morning, in order to support a hunger strike of miners in a nearby town. Because of the mounting tensions in Algeria,

⁴⁷⁰ Ben held a teaching post in Miliana, where the majority of her students were Muslim. Most Muslim children were not enrolled in school, and she intentionally went to a place where she could educate the Muslims. She was a teacher along with Maurice Audin, who was then a mathematics doctoral student.

⁴⁷¹ Christiane Achour, *Myriam Ben*. Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1989. Page 31. « Malgré les conditions matérielles difficiles, c'était une génération de jeunes enseignants qui voyait son activité professionnelle comme inséparable de la lutte du peuple algérien contre l'oppression. »

⁴⁷² Achour, page 32.

⁴⁷³ Serge Kastell, *Le maquis rouge: L'Aspirant Maillot Et La Guerre D'Algerie*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1997.

⁴⁷⁴ Dore-Audibet, page 172.

there were several policemen monitoring the demonstration. The crowd of protestors momentarily overwhelmed the police presence, surrounding a gendarme, and confiscating his weapons. Ben remembered the incident with pride; it was a moment when the workers had taken power from a policeman.

From the onset of the Algerian War, Ben had been an underground operative in collaboration with the FLN. Gradually, she began secret deliveries of arms, collaborating with the FLN as a member of the Maquis Rouge. She began by carrying weapons from one armed insurgent to another. If they found her, French authorities would have condemned her to twenty years of forced labor. She was convicted in absentia. She was able to hide until 1962,⁴⁷⁵ when she was publically appointed as part of the new Algerian administration.⁴⁷⁶ Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ben was a celebrated Algerian poet, novelist, and painter, although she continued to write in French. She remained in Algeria until the outbreak of the Algerian Civil war (1991–2000), the ten-year bloodletting that cost more than a million lives.

After the Algerian war, her still unserved prison sentence forgiven, she spent her life recording her experiences in short stories written in French. In her novella *Nora*, she expressed her hope that independent Algeria would become a site for a new sort of feminism, where girls would receive equal access to education. In a revealing line, written in 1967, one of her characters orders another to “educate

⁴⁷⁵ Ben attests to this in her interviews, compiled by Achour. See page 41.

⁴⁷⁶ Michèle Bitton, “Myriam Ben” in *Dictionnaire des Femmes Juives*, <http://www.afmeg.info/squelettes/dicofemmesjuives/pages/notice/ben.htm>.

your daughters, you hear my son, educate your daughters."⁴⁷⁷ Ben dreamed of a utopic future for Algeria, a fresh start for an inclusive society, but it foundered at the hands of Islamist militants, Algeria's new leadership.

Her longest novel, *Sabrina*, tells of a love story between two Muslims who were raised French, and the difficulties they face adapting to the new Algerian government.⁴⁷⁸ Novelist Albert Bensoussan believes that Ben expressed her own displacement through her characters—her own French culture was now considered foreign in independent Algeria.⁴⁷⁹

Ben never denied her Jewish heritage although her political activism took precedence. Judaism was merely a part of her; her genealogy made up who she was. Ben's journey to becoming a militant was shaped by her persecution as a Jew. But her Jewishness was incorporated into her humanist activism, as it was inspired by her own marginalization during the Vichy administration. She continued to write in French, yet never questioned—at least not consciously—her belonging within Algeria, nor her place as a cultural icon there. She was only forced to leave by fanatics, who had departed from her vision of social-democratic Algeria.

Her Jewishness remained at the core of her activism as a childhood trauma that she could never forget. She didn't experience a separate Jewish reawakening as a result of her activism in the FLN. Instead, she completely identified with the Muslim-Arabic culture out of a humanistic desire for equality. She saw no difference

⁴⁷⁷ Ben, Myriam. *Ainsi naquit un homme*, Paris: Harmattan, 1967, 1993.

⁴⁷⁸ Ben, *Sabrina: Ils t'ont volé ta vie*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 1986.

⁴⁷⁹ Albert Bensoussan, "Condition féminine et histoire : Myriam Ben dans la tourmente algérienne", *Cahiers d'Études Maghrébines*, n° 2, 1990, p. 119-122.

between Jewish and Muslim culture in Algeria. But the anti-Semitic trauma that she experienced in school was something she rejected. For others, it was a flash of empathy, for her, it was a flash of identification.

These three vignettes have all shown the way that former Communists reassessed their Jewish identities as part of their activism on behalf of the FLN. Not all dissenters went this route. Georges Nizan, a Jewish Algerian filmmaker, claimed that he had wanted to desert the Army when he'd been recruited, "but my family persuaded me that a Jew had to show himself to be 'more French' than others."⁴⁸⁰

Was the fact that some Jews attributed their FLN activism to their Jewish identity only part of a later phenomenon to embrace Judaism in retrospect? Or did their identification with the nationalists make them wonder about their own belonging in an eventually Islamic Algeria? Were Jews impelled to reflect upon their identity because they didn't fit in with any other group?

Jewish militants felt closer to Muslims by reflecting on their shared cultural background, in spite of any obvious sectarian and social differences. But as the FLN blatantly rejected the Communist party, it was clear that this new form of nationalism carried an ethnic imperative. Muslim nationalists strove to rebuild their lost history, to take new pride in their wounded culture. Jewish Algerian nationalists did the same: they exhumed their own lost cultural remnants, such as

⁴⁸⁰ Quoted in Jean-Luc Allouche, « Algérie : le vent de l'histoire » in *L'Arche* no. 273, Dec. 1979, pp. 32–38. Page 38.

their Arabic names, their Algerian meals, and their shared genealogical history. Although he remained in the French military, Georges Nizan recalled: “I had never felt so close at once to my community and to the Arabs as when I acted Jewish or embraced my Judaism.... Some of my Arab comrades imagined along with me—we wanted to make future Algeria into another Israel, a different kind of Israel.”⁴⁸¹

By exploring their common past with Muslims, and the common persecutions suffered under the French, dissident Algerian Jews could easily show their support for the FLN in the war’s early years. But a new wave of FLN leaders sought to inspire the Algerian masses by using their common Muslim heritage and cultivating the pan-Arabist mentality that prevailed throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Historian Neil MacMaster has noted that the Marxist interpretations of the Algerian War from the 1960s and 1970s have muffled the significance of Islam for the FLN, which had affected its policies from at least 1957.⁴⁸² In fact, many of the Algerian revolutionaries hoped that their war would be a *jihad*.⁴⁸³ Historian of the FLN Gilbert Meynier cited instances throughout the late 1950s when radical FLN leaders—such as Ali Zamoum—conspicuously identified independence with Islamist zeal and a Muslim future. When praying inside his prison cell, Zamoum and his coreligionists together imagined “a united community, different and opposed to that of the Christians, who were represented by the [prison] guards.”⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Ibid. Page 38.

⁴⁸² MacMaster, page 356.

⁴⁸³ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure*, page 220: “Il y avait longtemps qu’ils espéraient en la venue d’un vrai *jihad* triomphant.”

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. page 220, quoting A Zamoum, *Le Pays des hommes libres*, page 106.

The impetus for a special Jewish place within the independent Algerian nation was short-lived. In January 1961, the FLN's leaders considered any remaining Jews or Europeans as "minority Algerians" (Algériens minoritaires).⁴⁸⁵ As Todd Shepard has argued, ethnicity had become the key element in distinguishing the French from the Algerian people.⁴⁸⁶ The FLN no longer treated Jews with special attention. Instead, Jews were designated "European" Algerians. And after an FLN military coup d'état that took place on June 19, 1965, the FLN exiled all of the "minority" Jews and Europeans. Muslims were given special treatment in what became an exclusive sectarian nation: "To be Algerian, all you needed was to be named Mohammed, regardless of your political past."⁴⁸⁷

In truly understanding the psychological paths of these Jewish FLN fighters, we can see both how contingent and how important racial-ethnic identity had become in the struggle. While mainstream Jews sought to appear more "French," these outliers strove to be more "Algerian" which meant that they became more culturally "Jewish." Their ethnic identities had become nearly as important as their convictions of communism, justice, or the right to equality. Muslims engaged in a similar process. Regardless of how invested Jews were in eventual independence, Algerian Jews and Muslims grew apart, as FLN leaders imagined an "Islamic" independent Algeria. Identity politics played a greater, ultimately defining role, in

⁴⁸⁵ Meynier page 253, quoting *Moudjahid* 77, 29 Jan 1961.

⁴⁸⁶ Todd Shepard, "Part II: Between France and Algeria" in *Invention of Decolonization*, pp. 137-204.

⁴⁸⁷ (Meynier p. 252) "Or des répresentants de la minorité européenne ou juive, algériens 'par décret' furent expulsés après le coup d'état militaire du 19 juin 1965. il suffisait de s'appeler Mohammed, quel qu'ait été son passé politique pour être algérien."

the Algerian revolution, leaving no place for Jews—whatever their ideology—among a triumphalist Muslim majority.

Addendum: Jewish Anti-Torture activists of the Métropole

In the Soummam Appeal to the Jewish minority of Algeria, in the fall of 1956, Abbane’s group of FLN leaders had pressed the Jewish community to condemn torture.⁴⁸⁸ They did so by noting that other religious authorities had taken a stand, while the Algerian Grand Rabbi had stayed silent: “The Grand Rabbi’s silence contrasts with the comforting attitude of the Archbishop, who publicly and bravely condemned colonial injustices.”⁴⁸⁹ The FLN writers were referring to the archbishop of Algiers, Monsignor Léon Etienne Duval, who had denounced torture and the French repressions of terrorist attacks. Although the church was divided on the issue of Algerian independence, there were both Protestant and Catholic groups who officially exposed and rejected torture as a method of dealing with the insurgency.⁴⁹⁰ A December 1955 French administrative memo stated that “both the Catholic and Reformed churches are taking positions increasingly against a politics of repression and are demonstrating in favor of the emancipation of the peoples of North Africa.”⁴⁹¹ Catholic activists from the métropole included the Nobel Prize-winning novelist François Mauriac, the priest André Mandouze, and notably Pierre-Henri Simon, who wrote a well-known pamphlet, *Contre la Torture*, calling to action

⁴⁸⁸ I covered the official Jewish responses to the Soummam in Chapter three; I cover the “other” Jewish responses to the Soummam in Chapter Four.

⁴⁸⁹ Soummam from Courrière, p. 925.

⁴⁹⁰ Benjamin Stora details the nature of the intra-Christian debate in *Gangrène et Oubli*, pages 58–60.

⁴⁹¹ “Les Églises devant les problèmes d’Afrique du Nord.” Paris, December 16, 1955. (Governmental memo, four pages from the CAOM archives.)

all French people who had resisted Hitler.⁴⁹² The Protestant Federation took a stand “against policing and torture practices” on March 12, 1957. Two days later, on March 14, the assembly of cardinals and archdioceses published a declaration, stating that the Church would never permit the use of “intrinsically bad means”—even in fighting for a good cause.⁴⁹³

Inviting the Jewish community to align with the nationalists, the FLN leaders asserted: “In spite of the rabbi’s silence, the immense majority of Algerians have restrained themselves from believing that the Jewish community has passed definitively into the enemy camp.”⁴⁹⁴ The FLN had wanted a Jewish leader to speak out publicly. One FLN representative personally approached French Grand Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, asking him to align with the other churches against the horrendous acts of torture. According to him, the rabbi refused to do so.⁴⁹⁵

In a detailed though indirect response to the plea nearly two years later, Jacques Lazarus addressed the churches’ position. He called on Algerian and French Jews to remain neutral, and to resist exterior pressures. To Lazarus and the CJAES, neutrality was crucial to survival. Neutrality was also a veiled statement of the Jewish support of French Algeria. “I understand the desire of certain of us to define an attitude, given all of the problems that assail us,” he said in March 1958 before a roomful of Jewish leaders, “even more so since the representatives of other spiritual

⁴⁹² Pierre Henri Simon, *Contre la Torture*, pamphlet from April 2, 1957. (Archives de Vincennes)

⁴⁹³ Raphaëlle Branche, *La Torture et l’Armée Pendant la Guerre d’Algérie, 1954–1962*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001, page 148.

⁴⁹⁴ *Plate-forme de la Soummam*, verbal process, 20 August 1956. “La recherche des alliances: Le minorité juive,” quoted in Courrière, *La Guerre d’Algérie*, page 925.

⁴⁹⁵ AJHS, Label A. Katz papers, 1918–1975. p. 92, box 11. Folder “Algeria”

families don't hesitate to publish their conclusions."⁴⁹⁶ Lazarus then clarified the role he saw for religion vis-à-vis the complex politics of the war, when he declared that new, younger nations would reinforce the Catholic Church's much-needed hierarchy. Therefore, an independent Algeria could benefit the Church. Catholics were merely concerned with what was best for Catholics, and, he implied, the Jews should likewise pay attention to what was safest for Algerian Jews who were caught in the line of fire. Most French-Jewish organizations did not step in to help their Algerian co-religionists for the duration of the war.⁴⁹⁷

Lazarus posed a rhetorical question to his fellow-Jews: "What should our attitude be?" To which he answered that the French-Jewish collectivity, whether in the métropole or in Algeria, was an "integral part of the French community."⁴⁹⁸ Whereas he had previously defined Algerian Jews as a diverse collection of individuals,⁴⁹⁹ Lazarus clarified his loyalties in 1958. "We are French, Jewish, republicans, and liberals," he declared.⁵⁰⁰ As the self-selected spokesman on behalf of the official Algerian-Jewish position, Lazarus had the ears of several Jewish organizations in France and around the globe. It wasn't just the CJAES and the Algerian *consistoires* who were listening: The World Jewish Congress, the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the O.R.T., the Joint Distribution Committee, the O.S.E., the United Jewish Social Foundation (Fonds Social Juif Unifié), and the American Jewish

⁴⁹⁶ Jacques Lazarus, "Situation de la Collectivité Juive en Algérie," in pamphlet, Assises du Judaïsme Algérien, 12–13 March 1958, pp. 7-18 (AIU Fonds JL XVI), p. 11.

⁴⁹⁷ Letter Rabi to Lazarus October 5, 1955. "Et nos organisations (est-ce que je me trompe ? je le souhaite) ont trop tendance à négliger l'Afrique du Nord parce que le drame juif n'y est que l'accessoire du drame plus vaste. »

⁴⁹⁸ Lazarus, "Situation de la Collectivité Juive en Algérie," p. 11.

⁴⁹⁹ For instance in the "Déclaration du Comité Juif Algérien des Etudes Sociales," in *Alger Républicain*, November 25–26, 1956.

⁵⁰⁰ Lazarus, "Situation de la Collectivité Juive en Algérie," p. 17.

Committee all relied on Lazarus to convey what was best for the Jews in Algeria.⁵⁰¹ As supporters of Algerian Jewry—and therefore of *Algérie Française*—none of these organizations dared to criticize the French Army’s methodical use of torture.

Perhaps this was why a majority of Jewish individuals who avidly protested torture were both secular—even atheist—and they were living in the métropole. In the most infamous and publicized cases of torture, individual “dejudaized” Jews led protests. Ignoring Lazarus’s plea for Jewish support of *Algérie Française*, many metropolitan Jews saw the Algerian conflict as a battle for justice. Rather than answering the needs of Algerian Jews, they reprimanded the French Army for its oppressive and brutal procedures.

Jews who protested torture were comfortably French. As such, they did not share the Algerian Jews’ fears of denaturalization. As Jews living in war-torn Algeria, they felt the violence intruding on their neighborhoods. The metropolitan Jews, living safely on the mainland, insulated from the growing violence, invoked moral reasons to protest the French Army’s use of torture.

Even as some of the Jewish organizations asserted neutrality, unaffiliated Jewish intellectuals refused to remain silent and risked their lives to oppose torture. Nearly all of the Jewish protesters were based in Paris, although they travelled to Algeria. Jewish intellectuals were in the forefront of condemning the most notorious cases of torture, and were instrumental in exposing the horrific acts of violence committed by the French state against the insurgents. The journalist Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, co-founder of the influential weekly *L’Express*, and the Algerian-

⁵⁰¹ A list of listeners is found in AIU, “Situation de la Collectivité Juive en Algérie,” p. 10. For the AIU and the AJC, one finds letters between Lazarus and these two organizations in the Fonds Lazarus.

Jewish journalist Jean Daniel were among the very first to object openly to the war. Gisèle Halimi served as an attorney for several tortured FLN partisans. Henri Alleg endured violence himself in an Algiers prison over the course of several months. He lived to write about his experiences in his legendary book, *The Question* (1958). Pierre Vidal-Naquet became an outspoken critic of the army's cover-ups in their murder of Maurice Audin. Laurent Schwartz co-founded a committee in the name of Audin, and agreed to grant him a doctorate in mathematics posthumously. Alongside Christians, Muslims, and atheists, these French Jews became leaders of anti-torture movements throughout France.

Chapter Five: Interpreting FLN Violence, 1957–1960

Much had changed in the year following the Soummam Congress. Both philosophically and militarily, the FLN's policies were becoming less friendly to Algerian Jews. By the end of 1956, the ALN's military tactics had evolved, as its leaders favored arbitrary bombings and indiscriminate violence. This dangerous combination resulted in the highest death tally yet in Algeria. For both sides of the war, 1957 was the deadliest, with an estimated 33,500 killed, the majority of whom were Muslims.⁵⁰² Within the first two months of that year, Robert LaCoste, proclaiming a French victory, had announced that 2,512 rebels had been killed.⁵⁰³ The FLN responded by changing their tactics and bombing civilian centers. In this atmosphere, FLN bombs had killed more Jews.

As this chapter will show, Jewish leaders, including many throughout Algeria, began to think that the insurgents were targeting Jews specifically. News spread of FLN terrorists throwing bombs into synagogues, into Jewish businesses, a Jewish nightclub, and into Jewish neighborhoods. No longer was there any question about who was responsible for the attacks. The blame lay clearly with the FLN.

The exterior FLN faction that rivaled Abbane's group, led by Abdelhafid Boussouf, Lakhdar Ben Tobal, and Belcakem Kricm, proclaimed that Islam and Arabism should be the driving force behind Arab nationalism, muting Abbane's vision for a secular Algeria that included Jews. As other scholars have

⁵⁰² Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN, 1954–1962*, (Fayard: Paris, 2002), 295.

⁵⁰³ Benjamin Stora, *Histoire*, page 47.

demonstrated, Algerian activists began to see the war as a jihad.⁵⁰⁴ Nasser rewarded such thinking with arms shipments. As we saw in chapter three, anti-imperialism could easily be confused with antisemitism.

For Jews, Muslims had replaced Europeans as the principal threat. At the most extreme, French articles, political speeches, and governmental documents referred to Muslims as the new Nazis—a new danger for both Jews and Europeans. However, within Algeria, the FLN continued to petition the Algerian Jews to join the fight for Algeria, even as the exterior contingent grew more influential and began to claim that Islam was a unifying force for Algerian nationalism. Within the context of the newly violent atmosphere, however, these appeals seemed to be more threats than entreaties. This chapter will outline the post-1956 military and propaganda tactics of the FLN, and then present a sampling of letters and articles, testimonies from Jews throughout Algeria about how they experienced the war.

The Jews' own awareness of the fragility of their status as French citizens had forced them to profess their French citizenship ardently. And now the FLN was attacking them directly for doing so. Appeals were now more intimidating, bearing a threat of force—the purpose of revolutionary violence theorized at this time by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁵⁰⁵ Its goal was to polarize people and force individuals to choose one side or another. Jewish-FLN interactions were now marked by coercion, boycotts, and terrorism.

⁵⁰⁴ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, page 220: “Il y avait longtemps qu'ils espéraient en la venue d'un vrai *jihad* triomphant.”

⁵⁰⁵ Fanon, “Concerning Violence,” Chapter one of *Wretched of the Earth*, 1963.

Strategy changes in the FLN

On the ground, there was no question that the war was growing more violent. Since Soummam, the FLN's fighting squad, the ALN, had progressively begun to resemble an official army. Uniformed soldiers created an intimidating atmosphere. In each of the Wilaya zones, ALN fighters engaged in fierce engagements with the French toward the end of 1956.⁵⁰⁶ With each battle, tensions escalated between Muslims and Europeans with at least a dozen assassinations a day. In addition to the ALN activity and the French military response, rebel bands "searched everywhere for weapons caches."⁵⁰⁷

From the last few months of 1956 into the beginning of 1957, the nature of the attacks changed, intensifying the level of violence. In the earlier years, assailants murdered individuals using handheld weapons; from early 1957, they planted time-bombs in public places frequented by Europeans, multiplying the number of victims of each assault.⁵⁰⁸ The number of attacks by the FLN's Army peaked in 1957, according to statistics kept by both the FLN and the French.⁵⁰⁹ In January 1957, the FLN proclaimed an eight-day labor strike on all European facilities, which disproportionately affected the Jews. The U.N. convened that month, voting in France's favor over Algeria, which—according to the French military authorities—provoked an increase in attacks as well.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ For instance, battles raged in Souk-Ahras and in Kabylie in 1956; Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN* pp. 290–91.

⁵⁰⁷ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, 291.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁵⁰⁹ For French Army Statistics, see chart from the Minister for Algerian Affairs, dated October 23, 1961, and found in the CAOM archive 81F, copied below; for FLN statistics see chart on Meynier page 727.

⁵¹⁰ Delegation Generale d'Algérie, "Evolution du terrorisme FLN," 23 october 1961, page 6. (CAOM)

On August 20, 1957—the one-year anniversary of the Soummam Congress—the National Council of the Algerian Revolution (CNRA) met in Cairo. The exterior leaders, known by the historian Meynier as the three Bs, maneuvered to have the present summit of Algerian leaders meet in Cairo, rather than in Algeria. The meeting’s tone and its stated goals were completely different from that of Soummam. –For one, these exterior leaders prioritized military action over any sort of political platform.⁵¹¹ The purpose of the meeting was to shift the FLN’s power center from Abbane’s group to the exterior leaders. They justified the necessity for a new meeting by asserting that a number of FLN leaders—notably those who had been arrested or imprisoned since November 1954—had been unable to attend the Soummam meeting; they explained that a new conference was necessary to redefine the FLN’s priorities and its hierarchy.⁵¹² The exterior leaders “reversed many of the principles as they were stated at Soummam, instituting the following unwritten rule [...] from 1957 forward: ‘No civil power without military control.’”⁵¹³ Abbane had wanted to modernize, even Westernize, Algeria; his appeals were more receptive and persuasive to the sympathizing Europeans and local Jews than they were to the “Arab brothers” who lived in other North African regions. Abbane’s vision, as presented at Soummam, was no longer valid.

As opposed to Abbane’s secularism, the new leaders openly embraced Islam as a unifying national element and “Arabism” as a political movement, proclaiming

⁵¹¹ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, page 342.

⁵¹² Ferhat Abbas and Mohamed Benyahia, “Proces-verbal de la reunion du CNRA,” 20 August 1957, in Meynier and Harbi, *Le FLN, Documents et Histoire*, page 254-255.

⁵¹³ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN* page 343-44 : « Mais surtout, le CNRA du Caire se solda pas des décisions qui renversaient les principes de la Soummam et qui instituaient cette loi non écrite de toute Constitution algérienne en vigueur depuis 1957 : ‘Nul pouvoir civil sans le contrôle des militaires.’ »

that the Arabs formed a distinct people. Rather than seeking democratic rights for all Algerians, the new leaders swore on the Koran, and prayed to Allah for their military victories.⁵¹⁴ The FLN's tracts written in Arabic frequently included the following line from the Koran: "Attach yourselves to the link of God, and do not divide amongst yourselves." Moreover, a September 1957 tract celebrated an "Arab-Muslim personality."⁵¹⁵

The exterior groups of the Algerian group of the CNRA had triumphed over Abbane Ramdane's vision for a diverse, united, and civil independent nation. They accused him of embezzling money and of wielding too much power over the Wilayas.⁵¹⁶ A rival nationalist assassinated him in Morocco on Dec. 27, 1957.⁵¹⁷ The forces that conspired to purge Abbane did so because his inclusion of Jews and Europeans had muted the FLN's Arabic-Muslim program for an independent Algeria.⁵¹⁸ After Abbane's assassination, FLN leaders claimed repeatedly: "He cared very little about Algeria's Islamic and Arabic identity."⁵¹⁹ He was simply not Arabic enough. Beginning with the 1957 meeting, the FLN was in thrall to the Egyptian party line of Pan-Arabism, which had become an article of faith among its leaders. Arabism in general, and an adherence to Egypt's politics in particular, were the new priority for the exterior contingent.

⁵¹⁴ Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN*, page 220.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.* 221.

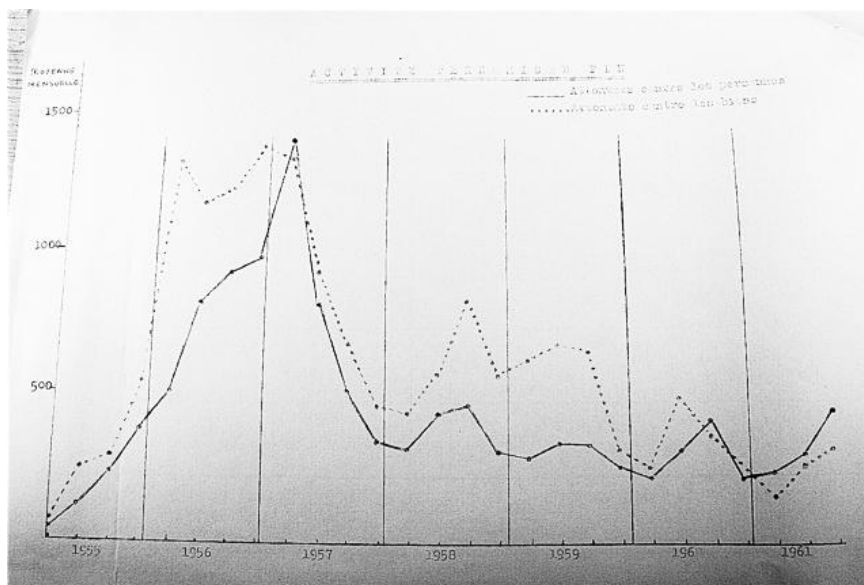
⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 345-46.

⁵¹⁷ For more details on the circumstances of his assassination, see Mohommed Harbi, *FLN: Le Mirage et le Réalité* and M. Lebjouai, *Vérités sur la Revolution Algérienne*, Gallimard, Paris: 1970.

⁵¹⁸ Meynier *Histoire Intérieure du FLN* page 256, "Sa position fut abandonnée du fait de ... la ténacité des réticences algéro-musulmanes."

⁵¹⁹ Meynier, "Une Obsession Egyptienne: L'Arabité des Algériens" in Meynier and Harbi, *Le FLN, Documents et Histoire*, Paris: Fayard, 2004, page 677.

Even as overall terror attacks diminished according to data gathered by the French army, it appeared to Jewish observers that violence targeting Jews had increased between 1957 and 1961. Beginning in mid-1957, Algerian Jews began to wonder whether the FLN (or Muslims generally) were attacking them directly. However, according to the Ministry of Algerian Affairs (in late October 1961), overall FLN actions decreased precisely at this time.⁵²⁰ The ministry attributed the decrease to the Army's successes in capturing terrorists and to the fact that the FLN had officially conquered their rival party, the MNA, and so there was no longer an internecine battle.⁵²¹



Terror attacks between 1955 and 1961, from the French Ministry of Algerian Affairs.⁵²²

The graph indicates a spike in events in early 1957, followed by a steep decline after the French victory in the Battle of Algiers, a severe setback for the FLN.

⁵²⁰ Ethan Katz agrees that attacks decreased around this time, although he cited De Gaulle's return—May–June 1958—a result of “Newfound optimism.” (Ethan Katz “Jews and Muslims in the Shadow of Marianne: Conflicting Identities and Republican Culture in France (1914-1975),” PhD Diss, University of Michigan, 2008, page 263.) In fact, the General Delegation of Algerian Affairs stated that May 1958 had only a “momentary effect” in slowing down violence.

⁵²¹ Delegation Generale d'Algérie, “Evolution du terrorisme FLN,” 23 october 1961, p. 6. (CAOM 81F)

⁵²² Ibid., 13.

The remaining years had much lower instances of attacks than 1956–1957.

According to historian Ethan Katz's calculations, based on Lazarus's collection of press clippings, there were actually 50 % fewer attacks on Jews after 1958 than there had been between 1956 and 1958.⁵²³ Even still, several Jewish observers reported that the FLN attacks between late 1957 and the war's end appeared to be explicitly anti-Jewish in nature. Even if the FLN was not engaging in a specifically antisemitic strategy, a series of brutal attacks on Jews created the impression that there was a new wave of anti-Jewish violence.

The tensions between Jews and Muslims discussed in Chapter Three had worsened. Although Rabi and others throughout the 1950s continued to refer to both Jews and Muslims as "*indigènes*," the label no longer had any effective meaning.⁵²⁴ The FLN's violence had driven a wedge between Jews and Muslims—not just among representatives, but also in the context of everyday interactions. As Jews grew to fear and revile their former Muslim "brothers," they began to share a new common ground with Europeans. Newspapers and French administrators had once carefully attributed acts of terror to (albeit anonymous) individuals. After 1958, however, they portrayed these attacks as the will of Muslims in general, precipitating a schism between two populations that had once lived harmoniously.

⁵²³ Ethan Katz, PhD Diss, page 262–263. "While violence lessened for almost two years following De Gaulle's return, this reflected a larger reduction in bloodshed linked to newfound optimism."

⁵²⁴ See W. Rabi, "Nos frères au coeur du drame algérien," *L'Arche*. #30, June 1959. Page 29. "ce mépris general qui englobe l'indigène, à la fois le Juif et le Musulman."

Jews as Jews

In March 1958, Jacques Lazarus was forced to acknowledge that the Jews of Algeria had suffered greatly at the hands of Algerian nationalists. He spoke before a room full of Jewish organizations to update them about the Algerian Jews' bleak prospects.⁵²⁵ Lazarus said bluntly: "Our co-religionists have paid heavily to terrorism. A number of them have been attacked as Jews." He declared that many Jews had already fallen victim to "terrorism"; Jewish businesses were faltering due to an FLN-inspired anti-Jewish boycott.⁵²⁶ He lamented the fact that the Crémieux decree ("which made us who we are today") had been decried by Europeans and Muslims alike.⁵²⁷ Lazarus and other speakers described a feeling that Jews were being newly attacked by Muslims, as Jews. He reported that not only had Algerian Jews been subjected to physical violence and assassinations, but there was also a kind of "economic terrorism." As early as May 1956, some squads of the FLN had organized a specifically anti-Jewish boycott, perhaps in response to the tensions that month in Constantine.⁵²⁸ Lazarus cited the situation of a Jewish fabric salesman from Constantine: His monthly income had been around 25,000 Francs, but since the boycott it had fallen to less than 200 Francs. Lazarus feared that the boycott was forcing more and more Jews out of jobs.⁵²⁹ Although the boycotters were targeting all "European" establishments, Lazarus felt that the boycott was taking a particular

⁵²⁵ J. Lazarus, "Situation de la collectivité juive en Algérie," in *Assises du judaïsme algérien* (pamphlet, AIU, Laz XVI), Originally delivered 12–13 mars 1958, pp. 7–17. AIU JL XVI.

⁵²⁶ J. Lazarus, "Situation de la collectivité juive en Algérie," Page 9. "Nos coreligionnaires ont payé un lourd tribut au terrorisme. Nombre d'entre eux étaient visés en tant que Juifs."

⁵²⁷ J. Lazarus, "Situation de la collectivité juive en Algérie," in *Assises du judaïsme algérien* (pamphlet, AIU, Laz XVI). Page 16. "Ce décret Crémieux que certains croient devoir attaquer aujourd'hui, il a contribué après tout à faire des Juifs d'Algérie de qu'ils sont."

⁵²⁸ Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 154.

⁵²⁹ Lazarus *Assises*, page 9.

toll on the Jews. In a private letter to Nehemiah Robinson of the World Jewish Congress from June 1957, Lazarus allowed that the boycott was not systematic; rather it depended on each town.⁵³⁰ However, he wrote that it was only a matter of time before “natural social evolution” would cause Muslim shopkeepers to replace Jews. Boycotts in Algeria, he stated, represented one of the most “pernicious forms of terrorism.”⁵³¹

In his 1958 speech, Lazarus opined that the “only problem up for debate” was whether or not to take action at all. By this reasoning, he appeared to be falling back on his earlier counsel to avoid taking sides, although the situation had altered radically since 1954. He also appears uncomfortable with all of his own questions, and continues to cyclically respond in an exercise of dithering that ended in paralysis. He offered no decisive solution.

What action should be taken to safeguard the interests of the Jewish collectivity? Should we take any action at all, and if so what kind? There’s certainly no reason, here as elsewhere, to establish a ‘Jewish politics’, because there is no Jewish politics. But it is no less true, and this has been said several times, that to be Jewish is also a political phenomenon, it is not just a religious or social phenomenon.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Lazarus to Robinson, c/o WJC. Algiers, June 17, 1957, page 1. From AIU JL.

⁵³¹ Lazarus to Robinson, c/o WJC. Algiers, June 17, 1957, page 2. From AIU JL.

⁵³² Lazarus, *Assises*. Page 8. Quelle action mener pour sauvegarder les intérêts de la collectivité juive? Doit-on mener une action et sous quelle forme? Il n’y a certes pas, ici comme ailleurs, à mener de politique juive, car il n’y a pas de politique juive, mais il est non moins vrai, et cela a été dit à plusieurs reprises, qu’être juif est aussi un phénomène politique et pas seulement un phénomène religieux ou social.

In this kind of revolutionary war, individuals had to choose to be with the revolutionaries, or they were considered enemies. Algerian Jews were the only group who were offered en masse such a choice, whether or not they legitimately could choose. Throughout the speech, Lazarus emphasized that Muslims were trying to oust the Jews from their businesses, and presumably, their livelihoods, which would effectively mean that there was no place for them in an independent Algeria. These Jewish families thought it was then an economic necessity to depart, as they could no longer sustain their living standards. They gathered in the city centers, to depart for France, or in some cases to Israel. Some even had to return to Algeria after failing elsewhere.⁵³³

Lazarus no longer brought up European antisemitism, as his attention had turned to the brutal violence and economic distress caused by the FLN insurgency. He was careful to treat the problems of the Jews in and of themselves and not to overly fault the French administration. His underlying goal was to illustrate that the Jews were just as French as Europeans, and one can assume that he wanted to show that Jews were deserving of French protection or refuge, if it came to that. He was also much more willing to generalize about Muslims than his constituents who wrote in with isolated complaints. He lamented that the Jews had been abandoned by the French government.

To sum up his perspective, Lazarus explained that although Jews had always been against any kind of anti-Muslim bias, they still had to react against “unjustified

⁵³³ There are several stories in the archives of people who tried to make a life in Israel but failed and returned to Algeria. Exact figures in Michael Laskier, *North African Jewry*, pp. 315-16.

[...] terroristic methods” in order to disavow the FLN.⁵³⁴ He alluded to his collection of press clippings that cited Jewish victims, remarking that the folder was growing thicker.⁵³⁵ He concluded his March 1958 discourse: “We understand the aspirations of the Muslim masses, today walled in total silence, toward well-being, toward complete equality. Jews, in general, are always against all sorts of racism, against all excesses, regardless of the perpetrators, regardless of the victims.”⁵³⁶

Still, meliorists like Wladimir Rabi were not convinced by Lazarus’s grim prognosis of Jews who had fallen victim to the FLN.⁵³⁷ While Rabi acknowledged that there had been a number of Jewish victims, he qualified this: “It’s a fact that no one ever, ever told me about terrorism that was discriminatory against *Jews as Jews*.”⁵³⁸ He believed that Jews were neutral, because neither the FLN nor the French government targeted them.

Gruesome news of attacks poured into Lazarus’s office daily. Alongside Muslim and Christian residents of Algeria, Jews endured the daily dangers of random assaults and brutal retaliations. War zone shortages and boycotts led to economic hardships.

Between 1957 and 1960, the CJAES and Jewish respondents attested that the FLN was attacking specifically Jewish targets. Militants bombed a dance hall, desecrated a synagogue, and assassinated prominent Jewish community leaders. Jews throughout Algeria reported new tensions with their Muslim neighbors. In her

⁵³⁴ Lazarus, *Assises*. Page 9

⁵³⁵ *ibid.*

⁵³⁶ *Ibid*, page 16, “Nous comprenons les aspirations de la masse musulmane, aujourd’hui emmurée dans le silence, à un mieux-être, à une complète égalité. Les juifs, en général, sont tjrs contre tous les racismes, contre tous les excès, quels qu’en soient les auteurs, quelles qu’en soit les victimes.”

⁵³⁷ Rabi, “Nos Frères au Coeur du Drame Algérien” in *Arche* no. 30, June 1959.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

case study of a Jewish-Muslim household, Joëlle Bahloul has shown the way that two families—one Jewish, one Muslim—began to dissociate in the waning years of the war for independence.⁵³⁹ In the Lazarus archive, several testimonials described violent interactions between Jews and Muslims or Arabs. The acronym “FLN” was rarely used in these incidents. Individuals saw their towns and their communities fall apart—the attackers were not necessarily intruding from elsewhere, but in each locale, Jews were helpless when facing Muslim assailants. Violence erupted throughout Northern Algeria from East to West, in all of the major towns. Observers reported that the Muslims/Arabs were specifically attacking Jewish institutions, Jewish individuals, or Jewish symbols. Labeling the attackers as antisemites was a way to call on the French Government and French Jewish organizations for help. Jews in outlying communities appealed to Lazarus asking him to intervene in their defense. The violence and the trauma of the internecine strife corroded decades of intercommunal peace.

By far the most dramatic attack occurred on a Saturday night in the metropolis of Algiers: June 8, 1957. Perpetrators placed a bomb under the orchestra pit at the Casino de la Corniche, a nightclub that was known as a haunt for Algiers’ young Jews. An enormous explosion killed nine people and insured more than 80.⁵⁴⁰ Many of the victims in the traumatized crowd of young couples and musicians were Jewish. One survivor of the attack, Gisèle Lelouche, recalled that

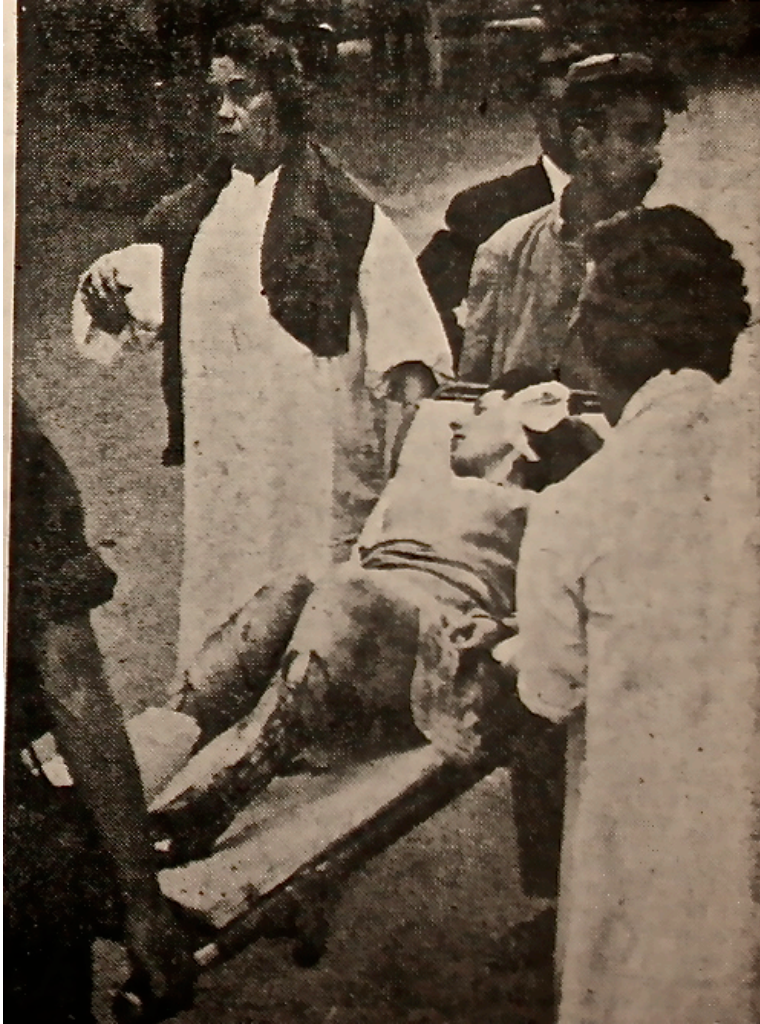
⁵³⁹ Joëlle Bahloul traced the relationship of a single Jewish-Muslim household. Relationships between the Jewish and Muslim families in her story began to deteriorate midway through the Algerian War. Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim household in colonial Algeria, 1937-1962*. Trans. by Catherine du Peloux Ménagé. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁵⁴⁰ “Bombe au Casino de la Corniche” in *Echo d’Alger*, June 9–10, 1957.

night several decades later: “I immediately saw both of my legs across the room and I made every effort not to pass out. I wanted to watch, fascinated. The orchestra conductor was in pieces, as the bomb was placed under the stage.”⁵⁴¹ Lelouche was able to recover and even had a child, but she never went back to Algeria. Emotionally, she described a profound desire for physical revenge on the perpetrators, although she said that she held no personal grudge against Arabs.⁵⁴² She also wanted terribly to return to “her country,” although she accepted the fact that she could never do so.

⁵⁴¹ Gisèle Lelouche, 60 years old (explosion at age 25). Testimony in Danielle Michel-Chich, *Déracinés*. Paris, Editions Plume, 1990. Pp. 16-17.

⁵⁴² Testimony in Danielle Michel-Chich, *déracinés*. Paris, Editions Plume, 1990. Pp. 16-17.



A young woman whose legs had been gravely injured in a similar way described by LeLouche. The majority of Corniche surviving victims were young women with serious leg wounds. (“Une bombe explose au Casino de la Corniche,” *Echo d’Alger*, 9–10 June 1957, AIUJL I).

In the aftermath of the Corniche explosion, the CJAES stated that it empathized with *any* human being, of any race, who suffered from the wartime violence. “We are crying with you in dignity,” they wrote to the victims’ families. Neither pain nor anger could ever justify such violence, they declared. But they placed their trust in “the Government of our country,” which, they hoped, would “bring back concord and peace.”⁵⁴³ Deferring to the French administration for help

⁵⁴³ CJAES statement, *Information Juive*, June 1957.

was a distinct political move that indicated to the world that the Jews of Algeria had decided to support the French camp in the war.

In Oran, over 400 kilometers west of Algiers, in July 1957, a local man named Samuel Cohen reported four grenade attacks—two in the middle of the Jewish Quarter and two on its edge.⁵⁴⁴ In a private note to Lazarus, Cohen detailed the assaults, conjecturing on their provenance. Cohen marked his hand-written letter “Confidential” on the top of the page. His report included detailed hypotheses about the nature and causes of the attacks. He raised four possibilities for why Jewish areas might be more vulnerable to wartime violence than “European” neighborhoods. First, he asked, were terrorists suddenly obeying a new order (not necessarily from the FLN) to attack Jews? Secondly, was the Jewish Quarter more vulnerable because it was easier to penetrate than other neighborhoods? Third, perhaps the rebels wanted to establish a “climate of paranoia and collective fright” in an area where residents were still undecided. Fourth, was the FLN maneuvering to turn Jews and Muslims against one another? He faulted the administration, which remained unresponsive; the French Army, whose protection around the Jewish quarter remained penetrable; and the local press, which minimized attacks on the Jewish quarter.⁵⁴⁵ The rest of the letter dwelt on details that were omitted by press reports in the aftermath of the attacks that had injured 35 people. -In summarizing, Cohen asked rhetorically: “Were these attacks deliberately directed against the Jews?” To which he answered, surprisingly, “no.” Despite the evidence he had marshaled, Cohen chose to conclude that attacking Jews was not part of the FLN’s

⁵⁴⁴ Samuel Cohen to JL, Aug. 1, 1957.

⁵⁴⁵ Cohen to JL, 8/1/1957.

political program. Instead, he suggested that the perpetrators sought to establish a climate of fear within a vulnerable area. He never elaborated on who they might be.

Throughout the letter, Cohen attempted to sustain a neutral tone, presenting both the Muslim and French perspectives on the war. His conclusions were equivocal. He acknowledged several times that the FLN could be directing a new wave of violence against the Jews, and then promptly negated this supposition. When referring to the Jews of Oran he first wrote “our brothers,” but quickly crossed out that phrase in favor of a more neutral formulation: “the Jewish quarter.” He noted that life had resumed its normal patterns since the attacks, implying that Jews and Muslims were once again on civil terms.

In the summer of 1957, a thousand kilometers to the east of Oran, in the city of Bône, a Jewish man, J. Attal, wrote a letter to Lazarus in desperation.⁵⁴⁶ There had been two terrorist attacks aimed specifically at Jews. Addressing Lazarus, Attal chronicled the historically peaceful relationship between Jews and Muslims in his town. However, over two August days in 1957, Muslims attacked Jews, first at synagogue, then at a Jewish café. Describing his distress, the man added that he overheard local Muslims justifying the attacks by blaming Jews for the bloody knife slayings and brutal French retributions in Philippeville two years before on August 20, 1955.⁵⁴⁷ (In fact, as we have seen, the FLN had taken responsibility for the massacre in Philippeville.) Rumors about Jewish involvement in Philippeville seemed to insinuate Jewish control of both the FLN’s actions and the response of the French air force. In other words, local Muslims were blaming Jews for conspiring

⁵⁴⁶ J. Attal, A letter to Lazarus from Bône, dated August 4, 1957. JL XVI.

⁵⁴⁷ J. Attal, to Lazarus from Bône, dated August 4, 1957.

with the French Army and somehow acting as agent-provocateurs within the FLN. In Bône, even though the prefecture knew that the FLN was attacking Jews, administrators still did nothing. Begging Lazarus for assistance, Attal exclaimed, “Still today, no one feels safe; fear is overtaking the population and neither the military nor the administration reacts accordingly.”⁵⁴⁸ The prefect refused to accept a meeting with the man, and warned him to be wise and not organize a “counterterrorist action.”⁵⁴⁹ “Please, see what you can do for us....” He wrote to Lazarus, “I didn’t telephone you because I was so afraid that [the phone call] would be intercepted.”⁵⁵⁰

A similar episode took place in Constantine in September 1958. A drunk Muslim man urinated near several Jewish girls, and then verbally assaulted them. The girls notified a French soldier, who was stationed the area. A group of parachutists came to the scene, and demanded that the girls leave their homes to “wash the streets,” “implying that the Jews had intentionally soiled them.” Later, the soldiers arrested a young Jewish man, blaming him for the initial urinating. Lazarus reported the entire complicated series of events to General Raoul Salan, a French officer who eventually became a leader of the OAS, in hope that he would punish the offending soldiers accordingly.⁵⁵¹ Although the event seems relatively harmless—when compared to plastics explosions that injured dozens—it reveals the mounting tensions among neighbors. It also shows that in this wartime environment, no

⁵⁴⁸ Tjrs est-il plus personne ne se sent en sécurité, la peur gagne la population et la force publique et l’Administration tant civile que militaire ne réagissent pas.

⁵⁴⁹ il nous a recommandé d’être prudent et de ne pas nous laisser entrainer dans une action contre terroriste.

⁵⁵⁰ Voyez si vous pouvez qq chose, nous vous en serons très reconnaissant.

Je n’ai pas voulu vous téléphoner de crainte que les communications soient interceptés..

⁵⁵¹ Lazarus to Salan, 25 september 1958, two pages. AIU JL.

crimes were apolitical. The parachutists policed the towns, and they were informed by their own prejudices. The poignant truth was that although these supplicants reached out to Lazarus for help, he was virtually powerless to intervene.

The French administration's silent indifference toward Jews coincided with a perceived uptick in intercommunal violence. It was not even conceivable to approach the Muslims directly to negotiate some accord between communities, and now the French administration was also neglecting Jewish requests for help. By calling on the administration for help, individuals showed that they trusted in France as their authority. When the French authorities refused to help, Jews took action in order to safeguard themselves. Israel-supported Misgeret squads, who covertly trained Algerian Jewish men, had the same purpose. A founder of the OAS in 1960 would cite these same reasons for forming a counterterrorist squad in order to protect *pieds noirs* from FLN dangers.⁵⁵²

Still, Algerian Jews continued to talk about their historical bonds with Muslims, even when facing the FLN's brutality. In the town of Boghari, in the fall of 1958, an FLN terrorist threw a bomb into a synagogue during services, killing eight people.⁵⁵³ This had followed a day when a bomb was thrown into a Jewish café in the same town. Even under these circumstances, when the perpetrator had been captured and the targets were clearly Jewish, a community representative insisted that there had always been an understanding between the various religious

⁵⁵² See Harrison page 73: Gabriel Anglade said, "We sought to remain French only because we deserved to be French. But France was not responsive to our desires."

⁵⁵³ letter dated October 1, 1958, Community of Boghari, JLI.

communities, even since the onset of the war in 1954.⁵⁵⁴ Perhaps his depiction of harmony in the face of a traumatized Jewish community was simply an attempt to hold onto the Jews' privileged position. His conclusion: that the violence came not from Muslims neighbors but from outside agitators. As he wrote: "[I]t is difficult, if not impossible, to situate the exact nature of these unspeakable terrorist attacks. In my view, they could not come from a local source, and they are a tangible sign of a 'bad climate' among ethnic or religious groups."⁵⁵⁵ He attributed local terrorism to the tensions in the Middle East, to the way that nationalist activists associated local Jews with Israel's actions.

Another newspaper reported that the FLN had assassinated two Jewish men. The victims, brothers named El Baz, were thought to know "too much" about rebel activity in Southern Algeria.⁵⁵⁶ The FLN killed them then displayed the bodies with a sign, "This is a warning."⁵⁵⁷ While the men may not have been targeted because they were Jewish, the Jewish community nonetheless felt threatened.

Likewise, the rabbi of Ben Saada continued to insist on Jewish-Muslim comity even as he mourned his 6-year-old granddaughter who'd been killed in an explosion on Yom Kippur in October 1959. He detailed a night of terror, and wrote at length about his daughter's distress when she lost her child. What is interesting about the rabbi's letter is that it sees a Divine hand in the catastrophe, arguing that God had willed all of the terror in order to teach the Jews a lesson. The rabbi did not

⁵⁵⁴ letter dated October 1, 1958, Community of Boghari, JLI.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ "Deux Juifs assaïssinés en Algérie," unknown newspaper, Sept 14 1958. JLI.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., "A titre d'avertissement."

associate all Muslims with the terrorist attack. He reported that his Muslim neighbors had come to his home in order express their condolences.⁵⁵⁸

In contrast, an article that appeared in early 1960 attributed violence to both local Muslims and the French authorities who were monitoring the town. An anonymous essayist chronicled episodes of violence and animosity between Jews and Muslims in a town (“X”), formerly a tourist center.⁵⁵⁹ Jewish residents had been completely despoiled by the boycott, the curfews, and electric fences imposed by the Army. A desperate shopkeeper said every Jewish family in the community shared the feeling of fear of approaching dangers. Women and children stayed cloistered in their apartments for days, while men went to work carrying revolvers. A systematic boycott had already pushed out the poorest Jews—peddlers, or shopkeepers within the Arab Quarter. Twenty percent of the Jewish population (formerly 6,000) had already departed for France by the end of 1959. To the middle and upper classes, however, leaving was “inconceivable.”⁵⁶⁰

The writer remarked that Jews and Europeans had become integrated very early on in this town. He noted that because “non-Muslims” only made up a small minority there, the Jews were vulnerable to the FLN. There was a time when grenades exploded daily.⁵⁶¹ The violence particularly affected Jewish shopkeepers in-the city-center, who either had to close their stores; or risk exposure to the bombs. One shopkeeper’s father stood guard outside his store each day, carrying a

⁵⁵⁸ Letter from Rabbi Abraham Sellem to JL. Dated 10/16/1959 from Ben Saada. Laz I.

⁵⁵⁹ R.T., “Lettre d’Algérie,” *L’Arche* no. 38, February 1960, pp. 15–19.

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 17.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*.

revolver. However, the writer maintained, the assailants were not attacking Jews per se, but rather as representatives of the French. As he wrote:

If the Jews of X were victims of the boycott, or of daily terrorist attacks, this was not because they were Jews, but (a tragic consolation) because they were “Europeans.”⁵⁶²

In December 1960, President De Gaulle had planned a visit to Algiers. The FLN led violent demonstrations, and the masses proclaimed “Algérie Musulmane!” They cried out for a Muslim Algeria, and not for simply an “Algerian Algeria.”⁵⁶³ This implied that at least these FLN activists had rejected the idea of a multicultural, independent Algeria, of the sort that Abbane had demanded. French soldiers fired into the crowd, killing 112 Muslims. On December 12, combatants destroyed Algiers’s Grand Synagogue. They gutted the interior, smashing the furniture, tearing apart the Torah scrolls, and painting swastikas and anti-Jewish slogans on the walls.⁵⁶⁴ The assailants left behind an Algerian flag, but the FLN denied any connection to the attack.⁵⁶⁵ A photograph snapped by Jacques Lazarus shows the graffiti “Vive la République Algérienne,” “Long live the Algerian Republic.” No one was harmed in the attack, but invaluable religious objects and sacred books were destroyed. Another newspaper reported that the same day, the rioters looted several Jewish shops in town, smashing up to twenty display windows. But no Jewish shop owners were harmed in these attacks.⁵⁶⁶ Henri Chemouilli claimed that the synagogue was merely symbolic because it bordered on the Casbah, and only a

⁵⁶² Ibid., page 17.

⁵⁶³ Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois Exiles*, page 155

⁵⁶⁴ André Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, page 276.

⁵⁶⁵ Stora *Les Trois Exiles* 155.

⁵⁶⁶ Reported in *Information Juive*, December 1960; originally reported in *Droit et Liberté*. (AIU JL XVI).

few members ever attended services there. Nevertheless , it was the largest and most beautiful synagogue in the city, situated in the Arab Quarter, which was once a shared Jewish-Muslim neighborhood.⁵⁶⁷ Across the street was a large Arab market, which reportedly was built by an “antisemitic municipality,” that had wanted to construct an Arab market at the foot of Algeria’s largest 19th-century synagogue.⁵⁶⁸



Lazarus documented the aftermath of the Algiers’ synagogue bombing (AIU FJL)

Chemouilli described the mourning ceremony for the Torahs, prayerbooks, and other ritual items that took place in January 1961. As was traditional, mourners treated the objects as if they were dead people, reciting the Kaddish and burying the items. He remembered asking himself, “What came over [the attackers]?” “Because

⁵⁶⁷ Chemouilli page 303

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

a Muslim knows that his god is also the god of the Jews.”⁵⁶⁹ That day, “the Jewish community cried over its own death.”⁵⁷⁰

FLN Pro-Jewish Propaganda

Terrorism had necessarily increased over-all—but the way that Jewish citizens and victims understood the new violence had changed. Algerian Jews once feared the resurgence of European antisemitism. After 1958, as the FLN gained more power, they feared the new Islamism of the nationalists, and it seemed as if the French Army was standing by and letting the violence happen. In the midst of all this, Jews were still receiving mixed messages from elements in the FLN assuring them of a place in a future Algeria and seeking to enlist them in the insurgent cause.

Such overtures may well have been motivated by the FLN’s efforts to win international backing. The FLN sought to promote its agenda to the world. In doing so, it appreciated the value of the overseas press in enlisting sympathy for the nationalist cause. As historians Matthew Connelly and Gilbert Meynier have illustrated, the FLN created a network of global propaganda to publicize its goal of Algerian independence.⁵⁷¹ Appealing to the Jews played a role in this.

A top-secret FLN document from early 1958 outlined the organization’s strategy for swaying Algerian Jews to support the insurgent cause.⁵⁷² One of the FLN’s greatest challenges would be to “show that our national struggle does not

⁵⁶⁹ Chemouilli page 304.

⁵⁷⁰ Chemouilli page 305.

⁵⁷¹ On Soummam, see Meynier, *Histoire*, 191-200. Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origin of the Post-Cold War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

⁵⁷² Archives de l’Armée de Terre, FLN documents confiscated from Beni Sbihi. stamped May 28, 1958, Document number 3, page 1.

have a racist character, as the colonists claim.”⁵⁷³ The writers warned against arbitrary armed violence, promoting instead a directed and controlled revolution.⁵⁷⁴

They mentioned a possible deterrent to their program:

Certain recent armed actions in the large cities have taken numerous Jewish and European victims, without seriously affecting the colonialist oppression. It would be a betrayal of our own ideas if we denied our responsibility for these acts. The French colonizers’ politics of extermination is the fundamental cause for these actions. The French Army’s monstrous crimes have brought our people to the height of their fury.⁵⁷⁵

They would execute a vast propaganda effort, that, in regard to the Jews, would emphasize the following arguments:

1. We must show that Jews are victims of the colonial regime;
2. That they will have a place in a free and independent Algeria;
3. The Jewish future is secure with the Algerian revolutionaries;
4. We have to prioritize Jewish support for Algerian nationalism by controlling armed actions within the large cities, where the Jewish leaders reside.⁵⁷⁶

Although the more Islamist elements of the FLN were by then in power, they continued to implore Jews to join their ranks in 1958, 1960, and 1962.⁵⁷⁷ Such appeals in these years prompted press reports that Jews were being bribed, or threatened. These new entreaties were slightly different than the 1956 letter to the Israelites. When they did respond, Jewish representatives used a strained

⁵⁷³ Archives de l’Armée de Terre, FLN documents confiscated from Beni Sbihi. stamped May 28, 1958, Document number 3, page 1.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, page 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ The FLN was not as organized as it appeared to be and was constantly faltering and quite disorganized. Mohammed Harbi has called the FLN a “mirage.” (See Harbi, *Le FLN Mirage...*)

neutrality, which barely veiled their loyalty to France and, eventually, to Algérie Française. Some claimed retrospectively that the FLN appeals were inauthentic, a temporary expedient in a propaganda campaign in which the FLN “needed the Jews” to gain the sympathy of international opinion (at the U.N. and in the U.S.).⁵⁷⁸ In 1958, André Narboni, the lawyer and CJAES representative, explained his stance carefully to the FLN (and to the world): “You are asking us to betray France, a country where we are already citizens, for a country that does not yet exist. We intend to remain faithful to France, faithful to the ideals of justice and democracy.”⁵⁷⁹ There was no longer any attempt at neutrality, nor at balancing French loyalism and Muslim loyalty.

In August 1958, a private letter to a Jewish tradesman rehearsed the version of ruthless history of violence and antisemitism since the French occupation.⁵⁸⁰ The letter, which donned an official FLN stamp, emphasized those moments when Europeans intentionally provoked Muslims and turned them against Jews, citing specifically the 1934 riots. It also dwelt on the Vichy past. The French authorities—or colonialism in general—were blamed for any Jewish-Muslim tensions. The writer begged the Jews to look around them at all of these “Ultras” who shared the “same hatred of the Semite,” and tried to break apart Jews and Muslims. The “division” between Jews and Muslims only benefitted the “oppressor.”

⁵⁷⁸ Such as H. Chemouilli, page 275; or Richard Ayoun, *Les Juifs d’Algérie pendant la guerre d’indépendance (1954 – 1962)*.” *Archives Juives*, 29/1, 1ère semestre 1996. (15–29),

⁵⁷⁹ Narboni, quoted in David Cohen, “Le CJAES dans le débat idéologique pendant la guerre d’Algérie,” in *Archives Juives* 1 sem, 1996. “Vous nous demandez de trahir une patrie dont nous sommes citoyens, la France, pour une patrie qui n’existe pas encore. Nous entendons demeurer fidèles à la France, fidèles aux idéaux de la justice et de la démocratie.”

⁵⁸⁰ Archives Vincennes, Dossier 1H/1255/2, Correspondence from FLN Wilaya IV to M. PARTOUCHE, posted September 17, 1958, but the letter is dated August 14, 1958.

The French Army investigated the letter, analyzing the typescript, presumably in an effort to capture the writer.⁵⁸¹ They compared the letter with another that was sent within the same zone, and established that they were from the same author. The second letter was addressed to a Muslim woman, “sister,” whom the writer accused of conspiring with De Gaulle under the guise of “fraternity.” The author admonished the woman, arguing that due to her education, she “should know better.” The letter ended as follows: “NO. WE ARE NOT TRAITORS TO OUR MARTYRS, THE ALGERIAN PEOPLE, ISLAM. It’s up to you to decide.”⁵⁸²

The FLN targeted and attacked the woman shortly after she received the letter. She was forced to move out of her home and relocate to a different city.⁵⁸³ The reason to describe her letter in such detail is because the FLN’s letter to the Jewish man was by comparison much gentler and more inviting. In the case of the Muslim woman, the FLN had already given up. While she suffered the most severe of the FLN’s threats and violence, the Jewish recipient was instead given invitations to join, and an alternate version of history.

On September 19, 1959, Charles De Gaulle declared that Algerians would have a right to self-determination. This gave the group hope that Algeria would indeed become independent. In response the FLN’s office for propaganda attempted to convince Algerian locals that independence would benefit everyone. Their slogans for Jews on September 28, 1959 were as follows:

Jewish Algerians, it is time to join the FLN en masse;

⁵⁸¹ Archives Vincennes, Dossier 1H/1255/2, Correspondence from “Le General de Corps d’Armée RETHORE (commandant du corps d’armée d’ORAN)” to “M. le Général d’Armée”

⁵⁸² Archives Vincennes, Dossier 1H/1255/2, Correspondence, anonymous to Mr. Partouche.

⁵⁸³ Archives Vincennes, Dossier 1H/1255/2, Memo from French Army.

Jewish Algerians, only ALGERIA is your country, participate en masse in its liberation;

Jewish Algerians, do not follow the ultras, your interests differ from theirs;

Jewish Algerians, reclaim peace;

Jewish Algerians, colonizers want to divide us; let's unite. Algeria is our country!⁵⁸⁴

In February 1960, the FLN declared that Algerian Jews constituted an integral part of the "Algerian Nation." They wrote, "This is not a matter of you choosing between France and Algeria, but of returning again as (*redevenir*) citizens of your true country."⁵⁸⁵ Once again, the FLN emphasized the idea that Jews were native to Algeria; they drew on the historical imperative that Jews had been in Algeria longer than Europeans. But their French citizenship was a sticking point since most Jews were unwilling to part with their French identity. By 1960, Jews (and the other major ethnic groups in Algeria) had reached a crossroads. This was a crucial moment in which they had no option but to choose: become Algerian, or become *pieds noirs*. There was no longer a possibility to exist as French Israelites of Algeria. -The FLN invited the Jews to take a "more active role" in the struggle for the Algerian republic.⁵⁸⁶ Frantz Fanon had even asked the Algerian Jews to spy on the French Army because they could blend in so easily with the Europeans.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ Harbi, M. and Meynier, G. (2004). *Le FLN, documents et histoire: 1954-1962*. (Paris: Fayard), p. 126.

⁵⁸⁵ « Vous êtes partie intégrante du peuple algérien : il ne s'agit pas pour vous de choisir entre la France et l'Algérie, mais de redevenir des citoyens effectifs de votre véritable pays.

⁵⁸⁶ « Le FLN assure la minorité israélite qu'elle est partie intégrante du peuple algérien, » *Le Monde*, 2/19/1960.

⁵⁸⁷ Fanon: "Les Juifs d'Algérie" in Attal, pp. 117-120. Originally published in *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, Editions Maspero, Paris 1959.

To claim that Algerian Jews were an “integral part of the Algerian nation” was actually a provocation. The FLN stated that the Jews needed to profess their allegiances in order to “dissipate any ambiguity that would risk compromising our future relations.”⁵⁸⁸ One newspaper saw this appeal as a “disguised ultimatum” for the Algerian Jews.⁵⁸⁹ The article described Nasser’s Arab nationalism as “exclusive and chauvinistic.” “If all of the bonds that currently unite Algeria to France are broken, that would be the end of Algerian Jews,” the author wrote.

Le Monde—a left-leaning paper that began to reveal its bias for the Algerian nationalists—used the FLN’s statement as an opportunity to analyze the cultural-ethnic ambiguities the Jews of Algeria represented. As part of its analysis, which appeared in February 1960, *Le Monde* re-published the FLN communiqué. What troubled Jacques Lazarus, though, was not the appeal itself — at this point, he was accustomed to the FLN’s regular missives to the Jews. Rather, it was the anxiety-provoking way in which *Le Monde* described Jews: they were the “Israelite minority” of Algeria. The first sentence, which was intended to be strictly explanatory, declared: “The Jews constitute a minority in Algeria, just like the Europeans.”⁵⁹⁰ Lazarus continued to insist that Jews were *just like* Europeans; he objected to *Le Monde*’s differentiating Jews from other Frenchmen. When an article from a distinguished journal separated the two groups, he expressed his frustration.

The FLN writers cultivated the ambiguity of the Algerian Jews, turning their ethnic identity into a psychological weapon in the war for independence. In

⁵⁸⁸ Joseph Ariel, “le Chantage FLN sure les Juifs d’Algérie,” unknown paper, 7 March 1960.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ « Le FLN assure la minorité israélite qu’elle est partie intégrante du peuple algérien, » *Le Monde*, 2/19/1960. « Les Juifs, comme les Européens, constituent en Algérie une minorité. »

appealing to Jews separately, the FLN isolated them and repeatedly drew attention to their differences from the Europeans. This had been its strategy since the Soummam Appeal, when the FLN invited Jews to join, even as it turned away sympathetic Europeans, who became unwelcome as the insurgents grew more insistent upon Arabic/Islamic identity, particularly after Abbane's murder.

Regarding the Jews, however, the FLN was turning the ethnic divisions that the French administration had introduced in the mid-19th century to its own purposes.

By 1960, it was nearly impossible for CJAES leaders to convince the FLN that they still supported the Jewish-Muslim brotherhood that they had celebrated in the immediate postwar era. The FLN declared that Jewish leaders were "abusing" the Jewish population by encouraging them to remain aloof from the struggle for national liberation.⁵⁹¹ Beginning in early 1960, the FLN's appeals to the Jews assumed a threatening aspect, based on accepting certain conditions. The FLN warned that the Israelites of Algeria, if they stayed, would not be permitted to travel to Israel. Nor would they be allowed any kind of movement, even to France. There was a sense that Jews—if they remained in an independent Algeria—would lose their rights, rather than gaining independence. It is therefore understandable why Jewish leaders were now trying to show that the Crémieux decree had nothing but a historical interest—its impact was no longer current; rather, it was an older law that influenced a generation that had now passed on.

In early 1961, at the meeting of the independent Algerian government in Tunis, the FLN stated that they would repeal the Crémieux decree upon Algerian

⁵⁹¹ *Moudjahid*, 21 December 1960, quoted in Lazarus, "Tels Que Nous Sommes," *Information Juive*.

independence. Presumably, as equal citizens of a free Algeria, the Jews would not need the special privileges granted under French suzerainty. But as it turned out, they might not be so equal under the nationalists. Among other restrictions, the FLN would deny Jews the right to emigrate to Israel.⁵⁹² Many articles from the French press reported on this directive which seemed to contradict the assurance that Jews would be an integral part of the Algerian nation. Another article by journalist Eugene Mannoni in *Le Monde* observed that with this new revocation, the Jews “would lose their French qualities and would be nothing but Algerian.”⁵⁹³

If the Crémieux Decree were to be overturned again, Jews would be excluded from all of the privileges that a French minority in Algeria would have.⁵⁹⁴ It also meant that Jews would be trapped in Algeria, without French rights, while Europeans would still have the freedom to go to France. Though it seems obvious that Jews who opted to live in an independent Algeria would lose their rights as French citizens, the timing and tenor of the FLN fiat to abolish the Crémieux decree nonetheless dealt a psychological blow to the Jewish community. The last time the decree had been revoked, it had been an act of overt antisemitism perpetrated by Vichy collaborators. Whatever the logic of dispensing with the decree, the message carried a reminder of the Jews losing their rights under a hostile regime. In the midst of the Algerian negotiations for independence, this move was not only provocative to the French Government, it was threatening to the Jews.

⁵⁹² J. Jefroykin, “Le FLN Précise” in *France Observateur*, Feb 1, 1961

⁵⁹³ Eugene Mannoni, *Le Monde*, 21 Janv 1961, “L’Agence Juive de la Paléatine s’inquiét des sentiments des Israélites à l’heure de l’Algérie Algérienne.” « Le FLN vainqueur abolirait, assurait-on, le décret Crémieux qui conféra, dès 1870, aux israélites algériens les mêmes droits politiques qu’aux Européens. Les juifs perdraient, ainsi, leur qualité de Français, et ne seraient dès lors, au milieu des musulmans, que des Algériens. » (3d column)

⁵⁹⁴ J. Jefroykin, “Le FLN Précise” in *France Observateur*, Feb 1, 1961

The reaction of Jewish leaders was to revisit their history—re-evaluating Adolph Crémieux’s legacy. This time, however, their motives had changed. They concluded that Crémieux no longer had any relevance for the present situation. In the early 1960s, Algerian Jews explicitly rejected their foundations as heirs of Crémieux, instead defending their French citizenship as a *fait accompli*.⁵⁹⁵ By that time, Jewish leaders suspected that if Algeria gained independence, then France would repatriate its European community, among whom the Jews now wished to be included. Their new priority was to assert their right to be considered French citizens beyond the shadow of a doubt. While earlier Jewish articles had described Adolph Crémieux in a personal, familiar manner, later ones discredited his decree explicitly. Jewish leaders sought to prove that their French citizenship was a profound, unconditional quality, rather than associating it with the Crémieux Decree which ordained their rights not as natural but by fiat, which could be revoked, as it was in the past.

In a private letter, Alliance Israélite president René Cassin worried about the FLN’s new political position: that Jews would be barred from going to Israel. He feared that the FLN would “lock up [Jewish] people and their belongings” while publicly stating that they were equal citizens.⁵⁹⁶ From his powerful position in France, Cassin proposed a solution that would continue to fight for Jewish equality in Algeria, but also open up legal discussions in France to make sure there were resources for welcoming Jews on the mainland, and that the Jews would be able to go to Israel, before it would be too late.

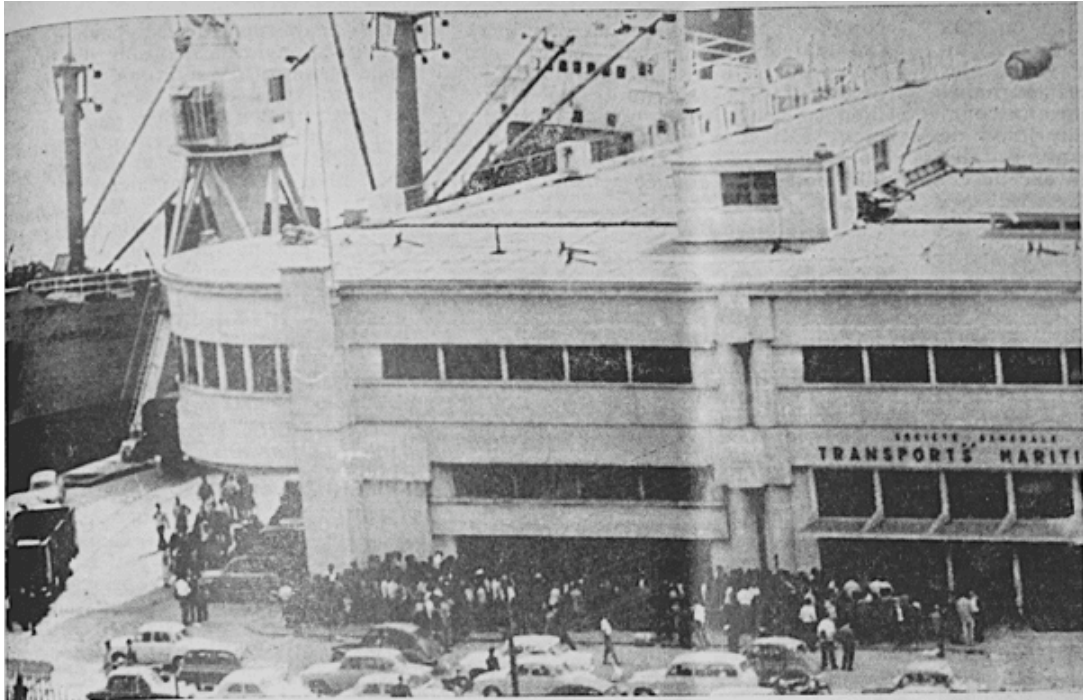
⁵⁹⁵ See for instance Emile Touati *Information Juive* Feb 1961.

⁵⁹⁶ AIU Cassin to Chouraqui, Correspondence, June 7, 1961.

The CJAES hardly responded to the FLN's declarations. The appeals drew attention to the fact that the ethnic hierarchies in colonial Algeria were no longer feasible; the FLN writers were using the Jews' ethnic ambiguity in order to demonstrate that neutrality was impossible in the climate of a revolutionary war for independence. The CJAES would have no recourse, other than to align with the *pieds noirs*. The divide between the French nation and the French republic, which had so concerned the Jews in an earlier phase of the war—as seen in Chapter Two—now seemed like a trifling difference. Jews were becoming more like *pieds noirs*, so they could be more “French” and less “Algerian.”

Alienated by the FLN's “Arab” identity politics, threatened by the violence that struck their institutions and neighborhoods, Algerian Jews feared that they would not be welcome in an independent Algeria. The FLN's increasingly hostile propaganda, bombs and anti-Israel threats convinced Jews that their cherished “Judeo-Muslim” comity was an illusion. In a conflict that had become a battle of “Europeans” versus “Muslims,” Algerian Jews had to choose their camp. In the final years of the Algerian War, Jews united with Europeans, overlooking their former animosities to form a common front against the insurgents. As the FLN's terror campaign spread from city to city and town to town, many Jews became suspicious of Muslim neighbors and friends. They withdrew into a realm of fear and anger, which led to a desire for revenge.

Chapter Six: Becoming Pieds Noirs



Hoirs of travelers crowded a Maritime Transport Center in order to secure a place on a ship headed to France in spring 1962.⁵⁹⁷

Historical narratives about Jews and the Algerian War often begin with the depiction of harried travelers making their way toward France, empty-handed.⁵⁹⁸ Formerly divided into Europeans and Jews, these travelers came to be known collectively as “pieds noirs.” All were French citizens, and nearly all “returned” home to France between 1961 and 1962, even if for the first time. In the rendering of a pied noir “return” to France, Jews and Europeans made a mass exodus “home.”

⁵⁹⁷ AP, from François Missoffe, Minister of Rapatriates, “Les Rapatriés d’Algérie” *Faim et Soif* no 54, October 1963, page 23.

⁵⁹⁸ For instance, in Benjamin Stora’s *Trois Exiles*, the Algerian War brought about the Jews’ “Third Exile” from Algeria; a photograph of a busy airport terminal is the chapter’s heading. In *Invention of Decolonization*, Todd Shepard’s chapter on Jews focuses on the Jewish emigration—their need to leave was already a presumed fact and the only question was whether to immigrate to France or Israel. In Sarah Sussman’s narrative, she speeds through the conflicts of the war to zero in on the Jewish repatriation to the metropole. G. Meynier groups Europeans and Jews together, as in *FLN: Histoire Intérieure*, page 251ff.

Seeking a secure future, they acceded to the FLN's vision of a Muslim Algeria.⁵⁹⁹ On the other side of the Mediterranean, France had become a single nation situated on the continent of Europe. Although the emigration out of Algeria was indeed sudden—as many scholars have remarked⁶⁰⁰—Algerian Jews had already begun a process of uniting with Europeans over the last half of the long Algerian War.

In Casablanca in 1952, a gang of young Europeans who demonstrated against the Moroccan nationalists coined the term. They labeled themselves “pieds noirs,” after the American-Indian tribe of the Blackfeet.⁶⁰¹ Another myth has it that those colonists who claimed the marshy land of the Mitija region burned the shrubbery, and their bare feet turned black from the ashes.⁶⁰² Between 1955 and 1956, a smattering of articles began to employ the term strictly to designate the French of Algeria instead of the more controversial “biological Europeans,” the “Europeans de Souche.” The term came to be used widely around 1962, when the majority of Europeans and Jews fled to the metropole.⁶⁰³ An official document published by the high commissioner of Algeria employed the label “pieds noirs” as he outlined the rights of the French citizens of Algeria upon the acceptance of the Evian Accords on July 1, 1962 by which France formally recognized Algerian independence.⁶⁰⁴ Todd Shepard declared, “What is undeniable is that in [spring and summer 1962],

⁵⁹⁹ On the FLN's Islamist vision, see Gilbert Meynier, “Islam et Islamo-Arabité” in *FLN Histoire Interieure*, pp. 220–222; Neil MacMaster, “The roots of populist Islamic nationalism during the War of Independence,” in *Burning the Veil*, pages 356–359; Marnia Lazreg, “FLN and religion” in *Torture and the Twilight of Empire*.

⁶⁰⁰ For excellent details on the Jews' sudden exodus from Algeria, see Sarah Sussman, “The Exodus of the Summer of 1962,” in “Changing Lands, Changing Identities,” pp. 175–185.

⁶⁰¹ Edmond Jouhand, *Ce que je n'ai pas dit* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1977), p. 8.

⁶⁰² Harrison, *Challenging De Gaulle*, page 13n

⁶⁰³ Daniel Lefeuvre, “Les pieds-noirs” in Harbi and Stora, *La Guerre d'Algérie 1954-2004 la fin de l'amnésie*, (2004: Laffont, Paris) p. 267.

⁶⁰⁴ Haut Commissariat de la République en Algérie, “Les Accords d'Evian et les ‘Pieds Noirs,’” pamphlet published in Spring 1962, 16 pages. AIU Laz IV.

departures [to France...] became ‘pied noir’ and no longer ‘Israelite,’ ‘Spanish,’ or ‘of French origin.’”⁶⁰⁵

Including Jews among the Europeans created a pied noir identity. Algerian Jews were not born pieds noirs; in fact, some Europeans still considered them natives (“*indigènes*”) until very late. For instance, in Pierre Nora’s 1961 attempt to define the groups of Algeria, he wrote that Muslims were classified as “all of the non-Jewish *natives*.”⁶⁰⁶ As Todd Shepard has demonstrated, many of the complexities of late-colonial Algeria have been forgotten in the service of a narrative of natural decolonization, which displaced *all* Muslims and made them Algerian, and displaced *all* pieds noirs and made them “French.”⁶⁰⁷ By the end of the war, as seen in the previous chapter, many Jews suspected that the FLN was engaging in a new anti-Jewish campaign. In addition to a collective fear of FLN-led violence, Jews and Europeans shared the sense that the French government, even the military, had abandoned them. Pied noir identity amalgamated Jews and Europeans, just as the label “European” a century earlier had unified French, Spanish, Maltese, and Italian residents of Algeria. Even so, historiography overemphasizes the extent to which Jews were accepted as Europeans during the Algerian War—a mistaken perception based on postcolonial hindsight.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁵ *Invention*, page 180.

⁶⁰⁶ Pierre Nora, *Les Français d’Algérie*, published 1961, page 161. “L’appellation de musulman est au contraire injurieuse. On classera parmi les musulmans tous les indigènes non juifs, même s’ils sont laïcs, même s’ils n’ont jamais lu le Coran.”

⁶⁰⁷ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*. For instance on page 55: “Decolonization emerged as a structural cause that French people could and did refer to in order to avoid explaining why they now overwhelmingly accepted Algerian independence.”

⁶⁰⁸ Often, historiography has echoed the CJAES insistence that the Jews of Algeria were absolutely French—and no different from Europeans. For instance, many historians assume that although Algerian Jews had been subject to antisemitism, there was just a small step separating them from

In this chapter, I seek to illustrate how we have come to see the Jews of Algeria as *pieds noirs*, despite the fact that Jews and Europeans had been segregated throughout the Algerian War.⁶⁰⁹ In order to understand how they became *pied noir*, I will document this change to show how—especially after the fall of the Fourth Republic in May 1958—Jews and Europeans shared many of the same preoccupations. Over the course of the war, Muslims eventually drifted away from all that was French, whether by choice or by force.⁶¹⁰ The subtler transformation from “*Français Israélites d’Algérie*” to *pieds noirs* occurred, I argue, through a series of events that took place in the final few years of the French presence.⁶¹¹ Similar to the way the FLN’s appeals shed doubt on Jewish belonging, so too De Gaulle questioned where the Jews would belong, particularly in the final years of the Algerian War.

By the end of 1957, Jews and Europeans began uniting against “Arabs” in general.⁶¹² At the most extreme, articles, political speeches, and governmental documents referred to Muslims as the new Nazis. At the May 1958 rallies, detailed

pieds noirs. However, as we have shown throughout this dissertation, Jews and *pieds noirs* were segregated—socially, ethnically, and politically.

⁶⁰⁹ For European antisemitism, in both the 19th and 20th centuries, see, for instance: Hannah Arendt, “Why the Crémieux Decree was abrogated,” *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1943. Vol VI, no. 2, Pages 115–123. (published by the American Jewish Committee, New York, NY) and Abitbol, *Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy*. Lefevre, « Les *pieds-noirs*, » in Harbi and Stora, *La Guerre d’Algérie 1954-2004 la fin de l’amnésie*, (2004: Laffont, Paris) page 269–70. Hebey, *Alger 1898*.

⁶¹⁰ On the evolution of Muslim Algerian choice to dissociate from France, see Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure*. On the French forcing Muslims out, see Todd Shepard, “Rejecting the Muslims,” Chapter 9 in *Invention of Decolonization*, pp. 227–242.

⁶¹¹ Scholars frequently begin to include Jews among *pieds noirs* as they describe the end of the Algerian War. I am seeking to understand the processes—cultural, psychological, political—by which Algerian Jews *became* *pieds noirs*. For instance, in Michel Abitbol, “The Integration of North African Jews in France,” (YFS 85, *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth-Century France*, ed. Alan Astro, 1994 by Yale Univeristy); Sarah Sussman, “Changing Lands, Changing Identities,” PhD Diss.

⁶¹² Lefevre, page 270: “Au fond, le sentiment de la communauté [des *pieds-noirs*] se nourrit principalement de l’opposition aux ‘Arabs’...”

below, Jews and Europeans shared similar views about the war and about the ascendancy of General de Gaulle as President of France, at first confident that he would support the Army, and then feeling betrayed when he accepted Algerian independence. As these events unfolded, Europeans downplayed their former antisemitism in the name of political unity against their common enemies: Muslims, on the one hand, and De Gaulle, on the other. During the final months of French Algeria, extremist pieds noirs joined forces to form a counterterrorist army—the Secret Armed Organization (OAS)—that was as dangerous as the FLN.

The Vision of May 13th



The front page of *Echo d'Alger* from 14 May 1958 shows the demonstrators at Algiers' central forum, "where all had come to affirm their faith in Algérie Française."⁶¹³

On May 13, 1958, a mass of 30,000 Europeans, Jews, and Muslims gathered before a monument to the WWII dead in Algiers' central square in front of a government building.⁶¹⁴ They assembled to demand that Prime Minister Pierre

⁶¹³ Photo courtesy of <http://patawet.hautetfort.com/>, retrieved 23 July 2012.

⁶¹⁴ Reuters, "Army Group in Algeria Asks Power for de Gaulle: French Army Seizes Rule in Algeria Amid Rioting" *New York Times* May 14 1958. Page 1. Henri Chemouilli, "Pieds Noirs, Juifs et Musulmans sont au Forum [on May 17]."

Pfimplim step down, and they called for Charles De Gaulle to take over.⁶¹⁵ The popular term of “fraternity” was used to describe the apparently spontaneous uprising that seemed to bond together Europeans and Muslims, making it appear as if everyone wanted the same thing—a united, multicultural French-ruled Algeria. Jacques Tarnero, who was a teenager at the time, was enthralled with the May 13 revolution in which the Army seized power in Algiers. He remembered that day, “Calling for De Gaulle seemed to have magically melted away [Algeria’s] racist hierarchies.”⁶¹⁶

In reality, the crowds consisted of angry Europeans from across Algeria who chanted “*Algérie Française!*” or “Long live Massu,”⁶¹⁷ hailing the French general who led the coup. A Committee in defense of *Algérie Française* made up of war veterans originally called for a demonstration in order to pay homage to French soldiers who were killed. The students of Algiers joined them and formed a “shock troop” of partisans for French Algeria. General Massu announced that he would form a Committee of Public Safety, which would strengthen the military-led government in Algeria. The following three weeks consisted of theatrical revolutions, which drew on a mythic French past—both the revolutionary days of 1789–94 and World War II Gaullist resistance. The committee demanded a completely new government, a different kind of society.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ For details on the May journées and May 13 insurrection, see MacMaster, *Burning the Veil*; Paillat, *Dossier Secret de l’Algérie II, 13 Mai 1958–1961*. Paris: Le Livre contemporain, 1961. Yves Courrière, chapter “l’Illusion.”

⁶¹⁶ Jacques Tarnero, “Cicatrices Vives,” *D’un temps révolu*, Sudaka-Bénazéraf, Jacqueline, ed. page 146.

⁶¹⁷ Horne, 286.

⁶¹⁸ MacMaster 115.

On May 16, according to newspaper reports, Muslims who supported *Algérie Française* filed into the square, symbolically joining hands or hugging their European “brothers” as the international media snapped photos. A Muslim boy waving a tricolor flag incited cheers of enthusiasm from the crowd.⁶¹⁹ Because the war had by this point captivated the international media, propagandists aimed to show that the new leadership (Massu and De Gaulle) would bring a French, multicultural peace—and to deny that their coup was either a dictatorship or a junta.



“France’s fate hangs on Algeria.” The cover of a leaflet promoting French multicultural, fraternal Algeria. (Found in AIU JLI, undated, likely 1958)

⁶¹⁹ Reuters, “Army Group in Algeria Asks Power for de Gaulle: French Army Seizes Rule in Algeria Amid Rioting” *New York Times*. May 14 1958. Page 1.

“An extraordinary and electric fervor had swept through the crowd of Europeans and Algerians, an emotional outpouring of joy and optimism that signaled an end to the bloody divisions, and the powerful solidarity of the two peoples as they faced the future together,” historian Neil MacMaster summarized.⁶²⁰ When De Gaulle arrived, on May 18, and once he had become president on June 4, he described himself as having a calming effect, upon both “Muslims” and Europeans. He claimed that he represented a true brotherhood “between the two communities.” De Gaulle’s own description of Algeria omitted the presence of the Jews, the Kabyles, or any other group that did not identify squarely in one camp or the other. But whatever lip service the President paid to liberty and fraternity, he drew the line at equality. As Todd Shepard argued, De Gaulle did not believe that Muslims were equal to French people in any way. This was most evident when he asked a French general, “You cannot possibly consider that one day an Arab, a Muslim, could be the equal of a Frenchman?”⁶²¹

As MacMaster has illustrated, the Fifth Bureau of the Army staged the May uprisings in order to convince De Gaulle that he was the leader that French Algeria needed. The French Army had orchestrated a veil burning, as Muslim women dramatically removed their headdresses and threw them into the fire. These women were the “other half” of the two communities—the Muslim half.⁶²² In the wake of these dramatic demonstrations, France’s propaganda specialists emphasized the new entwined friendship between Europeans and Muslims. They

⁶²⁰ MacMaster *Burning the Veil*, 117.

⁶²¹ Quoted in Shepard, page 75.

⁶²² MacMaster, *Burning the Veil*, Chapter 3: “unveiling,” page 114ff.

preached respect for the cultural differences, but still insisted on French leadership. A French-Jewish soldier in Algeria described his relief and overwhelming joy during those days in May 1958. He said that he and all of his fellow soldiers believed that the war had come to an end.⁶²³

During these May days, there was indeed a coming-together of a new kind, although it was not a burgeoning friendship between Muslims and Europeans. Rather, Pétainists and Gaullists had united for the first time on May 13 in order to bring De Gaulle to power. The day's events were planned by a complex network of political actors, which MacMaster has divided into two principal groups: the Gaullists, led by Algeria's former Governor-General Jacques Soustelle and several other prominent politicians, and the extreme right-wing Europeans, "who shared the Gaullist fear of national degeneration, but who were even more concerned about a sell-out in Algeria."⁶²⁴ These two groups, which until May 1958 had represented opposite sides of the political spectrum, came together around the issue of *Algérie Française*. They believed that De Gaulle could retain Algeria, and that only he could negotiate around the FLN and find a peaceful solution.

While its representatives claimed neutrality, the CJAES clearly aligned with the Gaullists. In his editor's letter from the June 1958 issue of *Information Juive*, Lazarus reserved rhapsodic adjectives to describe De Gaulle. He emphasized that the general had been "the symbol of a struggle against ... Nazi persecution" and the "restorer of the Republic"—in fact, he was an "incarnation" of the Republican ideal. It was he "who, at the worst period of Nazi persecution, swore to restore the

⁶²³ Conversation on July 2008 with war veteran.

⁶²⁴ MacMaster page 115.

Republic with its ideals of equality of rights and obligations for all citizens in the French territory.”⁶²⁵ Lazarus, as a representative of liberal Jews, longed for inter-communal fraternity: “We hope to be indissolubly united, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, in a newly found peace, united in freedom with complete equality of rights and duties, and with mutual respect.”⁶²⁶

De Gaulle answered their prayers when he took the podium in Algiers in June 1958, and proclaimed, “*Je vous ai compris!*—I understand you!!” Under his leadership, it appeared, the war would come to an end and usher in a multicultural French Algeria. De Gaulle embodied the *kind* of France that the CJAES (and other republican Jews) had long hoped for—a republican and equal France. Lazarus’s prayer for unity was not unlike the broader hope shared by pieds noirs. Shortly after the demonstrations, Henri Chemouilli reflected that French Algeria had finally overcome its racist past on May 13.⁶²⁷ Several years later, a disillusioned Chemouilli wrote, “De Gaulle appeared to be the prophet of the new Algeria,” dryly concluding that, alas, the general proved to be a false prophet.⁶²⁸

These celebratory attitudes were not universal among Jews. An anonymous Jewish representative claimed that most Algerian Jews were skeptical of the May 13 movement, because they “saw all of the former Vichy activists, all of the antisemites,

⁶²⁵ *Information Juive*, June 1958, page 1; translation from *AJYB* Algeria..

⁶²⁶ “Editor’s Note,” *Information Juive*, June 1958. « nous exprimons l’ardent espoir que sous la haute autorité du plus illustre de ses enfants, de celui qui, après avoir été le symbole de la lutte contre l’opresseur, fut le restaurateur de la Rép et de l’idéal qu’elle incarne et qui, aux pires moments des persécutions nazies, avait affirmé sa volonté de rétablir, après la victoire, à la fois l’égalité des droits et celle des devoirs de tous les citoyens dans tous les territoires français, la France mène à son terme, sur cette terre à laquelle des liens millénaires rattachent la collectivité juive, cette réconciliation totale des esprits et des cœurs, afin que cohabitent à nouveau, indissolublement unis, chrétiens, musulmans et israélites, dans la paix et l’unité retrouvées, dans la liberté et l’égalité complète des droits et des devoirs, dans le respect mutuel des consciences. »

⁶²⁷ Henri Chemouilli, “Fraternisation ou fraternité en Algérie?” *l’Arche*, no. 25, January 1959.

⁶²⁸ Chemouilli book, page 326.

all of the ultras, and also because we felt it was a coup against the republic.”⁶²⁹ It proved virtually impossible to undo a century of European antisemitism within a few years. Among the loud calls against the system or against France’s abandonment of the *pieds noirs*, some cries against “the Jews” were also heard as the mob stormed the gates surrounding the prefecture.⁶³⁰

Even though the CJAES did its best to convey that Algerian Jews supported De Gaulle, one Lieutenant Colonel expressed his concern that the Constantine Jews would not back De Gaulle.⁶³¹ In a confidential document, the officer observed that Jews had historically supported the French Socialist party because of its “protection of minorities.” He proposed a solution, to entice the Jews of Constantine to support De Gaulle: “The government should suppress any Socialist propaganda that was aimed at “minorities.” The Jews, he observed, had their own reasons for promoting Muslim integration. He caricatured a typical Jewish response, “Muslim integration? Why not? *We* have all been integrated for a very long time.”⁶³²

A special unit that would observe—or, to be more accurate, spy on—the Jewish “politics” of a certain region in Algeria is interesting in itself for several reasons. It shows that the government considered Algerian Jewish support to be crucial; that outsiders perceived the “Israelite community” to have a single politics; and finally, that the Jews were still seen as a segregated group, that they stood apart

⁶²⁹ Rabi, “Nos Frères...” *Arche*, page 29.

⁶³⁰ Henry L. Levy, “Algeria,” in *American Jewish Yearbook* 1959, page 275.

⁶³¹ 11 August 1958, “Enquete... sur l’attitude de la communauté Israélite vis-à-vis le general De Gaulle.” Archives Vincennes.

⁶³² *Ibid.* L’intégration des Musulmanes? Pourquoi pas? Nous avons bien été tous intégrés depuis longtemps.”

from other *pieds noirs*.⁶³³ The French Army persisted in minority categorization and then suppressed the information, since such observations were supposed to be illegal.

By welcoming Jews into an integrated and fraternal France, Europeans were changing, and slowly the new identity of “*pied noir*” was emerging. The self-selected Jewish leaders, for their part, had long embraced a kind of multicultural, yet French-controlled, government—as seen in the 1955 meeting of the World Jewish Congress, cited in Chapter Two. They had long advocated on behalf of “Muslims” in the country and had the hope that everyone would be treated equally. On May 13, there was not so much a question of Jews joining Europeans—but that the *pieds noirs*’ new moment of “fraternization” was finally in accord with the long-held aspirations of Jewish supporters of the Republic: that French Algeria would become multicultural. They wanted all inhabitants to be equal, in spite of their religious-ethnic divisions.

Later in summer 1958, Henri Chemouilli encouraged his readers of the Jewish monthly *Arche* to have faith in De Gaulle. “Peace seems close,” he wrote, “because Algeria, since the month of May, seems to be in a different kind of mood, with a new politics in which people accept the other on his own terms. In short, we are already living in the Algeria of tomorrow.”⁶³⁴ He specified what he hoped for: “France will stay. In twenty years, new men will rise up. Freed from humiliation, freed from hatred, freed perhaps from themselves. They will assume their

⁶³³ Gosnell cites the long past of the military spying on the Jews.

⁶³⁴ Henri Chemouilli, “Les Juifs d’Algérie après le 13 Mai,” in *l’Arche* no. 20–21, August–September 1958. “La paix, même, semble proche. Car l’Algérie, depuis le mois de mai, c’est un autre état d’esprit, une politique nouvelle, l’acceptation de l’autre en tant qu’autre. Bref, c’est déjà l’Algérie de demain.”

destiny.”⁶³⁵ He was alluding to Muslims who would overcome poverty and servitude in the wake of De Gaulle’s new fraternal—but still French—Algeria.

A few months later, Chemouilli elaborated his political perspective, citing clear examples of how the French had improved life in Algeria. He presented the Saharan Jews as orientalized—he described them as “ignorant in the extreme.”⁶³⁶ Using these Jews to justify the idea that France had brought positive reforms to Algeria, Chemouilli argued that throughout France’s history in Algeria, the French had remarkably improved life for Muslims and Jews alike. Calling his own family “colonized Jews,” he declared, “We are proud of our parents and grandparents.”⁶³⁷ He argued that the supporters of French Algeria would have a duty to “refuse to recognize an Algerian personality.” The reason was that the republic was blind: “There is an Algerian personality as there is a Corsican, Breton, Alsatian, or Jewish personality.”⁶³⁸ He was implying that the Republic was blind to regional distinctions, as it should be to an Algerian personality. To illustrate his point, Chemouilli attached a photo of a parade of headdress-adorned Muslim war veterans carrying signs that read, “We are French.”

Chemouilli’s article inspired a large stack of response letters, which the editor of *Arche* described as “abundant and passionate.”⁶³⁹ Of the letters the editors chose to publish, two came from Algeria, and three from the mainland. The first letter juxtaposed two conceptions of the world: Arab nationalism versus French

⁶³⁵ Henri Chemouilli, “Les Juifs d’Algérie après le 13 Mai,” in *l’Arche* no. 20–21, August–Sept. 1958.

⁶³⁶ Henri Chemouilli, “Fraternisation ou fraternité en Algérie?” *l’Arche*, no. 25, January 1959.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ *ibid.*

⁶³⁹ “Courrier des Lecteurs,” in *Arche* no. 26, February 1959, page 7.

democracy. While the nationalist movement was young, xenophobic and filled with irrational hatred, French democracy, though flawed, was secular and therefore able to include people from all social, religious and ethnic groups. The writer was sure that an independent Algerian republic would mean “the extermination of, or at least the eviction of, all the Christians and Jews and thousands of others.”⁶⁴⁰ A Parisian expressed his disappointment in Chemouilli’s article, asserting that Jews had a responsibility to be the firmest defenders of democracy, leftist ideas, and anti-racism. Another writer from Paris said he was “stupefied” at the “anti-democratic trends” that Chemouilli expressed.⁶⁴¹ From this small sample, one can see an emergent pattern—all three metropolitans in 1959 celebrated their Judaism through anti-racism on behalf of Arab nationalists in Algeria, while Algerian Jews stood with De Gaulle whom they presumed supported a French Algeria.

From the perspective of many Algerian Jews, the vision of May 13 matched their own desires—articulated earlier in the war—for a French-ruled multicultural Algeria. In the chaos that emerged from the days following 1958, when “Europeans, Muslims, civilians, men, women, children, and adults”—including young fascists and socialists—embraced in a fraternal De Gaulle euphoria, they seemed to forget the Europeans’ former antisemitism in favor of a new enemy—the FLN, and eventually all Muslims.⁶⁴² The FLN, of course, had refused to accept De Gaulle’s intervention, which promoted integration over independence.

⁶⁴⁰ R. Bénichou, “Courrier des Lecteurs,” in *Arche* no. 26, Feb 1959, pages 5, 7.

⁶⁴¹ Y. Dumont, “Courrier des Lecteurs,” in *Arche* no. 26, Feb 1959, page 7.

⁶⁴² Macmaster 117-118.

De Gaulle's Letdown

Hardly more than a year later, on September 16, 1959, President De Gaulle asserted that Algerians would have the right to “self-determination.” He proclaimed, “now we can envision the day in which the men and women who live in Algeria will be able to decide freely their own destiny, for once and for all.... I consider it from today forward to be proclaimed that the path of self-determination has commenced.”⁶⁴³ The 1959 speech set off a series of events—first mobilizing the radical *pieds noirs* against De Gaulle, and eventually resulting in the formation of the OAS. One of the founding generals of the OAS, Edmond Jouhaud, lamented in the late 1970s that De Gaulle had spoiled the “spirit of May 1958.”⁶⁴⁴

Historians have struggled to determine whether De Gaulle had always intended to grant Algeria independence, since the end of WWII, or whether he had decided expediently to respond to the FLN's military and diplomatic pressure.⁶⁴⁵ De Gaulle's memoirs make the transition to independent Algeria seem extremely smooth, despite his ambiguous actions and statements between 1958 and 1961. According to Matthew Connelly's reading of the situation, the Algerian nationalists

⁶⁴³ Quoted in Arnaud D roul de, *OAS: Etude d'une organisation clandestine*. H lette : Editions de Ramuntxo Partarrieu, 1997 page 8.. “on peut maintenant envisager le jour o  les hommes et les femmes qui habitent l'Alg rie seront en mesure de d cider de leur destin, une fois pour toutes, librement, en connaissance de cause. Comte tenu de toutes les donn es alg rienne, nationales et internationales, je consid re comme n cessaire que ce recours   l'autodetermination soit d s aujourd'hui proclam e. » (8)

⁶⁴⁴ Oral testimony to Harrison, page 143.

⁶⁴⁵ Julian Jackson has identified three conflicting historiographical trends in regard to De Gaulle's decision to grant Algerian independence. The first trend states that he had made the decision before 1958 to work toward independence; second, that he intended the opposite—to keep Algeria French; and third, that he preferred an “association” with France, much like the British dominion system. In a new book, Benjamin Stora uncovered De Gaulle's secret motivations for this declaration of “self-determination.”

eventually forced De Gaulle to abandon his aim: which had been an Algeria that was “attached to France by federal ties,” a so-called Third Force which was a compromise between independence and French sovereignty.⁶⁴⁶

In retrospect, De Gaulle claimed that he had always known that the Algerians were ready for their own governance. However, De Gaulle made several blatantly racist statements about Muslims, which suggest that he was not at all attached to the myth of “fraternity” among Algeria’s communities. In 1959, speaking of the long term of French Algeria, he admitted, “We pretended to make good Frenchmen out of the coloreds.”⁶⁴⁷ The same year, he declared, “Arabs are Arabs, Frenchmen are Frenchmen.” This was the same conversation in which he joked that if France were to absorb the Muslims, his town would be called Colombey-les-deux-mosquées rather than Colombey-les-deux-eglises.⁶⁴⁸

Just a week before De Gaulle’s speech declaring Algerian self-determination, Jacques Lazarus wrote him a letter. “Dear Mr. President,” he wrote, “In just a few days, the Jewish community will celebrate the sacred holiday of Rosh Hashanah. We [would like to invite you] to write a message to Algeria’s Jews on this occasion in the next issue of *Information Juive*.”⁶⁴⁹ He declared that De Gaulle’s presence as head of state fulfilled a wish shared by the whole Jewish community. De Gaulle’s office

⁶⁴⁶ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 180, quoting De Gaulle from his memoirs, *Mémoires of Hope*

⁶⁴⁷ Conversation with Petrefitte, quoted in Connelly, page 179.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Jacques Lazarus to Charles de Gaulle, 7 septembre 1959, AIU JL II.

apologized, stating that the President's "rule" was to deliver no message of any kind on the subject of Algeria.⁶⁵⁰

De Gaulle's statements about Algerian Jews reveal that his ideas on Algeria were more nuanced than simply a concept of "self-determination." The Third Force, he believed, would "constitute a threat to the FLN's hegemony and the fight for independence."⁶⁵¹ He envisioned a federalized nation that was neither French nor Algerian; the new imaginary Algeria would contain multiple ethnic "states."⁶⁵² His proposal alienated the resolute Jewish citizens of Algeria, who did not want to be counted as a "minority." He proposed an Algerian-governed state, which maintained "special links" to France, and included protection for ethnic minorities. The trouble was in how he listed those minorities: "Kabyle, Arab, Chaouïa, Mozabite, Jewish, and French."⁶⁵³ Lazarus was infuriated that De Gaulle would separate the "Jewish" minority from the "French." The De Gaulle government failed to recognize that Jews were citizens, who were just as French as the others. Lazarus was shocked that the Jews could possibly be "separated from the rest of the French collectivity to form a distinct ethnic community, whose future would need to be ensured and guaranteed."⁶⁵⁴

The following month, French Prime Minister Guy Mollet was astonished to learn that the Jewish leaders were unhappy with the federalized solution, which, he

⁶⁵⁰ Présidence de la République, Paris, 12 September 1959, to Mr. Lazarus. "M. le Prés de la République a été malheureusement dans l'obligation de se fixer pour règle de n'accepter aucun message particulier, sur qq sujet que ce soit. »

⁶⁵¹ See page 256 in Meynier

⁶⁵² « M. Guy Mollet : le général De Gaulle m'a parlé d'un État algérien fédéral, » *Le Monde*, 2/19/1960.

⁶⁵³ *Le Monde*, 2/19/1960; AIU Lazarus II.

⁶⁵⁴ Letter from Jacques Lazarus to Mr. Easterman, June 13, 1960 (AIU JLII).

said, “would be like Switzerland in terms of its racial and religious diversity.”⁶⁵⁵ In the interest of respect, Lazarus suggested that perhaps De Gaulle was confused. In his list of protected minorities, he noted, De Gaulle should have listed “Mozabites, Jews, and Christians,” instead of “Mozabites, Jews, and Frenchmen.” That way, at least he would have emphasized the religious affiliation of each minority, rather than comparing Jews to Mozabites—the tribespeople in Southern Algeria, who did not have French citizenship. Lazarus emphatically stated his perspective: “The only safeguard for the Jewish community has...been their French citizenship.”⁶⁵⁶ De Gaulle’s federation, it was feared, may not have shielded Jews in the same way. French citizenship, Lazarus elaborated, was something that Jews had long fought for, as recently as World War II against the Europeans and the antisemites. Jews had fully internalized French citizenship, and the Crémieux decree was no longer necessary; Lazarus found it inconceivable that anyone even questioned the Jews’ French identity, nearly five generations after the Crémieux decree.⁶⁵⁷

Lazarus, Narboni, and other officers of the CJAES met Guy Mollet face-to-face in order to clarify their concerns and to calm the emotions of the Algerian Jews, who, Lazarus claimed, were “understandably upset” that Mollet had singled them out.⁶⁵⁸ In a meeting that took place on March 30, 1960, the Jewish leaders addressed their most pressing concerns.

In whatever future Algeria might take, they asked that Mollet not categorize its Jews as a solid, indistinguishable, entity. Lazarus voiced his sentiments, which

⁶⁵⁵ Letter from Jacques Lazarus to Mr. Easterman, June 13, 1960, page 7. (AIU JLII).

⁶⁵⁶ Letter from Jacques Lazarus to Mr. Easterman, June 13, 1960, page 6–7. (AIU JLII).

⁶⁵⁷ Letter from Jacques Lazarus to Mr. Easterman, June 13, 1960, page 6–7. (AIU JLII).

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

he had rehearsed numerous times since 1956. Jews were a “collectivity,” and “like other ethnic groups,” they possessed “a whole range of opinions, and no group, no individual, is authorized to speak on behalf of a collectivity which is composed of French citizens.”⁶⁵⁹ This delicate wording juxtaposed “community” with “collectivity.” A collectivity implied a handful of French citizens, who happened to be Jewish, as opposed to community, which held religious, racially specific, perhaps anti-republican connotations. “Community” also implied a uniformity of political beliefs. Lazarus insisted that the Jews should not be used as a “political instrument” by anyone.⁶⁶⁰ He was referring specifically to the FLN, who, in an effort to undermine De Gaulle’s concept of self-determination, had claimed to integrate all Jews into Algerian nationality. But at this moment, when everyone was aware of Jewish-Algerian political ambivalence, he could just as easily have been referring to De Gaulle or the nascent OAS. Lazarus asserted that Jewish organizations intended to maintain their relations with the “other elements of the population, Muslims and Europeans,” in a tradition of liberalism and republicanism. He made a final plea to mainland Jews, calling them two halves of French Judaism, to the north and the south of the Mediterranean.⁶⁶¹

From this encounter, it is clear that Jewish leaders feared that the French government would use the chaos of settling the Algerian War as an opportunity to deprive the Jews of citizenship. Their French citizenship was as much an emotional

⁶⁵⁹ *ibid.* (3-4)

⁶⁶⁰ *ibid.* page 4.

⁶⁶¹ “deux fractions du judaïsme français, au nord et au sud de la Méditerranée.” (4) This language mirrored the propaganda for *Algérie Française* which had described France and Algeria as one country with the Mediterranean running through it in the way that the Seine divided Paris’s Left and Right banks. In this way, they were no different than the Christians.

question as it was a legal one. It was also a matter of survival since, in the event of an exodus, French citizenship was a ticket out of Algeria. Much to the disappointment of Jewish leaders in attendance, Mollet defended his concept of a federalized Algeria.⁶⁶²

In private, Lazarus stressed the imperative to balance the discourse on Jewish identity between ethnic particularity and European assimilation.⁶⁶³ Jews simply did not want to lose their French citizenship under De Gaulle's federalized plan. On the one hand, Lazarus feared that Algerian Jews would be lost in a "political void," left out of a dialogue that had been reduced to "only two ethno-religious communities"—Muslims and Europeans.⁶⁶⁴ His other fear was precisely the opposite: that Jews would be considered a *special* "ethnic minority," and, consequently, they would be responsible for their very own representation, as they had been in the first half-century of French rule. Although historically accurate, the notion of an administratively distinct Jewish community had become irrelevant from a legal, political, and even "psychological" perspective. Jews emotionally *felt* French; and that fact alone was enough for Lazarus to defend their citizenship, and to anticipate their relocation to the métropole in the event of independence.

Although they had specifically Jewish concerns, Algerian Jews began to overlook past differences with European antisemites. It was crucial for them at least to pretend to do so, in order for Jews to blend in with Christians—or, as Mollet and

⁶⁶² Then mollet argued that the fédération would be like « switzerland, en raison de la diversité et de la dispersion des races et des religions, ne serait pas uniquement géographique, mais aussi individuelle. » (7)

⁶⁶³ Anonymous, "Aspects Politiques de la Situation du Judaïsme Algérien." Dated February 1960. 4 pages. Laz III.

⁶⁶⁴ Anonymous, "Aspects Politiques de la Situation du Judaïsme Algérien." Dated February 1960. Laz III, page 2.

De Gaulle had referred to them—“Français de Souche,” translated roughly as “real” Frenchmen.

The idea that true Frenchmen existed apart from Jews continued to trouble the Algerian Jews for the remainder of the war. To get a sense of how vulnerable their status was, one need only trace a few key moments when the term “real Frenchman” was used. For instance, in a meeting at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which took place in January 1961, AIU president Louis Kahn declared that it was imperative to “struggle against this concept of ‘Français de Souche’ that we hear all too often.”⁶⁶⁵ On March 3, 1962, Pierre Adda wrote in *Le Monde* that the true “Français de Souche” were indeed the Muslims and the Jews, as both of those groups received French nationality in 1865, which many of the “Europeans” still had not obtained. Turning adversity to advantage, the same month, Nahum Goldmann publicly demanded that the Algerian Jews would share the status of “Français de Souche.”⁶⁶⁶

Because of the controversies stirred up within the highest ranks of both the French *and* the Algerian governments with regard to where the Jews would belong and who they were, the French public continually debated Jewish placement between 1959 and 1962, which only exacerbated the Jews’ predicament by drawing more attention to their differences. This new attention infuriated the Jewish leadership even more, and with each article in the press, Lazarus responded. Becoming pied noir required that Lazarus compose sound arguments that Algerian

⁶⁶⁵ AIU 1961 Meetings documents.

First document: “Proces-verbal de la séance du comité central du Merc. 15 Fev 1961, pp. 5–10 (Archives AIU). Page 6.

⁶⁶⁶ “Nous avons demandé le statut prévu pour les Français de souche,” in *Figaro*. 29 March 1962.

Jews were French and that they belonged to France. These arguments were publicized through letters to the editor and articles in the *Information Juive*. They downplayed any previous differences between Jews and Europeans in order to claim that Jews were *pieds noirs*.

Fraternity becomes “Fraternity with Weapons”

Whatever the original goals of the May 13, 1958, revolution may have been, by 1960, they were rewritten. In the face of De Gaulle’s new declarations of self-determination or a federalized solution, everything had changed. In January 1960, the De Gaulle government fired *pied-noir* army hero General Massu. Out of their frustration, a group of former army generals and other politicized Europeans decided to take matters into their own hands. Jean-Jacques Susini—who would become one of the OAS’s founding members—declared that French Algeria was “held at gunpoint.” He threatened the Government: “If you don’t return Massu to us, then we will go get him in Paris.”⁶⁶⁷ They staged a second revolution, in January 1960 in order to attempt a coup against De Gaulle’s government. It was the infamous “night of the barricades” in which a grassroots army took control of Algiers.

Lazarus condemned the January 1960 demonstrations within the pages of the *Information Juive*. Comparing one pre-OAS group’s emblem to a swastika (it was a Celtic cross), Lazarus wrote, “We cannot accept the [way some *pieds noirs*] are

⁶⁶⁷Arnaud Deroulède, *OAS: Etude d’une organisation clandestine*, Hélette : Editions de Ramuntxo Partarrieu, 1997 « Le salut de l’Alg Française est au bout du fusil... Si on ne veut pas nous rendre Massu, nous irons le chercher à Paris. » --Susini, Jan 22 1960. (10)

flaunting emblems that evoke a past whose meaning we understand all too well, under the pretext of patriotism.” He cautioned, “Remember that when the French Republic and its principles of liberty are threatened, the security of the Jews is threatened too.”⁶⁶⁸ Still engaged in an anti-fascist battle, Lazarus also bluntly asserted his allegiance to France.

The revolution failed, but in December 1960, the OAS was officially born in Madrid. From its beginning until even after the signing of the Évian Accords in March 1962, the OAS appeared to be stronger than both the FLN forces and the French Army combined.⁶⁶⁹ This was because the French authorities often permitted their attacks to take place. As the historian Alexander Harrison asserted: “Since De Gaulle’s support of independence for Algeria was seen as a move to the left, he attempted to compensate by having police treat the right-wing demonstrators with indulgence.”⁶⁷⁰

Historians disagree about the OAS’s goals. Todd Shepard tends to portray the organization as an outgrowth of a genuine Republican interest in integrating the Muslims into the French polity. In this reading, an armed defense of Algeria was compared to the radically left-wing *sansculottes* of the French Revolution.⁶⁷¹ By contrast, in tracing the organization’s violent antecedents, Harrison depicts the OAS as a neo-fascist organization.⁶⁷² Benjamin Stora has reported that the OAS’s May 1961 stated goals included: loyalty to the principles of May 13, 1958; resistance to

⁶⁶⁸ *Information Juive*, Feb 4, 1960.

⁶⁶⁹ Harrison, page 7.

⁶⁷⁰ Alexander Harrison, page 2.

⁶⁷¹ Shepard, “The OAS and the Marianne” in *Invention of Decolonization*, pp. 90–96.

⁶⁷² Harrison, part 1.

the politics of “disengagement” as put forth by the Gaullist government, and a commitment to constructing a new Algeria that was “fraternal and French.”⁶⁷³ By way of comparison, a communiqué from founding member Jean-Claude Perez declared in September 1961 that the OAS was fighting a “new Battle of Algiers,” which was going to terrorize the FLN, terrorize the police undercover agents, and terrorize the liberals—including Gaullists and anyone who was willing to negotiate with the FLN.⁶⁷⁴

The OAS’s goals may have been contradictory. What began as a benign justification to recoup the multicultural vision of 1958 (as shown by Todd Shepard), resulted in an all-out terror campaign against the FLN and liberals. Some OAS members may have joined based on their disappointment with De Gaulle, others may have wished to avenge injuries or deaths suffered by their family and friends. Most pieds noirs who supported the OAS were responding to the threat of losing their homeland. Harrison argued that “ideology proved secondary to a willingness to fight for a cause.”⁶⁷⁵ Eventually, the OAS comprised many ideologies across the political spectrum: “monarchists, bourgeois conservatives, pragmatists, religious mystics, even former [Communists]. There were even Jewish and Muslim units.”⁶⁷⁶

While Jacques Lazarus has retrospectively claimed that Jewish participation in the OAS was minimal, the research of Regine Goutalier has demonstrated that a majority of Jews from Oran supported the OAS.⁶⁷⁷ Henri Chemouilli, who himself

⁶⁷³ As summarized in B. Stora, *Histoire de la guerre d’Algérie*, page 61.

⁶⁷⁴ As summarized in Harrison, page 88.

⁶⁷⁵ Harrison, page 5.

⁶⁷⁶ Harrison, page 5.

⁶⁷⁷ Lazarus interview, summer 2008; Regine Goutalier, “Les Juifs et l’OAS en Oranie” in *Les relations entre Juifs et Musulmans en Afrique du Nord, xix-xx siècles*, Paris, Editions de CNRS, 1980, pp. 188-196.

had joined the OAS, emphasized that it was important to explain *why* Jews joined the Ultras. They were not against Muslims, he wrote, but against De Gaulle and his policy of withdrawal.⁶⁷⁸

The analyses of Jewish participation in the ranks of the OAS vary wildly. Some sources suggest that a Jewish branch would focus on “self-defense” of Jewish neighborhoods; others claim that Jews joined the larger cause.⁶⁷⁹ Goutalier claims that there were many members among the Oran Jews, who were not just concerned with self-defense—they killed an officer and several soldiers.⁶⁸⁰ Historian Rémi Kauffer cites Marcel the Jew, a member of the Delta commando in Algiers, as having organized a small squad.⁶⁸¹ Harrison stated that although “antisemitism remained a frozen article of faith for many pieds noirs,” a Jewish branch of the OAS was created, with Marcel at its helm.⁶⁸²

Many joined because they saw an increase in violent attacks from the FLN. Oran’s prefect announced on 3 February 1961, a month after the referendum that endorsed Algerian self-determination, that “attacks from the FLN have doubled. Muslims now intend to chase the Jews from their homes and neighborhoods.”⁶⁸³ Henri Chemouilli joined in order to avenge FLN outrages. He explained that his parents and children had been aboard a train bound for Algiers that was bombed by

⁶⁷⁸ Chemouilli, 326.

⁶⁷⁹ For instance, Kauffer suggests that the Jews wanted weapons in order to defend themselves against FLN attacks (294), while Chemouilli points to two different groups—one, a Jewish defense force and the second was the OAS. The groups, while related, appear to exist distinctly.

⁶⁸⁰ R. Goutalier, “Les Juifs et L’OAS en Oranie” in *Les relations entre Juifs et Musulmans en Afrique du Nord, xix-xx siècles*, Paris, Editions de CNRS, 1980, pp. 188-196.

⁶⁸⁰ Chemouilli, 326.

⁶⁸¹ Rémi Kauffer, OAS, page 293.

⁶⁸² Harrison pp. 86–88.

⁶⁸³ Quoted in Kauffer page 292, ““Les Musulmans ont la pretention de chaser les israélites des quartiers où ils habitent.”

the FLN. Although his family was spared—another car was hit—his brush with terrorism led him to join forces with “the fascists” as he called them.⁶⁸⁴

Jewish OAS activist Didier Schüller accepted a “fight against Arab nationalism, even at the price of collaborating with [those who were] nostalgic for Vichy.”⁶⁸⁵ Activists like Schüller had to adjust their perspectives in order to overlook a past in which Europeans perpetrated crimes driven by antisemitism. When a French leftist confronted Chemouilli about the fascists of the OAS, he responded: “The OAS, as far as I knew it in my small sphere was comprised of war veterans, often of former *résistants*, but *always* former Gaullists. All were leftists! We weren’t searching for some posthumous revenge on behalf of Pétain, we didn’t worry that the regime would come back. We just didn’t want to die!”⁶⁸⁶

Radical pieds noirs needed Jewish support in order to convince liberals in France that they were not essentially racist, but that their campaign to kill Muslims and other supporters of independent Algeria was motivated by counter-terrorism and self-defense. Some wanted to show that they were committed to a future multicultural French Algeria. Todd Shepard has illustrated that the Europeans intentionally began to “mute” their antisemitism as the war came to a close.⁶⁸⁷ The liberal Catholic journal *Esprit*’s editor Jean-Marie Domenach wrote that “the OAS’s

⁶⁸⁴ Chemouilli, *Diaspora Méconnue*, story about the terrorists.

⁶⁸⁵ D.L. “Clivages de Guerre,” *Tohu-Bohu*, Printemps 2005, n. 9, page 16, « Didier Schuller, un ancien conseiller général des Hauts-de-Seine, a participé à des actions de l’OAS. Pour l’activiste, son devoir de Juif le poussait à lutter contre le nationalisme arabe, même au prix d’une collusion avec des nostalgiques de Vichy. »

⁶⁸⁶ Chemouilli page 300. : « L’OAS telle que je l’ai connue dans me petite sphère était faite d’anciens combattants, souvent d’anciens résistants, toujours d’anciens gaullists. Tous hommes de gauche avec ça ! Nous ne cherchions pas une revanche posthume de Pétain, nous ne méditations pas le renversement du régime. Nous ne voulions pas mourir, tout simplement.»

⁶⁸⁷ Shepard, page 178-180

antiracist alibi is the support it has among Jews.”⁶⁸⁸ Shepard contends that there were two reasons for this: to show that they were “republican” and to convince the Jews to join their cause.⁶⁸⁹

Correspondingly, many Algerian Jews appreciated the Europeans’ overnight acceptance. The OAS answered the needs of radicalized Jews, who believed—like other members of the Organization—that an independent armed force was necessary to protect Algérie Française. André Chouraqui believed that this was the OAS’s intention. He surmised that the press exaggerated brawls between Jews and Muslims so that the OAS might step in to arbitrate, and therefore rescue the Jews from the Arabs.⁶⁹⁰ Jaques Tarnero, who was an adolescent who joined the OAS, simply redirected his love of France into a firm political stance. To him, it only seemed natural that Muslims should be French, and he wanted to “do more, become more active, to fight to protect my turf.”⁶⁹¹

French government officials and OAS members (both Jewish and Christian) seemed to make an abrupt decision, late in the war, to re-cast Muslims as the new “Nazis”—accusing them of defacing Jewish sites with swastikas.⁶⁹² The popular Jewish-French magazine *Arche* reflected a shift from more internal identity questions into a more hostile and openly defensive stance toward “Arabs” around

⁶⁸⁸ On this point, see Todd Shepard’s analysis of the OAS “muting” of antisemitism in order to appease Jews and to appear less racist overall, page 178–180. He quoted (p. 180)

⁶⁸⁹ Shepard, page 179, quoting an article in *L’Activiste* from 1962.

⁶⁹⁰ Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, page 277.

⁶⁹¹ Tarnero, page 158.

⁶⁹² Archives de l’armée de terre, “Action Psychologique”, Speech from Soustelle to his fellow intellectuals, Nov 1955, claiming that Nasser was the new Hitler. In addition to *L’Arche* article above, the general government observed internally that antisemitism was naturally rooted in the Muslim soul. (CAOM, file 81F, Delegation Generale du Gouvernement en Algérie, “Les Juifs ALgériens,” 6 mars 1961, p. 5)

the summer of 1958. Several articles appeared exploring “pan-Arabism”—for instance, an August 1958 headline stated “pan-Arabism has no past. But does it have a future?”⁶⁹³ The author compared pan-Arabism to other mythical and dangerous ideologies of Europe: “European civilization has recently shown [the danger of] such mythical slogans as ‘workers of the world, UNITE!’ and ubermensch of the Aryan race, UNITE!”⁶⁹⁴ He favored liberation with moderation. “I would like to note that I am not opposed to nationalist movements,” he wrote. “What’s more, I believe in the future of nationalism...” insofar as it pulled smaller nations away from “greedy sovereignties.”⁶⁹⁵ But pan-Arabism was an “imposter.” It was not a movement within national borders, but one that approached more closely “*ein Reich, ein volk, ein Führer.*”⁶⁹⁶ In the war’s later years, other writers lapsed into German when describing the Algerian nationalists, implying that the FLN was carrying on the legacy of Nazism. In his memoir, Chemouilli alluded to “orders” from high-ranking FLN officials to create an Algeria—and an entire Arab world—that was “Judenrein”—“Jew-free” in German.⁶⁹⁷

As other scholars have demonstrated, French propagandists went to great lengths to distinguish between “Muslim” and “French” culture, generalizing most dramatically about the way that Muslim men treated women.⁶⁹⁸ Not just women,

⁶⁹³ *L’Arche* Aug-Sept 1958, “Le Mythe de panarabisme,” page 65.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁷ Chemouilli, *Diaspora Méconnue*, page 326. « Dans tout le monde arabe les Juifs faisaient leurs valises, nous avons fait les nôtres. Pour accélérer le mouvement, des FLN frappèrent à coups redoublés, odieux, difficiles à oublier. Je ne sais pas d’où venaient les ordres, ceux qui les donnaient voulaient une Algérie ‘Judenrein.’ Ils l’eurent. »

⁶⁹⁸ Neil MacMaster, Matthew Connelly, and Todd Shepard offer compelling arguments about the way that Muslims were accused of suppressing women and then propagandists instrumentalized this

but “Jews” too, were supposedly victimized by Muslims.⁶⁹⁹ Presenting Jews as victims conjured up images of Muslim men as villains, and justified the harsh military tactics used by the French army: airplane bombings, torture, random arrests.⁷⁰⁰ As Jewish victimization at the hands of the Nazis was now acknowledged, the threat of a new kind of oppression, this time at the hands of Muslims, captured the attention of journalists and Jewish advocacy groups worldwide. Evoking recent memories of the Nazi past, propaganda claimed that Muslims were now using “Hitlerian” tactics, in the words of Jacques Soustelle. This depiction of Muslims as the new Nazis aided in the “crusade against pan-Arabism.”⁷⁰¹

In a confidential government document from March 1961, which analyzed the danger of the FLN, a delegate from the French government warned: “We must recall that antisemitism is profoundly rooted in the Muslim soul. Political and social problems—whatever their origin may be—cause the Muslim community to get revenge by attacking the Jews.”⁷⁰² The very word “antisemite” was now re-assigned

accusation to vilify “Muslims.” See Neil MacMacter, *Burning the Veil*. See also Matthew Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution*, p. 215ff; Todd Shepard, chapter 7, “Veiled Muslim Women, Violent pied noir men, and the Family of France,” pp. 183ff.

⁶⁹⁹ For instance, *New York Times*, “French cordon Jewish quarter of Algerian city to quell terrorism.” May 15, 1956: 1. *New York Times*, “ANXIETY IS VOICED FOR ALGERIA’S JEWS” (New York, N.Y.) 24 April 1958: 6. See also Wendy Brown. “Tolerance and/or Equality?: The ‘Jewish Question’ and the ‘Woman Question.’” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 15, No 2 (2004): 1-31

⁷⁰⁰ There is a wealth of historiography about the mistreatment of prisoners in the Algerian War. Raphaëlle Branche, *Torture pendant la Guerre d’Algérie*; Marnia Lazreg, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire*. Primary accounts include Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha*; Henri Alleg, *La Question*; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *L’Affaire Audin*.

⁷⁰¹ From LaCoste in May 1956, ‘What is going on in Algeria is but one aspect of a gigantic global conflict where a number of muslim countries, before collapsing into anarchy, are trying through hitlerian strategies to install an invasive dictatorship on a section of the African continent.’ (quoted in Connelly 106)

⁷⁰² CAOM, file 81F, Delegation Generale du Gouvernement en Algérie, “Les Juifs ALgériens,” 6 mars 1961, p. 5. « Il convient de rappeler ici que l’antisémitisme est un sentiment profondément enraciné

to the Muslims. In its older usage, when referring to Europeans, antisemites were specifically French citizens, coming from a French political party that had been antisemitic.

The swastika, which had for over twenty years symbolized the far right, Nazi-sympathizing antisemites, now was being re-assigned to the Muslim Algerian activists, or to the Gaullists. An open letter from “OAS combatants of the Israelite confession” reminded Algerian Jews that the FLN and Gaullists were now destroying synagogues or painting swastikas on Jewish establishments.⁷⁰³ As we have seen, the destruction of Algiers main synagogue in December 1960 included graffiti that read “Death to the Jews” and many swastikas.⁷⁰⁴ This time, though, the swastikas were placed next to “Long live the Algerian Republic!” graffiti. Another tract read, “The FLN’s fierce killers of the Jews have opened their eyes. They all remember the destruction of Algiers Synagogue in December 1960. This is why our Jewish brothers are joining our combat.”⁷⁰⁵

The OAS’s appeal to Jews hinted that swastika flags had been planted in certain locations to make the OAS appear antisemitic. This appeal sought to set the record straight, and to remind Jews about the latest global anti-Jewish movement: Arab countries and Muslims. The letter warned Jews that the Gaullists were not protecting them from Arab violence. It listed Jewish stores that had been burned.

dans l’âme musulmane et que des troubles politiques et sociaux, quelle que soit leur origine, affectant la communauté musulmane se sont tjrs traduite par exactions dont les juifs ont été victimes. »

⁷⁰³ OAS, “Appel aux Israélites d’Algérie,” no. 47 AID, no. 25 ZEC. AIU JLII.

⁷⁰⁴ “Le saccage de la grande synagogue d’Alger,” *Information Juive* no. 125, December 1960.

⁷⁰⁵ May 23, 1962, « Pour Réduire l’OAS, ‘les Démocrates’ proposent une solution : Le génocide... » in Pierre Meallier, *OAS: La Guerre d’Algérie vue de Bône à travers les tracts OAS*, France: European Editions, 2004, pp. 312-313.

The OAS invited the Jews to join their battle in order to “recover the true face of May 13, 1958.”⁷⁰⁶

Muslims weren't the only reincarnated Nazis. Another OAS tract claimed that Gaullists treated the pieds noirs like Jews in Dachau or Buchenwald, that they were killing off the pieds noirs as in a genocide. “We are like the new Jews,” they chanted.⁷⁰⁷ When two young Jewish men were killed in Oran, the OAS used their deaths in order to recruit more Jews to join. Their crime was shouting “Algérie Française!” and singing France's national anthem. “Just like our Muslim and Christian comrades, our Jewish brothers know that De Gaulle is ready to abandon them because they are French and intend to remain so.”⁷⁰⁸

The OAS struggled against its reputation as a neo-Fascist, antisemitic group. In November 1961, two prominent Jewish liberals were murdered. Dr. Joseph Cohen of Algiers who had survived two earlier bomb attacks, was assassinated. The other victim was David Zermati, who was president of the Sétif Jewish community and a Gaullist. The World Jewish News Bulletin claimed that the OAS had murdered both, because they were liberals.⁷⁰⁹ But the OAS sought to show that they were in favor of a liberal, multicultural vision for French Algeria, and that they were fighting Gaullist calumnies. The day following Zermati's murder, the OAS issued a declaration, expressing its sympathy with the Zermati family and explaining *why the FLN* would have murdered him. The OAS asserted that the Sétif population

⁷⁰⁶ « No. 47 AID/No. 25 ZEC. Appel aux Israélites d'Algérie » Lazarus, Dossier II.

⁷⁰⁷ May 23, 1962, « Pour Réduire l'OAS, 'les Démocrates' proposent une solution : Le génocide... » in *OAS: La Guerre d'Algérie vue de Bône à travers les tracts OAS*, pp. 312-313.

⁷⁰⁸ OAS publication entitled “Algérie Française toujours, un fusil, une patrie!” in Meallier, *OAS: La Guerre d'Algérie vue de Bône à travers les tracts OAS*.

⁷⁰⁹ World Jewish News Bulletin, November 6, 1961, no 32.

had finally understood the FLN's true nature—that the FLN killed those who were not Muslim, and that there would be no room for either Christians or Jews in an independent Algeria. They declared, “The OAS will make sure that the FLN and its fanatical followers will disappear.”⁷¹⁰

Jewish OAS members understood that they were cooperating with former antisemites. It was not until after the end of the war that one Jewish man had repudiated his participation in the OAS. Years after his service with the OAS, Alain T. explained that he had to “plug his nose and close his eyes” in order to join the other OAS activists, whom he labeled “antisemites,” at the barricades. [“At their core, these were the children of those who had elected [Max] Régis [mayor of Algiers at the turn of the century and president of the Antisemitic League] and [Edouard] Drumont [author of *France Juive* and League's founder], those who had applauded Vichy.”⁷¹¹ Another OAS activist stated, “Certainly Jeune Nation [French nationalist movement dissolved in 1958] and other antisemites represent a problem. But we have a bigger battle to wage, which must come first. We will settle with the antisemites later.”⁷¹²

In contrast to Chemouilli's assertion that the OAS was filled with leftists, protestors from the métropole depicted its members as what they called cruel “neo-

⁷¹⁰ OAS Secteur du Sétif, November 4, 1961. Lazarus Dossier I.

⁷¹¹ Jean-Luc Allouche, « Algérie : le vent de l'histoire » in *L'Arche* no. 273, Dec. 1979, p. 37. Interview with Alain T. « Il fallait quand même se boucher les narines et fermer un peu les yeux, dit Alain T., ancien de l'OAS, aujourd'hui repent. L'OAS comptait bcp d'anisémistes qui faisaient dans la 'fraternité d'armes', la croix celtique sur les barricades, j'évitais de la regarder. Au fond, ils étaient les enfants de ceux qui avaient élu les antisémistes Régis et Drumont, ceux qui avaient applaudi à Vichy.... Mais les arabes, il faut bien le dire, n'y avaient pas mis du leur. » (37)

⁷¹² Quoted in Michael Laskier, *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century*, page 332.

fascists.”⁷¹³ This rendering also had consequences for Jews in Algeria. The confusion of Israeli politics with Algerian politics that began with the Suez crisis in 1956 reemerged with accusations by even mainstream French journalists that Israelis or Algerian Jews were at the center of the OAS. Some Israeli diplomats attempted to dispel the connections between Israel and the OAS while others encouraged it. -Sometimes they did so by acknowledging that Algerian Jews might be connected to the OAS, but that Israel stayed out of the conflict.⁷¹⁴

Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion gave a controversial interview in the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*, in which he declared Israel’s support for “the French of Algeria” and asserted that all Arabs were enemies of both France and Israel.⁷¹⁵ The interviewer, Serge Groussard, asked him if pieds noirs were similar to Israelis, because, as the reporter phrased it, both populations had colonized, and both were being pushed out by Arab nationalists. Ben Gurion responded that unlike the Jews in Israel, the French in Algeria always had an option to resettle in the Metropole.⁷¹⁶

Rumors proliferated in French newspapers that the OAS was led by a squad of Jews who—more than a decade earlier—served in the Irgun, a paramilitary Zionist organization that had been disbanded in 1948 at the outset of the Arab-Israeli War, or the Stern Gang, another breakaway Jewish group that fought British rule in Mandate Palestine.⁷¹⁷ Adding to the confusion of where the Algerian Jews

⁷¹³ Todd Shepard’s chapter “Pied-Noir Men, Muslim women..” outlines this phenomenon.

⁷¹⁴ Laskier, *Israel Studies* Vol 6, Number 2, page 14.

⁷¹⁵ Serge Groussard, “Israël, Ben Gourion et les Arabes,” in *Figaro* 5 January 1962.

⁷¹⁶ Cited in Michael M. Laskier, “Israel and Algeria amid French Colonialism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1954-1978,” pp 1- 32, *Israel studies*, vol. 6, #2, page 11.

⁷¹⁷ Chemouilli *Diaspora*, 303.

stood were the claims of Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion to speak in the name of world Jewry.

One widely published story contended that a man named Jean Ghennassia was a leader of the OAS. His arrest in Paris captured the attention of French publications ranging from the weekly magazine *France Soir* to *Le Monde*.⁷¹⁸ Reports following his arrest claimed that, because of Ghennassia's involvement, Jews were at the center of the organization. Historian Emmanuel Ratier claims that he was OAS leader Joseph Ortiz's lieutenant.⁷¹⁹ Algerian Jews, who had formerly been excluded as Europeans, were now, in a dramatic turnabout, accused of leading the OAS.

The Jews could also symbolize the emerging counterterrorist powers of the OAS and Zionist groups—secret organizations whose leaders were elusive for those seeking to accuse them.⁷²⁰ As the Arab League had conflated Algeria and Palestine, French journalists lazily conflated Jews and counterterrorism. In 1961, *Le Monde* reported that recent suspected members of the OAS had included a Muslim municipal counselor as well as a Jewish man, presumably Ghennassia, who was “well known in the Zionist milieu.”⁷²¹

The Ghennassia stories enraged Lazarus, who responded with an article claiming that the French press was “abusive.” Lazarus reported that Jean Ghennassia was in the hospital—and that Richard Ghennassia was the one arrested in Paris.

⁷¹⁸ “Richard Ghennassia qui serait l'un des chefs de l'OAS et sous les Verrous,” *Le Monde*, 18 May 1961; “Ex-Terroriste antianglais en Palestine Ghennassia avais repris du ‘service à l'OAS,” *France Soir*, 18 May 1961.

⁷¹⁹ Emmanuel Ratier, *Les guerriers d'Israël: enquête sur les milices sionistes*. Facta, Paris, 1995.

⁷²⁰ Alain Jacob, « Les Musulmans d'Alger doutent que les derniers attentats soient d'origine FLN, » *Le Monde* 19 May 1961.

⁷²¹ Alain Jacob, « Les Musulmans d'Alger doutent que les derniers attentats soient d'origine FLN, » *Le Monde* 19 May 1961.

With this corrective, Lazarus also offered the following warning: “There is no proof that he is a chief of the OAS and in any case, this has absolutely nothing to do with his religion.”⁷²² The case of the Ghennassia mix-up remains a mystery—one that some historians have mistaken for the truth.⁷²³ The stories have also confused historians, and there is no consensus on what actually happened. Kauffer, Laskier, and Ratier all mention the Ghennassia story using only the articles as evidence, but works that focus exclusively on the OAS—Kauffer and Harrison—do not indicate that Jews were at its center. This claim, at least, was clearly false. Another piece in *Figaro* in January 1962 hinted that Jewish commandos had played an instrumental role in the riots that ensued in January. It claimed that Jews in Oran were “inspired by” the Israelis, based on the Ghennassia story.⁷²⁴

The notion that a squad of former Israeli terrorists led the OAS is not verified by any major historical works about the organization.—An older work, by Harrison, allows that some Jews may have joined, but he points to the group’s “Maurraussian” antisemitic roots, and his interviews center on the generals who led the OAS: Susini, Challe, Jouhoud, Perez, and Ortiz, none of them Jewish. Rémi Kauffer covers the Jewish squads briefly, only mentioning a few young Jews who joined various specific units.—Neither of these large exhaustive works, which both trace the organization’s trajectory, include Jewish names among the chief leaders.—To be sure, Israeli agencies were involved in forming Jewish defense units, which predated the

⁷²² Editors / Lazarus, “La Presse Abusive” *Information Juive*, May 1961. “Rien ne prouve qu’il soit un chef de l’OAS et ceci de toute manière n’a absolument rien à voir avec sa confession. »

⁷²³ For instance, Kauffer page 293.

⁷²⁴ Serge Bromberger, “Divisions de plus en plus accentuées au sein de l’OAS,” in *Figaro*, 10 January 1962.

creation of the OAS, as we have seen in Chapter Three. Although Goutalier has suggested that subsequently, Oran's Jewish OAS squads may have received weapons from Israel.

Chemouilli indicated that the idea of Israeli involvement was nothing but a myth. Instead, he argued, what was being observed was the engagement of Jewish commandos, set up as a self-defense force, working in tandem with the OAS. He alluded to a clandestine committee of Algerian Jews that oversaw the entire organization. Only this group had the authority to decide whether or not to intervene.⁷²⁵ He claimed that these forces never took any action, as it was composed of "good, peaceful boys." He compared their efforts to the undertaking of 8 November 1940, when groups of Jews silently monitored Algiers in order to help with the Anglo-American landing. Only this time, he allowed, "They had modern weapons." Just as Muslim squads monitored the Casbah, and the Christian squads kept watch over the apartment buildings, the Jewish groups held positions at night in strategic points where there was a dense Jewish population.⁷²⁶

Oran's OAS squads were incredibly powerful, and it was the site of a massive intercommunal battle, involving Jews, Christians and Muslims at the war's end. Jacques Tarnero's memoir is valuable because it describes Oran's OAS in details that only a first-hand witness could know. For instance, he described the OAS's parade of 403 black Pegouets in spring 1962, when a second referendum approved the Evian Accords. Each family watched from a window, rhythmically drumming on

⁷²⁵ Chemouilli page 302.

⁷²⁶ Chemouilli, page 302-303. les Juifs prenaient position pour la nuit aux points stratégiques des quartiers à forte densité juive.

their pans “*ti ti ti, tata, ti ti ti tata, Algérie Française.*”⁷²⁷ The entire town, it seemed was overtaken with awe and anger—as Goutalier argued, Oran’s Jews were enthralled with the OAS.

A much more detailed piece in January 1962 *Paris-Match* retrospectively claimed that patterns of terrorism in Oran had begun with Jewish perpetrators. The special feature traced teenagers’ feuds, which had all begun with the murder of a 19-year-old “Jewish grocer’s grandson” on his way to renew his bus pass.⁷²⁸ Four young men captured him, took him into a corner and cut his throat. There were two other seemingly unrelated victims: a pregnant woman who had been shot in the stomach with four bullets; and an elderly man who was also shot—both Jewish. The article opened as if it was going to play on the Jewish victimization that was so prevalent among other newspapers at this time. However, a reader quickly understands that it is about the Jewish response to these initial attacks. The journalist’s friend told him the following story:

Their reaction was brutal, worst of all, the Jews’ reaction. I was at home on the fourth floor balcony when I saw them coming. They were all youths, grouped by four. They systematically explored the streets, looking for isolated Muslims. When a group found one, they surrounded him, each one punching him once. Once their victim fell down, they fled. Then, right behind them, a lone young man around 18 or 19 approached. He was dressed in black, a cigarette in his mouth. When he got to the fallen man, he calmly took out his revolver, bent over, put two bullets in his head and, still smoking, he moved onto the next one. The Jews were terrible. For seven years, they stayed neutral, even with a penchant to flirt with the FLN. But the former Israel terrorist organization won them over. They were prepared to defend

⁷²⁷ Tarnero page 171. Goutalier, op cit.

⁷²⁸ Jean Maquet, “À Oran comme à Alger, un passant invisible: La Peur,” in *Paris-Match* 607, January 1962, pp. 26–31 ; page 27.

themselves against either the Muslims or the Christians. They chose their side: the OAS.⁷²⁹

What do we make of this report? The author could have been presenting a true portrait of some of the OAS squads. It is possible that units like this—although not necessarily Jewish—sought out Muslims in the waning months of the war. Perhaps the speaker witnessed the intercommunal violence that arose episodically throughout the war—as in May 1956 or September 1958 in Constantine. It could be that he was influenced by the Ghennassia reports which circulated at that time. In any case, it is obvious that the unnamed source (and the article’s author) became so repulsed by what he saw that he began to extrapolate, revealing an antisemitic bias, ultimately blaming Israel for convincing the Jews to hunt down lone Muslims. Interestingly, the remainder of the article addressed various teenagers who belonged to the OAS, and played out games of “cowboys versus Indians,” without further mention of the Jews. This anecdote was intended to entice the reader, to serve as an introduction to a story about the OAS in general. The point was to argue that Israel—and the Jewish OAS squads—had set off a series of violent episodes, which were then mimicked by the FLN and the OAS more generally.

We know that the *Paris Match* article was not an entire fabrication, although it has some serious journalistic flaws. Jacques Tarnero described a scene in which “an Arab killer” shot a pregnant woman twice in the stomach as she left a synagogue on what he thought was Passover 1962. This was months after the *Paris Match*

⁷²⁹ même auraient plutôt eu tendance à flirter avec le FLN. Mais la vieille organisation terroriste des Israéliens, l’Irgun, s’occupait d’eux. Prêts à se défendre aussi bien contre les musulmans que contre les chrétiens. Ils ont choisi leur camp : l’OAS. »

article was published, yet Tarnero's narrative appears to describe a similar phenomenon. After Edouard Jouhaud, the OAS leader, had been arrested, Oran was devoid of OAS leadership. "The OAS had been mutilated," he wrote. "Armed gangs kept order in the European quarter." The night the pregnant woman was shot, "the city became crazy, drunk with revenge."⁷³⁰ Most likely, as confirmed by Tarnero's text, squads indeed prowled the town, looking to avenge the Muslim killers. Did the squads belong to the OAS, Tarnero asks, or were they just youths who wanted to kill? Perhaps, he wrote, they were young Jews who wanted to avenge the woman's murder.⁷³¹ In his shop, which had been shuttered, Tarnero's father shielded two young Muslims who trembled with fear that they would be the next victims. On 5 July 1962, a crowd of "Muslims" attacked "hundreds of Frenchmen." This was the Oran massacre in which FLN troops scoured the streets looking for Europeans. The OAS had used scorched-earth tactics—the most dramatic of which was the burning of the Algiers central library, which had held over 60,000 volumes. Tarnero's father barely escaped his own death that day, which "has never entered into the war's official history."⁷³² Nearly fifty years later, Tarnero still was filled with rage and sorrow that he had been abandoned by the French army. Toward the end of his narrative, he included the Jews among the abandoned *pieds noirs*.

Conclusion: The invention of the *Pieds noirs*.

In 1961, imagining what Jewish life would be like in the Metropole, one Algerian Jewish artisan said sarcastically, "In France? We would have all of the flaws... Jewish,

⁷³⁰ Jaques Tanéro, "Cicatrices Vives," in *D'un Temps Révolu: Voix Juives d'Algérie*. Pp. 143-179, P. 174.

⁷³¹ Page 174.

⁷³² Page 178.

Algerian, Pied Noir.”⁷³³ By the end of the war, Jews were pieds noirs. On the one hand, they had shared so much with Europeans in the war’s final years that they began to “forget” the century of mistreatment and antisemitism. On the other hand, Jewish leaders realized that the only way to guarantee that the Jews were French was to declare that they were no different from the Europeans of Algeria.

Eliminating the label “Français de Souche,” the Jews of Algeria had also abandoned the Crémieux decree, which—as Emile Touati declared—only had “historical interest” and was no longer legally relevant.⁷³⁴ By that time, Jewish leaders suspected that if Algeria gained independence, then the French citizens of Algeria would be repatriated into metropolitan France. Their new priority was to defend the Algerian Jews’ belonging to the French citizenry beyond the shadow of a doubt.

After the mass exodus from Algeria—and the mass immigration to France—the newly designated minister of Repatriés, François Missoffe, described the new label for these immigrants. He wrote, “They’ve been called refugees, repatriates. We’ve also adopted their own designation, ‘pieds noirs.’ For them, this term is a sign of distinction. They want to express their particularity, and perhaps their pride in belonging to an *original ethnic entity*, with its customs, its own character, its mode of thought, its mores, and its way of life.”⁷³⁵ Upon their arrival in the métropole,

⁷³³ Eugene Mannoni, *Le Monde*, 21 Janv 1961, third column.

⁷³⁴ See for instance Emile Touati *Information Juive* Feb 1961 and Lazarus, undated “Memoire sur le Judaïsme Algérien.”

⁷³⁵ François Missoffe, Ministre des rapatriés, “800,000 ‘pieds noirs’ ont choisi la valise” in *Faim et Soif* no. 54. Sept Oct-1963. “On les appelle les refugiés, les rapatriés ; on a aussi adopté leur dénomination de « pieds-noirs. » Pour eux, ce terme est un signe de distinction, ils veulent ainsi exprimer leur particularité et peut-être aussi leur fierté d’appartenir à une entité ethnique originale, avec ses coutumes, son caractère propre, son mode de pensée, ses mœurs, et son façon de vivre. »

Algerian Jews were simply included among the mass of repatriates. The designation “pieds noirs” was set—it was an ethnic identity, as much as a political category.

Conclusion / Epilogue

On March 18, 1962, the Evian Accords announced that hostilities between France and Algeria would come to an end as of noon the following day. Much of the legal settlement addressed the fate of the *pieds noirs* within independent Algeria; this fact alone demonstrates that both French and Algerian representatives assumed that many would stay on. The accords stipulated that French citizens could remain in Algeria with a three-year grace period, during which they could choose one of two options: become Algerian citizens still under French civil code, or continue to live in Algeria as French foreigners.⁷³⁶ No word on the Jewish minority can be found in the accords, although press reports continued to allude to the separate Jewish minority.

The *pieds noirs* chose to leave, *en masse* . In the year 1962 alone, over 800,000 of them entered mainland France by boat or plane.⁷³⁷ About ten percent of these repatriates were Jews. They followed *émigrés* who had left before January 1962—about 150,000 Europeans, of which 25,000 were Jews.⁷³⁸ In total, 120,000 Jews immigrated to France, while just a few thousand went to Israel.

Violence did not end with the cease-fire. On March 19, OAS activists took control and blocked European departures. Activists occupied Bab-el-Oued and Oran in an eleventh-hour effort to hold onto these areas. As witnessed by Jacques Tarnero, there were many Jews among the demonstrators.⁷³⁹ The FLN retaliated,

⁷³⁶ Sarah Sussman. "Changing Lands, Changing Identities: Jews from Algeria in France, 1962–1970s," PhD Dissertation, (Stanford University, 2002), 150.

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 188-89, and it includes civil servants.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.* 152.

continuing to threaten Europeans as they had done for years.⁷⁴⁰ Some scholars argue that this final “environment of insecurity” was what ultimately pushed out the *pièdes noirs*.⁷⁴¹

As this thesis has indicated, the Jewish exodus could be foreseen in several different ways. First, although the CJAES leaders desperately clung to the vision of a multicultural Algeria, this dream was an anachronism. Jacques Lazarus’s line of defense on behalf of Algerian Jews was always to proclaim Jewish equality as French citizens; as we saw in the first chapter, Algerian Jews had long identified with France. When French rule came to an end, the Jews had no future in Algeria. Secondly, as the FLN’s exterior leadership grew increasingly Islamist, it became clear to the Jews that they would not be welcome in the society of an independent Algeria. Only a few thousand Jews chose to remain, among them Daniel Timsit, Henri Alleg, and Myriam Ben, all politically committed leftists, indeed, Communists. Eventually, these activists also left. Timsit wrote: “To be honest, a Western lifestyle suits me better than the lifestyle that gradually became the norm in Algeria.... We discovered little by little that we were living in an Arab-Islamic Algeria.”⁷⁴² Third, the tensions caused by mutual hostility between Israel and Egypt exacerbated anti-Jewish feeling inside Algeria.

Throughout the Algerian conflict, Jews attributed the war’s growing violence to an evolving variety of causes. At first, many blamed the European antisemites for

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., 152.

⁷⁴¹ Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d’Algérie*. (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 10.

⁷⁴² Daniel Timsit, *Algérie: Récit Anachronique*, (Paris: Editions Bouchène, 1999), 72.

trying to divide Jews from Muslims. Then, as the war progressed, most came to believe that the FLN was targeting the Jews specifically.

As we have seen, the FLN's assaults grew more threatening, culminating in the Oran massacre of *pieds noirs* after the ceasefire. The Evian Accords and the referendum for independent Algeria were the final steps in a process of withdrawal that had begun in 1958 with the ascent of De Gaulle and the Fifth Republic. In this case, cultural and sectarian factors resonated more powerfully than official assurances.

Flying with two prominent FLN leaders in a small airplane from Tunisia to Algeria in 1961, the Algerian-Jewish journalist Jean Daniel asked: "Given the strong presence of religious fanatics in Algeria, do you think that there will be a place for ... non-Muslims in independent Algeria?"

Daniel heard one address the other: "We mustn't lie to Jean."

They then explained to him that as a reaction to the century of French colonization, in which Muslim-Arabic identity had been denied, the new Algeria "would exclude any future for non-Muslims."⁷⁴³

Various authors see different events as signaling the end of any hope for Jewish-Muslim affinity in Algeria. While there are certainly no dearth of significant political turning points, one date that stands out in the minds of two memoirists focuses on a little-remarked moment involving the assassination of a cultural figure beloved by Jews and Muslims. Both Benjamin Stora and André Chouraqui cite June 22, 1961, as the closing moment for any hope of accord between the two

⁷⁴³ Jean Daniel, *Cet étranger qui me ressemble* (Paris : Gallimard, 2006), 198–99.

communities in Algeria. On that day, a popular Jewish musician, Raymond Leyris, was murdered by the FLN. He had been a symbol of Jewish-Muslim harmony because the musical style he had mastered was itself indigenous to Algeria. He played Arab-Andalusian music (“maalouf”) and throughout his life had been acclaimed by Jews and Muslims all over Algeria. Between 1956 and 1961, he recorded over 30 albums.⁷⁴⁴ That summer day, he was shot in the neck while shopping in a souk. Sources indicate that someone who “opposed” the Jewish community had shot him, without specifying which political group the assassin belonged to. In any event, the fact that Leyris’s Judaism was his distinguishing characteristic at the time tells us something about the hostile atmosphere at the end of the war, and the way that ethnicity became the determining factor in who would be considered Algerian and who would be marked as French.

As the struggle reshaped the politics of France and Algeria, French and Algerian representatives renegotiated the status of Muslims in both Algeria and the Métropole. As Jewish leaders watched the French officials redefine Muslim citizenship, they also lobbied on behalf of the few hundred non-citizen Jews who lived in the Mزاب, Algeria’s Southern Sahara.⁷⁴⁵ In the early 1960s, Algerian-Jewish leaders explicitly rejected their previously celebrated identities as heirs of Crémieux, instead defending their French citizenship as a *fait accompli*. By that time, Jewish leaders had come to understand that when Algeria gained independence, the

⁷⁴⁴ Hall de Chanson, <http://www.lehall.com/docs/biographies/raymondleyris.pdf>.

⁷⁴⁵ This was discussed at length at the AIU’s April 1961 meeting between René Cassin and others. See “Note concernant les modalités de conservation de la nationalité française...” in AIU FRC. On the Sahara, see Benjamin Claude Bower, *A Desert Named Peace*, New York : Columbia University Press, 2009.

French citizens of Algeria would repatriate into metropolitan France. Their new priority was to vigorously assert the Algerian Jews' intrinsic identity as French citizens.

Sarah Sussman traces the efforts at integration into French life by Algerian-Jewish émigrés, from an institutional standpoint as well as a social one. Once in France, Algerian Jews received a cool reception from their French-born co-religionists. A stark divide between “Sephardim,” Jews from Arabic cultures, and “Ashkenazim,” Jews of European derivation, became a way of defining the newcomers. Algerian Jews, who were once extolled for existing in authentically religious communities, were now disdained as “Sefs.” One former Algerian-Jewish leader said that he didn't know he was Sephardic until he arrived in France; likewise Benjamin Stora said that he didn't know the word “Algerian” until 1960.⁷⁴⁶ The Parisian synagogue on the Rue des Tournelles that had been celebrated in 1958 as a welcoming place for North African immigrants had become divided. The French Ashkenazim who had worshipped there separated to create their own congregation in an adjacent building, now known as the Synagogue des Vosges.

Had the Jews of France thought about the fate of their Algerian brethren during the war in light of a French withdrawal? In fact, Algerian Jews received a

⁷⁴⁶ Benjamin Stora, “Une France si proche, si lointaine,” in *C'était Leur France: En Algérie avant l'Indépendance*, ed. Leila Sebbar. (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 259.

paltry amount of support from France's Jewish establishment.⁷⁴⁷ Jacques Soustelle wrote in 1959 that "metropolitan Jews, with very few exceptions, have completely failed to observe any solidarity toward their 130,000 co-religionists in Algeria."⁷⁴⁸ Only later did some French Leftists express their regret for neglecting the Jews, especially as Islamic fundamentalists took control of independent Algeria. In retrospect, Laurent Schwartz, an activist against the French Army's use of torture, explained his early hopes for Algeria:

We thought that it would be possible to create a multi-national state in Algeria [...] with religious issues dealt with separately, but in which French Algerians would have their place. In particular, there were many Jews among the French Algerians, and it seemed as though it would be possible for these Jews to cohabitate with Muslims. I admit that we did not display much perspicacity on these questions; we had not thought about them enough. We had not thought for an instant that victory in the Algerian War would produce a monumental, practically unsolvable problem.⁷⁴⁹

It was as if Schwartz was responding to Lazarus's plea for Jewish solidarity, only decades later. His desire for a multinational state in Algeria was not so different

⁷⁴⁷ Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 127. Also a personal thanks to Professor Connelly for providing me with his detailed notes on this topic. France's Grand Rabbi, Jacob Kaplan, as if to definitively respond to the Soummam plea, held a confidential meeting with *New York Times* editors. The rabbi was able to negotiate a promise from the *Times* in early 1957 that the paper would "support the French line" during the UN debates. Indeed, compared to other American periodicals, *The New York Times* kept its reports of French brutalities in Algeria to a minimum—articles about the Algerian War, one scholar has assessed, were "weak and shallow." (Miloud Barkaoui, "The New York Times and the Algerian Revolution: An analysis of a Major Newspaper's Reporting of Events," (PhD Diss, University of Keele, 1988, pages 77–78.)

⁷⁴⁸ "Les Israélites métropolitains, à peu d'exceptions près, ont complètement failli à observer un minimum de solidarité envers leurs 130 mille coreligionnaires d'Algérie." (7) Quoted in Yves C. Aouate, "Notes et Observations sur une histoire en construction" in *Archives Juives: Revue d'histoire des Juifs de France*, 29/1, (1st semestre 1996): .

⁷⁴⁹ Laurent Schwartz, *A Mathematician Grappling with His Century*, trans. Laila Schneps (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1997), 374.

from the CJAES's vision for a French, multicultural Algeria, in which everyone shared the same privileges. The only problem was that there were only two possible outcomes of the struggle: In the end, one was either French or Algerian. Algerian Jews were committed to a French Algeria in order to maintain their jobs, their livelihoods, and their culture. When this became impossible, their exit was inevitable.

The thousand-year history of Algerian Jews had come to a close with the exodus of the Jewish community in 1962. The long entwining of Jewish-Muslim names, culture, and traditions was abruptly and definitively rent asunder.⁷⁵⁰ The vision of a multicultural democracy, which had influenced the decisions of Jews who were both for and against independent Algeria, had also come to an end.

⁷⁵⁰ Henri Alleg, Daniel Timsit, and Myriam Ben were among the 2,000 or so Jews who remained in Algeria. Their numbers dwindled after the 1990s civil war. See Benjamin Stora's personal account in *Les Guerres sans Fin: Un Historien, la France, l'Algérie*. (Paris: Stock, 2008).

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American Jewish Historical Society

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Archives Nationales, Centre des Archives Outre Mer

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