William B. Cohen

Legacy of Empire: The Algerian Connection

The French ethnologist Germaine Tillion who valiantly opposed the brutal war in Algeria observed during the conflict that France and Algeria were complementary enemies. One hundred and thirty years of colonial rule had created bonds between the two which could not be broken.[1] While many of the links have been loosened by independence, the former colonial relationship with Algeria continues to mark French life. The Algerian connection has affected French eating and drinking habits; couscous restaurants are legion in France and Frenchmen who never set foot on Algerian soil learned to enjoy drinking an anisette. Beyond such superficial signs of the Algerian impact are more important forms of the colonial imprint which have affected French society since independence was conceded in 1962.

The colonial past has left a lingering mark on France which can still be observed nearly twenty years after the French flag was lowered in Algiers on 5 June 1962. In two particular ways the colonial connection has played a significant role in French life. It had demographic impact bringing to the former Metropolis, Algerian settlers of European origin — the so-called 'Pieds Noirs' —, Algerian Moslems who had collaborated with the French authorities — Harkis — and Algerian migrant workers. The problems of adapting to these population groups are part of the sequel of colonization. Secondly, Algeria continues to captivate the attention of French statesmen, who, as in colonial times, are convinced

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it is the key to world prestige and influence. The nineteenth century myth that France's road to world power lay via Algiers survived the Algerian war and continues to be a basic tenet of French foreign policy makers.

Demographic Impact

The Pieds-Noirs

While there were many reasons to explain why the French so tenaciously held on to Algeria, the most bedevilling problem leading to French intransigence was the future fate of one million Europeans in an Algeria with nine million Moslems. French rule had encouraged the growth of the European settler population by reserving choice land and a position of privilege for it. The colonial relationship had created this population overseas and decolonization led to the emigration of the total Pied-Noir population to the mother country. In other empires decolonization also led to massive population transfers, one thinks of the 250,000 Dutch in Indonesia who were repatriated after independence, the 90,000 Belgians from the Congo, the 800,000 Portuguese from Portuguese Africa in 1974-76. Only 12,000-15,000 white settlers came to Britain; this small number was the result of the European population in the large British settler colonies maintaining its power and preventing majority indigenous rule. Freeing themselves from British control, the whites in South Africa and Rhodesia have so far been able to avoid the process of decolonization. In the French empire decolonization led to the 'repatriation' (many were born overseas and in Algeria were even descended from nationalities other than French — Spaniards, Maltese, Italians and Algerian Jews) of approximately 1.5 million people, constituting three percent of the French population. Next to Algeria, with one million repatriating, the largest group came from Morocco: 240,000, followed by Tunisia: 175,000, Indochina: 30,000, and Sub-Saharan Africa: 8,000.

The Algerian case of decolonization was special in the demographic shifts of population it created. For it had the largest settler population. French colonialism had fostered the development of this population and the bonds it felt for France, making it likely that a large proportion would seek haven in France if

decolonization occurred. It was not, however, necessarily inevitable that the settlers in the face of independence would all leave for the motherland. In many former French colonies the European population — originally small — stayed and increased in number after decolonization, for instance in Senegal and the Ivory Coast. In the Algerian case, the brutal war with the intense hatred and fears engendered on both sides made the future of the Pied-Noir population in a post-independent Algeria precarious, and evacuation nearly unavoidable.

The Evian peace negotiations in March 1962 proclaiming the intention of granting Algerian independence and then the setting of the date of independence in mid-May for July 1 created panic among the settlers. Alarmists spoke of a Saint Bartholomew's massacre if Algeria became independent. Others were discouraged by the prospect of losing their position of pre-eminence in an independent Moslem-dominated Algeria. And the final straw was the terror of both the Algerian nationalist movement, the FLN, and its sympathizers and the *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (OAS), made up of desperate settler and army elements who, in the hope of reversing Paris's decision, started a policy of the scorched earth, employing terror against both Moslems and Europeans. Uncertain of their future, frightened by the killings, the settlers in haste left Algeria for France.

Prior to 1962, sensing the drift toward independence, 150,000 Pieds-Noirs had left for France, in May 1962 82,000 left, in June half of the 650,000 who were to flee to France in 1962 arrived. By 1965 nearly a million had crossed the Mediterranean. The massive population shift was not foreseen. The government had assumed some Pieds-Noirs would leave Algeria, the Commissariat of Planning in its fourth plan had foreseen that over a three year period 400,000 Pieds-Noirs would come to France.[2]

Administratively unprepared for the onslaught, the French bureaucracy, considering the circumstances, mobilized efficiently in providing aid for the refugees who often came only with their suitcases. It provided for lodging, employment, and funds for acquiring new skills, starting a new business or farm. The challenge was that much more difficult since a majority of the Pieds-Noirs chose to settle south of the Loire River, while employment opportunities were generally in the more dynamic North. Within two years of arriving in France nearly all Pieds-Noirs had adequate housing — 30 percent of public housing being built was reserved for them. Of the Pieds-Noirs seeking employment, 87 percent in the

private sector and 80 percent in the public sector were employed within two years of the bulk of the exodus.[3] The success in integrating the Pieds-Noirs economically was due to the expansionist, labour-short French economy. The settlers arrived as the French economy was enjoying an upward swing, started in 1960 and lasting until 1964.

Making up only two percent of the French population, the Pieds-Noirs, however, had a greater regional impact since they concentrated in specific regions, notably the South. In the *département* of Hérault, ten percent of the population was Pieds-Noirs. Their arrival contributed to regional population growth. A third of the increase in population of the Provence and Aquitaine were due to their immigration. Certain areas were able to retain a stable population; without a Pied-Noir influx they would have suffered demographic decline, notably the Auvergne and the Limousin.[4] Mainly urban dwellers in Algeria, the *colons* also chose to dwell in cities, they made up ten percent of Southern cities such as Avignon, Beziers, Marseille, Montpellier, Sète, and Toulon. Regionally the Pieds-Noirs had an economic impact. The new population was responsible for a building boom, particularly noticeable in Marseille. Investing in new businesses and — since many of them came with no durable goods — spending more than their local neighbours, the Pieds-Noirs brought in additional capital and helped fuel consumption. It is estimated that in Avignon between 1962 and 1968, 75 million additional francs were invested in the city because of the Pied-Noir presence.[5]

With savings and government loans, the Pieds-Noirs entered the land market and helped inflate land prices. In one agricultural area which was studied, it is alleged that Pied-Noir entry into the market increased land prices threefold between 1957 and 1962.[6]

While they had varying impact on the rural regions of the Midi in which they settled, they seem generally to have played a modernizing role. In the Roussillon, traditional wine country, the Pieds-Noirs had little impact, but in the Languedoc they are credited with higher production by closer supervision and organization of the labour force and more efficient marketing techniques. In the Aude they introduced new machine equipment, heavy fertilizer and modern dairy equipment. Their success seems to have spurred their neighbours also to modernize.

The energy, organizational skill and love of risk which had made French commentators compare the Pieds-Noirs in Algeria to the

settlers of the American Far West seem to have helped them in their new homes. In Corsica a number settled in the countryside and participated in the government-sponsored effort at agricultural development, the SOMIVAC (*Société mixte de mise en valeur de la Corse*). Established in 1957 it had met with resistance from the native Corsicans, but the Pieds-Noirs proved more enthusiastic, bringing to it their skills in large industrial type agricultural development and helped make the SOMIVAC a success.[7]

Most of the 17,000 Pieds-Noirs settling in Corsica, making up seven percent of the island's population, did not go to rural areas and rather went to the major urban centres, Bastia and Ajaccio. Important in rural development in the SOMIVAC, prominent in the hotel and restaurant industry, the Pieds-Noirs did not, however, seem to have had an over-all impact on Corsican society. The Pieds-Noirs were not so different from their hosts that they changed them; they shared their traditional outlook on life, religion, family and politics. Their economic dynamism was not sufficient to transform the island. As one academic study noted

> They have been unable to innovate in depth, nor assure themselves of sufficient profits to create a ferment of economic expansionism [in the island] nor overthrow native traditions.[8]

Decolonization of North Africa has had a crucial impact on the make up of some segments of the French population, notably the Jewish community. 110,000 Jews came from Algeria, 30,000 from Morocco, 35,000 from Tunisia and 15,000 from Egypt. Within a six year period the French Jewish population increased from 300,000 to 500,000. After the United States, Israel, Britain and Argentina, France now had the largest Jewish population in the Western world. Some regions in France which had never had Jewish communities acquired them, among them La Rochelle, Angers, Poitiers, Blois and Rennes. Other areas saw a marked increase in the Jewish population. In Marseille it grew sevenfold from 10,000 to 70,000. Nice which had had 600 Jewish families, by 1962-63 had 3,500. This increase in the size of the Jewish population led to great activism, in Marseille 20 new synagogues were built, 60 new Jewish sports and social clubs were founded. This population which in North Africa had had a strong sense of cohesion and consciousness of forming a separate community seems to have provided a locus of political activism unknown to the in-

digenous French Jewish community, which was far more assimilated and usually diffident. The new arrivals seem to have been the leaven for activism asserting Jewish rights and providing a strong political support for Israel.[9]

Separated by religion, class, geographic origin, political affiliation, all Pieds-Noirs could agree on one issue: their right to secure an indemnity for the lost property in Algeria. They regarded governmental refusal to provide indemnity until 1970 and then the failure to grant adequate reparations as a deep affront. Robert Laffont, editor of the publishing house of the same name, who had been one of the leading liberals in French Algeria, wrote in 1975 that the government indemnity policy was 'the greatest denial of justice which France committed since the revocation of the edict of Nantes'.[10]

The Evian agreements of 1962 had stipulated that the Algerian government would not confiscate property without due compensation. And the French government had repeatedly assured the Pieds-Noirs of indemnity if any property were lost due to decolonization. By a law of December 1961 the possibility of granting indemnity had been stipulated by Parliament, although the enabling legislation was not passed. Addressing the Algerian settlers, De Gaulle had stated, 'whatever may happen, France will protect its children in their person and property', and in April 1962 Prime Minister Georges Pompidou assured the Pieds-Noirs that they would preserve their rights as Frenchmen 'whether it be political rights... or the right to call on national solidarity'.[11]

When these assurances were made it was not realized that all the Pieds-Noirs would leave Algeria for France and that they would not be compensated by Algiers for confiscated property. The total property owned by the Pieds-Noirs in Algeria was estimated by the respected Club Jean Moulin to be worth 50 billion new francs (US $10 billion). This figure was not accepted by the government, whose members presented estimates varying between 24.5 billion and 40 billion francs.[12] There was little public support for indemnification of the Pieds-Noirs. A public opinion poll in 1961 revealed that 70 percent of Frenchmen were opposed to providing indemnification; a later poll, in 1970, showed even less public support for full indemnification, only seven percent supporting such a measure.[13]

De Gaulle, in spite of earlier statements, was opposed to indemnity. He was hostile to the Pieds-Noirs, remembering their Pétainist

sympathies during the Second World War. Their presence in France after Evian was contrary to his expectations. He had thought of their continuing presence in Algeria as a measure which would ensure close collaboration between Paris and Algiers, making the latter dependent upon the French capital. Furthermore, by their presence in France the Pieds-Noirs were an irritating reminder of the failure of his policies to preserve *Algérie française*. In any case, he was opposed to indemnity. The main goal of the government, the Secretary of State in charge of the repatriates announced, was not to provide for indemnification, but rather to help in settling the Pieds-Noirs in France; 'indemnification is not excluded, but the first effort must be reinstallation'.[14]

The settlers felt that they had lost their property as a result of the government's decision to grant Algerian independence and its unwillingness to enforce the Evian agreements. There were precedents for indemnity to groups hurt by government policy, thus the government had paid coal miners compensation for closing down mines. Why should the Pieds-Noirs, equally hurt by government policy, be singled out as a group not worthy of being indemnified. 'The Pieds-Noirs feel,' declared one of their leaders 'that they have become pariahs after a disaster for which they are not responsible.'[15]

Given the reciprocal animosity between General de Gaulle and the Pieds-Noirs and the fairly comfortable majorities the General enjoyed, there was no electoral reason to provide for indemnification. Georges Pompidou in his election campaign for president in 1969 could not, however, be as sure of large majorities. To curry favour with the Pieds-Noirs, he promised indemnification. The amounts to be set were left vague. In spite of his promises, he did not attract a large proportion of Pieds-Noirs voters, most supported his opponent Alain Poher.[16]

The law which was passed in July 1970 to fulfill Pompidou's promises provided only partial indemnity. Depending on the evaluation of the property lost, the Pieds-Noirs would be reimbursed over a twelve year period for between 12 and 25 percent of the total property lost.[17] Appealing to the Pieds-Noirs, frustrated by the shortcomings of the 1970 indemnity law, Giscard d'Estaing, running for president in 1974, promised an increase in the indemnity and the appointment of a Commission which would make new recommendations on the indemnity question. Once elected, however, the new

president rejected the commission recommendation of a fuller indemnity.[18]

Pied-Noir efficacy in pushing for the indemnity had been reduced by the lack of a single over-all organization. In 1963 there were 275 different organizations in France representing the repatriates from the colonies, mostly Algeria. There were several umbrella types of organization, but even they had trouble preserving unity, racked as they were by political and personality conflicts. Organized around the need for indemnity, a one issue organization was founded in 1976, the *Rassemblement et coordination unitaire des rapatriés et spoliés* (RECOURS). Within Parliament was founded an interparty group consisting of deputies of Pied-Noir origins, or sympathetic to them (mostly coming from the south), consisting of 110 members, nearly a quarter of the total National Assembly. To reveal that they meant business, Pieds-Noirs in municipal and regional elections in 1977 organized a campaign against the government parties. They voted for the left in Auch, Beziers, Hyères and Montpellier. Aix barely remained under the control of the government parties.[19] These elections were considered a rehearsal for the parliamentary elections of Spring 1978. Anticipating these elections, one of the leaders of RECOURS had threatened, 'We created the Fifth Republic in 1958, let it be known that we today have the means to destroy it.' Another prominent Pied-Noir, who had supported Giscard in the presidential elections, warned him that he could not have support for the Parliamentary elections of Spring 1978 without a quid pro quo. Promises had been made in 1974 which then had been broken. This time the indemnification would have to be passed prior to the election; he declared, 'We were had by Giscard, but we shall not allow it to happen twice.'[20] The Elysée was impressed by the ability of the Pieds-Noirs in the municipal elections to mobilize a sizeable vote in favour of the leftist parties. In the parliamentary elections which were promising to be very close — in fact the polls showed the left winning — Giscard needed the vote of every imaginable group to ensure the survival of the government majority. It was estimated that the Pied-Noir vote was decisive in at least twenty-six districts.[21]

Under such electoral pressures the government majority passed an indemnity law, signed in January 1978. It provided an additional 20 billion francs in payment, 30 billion including interest payments. While the average indemnity had been 52,000 francs in 1970, the new law provided an average of 200,000. The payments

would be stretched over a fifteen year period with a maximum provided of one million francs per household. Some Pieds-Noirs expressed disappointment at the number of years which it would take for the indemnity to be paid off and realized that while they would receive forty billion francs (10 billion from the 1970 law, 30 from the 1978 law), inflation had reduced its value far below what it would have represented in 1962. While the official *Rapatriés* organizations proclaimed their dissatisfaction with the law, on the whole they seemed to realize that under the circumstances they had received the best terms possible. Concentrating less on the indemnity law, and instead on the 'Red menace' which the Socialist-Communist coalition seemed to represent, they called on their fellow *Rapatriés* to vote for Giscard's party.[22] Their call seems to have been answered and generally they supported Giscard's *Parti Républicain* and contributed to the victory of the government coalition.

The indemnity question provided a political focus for Pied-Noir discontent. In the first few years after their arrival in France segments of the Pied-Noir community were particularly sympathetic to right-wing parties. They were unanimously hostile to De Gaulle and the Gaullists whom they blamed for the independence of Algeria and their forced expatriation. On principle they voted anti-Gaullist. The president of one of the leading Pied-Noir organizations declared, 'I would have voted for Boumedienne or Khruschev if they had run against De Gaulle.'[23] Usually the left was also blamed for the loss of Algeria. But the extreme right was seen as friendly since it had been particularly strong in its support of *Algérie française*. The Algerian war had provided an opportunity for the extreme right, disgraced by collaboration during the Second World War, to regain its standing as a nationalist party.[24] Tixier-Vignancour, presidential candidate of the far right in 1965, who had served as Pétain's defence lawyer, was an ardent proponent of *Algérie française* and defended General Raoul Salan, tried for his OAS activities, and Bastien-Thiry, would-be assassin of De Gaulle. The theme of the defence was that these men had acted out of patriotic duty, De Gaulle was the traitor having allowed the dismemberment of France by conceding to Algerian independence.

Tixier-Vignancour was able to attract the support of important Pieds-Noirs and other ex-militants of *Algérie française*. On his election committee served former Algerian deputies: Lareymondie, Lauriol and Marçais and a noted military figure of French Algeria,

Colonel Thomazo, leading figure in the military uprising against the Fourth Republic on 13 May 1958 and the take-over of Corsica.[25] A large proportion of the Pieds-Noirs who voted cast their vote for Tixier-Vignancour in the presidential elections of 1965. While the exact proportion which did so is unclear, it was sizeable. Tixier won the largest support from the Southeast, the areas with the heaviest Pied-Noir concentrations. While nationally he won 4.4 percent of the vote, in the Southeast, it was 11 per cent of the registered voters.[26] This was the last time that the Pieds-Noirs gave such large support to a candidate of the extreme right. Tixier's failure, one student of the Pieds-Noirs avers, led them to recognize that their future lay with candidates who had a chance of winning.[27] While they hardly ever supported a Gaullist candidate on the first ballot, many in a run-off preferred to support him to a Communist or even Socialist. Usually their support went to a centrist candidate. The political integration of the Pieds-Noirs, their entry into the mainstream of French political life, was maybe caused less by Tixier's defeat than by the healing of old wounds. With the passage of time the question of *Algérie française* no longer was an obsession. After a few years, Pieds-Noirs political behaviour began to resemble that of their compatriots of metropolitan origin, except that they remained adamantly anti-Gaullist. They never veered from that position. One of the *Rapatriés* groups in 1969 called on their fellow *rapatriés* to vote against Pompidou, Gaullist candidate for the presidency, 'Do not give your vote to those who cheated you in May 1958, shot at you, imprisoned you, and restricted you to second class citizenship since 1961.' While in the presidential election of 1974 Giscard and Chaban-Delmas, the Gaullist candidate, held similar positions on the indemnity question, the latter was held in anathema: 'the *rapatriés* will not forget that the origin of their misfortune lies with the Gaullists and those who claim to be their successors.'[28]

The Pieds-Noirs were met with fear when they first arrived in 1962 by the metropolis which viewed them as OAS terrorists and fascists. The Communist *L'Humanité* viewed them as 'the reserve' force 'at the disposal of reactionary and fascist forces,' and with equal fear the liberal Catholic *Témoignage chrétien* warned that the arrival of the Algerian *colons* would establish 'in the heart of France, the OAS, torturing policemen and fascists, paratroopers plotting putsches.' A public opinion poll revealed that 57 percent of Frenchmen believed that between half and the total of the Pieds-

Noirs belonged to the OAS.[29] The fears proved groundless. Very few fascist-type organizations based on the Pieds-Noirs emerged. One of the most notable was the *Union syndicale de défense des français rapatriés d'Afrique du nord* (USDIFRA) led by a young hothead, Eugène Ibagnès. It mobilized armed groups to prevent the seizure of property owned by Pieds-Noirs in default of their payments, occupied, and was suspected of bombing several government buildings. Not having much of a following, it still could rally a good crowd. Ibagnès and eight others tried for bombing, were cheered by 1000 Pieds-Noirs yelling 'We are all bombers.' Clandestine groups calling themselves *Soldats de l'opposition algérienne* and *Justice Pieds-Noirs* with only a handful of members committed acts of violence, including murder, against Algerian labourers and planted bombs in government offices.[30] Such spectacular and eye-catching activities, however, reflect little about the political impact of the *colons* in France. They played an important role in extremist politics only during the presidential election of 1965. They contributed to decide close elections such as the presidential election of 1974 and the parliamentary one of 1978. But as the years pass, the Pieds-Noirs lose their cohesiveness and can no longer be thought of as a monolithic political force. They are beginning to share the general political characteristics of the French population as a whole. Such changes indicate Pieds-Noirs integration into French society and life in general.

The Harkis

The second population group that fled to France in the wake of decolonization were the Moslem Algerian military auxiliary members and their families, known as 'Harkis.' Attached to the police and the gendarmerie they numbered 200,000. 52,000 Harkis with their dependents totalling somewhere around 130,000 arrived in France in the Summer of 1962. As with the Pieds-Noirs, their number surprised the French government; only 10,000 Harkis including their family members were expected by the Secretary of State for Repatriation Affairs.[31] They were met by considerable hostility, the French government was less than helpful in assuring their evacuation and the Minister of Algerian affairs Joxe reprimanded his subordinates for facilitating evacuation.[32] Many came, surreptitiously, evacuated by sympathetic French army and

administrative officials, acting on their own. Some were forcibly returned to Algeria and must have been part of the 30,000-150,000 Harkis estimated killed by Algerians in a wave of revenge against traitors of the Algerian national cause.

If De Gaulle were contemptuous of the Pieds-Noirs, his feelings toward the Harkis were no more sympathetic. The Moslem auxiliaries had served France and fought for France. But once De Gaulle accepted the Algerian nation, proclaiming it the inevitable result of the forces of history, their presence was an embarrassing reminder of the war, and France's failure to protect those Moslems it had rallied to the French flag and who had been the object of much sentiment in France. Once De Gaulle recognized the legitimacy of Algerian nationalism, the Harkis, in spite of their loyalty to France, were probably reduced in his mind to mere 'collaborators.' In any case sentiment was unimportant. When during the war an Algerian Moslem deputy had told of his fear that if Algeria gained independence, the Moslem collaborators would suffer, De Gaulle told him, 'Well, then you will suffer.'[33]

Given the Harkis' lack of skills and the cultural gap between them and native Frenchmen, they could not be easily absorbed into the mainstream of French life. A large proportion was placed in camps which had served refugees during the Spanish Civil War, then refugees from Indochina. Six thousand were located in fire control and reforesting centres, and the rest in small communities, mostly in the South, suffering from the rural exodus. Many of the communities gained a Harkis majority, among them Saint-Laurent-des Arbres (facetiously referred to as des Arabes) in the Gard, Neoules and Saint-Paul-en-Forêt in the Alpes Maritimes and Mas Thibert in the Bouche-du-Rhône.

Although having fought for France, the Harkis did not enjoy the same rights as the Pieds-Noirs. Thus while the Pieds-Noirs returned to France as French citizens, the Harkis had to apply for citizenship, those who failed to do so were open to deportation. The government grants made available to them were less than for the Pieds-Noirs; they received 70,000 francs, the refugees of European origin 170,000. In the housing allocated to them little attention was paid to their large families.[34]

The Harkis were forgotten as a group. There were few Frenchmen sympathetic to them. 'Their cause,' wrote one observer, 'goes against the grain, few are those who will defend men who are Arabs but French nationalists, poor but suspect of being right-

wing, victims of racism, but heartily despised by its other victims.'[35] Living in substandard housing, several people to a room, underpaid, the inhabitants of the camps felt abandoned and cheated by the government. They had few opportunities to enter the mainstream of French life. Harkis outside the camps were also faced with a discouraging situation. They are, observed *Le Monde*, 'victims today of a double racism, that of the French who assimilate them to the Algerian emigrant workers, that of the Algerians in France who do not forgive them of their "treason".' That they were not regarded as fully French is shown by a report to the Prime Minister's Office suggesting that a circular be issued reminding government officials that the Harkis 'enjoy the full rights of French citizenship'.[36]

They were not integrated into the communities in which they settled; a detailed study of their experience in Saint-Laurent-des-Arbres revealed they were met with suspicion and hostility by the local townspeople. There was a separate café, soccer team, cemetery, and an attempt was made to establish a separate school for them. The mayor of the town, who had originally welcomed them, told a journalist in 1973, 'They are not like us, there's nothing to be done. They must leave.'[37]

Many Harkis were bitterly disappointed at their reception. Their plight was summarized by one of the Harkis organization leaders, Mohamed Laradji, who said, 'It is very difficult to be a Frenchman when one's name is Mohamed.'[38]

The Harkis problem was given attention after 1974 when young people in the camps staged protests against the failure of the government to provide adequate aid. Government buildings were occupied, a dramatic hunger strike was carried on in the Madeleine Church in Paris and officials were sequestered by angry young Harkis. The attention of the media and the government was directed to the Harkis problem; the government accelerated training programs for young Harkis, provided special housing subsidies to allow them to move out of the camps and be assimilated to the rest of the population. In 1978 eight percent of the Harkis still lived in camps, by 1981 it was expected that the last camp would be closed.[39]

The existence of the Harkis population, which by the late 1970s numbered 200,000 (they had a high birth rate), represented a great challenge to France's ability to assimilate a population which by its willingness to die for France had demonstrated its devotion to the

patrie, but yet was of foreign origin, physically of darker hue, culturally Islamic and in its way of life foreign to the modern urban values of late twentieth-century France. The discrimination which was practiced against the immigrant Algerian workers could be ascribed to xenophobia and the sequels of the Algerian war, but the reception of the Harkis could not be so easily rationalized. For after all the Harkis had become French citizens, they had not opposed France during the Algerian war — on the contrary they had been among France's most loyal supporters. Maybe more than any other group of foreign origin, the Harkis presence represented a test of the French ability to tolerate diversity and practice the principles of equality with which their country had been identified since the great revolution of 1789.

Emigrant Workers

Until the end of the 1970s the single largest group of foreign workers in France originated from Algeria. The presence of this large Algerian population is a direct legacy of colonial rule. In 1912 there were 4,000-5,000 Algerian workers in France but the First World War caused a dramatic increase in Algerian immigration. Needing labour for the war machine in France, the colonial administration conscripted North Africans, most of them Algerian, to come and serve in France. A total of 80,000 Algerians were brought to the Metropolis.[40] They started a labour flow, which interrupted by the depression, dramatically grew after the Second World War when France, demographically poor, depended on foreign labour for full economic expansion. In 1948 there were 230,000 Algerians in France.

The availability of a large mobile Algerian labour force was the result of French colonial policy which had encouraged the development of European land holding at the cost of the Moslems, who were dispossessed, or limited to owning the poorest land in Algeria. The introduction of colonial medicine had had an important demographic impact, the population which had numbered 4.5 million in 1906 rose to 9 million by 1950. Given the landholding patterns which French colonialism had fostered the teeming young Moslem population could not make a living on the land available. Emigration was an alternative to misery and hunger. Given the explosive social situation in Algeria, the French authorities encourag-

ed the emigration of Algerian labour to France. This flow of labour played a double role: it met French needs for workers and was a safety valve for Algeria. Algerian emigration was part of French colonial policy. It was not only the result of French rule but was actively encouraged and implemented by the colonial administration.

The Algerian war contributed in two notable ways to the increase in the number of Algerian labourers in France. The half million French soldiers sent to fight the war created a labour shortage which in part was filled by increasing the number of Algerian workers. And secondly, the brutality and dislocation of the war made France, relative to Algeria, a safe haven, bringing many Algerians to the Metropolis. In 1954 there were 280,000 Algerians in France, by the end of the war another 100,000 had come.

The Evian agreements establishing Algerian independence in no way stemmed the tide of emigration, on the contrary. The agreements provided for free movement of persons between Algeria and France. Paris wanted continued access to the large and cheap labour supply, while Algiers realized that its economy was heavily dependent on the remittances sent by the emigrant workers; about twenty percent of Algeria's population lived off these funds. The employment opportunities in the expanding French economy and the contraction of the Algerian economy immediately after independence led to a great spurt forward in immigration, by 1964 there were over half a million Algerians in France. Between 1964 and 1969, 90,000 a year arrived. Concerned by this development, the French government negotiated limits to immigration allowing in 1968 35,000 Algerians to enter annually, and reducing this figure to 25,000 in 1971. In the mid-1970s, there were 870,000 Algerians, forming the largest proportion of the foreign worker community in France, (20 percent of the total). After 1973, the number of Algerians ceased growing and by 1979 they no longer formed the single largest foreign group; the Portuguese numbered 880,000, while the Algerians were 830,000 strong.

The stabilization in the growth of the Algerian population represented definite policy decisions by both the French and Algerian governments. Evidently not desiring to be so heavily dependent upon Algerian labour, the French government encouraged the growth in immigrant workers from other countries of the Maghreb, Portugal and Yugoslavia.

Beginning with the 1973 recession, the number of migrant workers coming to France fell, especially Algerians. That year also

coincided with the decision of the Algerian government to suspend any further emigration. It was humiliated by the dependency of its economy on the remittances of the Algerian workers in France. The leaders who had fought a war of independence wished to erect a state which — in addition to political independence — had economic self-sufficiency. Nationalization of property, especially the oil companies in 1971, was a striking assertion of this will to exercise national sovereignty. Another way was to end the emigration of workers to France. Precipitating this action, which had probably been considered for a long time, was a particularly brutal wave of persecutions of Algerian workers in France. Unemployment in 1973 created a sense in France that foreign workers — and Algerians were particularly visible forming the largest proportion of that group — were robbing Frenchmen of work. Anti-Algerian sentiment was also fuelled by poor political relations between Paris and Algiers, memories of the Algerian war, and racism. Algerians were physically assaulted; in the first nine months of 1973, 32 Algerians were murdered. In anger at the apparent failure of the French government to provide for adequate security for Algerian workers, Algiers suspended emigration to France in September 1973.

The downturn in the French economy, new employment opportunities in Algeria and a growing reluctance to encourage the continued stay in France of non-European migrants will over time lead to the reduction in the number of Algerians in France. But for the foreseeable future there will be a notable Algerian presence in France, a tangible reminder of the colonial bonds, and the emigration fostered by it.

Immigrant labour is crucial to France: it has been the basis of its rapid economic growth since the early 1960s. No European country, except Switzerland, depends on such a large proportion of foreign labour and none has as large a proportion originating from its former colonies. The 4.4 million foreigners making up 7 percent of the French population provide 20 percent of the industrial work force. At Citroen 64.5 percent of the workers are foreign, in the building trades, 30 percent. Algerians are particularly strongly represented in the building trades where 41 percent of them work and in public works where 10 percent are employed.

Contributing to the economic expansion, foreign workers have the advantage of costing the recipient country relatively little in social costs. While many bring their families with them, most do

not. The social costs of raising a young person to be of working age was borne by the country of origin rather than France. Much of the money earned is sent home; while that is a drain on the balance of payments, it reduces consumption in France and reduces inflation.[41] While some medical and other social benefits are granted foreign workers, only those originating from Common Market countries share in the full benefits extended to French workers. The others represent a decidedly lower social cost than hiring Frenchmen. Of the 845,000 Algerians in France in 1974, over half, 467,000, were employed — a far larger proportion than the indigenous French population, 40 percent. Most of the dependent women, children and aged had remained in Algeria being a burden to that country rather than France.

French employers and workers have benefitted from the presence of foreign workers. They have been an essential part of the labour force, particularly appreciated by management which was provided with a cheap, docile and highly mobile pool of labour. By taking the lowest paid and least prestigious menial tasks such as unskilled factory work, street cleaning, and garbage collection, foreign workers have freed their French counterparts for more skilled, higher paid and more prestigious positions.

The immigrant workers had a religious impact on France. France, thanks to the Harkis and the North African emigrant workers, became the West European country with the largest Moslem population. There were over two million Moslems in France, making Islam the second largest faith in France, next to Catholicism, (Protestants numbered 750,000, and Jews half a million). There was a need to build mosques and Moslem cemeteries, to organize pilgrimages to Mecca and encourage the growth of Islamic learning. Both to meet the needs of the Moslem population in France and to create a bond with the oil rich states, the government announced plans in the summer of 1979 to establish a centre of Islamic learning in Paris.

In spite of such examples of governmental solicitude, decolonization has not ended the low regard which Frenchmen generally have had for their colonial peoples. Racist images still persist. While racial attitudes toward people of colour were strongly implanted in French cultures from early on,[42] the spread of such ideas to the general French population has occurred as a result of the inevitable conflicts between host and foreigners, resulting from the migration of large foreign labour. The latter appears strange in language,

customs and even physical appearance. And the Algerians have especially suffered the brunt of these hostilities. A 1966 poll of representative Frenchmen revealed that 62 percent thought there were too many North Africans in France, a poll of Parisians showed 65 percent 'having a racist attitude toward Arabs'.[43]

Until very recently the French vociferously denied that they were racists. That some of the main racist thinkers of the nineteenth century were Frenchmen and that the Jews were persecuted under Vichy have been seen as accidental phenomena in no way connected to the legacy of French culture. But the influx of migrant workers created considerable hostility, recognized as racism. Journalist Jean Lacouture published a series of articles entitled, 'Les français sont-ils racistes?' — a question he answered in the affirmative.[44]

The efforts of intellectuals and public authorities to combat the growing hostility toward migrant workers have met with varying success. Intellectuals write books and publish manifestoes which, as one worker writing in *Esprit* wryly noted, have had little effect on the French worker living in daily contact and sometimes conflict with his foreign neighbours.[45]

For thirteen years, the French Parliament had under consideration a bill to outlaw discrimination in housing and hiring on the basis of race or religion, and almost yearly since 1959, it was defeated. The opposition to the bill was based on the argument that its passage would be a shameful admission of something which did not exist in France — racism. The lack of such legislation was in fact cited by the French representative to the United Nations Security Council as a source for pride:

> There are few traditions which are so much a part of the history of my country as the concept of equality between the races... Everywhere where French laws and mores are the rule, there is no racial discrimination. It has not even been forbidden because it is not necessary to do so.[46]

A bill outlawing racial discrimination was finally passed in 1972. It has now been widely recognized that Frenchmen are capable of racism. The suggested remedy has been unusual, however; it is generally thought that reducing non-European migration into France will be the best cure for further manifestations of racism.[47] The French government has limited the migration of Africans into France, while favouring the number of European workers coming in. The liberal journal *L'Express* greeted this policy as 'maybe a

good preventive of racism'. But, of course, as it added, it was 'an abandonment of the national tradition of hospitality without discrimination'.[48]

Over half the foreign population in France is European. Because migrant workers often stay for prolonged periods of time, sometimes intermarry, and since they or their offspring might become French, the authorities prefer what they consider an easily assimilable European population: white in skin, European in culture and usually Catholic in religion, to darker-skinned peoples, most of whom are Moslems. In the summer of 1979 Parliament considered laws giving the government considerable discretionary authority to end work visas of foreign workers. It was widely assumed that it would be nearly exclusively used to deport non-European foreign workers. Passed in the National Assembly, but meeting with opposition in the Senate, the proposal was shelved. But it was expected that the measure would be re-introduced in the following session.[49] The discrimination would be directed against people who mostly originate from the former empire. The unequal treatment which had been bestowed on the overseas people in the colonial era, continued after independence. The French 'mentality' had not been fully 'decolonized'.

Algeria's Strategic Role

The role which Algeria has occupied in French strategic and international political ambitions has remained unchanged from the colonial era, through the Algerian war, and decolonization. The continuity is striking. In the colonial era the possession of Algeria was considered part of France's grandeur, a base and symbol of its power. Losing the French empire, De Gaulle had said, would produce 'a decline that could cost us our independence. To keep it and make it live is to stay great and, in consequence, to stay free.'[50] Algeria was the cornerstone of the French empire, it was the bridgehead to Africa, linking France to the continent. While France's empire in the Far East was potentially more valuable, its distance from France had always made it vulnerable and Frenchmen saw French imperial grandeur particularly assured by the possession of African territory from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Congo River. A territorial unity could be created between France and Africa, a Eur-African entity. The theme of Eur-

Africa, popularized in the 1930s, was strongly echoed during the Algerian war. By 1954 Indochina was lost and in fact French imperial grandeur now rested solely on the possession of the African empire.

The strategic value of Algeria, supporters of French Algeria insisted, was that it ensured the preservation of Eur-Africa. François Mitterrand, Minister of Interior during the Algerian war, spoke of an African France providing a 'workyard to our combined forces, across the space which extends from North to South, over 7,000 kms across the Metropolis, across white Africa, across black Africa'. A Community would be erected 'whose frontiers will go from the plains of Flanders to the Equatorial forests...without Africa there will be no history of France in the twenty-first century.'[51]

Algeria was not only the key to Africa, but also to the Arab world. Mitterrand, in a hyperbole which disregarded statistical realities, proclaimed that with Algeria, France was a Moslem power. 'The seven million Muslim Algerians make France the second Muslim nation in the world (after Pakistan). This we must not forget.'[52]

The illusion that Algeria was the means of preserving French control over its former empire in sub-Saharan Africa and that it was the key to world influence in no way died with independence. On the contrary, it has been a leitmotif in French foreign policy since 1962. Upholders of the Eur-African idea in the colonial era continued, after Algeria's independence, to adhere to it. In fact they suggested that since independence had removed conflict between France and Algeria, the time now was more propitious than ever 'to dream of Eurafrica.' 'The destinies of Europe and Africa are closely connected. Their economies are complementary, their interests converge.... France and Algeria can together play a world role...'[53] Such continuity of thought existed not only among colonialists but marked the thought of the French political elite.

The former North African colony was a central piece on the chessboard of international politics which could not be lost. Preserving Algerian good will ensured the possibility of creating Eur-Africa and also was the key to world influence. Whatever the blows Algiers might direct against French interests, Paris never responded with the harshness it could exhibit toward some other independent-minded ex-colonies such as Guinea. The stakes always seemed

higher in regard to Algeria. The loss of influence in Algeria seemed to presage a global decline, which France did not want to suffer. When the Algerian government in violation of the Evian agreement nationalized Pied-Noir property without compensation, encouraged the Pied-Noir exodus and the massacre of the Harkis, Paris, often so punctilious in insisting on its rights, barely protested. There were still material interests to defend that France did not want to lose: the oil of the Sahara; special trade relations making France Algeria's second trade partner, after Germany; and the right to test nuclear weapons in the desert. All of this counted. But gradually these advantages were lost; Algeria nationalized French oil interests in 1971, trade declined so that France was only Algeria's fourth trading partner and nuclear tests had to be suspended shortly after independence. In spite of this reduction of French interests in Algeria, Paris continued to court its former colony.

France could have parried the attacks against its interests by reducing foreign aid and the number of technical assistants — so crucial especially in the early years to Algeria. In 1963 there were 15,000 French teachers and 10,000 Frenchmen serving in the Algerian administration. The following year there were still 19,500 French assistants of whom 13,000 were teachers. A quarter of all primary teachers, half of all secondary and three quarters of instructors in higher education were Frenchmen. In 1972 there were 476 French professors teaching in Algerian universities, or 70 percent of all foreign professors. With the years, the number of technical assistants sent to Algeria declined and was limited to 5200 in 1975. But the foreign aid still represented a heavy French investment. No other single country received such a large proportion of French foreign aid, a fifth of French bilateral foreign aid. Morocco, with a population a quarter larger than Algeria's received only a third of the foreign aid allotted to Algeria.[54] The French jealously tried to preserve Algeria as a privileged arena in which to spread French language and culture.

Faced with the Algerian nationalization of the oil companies in 1971, Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas refused to withdraw French technical assistance from the vexatious former colony, since 'the role which our language plays in the thought and development of their men is too valuable to be ended'.[55]

Desiring to tie the elites of the former colonies to French culture and France, succeeding governments have vigorously attempted to preserve the ties with their former colonies. French universities

have welcomed foreign students, especially those coming from the former empire. Approximately 60 percent of the 100,000 foreign students in French universities come from ex-colonies. A particularly large number — 25,000 — are from the Maghreb (Morocco: 9,500, Tunisia: 8,500 and Algeria: 7,000). The cultural policy of Frenchification is the continuation of the *mission civilisatrice* ideal, so important a part of the French imperialist tradition. By spreading French language and the French way of thought, French governments believe that they are ensuring global influence for France.

Limited to 50 million people, France is a middle-level power, but if all the nations and people who speak French are thought of as forming a group, they are a formidable force. Stating the importance of the French language in the world, an article in the leading national defense journal noted that there were 32 countries with a population of 155 million who spoke French. 'Language is not only the means of communicating a civilization, it is a bond, a means of exchange.... On the economic and political level it opens immense perspectives.' Xavier Deniau, ex-colonial administrator and cabinet minister in charge of overseas territories, recently wrote of the need to uphold and strengthen 'francophonie'. 'Language is one of the elements defining national identity...language needs to be treated as a crucial element of foreign policy.' Some claim that the desire to spread French culture is not only influenced by foreign policy considerations but, as Professor Robert Debré has claimed, corresponds to some national characteristic, particularly French: 'France can only be happy if its culture, its thought, its efforts, its conduct create around it a warm radiance...'[56]

Since 1960 the French government has attempted to establish a kind of Commonwealth of French-speaking states. Meetings of these states have periodically been held but have not led to the creation of any viable meaningful organization. The illusion continues, however, among French policy-makers that a viable supranational body might be created which, while advancing French culture, will also serve as a vehicle for promoting French national interests.

The French eagerness to preserve good ties with Algeria, regardless of how their interests have been treated, are not entirely due to a commitment to francophonie, for other francophonic states have been dealt with differently. What distinguishes Algeria is its position in French strategic thought as the lynch-pin for French influence throughout Africa, and the Middle East, a basis

of French pretensions to world power. Attacked by the Third World for its war in Algeria, France hoped to recoup its influence by granting independence and then carrying out a model relationship with its former colony. Jean de Broglie, Secretary of State for Algerian affairs, explained that Franco-Algerian relations could serve 'as an example of relations between capitalist countries and those who have chosen a socialist path, industrial and underdeveloped countries, former metropolis and independent country.' The success of such a policy would contribute 'to the prestige of the power which conceived it.'[57] Having passed the test in Algeria, France could exercise influence throughout the Third World. As Broglie put it, 'Algeria is the narrow gate through which we penetrate the Third World'.[58]

Since the non-aligned nations had so violently taken France to task during the Algerian war, and it was the major stumbling block for good French relations with them, Algeria was believed to be of special concern and influence in the Third World. Events in the 1970s seemed to confirm such a view. Algiers appeared to be the capital of the Third World, hosting in 1973 the Non-Aligned Conference — the most important Third World meeting since the Bandung Conference of 1955. The Algerian President, Houari Boumedienne, was thought of as the spokesman of the Third World in the dialogue between rich and poor nations, 'the North-South dialogue'. It was in Algiers in 1973 that the oil embargo was decided on as an Arab weapon against Israel and its Western supporters during the Yom-Kippur war.

Located on the African continent with a large Arab-speaking population, Algeria is both an African and Arab state. This double role seems to make it strategically valuable, the means by which French influence can cross the Sahara southward and from Algeria eastward embrace the Middle East. In Algeria France had a privileged position providing 'an anchor in Africa and an open door into the Middle East'.[59] If French relations with Algeria failed, then Paris would have to renounce 'its pretension of playing a preponderant role in the Euro-Arabic dialogue and beyond that to the dialogue developing between developed nations and the Third World'.[60]

President Giscard d'Estaing revived the old idea of Eur-Africa, seeing it as a counterweight

> 'in a world of flux where large powers are being formed.... The geographical proximity of our two worlds, the long tradition of our relations, the interpenetration of our thoughts, the complementary nature of our economies and the convergence of our general interests lead to the establishment of an association between Europe and Africa.'

He extended the programme of Eur-Africa to include the Arab world and called for a 'trialogue' between Europe, Africa and the Arab world since these three areas 'had more ties with each other than with any other part of the world'. Success depended, French diplomatic observers believed, on the establishment of a Franco-Algerian entente.[61] A Paris-Algiers axis would enable France to play a leading role both in Europe and the Third World.

Algeria represented a very specific strategic target, but it also as in colonial times was thought to be France's frontier on the world and the future. A former cabinet minister and deputy spoke of Algeria in 1976 as the key to France's destiny. For the former colony 'is perpetually the listening post of the world. Nothing which is about to occur is foreign to it. It is here rather than in our tired metropoles that one breathes the air of open space.' In the colonial era Jacques Soustelle had said the same thing when he had spoken of Algeria as France's 'Far West', giving it a 'taste for wide-open spaces and hardy undertakings'.[62] Algeria as a key to French greatness and its future continues, long after decolonization, to haunt the imagination of the French political elite.

The demographic imprint of the Algerian connection has had a lasting impact on France, accounting for the presence of over 2 million people in France (Pieds-Noirs, Harkis, and immigrant labourers). The problem associated with their settlement and the relationship between them and the indigenous French population continued to pose serious problems for the French government and citizens nearly two decades after decolonization had occurred. Algeria, in spite of independence, continued to be crucial in political calculations of France's role on the world scene. If French rule had put an indelible mark on Algeria, France was not immune either from the effects of the 130 year colonial relationship. The Algerian connection had remained unbroken.

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William B. Cohen

is Professor of History and Chairman of West European Studies, Indiana University. His publications include, *Rulers of Empire: The French Colonial Service in Africa* (Stanford 1971); *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington 1980). He is the editor of *Robert Delavignette on the French Empire* (Chicago 1977), and *European Empire Building: Causes and Motives of Nineteenth-Century Imperialism* (St. Louis 1980).