

II The Harkis

History and Memory

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THE ALGERIAN WAR, one of the most brutal conflicts France has been involved in, left behind deep scars. The memory of the war was experienced in different ways by different participants; each group harboring its own understanding of what occurred while often contesting the memory of others. One of these vectors of memory has been the *harkis*, a much-neglected group, which both the French state and public, ill at ease with the record of their treatment, have tried to disregard.

Shortly after the Algerian War broke out in November 1954, the French started to recruit local auxiliary forces. Several units were established, the largest being the *harkis*. Their name stems from *harka*, meaning "movement" in Arabic, suggesting the roving bands they formed. *Harki* became the generic term for all auxiliary forces; 120,000 auxiliaries (and an additional 60,000 Muslims in the regular army) served the French at the end of 1960.¹

The use of *harkis* reduced the number of French draftees, already very large, that would have had to be called up. It brought into the field young men who knew the region they were fighting in and were familiar with the local topography and the habits of the inhabitants. Furthermore, the existence of these forces was useful in the propaganda war. It could be argued—as it was—that more Algerians supported the continuation of French rule than who wanted independence, for the number of Algerians enrolled in the auxiliary forces was nearly four times the number fighting for the nationalists, the Front de libération nationale (FLN), within Algerian territory.

1. There are conflicting figures owing to the lack of clarity on the status of these troops and the dates at which they were measured. Méliani claims that on the eve of the cease-fire in March 1962, 160,000 auxiliaries and 65,000 Muslims were serving in the regular army (1993, 26). Ageron, however, finds a total of 120,000 Muslims (including 40,000 *harkis*) serving in the French forces at the time of the cease-fire (1993b, 11, 1995, 3–20).

The reasons why young men joined auxiliary forces were varied. Some joined to seek vengeance for an act of terror that might have been committed by the FLN against their village.² Others joined as a result of traditional enmities between villages and clans: if one joined the FLN, the other by reflex signed up with the French. Many joined because of French military pressure. French officers bullied and threatened young men to become *harkis*; they also deliberately compromised villagers, making them appear to be collaborators, so that, in defense, young men had to sign up with a *harka* if they did not want to suffer the fate of those suspected by the FLN of treason (Ferdin 1981). Yet others found in the pay they received from the French, modest though it was, a regular form of income that could keep hunger and want at bay from their families.

The French military viewed the recruitment of *harkis* and other auxiliaries as a useful tactic in revolutionary warfare, a method of depriving the FLN of potential supporters and helping tip the population toward the French. According to Charles-Robert Ageron (1994, 1995), there was little belief in their intrinsic military usefulness. There were doubts about *harki* loyalty; they were therefore poorly armed and commanded by a large number of French officers. Paid a daily wage, 750 (old) francs, they were viewed as day contractors. Although the desertion rate was low, many did not sign up for renewed contracts. *Harkis* were suspected of contributing part of their wages to the FLN, of avoiding battle with FLN troops, and of showing insufficient zeal in rounding up FLN suspects. Documents from the war suggest that the *harkis* did not see themselves as soldiers. In explaining why they were not denouncing the presence of FLN soldiers, one group of *harkis* declared in October 1960, "We are laborers and nothing more." Yet even if the *harkis*, as much of the Algerian population, held an attentiste attitude, unsure for which side they should opt, Algerians viewed them as traitors (Ageron 1994, 1995).

Charles de Gaulle took power in June 1958 on the premise that he would preserve Algeria as French; by late 1959 or early 1960, he concluded that Algeria had to be granted independence. Reflecting the winding down of the war and a desire not to compromise more Algerians, the *harki* forces were reduced in size; the total number of Algerians serving as *harkis* and in other military branches of the French army by 1 March 1962 was 120,000 (80,000 of whom were auxiliaries) (Ageron 1993b; Faivre 2000, 131).

Various planning organs considered the implications for the *harkis* of France leaving Algeria. One military position paper in 1961 decided that the *harkis*

2. The FLN itself recognized that some of its actions led villagers to volunteer for *harki* service (FLN directive, November 1961, quoted in Harbi [1980] 1993, 259).

should be disarmed for fear that if they were left with their weapons, there would be something like a "revolt of the Sepoys." It was feared that the *harkis* would turn their weapons on the French to win last-minute recognition as patriots and to gain favor with the newly independent government ("Problèmes posés par les harkis" 1961).

Officials had contradictory information on the risk to the *harkis* of reprisals once Algeria became independent. A preliminary study, conducted in 1961, assumed there would be few reprisals. A position paper considered the extent to which pro-French Moroccans had suffered after their country's independence and found that few were victimized. Other information, however, was more alarming. When the prefects in Algeria were asked in October-November 1961 about the best way of assuring the safety of French loyalists, they reported that they should be transferred to France (Faivre 2000, 113, 133).

The planners determined that to protect the French loyalists, the government of an independent Algeria would be required to issue an amnesty to them, and France would have to issue a unilateral guarantee that anyone who wished to leave Algeria would be helped to settle in the metropole, although it added that "settling in France is neither to be anticipated nor encouraged." The number of loyalists coming to France was assumed to be very low, numbering a few thousand at the most. Even the alarming December 1961 report by the prefects that suggested that virtually all loyalists were in danger stated that few felt themselves threatened (Faivre 1995, 83-84, 2000, 133).

When the French government and the FLN finally negotiated an end to the war on 18 March 1962 at Evian, a cease-fire was announced for the next day, and mechanisms were put in place to transfer authority to the Algerians, leading to independence in July. At Evian, the issue of the *harkis* was not dealt with specifically, however. Both the FLN and the French government declared that no one would be persecuted for his position during the war.

At the end of the war, the French disbanded the auxiliary troops. French officers were supposed to offer the auxiliaries three choices: (1) sign up with French army, (2) be part of the local forces that were about to be formed, or (3) go home with a bonus. The first option was available only for those without dependents, and most were married. As one historian of the *harkis* claims, it is likely that few were told of these options; instead, they were simply disarmed, given their bonus, and sent home (Faivre 1995, 184).

In the spring of 1962, the French had intercepted FLN correspondence indicating that the *harkis* were at risk. The party directed its members to "show themselves conciliatory toward the *harkis* in order not to provoke their departure for the metropole, which would allow them to escape the justice of independent

Algeria." By April, harassment and killing of *harkis* had begun, although not to the extent that was to occur in July and August. In April, the secretariat of the Ministry of Algerian Affairs noted that "Muslims [are being] tortured" (Faivre 2000, 137, 198, 222, 317; Pervillé 1999, 65). It was clear all was not well. *Harkis* were fleeing to French military barracks asking for protection. Individual French officers, who had led *harki* units, offered *harkis* protection on their own initiative and transported a number of them to France.

Higher-up officials were opposed to the possible inflow of potentially a million French loyalists (*harkis* and other auxiliary troops, elected Algerian officials and civil servants, and others who had shown support for the French cause) and their families. Although some were highly "Frenchified," the *harkis* were least so, coming from rural areas and being often illiterate. In various letters in April, the minister of Algerian affairs, Pierre Joxe, confirmed that *harkis* could enjoy the protection of the French army, but he appeared to put a limit on their right to come to France by saying they could qualify only if their lives were in danger. On 12 May, he issued a decree, backed up by a circular from Colonel Buis, head of his military cabinet, and leaked to the press, which forbade the repatriation of *harkis* outside any official plan (Faivre 2000, 135-136, 225; *Combat* 1962, 23 May; *Nation* 1962, 23 May; *Le Monde* 1962, 24 May; Hamoumou 1993, 273). This decree effectively excluded most from coming because the officially organized plan admitted only a small number.

Until independence, all the populations of Algeria were French citizens and should have had the same rights to move between Algeria and France. However, whereas Algerians of European origin, the *pieds-noirs*, could arrive freely in metropolitan France, that was not the case for the *harkis*. In May 1962, when some *harkis* arrived in Marseille through nonofficial channels, they were sent back to Algeria (*Figaro* 1962, 23 May). As far as French officials were concerned, there were two categories of citizens.

The only public explanation for the reluctance to accept the *harkis* was Minister Joxe's claim that they might be employed by the French terrorist organization, the Organisation de l'armée secrète (OAS), committed to keeping Algeria French. Many army officers had been involved in challenging the government's policies in Algeria and, given the personal loyalties that many *harkis* felt toward their officers, such a scenario was within the realm of the possible, and it therefore found some echoes in the press (Pervillé 1999, 67). But, then again, toward the end of the war, although the *pieds-noirs* nearly unanimously supported the OAS, they were not hindered from reaching French shores (Duranton-Crabol 1995, 113). The most likely explanation was provided by Joxe in a letter to the prime minister warning of the danger that *harkis* might be used by the OAS and

stressing “the particular habits of these elements.” In a cabinet meeting, he described them as “undesirable,” alluding most probably to their purportedly unasimilationist nature (Peyrefitte 1994, 136; Faivre 2000, 199).

There was little sympathy for the *harkis* in the government. Once de Gaulle had convinced himself that the FLN incarnated Algerian nationalism, its opponents, such as the *harkis*, became unworthy. In a cabinet meeting, he described the *harkis* as “flotsam and jetsam” and as “soldiers of fortune” who served no purpose and should be got rid of as soon as possible. De Gaulle was indifferent to any danger the *harkis* might be facing: “if the people kill each other, it will be a matter for the new authorities,” he told the cabinet (Pervillé 1999, 66; Peyrefitte 1994, 166).

With independence on 3 July, any constraints that Algerians might have felt were gone, and a full-scale assault was unleashed on the *harkis* and their families. There were reports of *harkis* and their dependents being hacked to death, set on fire, and even boiled to death. Some were taken prisoner and forced to carry out life-threatening tasks such as removing the mines the French had laid on Algeria’s borders with Tunisia. There is no consensus as to the number killed, but it was in the tens of thousands. One of the first estimates in November 1962 came from the journalist Jean Lacouture, who evaluated the number of *harkis* killed by then to have been ten thousand, reflecting French official sources at the time (*Le Monde* 1962, 13 Nov.; “Atteintes aux accords d’Evian” 1962). *Harkis* and their sympathizers often mention 150,000 victims, a figure based on the extrapolation of a report by the subprefect of Akbou, who thought that maybe 750 *harkis* or even 1,000 had been killed in his *arrondissement* and surmised that the number was double in other *arrondissements*. Because Algeria had seventy-two *arrondissements*, the 150,000 figure was arrived at. After a careful demographic study, however, the historian Xavier Yacono (1982) categorically rejected the 150,000 figure as far too high, although he did not suggest an alternative number (see also Hamoumou 1993, 246–48; Méliani 1993, 34–35). Thirty years after his initial estimate, Lacouture (2001) revised the figure to 100,000. In 2001, the official historical Algerian agency devoted to the history of the war, which was probably liable to downplay the number of casualties, came up with a surprisingly high figure, suggesting between 75,000 and 100,000 victims (*Quotidien d’Oran* 2001, 4 Oct.).

After 3 July, all Algerian Muslims became Algerian citizens; until 1 January 1963 they could ask a French court to recognize them as French citizens, but they had to be on French soil to do so. With regard to *harkis*, who were now obviously in danger, the government adopted a legalistic position: they were not of interest to the French government because they were not French. When Minister of Defense Pierre Messmer reported on 25 July that *harkis* and other French loyalists

were claiming that they were in danger, de Gaulle remained indifferent, telling the cabinet, “We cannot accept all Muslims who claim they are not getting along with their government” (quoted in Peyrefitte 1994, 196).

In Algeria, the French army was aware that the *harkis* were being persecuted. The superior commander noted to his subordinates on 24 August that the “crimes and brutality” suffered by the *harkis* justified the reception of the four thousand who had fled to French military camps. But no more could be accepted, and officers were forbidden from looking for former *harkis* or their families (this part of the copy of the order in the archives was underlined in red). The camps in France were full, and the experience with the *harkis* was “disappointing”—they were “inadaptable;” it was unclear how the camps in France would manage with winter approaching (Commandement supérieur 1962c).

Ageron has documented repeated expressions of concern by French authorities for the fate of the *harkis*. Prime Minister George Pompidou told the minister of the army that the auxiliaries who had sought asylum in French garrisons be transferred to France, and later he and his subordinates filed protests with the Algerian government for its maltreatment of the *harkis* (Ageron 1994, 5, 2000, 13).³ But Pompidou, in line with other members of the cabinet, wanted to limit the number arriving in France. At a cabinet meeting in January 1963, Pompidou said, “We must not let ourselves be invaded by the Algerian labor force, even if it pretends to be *harkis*. If we are not careful, all the Algerians will settle in France” (Peyrefitte 1994, 396).

Government-organized repatriation programs, lasting from 1962 to 1967, brought twenty-five thousand *harkis* and other loyalists and their dependents to France; sixty-three thousand came by nonofficial means. Although these figures are in dispute, the one firm figure is that of the census of 1968, which shows that eighty-eight thousand “French Muslims” were born in Algeria (Jordi and Hamoumou 1999, 48–49; Faivre 2000, 142). Some of them were from privileged backgrounds, high civil servants, members of the liberal professions, and other important notables, but most were modest auxiliaries and their families. It is estimated that the French loyalists and their descendants, with a high birth rate, might today number around four hundred thousand, but there is no consensus on this figure.⁴

3. The Pompidou order, Ageron seems to believe, provides documentary evidence that the French were not reluctant to repatriate *harkis*. But Pompidou knew that this order would not mean that all *harkis* would be brought to France; the garrisons in Algeria were no longer accepting any more *harkis*. So the order applied only to the four thousand in the garrisons.

4. An official estimate of their number in the 1980s was already 400,000 (Report by secrétariat d’état 1984), but most estimates are lower and widely fluctuating; *Le Monde* in 2000 approximated

Although the *pieds-noirs* were allowed to live among other Frenchmen in France, most of the *harkis* were segregated. Government policy toward the *harkis* was a mixture of paternalism and racist indifference. Some *harkis* were brought to what previously had been internment camps, such as Rivesaltes, Larzac (Aveyron), and Saint-Maurice-l'Ardoise (Gard). Surrounded by barbed wire and run like military camps, these camps had held Spanish refugees in the 1930s, then Jews in the 1940s, and during the Algerian War the FLN and still later OAS prisoners. There were few facilities; most internees lived in tents even though winter conditions prevailed. Larzac was closed in 1964, but Saint-Maurice l'Ardoise and Biais continued as camps to house those considered to be unassimilable: the chronically ill, the traumatized, the aged, and families with no male heads of household. The former camp functioned until 1975, the latter even longer. Some *harkis* were employed to do forestry work in remote areas, with their families housed in abandoned villages. Still others were housed in public housing near industrial towns, where they had little contact with metropolitan Frenchmen (Gaspard 1995, 37–39).

At the beginning of this period, many *harkis* appeared to be hopeful that they would be recognized as French. Interviewing *harkis* in a camp in 1963, *Le Monde* met a girl who proudly announced that her name was Yvonne, and families had to be dissuaded from changing their names to Pompidou (*Le Monde* 1963, 20 June). The television news program *Cinq colonnes* had a program on *harkis* and shared the news of the birth of a new Frenchman, the son of an *harki*; his parents had named him Jacques (*C'était les harkis* 1963). Such naming practices were quite common during the first decade after the *harkis*' arrival, but by the 1970s disillusionment with the possibility of assimilation had set in, and *harkis* reverted to giving their children Muslim names (*Le Monde* 1973, 4 July; Roux 1990, 22)—a natural response to the poor reception they received. When in the 1990s children of *harkis* evoked the practice of giving European names, they claimed the names had been imposed upon them by social workers; they could not imagine that their parents had freely and rather enthusiastically administered these names (Delarue 1992, 34).

The metropolitan population revealed the same prejudices and fears toward the *harkis* as it had toward Arabs and Algerians in particular. An *harki* daughter remarked that in the hiring process, employers, in deciding "between us and the French with the same qualifications, will take a French person; they don't like us. They fear us, maybe it's our looks" [*peut-être c'est la tête*] (radio program 1981).

their numbers at 250,000 (17 June 2000). A few months later it reduced the number to 150,000 (*Le Monde* 2001, 8 Feb.).

The son of an *harki*, who had taken on the very French-sounding name Jean-Pierre Guérin, reported that he would call a potential employer on the phone about a job saying his name was Guérin and would be encouraged to come for an interview, but when he arrived, the employer would tell him there was no job. Then there was the gaze of the Frenchman categorizing him; when he crossed the border, police would scrutinize him because he did not "look like a Guérin." He applied to the Conseil d'état to change his name, but was repeatedly refused. He was now stuck with a name that he did not feel suited the reception French society was giving him (Muller 1998, 1:70–71, 1999, 35–36).

The daughter of an *harki* bitterly remarked that she was not French; there was no point in insisting on that: "We were never liked, I am always an Arab." In a radio program in 1981, a second proclaimed, "From all points of view I am French, but we are kept out of the system." Yet a third complained, "We desire total integration; we should not be thought of as immigrants. We have no rights, we are called Algerians." One *harki* reflected some of the same despair, "I would prefer Algerian nationality, but it is too late. Here, one is always an Algerian," or, as another put it, "He who says I am French is a liar." Asked when he came to that realization, he said it was the moment a fence was erected around the camp in which he was housed (radio program 1981; see also R. Courrière 1985).

Anger at their parents for bringing them to or giving birth to them in a society that did not accept them as full equals and embarrassment at having parents who were often illiterate and incapable of assimilating to French society created generational conflict. Critical of her *harki* parents, one girl remarked, "They came to France, but they did nothing. They did not really learn the language. They did nothing to succeed." Another girl remarked, "Parents don't transmit anything to us. We have no past, no future, no present." Reflecting these disappointments and an inability to put their parents' choice in historical perspectives, many of the *harki* children confidently declared, "We would have made a different choice from our parents," and "They let themselves be duped." A son of an *harki* angrily told his interlocutor:

My father is an idiot. A poor creature. He chose the camp of the defeated and he brought us here to live the life of a dog; I am ashamed of him. Look at what being French has brought us! We are held in greater contempt and treated worse than the authentic Algerians. . . . If I had been adult before 1962, I would have fought for my country, Algeria, not for the colonialists. I would have been a member of the FLN and everyone would have respected me.⁵

5. See Anglade 1976, 114; radio program 1981; and Muller 1998, 1:133, 1999, 69, for the quoted material in this paragraph.

Their parents' choices were to blame for the no-man's-land in which the *harki* children found themselves: "In Algeria we are traitors, in France we are Arabs" (Diop 1990, 35).

In the early years, *harki* children came home from school reporting that their classmates called them children of traitors, creating in them a malaise, a sense of guilt. And as for parents, "hardly ever do they speak in front of the [children] of events in Algeria, neither telling about their lives, nor exalting their battles. It is a terrible silence, born of the impossibility to communicate and from an acquired sense of guilt" (Muller 1999, 199; Méliani 1993, 42).

Fathers felt disgraced by often being unable to provide a living for their families and for having brought them to live in a country that treated them as outcasts. A pregnant silence enveloped *harki* families with no mention of the war or the circumstances that had brought them to France. When Mohand Hamoumou conducted his research on the *harkis* in the 1980s, much of it based on interviews with former auxiliaries, the children of the *harkis* would listen in and afterward tell Hamoumou that this was the first time they had heard their fathers talk about the war (Hamoumou 1993, 39). The son of one *harki* interviewed by Jordi and Hamoumou noted that "[m]y father was an *harki*. For a long time I did not know what that meant. My family did not speak of the Algerian War" (1999, 17; see also Muller 1998, 1:91, 186, 1999, 108).

Many *harkis* were burdened by the position they had taken in the war. Were they patriots or traitors? Hamoumou, in his three hundred or so interviews, discovered a fairly large number of former *harkis* who claimed to have been FLN sympathizers, favoring independence for Algeria. But, they said, they found themselves repelled by FLN atrocities or by some other form of misplaced zeal, or they had tried to join the FLN but were fended off by militants who did not want to share in the glory of being fighters (Hamamou 1993, *passim*). Although Hamoumou believes his interlocutors, it seems more likely that these explanations were memories created later, protecting the interlocutors from the charge of sedition that had been leveled against them. Also, the rural environment from which the *harkis* were recruited was not one in which a strong sense of nationalism flourished, especially in the early years of the war (see Stora 1986).

Another response to the charge of treason was loudly to proclaim one's Frenchness. Bachaga Boualem, the son and grandson of notables who had served France, had been vice president of the French National Assembly and recruited *harki* groups. He proclaimed his choice in the title of his book *Mon pays la France* (1962). Colonel Abd-el-Aziz Méliani, a graduate of Saint Cyr and an officer in the regular French army, wanted it to be understood that the *harkis*, born in Algeria, a territory that was French in 1830, were "French before our compatri-

ots in Nice and Savoy and on the morrow after independence of Algeria chose to remain French" (1993, 11). In a television program, one *harki* proclaimed, "I am French; my grandfather fought for France, and in the Algerian War my brothers did. I have always thought I am French" (*Vaincre l'oubli* 1985). Many *harkis* and their supporters insisted that they could not have been traitors to the Algerian nation, for it did not exist until 1962. As an *harki* publication put it, how could *harkis* be considered traitors? "Our country is France and we have not betrayed it" (Méliani 1993, 42; *Le clin d'oeil* 1997; Muller 1998, 2:7, 33, 1999, 188).

Certainly a number of Algerians had felt strongly French and been well assimilated to French culture. Sometimes their expressions of loyalty to France were seen as representing *harki* sentiment, but on the whole *harkis* had had limited contact with the French and did not speak or read their language. Just as few of them had been Algerian nationalists, so they equally had not had a strong sense of attachment to the colonial power. The strong French patriotism, mostly absent during the Algerian War, was a product of the postwar era, an answer to the charges of treason and a means of assuring themselves of all the rights they were entitled to as French citizens.

Some *harki* children were pleased their parents had chosen France. The horrors in independent Algeria after the civil war that broke out in 1992 seemed to validate the French cause: "our parents did not make a bad choice. . . . We now know why our parents were *harkis*. We know why we are here. We can be proud of our fathers. They refused the terror that we now discover in Algeria." A number of *harki* women expressed gratitude for their fathers' choice of sides, for otherwise they would be growing up in a country where women were denied their rights (Anglade 1976, 121; Diop 1990, 35; Jordi and Hamoumou 1999, 123). Although such opinions were expressed, the overwhelming attitude was one of disappointment, of a sense of betrayal and a memory of betrayal. If some regretted they had chosen the wrong camp, others remembered how France had betrayed them. When in 1982 *L'honneur d'un capitaine* was filmed, the sons of *harkis* played their fathers. There was a scene in which a French officer addresses them and tells them, "We shall not betray you." One of the actors requested that the scene be changed with the French officer just saying, "We need you," explaining "especially not that word. For too long they swore not to betray us, and we have been widely betrayed" (Droit 1982).

The *harkis* had legitimate grievances; they had been told they could trust France's word: France would stay in Algeria, but instead it decided to leave, disarmed the auxiliaries, and abandoned them to be murdered by the FLN. The French had only reluctantly accepted the settlement of a few *harkis* and had been indifferent and even callous toward their plight after their arrival on metropoli-



tan soil. Yet it could also be argued that the emphasis on how France had betrayed them was a way of displacing the charges of betrayal the *harkis* had had to endure for so many years.

The *harkis* were generally ignored; their presence was an embarrassing reminder of the costs of decolonization. As Secretary for Repatriation Raymond Courrière put it in 1985, "The intent of the politicians was not to speak of this community and that it not be spoken of" (Courrière 1985). To the Gaullists, the *harkis* were an uncomfortable reminder of the failure to protect French loyalists and the reluctance to accept them into French society. To the Left, which had supported de Gaulle's policies in Algeria, they were also a poignant reminder of the costs of decolonization. Once the war was over, the *harkis* were a reminder of a conflict the French preferred to forget. Years later, the caricaturist Pancho amusingly summarized the case of the political Left and of many Frenchmen against the *harkis*: in the cartoon Marianne tells an *harki*, "You were wrong to help us when we were in error" (*Le Monde* 2001, 31 Aug.).

Frustrated by years of neglect, the *harkis* started to protest in 1974. They held hunger strikes, took officials hostage, issued manifestos, and gave interviews to the press. There were high-profile *harki* hunger strikes at the Madeleine in Paris in 1974 and again in 1983. In Narbonne, children of *harkis* rioted in June 1991, setting off a series of similar protests throughout the country. On the day before Bastille Day, five thousand *harkis* marched through Paris, carrying flags and wearing large badges inscribed with: "My country, France. Where is France?" (Muller 1999, 140). In the years that followed, they held publicized hunger strikes, and on 11 November 1999 a scuffle took place between *harki* or-

ganizations and police at the Arc de Triomphe. The media provided a voice to the children of *harkis*, who made clear the neglect and mistreatment of a population whose only transgression had been loyalty to the French nation (Muller 1998, 1:240; Jordi and Hamoumou 1999, 111).

With the passage of time, it was easier to confront the issues of the *harkis*. The Gaullist leaders who had directed affairs during the painful years of decolonization were replaced by a new generation that had had no role in the decision making of that period and hence could more easily confront the *harki* cause. During the war, the *harkis*, seen as tools of repressive policies, had been the subject of opprobrium from the left. Indicative of this view was the journalist Paulette Péju, who described the *harkis* as "mercenaries serving the occupier, they round up people, they rape, they pillage, they torture and they kill" (1961a, 7). But after the war, the Left saw the *harkis* as victims of exploitation and neglect and hence worthy of empathy. Socialist prime minister Michel Rocard in 1990 assured the *harkis* of his concern for them and "more generally [for] those who feel they have been the victims of history." Later, even the Communists empathized with the *harkis*, describing them as "victims of colonialism" (Méliani 1993, 190; *Humanité*, 29 Aug., 26 and 29 Sept. 2001).

In the 1980s, xenophobia, exploited by the extreme rightist National Front Party, made clear that there was a need to combat racism, in particular that aimed at Algerians and other North African migrants. Responsible political leaders from both the left and the right stigmatized racism and its discourses of exclusion. If immigrant workers and even their offspring born in France were viewed as foreign, that certainly could not be the case for the *harkis*, who not only had been French citizens (also applicable, of course, to Algerian immigrant workers), but also had shed their blood for France. As Prime Minister Jacques Chirac declared in 1987, "We must honor the debt we have for the blood that was shed" (quoted in Roux 1991, 334).

Political leaders, arguing for the inclusion of all people living in France regardless of background, made a special case for the *harkis*, for if they could not be included in the body politic, which Muslims would qualify? Even the National Front was sympathetic to *harki* inclusion, albeit not as a first step toward inclusion of those considered of non-French origin, but to claim that the party was not racist and to show its continuing support for French Algeria. Opinion polls revealed a consensus on the *harkis*. A 1992 poll showed that although 32 percent of Frenchmen thought the *pièdes-noirs* had been unfairly treated upon their arrival in metropolitan France, 62 percent thought the same for the *harkis* ("1962-1992" 1992).

Official attempts were made to repair the prejudice that the *harkis* had expe-

rienced. By 1974, before the protests broke out, the French parliament recognized that the *harkis* had the same veteran rights as the French soldiers who had fought in Algeria. (Until then they had not because the French Parliament did not officially recognize the conflict as a war. Indeed, it did not do so until October 1999.) By giving *harkis* the same rights as regular soldiers of the French army, Parliament appeared to recognize the auxiliaries as having been comparable fighters, a change from the actual status they had enjoyed throughout the war.

Parliament also provided financial help; in 1984, it gave a lump sum of 110,000 francs to each of fifteen thousand *harki* families. In 1987, in 1994, and again in 1995, further indemnities, special loans, and training programs were established for *harkis* and their families. In 1994, *harkis* who were imprisoned or tortured by the FLN after 2 July 1962 because of their loyalty to France were provided with a pension and provision for medical services. In 1999, *harkis* older than sixty years of age and of low income were given a yearly pension of 9,000 francs. By 1999, 6.8 billion francs in aid had been disbursed on various government programs to *harkis* (Assemblée nationale 1999).

A number of symbolic attempts were made to register regret for the treatment of the *harkis* and to show gratitude toward them. In 1989, a stamp was issued in their honor, with the inscription, "Homage to the *harkis*, soldiers of France;" it sold 11.5 million copies. The need to include *harkis* in the national community led to a rewriting of the past; although during the war they had not been recognized as soldiers, now they were. Public regret was expressed for the policies of the past. At the ceremonial issuing of the stamp, a Defense Ministry representative declared: "Those who wished to reach France, unfortunately, were unable to do so. Those who were repatriated did so under difficult circumstances of which we cannot be proud. By this ceremony the Government of the Republic wishes to thank the veterans, tell their children and grandchildren they should be proud of their parents" (*Journal de l'union nationale des anciens combattants* 1990).

By a law of June 1994, Parliament unanimously declared, "The French Republic acknowledges its gratitude toward the repatriated former members of auxiliary or similar forces, or victims of captivity in Algeria for the sacrifices they made." In 1996, inaugurating a monument to "civilian and military victims who fell in North Africa, 1952–1962," President Chirac spoke of the auxiliary forces and the regular military as "fraternally united in the same fold of the flag" ("Inauguration à Paris" 1996).

Broad developments in general regarding memory and justice affected both the *harkis* and the attitudes toward them. In the 1970s, there was, as Henry Rousso puts it, "a reawakening of Jewish memory"; Jews and non-Jews to a

greater degree focused on the Holocaust (1991, 132). The language of persecution and genocide commonly employed to talk about Jews was also appropriated by *harkis* and their supporters. Jean Bastien-Thiry, the would-be assassin of de Gaulle, at his trial in 1963 represented the killing of the *harkis* as a "genocide," before it had become common to do so (see Bastien-Thiry 1994, 127). Dominique Schnapper, a sociologist and the thesis director of Mohand Hamoumou's *Et ils sont devenus harkis*, herself Jewish, saw parallels between the treatment of *harkis* and Jews in the Second World War: "The treatment of the *harkis* constitutes a shameful page in the history of France, as was the establishment of the Jewish statutes on October 3, 1940 or the rounding up of Jews at the Vel d'hiv on July 16, 1942" (Hamamou 1993, 10). Colonel Méliani spoke of the *harkis*' "massacres, as having the dimension of a genocide" (Méliani 1993, 27; see also Méliani 1995). Ahmed Kaberseli, also an *harki* spokesperson, described the killing of the *harkis* as similar to that of the Jews, Armenians, and Roma peoples. If 120,000 *harkis* had been killed, why did French people care less about them than France's 76,000 Jews killed in the Second World War? If Philippe Pétain was held in opprobrium for killing the Jews, why was de Gaulle, responsible for a greater number of *harki* deaths, not cursed also (Kaberseli 1996, 5)? For a French military historian who as an officer had directed *harkis*, "There is no example of such atrocities carried out by a fanaticized population in the whole twentieth century" (Faivre 1994, 184).

Although nearly all *harkis* went through camps as part of the official processing, most stayed only a limited time before joining the labor force. But the camps became a focus of *harki* memories. They were seen as analogous to the Nazi death camps. One *harki* reminisced, "When one sees a film on the concentration camps, it reminds me of Saint-Maurice-l'Ardoise. . . . It is a different planet" (Méliani 1993, 128, 140). Another remembered the Biais camp "as resembling very much a concentration camp." The child of an *harki* noted, "I personally am traumatized. To spend one's youth in a concentration camp is not a piece of cake" (Delarue 1992, 33). Certainly some *harkis* did spend many years in such camps, but such an experience became emblematic of the whole *harki* experience. A spokesperson for the *harki* cause declared, "After letting us be massacred, we were put in camps to remain subcitizens, victims of crimes against humanity" (Chabrun, Lenoir, and Varela 2001, 14).

The heightened memory of the Holocaust, triggered by Jewish memory, led to an increasing role for the state in recognizing the horrors of Vichy's policies toward France's Jews. The courts were seen as a venue for meting out justice, but also for establishing the historic record. Beginning in the 1980s, the courts brought to trial for crimes against humanity Klaus Barbie, Paul Touvier, and

René Bousquet on charges of "crimes against humanity" for their role in the killing of Jews. The most important trial, however, was that of Maurice Papon in 1997–98, who as secretary general of the prefecture of Bordeaux in 1942 had helped deport fifteen hundred Jews. He was found guilty and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment (Golsan 1996, 2000; *Le procès de Maurice Papon* 1998). In between these trials, in July 1995, President Chirac made a significant gesture in a solemn ceremony by issuing an official apology for the role of the Vichy state in the Holocaust (*Le Monde* 1995, 18 July).

Harkis and their supporters, having equated *harki* fate with that of the Jews, came to expect a parallel remedy for their ills: a state apologia and the sanction of courts to bring to justice the authors of their misfortunes and to redress the historic record. If Papon could be tried for killing fifteen hundred Jews, what about the officials who had served de Gaulle and were responsible for the deaths of 150,000 *harkis*, asked one *harki* publication (*Le clin d'oeil* 1998).

The attraction of judicial action was heightened in 2000–2001 by a passionate debate that broke out on the possibility of bringing to trial, on charges of crimes against humanity, French police and army officials guilty of torture and other acts of brutality during the Algerian War (W. Cohen 2001). In the fall of 2001, an *harki* organization filed suit against the French government for committing crimes against humanity by having abandoned the *harkis* to their fate (*Le Monde* 2001, 29 Aug.) Most commentators quite rightly pointed to the Algerian state as responsible for the death of the *harkis* and to the unlikelihood that any court would accept the case because all acts connected with the Algerian War had been amnestied by a series of laws after the end of the war. Nonetheless, the case caught the attention of the press (Gacon 1995, 2000).

The need for a symbolic recognition of France's responsibility for what happened to the *harkis* was seen as crucial after an episode that took place in the summer of 2000. In June, Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika came to France on a state visit. French journalists queried him as to whether *harkis* would be allowed to return to Algeria on a visit (most had been barred by Algerian authorities from doing so since independence). The president answered that the moment was not yet come: "it is exactly as if one asked a French member of the Resistance to shake hands with a collaborator" (*Le Monde* 2000, 18–19 June). The *harki* community was stung at being compared to Nazi collaborators and by the failure of French authorities to speak out for the equality of all French citizens. After all, Bouteflika had issued an invitation to *piets-noirs* to visit their former birthplace, but was barring other French citizens from the same rights. A few

weeks later, however, on the occasion of the yearly interview with the president of the republic on 14 July, President Chirac expressed shock when asked about Bouteflika's comments and affirmed the *harkis*' full equality with all other French citizens (*Le Monde* 2000, 16–17 July). But the pain inflicted on the *harkis* seemed to need a more forceful intervention—some national ceremony to recognize their contributions to the nation and to affirm their full membership in the body politic.

The *harkis*, believed to be four hundred thousand strong in France, represented a significant electorate that needed wooing, so their cause was also being exploited by political rivals. Alain Madelin, the leader of the centrist party Démocratie libérale, called on the Fifth Republic to carry out "its duty of repentance" (the mention of the Fifth Republic was a covert reminder to voters that it was the founders of the Fifth Republic, the Gaullists, who bore the responsibility for the fate of the *harkis*) (Agence France presse 2000). In February 2001, President Chirac decided to hold a national ceremony in September to honor the *harkis*—a reparation for the slight they had suffered during Bouteflika's visit. It was also intended to neutralize the political exploitation of the *harkis*.

On 25 September in the presence of sixty *harki* organizations and the highest civilian and military officials, President Chirac gave a speech at the Invalides in which he spoke of the "debt of honor" France owed "these proud and courageous fighters" and of the need to recognize "the position that is their due . . . [and that] justice be rendered to their honor as soldiers, their loyalty and patriotism": "our brothers in arms expect of France, the fatherland they chose, that it defend their honor and express the gratitude to which they have a right."

Once again the obligations of memory took precedence over the historic record considering that the *harkis* had not been fully viewed as soldiers during the war. But history and memory coincided when Chirac mentioned the massacres of *harkis* and their families and noted that when leaving Algeria, the French had "not known how to prevent [these deaths]." He also spoke of the poor reception of the *harkis* in France, their segregation, and the poor schooling provided them, all of "which are still at the origins of important handicaps." And he promised that "the *harkis* and their children will have their place in the national community" (quoted in *Figaro* 2001, 26 Sept.; *Le Monde* 2001, 26 Sept.). Ceremonies were held in twenty-seven locations in France connected to an *harki* past, such as the camp at Saint-Maurice, or where there were large concentrations of *harkis*, as in Lille. A plaque was installed at the Invalides and in the provincial sites with the words of the 1994 parliamentary resolution, "The French Republic acknowledges its gratitude toward the repatriated former mem-

bers of auxiliary or similar forces or victims of captivity in Algeria for the sacrifices they made.”

This was an important symbolic act, but an editorial in *Libération* was correct in suggesting that success in resolving the problem of the *harkis* would occur when there no longer would be an “*harki* community, because they finally would be fully French. What are we waiting for?”

I2 Language and Politics

A New Revisionism

HABIBA DEMING

ALGERIA'S POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY can be seen as a series of attempts to deal with consequences of the colonial past. Nowhere is this truer than in the cultural realm. Because of the brutality of the wars of conquest and liberation and the extent of the deconstruction of society that occurred between these two events, colonization in Algeria resulted in greater social upheavals than in the rest of the Maghreb. The economic and social tectonic shifts that took place under French domination and the devastation they caused often obscure other forms of deconstructing that are not easily measured, but may have longer-lasting sequelae. Aspects of the French colonial project that deserve closer attention are the colonial linguistic and cultural policies and how they continue to impact the country today. This chapter examines how the present linguistic debate in Algeria both stems from and reflects a revisionism of colonial cultural ideology.¹

At the time of conquest, Algeria had an extensive infrastructure of Koranic schools (primary education) and *medersas* (secondary education) (Lacheraf 1963). These schools were funded by revenue from *habous* lands.² Education was

1. This chapter focuses on certain aspects of colonial linguistic policies aimed at disjoining vernacular Arabic from classical Arabic, the written language. For this reason, it does not deal with Berber vernacular languages such as Chaouia or Kabyle, for even in Berber-speaking areas the written language was classical Arabic (Berber vernaculars do not fully function yet as written languages, and there are ongoing efforts to codify them and debates over the use of Latin, Arabic, or Tifinagh characters to give them a written form). In Berber-speaking areas, both in Algeria and Morocco, the French colonial administration pursued another brand of cultural deconstructing of traditional society, often referred to as *la politique berbère*. Its strategy was somewhat different in that it relied primarily on religious and ethnic mythologizing rather than on linguistic mythologizing. Berber speakers were constructed as quasi-pagan populations, superficially Islamized and descendants of Romans or Aryans and thus easily Christianized.

2. Also called *wakf*. These charitable foundations, constituted from lands willed by individuals, served to finance schools (Stora 1991).