

**IMMIGRATION, ETHNICITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:
MAGHREBIS' SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND
DISCOURSE IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD AND DURING
THE 1970s IN FRANCE**

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credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others**

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ABSTRACT

It has often been argued that post-colonial immigration in France has posed new challenges to the so-called French Republican model of integration. Indeed, French popular, and to a large extent political and media, discourses have presented post-colonial migrants (especially Maghrebis) and their children as constituting a population which is more difficult to integrate than previous, mainly European, migrants. At the core of this widely held belief lies the idea that Maghrebi immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon, and that their cultural, religious traditions and social practices (which are often described in vague and reifying terms) are irreconcilably different from those of the French, thereby ignoring the long and complex historical links that have tied France to North Africa since the colonial era. Equally, the lack of political representation of Maghrebis in France is not so much attributed to the discrimination to which North Africans are subjected as to their lack of political tradition.

This thesis aims to challenge these two widely held beliefs by carrying out a detailed analysis of the discourse and mobilisation processes of two important political movements which developed within North African immigration in France in the twentieth century. The first one, the *Etoile nord-africaine* (ENA), later to become the *Parti du peuple algérien* (PPA), developed during the inter-war period and became the strongest voice of Algerian nationalism during those years. The second one, the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* (MTA), which was created in the early 1970s in France, saw itself as an Arab nationalist movement which fought for the liberation of the Arab people and against racism within France and beyond.

Many academic studies posit the development of the ENA/PPA within the wider framework of colonial liberation movements and as a phenomenon which is linked with the history of Algeria. And further Maghrebi political movements such as the MTA, which have emerged in the post-colonial period, are somehow viewed as rooted in the social history of immigration in France. This thesis challenges this dichotomy and shows that, in spite of their specificities and different socio-historical contexts, these two Maghrebi political movements which developed during the colonial and post-

colonial eras form part of a consistent political tradition established by the Maghrebi diaspora in France. This study also focuses on the central question of identity and examines the complex social, historical and political processes which shaped Maghrebis' sense of national and ethnic identity during these two periods.

Both movements' discourses and actions are analysed through a large corpus of archival documents and publications produced by the ENA/PPA and the MTA on the one hand, and secondary sources pertaining to these two organisations on the other. The primary documents which are examined in detail include newspapers, tracts, reports from militants, personal correspondence, minutes of meetings, posters, as well as police and government reports.

This thesis shows that both the ENA/PPA and the MTA viewed Maghrebi national identity as rooted in Arabness. However, their sense of identity was informed by different markers and shaped their political agenda in different ways. On the one hand, the ENA/PPA's sense of ethnic identity marked a nationalist discourse rooted in history and religion which aimed to challenge France's oppressive colonial rule, and establish a modern nation-state within the confines of the colonial territory. On the other hand, the MTA's sense of ethno-national identity was informed by North Africans' anti-colonial struggle, by the Palestinian Revolution and by a strong sense of class belonging. Its nationalism encompassed the Arab World and transcended the boundaries of nation-states which had failed to defeat imperialism and its corollary, racism. In spite of these differences, this analysis shows that Maghrebi immigrants, who have been present in France since the early twentieth century, have developed a consistent and original political tradition and discourse in France.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: theories of ethnicity and nationalism

1.1 Introduction

L'immigration [est] le révélateur d'une crise profonde qui affecte l'idée même d'Etat-Nation. (Bouamama 1992: 153)

From the "malaise des banlieues" to the question of the integration of immigrants and their children, and from the future of France as a multicultural society to the persistence of xenophobia and the continuing popularity of the *Front National's* ideas, much of the media and political debate has, over the last two decades, focused on the "problem of immigration".¹ The term immigrant itself has been diverted from its original meaning to encapsulate mainly non-Europeans, and in particular North Africans, regardless of the fact that many amongst them were born in France and are French nationals (Sayad 1985).²

In this process which posits immigration as a problem (Silverman 1992: 70-78), the question of religion is frequently evoked and inexorably tied to the "immigrant"'s persona.³ Images of Islamic fundamentalism are conjured up. The headscarf affairs of 1989 and 1994 (see, for example, Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995, Siblot 1990), the "Affaire Kelkal" in 1995, and the suspicion and surveillance that Maghrebis were subjected to by the French authorities who feared that they might constitute a fifth

¹ In spite of the recent split of the *Front National* into two rival parties, prejudice remains strong in France. The annual report of the *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'Homme* on the fight against racism and xenophobia which was produced in March 2000 for the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, shows that more than two-thirds (69%) of French people declared that they were "plus ou moins racistes" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 15 mars 2000).

² Sayad calls those French people of immigrant origin "[les] «immigrés» de nationalité française" (1985: 19).

³ In the French public opinion and media, the correlation between immigration and Islam has, over the last decade, become an even closer one than that described by Bariki in 1984. He stated then that "Islam et immigration sont, pour l'opinion publique française, deux sujets très sensibles, que leur association rend encore plus explosifs. L'Islam, essentiellement perçu sous son aspect religieux, est devenu pour beaucoup de médias synonyme de fanatisme, de terrorisme et de totalitarisme. Il est désigné comme l'une des grandes menaces extérieures. L'immigration, quant à elle, est assimilée à insécurité, délinquance, chômage, atteinte à l'identité française. Elle fait de plus en plus figure de menace intérieure" (Bariki 1984: 427).

column in France during the 1991 Gulf war are just a few illustrations of the way in which North Africans have become and remain the embodiment of alterity in France. And in a twist of history, images of the tragedy of the current Algerian civil war (which some authors have called "la deuxième guerre d'Algérie") have come back to haunt France (Provost 1996).

In the face of the racism and socio-political, economic and cultural segregation experienced by Maghrebis and other post-colonial ethnic minorities in the 1980s, a number of antiracist organisations were created: associations close to the French Socialist Party such as the media-friendly *SOS-Racisme* and the "assimilationist" *France Plus*, or the more ethnically and regionally-based *Jeunes Arabes de Lyon et sa Banlieue* (JALB).⁴ Maghrebis developed their own political action such as the *Marche contre le Racisme et pour l'Égalité* of 1983 and played a leading part in the multi-ethnic, and somewhat less successful *Convergences* March of 1984, as well as the so-called "*Troisième Marche contre le Racisme*" of 1985.⁵ In the 1990s, the emergence of new social movements such as the *Mouvement de l'Immigration et de la Banlieue* (MIB) reflected a desire amongst migrants and their children to be more autonomous and proactive in fighting discrimination and racism.

In spite of their so far limited, but nevertheless worthwhile, success in obtaining improvements in the rights and life of ethnic minorities in France, these movements have been seen by the media and politicians alike as marking a new era of affirmative action amongst immigrants and their children in France. They have also been interpreted as signs that "les jeunes de la deuxième génération" are entering the realm of French polity (Leveau and Wihtol de Wenden 1988).

However, what is more problematic is the fact that their action has often been depicted as inherently "new" amongst ethnic minority populations, and in particular Maghrebis, in France. Indeed, even though their political mobilisation was, and still is innovative, it does not constitute the first sign of structured affirmative socio-political action amongst the North African migrant population. The general view which seems to

⁴ Malik (1990) provides an insightful analysis of the close relationship between the PS and *SOS-Racisme*.

⁵ For a detailed account of the *Marches*, see for example, Bouamama's *Dix ans de marche des Beurs, chronique d'un mouvement avorté* (1994) and Jazouli's *Les années banlieue* (1992).

persist in France is that North African immigration started to become "visible" with the coming of age of the "second generation" from the late 1970s/early 1980s onwards (Leveau and Wihtol de Wenden 1988: 68). As for the "first generation", which was marginalised in *bidonvilles*, *cités de transit*, SONACOTRA *foyers* and other hostels, and later in HLM, it was essentially seen as being composed of "invisible" and passive workers who lived mostly lonely and quiet lives well away from the gaze of most of the French population.

This lack of historical perspective on the part of the media and politicians may be less innocent than it appears as it constructs Maghrebi immigration as a relatively recent phenomenon and "problem", and as radically different from previous migrant groups. It also conveys implicitly the idea that previous immigrations from European countries have successfully "integrated" into French society without much difficulty thanks to their cultural and religious affinities with the French, when they clearly suffered from racism and segregation in their own time (Gallissot 1985c: 61-62, Mestiri 1990, Schor 1996: 24-27) and experienced similar choices and difficulties in the face of France's assimilationist message.⁶ It allows the French to present their "modèle d'intégration" in an unproblematic way and to put the onus on the "latest" arrived to assimilate. And their failure to do so is explained not by their socio-political, economic and cultural exclusion in France whose assimilationist machine clearly worked so well for previous migrants, but by the fact that they are culturally and religiously too "different" or reluctant to integrate. As Sayad points out:

L'espèce d'édenisme (social et politique) qui s'attache au mot "intégration" porte, non seulement à magnifier sous ce rapport l'histoire passée (et l'histoire des "intégrations" passées, déjà accomplies) et corrélativement, à "noircir" l'histoire présente qui est l'histoire des conflits présents. (Sayad 1994: 9)

Equally, Maghrebis' absence from the political spheres and decision-making process can, therefore, be presented by the French as reflecting the lack of maturity of a

⁶ See Ponty (1985) for a study of the difficult "integration" of Polish immigrants in France.

community more prone to instinctive rather than coherent action and lacking in political tradition, rather than as another illustration of their marginal status in French society.

The aim of this study is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to challenge those widely held beliefs and expose the processes by which Maghrebis have, since the early twentieth century,⁷ developed a consistent and original political tradition and discourse in emigration.⁸ The second objective of this thesis is to emphasise the central role that emigration played, during the inter-war period, in developing a nationalist discourse which laid the foundations for the independentist movement which won Algerian independence, and in the 1970s a nationalist stance which challenged the totalitarian rule of regimes in North Africa and beyond. Too many historical studies of North Africa which have focused on the emergence of nationalism and politics in that region have indeed paid little attention to the *continuity* of a political tradition in the Maghrebi immigrant community in France, and underestimated the often influential role that the diaspora has played in the politics of change in their home country.

Admittedly, many historians acknowledge the contribution that Messali Hadj's movement, born in emigration, made to Algerian independence and politics, but (and this is part of their limitation) the emergence of political activism in the diaspora in the inter-war period is, generally, bound to the colonial history of Algeria and somehow fades from the Maghrebi migrants' "map" after Algerian independence was achieved (see for example Droz and Lever 1982, Ageron 1968b & 1993, Julien 1972, Aron 1962, Le Tourneau 1962, Noushi 1962, Lafont 1980, Kaddache 1981, Kaddache and Guenanèche 1984 & 1985, Yacono 1973 & 1993).

By contrast, political organisations which developed amongst North Africans in the post-colonial period before the late 1970s are rarely, or too briefly studied, and mostly within a French socio-political context (see, for example, Jazouli 1986 & 1992, Wihtol de Wenden 1988, Hargreaves 1995, Cordeiro 1981). My aim here is to challenge this artificial dichotomy, reconcile both spheres of analysis and show that the hybrid

⁷ Political action amongst Maghrebi migrants in France can be traced back to as early as in the interwar period (see, for example, Stora 1992a, Gallissot 1985b: 217).

⁸ Girardet broadly defines political tradition as "tout phénomène de permanence à travers le temps d'un système relativement cohérent d'images et de représentations, de souvenirs et de comportements, d'allégances et de refus" (1987: 6).

political discourse of those political movements born in the Maghrebi migrant population are rooted in the politics of both France and North Africa. My aim is also to contribute to a better understanding of the underlying political themes developed by political activists in the North African diaspora this century, and particularly in the 1970s, an area on which very little academic work has been carried out.

This thesis will focus on the political discourse and mobilisation of two key autonomous movements which grew within the North African migrant population during two distinct periods. The first one is the *Etoile nord-africaine* (ENA),⁹ a movement born in June 1926 in France and which grew at the apogee of French imperialism.¹⁰ My analysis of the *Etoile* and the PPA will particularly, but not exclusively, focus on the 1930s.¹¹ The second movement is the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* (MTA),¹² created in 1972 out of the *Comités Palestine*, and which became one of the strongest independent political voices in the Maghrebi immigrant population in the 1970s.

The "discours nationalitaire" amongst immigrants did not end with the independence of North African states in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. Both movements claimed to be nationalist and became prominent in decades (the 1930s and the 1970s) marked by economic recession and the rise of racism affecting migrants and other ethnic minorities. They are also anchored in two key eras, the ENA/PPA in the colonial, and the MTA in the post-colonial period.

By studying those two organisations, this thesis aims to outline some of the main characteristics of Maghrebis' political discourse and mobilisation in France during those two decades. To be more precise, this study will focus on the central question of identity and on the processes by which Maghrebis in the diaspora constructed a sense of nationality rooted in ethnicity. It will also look at how the ideological substrate underpinning their sense of identity has been consistent or otherwise over the years. Of

⁹ The ENA soon became a mainly Algerian nationalist organisation.

¹⁰ It was dissolved by the *Front Populaire* on 27 January 1937 and continued its political activity as the *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (PPA) until the leadership's decision to transfer the movement's headquarters from Paris to Algiers in November 1938 (Stora 1992:37-44).

¹¹ The *Etoile nord-africaine* became a truly autonomous nationalist movement during the 1930s.

¹² The MTA was composed of Moroccans, Tunisians and Algerians.

course, one has to acknowledge the different contexts within which those two movements emerged and developed, and how their respective socio-political environments affected and shaped their outlook. However, the strong correlation which exists in some of the key aspects and themes of their discourse and action illustrates the extent to which the experience of Maghrebis in France remained a shared one, and was marked by racism, socio-economic and political alienation.

The main body of the thesis is divided into two parts, each focusing on one case study: the first part on the nationalist discourse and actions of the *Etoile nord-africaine* (ENA) and the *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (PPA) in the inter-war period in France, and the second part on that of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* (MTA) in the 1970s. Each movement was rooted in what Sayad (1977) defines as a distinct "age" of emigration.¹³

Each part has a similar architecture which consists of two main sections. The first one focuses on how ethnic and national identity is shaped in the discourse of each movement (the "ins"). The second one looks at the ENA/PPA and the MTA's discourse on external parameters which marked Maghrebis' diasporic experience such as racism and international political events, but also their relationship with the French, with other immigrants and with political organisations (the "outs"). This structural framework is largely inspired theoretically by Hughes' definition of ethnicity:

An ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups: it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the *ins* and the *outs* talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group (Hughes 1994: 91).

¹³ Sayad has analysed the complex processes of emigration in a number of studies (see, for example, Sayad 1975, 1981, 1993, 1994a, 1999). In 'Les trois âges de l'émigration' (1977), he describes Maghrebi migration to France in the inter-war period as the first "age" of emigration, a migration of older and more able men forced by the collapse of traditional socio-economic structures brought about by colonisation and whose aim was to enable rural communities to survive. From the 1950s onwards, the second "age" of emigration marked a shift from the previous generation and from traditional norms and practices. It was characterised by the desire amongst an increasingly larger number of younger Maghrebis (not only from rural communities, but more often from urban environments) to emigrate for more individualistic reasons.

Paraphrasing his definition, Jenkins convincingly points out that "ethnic cultural differences are a function of ethnic groupness ... identity is a matter of the outs as well as the ins" (Jenkins 1997: 11). As the present study will show, this contention is particularly pertinent within the context of diasporic North African political movements struggling to build a sense of ethnic and national identity within spatial and historical contexts marked by alienation. However, I extend this conceptual dichotomy between the "in" and the "out". Indeed, my analysis includes not only human groups, but also concepts, themes, socio-political phenomena and political power structures.

The first area upon which this thesis focuses is the inner constitutive elements of Maghrebis' ethnic identity underlying their sense of nationality,¹⁴ and looks at how the markers of ethnicity (kinship, but also class, religion, culture, as well as history and memory) shaped their discourse.¹⁵

The second area examines what I refer to as "the outer constitutive elements of identity", that is to say the movements' tense and complex relationship with, and discourse on themes, concepts, organisational structures, and political groups, some constructed negatively (such as racism and colonialism) and some positively (relationship with the Left, with the French people, with other immigrants and anti-imperialist groups, with the Palestinian struggle, and so on) which affected them. Even though these markers were posited as being outside the boundary of identity, they played a crucial role in the shaping of both movements' ethno-national identity and political discourse. Chapters four (ENA/PPA) and seven (MTA) look at Maghrebis' discourse on racism and at the antiracist strategies that they developed, and at the way in which universalism as an ambivalent concept both inspired them at an ideological level and underpinned the oppressive forces which alienated them as immigrants. Chapters five (ENA/PPA) and eight (MTA) assess both movements' discourse on, and relationship with, French political parties of the Left, trade unions and French intellectuals, as well as other immigrants in France. They also look at the way in which the socio-political situation in their home countries in North Africa and international

¹⁴ Chapter two for the ENA/PPA and chapter six, sections two to three for the MTA.

¹⁵ Chapter three for the ENA/PPA and chapter six sections four to seven for the MTA.

events, such as the Palestinian question, are evoked and inform their ideology, political discourse and process of mobilisation. Part two will include a comparative dimension which will highlight some of the similarities and dichotomies in the key political themes developed by the two movements. In chapter nine, I will draw some conclusions on the overlap and differences that marked the discourse of the ENA/PPA and the MTA.

1.2 Exploration of some theories of ethnicity and nationalism

The aim of this section is to survey some key aspects of the two main areas (namely *ethnicity* and *nationalism*) which traversed the political discourse of my two case studies. Methodologically and theoretically, this research is based on the premise that, even though nationalism can be founded on political membership (Jenkins 1997: 142, Verdery 1993: 38), North African nationalism, like most nationalisms, was rooted in ethnicity (see Connor 1978). However, it could be argued that the former and the latter forms overlap, as the construction of ethnicity is, to some extent, a political process.

Those two fields of research have been the subject of considerable interest amongst social and political scientists. My objective here is not to map out the entire corpus of academic work which has been produced, nor to analyse in detail the complex debate which has been and still is taking place in those two areas, but rather to introduce and discuss some key authors and trace some of the more important theories that have inspired this work.

1.2.1 Theories of ethnicity

This survey will focus mainly on studies of ethnicity which have been carried out outside France because, as Rinaudo points out, "la recherche française s'est longtemps caractérisée par un désintérêt général à l'égard de cette question avant d'en arriver ces dernières années à établir des constats d'ethnicisation de la société" (1999: 7). Marginalised at an academic level until the 1980s, the issue of ethnicity became the prerogative of economic and political circles, and particularly of the *Front national*

(Rinaudo 1999: 7). The work of social scientists such as, amongst others, De Rudder (1982, 1992, 1996) and Rinaudo (1999) and the more "*intimiste*" work of Kristeva (1988) have since shown that ethnicity has become a valid theoretical framework for the study of immigration and of French people of foreign origin in France.

Ethnicity is a complex and sometimes elusive concept. The word "ethnie" was first used by Vacher de Lapouge in France in 1896 to describe distinct "races", and was also employed in 1935 as a synonym for "race" by the pro-nazi author Montandon, and as the equivalent for "tribu" and "peuplade" by colonial administrators, always relating it to biological attributes (De Heusch 1997: 185). Connor (1978: 386) notes that it derives from the Greek word *Ethnos* which means "nation" in its original sense (as a group marked by common descent). Weber was one of the first social scientists to explore the meaning of this concept. His early work on ethnicity emphasises the process by which an ethnic group is the result of its members believing that they are of common descent: "We shall call 'ethnic group' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent ... this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation" (Weber 1978: 389). He also argues that the formation of ethnicity is a subjective process which is very much the result of contact and/or antagonism with "members of an *obviously* different group" (Weber 1978: 385, Jenkins 1997: 9-10).

Until the 1960s, the dominant approach to ethnicity in social anthropology, which was first described by Shils in his article 'Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties' (1957), had been to ascribe specific cultural traits to particular groups. This school of thought, which has been referred to as primordialism, was led by Geertz (1963) and developed by authors such as Isaacs (1975). Geertz described how the "primordial attachment" of groups hindered the development of modern citizenship and conflicted with the establishment of modern states. This approach is problematical in that it opposes those primordial feelings (which are linked with tribalism and communalism), and those of loyalty to the modern state (Geertz 1963: 107-113). Indeed this interpretation of ethnicity naturalises, and even reifies ethnic groups as cultural entities which are fixed, and it presents the ethnic attachment and the sentiment of citizenship as stemming from different sources which are to a large extent irreconcilable. It could on

the contrary be argued (and the analysis of ethnicity in this thesis shows this) that ethnic ties, however constructed and imagined they may be, can contribute, and even be at the core of the development and construction of nationality (or loyalty to one's nation), particularly in new states, which are the main subject of Geertz's study. Furthermore, in his listing of some of the more important markers of primordial ties potentially undermining citizenship (presumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion and custom), he does not take into account the fact that most of them, with the exception perhaps of "region", may actually have constituted the very basis for the creation of a nationalist discourse and mobilisation leading to independence and upon which calls for citizenship were based in newly independent North African states.

The limits of primordialism have been highlighted in a number of academic works (see for example Olzac 1983: 356, Eller and Coughlan 1993, Jenkins 1997: 44-45, Eriksen 1992: 28, Bentley 1987: 26). Eller and Coughlan in particular, criticise primordialism for being unintelligible and unsociological as it "presents us with a picture of underived and socially-unconstructed emotions that are unanalysable and overpowering and coercive yet varying" (Eller and Coughlan 1993: 187, see also Jenkins 1997: 45) and call for the term to be dropped from the sociological lexicon (1993: 183). They object to the term because it provides "no mechanism for the genesis of its phenomena", and does not explain the relationship between ethnic attachment and the social experience of members of a given ethnic group (1993: 194). They argue that Shills (1957), who is credited for being the first anthropologist to develop such a concept, based his theory on an erroneous interpretation of Nock's work (1933) on traditional and prophetic religions (Eller and Coughlan 1993: 184-185).

Another model of ethnicity has been developed by authors such as Wallerstein (1960) and Cohen (1969) who are referred to as instrumentalists. For them, the evolving economic and political context affects the established order and new groups of interests emerge. Bentley points out pertinently that in this interpretation of ethnicity,

People with common interests coalesce into groups in pursuit of those interests. Robing interest groups in ethnic (cultural) garb takes advantage of the legitimating nationalist ideologies of

modern states and/or renders such groups less vulnerable in the face of numerical or political inferiority. (Bentley 1987: 25)

This model is useful in understanding some aspects of ethnicity in the discourse of the North African political movements discussed in this thesis, and Wallerstein's work is used to shed light not only on these organisations' ideology, but also as racism as a socio-economic phenomenon which marked the society within which those two movements evolved.¹⁶ However, instrumentalism fails, to some extent, to take into account many of the complex processes that shape ethnicity, and reduces it to a phenomenon marked by the pursuit of short-term economic interest (Patterson 1975, Bentley 1987: 26).

A more recent and convincingly laid out interpretation of ethnicity is the situationalist approach developed by Barth in his introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969a), which has constituted the broad theoretical framework within which my research on ethnicity in the North African migrant population in France has been conducted. It opposes the previous analysis in many respects. Barth challenges convincingly the premise that ethnic groups should be defined solely according to common cultural characteristics, and calls for a better understanding of the processes by which ethnic groups are constituted and of the nature of the boundaries between them (1969a: 9). He points out that it is "the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969a: 15), and therefore shifts the emphasis from cultural traits to boundary maintenance:

although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between the units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant ... some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down or denied. (Barth 1969a: 14)

¹⁶ See chapters four and eight.

This perspective on the field of ethnicity marked a change in the way in which social anthropology worked. As Jenkins, drawing on Cohen (1978: 384), points out, it involved a shift "from a Western interest in the uncivilized peoples of the colonies and ex-colonies, to a more equitable concern with the heterogeneity of all societies" (Jenkins 1997: 18). In other words, the concept of ethnicity was not only freed from the narrow context within which it had been used previously, it also enabled the widening of the field of anthropological exploration and highlighted the salience of ethnicity as a concept and analytical tool in all societies.

A significant number of authors have adopted the situationalist or transactional interpretation of ethnicity in their research. Amongst them is Wallman whose definition of ethnicity has inspired my analysis of the discourse of the *Etoile/* PPA and the MTA:

ethnicity is the process by which 'their' difference is to be used to enhance the sense of 'us' for purposes of organisation or identification ... Because it takes two, ethnicity can only happen at the boundary of 'us', in contact or confrontation with them. And as the sense of 'us' changes, so the boundary between 'us' and 'them' shifts. Not only does the boundary shift, but the criteria which mark it change. (Wallman 1979: 3)

Wallman's understanding of ethnicity, which in some ways echoes that of Hughes (1994), has enabled me to map out some of the key processes of ethnic identity formation in the North African immigrant population in the inter-war period and during the 1970s.

In his study of culture and society in Trinidad and Mauritius, Eriksen (1992) also uses the situationalist approach (which he refers to as formalist) which posits ethnicity as a form of social process. But he does so in a more cautious way. According to him, the formalist interpretation offers greater flexibility and theoretical sophistication than the primordialist interpretation. However, he notes pertinently that it has two important limitations which prevent it from fully understanding ethnicity. The first one is that as a concept, it is ahistorical, and therefore diverts analytical attention

from the wider social and political context. He highlights the fact that "ethnicity is always a property of a particular social formation in addition to being an aspect of interaction" (Eriksen 1992: 29). My research attempts to address that limitation in two ways: firstly by looking at the process of identity formation in my two case-studies as a transactional, synchronic process which is 'context-sensitive', that is to say rooted in the socio-political context of its time, and secondly by examining diachronically, by comparing and contrasting those two socio-political formations whose nature and discourse share some significant common ground with one another.

The second limitation that Eriksen highlights in the Barthian model is that it sees ethnicity as an "empty vessel", in other words that it marginalises the role that cultural specificities play in the way the interaction is shaped (Eriksen 1992: 30-31). Again, my study of the North African nationalist discourse in France adapts the situationalist approach to take into account the cultural (in the wider sense of the word) dimension of the discourse of both movements on ethnicity in order to better highlight the transactional processes at work in the process of ethno-national identity formation.

Starting from a similar viewpoint, Cornell (1996) acknowledges the important contribution that both situationalists (for example Cohen 1974a & 1974b, Steinberg 1981, Herstein 1983) and constructionists made to this field of research by moving away from the previously dominant primordialist model which considered ethnic identities to be fixed. He calls constructionists those anthropologists (such as Sollors 1989, Nagel 1994) who adhere to a model of ethnicity stemming from situationalism (which he also refers to as circumstantialism), and who treat "ethnic groups as agents in their own construction, shaping and reshaping their identities and the boundaries that enclose them out of the raw materials of history, culture, and pre-existing ethnic constructions" (Cornell 1996: 266). However, Cornell challenges the prominence given by circumstantialists/situationalists to the transactional processes and calls for a new approach which strikes a balance between cultural content and circumstance. His definition of an ethnic group reflects this. He sees it as "a social group distinguished by a claim to common descent or some approximation of it and the assertion of either a history or a present of shared culture" (1996: 269). He argues convincingly that the

circumstantialist approach, which focuses on ethnic identity as being derived from convenience or efficacy, does not explain why some groups remain attached to identities which do not serve their objectively determined interests, and adds that:

Positional interests may indeed shape collective identities, but surely the reverse is true as well: our self-concepts shape our perceptions of the world around us and therefore, our perception of our interests. This in turn, shapes action often with transformative consequences for circumstance. (Cornell 1996: 267)

While Cornell recognises that the constructionists' approach focuses far more on the content of ethnic identities than the circumstantialists', he criticises their basic contention that self-construction of ethnic identity is by and large "driven by factors external to the group" (1996: 267).

Another polemical, and I would argue problematic, view of the concept has been proposed by van den Berghe, which is worth mentioning briefly. Drawing on analysts such as Hamilton (1964), his socio-biological interpretation of ethnicity is based on the idea that socio-biology supplies "the main genetic mechanism for animal sociality, namely kin selection to maximize inclusive fitness" (1978: 403). He considers that kin selection is a strong bond of sociality between humans, as it is between other animals, but that in the case of the former, two more bases of sociality can be observed, that is to say reciprocity and coercion (1978: 403). He goes on to suggest that ethnicity and 'race' are extensions of kinship, and that "ethnic and race sentiments are an extended and attenuated form of kin selection" (1978: 403). He distinguishes two types of human collectivities: the first one being ascriptive and defined by common descent and the second one whose membership is informed by the defense of common interest. This explication of ethnicity as a socio-biologically-grounded phenomenon has been pertinently criticised by a number of analysts, who have accused him of naturalising a concept which is, in essence, socio-cultural (see for example Sahlins 1976, Jenkins 1997: 77).

From a markedly different perspective, Bentley (1987) tries to address the limitations of both instrumentalism and primordialism (which he refers to as the "instrumentalist-primordialist dichotomy") by drawing on Bourdieu's "theory of practice" (1992), and more specifically on his concept of "habitus".¹⁷ He states that his proposition is based on the contention that "consciousness of affinities of interest and experience embodies subliminal awareness of objective commonalities in practice [and] provides the objective grounding for ethnic subjectivity sought by both instrumentalists and primordialists" (Bentley 1987: 27). He argues that his theory addresses what he and other anthropologists (such as Eriksen 1992: 30-31) view as an important weakness of the Barthian model which treats ethnic identity as

empty vessels whose content is anchored externally in conventional but arbitrary oppositions between categories. The theory of practice posits a different kind of dialectic whose poles are constituted by affective affinities based on shared habitus and symbolic differentiations both cognitively and affectively generated. (Bentley 1987: 36)

Bentley applies his model to his case-study (a young Philippino Muslim woman called Soraya Monap who belongs to the Maranao ethnic group) which illustrates the relationship between practice and sensation of ethnic affinity. Her personal "parcours" is marked by her will to combine both dimensions of her identity, her "traditional" Maranao identity and the "modern" values and norms which she acquired during her years at school and university in Manila. He goes on to suggest that as ethnic identity stems from situationally shared elements of a multi-dimensional habitus, people can have several "emotionally authentic identities and symbolize them in terms of shared descent" (1987: 35).

¹⁷ Bourdieu defines habitus as follows: "the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions ... The habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures ... to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can ... call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same material conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1977: 72, 85).

This idea is of particular relevance to the question of the negotiation of identity for Berbers in the two political movements studied in this thesis, which both leaned heavily towards Arabness as an ethnic referent. However, his analysis fails to tackle the important question of hybridity (see, for example, Melucci 1997: 63-66, Grossberg 1996: 91-92, Bhabha 1986: 198-205 and 1990: 207-221) and pays too little attention to racism which may, to some extent, have informed such identity (for instance, during Soraya's years in predominantly Christian Manila).

Also, even though Bourdieu's argument is that the habitus can evolve, produced as it is by different modes of generations (Bourdieu 1992: 78, Bentley 1987: 29), Bentley's application of his theory of practice does not provide an entirely suitable analytical framework for the study of nationalist political movements in the colonial and post-colonial diasporic populations, whose ethnic identity is as much shaped by the habitus (established not only within the diasporic community itself, but also by the cultural practices and norms which are inculcated by the dominant "host society") as it is marked by discursive processes of *transgression* of the habitus in colonial and post-colonial contexts (and we are coming back here to the complex issue of hybridity).

In his article entitled 'New Ethnicities', Stuart Hall (1988) addresses this issue in an interesting way (within a cultural studies perspective), and also highlights the dangers of ethnicity as a concept and its recuperation by British and other racisms (1988: 29). He identifies two "moments" of black cultural politics. The first moment, which was traversed by binary oppositions and substitutions, was when the term "black" encapsulated the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain which provided the framework within and against which a new politics of resistance emerged (1988: 27). The second moment marks a new phase ("new ethnicities"), which is by no means a break from the first moment. To some extent, it "displace[s], reorganise[s] and reposition[s] the different cultural strategies in relation to one another" (ibid). Hall argues that the new politics of representation he has witnessed in black culture and politics in Britain since the 1980s is very much informed by an awareness of the black experience as a diaspora experience rooted in a process of hybridisation, which is also referred to as "the process of *diaspora-ization*" (Hall 1988: 29-30). His

interpretation of ethnicity highlights the role played by history, culture and politics in the construction of ethnicity:

If the black subject and black experience are not stabilised by Nature or by some essential guarantee, then it must be the case that they are constructed historically, culturally -and the concept which refers to this is 'ethnicity'. The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. (Hall 1988: 29)

Hall emphasises the contextual/situational character of ethnicity, and welcomes what he sees, in Black British cultural output, as a process of contestation of the dominant conception of ethnicity underlying the essentialist English ethnicity (which has too often been associated with notions of "race" and "nation"), and the beginning of a "positive conception of ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery" (1988: 29).

While Hall's analysis is clearly rooted in a British socio-cultural and political context, a number of his observations would prove salient in the French situation, and more specifically in the case of the two political movements studied here. Indeed, it could be argued that the ENA/PPA and the MTA's discourses were not only rooted within what Hall defines as the first moment of ethnicity, but were also hybrid discourses informed by the diasporic experience of the North African migrants who militated within those organisations. I would go further and assert that this process, which he coined "diaspora-ization", did not start in emigration. It may indeed have started much earlier in the colonies, as an epiphenomenon of colonialism and post-colonialism, and of the politics of displacement, dispossession, alienation, and construction of identity.

Other authors have analysed the concept of ethnicity using and combining different approaches. Hagendoorn (1993), for instance, who is clearly influenced by the situationalist interpretation of ethnicity, draws on anthropology, sociology and social psychology to build a pertinent multi-disciplinary model explaining the processes by

which negative ethnic attitudes develop and ethnic hierarchies are constructed in society. The first field allows him to assess the extent to which those negative attitudes can be the result of cultural misunderstanding, the second one to understand how those negative ethnic attitudes are a reflection of a struggle for power between ethnic groups, and the third field to examine how ethnocentrism is the result of identity being defined through their own ("ingroup") and other groups ("outgroups") (Hagendoorn 1993: 26-27). At the core of those negative attitudes is the issue of prejudice which, according to him, is characterised by the fact that "the behaviour of outgroup members is not evaluated on the basis of its cultural meaning, but on the basis of ingroup values" or alternatively, can be defined as a justification "of the influence, power and wealth of and by the powerful" (1993: 27-28). However, it could be argued that this interpretation does not account for prejudice that ethnic minorities can encounter on the part of those within the "dominant" ethnic group who are themselves socially, economically and to some extent culturally marginalised (so called "working-class racism").

Interestingly, the question of prejudice leads Hagendoorn to tackle the issue of racism. He notes that new forms of racism have emerged which Barker (1981) referred to as "new racism". Two types of new racism are described, which he argues are interconnected, and related to classical racism (which is the expression of the ingroup seeing the outgroup as racially inferior). The first one, which developed in the USA after World War Two, is categorised as symbolic racism or ethnocentrism, a phenomenon that he views as a veiled form of racism which considers the outgroup as unfairly privileged. The second one is aversive racism where the aversion for the outgroup is expressed through avoidance (1993: 28-29).

Within a French context, new racism has been broached in a different way. Balibar sees it as a phenomenon which has developed in "Anglo-Saxon countries" and which has gained influence in France. It focuses on immigration and can be seen as a

"racism without races". It is a racism shaped during a period of decolonisation, of migration of post-colonial populations into France and marked by the "scission de l'humanité à travers un seul espace politique" . Its dominant theme is not biological heredity, but the irreducibility of cultural differences (1988: 32-33). Balibar's definition of new racism reflects that of Taguieff, who also refers to it as a "racisme différentialiste".¹⁸ Taguieff defines new (or neo) racism as follows:

Les nouveaux modes de légitimation du racisme dérivent ... de deux opérations fondamentales: d'une part, la production de nouvelles présentations recevables centrées sur la « défense des identités culturelles »; d'autre part, la mise au point de nouveaux arguments acceptables tournant autour de l'éloge immodérée de la différence. En second lieu, c'est sur la question de l'immigration, et de l'immigration instituée en problème social et politique majeur par les effets combinés des propagandes anti-gauche (1982-1986), que se sont cristallisés tous les nouveaux lieux communs de la rhétorique de l'identité culturelle et de la différence, dont la hantise du métissage, perçu comme génocide indirect et ethnocide à moyen terme, constitue le fond affectivo-imaginaire plus ou moins voilé dans les discours produits. (Taguieff 1991b: 49-50)

Another important development in this field has been the study of ethnic mobilisation. Mobilisation as a theme has been the subject of a significant number of studies, and it would require too much space within this thesis to map out the entire body of work carried out in this field. It would be useful however, to mention some of the key trends and analysts who have shaped that concept. According to Chazel, Karl Deutsch, in *Nationalism and Social Communication* (first published in 1966) was the first theorist to discuss and place the question of mobilisation in direct relation with modernity. In his

¹⁸ Footnote: For further discussion of new racism, see chapter seven, section one. See also Silverman 1992: 122-124, and Guillaumin 1972: 69-79.

work, mobilisation is equated to a process of change which reflects a shift from tradition to modernity (Chazel 1975). On the other hand, Etzioni (1968: 243-253) challenges the close relationship between mobilisation and modernisation and views mobilisation as a process which is independent from the latter. Chazel considers that Obershall's theory (1973) is the most convincingly developed. Unlike Deutsch, Obershall posits mobilisation within the politics of conflict and argues that it is often directed against the authorities and the state. Its efficacy is dependent on its grounding in a community (a family, a village, or an ethnic group) or in a complex network of professional, political or religious associations (Obershall 1973: 28,121,133, Chazel 1975: 511-512). His view further contradicts that of Deutsch when he states that the most efficient mobilisation comes from groups which have best resisted the disintegration of traditional structures and from associations with communitarian underpinnings in spite of their apparently modern character (1973: 123-124, Chazel 1975: 512).

The question of political mobilisation has also become the subject of studies within the field of ethnicity. Olzak's (1983) detailed analysis of the various approaches to contemporary ethnic mobilisation provides a useful insight into such a socio-political phenomenon. She defines ethnic mobilisation as "the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity (for example skin color, language, customs) in pursuit of collective ends" and agrees with analysts such as Connor (1972) and Smith (1979) that in some circumstances modernisation creates and sustains contemporary ethnic movements (1983: 355). Olzak, whose own work could be said to be inspired by situationalism, points out that a distinction should be made between ethnic solidarity and ethnic mobilisation. The former is understood to be a process of conscious identification with an ethnic population and is about the maintenance of "strong ethnic interaction networks and institutions" (1983: 356). She also notes that there are four main theoretical approaches to ethnic mobilisation. The first one (developmental theories), whose proponents include, amongst others, Deutsch (1966) and Rokkan (1970) views such a phenomenon as a reaction from the periphery (marked by a reinforcement of primordial traditional ties) against the centralising core during development (Olzak 1983: 358). Olzak challenges the main hypothesis underlying this

theory by arguing that development may actually lead to assimilation rather than mobilisation. The second theory encapsulates internal colonialism and cultural divisions of labour. The internal colony is the result of a richer and culturally dominant core exploiting and dominating an ethnically identified periphery. In that context core-periphery conflict increases, and cultural and economic exploitations reinforce each other when cultural differences correspond to differences in development between core and periphery (Olzak 1983: 359, see also Gellner 1969: 168-70).

This process, marked by segregation along cultural and ethnic lines, and which assigns the dominated ethnic minority to lower status socio-economic positions, can lead to ethnic mobilisation which combines with "class-based interest" (Olzak 1983: 359). Olzak criticises that approach for focusing mainly on economics and for not determining which boundary (ethnicity or class) underlies some collective action (1983: 360). The third approach (split and segregated labour markets) emphasises the importance of economic roles in ethnic solidarity processes, and either views ethnic conflict as the result of the competition of two or more ethnic groups within the same labour market ("split labour market") (Olzak 1993: 360, Bonacich 1972: 558) or interprets the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and solidarity through the existence of strong specialised institutions and networks which sustain ethnic solidarity ("segregated labour market"). Olzak criticises the latter for not explaining how ethnic solidarity affects ethnic mobilisation (1983: 361). The fourth theory ("competitive models of ethnic mobilisation") which is supported by Olzak and by other analysts such as Despres (1975) and Young (1976) links in with the previous approach, but goes further by arguing that ethnic mobilisation will happen through increasing access to political, economic and social resources (Olzak 1983: 362).

Olzak's detailed overview of the theoretical framework and limitations of studies on ethnic mobilisation contains nonetheless some arguments which need to be briefly discussed and challenged. Firstly, her suggestion (which is consistent with that of Glazer and Moynihan 1975) that studies of that process should concentrate on the post-war years because that period was characterised by increasing politicisation of ethnicity (1983: 355) is problematic. Examples such as the development of the *Etoile nord-*

africaine and the *Parti du peuple algérien* in the inter-war decades would tend to show that such ethnic mobilisation had taken place before that period. Secondly, she asserts, in her assessment of the segregated labour market theory, that ethnic conflict in France (as well as in Germany and Switzerland), with the exception of Algerians, has been more "contained and routinized" than in Great Britain, where ethnic tensions have been marked by violence and their racial content (1983: 361). It could be argued that ethnic conflict in France has not necessarily been more contained and routinised, and less "racial" than in Britain. It has been violent not only with regard to Algerians, but also to Tunisians and Moroccans, as our study of the MTA shows. Furthermore, ethnic conflicts involving other migrants such as Mauritian immigrants in the 1970s and Sub-Saharan African in more recent years, would tend to suggest that tensions also involved ethnic groups other than Maghrebis.¹⁹ If her timescale were to include ethnic phenomena since the end of the nineteenth century, further examples of violent ethnic conflict (anti-Semitism, and the Aigues-Mortes racist attacks against Italian migrants in 1893 are a case in point) would also problematise her argument.

Within this thesis, my analysis of the discourse of the ENA/PPA and of the MTA on ethnicity is developed firstly through a situationalist perspective (Barth 1969a, Wallman 1979). But I argue that defining ethnicity simply as being shaped at the boundary between "us" and "them" gives only a limited understanding of the complex processes of ethnic identity formation. I also incorporate a context-sensitive approach to the study of ethnicity which also takes into account the socio-cultural, economic, religious and historical context within which ethnicity is shaped. I also study the phenomenon of ethnic mobilisation in the *Etoile/PPA* and the MTA as a process whereby groups organise around ethnicity in pursuit of collective ends, and that modernisation plays a key role in creating and sustaining contemporary ethnic movements (Connor 1972, Smith 1979, Olzak 1983).

¹⁹ For instance, the mobilisation around the *sans-papiers* at the St Bernard Church in Paris in the mid 1990s.

1.2.2 Theories of nationalism

Equally wide in its theoretical and practical scope is the concept of nationalism. It would be beyond the remit of this section of the thesis to discuss the extensive body of research which has been carried out in this important field, in which no analytical consensus and no widely accepted definition exists (Anderson 1996: 1). Students of nationalism could nonetheless refer to some of the works of influential authors such as Renan (1882/1992), Durkheim (1975), Anthony Smith (for example 1979, 1981, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1996), Kedourie (1985), Gellner (1983, 1996), Hobsbawm (1973, 1988, 1996), Anderson (1983), Breuilly (1982, 1996) and Hroch (1985, 1996), amongst others.²⁰ With the exception perhaps of Anderson, Gellner and Smith, most of the works on nationalism have focused mainly on the study of the phenomenon in Europe.

Echoing what was said above about ethnicity, the study of nationalism as a concept, since the work of Renan and Durkheim, seems to have been largely ignored in French academic circles until fairly recently. To a great extent, it remained the preserve of the discourse of nationalist political organisations (in the extreme-right). However, over the last decade marked by the "retour des nations" authors such as Birnbaum (1997), Delannoi and Taguieff (1991), Delannoi (1994) and Touraine (1997) have become aware of its salience as a sociological concept, and have joined the circle of predominantly non-French analysts working on nationalism.²¹ Others, such as Bouamama (1992) and Tassin (1994), have focused on the complex and often conflicting relationship between nationality and citizenship.

My aim here is to present critically some of the more relevant and recent works on nationalism which have influenced this thesis in a specific way. But before doing so, it would seem important to discuss the overview, which Breuilly (1996) has carried out, of some of the trends in research on that concept. He considers that historians have

²⁰ Smith is acknowledged to be "the main guide in this field for readers of the English language" (Hobsbawm 1990: 2).

²¹ Birnbaum points out that "nombreux sont ceux qui aujourd'hui, dans un monde anglo-saxon plus sensible aux sociologies des valeurs, s'engagent dans des recherches de tous genres: l'industrie du nationalisme remplace dans les préoccupations de beaucoup celles du corporatisme ou de l'Etat" (1991: 2).

focused on three main areas: doctrine, politics and sentiments (1996: 146). Kedourie (1985), for instance, focuses on the emergence of doctrine and its political uses to analyse nationalism. This model implies positing nationalism as a phenomenon which is informed by ideas generated in particular by the intelligentsia (Breuilly 1996: 147). Kedourie examines nationalism through the work of intellectuals such as Kant (and his theory of self-determination which features prominently in his book), Montesquieu, Fichte, and the Egyptian political leader Abd-el-Nasir (Kedourie 1985: 21-31). For Breuilly, this approach has little value as in many cases, nationalist politics are dominated by groups other than intellectuals and national sentiments arise through complex processes, and not as a result of the spread of a doctrine by intellectuals in the population (1996: 147). Secondly, there is the development of national sentiments within the population (the "nation"), which is considered to be at the core of nationalism by analysts such as Seton-Watson (1977). Breuilly argues that there are limitations to this model as doctrines and nationalist politics can develop in regions where there is a lack of national sentiments among the population, and there are cases where there are strong national sentiments amongst the population but these do not lead to the development of nationalist doctrines or movements (1996: 147-148). The third model applied to the study of nationalism, which is favoured by Breuilly, centres not so much on the intelligentsia or the people, but rather on *politics* as the process of nation-building. He argues that "there exists a nation - a special group which is set apart from all other human beings - ... Political identity and loyalty are, first and foremost, with and to the nation ... The nation should have political autonomy, normally in the form of a modern state" (1996: 149).

Breuilly goes on to describe, within those areas, the four approaches adopted by authors to understand nationalism. The three approaches that he criticises are firstly, the primordial approach which sees the nation as rooted in history (which encapsulates the discourse of nationalists themselves and which has, to some extent also influenced Anthony Smith's work), secondly the functional approach, which informed the work of Kedourie (see Smith 1996: 185), and which views nationalism as fulfilling the need for

an identity after the collapse of tradition and religion (1996: 155-156), and thirdly the narrative approach, which he considers of little analytical value :

Academic historians frequently accepted the narrative as the proper form of an historical account, the national as providing the boundaries and identity of their subject matter, and the emergence, expansion and success of national movements as the principal story ... The problem, of course, is that a narrative explains nothing. It is built on dubious assumptions. (Breuille 1996: 157)

The final approach – and the one which he advocates – focuses upon modernity, upon "transformations in the nature of power which leads to the production of nationalist politics" (1996: 159). I would agree with Breuille that nationalism is inherently rooted in modernity (and the development of the *Etoile* and the PPA shows this), and that the three areas which have been highlighted (doctrine, politics and national sentiments) should not be considered as discrete, but as part of a tension, with different cases of nationalism stressing different aspects of that tension. However, his theoretical framework (which focuses mainly on the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century in Europe) does not take into account more recent, and possibly more culturally complex nationalist phenomena, particularly those which involve non-European regions, societies and cultures. Furthermore, his interpretation of the phenomenon through politics is, to some extent, problematical as it posits the existence of the nation as a given ("there exists a nation") rather than as construct, and the result of a shifting process. More importantly, his proposition that a distinction should be made between *ethnie* and ethnicity on the one hand, and nationalism on the other (1996:148) is questionable. One of the problems within studies of ethnicity is that they have for a long time (at least until the early 1980s) developed quite separately from the field of nationalism (and vice-versa). As Connor argued in 1978:

a review of the indices and bibliographies found in those ethnic studies that do deal with a national or potential national group, illustrate all-too-often that the author is unaware of the

relationship of his work to nationalism. The student of nationalism and the student of ethnicity seldom cross-fertilized. (Connor 1978: 387)

Gellner is another important theorist of nationalism who has been influential in my work. He also views this phenomenon as inherently modern and grounded in national sentiment (1983). His emphasis on culture as a crucial repository of identity underlying the development of nationalism is convincingly presented, and so is his argument about the invention of nations:

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality, for better or for worse, and in general an inescapable one. (Gellner 1983: 48-49)

Also, Gellner's assertion about religion, particularly Islam, as a high culture forming the basis for national sentiment, and conflicting with the locally-rooted vernacular forms of religious practices (1983: 73-87) is consistent with my first case study. He is one of the few social scientists to have discussed, although too briefly, the question of nationalism within a diasporic context (1983: 101-109). However, his analysis is mainly devoted to the "traditional" Jewish model of the diaspora and does not really relate to more recent diasporic groups of the industrial era whose socio-economic position in the "host-society" was, and still is, in many respects, markedly different. Furthermore, his discussion of the development of Algerian nationalism does not acknowledge the role played by Algerian migrant workers in France and his work also pays little attention to the role that ethnicity plays in nationalism and, in the primordialist tradition, posits ethnicity as a synonym of culture (1983: 102). The role played by religions such as Catholicism, Judaism and Islam in nationalism is also briefly, but pertinently, discussed by Kedourie (1985) who highlights the process by which religion is transformed into nationalist ideology by drawing on old religious loyalties (1985: 75-77).

Equally useful for my argument is some of the work of historian Eric Hobsbawm, in particular his introduction to *The Invention of Tradition* (1983a) where he argues that traditions which appear to be ancient are in fact a relatively recent creation. This proposition is applied to the study of the discourse of the North African nationalist movement to understand the processes by which traditions are (re)constructed to enhance the nationalist project. In the final chapter of his edited book, Hobsbawm analyses that process of invention within a European context (1983b), while Ranger discusses the use made by colonists of those invented traditions in order to impose their imperial rule on Africa, and its impact on the colonised (Ranger 1983). Hobsbawm defines "invented traditions" as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983a: 1). This continuity with the past is, to a large extent, fictitious. Traditions differ from customs in that they are presented as fixed and invariant, and from convention and routine as they belong to the ideological, rather than technical sphere (1983a: 2-3). The focus on the past to understand the national process is also what informs Hobsbawm's other studies (see, for example, 1990, 1996).

His work on nationalism, which focuses particularly on its spread (national sentiments) within the wider population (1992: 12-102) is, I would argue, more problematic. Indeed, it establishes too much of a distinction between old (and mostly European) democratic nations with new "unhistorical" (and by that may be implied inauthentic) nations, particularly in ex-colonial territories when, as Anderson (1983: 15) shows - and this is a contention Hobsbawm acknowledges too briefly in his book (1992: 46) - *all* nations are imagined communities. Furthermore, his emphasis on the importance of ethnicity (and language) in the nationalism of those newer nations (1992: 102) is pertinent, but he somewhat downplays its role in older nations, arguing that the emergence of ethnicity occurred mainly after the establishment of the nation-state (through racism) (1992: 64-66). As my discussion of the ENA/PPA shows, some correlation exists between the way in which ethnicity (or a certain political representation of it) and language were used to shape the nation in Algerian nationalist

discourse and the manner in which they had been mobilised in France, not only after the birth of the modern Jacobin nation-state, but also long before its emergence in the case of language. Hobsbawm's argument that "cultural movements like pan-arabism ... were not nationalist even in this limited sense, but supra-nationalist" (1992:137) fails to acknowledge that pan-arabism could also constitute a wider ideological framework of "ethno-political" solidarity within which nationalisms, such as in Algeria, could develop and find support (as was shown by the relationship that the ENA and the PPA maintained with Chekib Arslan in Lausanne, with Syrian nationalists, and by their attendance to the Congrès Islamo-Européen on 12 September 1935).

Three further remarks concerning his discussion of the Algerian case, which he often cites, could be made. Firstly, he did not discuss how Algerian nationalism was different to many other anti-colonial nationalisms in that it developed not amongst "an exiguous minority of évolués" (1992: 137) but to a large extent, in the working class diaspora.²² Secondly, the discourse of the Algerian nationalist movement in the inter-war years in France contradicts his argument that "the appeal of such 'nations' and 'national movements' [which emerged after anti-colonial struggles] was the opposite of the nationalism [in older nations] which seeks to bond together those deemed to have common ethnicity, language, culture, historical past and the rest" (1992: 179). These references (and one could add religion) were precisely the claims upon which Algerian nationalism was based. Finally, Hobsbawm's assertion that tensions between the component parts of the Algerian independence movement (Arabs and Berbers) soon developed after independence is partially incorrect. Those tensions already existed within the *Etoile* as early as 1934 (conflict involving Kessaci), 1934 (Fodil) and 1936 (conflict between Messali Hadj and Imache) and culminated with the "crise berbériste" within the PPA in 1945-1946 (see, for example, Carlier 1984: 363-364, Harbi 1980: 31-36).

Let us now turn to Benedict Anderson, whose key book on nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1983), is drawn on in this study. He considers nationality (or

²² In other parts of the colonial empire such as Senegal, the évolués played a more pro-active political role (see, for example, Conklin 1997).

nation-ness) and nationalism as cultural artefacts, and the nation as an imagined community and as a modern phenomenon. What distinguishes nations is not their authenticity or falsity, but the manner in which they are imagined. Nations are imagined as limited and sovereign, and conceived as a deep comradeship traversed by a sense of kinship which can command the highest of loyalties, and ultimately command the sacrifice of one's life (1983: 15-16). This interpretation of nation and nationalism has informed much of my work and is discussed at length within the analysis of my two case studies.

However, even though Anderson argues that kinship is a key marker of nation-ness, he does not examine explicitly the role that ethnicity plays or, according to some historians such as Breuilly (1996), does not play within the nationalist process. A number of authors have, relatively recently, developed an approach to nationalism which incorporates the question of ethnicity. Probably the most prominent writer on nationalism and ethnicity is Anthony Smith. Other important analysts include Connor (1978, 1990, 1993) and Horowitz (1985). Often considered as a proponent of primordialism, Smith criticises the argument that nations - and by extension ethnic identities - are constructs, a product of modernity and asserts that nations have formed around pre-existing ethnic cores rooted in concrete culture and history (Smith 1989).²³ My study of discourse and political action within the Algerian nationalist movement in the inter-war years (but also of the MTA in the 1970s) would tend to contradict this perspective and infer that ethnic and national identity were indeed shaped by modernity and, to a certain extent at least, imagined and constructed within the colonial context.

From this brief and clearly not exhaustive review of theories and writers on nationalism, it appears that the issues of nationalism and nation continue to be the subject of sustained academic debate, mainly between "primordialists" and proponents of an interpretation of nationalism as a product of modernity (Birnbaum 1997). No broad consensus seems to have been reached even on the most fundamental understanding of what nationalism actually is. What also comes out of this discussion is that the theoretical and case study-based work on such a phenomenon has focused

²³ See, for example, Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) for an exposition of a differing viewpoint.

essentially on the emergence of anti-colonial independence movements, even in Algeria, along monolithic lines, presenting it as led by the elites, the *évolués*, those whom Homi Bhabha calls pertinently the "mimic m[e]n ... the authorized version[s] of otherness" (1986: 201). However, the Algerian case (and there may be other comparable examples) provides a different script altogether. Furthermore, my second case-study appears to fall foul of much of the work which has been carried out in this field. The MTA was a post-colonial diasporic movement presenting itself as nationalist. What are we to make of its claim? What form(s) did its nationalism take? The second part of my study provides a tentative interpretation of this movement's discourse and ideology. To conclude, it is worth noting that, to my knowledge, no study tackles the question of nationalism amongst colonial and post-colonial migrants in a diachronic and systematic way.

1.3 Questions of Method

In this thesis, I will examine a number of archival documents. In the case of the *Etoile nord-africaine* and the PPA, my first case-study, the primary sources which will be used include mainly the newspaper published in France by the nationalist movement (*El Ouma*) and tracts, but also other publications produced by (or for) the North African population in France (such as *El Ikdam* and *L'Ikdam de Paris*) and by the French Communist Party and the CGTU (the communist trade union). Pertinent references from the French national press in France (and some from the French press in Algeria) will also be analysed. I consulted those documents and publications at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* and the *Archives nationales* in Paris. The other key primary sources pertaining to my first case-study are the official and police reports on the ENA and the PPA produced by French police and government bodies. I was able to access these mainly through *Archives et Musée* at the *Préfecture de police de Paris* and *Archives nationales*.

Unfortunately, my request to consult the police archives on the MTA, my second case-study, was turned down. The reason that the *Renseignements Généraux* gave me (through *Archives et Musée* at the *Préfecture de police de Paris*) was that the

information on that movement was still far too sensitive to be made available to researchers. However, the large corpus of primary sources on that movement which will be used in this thesis compensates for this.²⁴ I consulted the archives of the MTA at the *Bibliothèque de Documentation internationale contemporaine* (BDIC) at the University of Nanterre in Paris. These include some of the movement's publications such as *Akhbar el Haraka* and *La Voix des travailleurs arabes*, reports from leading militants, personal correspondence, minutes of meetings, tracts and posters, etc. I analysed other sources, such as publications from the French national and regional press, North African newspapers and magazines, as well as antiracist newspapers at the *Bibliothèque Cujas*, *Bibliothèque Sainte-Genève*, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* and the *Bibliothèque de Sciences politiques* in Paris.

This thesis is multidisciplinary in its approach and fairly wide in scope. It is a historical, ethnographic and political analysis of aspects of immigration in France. As stated above, it focuses to a large extent on ethnicity, nation-ness and political mobilisation within two North African movements set within specific historical contexts. More importantly, this study will be carried out through a comparative study of the discourse and actions of these movements and their militants, but also of other social, political and institutional actors/factors affecting them. In her study of the militant weekly *Sans frontière* (1979-1985), created by ex-militants of the MTA, Polac (1994) highlights the "unconventional" character of political practices amongst immigrants (before the 1980s), as well as the importance of discourse in their political activism which, drawing on Memmi (1985), she refers to as "participation discursive".²⁵ She also points out pertinently that:

Privés du droit de vote, les immigrés sont présents dans la sphère politique comme objets d'un discours et comme enjeux de lutte, bien plus que comme acteurs de l'espace politique. Aussi, le passage au politique signifie-t-il pour beaucoup d'entre eux la prise de parole. (Polac 1994: 360)

²⁴ It is worth noting that most of the documents, tracts and publications of the ENA/PPA and of the MTA were written in French.

²⁵ Memmi argues that "en dehors des décisions politiques émanant d'un très petit nombre de professionnels de la politique ayant un pouvoir d'initiative, en quoi consiste l'activité politique? En une production et reproduction de discours" (Memmi 1985, quoted in Polac 1994:360).

It would therefore seem important to state briefly what theoretical framework I have used to explore the complex political discourse of those two movements. Discourse analysis is a field which is not easy to define for, as van Dijk argues, "the notion of discourse is essentially fuzzy" (1997a: 1) and has been used in different ways and for different purposes in a number of areas. Indeed, the different disciplines in which discourse has been adopted and analysed (or used as an analytical tool) include, amongst others, philosophy (with the work of Alain Bachelard), linguistics (Ferdinand Saussure and Emile Benveniste), literary criticism (Jacques Derrida), psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan) and Marxism with the works of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault (Burton and Carlen 1979: 15). Foucault's writing has been most influential in that field, particularly amongst discourse analysts such as Mills, who argues that:

One of the most productive ways of thinking about discourse is not as a group of signs or a stretch of text, but as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972:49). In this sense, a discourse is something which produces something else (an utterance, a concept, an effect), rather than something which exists in and of itself and which can be analysed in isolation. A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving within a particular context. (Mills 1997:17)

However, systematicity does not mean linear stylistic, semantic, representational or even ideological coherence and stability in discourse.²⁶ Apparent contradictions, variations and shifts can indeed be characteristic of a discourse, and are reflections of the complex social processes within which text and talk are rooted (van Dijk 1997a, see also van Dijk 1984, 1992, 1997c & 1997d).

Furthermore, it is important to note that language, which is the core medium of discourse, is used as a way into ideology (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998: 32). In

²⁶ Indeed, it could be argued that it is one of the tropes of ideology that it can evolve, fluctuate, be displaced and/or repositioned to perpetuate itself.

this study, I will focus on discourse in broadly defined terms. Firstly, discourse will be apprehended not so much in its structural dimension, but as a cognitive process: language is constructed, understood, interpreted, *hiérarchisé* and branded with meaning through socio-cultural and religious beliefs, knowledge, gender, ethnicity and ideologies (amongst others), and can therefore be perceived in different ways. Secondly, discourse analysis is understood here as more than the study of the structural and cognitive characteristics of language. Discourse is also viewed as (to use van Dijk's terminology) a 'context-sensitive' process of action and interaction in society:

If we want to *explain* what discourse is all about, it would be insufficient to merely analyse its internal structures, the actions being accomplished, or the cognitive operations being involved in language use. We need to account for the fact that discourse as social action is being engaged in within a framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes (van Dijk 1997a: 21).

Therefore, discourse is conceived here in broadly-defined terms and is looked at from a multi-disciplinary perspective. This study concentrates on discourse *and* on the cognitive, social, political structures and processes that inform its 'context', and highlights the multiple relationships between text and context (van Dijk 1991: 4), and also between discourse and action.

Within this wider framework, it could also be said that discourse is a representation, that it structures our sense of reality (both diachronically and synchronically) and the way in which we perceive our and other people's identity (Pêcheux 1982, Mills 1997). It can constitute a tool of power and hegemony, and a means of establishing consensus around the dominant ideology. Also, access to public discourse is, in a number of ways, limited and controlled by the powerful (van Dijk 1997b).

In that context, it would also be pertinent to our study of the discourse of the ENA/PPA and the MTA to highlight the fact that ideological struggle is the essence of discourse structure (Pêcheux 1982, in Mills 1997). I would go further and argue that

discourse is one of the key terrains where ideologies (and identities) can be constructed, shaped, negotiated, and where they can clash. Control and domination often imply some form of resistance and counter discourse. My study will examine and illustrate the complex processes and strategies underlying the discourse of the dominated (such as ethnic minorities),²⁷ and how it can also constitute an empowering tool and be appropriated by them as a means of challenging dominant discourse and ideology.

1.4 Theoretical and methodological framework, and main results of analysis

This study aims to analyse the discourses of the *Etoile/PPA* and of the MTA, and examine the complex processes by which the North African diaspora was able to establish and develop a strong political voice and tradition in France during the inter-war period and the 1970s. The analysis will focus more specifically on the concepts of ethnicity and nation-ness which were particularly salient, and inextricably linked to one another in their discourse, and highlight the hybrid character of their ideology and the way in which it was enunciated.

In broad terms, my analysis of ethnicity in both organisations is developed from a situationalist perspective (Barth 1969a, Wallman 1979), but is also informed by the contention that ethnicity cannot be fully understood if it is viewed exclusively as being shaped at the boundary between "us" and "them", as it does not fully account for the complexity of this concept. This perspective also needs to incorporate another dimension of ethnicity: the fact that it is also marked by the social, cultural, political, economic and religious context within which it is developed and posited (this could be called a "context-sensitive" approach).

The second concept which shaped both movements' discourse is that of nation. It is understood here as a modern concept and phenomenon rooted in politics (Breuilly 1996), but also in ethnicity, and is viewed as an imagined community (Anderson 1983) shaped by nationalism.

²⁷ This also applies to other dominated groups, including women.

The analysis of the ENA/PPA and the MTA's discourses is based on the contention that it is a cognitive process, and that language, which is at its core, is a way into ideology (Blommaert and Verschuere 1998:32). It is also a "context-sensitive" process of action and interaction in society (van Dijk 1997a: 21) which can empower and mobilise the dominated and allow them to contest the dominant discourse and ideology.

Two important aspects of the discourse of the *Etoile*/PPA and the MTA are discussed in this thesis and inform its structure. The first section of each case-study looks at the ways in which ethnicity and nation-ness were shaped in the discourse of both movements, and how they were informed in sometimes overlapping, sometimes differing ways, by key markers of kinship (class, religion, history and memory and culture). Both nationalist movements viewed Maghrebis' ethnic and national identity as grounded in Arabness. In the case of the *Etoile* and the PPA in the inter-war period, this ethnic identity was posited as a means of countering the colonial narrative which aimed to divide the North African Muslim population along ethnic lines, and as the justification for the creation of an Algerian nation-state built within the borders of the colonial territory. As for the MTA, the aim of its revolution was to establish an Arab nation encompassing the whole Arab world and transcending the modern structures of nation-states which they viewed as dividing the Arab people and serving the interest of imperialism.

The ENA/PPA's ethno-national claims were grounded in religion and history. Islam was constructed as a high culture capable of mobilising North Africans around the movement's nationalist agenda, and as the foundation of a once great Arabo-Islamic culture that their nationalist project aimed to restore. In the case of the MTA, religion was reduced to its visible and cultural dimension. In the discourse of this movement which was very much influenced by the struggle of North Africans (and particularly Algerians) for independence and marked by May 1968, far more emphasis was put on the concept of class as a key marker of their ethno-national identity, as well as on culture and cultural practice as a means of mobilisation.

The second section of both case studies looks at the nationalist movements' relationship with, and discourse on the Other, that is to say on socio-political phenomena and ideologies, governments, political groups, parties and individuals, as well as national and international events which were seen as affecting the movement positively and/or negatively. Such a process of interaction and conflict implied that these markers of what could be coined the "out", informed in various and complex ways the shaping of identity in both organisations. Racism was one of those markers. It traversed all aspects of Maghrebis' life, epitomised all the forms of oppression that they were subjected to, and informed the way in which militants within those movements mobilised. In the inter-war period, it was seen as the driving force behind the colonial project of domination and dispossession, and therefore justified Muslims' fight for independence. In the 1970s, the MTA viewed racism as being present at all levels of society and as underpinning the West's imperialist agenda. Mobilisation for rights along ethnic and class lines, and solidarity with the French people, seen as the true heir of the Revolutionary legacy, were perceived as the only way to fight racism and oppression effectively. This vision was somewhat problematic as it established a dichotomy between universalism and racism, and between racism and nationalism when it could be argued that these concepts are linked in some ways. This may, to some extent, explain the sometimes tense relationship between the nationalist organisations and the major French left-wing political organisations and unions.

In this context marked by racism, solidarity with the dominated was also seen as crucial. The ENA/PPA established links with Moroccan and Tunisian nationalist parties and student organisations, as well as with Black and Annamese organisations. The MTA supported and participated in protest and strike actions involving Mauritians and Pakistanis, and had established contacts with other parties of the Arab left. Those North Africans who did not support the action of both nationalist organisations were often depicted as betraying the Arab people and serving the interest of imperialism.²⁸ Finally, for the ENA/PPA and even more so for the MTA, the

²⁸ These included Algerian reformist parties and student organisation in the case of the ENA/PPA, and the *Amicales* and illegitimate governments in North Africa for the MTA).

Palestinians' fight against Zionism epitomised the Arab people's, and by extension their own struggle for rights and freedom, and against imperialist oppression.

To conclude, my aim, in this thesis, is to draw upon this theoretical framework and to carry out a detailed analysis of these dimensions of the ENA/PPA and the MTA's discourses and assess the complex processes by which Maghrebi immigrants in France were able to develop a complex and shifting discourse on ethno-national identity rooted in their diasporic experience. This study will place the discourse of the *coloniaux nord-africains* and that of post-colonial Maghrebi immigrants within the same analytical framework. In doing so, my aim is to reconcile these two social, political and historical phenomena which have, too often, been broached in a dichotomous way (one belonging mainly to Algeria's struggle for independence, the other to that of post-colonial immigration rooted in a French context), and to highlight the process by which Maghrebi immigrants were able to build a consistent political tradition in France.

Part 1

**North African nationalism in the inter-war period in France:
the case of the *Etoile nord-africaine* and the *Parti du peuple algérien***

Chapter 2

Ethnicity and nation-ness

2.1 Introduction

In the inter-war period in France, the discourse of the North African nationalist movement on the nation was characterised by its focus on Maghrebis as an ethnic group and on ethnicity as the underlying mobilising force behind their nationalism. But what ideological function did this concept fulfil? How was ethnicity invoked in relation to nation-ness? The aim of this chapter is to try and answer these questions. I will first assess whether the North African migrant community constituted - and still constitutes - a diaspora, and by extension whether we can describe the Algerian nationalist discourse as *diasporic*. Secondly, the concept of ethnicity which is so central to North Africans' nationalist discourse, will be defined. Thirdly, we will examine the function that Frenchness/Otherness fulfilled in the process of identity construction. And finally, we will look at the role played by race and ethnicity in the construction of a national consciousness.

2.2 The Maghrebi diaspora

Algerian nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s - in its modern form - was born and evolved within the North African migrant community and was shaped by their experience in France. However, can the case be made for defining Maghrebi migrants in France as part of a diasporic community, and for considering their experience and discourse as diasporic? Safran's wider definition of diaspora would suggest that it can:

I suggest that ... the concept of diaspora be applied to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: (1) they, or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral", or foreign regions; (2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland -its physical

location, history, and "achievements"; (3) they believe they are not -and perhaps cannot be- fully accepted by their host society, and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; (4) they regard their ancestral home as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return -when conditions are appropriate; (5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; (6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 1991: 83-84)

He states that even though the Maghrebi community does not "fully conform to the 'ideal' type of the Jewish diaspora" (Safran 1991: 84; Clifford 1997: 247-248), it can be considered as a diaspora in spite of the fact that Maghrebis have not been expelled from their country by force and that they were not faced with the political obligation or the moral burden of "reconstituting a lost homeland or maintaining an endangered culture" (Safran 1991: 85-6).²⁹

It could be argued that the case made by Safran to describe the Maghrebi community as a diaspora is, on the whole, convincing, but his interpretation fails to assess their experience within a wider historical context. Indeed, the diasporic era for North African migrants started in the early twentieth century and was marked by colonialism and its corollaries, the politics of dispossession and socio-cultural dislocation. Migrants' aim, as illustrated in the discourse of the main North African political movement of the inter-war period in France (the *Etoile nord-africaine*/the PPA) was clearly to reconstitute a lost homeland and maintain an endangered culture; and this remained their objective in the post-colonial era too, even though their understanding of the "lost homeland" and culture had by then shifted, as will be shown in our second case-study in part two (the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes*).

A number of characteristics in the experience of the North African, and more specifically in the larger Algerian, migrant population in the 1920s and 1930s can be

²⁹ Brah (1996) also argues in favour of a wider understanding of the concept of diaspora.

viewed as being inscribed in diasporic terms. During the colonial period, many had left the Maghreb to go to France and the Middle East. They perceived their experience in France as an abnormal period in their life, comparable with "warfare in an 'infidel' land", as Paz described it (*Le Populaire*, 10 avril 1938). *El Ouma* (Numéro 58, décembre 1937) referred to North African workers in France as "[des] prolétaires nord-africains de France, des déportés économiques que le colonialisme exploiteur chassa de leur foyer et de leur patrie". As a political movement, the *Etoile nord-africaine*, in spite of its focus on North Africa, was very much anchored within the North African community in France, and its political philosophy was informed by a realisation that the exile of Maghrebis in France was the direct result of colonial oppression. In a meeting organised by the Club du Faubourg on 18 March 1936 on the "malaise algérien" which gathered most of the parties involved in the Algerian question, Dr Ben Sliman, representing the *Etoile*, defined his movement as follows:

Qu'est-ce que l'*Etoile Nord-Africaine*? Une organisation qui groupe les travailleurs algériens, tunisiens et marocains émigrés en France et qui a pour but leur éducation politique pour leur permettre de travailler à l'émancipation nationale et sociale de l'Afrique du Nord. Elle défend aussi les Nord-Africains traqués par la rue Lecomte [i.e. the *Brigade nord-africaine* which was the police unit in charge of the surveillance of North Africans in Paris], les chômeurs radiés et tous ceux qui sont brimés par l'administration. (*El Ouma*, Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

The *Etoile* was therefore described as a movement born in exile whose main aim was to educate and mobilise North African migrants in order to achieve independence and restore their homeland.

North African migrants could also be regarded as a diaspora because of the very nature of their migration process. Colonialism had contributed to the cultural alienation of the indigenous population and had destroyed the communal system and behavioural code that were essential in maintaining social cohesion (Khellil 1979: 63).³⁰ The

³⁰ For a detailed study of colonialism in North Africa, see, for example, Berque (1970), Cohen (1972), Marseille (1984), Djilali (1975).

introduction of the *Code de l'indigénat* (a segregationist and punitive code applied to the Muslims), the imposition of the European taxation system and of individual ownership devitalised and dislocated the pre-colonial economy (Cordeiro 1971: 48). Dispossession of the more fertile land by the French colonial authorities resulted in a large-scale rural exodus (Bourdieu and Sayad: 1964), and increasing pauperisation and debt, lack of land and demographic growth led to more farmers becoming day labourers in French farms or in towns and cities.

In that context, emigration was described, in the discourse of the ENA/PPA, as Muslims' best option to escape the oppressive realities of colonialism. It could offer some reprieve from the forces of dispossession as many worked in France to help financially their families and communities in North Africa.³¹ Their act constituted what Stora calls "l'échappée hors du ghetto colonial" (1992b: 14). Contrary to a frequently-held belief, migrants did not represent the least able amongst the North African population. The best were chosen to carry out such an important task (Sayad 1977: 61). The colonial context within which migration took place, which was evoked by the nationalist movement, showed that emigration was, to a large extent, a political act. In 1933, in an article denouncing the racist comments about Kabyle immigrants made by the French press and the dispossession and oppression endured by Muslims in North Africa, Imache Amar, then General Secretary of the ENA, compared emigration with an "exode des martyrs ... qui ont fui l'enfer" and described the process of migration as follows:

Je voulais dédier cet article à tous mes frères. A ceux qui souffrent là-bas, en Afrique du Nord, de l'oppression impérialiste, obligés de courber la tête sous l'autorité féodale, sous la République démocratique qui fait couler à flots la «justice et la paix», et aussi à mes frères expatriés, à ceux qui fuient devant l'odieux code de l'indigénat et qui paient cher le droit d'aller en exil ... Je pensais à la douleur qui étreint les cœurs à la veille du départ et au déchirement à l'heure de se

³¹ Sayad refers to the process of migration of North Africans in the inter-war period as the first "age" of emigration: "conséquence en même temps qu'indice de la ruine de l'équilibre ancien dans lequel persévéraient la société et l'économie paysannes traditionnelles, l'émigration en France avait pour fonction première de donner aux communautés paysannes ... les moyens de se perpétuer en tant que telles" (1977: 61).

séparer, car pour nous la seule solution est de partir: à côté du colon heureux et riche d'une terre qu'il nous a volée, il n'y a pas de place pour nous. (*El Ouma* Numéro 19, décembre 1933)

The nationalist movement's discourse on emigration conjures up notions of exile, separation and oppression, as well as an awareness of the racism and hostility that North Africans were subjected to, not only in the colonies but also in metropolitan France. It is a discourse which is imbued with diasporic feelings of loss and memory, and of hopes that their eventual return to their homeland will be marked by their emancipation and freedom. The economic imperatives which motivated their migration were inextricably linked to their social, political and economic marginalisation in North Africa.

2.3 Definition of ethnicity: at the boundary between "us" and "them"

Defining ethnicity, and by extension understanding what an ethnic group consists of, can be a complex exercise given the fact that various schools of thought have offered different (sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping) interpretations of the concept. For instance, Wallerstein's view that the ethnic group is a "catégorie culturelle, définie par certains comportements persistants, transmis de génération en génération, et qui à la différence de nation ne sont pas en théorie circonscrits dans la frontière d'un état" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 105) reflects many anthropological studies which have traditionally equated ethnic groups and cultures. Barth, on the other hand, distinguishes between the former and the latter and focuses on ethnic boundary maintenance rather on culture as a marker of ethnicity (1969a: 15).³² Of the two definitions, Barth's is the most pertinent, as it puts an emphasis on the transactional, negotiated and shifting nature of ethnic boundaries. Wallman's interpretation of ethnicity (1979: 3), which is inspired by Barth's, will be used as a working definition in this chapter in order to evaluate the role that it played in the formation of an ethno-national identity amongst North African nationalists in France.³³

³² For Barth's definition of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries, see chapter 1, section 1.2.1, p. 11.

³³ For Wallman's definition of ethnicity, see chapter 1, section 1.2.1., p. 12.

If ethnicity can be defined as a process which is articulated at the boundary between "us" and "them", it should also be understood, within the framework of this study, as a constitutive part of a wider process. It was indeed at the point of contact, at the boundary between the ethnic and the political that Algerian national identity was constructed. Algerian nation-ness was shaped by a binary process: on the one hand, ethnic membership facilitates group formation in the political sphere, and on the other hand, it is the political community that inspires the belief in common ethnicity (Weber 1997: 19).

2.4 Nation-ness and difference

The interplay between ethnicity and nation-ness which was at the core of the formation of the ethno-national bond in the North African diaspora needs to be examined in order to better understand the processes of construction of the community's identity. By nation-ness, a term borrowed from Anderson (1983: 13), is meant nationality or the sense of belonging to a "nation". Even though "nation-ness", "nationhood" and "nationality" are terms which, for stylistic reasons, will be used interchangeably in this study, there is a case for selecting/privileging a distinct word such as "nation-ness" in order to highlight the specificities of the diasporic context within which Algerian national identity was constructed by North African nationalist militants in France in the 1920s and 1930s. The path followed by them was, to a large extent, distinct from the more "traditional" processes of nationality formation which marked most other anti-colonial nationalist movements, that is to say the ones which were spatially rooted in what was to become the independent state.

Before returning to our study of the North African nationalist movement, it is necessary to define briefly the concept of nationalism, as well as those of nation and nation-state which tend to be used widely and interchangeably, and assess the relationship that exists between them. Giddens interprets pertinently "nationalism" as being "a phenomenon that is primarily psychological - the affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and beliefs emphasising communality among the people of a political

order" (1992: 116) and the "nation-state" as a "bordered power container" (1992: 120). However, his reference to the "nation" as a "collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states" (1992: 116) is more problematic because it is limited to those cases where there is an equivalence between the nation and the established state. It does not allow for a better understanding of other forms of the nation that still exist outside the state structure - the Kurdish nation comes to mind - or within the historical context of colonialism prior to the formation of post-colonial states.

Connor (1978), who favours an ethnic rather than political interpretation of nation, argues that the terms "nation" and "state" have too often been used synonymously when there is, most of the time, no direct correlation between the two. He also criticises the broadly used designation of "nation-state" to describe all established state structures, even when the majority of them contain several nations. He defines the state as the major political subdivision of the globe, which is readily defined and easily conceptualised in quantitative terms (Connor 1978: 379). On the other hand, Connor sees the essence of a nation as intangible and argues that "this essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way. The nature of that bond and its well-spring remain shadowy and elusive" (ibid). Anderson, however, challenges this somewhat primordialist reading by clarifying the nature of that bond, and takes the concept of nation further when he defines it as an imagined community (1983: 15).

This interpretation can shed some useful light on the processes of ethno-national formation within the North African migrant community during the inter-war years. Indeed, if one accepts his contention, then it is worth exploring the way in which the Algerian nation was imagined. In a tract announcing a political rally on 16 June 1933, the nationalist movement referred to itself as "l'Etoile nord-africaine, votre organisation nationale" (*Note sur l'activité de l'Etoile Nord-Africaine depuis sa création jusqu'au 15*

novembre 1934: 61) (1).³⁴ But what nation did nationalists invoke, and how did they define it? Was it built on a sense of ethnic belonging or on other foundations?

Firstly, it could be argued that the movement's sense of nation-ness was very much informed by what it was not, or rather what it was against. Indeed, much of its discourse focused on rejecting the idea that Algeria was French and by extension, that Muslims in Algeria could one day become French. The nationalist newspaper often reminded militants that "L'Algérie ne fut jamais française, elle n'est pas française elle ne sera jamais française de par la volonté de ses enfants" (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, Septembre-octobre 1934) and condemned the concept of a French Algeria in an article hostile to a pro-colonialist association created by the French authorities, called *Algérie française*, which recruited amongst North African immigrants in France :

L'« Algérie française » quelle dérision! L'Algérie, en quoi est-elle française, par quoi est-elle française? Non, vraiment, il n'y a pas d'Algérie française, il y a une Algérie dominée par les Français, oui! mais l'Algérie restera éternellement algérienne ... nous préférons et combattons pour rester « Algériens... algériens ». (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)

Becoming French, which implied a renunciation of one's Muslim status, was perceived as a betrayal of Islam. In a meeting organised by the ENA on 9 September 1934, Imache Amar called for "la mise à l'index de tous les naturalisés, traîtres à l'Islam" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 101) (1). The "naturalisés", who usually belonged to the Algerian elite, were also relentlessly condemned in the nationalists' newspaper. In an article published in *El Ouma*, the movement expressed its indignation to see the French *Commission Inter-Ministérielle des Affaires Musulmanes* control the Muslim faith and Law in North Africa with the assistance of leading North African reformist politicians such as Khalifat El Djerad and Dr Ben Jelloun:

Comment M. le Docteur Ben Jelloul qui a déclaré solennellement plus d'une fois qu'il pense en français, qu'il rêve en français et qu'il parle en français, comment peut-il, diable! s'occuper des

³⁴ From now on, I will refer to this source as *Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*.

questions juridiques islamiques? ... Certes, il est bien facile au Kalifat [El Djerad] et à son jeune partenaire [Ben Jelloul] de faire des déclarations d'amour à Marianne, même quand celle-ci les repousse avec répugnance, de débiter sans cesse ses déclarations de loyalisme et d'attachement à la « Mère-Patrie » ... Allez donc avec votre Mère-Patrie, serrez-la, sacrifiez-vous pour elle, mais nous vous défendons de parler de nous et de l'Islam. Vous êtes indignes de l'Islam et de la société arabe, partez! ... qu'ils se fassent naturaliser qu'ils nous laissent travailler pour la construction de notre Patrie, qui saura aimer ses enfants en mère, et non en marâtre. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

The gendered and sexual metaphors used in this extract to differentiate between French and Algerian nation-ness is worth highlighting. Here, French nationality is personified by Marianne, and the declaration of love made to Marianne by those "notables naturalisés", symbolising their love for France and their desire to become French citizens, is constructed as belonging to the sphere of the unnatural and of perversion (through the ambiguities of the term "marâtre"). It is a one-way relationship which is only met with disgust by the loved one (Marianne). By contrast, the nation-ness which they, as nationalists, are longing for is also personified, but it is presented as the natural, generous and *disinterested* love of a mother for her children ("notre Patrie, qui saura aimer ses enfants en mère").

Naturalisation not only meant betraying Islam, it was also equated with christianisation. In the Algerian nationalist discourse, the relationship between nationality and religion was constructed as a binary process; naturalisation implied christianisation, whilst Algerian nationalism was equivalent to the preservation of Islam and the Muslim identity of North Africans. This point is illustrated by the speech made by a militant, Amar, during a political meeting of the Levallois-Perret section of the *Etoile* on 12 September 1933:

Le peuple [n']est avide que d'une seule aspiration: être libre et indépendant, quant aux hypocrites alliés des missionnaires ... qui essayent d'engouffrer les musulmans algériens dans la christianisation. En disant: « nous voulons une place dans la grande famille française, et nous

voulons être des Français musulmans». Ceux-là se heurtent à la colonne solidement édifiée de l'Etoile qui ne désire que la tradition des Arabes, et la divine doctrine ... Nous sommes Algériens musulmans ... nous en sommes fiers. Et pour rien au monde nous accepterons d'être français. (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933)

The assertion that the best way for Algerian, and more broadly North African, Muslims to preserve their religious identity was to adhere to their nationalist programme was reiterated on a frequent basis by the movement. In 1935 the *Etoile* asked all Muslims to open their eyes to the "danger de christianisation et de naturalisation" (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935), and a further article published in *El Ouma* entitled "Musulmans... Alerte!!!" written under the pseudonym "El Ançari" by the Moroccan student leader El Kholti who was himself a Berber, denounced the attempts made by the "Pères Blancs" to spread Christian faith amongst the Kabyles :

Mais nous voulons mettre en garde nos coréligionnaires contre les charlatans et les hypocrites, de ceux qui profitent de la misère du peuple musulman pour les christianiser et qui obligent, dans les domaines composés de milliers d'hectares de terre volées aux musulmans ... les ouvriers musulmans à faire la prière devant eux, sous menace de renvoi Voici que le Père Blanc Jean Lemoine nous demande de chanter la «Marseillaise», au lieu de «l'Internationale» ... Nous aurions à la rigueur chanté la «Marseillaise», si elle était encore le chant de ceux qui proclamèrent les principes de 1789 et de ceux qui, en 1792, la chantèrent pour apporter la liberté, et non l'esclavage, aux peuples. Et pour nous, Musulmans, aujourd'hui nous préférons mieux chanter «Beni-El Ouatani». (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

Under a colonial rule which had dispossessed Maghrebis from their land and undermined much of the traditional socio-cultural fabric of North Africa, nationalists viewed their Muslim heritage as the last and most important marker of identity. In this extract, Christianity is equated with the colonial oppression that North Africans are subjected to. They brushed aside accusations made by Jean Lemoine that their nationalist agenda was part of a communist plot ("voici que le Père Blanc ... nous

demande de chanter la «Marseillaise», au lieu de «l'Internationale») (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935). Their rejection of French nation-ness was symbolised by the evocation of France in historically binary terms: the France that oppressed them bore no resemblance to that of the French Revolution whose values and principles they, as nationalists, adhered to. The latter had ceased to exist, and their salvation lay in their nationalist struggle for an independent Algeria (as implied by their reference to "Beni-El Ouatani", the Algerian national anthem).³⁵

Another theme developed in their discourse was the rejection of the belief held by some North Africans that they would gain materially if they obtained French citizenship. The political vision developed by the movement illustrates the extent to which many North African immigrants had developed a class consciousness during their presence in metropolitan France. They had clearly been influenced by their contact with the French working class and by their involvement in union activity and protest actions in the workplace. They also realised that in the class-system, they belonged to and would remain part of the "sous-prolétariat" whatever their legal status, and this for as long as the colonial order was in place and Algeria was not independent:

Les Musulmans n'ont jamais été français, ne le sont pas, et ne le seront *jamais, jamais*, au *GRAND JAMAIS* ... Car nous savons pertinemment que ce n'est pas la citoyenneté qui nous sortira de la misère dans laquelle nous pateageons, puisque nous constatons la situation désespérée de nos camarades ouvriers français... nous puiserons la douleur d'aimer notre chère Algérie, au fond de ces géhennes que sont nos taudis de la Métropole, et les gourbis et les tentes du bled. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

Even though this study will show later that the reference to class did not appear frequently and explicitly as a key element in the construction of their identity, class awareness, as shown above, constituted nonetheless a reason *not to be* assimilated into the French nation as, to them, French citizenship did not imply better living conditions.

³⁵ An early version of the national anthem was translated by the police (see 'Hymne national algérien', 20 mai 1937) (1).

North African nationalists' sense of belonging to a nation was marked by a discourse belonging to the sphere of the family, and by a sense of affiliation and faithfulness to one's religion. It was a nation where ties of fraternity were seen as crucially important. Dr Ben Sliman insisted in his speech at the "Club du Faubourg" on 18 March 1936 on the fact that national emancipation could only be achieved by ending the colonisation of the Algerian people by a minority of foreigners *who had no feeling of fraternity with Muslims* (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936). The nation also had to love all her "children" as a true and generous mother, not as a "marâtre". France's colonial domination of Algeria therefore disqualified her as a possible repository of nation-ness for Muslims. Here, as well as in the following extract, identity is articulated in terms of difference, by positioning one's identity as inherently and irreconcilably different from the other's:

Nous ne serons français ni par la race, ni par la langue, ni par la religion. Non et mille fois non, l'Arabe sain d'esprit ne sera jamais français, quoique vous fassiez, messieurs les assimilateurs! Il ne peut pas le devenir du jour au lendemain. (*El Ouma* Numéro 64, 27 mai 1938)

However, defining nationhood simply within those dichotomous parameters would be too limited. Indeed, marking it out in contrast to, or against, otherness may be a necessary step in the process of identity formation as it clarifies the boundary of selfhood, but it hardly provides a viable reference or blueprint for the construction of what could be called the "inner" substance that makes up nation-ness. It is worth noting here that given the shifting nature of that boundary, identity is not a unidimensional construct, but rather the multifaceted and unstable product of a process of negotiation, transaction, exchange and conflict.

If Algerian nationalists rejected unequivocally the idea that North African Muslims could become French, they argued nonetheless that their newly born nationalist feelings should not turn into hatred for the French people and more ambiguously for French *nationalism* - nationalism in the sense of love, loyalty and, as

Connor points out, *identification* with one's nation (October 1978: 384). An *El Ouma* article written in 1938 and entitled "L'Algérie vivra" illustrates this point clearly:

Mais ne croyez pas, mes frères, que l'amour de notre pays doit nous amener à détester celui des autres. Non, au contraire, nous ne pouvons avoir que de l'admiration pour les peuples qui ont su garder leur indépendance ou qui l'ont obtenue par leur courage et leur dévouement. Cela ne doit pas nous amener à attaquer ou à blâmer la patrie et le peuple français si héroïque et si juste. (*El Ouma* Numéro 62, 1er avril 1938)

This passage raises a number of questions about the way in which nationalists perceived their own identity. The Algerian nationalist movement had developed largely as a result of French colonial domination. This domination, as expressed through a colonial project which declared that Algeria was part of France, was clearly a manifestation of French nationalism. However, the PPA, as it was then called, still described the French people, and more importantly French nationalism, with admiration ("l'amour de notre pays ne doit pas nous amener à détester celui des autres").³⁶ How can this apparent contradiction be explained?

Firstly, it could be argued that Algerian nationalism bore many of the tropes of its French equivalent, as will be seen in the following section (reference to French revolutionary principles, to the "Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen", to pride in national independence and to the concept of the "République une et indivisible", etc.). It was essentially a modern political concept of nation that was adopted.³⁷

Secondly, the ENA/PPA still made a distinction between, on the one hand, the people of France, whose claim to national sovereignty they considered legitimate and which they wanted to emulate, and on the other hand, French imperialism. The

³⁶ The *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (PPA) was created on 11 March 1937 by Messali Hadj after the dissolution of the *Etoile nord-africaine* by the *Front Populaire* Government on 27 January of the same year (Stora 1992b: 49-50).

³⁷ Further on in this section, our discussion of the movement's attempt to construct the Algerian nation along "ethnic" lines is shown not to be contradictory with this point. The "ethnic profile" that nationalists attributed to the ideal Algerian nation could not hide the fact that the process and substance of nation-building as it appeared in their discourse was inherently modern and political.

distinction made between the two seems to imply that they might have been unaware of the fact that both were inextricably linked. It is also interesting to note that this dichotomous interpretation was made at the apogee of the French colonial empire, which coincided with the development of Algerian nationalism in its modern form. Clearly, there had been previous expressions of nationalism in colonial Algeria, such as Abd el-Kader's war against the French between 1840 and 1847 and the 1871 Kabyle uprising, but unlike Messali Hadj's movement, they were not articulated along modern lines.

Let us now assess the content of the movement's nationalism. How was it shaped and what was it composed of? Did it aim to establish a North African state which would destroy the colonial border established by the French, a state that all Maghrebis would embrace all the more willingly and "naturally" as it corresponded to their national aspiration of building a state based on the "homogeneous ethnic make-up" of North Africans? This was certainly one of the options on the *Etoile's* agenda when it was created by the French Communist Party on 20 March 1926. Its mission then was to unite all North Africans against colonialism and during the early years of the movement (until the late 1920s), its discourse often called for the mobilisation of all Maghrebis in order to gain the independence of North Africa. However, as a police report noted, the ENA never really managed to establish a common front between Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 172) (1).

Even though solidarity between the different "national" groups was constantly displayed, the action and discourse of the *Etoile* shifted rapidly to focus mainly on Algerian issues. The reasons for this relative rupture in North African unity of action are multiple. One of them had to do with the nature of North African immigration to France: Algerians dominated numerically and Algerian issues were probably given more importance than those affecting other North African workers, thus alienating many of them.³⁸ It can also be explained by the fact that differently perhaps from Morocco and Tunisia, where part of the elite was developing quite a radical agenda (the *Jeunes*

³⁸ Within the wider context of immigration in France in the inter-war period, Carlier points out that "[m]inoritaire dans l'immigration, mais majoritaire dans l'immigration coloniale, l'immigration algéro-maghrébine est la plus différenciée et la plus sujette au fantasme" (1985: 156).

Marocains in Morocco and the *Destour* in Tunisia), the Algerian nationalist movement was, during the inter-war years at least, anchored in the working class Algerian diaspora in France, and not in the educated middle-classes in Algeria who had adopted a more reformist stance.³⁹

During a meeting organised on 30 July 1933, Radjef Belkacem, then member of the central committee and treasurer of the ENA, and someone the police described as the most devoted and active lieutenant of Messali Hadj (ibid: 149-151) made a speech in which he called North Africans to rally around one programme: "L'Algérie aux Algériens, le Maroc aux Marocains, la Tunisie aux Tunisiens" (ibid: 64). How can this slogan be interpreted?

Let us first concentrate on the countries mentioned here and note that the borders established by the French colonial authorities were not challenged as a further legacy of the divisive French imperialist project. On the contrary, they seemed to have been adopted as valid frameworks for the creation of independent North African states. The ethnic make-up (or "imagined" ethnic make-up, to use Anderson's term) of a nation was therefore not necessarily considered to be the indispensable foundation and justification for the shaping of a similarly imagined nation-state. In as much as ethnic boundaries could shift and encompass the whole of North Africa, the struggle for the establishment of an independent state seemed to dictate that the frontiers of the nation had to be defined and shaped in order to fit into the rigid borders of the ex-colony. This choice was itself fraught with problems and, as history has shown, would create further unrest and instability (for example, the post-independence semi-official wars between Algeria and Morocco triggered by a dispute over borders).

The second question which needs to be explored here in order to better understand the process of national formation and nationalism in this case-study is to assess who nationalists referred to when they used the terms "Algerians", "Moroccans"

³⁹ However, it is worth noting that the leadership of the ENA usually belonged to the more educated section of the working-class migrant population, and that the profile of ENA and PPA militants in Algeria was different, as nationalists had developed a significant audience amongst sections of the more educated Algerian youth (Carlier 1995).

and "Tunisians". As Bauman (1992: 676) argues pertinently, "to explain the phenomenon of the nations, one needs to explain the phenomenon of nationalism".⁴⁰

In the nationalist discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, the Algerian nation and the state were evoked in different ways. Indeed, it could conjure up the vision of an independent Algerian state and of the Algerian people based on democracy, multiculturalism and where different faiths could co-exist, when they demanded "la suppression du Gouvernement Général, de la Délégation Financière, et leur remplacement par un Parlement algérien, élu au suffrage universel, par le peuple algérien, sans distinction de race et de religion" (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935). And this open and tolerant conception of Algeria was not deemed to be in contradiction with the nationalist feelings of the ENA, as the following passage shows:

Nous disons, nous nationalistes, qui aimons notre pays, qui désirons pour lui l'instruction, la liberté, la paix, la justice, le bien-être pour l'ensemble de ses enfants, sans distinction de race ou de religion, que la seule solution est dans le peuple algérien lui-même, dans son union, dans son organisation, et dans la lutte quotidienne, qu'il doit entreprendre pour la réalisation de ses revendications immédiates, et pour sa libération nationale. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

In this extract, the ENA's vision of the ideal Algerian nation was rooted in the political rather than in ethnicity, and its representation of Algerian people included Maghrebis, Europeans and Jews. It was a nationalism which, the *Etoile* claimed, was based on generous values of tolerance and not on racism, which gave the same rights to the majority as to the minorities. It was a reversal of the colonial order in the sense that in a free and independent Algeria, the ethnic make-up of the country would be kept as it was, but it would be a free democratic state where what Messali Hadj's movement perceived as the true Revolutionary spirit of 1789 and the "Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" would find a home. Several examples can be mentioned to

⁴⁰ Even though this assertion is valid in the context of this study, it is worth noting that there are also cases, such as the Welsh, where the nation exists outside the sphere of nationalism; that is to say that the Welsh have not, or not yet, developed patterns normally associated with it.

illustrate this point. During the debate organised by "the Club du Faubourg" on the Algerian question 18 March 1936, Dr Ben Sliman's exposé of the nationalist view sparked off a hostile reaction from the French settlers present in the audience who, according to *El Ouma*, shouted "Vive la France". Ben Sliman, who was the *Etoile's* delegate, then reacted by declaring:

Oui! Vive la France de la Révolution de 89! Vive la France des Droits de l'Homme! ...

Le peuple algérien, maître de ses destinées, mettra fin à l'oppression politique, et, dans une Algérie libre et indépendante, il n'y aura ni Juif ni Français, ni indigènes, mais des Algériens réconciliés dans la liberté. Il y aura aussi, ce jour-là, comme l'a dit notre vaillant président, Messali, du pain pour tout le monde et la liberté pour tous. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

In an article published in *El Ouma* in January 1938, the Algerian nationalist movement emphasised the inclusive and conciliatory nature of its political programme and rejected accusations made by the French press and some political parties (including the *Parti Communiste Français*) that the PPA, successor to the *Etoile*, was a fascist and racist party close to Doriot's fascist movement, the PPF:

On nous concèdera en toute justice que, rien ne figure dans ce programme qui soit dirigé contre la France ou contre les Français d'Algérie. Au contraire, tout y est conçu pour une plus étroite et plus réelle collaboration entre les différents éléments ethniques du pays ... Collaborer, mais d'une façon réelle et conforme aux principes dont s'inspire le régime actuel de la France, voilà ce que nous visons. Cela ressort avec évidence du chapitre fondamental de notre programme où nous demandons la transformation des Délégations financières en une assemblée algérienne, mais élue au suffrage universel, sans aucune distinction, pour les électeurs, de race ni de religion... donner à tous, musulmans[,] français ou étrangers ayant acquis droit de cité en Algérie le droit de dire leur mot dans la direction des affaires du pays, voilà le but de notre nationalisme. Un nationalisme qui n'a, comme on le voit, rien de chauvin ni de xénophobe parce qu'il ne se fonde sur aucun préjugé de race. (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938)

It was a nationalism based on equality between citizens belonging to all ethnic groups within a democratic state, rather than on the nation shaped by a sense of ethnicity. The Algeria imagined here was not a nation-state giving prominence to the primordial rights of the majority "ethnic" group, but rather a free, democratic and multi-ethnic state.⁴¹ It could be argued that this ideal nation was perceived as a pluralist or diverse one, where all Algerian citizens, regardless of their ethno-national belonging (be it marked by religion, "race", geographical origin, language, and/or culture) would be part of the same independent state and have the same rights. This vision of an independent state reflected the complex ethnic make-up of Algeria at the time, but was marked by a will to transcend the political and socio-economic divisions and the racialised boundaries that colonialism had constructed as insurmountable ones.

Establishing the foundations of the nation-state on such a precept was undoubtedly consistent with Algerian nationalists' understanding of universalism; it also had the advantage of offering a realistic alternative to the colonial order as it would enable Algeria to replace the latter with a fairer social system:

Il ne s'agit nullement ... d'amender, d'adoucir, assouplir le système colonial, mais le changer par d'autres rapports plus sains qui, tout en établissant des droits, sauvegardent certains intérêts respectifs des peuples en présence ... cette voie ... est la seule juste, car elle scellera l'union fraternelle des peuples, basée sur l'égalité des peuples, basée sur le respect de la nationalité (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)

This call for a smoother transition from the colonial to the democratic was, to nationalists, the best way of helping independent Algeria emerge as an economically and politically viable and stable state. Expertise from former colonials, who would then become Algerian citizens, would benefit the country while the Muslim population, which had previously been marginalised educationally, socially, politically and

⁴¹ The discourse of the ENA/PPA also reflected a process of imagining of the ethnic make-up of the majority North African population (see following section).

economically, would play a full role in those previously forbidden areas. Also, as a police report shows, Messali Hadj considered in private conversations that an independent Algeria would still need France's technical and economic assistance (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 48) (1). That depiction of a free and pluralist Algeria focused on the construction of an inclusive and egalitarian society where the ethnic divisions on which the colonial system was based would be removed, in order to establish the foundations of a modern country whose diversity was represented as being of potential benefit for all new Algerian citizens. In an independent Algerian state, ethnic difference was seen as compatible with equality, and equality as the only way forward for the respect of difference. This political perspective implied that a constructive dialogue between nationalists and progressive French authorities be established.

The way in which the term "nationality" was used is worth exploring. When they referred to "l'union fraternelle des peuples basée sur l'égalité et le respect de la *nationalité* [my emphasis]" the latter word was understood as meaning a feeling of loyalty to the Algerian nation-state within the framework of a diverse society where all the *peoples*, in the sense of ethnic groups, would be equal. This feeling of loyalty to one's nation-state, which they called "nationalité", was a form of patriotism (Connor 1993: 374).⁴² The Algeria that the ENA and the PPA imagined was rooted in a universalist/political conception of nation, one where all the citizens living in the state, whatever their origin, would be bound by this social contract.

However, the ENA/PPA's universalist vision of a multi-ethnic Algeria traversed by a sense of patriotism was a problematic one, given the particular nature of the movement's nationalism. Indeed, while, on the one hand, that ideal representation of social relations between the citizens of an independent Algeria normalised and ironed out any difference by the establishment of a clear social contract and shared patriotic

⁴² Walker Connor (1973), who is a proponent of an ethnic interpretation of nation, argues that a distinction should be made between loyalty to one's national group (which he defines as nationalism) and loyalty to one's state (to which he refers as patriotism). On the other hand, Breuille, who sees nations and nationalism as an inherently modern and political processes, considers that there is "little analytical value in distinguishing 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'. The first tends to become a term of praise, the second a term of abuse" (1996: 148). Whilst I would agree with Breuille, it has to be said that in the inter-war period, the ENA and the PPA, like many other political groupings, used the term 'nationalism' as an empowering and positive concept.

feelings, the North Africans' anti-colonial nationalism, on the other hand, was sustained by a process of identity construction marked by an emphasis on ethno-national differentiation.

Nationalists wanted to be independent because they saw themselves as "ethnically" different, because they could draw on what they considered to be tangible historical, cultural, linguistic, religious differences in order to demand the emancipation of North Africans. In other words, there was a divergence between the underlying "inspirations" which shaped the ENA/PPA's nationalist feelings of ethnic "uniqueness", and its aspiration to see, one day, a state based on inclusiveness and equality emerge from the rubble of colonialism.

Nonetheless, at that particular stage of their anti-colonial struggle, reconciling the two was extremely difficult, but not impossible, provided that the transition from a colonial order to the creation of independent Algeria was carried out relatively peacefully and without alienating the two sides. Muslims' nationalism could serve as a tool to destroy the colonial order, and the newly independent state could forge a new patriotic bond amongst ethnically varied Algerian citizens on the basis of the already existing feelings of Algerian-ness shared by North African Muslims, European settlers and Jews.⁴³

The nationalist movement's own discourse showed that this vision of an independent Algeria was sometimes questioned and contradicted as leaders and militants declared their hope that one day, the French would be expelled from Algeria. In a meeting of the ENA on 15 September 1934, Imache Amar and Radjef Belkacem both called for the French to be "jetés à la mer" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 103-104) (1). But these evocations, which were occasionally made in the course of heated political speeches and debates, probably referred to the French as a symbol of colonialism, and as such were not necessarily contradictory to their other universalist and inclusive claims. Furthermore, those calls for the French to be expelled did not

⁴³ North African Jews, who became French with the Decret Crémieux in 1870, were culturally and historically rooted in the Maghreb, and many Europeans had been in Algeria for generations and had developed a specific *Pied-Noir* identity. However, history would show that the chasm between the different parties was to widen as the French authorities showed no sign of reforming their colonial agenda and anti-Semitism spread.

appear in the issues of *El Ouma* analysed here. Rarely was the future Algeria described as only composed of indigenous North Africans in the movement's newspaper. On the contrary, the over-riding position of the ENA/PPA seems to have been that a new leaf should be turned over once independence had been achieved, and that constructive relations should be established between France and Algeria:

Cent ans de domination française ont créé entre le peuple français et le peuple algérien une affinité spirituelle et une communauté d'intérêts certaines. L'Algérie a besoin d'une France sincère et loyale ... Et la France a besoin de l'Algérie aux richesses multiples. (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)

This conciliatory representation of postcolonial relations between the two countries was marked by mutual understanding based on shared history, as well as political and economic interest.

2.5 Ethno-national identity: the tension between inclusive nationality and exclusive nationalism

Even though the future Algerian nation-state imagined by the ENA and the PPA was of a multi-cultural nature, Algerians' nationalist feelings, which were rooted in the urgency of the anti-colonial struggle, were built in a radically different way. In order to understand the manner in which their nationalism was shaped, it is essential to examine the process by which the ethnicity of North African Muslims (who were meant to be the numerically dominant component of that independent state) was constructed in the nationalist movement's discourse.

It was established in the previous section that one of the key characteristics of the militants' identity was to define themselves *vis-à-vis* the other, and to argue that they could never become that figure of alterity that the French assimilationist discourse promoted. This marked the outer boundary of their identity. However, one cannot simply consider oneself as belonging to a specific nation only because one feels

different from another national group. The nature of that difference had to be defined, or rather imagined, in such a way that it could *mobilise people around a number of clear, if shifting, referential values*. That is why the processes by which they constructed their own national identity also need to be assessed. To put it differently, the question which needs to be considered is the following one: if Algerian Muslims were not French, then, who were they?

Firstly, it is important to note here that both frameworks of reference were inextricably linked: national identity was formed by the complex and constantly evolving tension between what constituted "us" and what differentiated "us" from "them". As Connor puts it, "the essence of the nation is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all non-members in a most vital way" (1993: 377). The aim of this section is to examine how this bond was constructed.

At the core of the process of nation-building is the relationship between nation, ethnicity and "race". Today, a distinction between race and ethnicity tends to be made. Wallerstein, for instance, defines race as "[censé] être une catégorie génétique, correspondant à une forme physique apparente" and an ethnic group as "une catégorie culturelle, définie par certains comportements persistents, transmis de génération en génération" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 104-105). Since the notion of "race" lost much of its credibility after the Second World War, the concept of ethnicity has become more widely used. In the inter-war years, the term "race" was widely used and loosely defined: it could describe biological, as well as cultural, religious, historical, geographical and/or linguistic differences. Banton and Harwood's historical interpretation of the way in which the notion of "race" was invented and then spread to the rest of the world highlights the meaning that it conveyed in colonial times:

race was a kind of classification invented by Europeans, first to press the political claims of groups within European countries; then to represent the relations between these countries; only later when the potentialities of this way of labelling people had been extended and biological

theories integrated with social ones, was it imposed upon the rest of the world. (Banton and Harwood 1975: 8)

However, to follow up on that argument and relate it to our case-study, the fact that this kind of classification was imposed on the rest of the world does not necessarily mean that it was adopted, structured and used in the same way by the colonised as it was by the coloniser.

The meaning of the word "race", as featured in the ENA/PPA's discourse, seemed to reflect a certain ambivalence. In an article entitled "Le peuple algérien saura choisir!" which denounced colonialism *El Ouma* referred to nationalism as the bond which united all North Africans of the same "race" belonging to the same country:

Nous disons à notre peuple musulman nord-africain et devant le monde entier qu'il ne peut acquérir ses droits, son honneur et sa prospérité que si le sentiment de la liberté et de la patrie inspire les grands et les petits et devient le lien puissant entre les enfants d'une même race et d'un même pays. (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935)

In this passage, the term "race" is used in the singular and all North African Muslims are described as being members of that "race". But which "race" do they invoke? That article later implies that all North African Muslims belong to the Arab "race" when it states that "le peuple ... saura choisir entre le courage et la poltronnerie ... entre ceux qui disent: « nous sommes fiers d'être des Arabes, et nous voulons le rester », et ceux qui se renient et disent: « nous ne voulons être que des Français »" (ibid). However, it also acknowledges that different "racial" or ethnic groups compose the North African Muslim people: "à nos appels, les esprits de çof et de division s'effacent, on voit, fraternellement unis dans un même esprit nos frères arabes, kabyles" (ibid). One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the apparent contradiction between the two above-mentioned passages is that between the two existing ethnic groups, the Arabs and the Kabyles (or the Berbers), Arabness appears to be the dominant "racial" reference.

Essentialising the varied ethnic make-up of the North African indigenous population implied not only determining which "race" was the dominant one, but also reconciling both ethnic groups by explaining that they were one and the same "race". In a conference on "[l]a qualité de Français dans le statut des indigènes" in Algiers on 12 March 1936, Lamoudi, a militant of the ENA, gave the following historical account of Arab domination in North Africa:

Il y a à retenir ... la conquête arabe. Les Arabes ne sont pas considérés en conquérants, ni vainqueurs, ni vaincus. Les Berbères bénéficièrent de la plus large démocratie, et c'est pour cela qu'après moins de 20 ans, les Berbères étaient conquis corps et âme aux Arabes ... Disons qu'en Algérie, il n'y a plus, ni Arabes, ni Kabyles, ni Mozabites, il y a des Arabo-Berbères musulmans et, tous unis, nous sommes certains du triomphe de notre Cause juste. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

This depiction of the Arab invasion of North Africa was clearly inaccurate as it glossed over the wars that had opposed the two ethnic groups from the seventh and eighth centuries onwards and dismissed the differences that continued to mark both communities.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the point of this account was not about whether or not it was historically accurate, but rather about the political purpose that such a portrayal could serve. Indeed, it could be argued that it played the more important role of creating a unified identity shared by all North African Muslims, an identity which could mobilise North Africans and constitute a rallying front against colonialism.

The above-mentioned passage shows another, more particularist, perspective on the nation. It illustrates Connor's argument that a nation is a self-aware ethnic group (1978: 388-389). Indeed, however problematic the nationalist movement's reinterpretation of history was (as time would show) it was part of a process of nation-building which implied (re)defining Maghrebis' identity in order to create or enhance an

⁴⁴See, for example, the emblematic figure of the Kahina in Berber consciousness.

awareness amongst all North African Muslims that they belonged to a common ethnic group, and therefore to the same nation.

Identity played a crucial role in their fight against colonialism, whose "divide and rule" strategy was felt across Algeria.⁴⁵ Indeed, the nationalist movement consistently condemned the French colonial authorities, who had introduced differentialist policies that made a distinction between Arabs and Berbers, as "ceux qui veulent la division du peuple musulman" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935). This point is illustrated in several articles in which nationalists denounced the continuing exploitation of Muslims by a minority of Europeans, and called for the *Délégation financière*, which was dominated by European settlers, to be replaced by an Algerian Parliament whose members should be elected by universal suffrage:

revenons à notre Délégation financière et éclaircissons son mécanisme. Comme dans toutes les Assemblées algériennes, les Musulmans au nombre de 5 millions sont représentés par un tiers et les néo-français au nombre de 900.000 sont représentés par les deux-tiers. Ainsi, sur 60 délégués financiers, il y a 40 délégués colons et non-colons et 20 musulmans divisés en deux sections, l'une arabe et l'autre kabyle. Cette division entre Kabyles et Arabes est voulue et entretenue par la Délégation pour créer entre les musulmans la lutte de çof qui permettra aux colons de tailler la part du lion dans le budget algérien. (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

Les autochtones, qui sont au nombre de [5] millions, sont représentés par un tiers au sein de la Délégation financière ... Le tiers qui représente le peuple opprimé, est divisé en deux clans par l'impérialisme, afin de pouvoir les manœuvrer à sa guise, c'est le clan arabe et le clan kabyle. *El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935)

Faced with these divisive policies, the nationalist movement saw it as crucial to claim and reassert that Arabs and Berbers were part of the same ethnic group. This was all the more necessary as Kabyles were the subject of a certain fascination amongst French

⁴⁵ Spurr points out pertinently that "the classification of indigenous people according to their relative complexity of social organization becomes more systematic and articulated as it directly serves the interests of colonial administration" (1996: 68).

intellectuals and politicians in the nineteenth century. The "mythe kabyle", according to which Berbers were the descendants of Europeans, developed from 1830 onwards, and had its heyday in the decades between 1870 and 1890. At the time, it led the colonial authorities to consider the assimilation of Kabyles and the marginalisation of Arabs.⁴⁶ Even though the myth lost influence at the turn of the century, it survived in colonial and metropolitan circles; from the early 20th century onwards, France's "politique berbère" aimed no longer to assimilate Kabyles, but to differentiate between what they saw as the two "races" of Algeria (Ageron 1968b: 873, see also Dornel 1995: 51, Zeghidour 1995).

This romantic interpretation of the history of the Kabyles as that of a "lost" European people had its supporters up until 1960 (Ageron 1968a: 267-291). It served the purpose of furthering the colonial agenda and reinforced racism: it established a link of distant kinship between Kabyles and European settlers, and divided the two indigenous communities. It portrayed the Kabyles as the distant European cousins who were the precursors of the French, and it supported the claim that colonisation was a rightful enterprise that had come full circle, as the French, in the name of their Gallo-Roman heritage, were only claiming back what was "truly theirs". This interpretation also delegitimised any claim on North Africa made by the autochthons: in their view, Kabyles were descendants of Europeans (many of whom were Christian before the Arab invasion) and Arabs were just another conquering people. Of course, the French did not go as far as accepting the Kabyles into the "French family". They were not even, as Carlier points out "colonisé[s] de premier rang, mais citoyen[s] de second plan" (1984: 361), as they did not benefit from French citizenship. Like the Arabs, they were also considered as North African subjects and had to endure the harsh rule of the *Code de l'Indigénat* and racism on both sides of the Mediterranean. But one of the direct consequences of this representation was that the Kabyles were singled out as the North African ethnic group on which the proselytising efforts of the Catholic Church should concentrate.

⁴⁶ For a study of assimilation in the inter-war period, see, for example, Hily (1981), and Siblot (1989).

The Algerian nationalist movement saw it as one of its priorities to counter this historical interpretation of the ethnic make-up of North Africa. In an article which denounced vehemently this interpretation of the origins of the Berbers and the attempts made by the Pères Blancs to christianise the Kabyles, the Moroccan student leader El Kholti, under the pen name of El Ançari, presented the ENA's view of the "racial" make-up of Algeria:

Depuis quelques années, s'est installé, à Fort-National, un certain « Père Blanc », dénommé Jean Lemoine, missionnaire-espion, soudoyé par le Quai d'Orsay et le Service des Affaires Indigènes, pardon, naturellement aussi par le Pape: dans le dessein manifeste de détacher les Kabyles de leurs frères et coreligionnaires arabes et essayer de les christianiser.

Nous voyons que cette politique de division pratiquée sur une plus grande échelle par l'impérialisme français, en Afrique du Nord, pour dissocier le bloc musulman arabo-berbère, se manifeste d'une façon toute spéciale en grande Kabylie. C'est ainsi que nous voyons quelle abjecte littérature M. Jean Lemoine développe dans son torchon dénommé scandaleusement «Le Berbère», ne ratant aucune occasion de discréditer la civilisation musulmane ... Le Père Lemoine veut nous faire croire à nous, Berbères, que nous sommes d'origine romaine et, par conséquent, nous n'avons rien de commun avec les Arabes. Mais dieu merci, nos ancêtres n'ont jamais été des Romains, et ce sont les seuls qui ont su juguler leur domination ... Nous, Berbères, nous savons que nous sommes aussi des Arabes, venus seulement quelques milliers d'années avant nos frères venus après la révélation et la mission de notre glorieux prophète (que le salut soit sur lui), ce qui explique bien la diffusion rapide de l'Islam en Afrique du Nord à l'arrivée des envoyés des Kalifes.

Aujourd'hui, pour nous, soit en Algérie, en Tunisie ou au Maroc, il n'y a ni Arabes, ni Kabyles, ni Mozabites, il n'y a qu'une race, la race arabo-berbère, issue d'un seul croisement, et nous sommes par-dessus tout Musulmans, ce dont nous sommes fiers, et tous les Musulmans sont frères. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935)

This article, which dismisses the argument that Berbers are of Roman origin, is worth quoting extensively as it sheds some useful light on the processes of ethnic identity

formation in the nationalist movement. What is striking in this exposé is that discourse is structured around similar criteria to the ones developed by Lemoine and his peers. Firstly, the ENA evoked the links of kinship between the numerically dominant ethnic group (the Arabs) and the Berbers, whilst the French emphasised the distant connection between the latter and the colonially dominant Europeans. Secondly, both Lemoine and El Ançari ignored the possibility that Berbers could be the original indigenous peoples of North Africa, and asserted that they originated from a specific "homeland" outside North Africa. Thirdly, the question of religion is seen as central in determining kinship, and by extension "race" for both Algerian nationalists ("il n'y a qu'une race, la race arabo-berbère ... et nous sommes par-dessus tout Musulmans ... et tous les Musulmans sont frères") and the French (who wanted to see the Kabyles "return" to Christianity).

What also appears clearly from this debate is the extent to which the hegemonic discourse on identity of the nationalists legitimised their own, and countered France's, claim on the North African territory. In this battle for identity, the interpretation which would get the upper hand would greatly determine the future of North Africa. For the ENA, all North Africans were Arabs as the two components of the Arabo-Berber ethnic group were described as originating from Arabia. This was the way in which the psychological bond that joined the North African people was justified. To paraphrase Connor (July 1993: 377), it was a bond that differentiated them from the French in a most fundamental way, and which constituted the essence of North African nationalists' claim on the Algerian nation.

Furthermore, it could be argued that this interpretation of Algerian nation-ness as being inherently Arab was, as they perceived it, all the more justified as the religious brotherhood that united all North Africans merged Islam with Arabness, and by extension with the Arabic language. That relationship between race and religious belonging, where the former could be subsumed by the latter, was implied by the ENA's occasional reference to Muslims as a race.⁴⁷

Another parallel needs to be noted. The process by which Algeria was being imagined as a nation clearly echoed the way in which France developed and portrayed

⁴⁷ See, for example, *El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933.

herself. Indeed, France saw herself as a "République une et indivisible" which was the incarnation of the French nation, in other words of the French people, and by extension the French *ethnie*. This meant that the very existence of ethnic minorities such as the Basques or the Bretons was ignored, and languages and cultures other than the French forbidden or marginalised because they were seen as a threat to the Republic. Similarly, Algeria was depicted by the ENA as a republic with, at its core, an Arab nation rooted in the Arab *ethnie*, composed of Arabo-Berber people who were described as Arabs. This essentialist representation of North African identity also meant that differences and diversity were denied in the name of unity, and it led to a number of crises within the nationalist movement (and in post-colonial Algeria) as Berbers felt alienated.⁴⁸ Calls made by some Berbers to be recognised as a distinct ethnic group were seen as a threat to the anti-colonial struggle of the *Etoile*, which saw itself as a "mouvement de la nation arabe" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935), and to the future viability and stability of an independent Algerian Republic.

2.6 Conclusion

The North African migrant community in France should be considered as a diaspora, even if it does not correspond to the "ideal" type of the Jewish diaspora. Its experience of migration, as portrayed by nationalists, was permeated by feelings of dispossession, oppression and exile, and its hope was to fight colonialism and for the re-establishment of its lost homeland. It was within this diaspora that Algerian nationalism, in its modern form, developed.

In its early years, the movement's aim was to mobilise all North Africans in order to obtain the independence of the whole of North Africa, implying that a single national state covering the whole Maghreb should be created. However, its position evolved to present a nationalist programme for the Maghreb based on three distinct states adopting the existing colonial borders of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. As a

⁴⁸ It is interesting to note, in the ENA/PPA's discourse, the paradigm of diversity as a concept. It was constructed positively within the context of a multi-ethnic and independent Algeria enriched by its multi-ethnic population, and negatively during the process of ethnic self-definition.

movement numerically dominated by Algerians, the *Etoile*, and from 1937 the PPA, focused mainly on Algerian issues.

Algerian nationalists' view of the future of Algeria was inclusive and marked by universalist principles. They wanted to see the creation of an independent, multi-ethnic and democratic state keeping strong ties with France, and where all citizens, whatever their "race" or religion, would be equal and share the same patriotic feelings for Algeria.

By contrast, their own ethnic identity as North Africans was constructed in exclusivist terms, and informed by a sense of "us" and "them". They argued strongly that North Africans were not and would never become French, and that France's colonial domination aimed not only to dispossess North Africans of their land, but also of their religious identity. "Naturalisation" was seen as a betrayal of their identity as Muslims and was correlated with a conversion to Christianity, and the "évolués" were stigmatised for what was seen as their sterile pursuit of assimilation into the French nation.

Their ethno-national identity was constructed in a way which countered colonial attempts to divide North Africans on the basis of "race". They denounced French imperialism for using what they saw as the fallacious argument that Berbers were a distinct "race" of European origin as the basis for the differentialist policies aimed at dividing North Africans.

Their own interpretation of Maghrebis' ethnicity also essentialised the varied ethnic make-up of North Africans. For them, Arabs and Berbers belonged to the same "Arab race", and both originated from the Middle East. This representation, which reflected the process by which France had come to essentialise her own national identity, shows the extent to which Algerian nationalism had been influenced by France's.

Chapter 3

The markers of ethnicity in North African nationalist discourse: kinship, class, culture, pastness and religion

3.1 Introduction

The discourse of the Algerian nationalist movement in the inter-war period in France highlights the extent to which the boundary of North African ethnic identity was constructed to coincide with the contour of the imagined Algerian nation. This process implied not only defining "us" (North Africans) as inherently different from "them" (the French), but also discursively merging ethnically varied North Africans into a single ethnic entity (alternatively called "Arab" and "Arabo-Berber") subsumed by a sense of religious belonging.

That ethnic identity was imagined in such a way that it could build on a number of socio-cultural, religious and historical references to create a sense of "we-ness", of self-awareness that they, North Africans, belonged to a specific nation. However, as Barth argues, cultural features can be used as signals and emblems of differences or can be ignored, and differences can be played down or denied (Barth 1969a: 14). Far from being characterised by their consistency, the ENA/PPA's references were selected strategically and circumstantially in order to justify the image of the Algerian nation conjured up by the movement's discourse. Some traits were adopted whole-heartedly whilst others were discarded or modified to support their nationalist agenda.

The mechanisms that allowed the formation of Algerian nation-ness worked in a binary process of legitimisation: on the one hand, the markers of national identity which were chosen by the movement legitimised the nationalists' own discourse on the nation and therefore allowed Messali Hadj and his organisation to present themselves as the incarnation of the nation; and on the other hand the way(s) in which the nation was evoked by the ENA/PPA legitimised those traits that had been used as the true source of their identity and, by extension, delegitimised those which had been dismissed.

It could be argued that Barth's emphasis on the transactional or negotiated nature of ethnicity, which subordinates the cultural content and profile of ethnicity to the process of boundary maintenance, does not tackle an important point, that is to say the extent to which the ethnic boundary has what could be called a "limited elasticity". In other words the process by which those cultural traits which are considered relevant and others ignored cannot be infinitely flexible, as the case of the Algerian nationalist movement shows. The essentialist nature of the ethnic identity which was constructed by the ENA/PPA meant that calls for a fairer representation of the nation's varied ethnic make-up were deemed anti-patriotic because divisive; but this did not mean that the discarded cultural traits, however delegitimised they had been, disappeared from the cultural landscape of its militants' imaginary. The persistence of a distinct Berber identity, and those supporting a vision of Algeria based on her cultural diversity recurrently challenged the nationalist movement's official interpretation of ethnicity. This has continued to be the case up to this day in the independent states in North Africa. To go further, it could be argued that the boundary of ethnic identity is not only informed by a process of transaction between "us" and "them", but it is also subject to inner challenges which can put into question the very legitimacy of that boundary.

3.2 The bond of kinship in Algerian nationalism

The class, religious, cultural and historical references which traversed the Algerian nationalist discourse were all markers of kinship. Kinship was crucial to the formation of nationhood as it provided a store of symbolic devices through which the modern nation-state could construct itself (Helmreich 1992: 244). A number of studies on ethnicity and nationalism have acknowledged the prominent role played by kinship in the process of ethnic and ethno-national formation (for example, Geertz 1963a, Anderson 1983, Jenkins 1997, Connor 1993, Cornell 1996). The bond of kinship which marks nation-ness is one Anderson illustrates convincingly when he argues that the nation is an imagined community which "is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible ... for so many

millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 1983: 16). According to Anderson, the ties of kinship denote something which is natural and unchosen; and because these ties are unchosen, they have about them what he calls "a halo of disinterestedness". In other words, the nation can ask for sacrifices because it is interestless (Anderson 1983: 131).

Using this contention as an analytical tool can enable us to highlight some of the key processes by which this bond of kinship was constructed in the ENA/PPA's discourse. Its evocation of the Mother-Nation or Fatherland illustrates the way in which the Algerian nation was imagined.⁴⁹ After the First World War, the North African diaspora in France still made a disjunction between, on the one hand, French colonial oppression in the Maghreb and, on the other hand, metropolitan France which summoned up images of democracy and fairness. At that time, Maghrebis had not fully developed their nationalist project and their demands focused mainly on socio-political and economic equality. An article in *L'Ikdam de Paris* illustrates the extent to which many Maghrebis, at that stage of pre-nationalist thought, still perceived France as their Mother-Nation and were willing to contribute to France's reconstruction after the Great War :

Tout d'abord, le premier devoir qui s'impose à nous au lendemain de cet indiscible cataclysme qui a si féroce­ment atteint la France, consiste à coopérer avec le meilleur de nous-mêmes à l'œuvre de reconstitution de la Mère-Patrie, avec cet élan généreux et héroïque, si caractéristique de notre race, et qui valut à nos frères tombés par centaines de mille sur les champs de bataille de Charleroi, de la Marne, de Verdun, pour ne citer que ceux-là, la Gloire impérissable d'avoir mérité une page historique dans la victoire finale. (*L'Ikdam de Paris*, vendredi 7 mars 1919)⁵⁰

This passage highlights the fact that, in the years that followed the war, Maghrebi migrants' sense of kinship was very much anchored within the French nation. By

⁴⁹ Interestingly, the French equivalents of those terms either encapsulate both genders ("la Mère-Patrie"), or are marked by patriarchy ("la Patrie").

⁵⁰ *L'Ikdam de Paris* was the voice of the North African community in France until it was forbidden by the French government on 1 February 1927, and was then replaced by *L'Ikdam Nord-Africain* until 1930 and by *El Ouma* thereafter (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA 1934*: 135).

making the supreme sacrifice of their life to the nation, Muslims argued that they had fulfilled one of the most sacred requirements on which French nation-hood is based ("le don du sang"). Their identity was perceived within an assimilationist perspective: they described themselves as a "generous and heroic race" whose contribution to French victory in the war had earned them a place in the French nation. However, it appears clearly that that hybrid sense of kinship was not marked by disinterestedness, as on the one hand Muslims hoped that they would be granted equal rights as a reward for their role during the Great War, and on the other hand the French had no intention of introducing reforms that might undermine their colonial rule of Algeria.

From the second half of the 1920s onwards, which coincided with the creation of the ENA, France's failure to keep her word on the question of rights for Muslims contributed to her losing much of her credibility amongst them. By then the terminology used to refer to France and to the war had become far more irreverent. France was described as a country which had not kept her promise to grant rights to North African Muslims as a reward for their sacrifice for France during the First World War and as one of those "pays «civilisés» [où] le mensonge, l'hypocrisie ... se pratiquent du plus haut de l'échelle sociale" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935). Also, the ENA and the PPA often recalled with bitterness their contribution to the war effort, to which they referred as "faire trouser sa peau au cours de la grande boucherie mondiale de 1914" (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933), and the way in which Muslims had been duped by France's empty promises into joining their ranks and fight the Germans:

Le peuple nord africain se souvient toujours que pendant quatre ans il s'est battu, parce qu'on lui avait dit que c'était une guerre pour le Droit et la Liberté. Il se souvient encore, et cela est gravé dans sa mémoire, que plus de cent mille de ses enfants reposent sur les différents champs de bataille, et il se souvient également que des promesses formelles lui ont été solennellement faites. (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934)

Nous demandons d'abord la réalisation de toutes les promesses qu'on nous a faites pendant la guerre, pour nous endormir et nous envoyer à la boucherie défendre une cause qui n'était pas la nôtre. (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934)

nous avons fait la guerre de 1914 à 1918 ... et du moment que nous avons payé cet impôt du sang, nous avons le droit de demander, au nom de la justice, la réalisation de nos revendications légitimes. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

Not only did North Africans realise that they had fought France's war for nothing, but they, as colonials and unlike the French, had been consistently sent to the front line with the Senegalese and other "coloniaux" by a racist French army (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938). They also became aware that the wider implications of that unjust war had been for European imperialist powers to reinforce their colonial domination in Asia and Africa:

C'est pendant que les hommes de toutes les races et de toutes les couleurs s'entretuaient pour le «Droit, la Justice et la Liberté aux peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes», que l'impérialisme anglais, français et italien, se réunissait à Londres pour se partager l'Asie et l'Afrique. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935)

These extracts highlight the extent to which the ENA/PPA's discourse on kinship had drastically changed from the mid-1920s onwards. What had previously been described as the "imperishable Glory" of their sacrifice to their French Motherland was now seen as a "boucherie" during which thousands of Muslims had died for nothing. Their blood had been wasted on a cause and for a nation which were not theirs. That war had shown that far from having "a halo of disinterestedness" about it, the bond which had tied Muslims to the French nation was traversed by interest and prejudice.

In nationalist discourse, a shift had therefore taken place. The Algerian nation had become the repository of their national feelings, and the bond which united Algerian nationalists to their nation was marked by disinterestedness. Certainly, the

concept of disinterestedness is highly ambivalent and should not be equated with gratuitousness. Social agents act as they do for a particular reason and do not engage in gratuitous actions (Bourdieu 1998: 76). Furthermore, however valid Anderson's assessment of the disinterested nature of nation-ness, a dichotomous interpretation of disinterestedness and interestedness would be misleading in the case of the nationalist discourse, as the former and the latter constitute both ends of the same tension. In the case of the Algerian nationalist movement, the disinterested relationship with what it referred to as the Algerian nation also had a number of corollaries which were arguably of an interested nature, namely the will to end colonial domination and restore Muslims' dignity and freedom, improve their socio-economic position and their political rights in society, and so on. *El Ouma's* tribute to the Muslims who died or were injured during the Constantine uprising in August 1934 illustrates that point: "Nous nous inclinons bien bas devant tous les morts et tous les blessés qui sont tombés en combattant pour nos libertés, pour nos *intérêts* [my emphasis] et pour le respect de notre race" (*El Ouma*, août-septembre 1934, in *Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 149) (1).

The movement's evocation of family ties to refer to the nation is also revealing. The nation could ask for sacrifices because the disinterested nature of that bond of kinship guaranteed that their *interests* would be looked after. In other words, it was a question of "national interest" for nationalists to be engaged in building an Algerian Mother-Nation ("la Mère-Patrie" or "la Patrie") which would nurture Muslims (her children in the sense of les "enfants de la nation") as a "true mother" rather than as a "marâtre" (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).⁵¹

As was seen previously, for nationalists, building the Algerian nation implied first rejecting the French nation as the repository of their nationhood and coming to terms with the fact that the hybrid relationship that had, for some time, tied North African Muslims to the French nation was sterile, and that they had been deceived:

⁵¹ See *El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936, p. 3: "travailler pour la construction de notre Patrie, qui saura aimer ses enfants en mère et non en 'marâtre'".

C'est la force qui prime sur le droit! Le peuple a beau gémir, la France a bouché les oreilles devant nos plaintes, et fermé les yeux devant notre souffrance! Le seul droit qui reste, c'est celui du plus fort. Il appartient plus que jamais aux Musulmans de s'unir pour être forts. Car il n'y a plus rien à attendre de la France. Notre salut est entre nos mains. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

Le peuple nord-africain, dont les yeux naguère étaient encore bandés, s'est affranchi de son bandeau et s'aperçoit que le colonialisme entreprend de l'assassiner par derrière. Soyons optimistes et espérons qu'il conquérira sa liberté, même au prix de l'ultime sacrifice. (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938)

The concluding part of a letter addressed to the Président du Conseil by Algerian nationalists on 16 January 1925 also shows the extent to which France's rejection of the Muslims' appeals to be accepted within the French nation and to be treated as equals informed the birth of their nationalism:

L'indifférence de la France à notre égard, son injustice, son ingratitude nous soulève le cœur et fait naître en nous, nous vous le disons franchement, un esprit nationaliste ... Permettez-nous, Monsieur, de vous dire, avant de nous séparer, que nous voulons notre Algérie à nous, puisque vous nous empêchez d'accéder à votre France. ('Propagande communiste aux colonies') (2)

This passage reflects the way in which nationalism developed out of a feeling of rejection and an awareness that, in colonial Algeria, Muslims would always remain *outside*, and never be accepted *in* the French nation. This polarisation of identities was the result of the French colonial agenda, and it contributed greatly to the shaping of a nation-ness marked by a sense of "us" which was irreconcilable with "them". The movement's discourse shows that because the Muslims' attempt to determine their nation-ness *vis-à-vis* the French national project had blatantly failed, it had to be built on different foundations. Algerian national identity should be defined *against* France. In a political meeting of the *Etoile* on 15 September 1934, Radjef Belkacem, then a key

member of the Central Committee of the *Etoile*, declared that France should no longer count on indigenous troops to protect her and that, if a war happened, she would be unable to prevent Muslims from rebelling. During that same meeting, Messali Hadj invited the North African soldiers who were present in the audience to turn their weapons against imperialist France (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 104-106) (1). In the same year, an article written in *El Ouma* by Ali Rouifed, a young militant, explicitly invited Muslim nationalists to fight against France:

Ne comprenez-vous pas la nécessité urgente d'être nationaliste? C'est le moment où jamais d'en profiter, la situation internationale étant très tendue. N'y aurait-il pas en Afrique du Nord une centaine de mille braves qui donneraient leur sang, non pas à Verdun contre une nation qui ne nous a pas attaqués, mais contre l'impérialisme[,] contre les aventuriers qui nous oppriment et nous asservissent? (*El Ouma* Numéro 18, janvier 1934)

This extract illustrates clearly the fact that the concept of "don du sang" had shifted in the movement's discourse. North Africans' nation-ness, their sense of "we-ness" was constructed against the Other which incarnated colonialism. The evolution from a nationhood defined *vis-à-vis* the other to one constructed *against* the other displaced the boundary of national belonging to anchor it within the sphere of nationalism. The movement developed a discourse on kinship in which calls for sacrifice were rooted in evocations of peoplehood and symbolised the fight for the Algerian nation:

Ne reste pas indifférent au sort de ceux des tiens qui s'immolent pour ta défense, que ceux-là partent au sacrifice la tête haute et dégagée en se disant: "Au moins notre sacrifice n'est pas vain, un peuple entier nous observe, haletant, et n'attend qu'un ordre pour joncher de ses cadavres le chemin de sa libération". (*El Ouma*, juin 1934, in *Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 148) (1)

Sacrifice is depicted here as a noble cause that has to be championed in the name of the Algerian people. The concept of the "don du sang" is one of the key markers of national belonging. The reference to an Algerian people ready to fight and to give their life for

freedom symbolises the birth of a nation. The tension between evocations of death (through sacrifice) and birth (of a nation) underpins their nationalist discourse. Algerian nationalists therefore argued that North African identity ("us") could not be reconciled with French nationality ("them"). Their positing of Algerian identity as being defined by what it was *against* was part of a process of mobilisation.

3.3 Markers of ethnic solidarity

Even though identification with the Algerian nation was reinforced by North Africans' political involvement in anti-colonial struggle, the Algerian nationalist movement could not mobilise Maghrebis against colonialism unless more positive feelings of solidarity were established through a shared awareness of who they were: nation-ness had to be imagined in such a way that Muslims in the Algerian diaspora and in the colony could identify with it and relate to it.

The references which nationalists drew upon in order to construct a shared sense of ethno-national belonging were often discussed in contrast with French identity rather than separately. It shows that identity was not simply the combination of a number of traits, but also that that combination had to highlight distance and difference. An article in *El Ouma* which was highly critical of Ferhat Abbas reflects that point. It denounced Abbas for going back on the radical political views that he held when he was young (at a time when he used the name of Abencérage, Chateaubriand's heroic character, as a pen name) to adopt a more reformist position, and reiterated the PPA's nationalist conception of Algerian identity:

Comme le jeune Abencérage, nous pensons qu'il est impossible de changer de nationalité comme on change de cravate. Notre nationalité c'est, avant tout, notre passé, notre histoire, nos mœurs, nos traditions, nos souvenirs de jeunesse, nos habitudes d'esprit, tout ce qui entre dans la composition de notre moi et on ne peut pas vider la personnalité de son contenu par un acte de volonté. En d'autres termes, on ne peut pas cesser d'être arabes ou kabyles pour devenir français du jour au lendemain. Nous sommes persuadés d'ailleurs qu'une fois transplantés dans la famille

française, Abbas lui-même, le tricolore flamboyant de l'Entente éprouverait de la gêne à dire: «Nous avons conquis l'Algérie». (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938)

This extract outlines that identity is perceived in binary terms: first by stating what being Algerian means, and secondly by arguing that those traits make it impossible for North Africans to become French. To come back to what constitutes an Algerian, several attributes ("notre passé, notre histoire, nos mœurs, nos traditions, nos souvenirs de jeunesse, nos habitudes d'esprit") are mentioned which could be encapsulated into two broad referential and overlapping categories: history and memory on the one hand, and culture and tradition on the other hand. To those, one could add religion, which is another key marker of national identity frequently evoked, and class.

3.4 The ethnic dimension of class awareness

The purpose of this section is to assess the interplay between the concepts of class, ethnicity and nation-ness in Algerian nationalist discourse in the inter-war years. The development of a class consciousness amongst North African migrants was undoubtedly marked by their experience as colonial workers in France (Wihtol de Wenden 1988: 33). However, it would be too simplistic to view it only as the result of their socio-political and economic interaction with other agents during the years that they had spent in the metropole. Indeed, such an exclusive interpretation ignores the complex diasporic processes that informed the development of such an awareness. Their experience in the colony prior to their emigration already played a central role in the formation of a political consciousness and constituted the very reason why they decided to migrate.

In North Africa, class belonging was very much informed by ethnicity. The complex social order on which colonial North Africa was based meant that Europeans occupied the top of the hierarchy, followed by Jews who had gained French citizenship through the Décret Crémieux in 1870, and by the Muslim elite and "notables", many of whom had become French citizens by abandoning their "statut personnel" as Muslims. Most autochtons belonged to the proletariat and the underclass. Even though a European

proletariat existed, ethnic and racial differences between them and Muslims were constructed by the colonial order to set them apart from one another through racism. The harsh realities of the "petit blancs" lower social status was therefore "attenuated" by racial divisions which still placed them above another group (Muslims). The racist foundations upon which the colonial system had been built and the discrimination that they endured in the hands not only of the European bourgeoisie, but also in the hands of European working class shaped Maghrebis' experience in North Africa. An article published in *La Patrie Humaine* on 8 March 1935 and reproduced in *El Ouma* described how "[Les Nords-Africains] sont restés les éternels manœuvres-serfs ... jouets non seulement des maîtres, mais souvent de leurs camarades de travail, spécialisés eux, mais inconscients aussi, pleins de préjugés de race... Navrant!" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935). Others also denounced the anti-Maghrebi racism that existed within the European working class in the colonies. Ferhat Abbas explained that a Serb worker whom he knew and who greeted him in the street, was told by the workers he was with that "on ne saluait pas ces gens-là quelque fût leur condition sociale" (*Liberté*, 7 janvier 1936). Briole, a union leader in Algeria, stated that since his arrival in Algeria in 1904, he had noted that "les Européens, même les bolchéviks, quoi qu'ils en disent, considèrent les Arabes comme des êtres inférieurs, malfaisants, paresseux et malpropres" (*Le Peuple*, 25 septembre 1926).

The conflict which opposed the Algerian nationalist movement to the *évolués* or the reformist North African elite, shows that class could be an important criterion informing its sense of nation-ness. The Algerian nationalist movement frequently condemned the latter for ignoring the plight of their people:

Il y a un clan qui comprend tous les fonctionnaires, les avocats, les médecins, etc... qui se targuent du nom d'hommes d'élites et d'intellectuels ... C'est de leur éducation et de leur milieu social que découle leur action. Ce clan est loin du peuple, il l'ignore, quoique vivant dans son milieu, il le sous-estime et le prend pour une quantité négligeable, une masse inerte sans aucun intérêt pour lui. C'est une grosse erreur, le peuple: c'est la force de l'Algérie, la force sur laquelle on peut compter; le peuple est plus avancé que nos intellectuels, plus combatif, car il est toujours

prêt au combat et à la lutte pour ses revendications et pour sa liberté. (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933)

This passage illustrates how class shaped the nationalist movement's representation of ethno-national belonging. The *Etoile* made a distinction between the elite and the people. This dichotomous representation was not based on "race", but on class. On the one hand, the North African elite (intellectuals, politicians and "notables") were stigmatised and described as divided from the rest of the Algerians and indifferent to their fate. On the other hand, the Algerian people, which referred to the vast majority of poor and oppressed Algerians, were praised. Peoplehood was depicted as the true repository of Algerian nation-ness and nationalism. The movement's assertion implied that because the elite had not developed a sense of kinship with the rest of the Algerian people, because they did not share feelings of ethnic groupness with them and still expressed their attachment to the French nation, they had betrayed their people. They were described as "[des] traîtres ... ceux qui dans l'ombre assassinent la nation algérienne" (ibid). Even though the élite were of the same ethnic origin as the rest of the Algerian people, they were nonetheless displaced discursively into the sphere of the Other on the basis of their reluctance to develop a sense of nation-ness based on that shared *ethnie*.

Going to France was compared to exile and was in itself a conscious political decision; it was seen by many North African Muslims as the only way of escaping colonial oppression. Their years in France, where they were also subjected to racism and to the colonial rule, were another important stage in a long process of politicisation which had started in North Africa, and in the development of a class, communitarian and national conscience. In *El Ouma*, Imache Amar's vivid recollections of the colonial realities which had led many North Africans to go into exile highlighted the political dimension of their migration:⁵²

⁵² In the same article, Imache denounced the press in France which led a racist campaign, and which described North African migrants as invaders.

j'étais là, dans mes méditations, m'efforçant de garder mon calme à l'évocation de ces scènes tragiques de notre vie brisée où je voyais tour à tour la silhouette cauteleuse et cynique de l'usurier, le visage fermé de l'impitoyable caïd et la hautaine attitude de l'administrateur, autoritaire et despotique au milieu de sa séquelle de soldats, de gendarmes et de mokhzanis ... Et pendant que tous les accapareurs se repaissent de nos richesses, pendant que tous les aventuriers s'enrichissent et s'engraissent du bien de nos aïeux, pendant qu'à côté d'eux, une autre population souffre de la faim, pendant que les enfants attendent le retour de leur père et que la maman pleure l'absent, pendant ce temps là, ceux qui ont réussi à s'évader de chez eux -ô ironie du sort! ô destinée étrange!- ceux qui ont fui l'enfer se voient qualifiés d'agresseurs et d'assaillants! (*El Ouma* Numéro 19, décembre 1933)

This discourse clearly reflected an awareness that the political dynamics that led to North Africans' emigration was rooted in a binary class system which enabled the colonising minority and the Muslim "notables" to deprive the vast majority of the Muslim population who constituted the underclass from their land and their rights.

In the 1930s, the *Etoile nord-africaine's* objective was to unite and mobilise all Algerian Muslims, whatever their social status, around its nationalist agenda (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 139-140) (1). However, it also celebrated the fact that, as a movement, it was born within the Maghrebi working class in France. To mention a few examples, *El Ouma* saw the successful contribution made by the *Etoile's* delegation to the Muslim Congress which took place in Geneva in September 1934 as "un encouragement pour tous ces ouvriers, pour tous ces fils de fellahs et tous les chômeurs qui, du néant, ont fait surgir ce mouvement qui a fait l'admiration de tous les grands partis politiques et de tous nos coréligionnaires de tous les pays" (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935). The December 1937 issue, which condemned Messali Hadj's imprisonment, recalled the role that he had played in the formation of the movements in those terms: "patiemment, inlassablement, il organisa les prolétaires nord-africains de France, ces déportés économiques que le colonialisme exploiteur chassa de leur foyer et de leur patrie" (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937). Class is emphasised here as a characteristic of the nationalist organisation: it had been created by exiles, those

workers, farmers and unemployed people who constituted the North African proletariat of France.

The ENA was well aware that, under colonial rule, both in North Africa and in metropolitan France, class, ethnicity and "race" were inextricably linked. On the front page of the 1 April 1938 issue of *El Ouma*, the PPA reported in those terms on the racist murder of Acherchour, a North African worker and a union activist, and on the Tribunal de la Seine's decision not only to acquit Paul Cusinberghe, the Frenchman who had killed him, but also to order Acherchour's widow to pay costs:

Contre toute attente, Paul Cusinberghe, dont la culpabilité ne faisait pourtant aucun doute, est acquitté, et pour comble, c'est la veuve de la victime qui est condamnée aux dépens de l'instance. C'est tout juste si le cadavre d'Acherchour ne fut pas, comme celui du Pape Formose, exhumé et traîné sur le banc d'accusation.

Rien pourtant ne pouvait laisser le moindre doute sur la préméditation de ce lâche assassinat et le réseau serré des témoignages à charge excluait toute circonstance atténuante. Mais il y en avait une qui, aux yeux du président Saussier, était suffisante pour justifier le forfait de Cusinberghe: celui-ci est réactionnaire, fils de réactionnaire, tandis qu'Acherchour était ouvrier et indigène de surcroît ... En Algérie, toutes les fois que se produisait une injustice ... les musulmans tournaient leur regard vers la métropole où ils pensaient qu'il se trouvait encore des juges intègres et une justice où les considérations de classe et de races n'avaient pas cours; après le procès de Cusinberghe, il n'y a plus de doute: la justice française, sous toute les latitudes, n'est qu'un mythe! (*El Ouma* Numéro 62, 1er avril 1938)

The judge's decision was condemned by the movement for being motivated by class and racial prejudice, and was interpreted as a sign that in the French justice system, and by extension the French authorities, both in North Africa and in metropolitan France, Maghrebis were doubly discriminated against on the basis of their "racial" and class origin.

Nationalists also denounced this implacable double "injustice" when, on 24 January 1935, the leadership of the *Etoile nord-africaine* (Messali Hadj, Imache Amar

and Radjef Belkacem) were sentenced to several months in prison and had to pay fines on charges of "reconstitution d'association illégale", in violation of the 1901 Law. They argued that "une fois de plus, il nous a été donné de constater que: « selon que vous serez...». Une fois de plus, nous avons été victimes de la justice de classe et la justice de race" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935).

These examples show that the movement was aware of the fact that the racist stigma attached to North Africans in colonial times was shaped by class and racial bias. In other words, North Africans, in court and beyond, were guilty on both counts. Racism was the locus where class and racial prejudices reinforced each other: their ethnic origin (North Africans, Arabs, etc...) justified their class positioning (the underclass).

In order to break that vicious circle, the nationalist movement challenged the colonial ethno-class system in order to empower the marginalised Muslim majority: they exploited the fact that class differences broadly reflected ethnic divisions, in other words that the lower class status occupied by the Algerian population coincided with their ethnicity in order to mobilise them. Even though class and ethnicity are in general terms two distinct concepts, the particular colonial context within which the Algerian nationalists evolved had created a significant overlap between the two, and the movement turned that overlap into a political tool.

However marginalised North African migrants were, and in spite of the racism that they endured both in the workplace and outside, the years that they had spent living and working in metropolitan France affected their political interpretation of their own experience. Their contact with other workers and the actions in which they were involved in the workplace enabled them to develop a sense of solidarity with other workers and identify with the working class of France. When on 24 March 1936, 150 North African workers went on strike at the Sueur factory in Bagneux and demanded a salary increase and safer working conditions, militants of the *Etoile nord-africaine* managed successfully to gain the support of part of the French workforce and produced tracts calling for solidarity between French and North African workers and for a continuation of the strike (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

It is worth noting also that the meaning of the concept of working class in their discourse encapsulated more than the traditional "blue-collar" workers', it referred to all workers, including intellectuals (who had been, or had to be, won over to their cause) as fellow proletarians.⁵³

They considered that North African workers in France were an inherent part of the working class of France:

[A] l'heure où une inquiétude de régression des avantages acquis gagnés dans le sacrifice de l'ensemble de la classe ouvrière, est déclenchée ... faut-il rappeler que les travailleurs nord-africains ... exigent, et il est temps encore, que l'on s'occupe de leur misérable sort, et que l'on étudie avec plus d'attention et d'égards les revendications les concernant.

Toujours aux côtés de leurs frères d'exploitation, ayant sincèrement lié, confondu leur sort avec celui de la classe laborieuse de France, ils luttèrent d'abord sans restriction aucune à la conquête d'une condition d'existence meilleure et dont les avantages acquis en juin 36, illustrent éloquemment, aussi ils ne cessèrent de faire ressortir, parallèlement à ce grand mouvement d'affranchissement de la classe ouvrière les problèmes particuliers qui les touchent ... Et ce n'est pas la classe ouvrière française aujourd'hui qui va méconnaître ces justes aspirations de ces frères d'exploitation, qui dans le sacrifice même de leur vie (Acherchour est encore dans l'esprit de tous) œuvraient courageusement au triomphe de la cause cégétiste. (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)

Here, the evocation of the bond of kinship amongst workers in France was marked by a reference to the sacrifice of the whole of the working class ("le sacrifice de l'ensemble de la classe ouvrière") for social progress. It was a bond which tied North African workers to the rest of the working class in France ("[les travailleurs nord-africains] ayant sincèrement lié ... leur sort à celui de la classe laborieuse de France") through the sacrifice made by Maghrebis for that common cause. However, in spite of the sacrifice that they had made in the name of class solidarity, the movement argued that their own

⁵³ The January 1935 issue of *El Ouma* called for the unity of the "prolétariat intellectuel et manuel" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935), and in the February-March issue of the same year, referred to "[les] ouvriers intellectuels et manuels".

legitimate calls for an improvement in the living and working conditions and rights of North African workers had been, up to then, largely left out, and still asked the French working class to make common cause with them and support their specific demands.

El Ouma's nationalist discourse appealed to a sense of kinship based on class (as their use of terms such as "sacrifice" and "frères d'exploitation" shows) which transcended ethnic belonging. However, it also hinted at the fact that this bond between North African and French workers had been weakened by the failure of the union representing the French working class to express the same level of solidarity towards them and to support their legitimate demands.

The movement's discourse on class, which focused on the unequal relationship that characterised the tie of kinship that linked them to the French working class, bears some similarity to that on the French "Mother-Nation", which denounced the sterile nature of the sense of kinship that had for so long led North Africans to sacrifice their lives for France, an oppressive nation which they had come to compare to a "marâtre". Such attempts to create hybrid ties of kinship which went beyond ethnicity were jeopardised by the racism that traversed the structures and institutions representing the other in the relationship (the state in the case of France as a potential "home" for their nation-ness, and unions in the case of class solidarity). Furthermore, as will be shown later, this may have been one of the reasons behind the widening gap which appeared between the nationalist movement and the CGTU.

To conclude, it could be said that class played a role in Algerian nationalist discourse, and that class consciousness was shaped not only by Maghrebis' experience as migrant workers in France, but also by colonial oppression in North Africa, which was at the core of their decision to migrate. In North Africa, class coincided with ethnicity and nation-ness: the Algerian people represented the under-privileged, and were described as the repository of national aspirations. The North African elite, which had generally adopted an assimilationist position, was accused by the movement of betraying its own people.

Nationalists also celebrated the fact that their movement was born within the North African working class in France. They viewed the experience of Maghrebi

immigrant workers as inextricably linked with that of the working class of France, and called on the whole of the French working class to support their political and social demands. This shows that class solidarity could transcend ethnicity in the name of social progress, but only if the sense of kinship between North African and French workers was *shared* and was of mutual benefit.

3.5 Cultural practices

The role of culture and its interplay with ethnicity in the discourse of the Algerian nationalist movement needs to be examined.⁵⁴ This section will try to answer the following question: how was culture defined by the movement and what cultural features were emphasised or made relevant to the construction of Algerians' ethno-national identity?

As *El Ouma* (Numéro 59, janvier 1938) pointed out, "il est impossible de changer de nationalité comme on change de cravate". Nationality, in its view, was not about choice or political calculation, it was about substance and destiny; it was something unchosen and unchangeable. For North African nationalists in France, the substance of nationality was "avant tout notre passé, notre histoire, nos mœurs, nos traditions, nos souvenirs de jeunesse ... tout ce qui entre dans la composition de notre moi" (ibid). In other words, their national identity was very much grounded in culture: what, apparently, constituted the bond that tied all Maghrebis was a shared sense of cultural we-ness, an awareness that they were who they were because of some determinist logic implied by those historically-shaped markers of cultural identity.

However, behind that apparently reified interpretation of culture, lay the fact that those very markers of identity were actually the result of a transactional and shifting process which produced or redefined those cultural characteristics. The movement's naturalised discourse on culture masked its hybrid make-up. Indeed, North African nationalists depicted a vision of their "true" self shaped by their past, their history,

⁵⁴ Culture is defined by Fanon as "l'ensemble des comportements moteurs et mentaux né de la rencontre de l'homme avec la nature et avec son semblable" (1956: 122).

customs, traditions and childhood memories which conjured up images of nature and purity, and therefore of an identity which was intrinsically different, unique and not affected by the Other, when it was in reality a hybrid construct born and developed out of conflict and resistance to colonial domination. Just as Algerian history and traditions (even prior to 1830) could not be conjured up outside the colonial context, childhood memories were traversed by recollections of incidents and injustice that Muslims experienced or witnessed.

Within the same article, the nationalist movement went further when it added that "en d'autres termes, on ne peut pas cesser d'être arabes ou kabyles pour devenir français du jour au lendemain". This last quote highlights two important facts: firstly, that nationalists' sense of (Algerian) nationality was defined by culture, and was inextricably linked with ethnicity (Arabs and Kabyles); secondly, that their ethno-national identity was not simply defined in terms of the perceived nature of the cultural substance (or cultural stuff, as Barth (1969) calls it) that made it up, but also by the creation and maintenance of the boundary between "us" (Algerians) and "them" (the French) which posited national differences between North Africans and the French as irreconcilable ones.

To come back to our first point, it is clear that beyond the nationalists' representation of culture as unique, timeless and transcending spaces and experiences, cultural practices and perceptions amongst the North African population were in fact, like most aspects of Muslim society, fundamentally affected by colonisation. The upheaval brought about by colonisation altered in the most profound manner Muslims' social, economic, political and cultural frameworks of reference. Expropriation and dispossession, rural exodus, proletarianisation, the introduction of paid labour and of a new conception of time and space, the prominence given to the individual over the group, and to private ownership over common use of land and resources, all led to profound changes in intra and intergenerational relationships, and in the cultural fabric of Muslim society. As Fanon points out:

Il existe ... certaines constellations d'institutions, vécues par des hommes déterminés, dans le cadre d'aires géographiques précises qui à un moment donné ont subi l'assaut direct et brutal de schèmes culturels différents. Le développement technique, généralement élevé, du groupe social ainsi apparu l'autorise à installer une domination organisée. L'entreprise de déculturation se trouve être le négatif d'un plus gigantesque travail d'asservissement économique voire biologique. (Fanon 1956: 122)

Therefore, the cultural practices and "habitus" of North Africans, which fulfilled a crucial role as the last repository of their identity (with religion), and which constituted the cultural baggage that migrants brought with them, had already been deeply marked by French domination. This complex process of "déculturation", as Fanon calls it, became even more salient for Maghrebi migrants evolving in an environment where French culture was dominant.⁵⁵ Indeed, culture went through a process of further hybridisation in emigration which was consistent with its *politicisation* within the discourse and actions of the nationalist movement.

Within the ENA and the PPA, culture was considered as central to the development of a sense of common identity and solidarity amongst Maghrebis. This appeared not only in the movement's discourse, but also in the way in which its political events were organised. The meetings and rallies that it held were not limited to political speeches; they often included other cultural and artistic events such as plays and concerts. Those "fêtes arabes" were seen by the police as a way for the association of attracting more North African migrants to its political rallies (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 56) (1). The aim of meetings such as the ones organised on 18 November 1934 in the "Maison commune" in rue Cadet, Paris, with an audience of 250 people, on 25 November in Puteaux in front of 400 people and on 31 December 1934 in rue Duhesne was to collect funds for the nationalist movement and its newspaper (Ibid: 66-78). Other "fêtes artistiques", as the association called them, on 7 March in Levallois-Perret, on 4 April 1936 at "La Grange-aux-Belles" (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, mars-avril 1936) and on

⁵⁵ Fanon has produced a large corpus of work on the impact of colonisation (see, for example, Fanon 1951, 1952, 1975, 1975a and 1991).

25 December 1937 in "La Mutualité" (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938) were organised in favour of North African political prisoners (including, at the time, the leadership of the *Etoile nord-africaine*). Artistic events regularly featured satirical plays which denounced colonial rule in North Africa and contained a political message which was consistent with and reinforced the speeches made by leaders and militants of the nationalist movement. The fact that political expression was not limited to traditional rallies and included songs, dances and plays showed that North African migrants had adopted a holistic approach to political activism. Expressing political views through artistic means was considered as a tool of propaganda.

These "fêtes artistiques" also played a socially cohesive role as North African migrant workers were culturally and socially marginalised in France. Political mobilisation was therefore not simply about the evocation of the ethnic bonds that were meant to unite Maghrebis in their struggle for independence, it was also about celebrating that bond through the creation of a sense of cultural commonality with other Algerian Muslims.

The nationalist movement's efforts to establish specific cultural practices and traditions in emigration which were presented as perennial could not hide the fact their hybrid contours corresponded to the political boundaries that it had established. The development of such cultural practices which were (re)created in emigration was inspired by the ENA/PPA's modern conception of the nation informed by "l'idéal républicain".⁵⁶ It aimed to foster a national culture marked by Algerian-ness and corresponding to specific territorial borders (Gallissot 1984: 49). However, that national culture could only be constructed and sustained if it was bound to the wider cultural framework of "civilisation", as the following section shows.

⁵⁶ This was not incompatible with the movement's claim that its nationalist aspirations were rooted in Islam.

3.6 History and memory: nostalgia for a great past and the anti-colonial struggle

The discourse of the nationalist movement was traversed by evocations of the past which was one of the most dominant themes upon which its nationalist claims were based. It informed the present in as much as, to paraphrase Gangulay, reference to the past provides a crucial discursive terrain for shaping and reconsolidating selfhood and identity (1992: 21). This section will examine how the past was discursively reconstructed by the movement and how it was shaped by its political and cultural vision.

Before looking at the role played by the past in Algerian nationalist discourse, it is necessary to explain what that term entails. It could be argued that, within the context of this study, pastness should be defined in binary terms, as it encompasses both history and memory. The former and the latter constitute the two sides of the same tension that marks pastness. History marked a sense of "us" which often transcended time and space, and tended to be constructed positively, while memory was rooted in experience, the "here" and "now" of the colonial era and was imbued by otherness ("them").⁵⁷ As Carlier points out, memory belonged to the sphere of the "vécu", and history to that of the "relu" (1984: 348). Both shaped the Maghrebi diaspora's identity in specific ways and contributed to shape the shifting boundary of their ethno-national identity.

At the core of the movement's evocation of history lies the concept of civilisation. Elias (1994: 3-7) considers civilisation to be a concept which can refer to political, economic, religious, technical, moral or social facts, and which expresses the self-consciousness, or the national consciousness, of the West. He also argues that by this term "Western society seeks to describe what constitutes its special character and what it is proud of: the level of its technology, the nature of its manners, the development of its scientific knowledge or view of the world, and much more" (1994: 4-5). More importantly, Elias points out that the concept of civilisation is shaped by the articulation of situation and history:

⁵⁷ The movement's reference to history through its evocation of a great Arabo-Muslim civilisation, which is discussed later in this section, is a case in point.

The situation and history of the group are mirrored in [civilization] ... The collective history crystallized in [it] and resonates in [it] ... the concept[] live[s] as long as this crystallization of past experiences and situations retains an existential value, a function in the actual being of society ... at times too, [the concept of civilisation] sleep[s], or sleep[s] in certain respects, and acquire[s] a new existential value from a new social situation. [It is] recalled because something in the present state of society finds expression in the crystallization of the past embodied in the words. (Elias 1994: 6-7)

He also asserts that civilisation was established as a Western concept which gave expression to the continuously expansionist tendency of colonising groups (1994: 5). French and British colonial empires were built on and justified by their claim that by colonising "uncivilised" and therefore inferior people, they fulfilled their civilising mission.

That concept also became central to the ideology of the colonised fighting for Algerian independence in the inter-war period. In nationalist discourse, the concept of civilisation crystallised history and situation. But while at the beginning of the twentieth century, civilisation expressed the national consciousness of Western countries such as France whose national integrity was well established, it appears that for North Africans at the time, the concept was the reflection, as well as the enunciation, of the process of a national consciousness in formation. It gave structure, meaning and a sense of purpose to their own social experience at a time when colonial rule was disintegrating the socio-cultural fabric of Muslim society. Civilisation also constituted the wider framework within which nationalist aspirations for an Algerian national culture could be articulated. Indeed, Césaire argues that civilisation and culture are both aspects of the same reality, and adds that:

il n' y a de culture que nationale ... Mais il saute aux yeux que les cultures nationales, toutes particulières qu'elles sont, se groupent par affinités. Et ces grandes parentés de culture, ces grandes familles de cultures portent un nom: ce sont *des civilisations* ... la civilisation tend à

l'universalité et ... la culture tend à la particularité; ... la culture c'est la civilisation en tant qu'elle est propre à un peuple, à une nation, partagée par nulle autre et qu'elle porte, indélébile, la marque de ce peuple et de cette nation. (Césaire 1956: 191)

Césaire also points out pertinently that the spheres of culture and civilisation are shaped by socio-political processes: "la civilisation est avant tout un phénomène social et la résultante de faits sociaux et de forces sociales ... l'idée d'une influence du politique sur le culturel s'impose comme une évidence" (Césaire 1956: 193).⁵⁸

This influence of the political on the cultural was one of the key characteristics of nationalist discourse. The movement's reference to civilisation was an inherent part of the process of construction of a national culture and project discursively embedded in the past. Indeed, the *Etoile's* nationalist pursuit was metaphorically described as "chercher sur chaque chemin, chaque sentier, les traces et les pas de nos ancêtres et peut-être entendrons nous leur langue et leur conseil" (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933).

Far from being rigidly defined, the past was conjured up in fluctuating ways so that it could both shape and be shaped, as well as inform and be informed by the present. The function of the concept of civilisation was to provide nationalists with an empowering cultural framework of reference for their discourse on identity:

Quand les Arabes vivaient dans leur brillante civilisation, quand ils construisaient châteaux, villas, jardins, quand ils traduisaient les œuvres grecques et les perfectionnaient, quand les Papes allaient s'instruire à Cordoue, quand pendant plusieurs siècles, les Chrétiens apprenaient la médecine sur les livres arabes traduits en latin, une bonne partie de l'Europe était vêtue de peaux de bête et vivait à l'état d'ignorance, parce que les Européens de cette époque n'étaient pas organisés et vivaient dans l'anarchie. Mais depuis, qu'ont-ils fait? Ils ont imité les Arabes, ils se sont mis au travail sans perdre un seul instant. Ils se sont organisés et ils ne se sont jamais découragés. Ils ont parcouru un grand chemin et aujourd'hui ils sont nos dirigeants. (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

⁵⁸ For a detailed discourse analysis of colonialism, see Césaire (1972).

The civilisation that they referred to was in itself problematic. Indeed, by acknowledging only the Arab civilisation, they dismissed the history of North Africa prior to the Arab conquest and thereby ignored the Berber cultural legacy. That essentialist interpretation of civilisation and cultural heritage was to mark the discourse on culture and ethnicity of the nationalist movement, but also of North African independent states.⁵⁹ In a way, it echoed the process by which France came to construct her own sense of civilisation, as the expression of the French nation and culture which formed the foundation for the exclusivist construction of a French *ethnie* (cultural specificities of minority ethnic groups in France were both dismissed and suppressed).

This passage also shows that nationalists adopted the very concept of civilisation that the French had developed to justify their colonial domination, but placed it in a historical context. By displacing historically their discourse on civilisation, they reversed the dominant/dominated, superior/inferior relationship to the advantage of North African Muslims. The prestigious Arab civilisation that is evoked here is one where Arabs were culturally, scientifically, architecturally superior to the French and Europeans, who were described as backward, uncultivated and dependent on Arab science and culture. They also implied that Europeans were able to leave that state of anarchy that characterised their society and develop their own civilisation only by imitating Arabs. This enabled the movement to claim not only that Arab civilisation preceded and was superior to European civilisation, but also that the former was a source of inspiration for the latter. Arab civilisation is therefore given as natural, authentic, pure and rooted in pastness, while European civilisation is described as an imitation, as something artificial, unnatural, corrupt and by extension corrupting:

si, aujourd'hui, il y a moins de vérité en Kabylie, c'est depuis que nous nous sommes un peu amolés au contact de cette civilisation pourrie qu'est la civilisation occidentale. Dans ces pays

⁵⁹ For a historical overview of the Berber question in Algerian politics and in emigration, see Chaker (1984).

«civilisés», le mensonge, l'hypocrisie, la forberie se pratiquent du plus haut de l'échelle sociale.

(*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

The way in which the movement's discourse on civilisation was developed showed that the concept had been appropriated by nationalists to construct their own sense of ethno-national identity, but that it was done in such a manner that the sense of "us" that was conveyed in those evocations was of dialectical significance to their present (and future) relationship with the "other" (the coloniser). Indeed, images of a great Arab civilisation were conjured up to the extent that they could differentiate North Africans from the French, and position them as culturally superior to the colonial power that dominated them. This was what *El Ouma* implied, in an article denouncing the attempts made by Father Lemoine and the Jesuits to christianise the Kabyles, when they wrote that "la doctrine et l'évangile de civilisation qu'il [Lemoine] défend et exalte sont de beaucoup inférieurs sur tous les points à la civilisation arabe" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935). Therefore, France's colonial domination of North Africa was not a sign that France's civilisation was superior, but that the West was now more organised and motivated than the Arab World:

Celui qui n'est pas organisé est fatalement voué à l'esclavage, à la domesticité, à travailler pour le profit de celui qui est organisé ... les Européens, particulièrement l'Anglais, le Français, l'Italien ou le Hollandais qui dirigent en quelque sorte toute l'activité de la planète ne sont pas d'une naissance supérieure à celle des Musulmans tunisiens, marocains ou algériens; ils sont nés comme tous les enfants des autres pays, ils ne sont supérieurs en rien. Ils n'ont pas le monopole de l'intelligence, ni du savoir, mais la différence est qu'ils naissent dans un milieu organisé. (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

Interestingly, this passage shows that nationalist discourse could go beyond the French-inspired rhetoric and posturing on the superiority of one's civilisation over another, and explicitly adopt a more egalitarian stance in this debate. It also highlights the fact that organisation, as a theme, was central to the movement's dialectical interpretation of

colonialism. It was also seen as indispensable to North Africans if they were one day to recover their freedom. It was both the reason for their misfortune and the key to their problem. The *Etoile Nord-africaine* argued that the experience that they had accumulated in terms of organisation, and the fact that they were the only North African political movement to demand rights and independence, made it Maghrebi nationalists' natural choice for mobilisation. The way in which the movement discursively positioned itself vis-à-vis the concept of civilisation is illustrated by *El Ouma's* equation of the *Etoile nord-africaine* with "le mouvement de la nation arabe [qui] tend à donner à une civilisation qui fut brillante la place qui lui convient" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935). The ENA was therefore not simply depicted as a political association struggling for North Africans' rights to emancipation, but as the incarnation of the Arab nation fighting to bring Arab civilisation back to its former glory.

The fact that the nationalists' discourse was based on the representation of a North African *ethnie*, nation and civilisation rooted in Arabness shows the extent to which the past could be re-written, shaped or imagined to suit the ideology and political needs of the nationalist movement, as well as the situation and context within which it evolved. It also reveals how those evocations could contribute to a binary process of legitimisation: on the one hand, the ENA/PPA's recurring reference to the glorious past of the Arab civilisation and past legitimised the movement as the true voice of the nation, and on the other hand their very discourse privileged and legitimised that interpretation of the Algerian nation and civilisation as authentic.

Their use of pastness and of the concept of civilisation, their insistence on the primacy of the state and on the integrity of the nation, their reifying definition of a nation-ness based on one *ethnie*, one culture and one language further demonstrates how the Algerian nationalist project was marked by modernity, and how it bore many of the tropes that characterised French nationalism. The *Etoile nord-africaine* and the *Parti du peuple algérien* were unable to conceive a nation outside the parameters of France's own nationalist discourse and the binary logic on which France had based her colonial rule. In the independent Algeria that their discourse conjured up, all things French would be replaced by all things Arab, but the internal dynamics of cultural and ethnic

oppression and division would not be questioned. Berber and popular Algerian Arab cultures and languages would remain marginalised, and an Arab culture (based on classical Arabic) which was probably as, if not more, alien to Algerian Muslims as the French culture and language at the time would be imported.

In the nationalists' discourse, their own identity seemed to be only defined against others (the French) and through others (the Arabs). Arab culture from the Middle East was seen as suitably prestigious, authentic and untouched by the corrupting influence of French civilisation, and therefore ideal to supplant French culture in North Africa. But for such a project to function as a framework of reference for their identity, that Arab culture had to be presented as the true cultural self of North African civilisation.⁶⁰ This implied that the varied ethnic make-up and cultures of Algeria would remain as stigmatised under the new cultural order as they were under French rule. But when Algerian nationalist leaders decided to favour the "Algérie arabo-islamique" alternative rather than the "Algérie algérienne" one, they may not have fully realised what the implications of such a cultural option were; it was a choice which was fraught with problems, and the economic, social and political price to pay for the imposition of an imported Arab culture and language on Algeria would turn out to be heavy, particularly if one considers that it took the French several centuries (probably up until the early twentieth century) to establish a culturally and linguistically homogeneous state.⁶¹

To return to the question of civilisation, it is worth noting that such a concept was used by the nationalist movement as a device to construct Algerian national identity as marked by pastness, and therefore by timelessness. The ENA/PPA discursively reduced French domination to a temporary episode of colonial domination, which like other such periods in the history of North Africa, would one day fade away and leave North African civilisation unadulterated. *El Ouma* compared metaphorically France with ancient Rome when it wrote that under French colonial domination "il ne saurait

⁶⁰ The "courant berbériste" which existed within the nationalist movement, and which was in favour of "l'Algérie algérienne", a pluralist Algeria did not manage to impose its views.

⁶¹ See Benrabah (1999) for an account of the disastrous social, cultural and political consequences of Algeria's arabisation policy after independence.

être question pour nous d'affranchissement. Rome a besoin d'esclaves" (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938). Nationalists argued that just like the Roman domination of North Africa, France's colonial adventure was destined to fail:

le recours à la force est une erreur grossière sur cette terre d'Afrique ... Le Romain à la poigne brutale n'est plus depuis longtemps. Ses grandes ruines dorment sous le linceul des sables. Et ses armes de bronze ont fondu au soleil. Mais notre peuple est toujours là, solide comme le roc. Seul l'Islam l'a conquis pour toujours, parce qu'il a su s'adresser aux cœurs et leur parler le seul langage qu'il comprenne: celui de l'honneur et de la foi. (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938)

Nationalists considered that history was on their side. The Roman example, which had proved that domination by force could not succeed, was used by the movement as a metaphor for the fate that awaited the French colonial empire. Colonialism was defined as ruthless, uncivilised ("le Romain à la poigne *brutale*") and ephemeral, while the Algerian people (and therefore, within the political context of the time, the Algerian nation) was described as timeless and powerful, as something which was part of nature ("solide comme le roc") and civilised ("le seul langage qu'il comprenne: celui de l'honneur et de la foi"). Therefore, history enabled the ENA/PPA to reverse discursively the power relations of their time. Their evocation of the past glories of the "sarrazin" recalled "l'époque pas si éloignée où l'Arabe savait se faire respecter" (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938).

It can therefore be seen that the concept of civilisation developed by the nationalist movement fulfilled two functions: the first one was to emphasise difference and mark the boundary between "us" and "them", the second one was to empower the nationalists' sense of ethno-national identity through their identification with a great civilisation. This does not mean that their conception of civilisation was inherently different from that of the French. In fact, distinguishing one's own civilisation from the other's and present it as intrinsically superior is one of the characteristics of civilisation as a concept. Even if the content of that civilisation was (and needed to be) different, the basic processes that shaped its conception were the same.

One of the key features which could be highlighted here to illustrate the extent to which the nationalists' reference to the greatness of their own civilisation bore similarities with that of the French is the question of colonialism and domination. If, as was discussed previously, domination of North Africa was denounced as brutal, uncivilised and ultimately futile, the *Etoile's* own discourse on the Arab civilisation also conjured images of supremacy and subjection. In a political rally which took place on 26 May 1934 in the "Salle des Sociétés Savantes" in Paris, Fodil Arab, a militant of the *Etoile*, contrasted North Africans' subjugation by France with their past glories and recalled that "autrefois les musulmans, unis, avaient pu conquérir une partie de l'Europe et de l'Asie, alors qu'ils devaient à leur division leur actuel esclavage" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 83) (1). The linking of the past greatness of Arab civilisation with the concept of empire was also mentioned in *El Ouma*:

Nos ancêtres ont été les artisans d'une civilisation qui a brillé d'un vif éclat en Asie, dans tout le bassin méditerranéen et partout où l'Islam a pénétré. Ils en semèrent les premières graines; elle prit un grand essor et répandit sur le monde barbare les lumières de la science. Pendant que les Arabes construisaient des palais d'une grandeur jamais égalée, et des universités pour diffuser la civilisation florissante, l'Européen logeait dans des cavernes naturelles et s'habillait de peaux de bêtes.

Nous avons eu nos savants illustres, nos philosophes, nos littérateurs, nos historiens, nos géographes, nos mathématiciens, nos architectes. De nos jours, nous voyons encore partout les vestiges de l'art arabe, qui ont défié la force du temps et ont gardé intacte toute leur beauté ... c'est parce que nous formions une nation unie et prospère que nous pûmes organiser un domaine colonial. (*El Ouma* Numéro 64, vendredi 27 mai 1938)

This passage shows the striking similarity that existed between the way in which both North African nationalists and the French invoked their own civilisation. Were terms like "Arab" and "Islam" to be replaced respectively with "European" and "Christianity", this extract would have easily been taken for a celebration of "European civilisation". Condemning the domination that Europe had imposed on the rest of the world in the

name of civilisation, while praising the fact that they, too, as Arabs, had once organised a colonial empire was not so much a contradiction as an illustration of the ideological power struggle in which North African Muslims and French colonialism were engaged. It was, to a large extent, a discursive confrontation with the French about the greatness of their respective civilisations whose outcome would determine who would rightfully claim ownership of North Africa.

North African nationalists, just like the French, illustrated the timelessness and greatness of their civilisation at a cultural, scientific and political level. The reference to aesthetics and past architectural achievements was also aimed at conveying a sense of superiority: while Roman constructions were seen as ephemeral ("Ses grandes ruines dorment sous le linceul des sables" (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938), an emphasis was put on the timeless beauty of Arab art and architecture ("De nos jours, nous voyons encore partout les vestiges de l'art arabe, qui ont défié la force du temps et ont gardé intacte toute leur beauté").

Nationalists also dismissed French accusations that North Africans were "barbarians" and considered that their own civilisation was superior to that of Europe because it spread not through oppression and exploitation, but through fraternity. In the October 1935 issue of *El Ouma*, an article quoted an unnamed English historian who observed, in his book entitled "Histoire de Charles Quint", that Muslim civilisation was unique in that it combined armed conquest and proselytism with tolerance. Remel El Hok, the author of this article, also argued that:

Si les Musulmans étaient des Barbares, ils n'auraient pas conquis de Gibraltar aux glaciers de l'Himalaya, de la Méditerranée aux confins de la Chine. Les Musulmans ont créé un empire qui réunis toute la population arabe divisée pendant des siècles, dans une fraternité raciale, dans une fraternité de paix d'où est exclue toute distinction entre riches et pauvres; entre bédouins et sédentaires.

Ils gouvernent non seulement politiquement la moitié du monde, mais nos savants de Cordoue, de Salamanque, de Bagdad, de Damas influencent profondément les sciences, la vie intellectuelle du monde entier. (*El Ouma* Numéro 31, octobre 1935)

In this passage, the switch from the past (paragraph one) to the present tense (paragraph two) reflects the contiguity of both past and present in Algerian nationalist discourse. What is also implied here is that, for the *Etoile*, the greatness of Muslim civilisation was inextricably linked to the possession of an empire. This article dismissed French claims that North Africans were barbarians on the basis of the conquests that had been made by Muslims. What this extract also shows is that, for nationalists, Arab civilisation was also imagined as unique because it was marked by tolerance, generosity, fraternity and egalitarianism, thereby ignoring the reality of imperial domination when it came to remembering their own. This rhetoric further emphasises the parallel which was made earlier: the more North Africans strived to make their imagined Arab civilisation as different and unique, the more alike it appeared to that of the French in the way it was constructed.

A further consideration of the above extract also reveals the problematic manner in which territory was equated with ethnicity and religion. The fact that nationalists amalgamated Islam and Arabness and argued that the empire which they had built unified the previously divided Arab population, brushed aside the existence of other peoples, ethnic groups (Iberians, Berbers, Persians, Kurds, Indians, Chinese, and so on) and religions (Christianity, Buddhism, etc.) that may have been numerically dominant in parts of the empire.

The movement's argument conveyed the idea that the concept of civilisation, and the empire which was built in the name of civilisation was not about domination, but about fulfilling a destiny. It conveyed the idea of a return, of a reunification of one's people. It was, in a way, about claiming what was rightfully one's. In that sense, the ENA and the PPA's interpretation of civilisation was not different from that of the French who presented France's imperial ambitions in North Africa not only as its destiny and as its duty to spread civilisation and faith to inferior and "barbaric" people, but also as a return to their Roman/European roots.⁶² The Arab empire which

⁶² This was the context within which the Kabyle myth and the "politique berbère" were particularly pertinent.

nationalists described was essentialised to accommodate their nationalist project which aimed to establish an egalitarian and classless society based on one religion and one *ethnie*.

It is therefore apparent that pastness as a theme was particularly salient in the discourse on national identity. However, did it play a similar/comparable role for Maghrebis on both sides of the Mediterranean, or did the particular diasporic experience of North Africans in France shape the way in which the past was "mobilised" to imagine the Algerian nation? In order to examine this question, let us compare and contrast the discourse on the nation as invoked by the Algerian nationalist movement in France with that of a prominent North African politician in Algeria. The ENA/PPA's nationalist programme was based on claims that the Algerian nation pre-existed the arrival of the French:

Les colonialistes ont voulu nous faire croire qu'avant leur arrivée sur la terre d'Afrique, nous ne formions pas une vraie nation, que nous étions plongés dans une grossière barbarie. Ceci est dénué de tout fondement. Nous étions une vraie nation avant l'arrivée des Français en Algérie. Le même sentiment de solidarité et d'unité nationale nous animait. Nous avions un genre de vie particulier. (*El Ouma* Numéro 64, 27 mai 1938)

The nationalists' assertion that their nation existed before the French arrived may first appear questionable. After all, the very name and borders of Algeria were creations of the French colonial authorities. But their argument, however problematic it is, should be interpreted as more than mere posturing. Firstly, the nation is referred to in vague term, and the article does not explicitly mention Algeria. Secondly, nation as a concept is understood in this extract as rooted in ethnicity.⁶³

The ENA/PPA refers here not so much to a "nation-state" which they want to restore, as to the broadly-defined nation that forms the foundation upon which that

⁶³ This problematic interpretation of nation as *ethnie* is supported by Anthony D. Smith who argues that the origins of nation "can be traced back to pre-modern ethnic communities"(1989: 340). In the same tradition, Connor (1978) also asserts that a distinction should be made here between "nation" on the one hand and "state" on the other.

nation-state would, one day, be built. The nation is presented as well established on the basis that a sense of nation-ness existed prior to the invasion of the French. When nationalists stated that "le même sentiment de solidarité et d'unité nationale nous animait", they implied that they were a nation in the sense of a self-conscious *ethnie* and that shared socio-cultural traditions and practices marked that sense of belonging ("nous avons un genre de vie particulier").

The fact that this argument may not have reflected the ethno-national reality of the North African territory before 1830 is not really important; the accuracy of France's representation of Algeria's ethnic, historical and social characteristics prior to, as well as after, colonisation was no less questionable. Indeed, as Anderson (1983) points out, what characterises all nations is not their falsity/genuineness but the way in which they are imagined. In this instance, the discourse of Messali Hadj's movement merely reflected the way in which the Algerian nation was conjured up in nationalist discourse. It was an interpretation of the nation which was negotiated within, and informed by, the colonial context, by the Other. Firstly, nationalist discourse on nation-ness, which essentialised ethnicity around what was seen as a prestigious and powerful identity based on Arabness (when the ethnic make-up of Algeria was actually varied and complex) echoed the way in which the French nation had been constructed. Secondly, as the above-mentioned passage shows, the movement's representation of nation-ness served a clear political purpose: it was designed to counter the colonialists' argument that the Algerian nation did not exist prior to 1830.

Let us now turn to Muslim politicians in North Africa and to their discourse on the nation. In contrast to the nationalist stance adopted by the ENA and the PPA, both shaped by the diasporic experience of the North African proletariat in France, the political voices of Muslims in North Africa, which were grouped together within the *Fédération des élus musulmans*, were marked by reformism. That *Fédération* considered that the future of Algeria lay with France. It included a number of movements led by the intellectual elite and the notables, by religious leaders (the *Oulémas*) and, from its creation in 1936 onwards, the Algerian Communist Party. Ferhat Abbas, vice-president of the *Fédération des élus musulmans*, expressed those

assimilationist views very clearly in *L'Entente* (28 février 1936) and in *La Liberté* (7 janvier 1938) when he argued not only that he was in favour of assimilation, but that he identified with France:

Je suis partisan de l'assimilation. La France, c'est moi, parce que je suis le nombre, l'ouvrier, l'artisan ... je ne puis concevoir l'Algérie sans la France ...

Mon opinion est connue. Le nationalisme est ce sentiment qui pousse un peuple à vivre à l'intérieur des frontières territoriales, sentiment qui a créé ce réseau de nations. Si j'avais découvert la «nation algérienne», je serais nationaliste et je n'en rougirais pas comme d'un crime. Les hommes morts pour l'idéal patriotique sont journellement honorés et respectés. Ma vie ne vaut pas plus que la leur. Et cependant, je ne mourrai pas pour «la patrie algérienne» parce que cette patrie n'existe pas. Je ne l'ai pas découverte. J'ai interrogé l'histoire. J'ai visité les cimetières: personne ne m'en a parlé. Sans doute, ai-je trouvé «l'empire arabe», «l'empire musulman», qui honorent l'Islam et notre race. Mais ces empires se sont éteints. Ils correspondraient à l'empire romain et au Saint Empire romain de l'époque médiévale. Ils sont nés pour une époque et une humanité qui ne sont plus les nôtres.

Un Algérien musulman songerait-il sérieusement à bâtir l'avenir avec ces poussières du passé? Les Don Quichotte ne sont plus de notre siècle ... On ne bâtit pas sur du vent. Nous avons écarté une fois pour toute les nuées et les chimères pour lier définitivement notre avenir à celui de l'œuvre française dans ce pays. (*La Liberté*, 7 janvier 1938)

Ferhat Abbas' interpretation of the nation differed significantly from that of Messali Hadj. While his statement includes many of those tropes which made up the nation evoked by the ENA/PPA (ethnicity, religion, kinship/sacrifice, history and memory), these were considered in a distinct and disarticulated manner. By contrast, nationalist discourse imagined an Algerian nation which crystallised and mobilised all those markers for political ends.

While, on the other side of the Mediterranean, the uneducated workers who belonged to the nationalist movement were more able to imagine the Algerian nation in its own right, Ferhat's position echoed that of many French-educated Muslims in North

Africa who failed to do so.⁶⁴ Indeed, he was convinced that a nation had to be built on some tangible foundations and failed to realise that all nations - including France - were imagined. His views on the French nation as being somehow concrete and marked by timelessness was very much influenced by the French education system which he, like many North African *évolués*, went through, and whose function was not only to articulate convincingly those tropes of the nation in order to inculcate a sense of French nationhood based on the manifest and unquestionable existence of the French nation, but also to present Algeria as an uncivilised territory where no nation existed.

Abbas' contention that no Algerian nation could be found in the past was based on problematic premises; firstly, that nation-ness was rooted in and legitimised by history, when it is clear that nation-ness could actually shape and legitimise history; secondly, that a nation could only exist per se, and not be shaped through conflict and negotiation at the boundary between "us" (the colonised) and "them" (the coloniser); thirdly, that memory, in other words recollections of past experiences, including colonial ones, did not play a part in the building of Algerian nationhood; and fourthly that nation and state had to coincide in the past and present to be legitimately considered as a basis for nation-ness, when they could be two discrete, but by no means incompatible, loci of belonging; and finally that giving one's life for the Motherland was justified only if that nation "existed", when in fact that longing for sacrifice could foster the birth of a nation.

Soon after their publication, Ferhat Abbas' arguments were denounced in the March-April 1936 issue of *El Ouma*, which accused him of betraying Arabs and Muslims. The way in which each of the points that he had made were countered not only exposed the chasm that existed between the two political groups at the time, but more importantly, revealed the modern character of the *Etoile's* nationalism. On the question of the link between the past and nation-ness, whilst the *Etoile nord-africaine* recognised that the "Arab Empire" had declined, it asserted that "l'Empire arabe n'est pas une poussière du passé, il existe, pour celui qui veut le voir". Its statement conveyed

⁶⁴ It is important to note, however, that the leadership of the nationalist movement (including Messali Hadj and Imache Amar) were more educated than the large majority of the migrant workers who supported it.

the idea that the past is not fixed and dead, but can be subject to choice and interpretation, or, to use Carlier's argument, that history can be "re-read" (1984: 348). The Arab empire, and by extension the Algerian nation, exist for those who *want to see* them. What is implied here is that the Arab Empire, epitomising Arab civilisation, is not rigidly rooted in the past, but is crystallised at the boundary between past and present; it is shaped by, and interpreted through, present circumstances and situations. The *Etoile's* evocation of the Arab empire was one in which ethnicity was subsumed by religion and the past linked to the present. It encapsulated both Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries: the examples given by the nationalist movement to support its argument included countries such as Yemen, Irak and Egypt, but also, more problematically, Afghanistan and Turkey (*El Ouma*, Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

In the same article, the examples of Algerians, but also of Syrian and Egyptian nationalists who had sacrificed their life for the emancipation of their nation, were also cited by the ENA to counter the argument of the vice-president of the *Fédération des élus musulmans* that he would not die for the "Algerian motherland, because it does not exist":

Pour ce qui est de la Patrie algérienne, si M. Abbas ne la voit pas personnellement, il n'y a rien d'extraordinaire à cela, mais qu'il condamne les six millions d'Algériens à penser comme lui, cela dépasse les limites de la raison ... Il y a dans chaque cœur d'Algérien musulman, l'idée de patrie fortement bien ancrée.

Sans remonter dans l'histoire de l'Algérie jusqu'aux dynasties arabes et berbères, prenons seulement la grande figure de l'Emir Abd-el-Kader, qui a, pendant 16 ans, tenu tête aux armées étrangères, et qui a obligé la France à reconnaître sa souveraineté par le traité de la Tafna. Cette reconnaissance, n'est-ce pas une reconnaissance de la Patrie algérienne?

Depuis 1830 jusqu'à nos jours, est-ce que l'Algérie s'est soumise corps et âme à l'impérialisme français? Jamais! Elle a toujours lutté avec acharnement pour recouvrir son indépendance. M. Abbas parle de cimetières; eh! bien, qu'il aille visiter les cimetières de la Kabylie, où des milliers de combattants sont morts pendant l'insurrection de 1871. Et bien d'autres soulèvements pour la libération de l'Algérie. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

For Algerian nationalists, the Fatherland was rooted in history and memory. What differentiated them from reformist and assimilationist politicians such as Ferhat Abbas was that it was their national feelings which fostered the idea of the nation. By contrast, Abbas was wrong to consider that the "existence" of the nation was an indispensable condition for the emergence of nationalism. The *Etoile* argued that it could indeed build "l'avenir avec ces poussières du passé". In the age of nationalism, the fact that shreds of the past could be summoned up and construed by nationalists to further their agenda belied Abbas' argument that "les Don Quichotte ne sont plus de notre siècle".

Revealingly, the historical references which were selected in that article were all illustrations of past resistance to France's domination, and placed Algerian nationalism within the French colonial context. The mythical figure of Abd el-Kader, who fought against the French until his surrender on 23 December 1847 (Droz and Lever 1982) and the Kabyle rebellion led by Mokrani in 1871 were evoked to sustain the nationalist movement's argument that the "Patrie algérienne" did exist; but the existence of such a nation was not so much perceived in the form of an established nation-state, as through the nationalist feelings and struggle of historical figures. The fact that the above-mentioned examples were all from the colonial era was no coincidence. Nationalism was, after all, a gift of the West to the rest of the world (Chatterjee 1996: 215) and triggered the construction of nations in many colonial countries, including Algeria. However, as Hobsbawm points out, "nations without a past are a contradiction in terms ... [w]hat makes a nation is the past" (1996: 255). Nationalist discourse wraps the nation with the mantle of timelessness. Like all other nations, Algeria was constructed as rooted in the immemorial past.

Nevertheless, the same article provided a useful insight into how the nation was constructed in nationalist discourse, and showed that it could not be exclusively grounded in historical recollection of past resistance to oppression. A powerful rallying force, Islam, had to be invoked to create strong enough feelings of solidarity and identification with the nation to mobilise Muslims around the movement's nationalist project:

Même en admettant l'inadmissible, à savoir qu'il n'a jamais existé de Patrie algérienne, est-ce que six millions d'hommes ne sont pas capables de travailler pour créer cette patrie? Il est plus facile, plus logique de stimuler l'idée de Patrie parmi la population musulmane déjà prête à cette conception par son amour indéfectible à l'Islam, par ses luttes acharnées et sa résistance à la pénétration de l'impérialisme, que d'entreprendre un travail de francisation, et de francequillonnerie, et de trahir ainsi Dieu et le peuple, comme le font Abbas, Ben Jelloul et douzaine de leurs pareils. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

This was the closest that the *Etoile* ever came to consider explicitly that the nation could be imagined, and shaped by nationalism. It argued that even if, as Abbas pointed out, such a nation did not exist, it could be *created* by *stimulating* the idea of an Algerian fatherland amongst Muslims based not only on resistance to imperialism, but also, and more importantly, on Islam. The nationalists' discourse conveyed the idea that the construction of their national identity was very much informed by the colonial context from which it had emerged. The choice was between assimilation and nationalism; both were, to some extent, defined vis-à-vis or against the other (French colonial rule). The former implied a Frenchification which was equated with the betrayal of one's religion and people, and presented as contrived, artificial ("*entreprendre un travail* [my emphasis] *de francisation*") and somewhat ridiculous ("*francequillonnerie*"); while the latter was described as a more logical and easier choice, and as something which was consistent with the true nature and religious beliefs of North African Muslims. The argument made by Ferhat Abbas about the impossibility of a nationalism based on "*ces poussières du passé*" was therefore discursively challenged by the movement which, conversely, depicted the Muslim elite's assimilationist agenda as an empty pursuit, as nothing more than an impossible attempt to build a French Muslim identity on, so to speak, *ces poussières du présent*.

The nationalists' argument that past examples of nationalist struggles demonstrated that the Algerian nation did "exist" seems to be supported by the work of historians such as Droz and Lever, who emphasise the nationalist character of Abd-el-

Kader's reign when they point out that during his war against the French, "il amorça la constitution d'un état arabe, sinon algérien, doté de moyens étonnamment modernes" (1982: 14).

In that context, Gellner's argument on the development of Algerian nationalism, which concurs with that of Abbas, is problematic. He states that:

There had previously been no Algerian nation prior to the nationalist awakening in this century, as Ferhat Abbas, one of the principal early nationalist leaders in the country, observed. There had been the much wider community of Islam, and a whole set of narrower communities, but nothing corresponding even remotely to the inhabitants of the present national territory. (Gellner 1983: 73)

This assertion needs to be challenged because it judges the nineteenth century, and the centuries preceding it, through criteria which were established in the twentieth century. Gellner problematically assumes here that a nation can only exist if national aspirations manifest themselves within the limited confines of the territorial state inherited from the colonial era. Indeed, the nation can emerge as the result of complex political processes which may not, initially, necessarily be correlated with a specific territory.

Furthermore, he ignores past events such as Abd-el-Kader's struggle against the French and his establishment of a kingdom because they did not coincide with the borders of the present national territory, even though, at the time of his rebellion, those colonial borders on which the present Algerian national territory was based were not even created.

Finally, Ferhat Abbas could not be considered as one of the principal *early* nationalist leaders in Algeria. The *Jeunes Algériens* to which he belonged in the inter-war period was a secularist and assimilationist movement inspired by the French republican tradition (Ageron 1968b: 1053). The assimilationist stance that he had adopted until 1939 led him to become a volunteer in the French army and fight for France during the Second World War. It was only during that conflict that his political views evolved towards moderate nationalism. Even if he was to play a prominent role in

the post-war struggle for independence, his political career stood in sharp contrast to that of the leaders of the *Etoile*/PPA whose militant nationalism had led them to face police repression as early as the mid 1920s and several jail sentences from the 1930s onwards.

3.7 Religion: a nationalist project shaped by Islam

While Gellner's assessment of early manifestations of national formation in Algeria and of Ferhat Abbas' political profile may be problematical, his appraisal of the central role played by Islam in the development of Algerian nationalism is convincingly presented. He points out that before, and as it were during, the emergence of nationalism, "the religion defined fairly closely all the under-privileged as against the privileged, even if the under-privileged had no other positive shared characteristic (such as language and common history)" (Gellner 1983: 73). Gellner's assertion implies that, in the case of colonial Algeria, there was a strong correlation, or an overlap, between religion, which he describes as a high culture, and class. This is where religion became salient to the development of Algerian nationalism. Indeed, if Islam was what characterised a dominated, oppressed and, to a significant extent divided, North African population, it could play a significant role not only in shaping a new Algerian identity, but also in mobilising North Africans against colonialism.

The purpose of this section is to examine the ways in which Islam, and religion as a concept, came to play a central role in nationalist discourse and ideology. In other words, our aim here is to assess the process by which the experience of the sacred was appropriated by nationalists to give it territorial shape (Chatterjee 1996), and by doing so, entered the sphere of modernity.

It is also important to note that the close relationship between religion and politics which characterised the nationalist discourse was also a feature of colonialism. Indeed, for Muslim nationalists, France's colonial policy in North Africa went further than socio-economic dispossession and political oppression. It set out to marginalise Islam and christianise the autochthonous population. Imperialism and Christianity went

hand in hand. In an article which conjured up painful images rooted in history, colonialism was described by the PPA as "[l]a croisade acharnée de l'impérialisme français contre les musulmans nord-africains" (*El Ouma* Numéro 70, mars 1939). The nationalist movement considered that, in North Africa, politics and religion were inextricably linked to further the interest of imperialism:

La politique et la religion vont de pair. [L'impérialisme] utilise, pour le même but, l'officier et l'évêque, comme le soldat et le mouchard, et les inoffensifs Pères Blancs s'y prêtent avec la même grâce et la même aisance que la gent au grand Guenour ... Il est temps d'ouvrir les yeux au danger de christianisation et de naturalisation ... Il faut défendre votre droit et votre vie. (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935)

Tout ce que peut affirmer l'impérialisme ne nous émeut plus. Que n'a-t-il pas essayé, d'abord, [de] nous assimiler par la christianisation (les missions africaines, pères blancs missionnaires, etc.). «La Croix est trop fragile pour briser le Croissant», la naturalisation pour que nous ne puissions plus réclamer, d'abord, puis, un jour que nous souhaitons prochain, EXIGER la libération nationale de notre pays. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

Christianity was compromised by its association with colonialism to such an extent that they became indistinguishable from one another. In the ENA/PPA's discourse, the political and religious dimensions of colonialism overlapped. In 1938, the imprisonment of nationalists such as Messali Hadj and six other leading activists by France was compared to the "époque obscure de l'Inquisition" (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938). The nationalist movement referred to the Eucharistic Congress which was held in Algiers in May 1939, as "cette manifestation colonialo-catholique" and saw it as a provocation to Islam. It recalled how, throughout the history of colonisation, "nous trouvons à l'avant-garde des troupes expéditionnaires, le missionnaire pour préparer l'armée de soldats apportant avec eux ce que l'on appelle sous un euphémisme hypocrite, la civilisation" (*El Ouma* Numéro 71, avril 1939). When nationalists denounced the dispossession and exploitation of Muslims by colonialism, and stated

that "ce qui compte pour lui, c'est le Dieu-argent, c'est là son culte et son adoration" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935) the Christian faith was, in their eyes, further (albeit indirectly) discredited by its association with imperialism.

So it appears from the above-mentioned examples that the nationalist movement's discourse was indeed characterised by its dialectical interpretation of colonialism as being shaped by a process of politicisation of religion. In fact, its accusation that it was France which had inextricably linked the issue of religion with politics was not unfounded. The decision by France not to apply the law on the separation of State and religion to Islam was clearly politically motivated. The Muslim faith was directly controlled and administered by the government, and the colonial authorities had established a social order which excluded the majority autochthonous population socially, economically and politically on the basis of their religious faith. The fact that North Africans had to give up their "statut personnel" as Muslims to become French citizens implied that they had to renounce a central part of their identity. This indicated that France considered Islam as the last bastion of "resistance" to colonial domination which had to be mastered. The *Etoile nord-africaine* was aware of this when it declared that "[l]a France, qui a proclamé la séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, a fait de l'Islam, en Algérie, un clergé soumis et dévoué à la colonisation" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935). As part of their political programme, nationalists demanded "[l]a liberté de culte et séparation de la Mosquée et de l'Etat, [l']autonomie complète des organisations religieuses et [l']élection au suffrage universel de la cultuelle musulmane" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, janvier 1935) and the extension of the 1905 Law on the separation of the Church and the State to Islam (*El Ouma* Numéro 68, 11 décembre 1938). The construction of the Paris Mosque in the 1920s, which was opposed by the ENA as a further act of propaganda (Stora 1996, MacMaster 1997), was an earlier illustration of France's will to use religion as a political means to assert her imperial power. In such circumstances, the struggle for independence was discursively equated, in nationalist discourse, with a war of religions, as its use of the "Croix contre le Croissant" metaphor shows.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ See, for example, the September-October 1934 and the February-March 1935 issues of *El Ouma*.

As Kedourie points out, the transformation of religion into nationalist ideology enables nationalists to use the "powerful and tenacious loyalties which a faith held in common for centuries creates" (1985: 76-77). However, one should not see the role played by Islam in the development of Algerian nationalism simply in utilitarian terms and thereby conclude that it was given prominence only because it had that capacity to mobilise. Certainly, the movement was conscious of the potential for effective mobilisation contained in religious loyalties. But because of the very nature of the colonial context within which its ideology developed, and given the particular social background of most North African migrants in France, Islam also constituted the main socio-cultural framework of reference through which they could interpret their own experience.

However, the kind of Islam which was to play such a central role in the definition of an Algerian national identity and in the movement's struggle for independence was of a particular nature. It was different from the traditional faith of most North Africans. It was constructed as a *high and universal culture* in order to challenge politically colonial rule effectively. This grounding of religion within nationalist ideology was made possible through a three-way process.

Firstly, Islam was shaped as a high-culture *per se*. Indeed, as was seen in the previous section, religion was posited at the core of a prestigious Arabo-Islamic civilisation rooted both in history and in the present.⁶⁶

Secondly, in order for the Muslim faith to constitute the foundation of national identity and mobilise North Africans, it had to be defined as inherently incompatible with French culture and rule. France's control of Islam was perceived as heresy, and North Africans who sought to obtain French citizenship were condemned as traitors. For instance, in a meeting of the *Etoile* which took place on 9 September 1934 in rue des Pyrénées in Paris, Imache Amar called for "la mise à l'index de tous les naturalisés, traîtres à l'Islam" and Muslim leaders and scholars who were seen to collaborate with the French were denounced (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 101) (1). The *Etoile nord-*

⁶⁶ Examples of independent Muslim countries such as Turkey, or those fighting for their independence, such as Egypt, were often evoked by Algerian nationalists to sustain their argument that their Muslim civilisation was not dead.

africaine's sustained attacks on Si Kaddour Ben Gabrit, the French-appointed Imam of the Paris Mosque is a case in hand. In May 1934, the central committee of the ENA addressed an open letter to him which ended with "[a]ujourd'hui plus que jamais, la jeunesse musulmane nord-africaine ... travaille d'arrache-pied pour son avenir, et cela, malgré et contre vous et vos maîtres de la colonisation" (Ibid: 142). During a political meeting which took place in rue Daguerre on 13 January 1934, Imache Amar stigmatised the imam and invited the members of the association to seize the opportunity of the Aïd Seghir on 17 January to go to the Paris Mosque "pour manifester contre ce renégat"; and in the banquet organised by the ENA on the day of that religious festival, Si Kaddour was condemned by Messali Hadj, while Radjef Belkacem described how he and several other militants were arrested by the police before they could reach the Mosque where they wanted to protest (Ibid: 71-73).

Thirdly, if Islam was to embody national identity and aspirations for freedom and modernity, then it had to be distinguished from the vernacular forms of religious practices which were well established amongst North Africans. Interestingly, this type of Islam as high culture and as universal religion which nationalists referred to was also the one that was well established in the urban bourgeoisie of North Africa, and was in many respects opposed to the traditional faith of most rural Maghrebis. This dichotomy between those two forms of religious belief is highlighted by Bourdieu when he asserts that in North Africa:

la religiosité des bourgeois citadins («traditionalistes» ou «occidentalisés»), conscients d'appartenir à une religion universelle, s'oppose en tous points aux ritualismes des paysans, ignorants des subtilités du dogme et de la théologie et l'Islam se présente comme un ensemble hiérarchisé où l'analyse peut isoler différents «niveaux», dévotion animiste et rites agraires, culte des saints et maraboutiques, pratique réglée par la religion, droit, dogme et ésotérisme mystique. (Bourdieu 1971: 326)

Nationalists viewed those "backward" practices, epitomised by the marabouts, as a form of low culture which corrupted Islamic faith and maintained Muslims in a state of

colonial subjection and exploitation. In the 9 September 1934 meeting, Si Djilani, who was then editor of *El Ouma* and a member of the central committee of the *Etoile*, blamed the practices of marabouts, whom he accused of collusion with imperialism. He called for Muslims to rediscover the purity of their faith and reject the beliefs associated with the worship of false saints (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 101) (1). The contrast between the "true" nature of Islam and the "subverted and venal" character of maraboutism was also emphasised in the nationalist newspaper:

L'Islam est pur, il n'accepte pas ces microbes [les marabouts] dans ses rangs, ni de maquignons se servant de lui pour tromper et leurrer le peuple. Notre religion, l'Islam, est claire et nette, point de sorcelleries, ni de prestidigitateurs, point aussi de jongleurs. La science, la morale, l'honnêteté, la paix, la bravoure et le respect de son prochain. Voilà l'Islam. Demandez la science même en Chine[,] demandez la science du berceau jusqu'à la tombe, a dit notre grand prophète que le salut et la bénédiction soit sur lui.

Tous ces chefs de Confréries qui espionnent, qui se dressent contre notre intérêt national, l'ensemble du peuple algérien doit les combattre, les démasquer et éclairer nos coreligionnaires sur leur néfaste action. Lutte à outrance contre eux, lutte sans pitié, par la parole, par la plume et les conférences. Ces suceurs de sang du peuple [...] doivent disparaître de notre société. (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933)

The way in which religion was defined in Algerian nationalist discourse reflected, and was intricately linked to, that of the process of ethnic identity construction. The movement's evocation of Islam was shaped and negotiated at the boundary between "us" and "them". It was a high culture per se with which all North African Muslims should identify. Islam could not escape the logic of being historically defined in comparison and contrast with the Other: it was the core of a great civilisation which was perceived as intrinsically superior to that of France or Europe. The condemnation by the *Etoile* and the PPA of reformist Muslim leaders and people willing to abandon their "personal status" as Muslims to become French showed that religion was seen to be a marker of difference: it was what distinguished North Africans from Europeans (one could not be

both Muslim and French). And when nationalists denounced traditional religious practices amongst North African Muslims as backward and almost "barbaric", they perpetuated the stigmas that the French had attached to vernacular forms of cultural and religious expression. For nationalists, religious identity, which was at the basis of national identity, was very much informed by processes of interaction and conflict with, as well as emulation of, the spirit of Western modernity.

That process of politicisation of religion served several purposes: it legitimised not only Algerian Muslims' claim for independence on the basis of their distinct national identity rooted in Islam as a high culture, but also legitimised the movement itself by draping it with the mantle of Islam. The *Etoile* and the PPA presented themselves as the true voice of religion. Joining the nationalist movement was depicted as a duty for all Muslims:

Chaque bon Musulman nationaliste peut et doit contribuer à l'effort commun en faisant la propagande autour de lui par la parole et par le journal. Faites des abonnés, faites des souscriptions ... Debout tous pour notre droit à la vie, pour notre dignité et pour l'Islam! (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

A tract announcing a political meeting on 16 June 1933 ended with "[a]bonnez-vous [...] au journal "El Ouma" qui vous défend. Faites-le connaître, ainsi vous aurez fait votre devoir de bon musulman" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 61) (1).

Religious metaphors were also used to describe the particular atmosphere of political rallies. Reporting on a political rally which took place in Lyon on 26 August 1934, *El Ouma* wrote how the speeches made by Bedek, president of the Lyon section of the *Etoile*, and by Messali Hadj both imposed "un silence religieux" in the audience (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934). Also, Imache Amar described his tour of the Lyon region in January 1935 in the following terms:

Partout, des frères! des frères d'une même famille ... partout le même accueil, partout les mêmes sentiments étaient mis à l'épreuve, et partout la même volonté de lutte et de sacrifice se lisait

dans les yeux ... Et l'on parle de voyage? Je l'appellerais plutôt un pèlerinage puisque ce déplacement m'a permis de constater ... notre union et notre fraternité. Ma mission était pourtant d'aller annoncer ce miracle à mes frères, et j'ai eu la joie de le trouver partout réalisé. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935)

Let us now turn to the relationship between ethnicity and religion. The way in which the ethnic, and by extension the ethno-national, identity of Algerians was constructed by the nationalist movement implied that differences, distinctions and variety in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia had to be reconciled into a unified interpretation of the ethnic make-up of North Africans. It was a process which essentialised identity in order to create a sense of ethnic commonality and solidarity amongst Maghrebis, and which could, in turn, constitute the basis for efficient political mobilisation. The movement's assertion (which countered French colonial attempts to divide and rule the two ethnic groups) that Arabs and Berbers belonged to the same Arabo-Berber people, that Berbers were somehow of the same ethnic origin as Arabs, explicitly constructed Algerian identity as being marked by Arabness.

This reification of Algerian-ness was very much facilitated by the incorporation of Islam as the core marker of national identity. Ethnic differences were effaced by religious commonalities. In a political rally which took place on 7 July 1934 in the salle de l'Union intersyndicale in Paris, Fodil Arab announced that "le réveil de l'Islam se réaliserait bientôt" and that "il n'y aurait plus de Kabyles, ni Arabes, mais seulement des Musulmans unis pour la guerre sainte" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 61) (1); and the *Etoile nord-africaine* stated that:

aujourd'hui, pour nous, soit en Algérie, en Tunisie ou au Maroc, il n'y a ni Arabes, ni Kabyles, ni Mozabites, il n'y a qu'une race, la race arabo-berbère, issue d'un seul croisement et nous sommes par-dessus tout Musulmans, ce dont nous sommes fiers, et tous les Musulmans sont frères". (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935)

This passage illustrates the extent to which religion was crucial to the movement's construction of North African ethnic identity. In the colonial context, the prominence given to Arabness was not simply justified by history, it was, more importantly, consistent with the nationalists' argument that all North Africans were, first and foremost, Muslims. Islam, Arabness and the Arab language were inextricably linked, and constituted the high culture and powerful identity on which the nation could be shaped, imagined, and fought for. The movement further emphasised the bond between religion and "Arabité" when it asserted that "[p]our arriver à nos désirs, il faut l'union de notre race. Nous demandons à Dieu et à notre Prophète, qui, jadis, a donné la force à l'Islam, de nous redonner cette force afin de reconquérir nos libertés et nos droits" (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933). When, in January 1934, the movement decided to organise Arabic classes and Messali Hadj took the initiative to read and comment on Arab texts to militants every Wednesday, the aim of the *Etoile* was to "enseigner à ses auditeurs la force de l'Islam" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA: 75*) (1). Islam was therefore not limited to the religious sphere; it symbolised "race" and language as well as culture. On 26 May 1934, in front of 600 mainly Algerian Muslims, Messali Hadj condemned France's attempt to regulate Koranic teaching as a threat to Algeria's Muslim traditions and culture (Ibid: 81-82). Religion also gave meaning to Muslims' experience as a colonised people and substance to their struggle for independence:

A la barque désemparée, Dieu fait trouver le port. Le seul bien qu'il nous reste au monde, c'est la lutte, naître, espérer et souffrir, tel a été notre sort ... Que nos frères musulmans, partout où ils se trouvent, se remémorent les belles pensées de l'Islam: «Invoque la toute puissance, elle viendra à ton secours, dans la lutte». (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

The fact that the movement emphasised Islam's compatibility with modernity (*El Ouma* Numéro 64, 27 mai 1938) implied that, for its militants, religion could play a central role in the development of nationalism. What also emerges from an analysis of the movement's discourse is that religion did not so much justify the existence of the Algerian nation as embody it. Indeed, every political act and event had a religious

resonance to it. Islam epitomised all aspects of the nation as the movement perceived it (religion, but also culture, tradition, language, history, civilisation, "race", etc.), as well as its national aspirations (nationalism). For the *Etoile*, being faithful to one's culture, tradition and history was to be faithful to one's religion. In the meeting of the *Etoile* of the 6th of June 1933, the nationalists' fight for independence was referred to as "travailler à la libération totale de l'Islam" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 57) (1). Imache Amar's lyrical evocation of Algeria's emancipation also underlined the correlation that was made between the renaissance of Islam and the birth of the nation:

C'est l'aube naissante, c'est la lumière, c'est le soleil qui va paraître. Et là-bas, sur la montagne rose, un grand drap [est] planté par une poigne vigoureuse, sa couleur est vert-espérance avec l'Etoile et le Croissant. [S]ur sa hampe une feuille imprimée en lettres lumineuses où chacun peut lire: Union, fraternité! Indépendance, liberté!" (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933)

For Algerian nationalists, the sacred dimension of the nation, defined by Balakrishnan as "the longing for immortality becoming a will to membership of an unperishable collective" (1996: 205) was therefore incarnated by Islam. It conferred on this collective, that is to say on the community of North African Muslims, that "halo of disinterestedness", as Anderson (1983) puts it, which could ask for sacrifices:

"Notre Prophète ne nous ordonne-t-il pas de lutter pour notre liberté, de tomber sur le champ de bataille et de défendre l'Islam? Ne sommes-nous donc pas musulmans, réveillons-nous Nord-Africains, mettons-nous dans les rangs. (*El Ouma*, janvier 1934, in *Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 144)

The nationalist discourse illustrates how religious attachments were used to develop a sense of national identity and solidarity and mobilise North Africans against French imperialism. However, it could be argued that Algerian nationalism and French republican nationalism shared the same framework of reference. Loyalty to the nation was marked by the bond of kinship and its corollaries: sacrifice and the "don du sang".

But unlike France, whose long-standing republican nationalist discourse focused essentially on the nation decoupled from Christianity, Algerians constructed their nationalism on the concept of a nation rooted in religious belonging. The timeless, boundless and modern nature of Islam as a high and universal culture enabled nationalists to challenge France's claim that there had been no nation in Algeria before 1830 on the grounds that their great Islamic religion and civilisation had been suppressed by French imperialism. It also allowed them to represent discursively the ethnically diverse North African population as all sharing the same Arab identity which was seen as indissociable from religion.

3.8 Conclusion

The nationalist discourse on the nation was characterised by its modernity and by a dichotomous process of "opening" (evocation of a future independent state) and "closure" (essentially in their discourse on anti-colonial struggle). Indeed, while nationalists considered that Algeria would, one day, be an independent multi-ethnic state where Muslims, Europeans and Jews would live side by side, and maintain some relationship with France, the colonial context within which they developed their ideology led them to construct an exclusive sense of national identity which was based on ethnicity, and which was defined as inherently incompatible with Frenchness. The nation to which North Africans were to identify was one marked by a sense of kinship which was deemed strong enough to command feelings of disinterestedness and sacrifice for Algeria. It was also based on a reified and problematical interpretation of ethnicity (whereby all Arab and Berber North Africans belonged to the "Arab race"), on class (the North African "people" seen as the underclass in Algeria), culture, as well as history and memory.

More importantly, Islam was placed at the core of nationalist discourse. It transcended differences and divisions and embodied the nation and its corollary, nationalism. Religious loyalties could command those feelings of sacrifice and

disinterestedness. The ENA/PPA's interpretation of nation, as based on ethnicity/"race", class, culture and history and memory were all traversed by religious attachments.

The inextricable link between Islam, Arabness and the Arab language provided nationalists with a blueprint for an empowering national identity which could effectively challenge colonial rule. For them, Algerians were Muslims and therefore Arabs. Conversely, Arabness was seen as incompatible with Frenchness, because such a bond betrayed Islam. Also, the language of the nation was Arabic, the language of religion.

However, those markers of the inner boundary of ethno-national identity were problematical: they included, as much as they excluded. Nationalists' will to mobilise Muslims around a unified and modern vision of the nation, which placed Islam (in its modern form) at the core of Algerian-ness, implied imposing a new identity, language (classical Arabic) and religious practices on North Africans, and alienating people because of their vernacular religious beliefs, cultural practices, language (Berber and colloquial Arabic), in other words their "ethnic habitus".

In so doing, the *Etoile* and the PPA's discourse showed that, in nationalism, difference was very much rooted in sameness. The more they wanted to build Algerian national identity as different, the more the way in which that difference was constructed appeared similar to that of the French. Indeed, it could be argued that their nationalism shared many of its characteristics with French nationalism (the bond of kinship based on disinterestedness, sacrifice, and the "don du sang" theme, a unified high culture based on a reified vision of ethnicity, the rejection of difference seen as a threat to the "République une et indivisible", etc.). Furthermore, nationalists implicitly adopted the legacy of French colonialism when they simply replaced one "imported" high culture (that of the French) by another (Islam-Arab culture from the Middle East), and dismissed North Africa's varied cultural, linguistic, ethnic and vernacular Islamic heritage as "backward" and unfit to form the basis of a modern nation.

Chapter 4

The outer boundary of ethno-national identity: racism, colonialism and universalism

4.1 Introduction

In Algerian nationalist discourse in the inter-war period in France, ethnic identity and nation-ness were defined and negotiated at the boundary, at the point of contact between "us" and "them". Indeed, the way in which nationalists represented themselves (the "in") was very much informed by a process of transaction, interaction and conflict with "them" (the "out"). In that sense, ethnicity was constructed to fit in the straight-jacket of modern nationalist necessities. Their ethno-national identity had to appear as unique, while the processes by which that identity was shaped were, in many respects, similar to those of Western nationalism.

For the ENA and the PPA, a number of (mainly French or Western) institutions, symbols, values, political processes and groupings were viewed as markers of alienation and racism. In other instances, events and symbols, but also political groups and personalities both in France and beyond whose actions were seen as consistent with the nationalist movement's anti-colonial project were constructed more positively. Those factors, which could be called alternatively the "out" or the outer formative elements of identity, need to be examined. The fact that they were recurrently evoked by the *Etoile* and the PPA illustrates the extent to which they contributed to shape Algerian nationalist ideology and the movement's conception of Algerian ethno-national identity. Chapters four and five will discuss both aspects of the "out". Chapter four will focus on the movement's discourse on racism, colonialism and on France. It will look at the complex role played by the concept of universalism in the ENA/PPA's ideology. Chapter five will assess the movement's complex relationship, or rather the way in which that relationship was invoked, with other groups (such as the French Communist Party and the CGTU, French intellectuals and workers, colonial migrants, etc.) whose values were traditionally viewed as closer to those of the *Etoile* and the PPA, and with

movements and events both within and outside the French colonial empire (such as the Middle East and other colonies) which were considered to be pertinent to their own struggle for emancipation.

4.2 Racism in North Africa and in France

Racism, as a concept, was central to colonialism, and more importantly, constituted a fundamental theme in a North African nationalism inspired by universalist values. Indeed, the complex interplay between racism, colonialism and universalism shaped the way in which Algerian nationalist ideology and discourse developed in the inter-war period. This chapter aims to examine that interplay, rather than carry out a detailed study of those three concepts (racism, colonialism and universalism), which would be beyond the remit of this work.

Let us start with the first concept, which featured as one of the main issues in nationalist discourse. The meaning and connotations of terms such as "race" and "racism" have evolved and changed historically (see Banton and Harwood 1975), but for the purpose of this study, which consists of a comparative analysis of two movements set in different historical, socio-economic and political contexts, racism will be referred to in its current meaning.

A significant corpus of work on racism exists (see, for example, Banton 1967, 1988 & 1994, Banton & Harwood 1975, Miles 1989, Rex 1986, Taguieff 1989, 1989a, 1991a & 1991b, Wieviorka 1991, 1992 & 1994, Silverman 1992). Our aim, however, is to select a working definition of racism which can be used as an interpretative tool to deconstruct the discourse of the nationalist movement. Banton's definition could be adopted as a good starting point. He defines racism in the following terms:

By racism is meant the doctrine that a man's behaviour is determined by stable inherited characters deriving from separate racial stocks having distinctive attributes and usually considered to stand to one another in relations of superiority and inferiority. (Banton 1967: 8)

What he pertinently implies here is that racism is a determinist doctrine in which group difference and inequality are ascribed in "racial" traits. However, given the elusive nature of "race" as a concept, his reference to the "racial stocks" to which people are supposed to belong requires further clarification.

The difficulty of defining "race" resides partly in the fact that, as a concept, it can draw on perceived genealogical, genetic and/or cultural characteristics, as well as on processes of "cross-fertilisation" between those three domains - whereby, for instance, cultural traits are represented as inherently linked to, and explained by the "genetic" and "genealogic" make-up of a group to justify the place occupied by members of that group in the social/world order, and vice-versa.

Jenkins, synthesising some of the variant interpretations of the concept, offers a broader defining framework whose options may apply to specific or general contexts where racism is noted:

- either (1) racism is a set of organized beliefs about 'racial' categories and their inferiority or superiority, which people consciously hold and can, to some degree, articulate; or (2) racism exists in institutional arrangements and practices which have systematically detrimental outcomes or consequences for 'racial' categories, rather than in consciously held beliefs, attitudes or values;
- and either (3) racism involves categorization on the basis of purported biological differences; or (4) racism involves categorization on the basis of any set of criteria which will allow difference to be asserted. (Jenkins 1997: 82-83)

Racism, which is both belief and practice of categorisation and differentiation, places and fixes the "other" in a state of inferiority. The question of the forms that racism can take in society is discussed by Wieviorka (1991: 83-86), who notes that there are four levels of "intensity" of racism, from "infracracisme", a rather minor and disarticulated social phenomenon, to racism permeating the inner workings of the state and its policies. This perspective is of particular relevance to our case study as it explores the role which racism plays in articulating social practices and the polity.

Memmi's work on racism and antiracism (1957) in a colonial context broke new ground in this field. It emphasised the specificity of the experience of the colonised and offered a dualistic interpretation of the relationship between the former and the coloniser which went against the grain of "traditional" theories of antiracism which were imbued in universalism (Lloyd 1998). Gallissot (1985a) adopts this dualistic approach to explain colonial racism, but provides a better understanding of the complex social processes which led to the inherent antagonism between colonised and coloniser. He describes how, in Algeria, racism was an inherent part of colonial relations affecting not only the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, but also that between Jews and Europeans, as well as that between the varied European populations. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the Algerian colony was traversed by virulent anti-Semitism which had repercussions in France in the Dreyfus affair. Anti-Jewish racism developed within a tense racial context which, in the colony, was referred to as "la guerre des races". The populations from Italy, Spain and Malta (and so on) which composed the multi-ethnic, stratified and racialised European proletariat that the colonial economy needed to expand, expressed hatred and envy towards the Jews who had acquired French citizenship with the Décret Crémieux in 1870. It was only with the Law of 1889 which made second generation European migrants into French citizens that the idea of the "Français d'Algérie" emerged, and that the myth that two communities existed in North Africa, that of the French of Algeria and that of Muslims, became established (Gallissot 1985a: 44-46).

To return to our case study, it could be argued that the *Etoile nord-africaine* and the PPA were very much conscious of the fact that racism pervaded all levels of colonial society from the individual to the higher echelons of the French imperial project.⁶⁷ The movement's denunciation of the colonialist press, which referred to North Africans as "des «bicots», des propres à rien ... dans le but évident de tromper et d'ameuter l'opinion publique ... pour enrayer le mouvement national de revendications" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935) shows that it saw racism as creating a chasm between Muslims and the French people and as an obstacle to emancipation.

⁶⁷ See Sivan (1979) for a detailed analysis of Pied-Noir racism against Muslims.

The legacy of the century-old colonisation of Algeria was described by nationalists as one of suffering, humiliation, oppression and exploitation of Muslims, and they accused imperialism of using force "pour ... nous abaisser au rang d'inférieurs, au rang d'esclaves" (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934). In an article reporting on a court case where a young French settler had been sentenced to pay a sixteen franc fine for murdering a Muslim woman in Algeria, *El Ouma* depicted the relationship between the dominant and the dominated as one of extreme psychological and physical violence:

[en] Afrique du Nord, un colon peut tuer, voler, frapper, insulter, humilier, verbaliser de son propre chef ... il est maître et l'Arabe est, purement et simplement sa chose, il en dispose à sa guise, en tout moment et en toute circonstance ... Nous sommes la chair, vous êtes le couteau, découpez-nous comme vous l'entendrez, emprisonnez-nous, comme vous voudrez, assassinez nos femmes, suivant votre désir, déportez-nous aux cinq cent diables, prenez-nos terres, exploitez nos enfants, mais nous savons très bien que tout a une fin. Rira bien qui rira le dernier". (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

For North African nationalists, this violence which marked the relationship between coloniser and colonised was informed by racism. Racism dehumanised and reified the "indigènes". In response to an article written by Jules Rouanet in the pro-colonialist newspaper *La Dépêche Algérienne* on 21 February 1939 claiming that colonials were treated as equals and brothers by France, *El Ouma* put colonialism in the dock and explicitly linked it with racism:

Du racisme? A entendre «La Dépêche» on croirait qu'il n'y en a pas en Algérie et dans les colonies françaises. Pourriez-vous nier que le code de l'indigénat n'est pas un code de racisme? Que le Décret Régnier et toute la liste des décrets spéciaux aux indigènes, ce n'est pas du racisme? Que le fait [que les] fonctionnaires et ... ouvriers indigène[s] gagne[nt] un salaire moindre que celui des [E]uropéens, ce n'est pas du racisme? Que le fait des expropriations et le

refoulement des indigènes vers des terres pauvres, ce n'est pas du racisme[?] Que les massacres du Maroc et de la Tunisie, ce n'est pas du racisme? (*El Ouma* Numéro 70, mars 1939)

This passage shows that racism was not perceived as a corollary of colonialism, but as constituting the very nature of it. Each measure introduced and action taken by the French empire was seen as racist. Indeed, colonialism was discursively and ideologically conflated into racism. The movement's interpretation of the realities of colonialism, which was in sharp contrast to France's claim that it was her duty to fulfil her generous "mission civilisatrice" in the colonies, had direct implications for the development of Algerian nationalism, as racism was also posited as a justification for emancipation:

C'est incroyable, mais cependant vrai. Le colonialisme n'engendre pas seulement ... la misère et l'exploitation des peuples opprimés, mais il crée des préjugés de race et de xénophobie ... quand on a besoin des Nord-Africains pour se faire trouer la poitrine ... ils sont [f]rançais, mais pour jouir de leurs droits politiques et civiques, ils sont «indigènes», ce qui veut dire de race inférieure, taillables et corvéables à merci. Devant cette atteinte à la liberté et devant ces préjugés de race, Musulmans nord-africains, unissez-vous et exigez partout la liberté.

A bas le code de l'indigénat! A bas la haine de race. (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935)

The surprise expressed by the author of the article was purely rhetorical. He asserted that the exploitation and oppression of Muslims by colonialism went hand in hand with racism (referred to as "préjugés de race") and xenophobia, and highlighted the cynicism displayed by French imperialism, which imposed on Muslims the *duty* to defend the French nation and sacrifice their life for her, but did not grant them any of the civic and political *rights* that such an act deserved. The movement considered that the colonial order, which differentiated between Europeans (who were French) and Muslims ("indigènes") was one based on "race", and that racism was at the core of colonial policy making.

For nationalists, colonialism was a system which was not inspired by the principles of the French Revolution, but was akin to feudalism (for example evocations of slavery, of North Africans being "taillables et corvéables à merci"). In such a context, their fight against colonialism was presented as a struggle against racism. Their nationalism was informed *externally* by racism. Indeed, the racism that they were subjected to justified their struggle for freedom and reinforced their resolve: "de chaque répression, de chaque injustice, nous sortirons plus forts et plus aguerris" (*El Ouma* Numéro 63, 22 avril 1938). The very process of alienation, exploitation and violence that it engendered also precipitated the formation of movements of national liberation.

4.3 Colonialism, universalism and the state

If colonialism was denounced as inherently racist, the nationalists' discourse on, and relationship with, metropolitan France was more complex. At an ideological level, Algerian nationalists were very much influenced by universalism and presented themselves as a movement ruled by democratic principles (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1939). Their political programme, which demanded equality between the French and Muslims, was greatly inspired by those principles. That programme included, amongst other things, equal political and union rights between Muslims and the French, equal pay, access to jobs and social legislation, the separation of the Mosque and the State, freedom of expression for Muslims and their press, the abolition of the *Code de l'indigénat* and of the *communes mixtes*, compulsory education in French and Arabic, a military service of the same duration for both Muslims and the French, the same freedom to travel as European settlers and an Algerian parliament elected by universal suffrage "sans distinction de race, ni de religion" (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934, *El Ouma* Numéro 28, janvier 1935). At a more abstract level, they argued that their nationalism reflected Muslims' aspirations to freedom and rights, to become full citizens:

[les musulmans] veulent la liberté, le respect absolu de leur personne, de leur conscience et de leurs droits, une part équitable dans les avantages e[t] les biens de la vie collective ... le droit aux bienfaits de l'instruction et de leur éducation, à la jouissance de tout ce qui peut contribuer à élargir la vie et à l'embellir, celui de participer également à la direction des affaires publiques et des intérêts généraux; en un mot, tout ce [qui] leur donne droit d'aspirer [à] leur caractère de personnes raisonnables et libres ... Il faut avoir la conscience d'une solidarité supérieure qui, associant les Musulmans dans la poursuite d'un idéal commun substituera l'ordre et la paix, l'autorité respectée des lois à la violence et à la tyrannie brutale des plus forts et des plus hardis.

(*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938)

The themes contained in this passage and the way in which they are stylistically presented were consistent with those developed in French universalist discourse. The movement called for the Declaration of the Rights of Man to be enforced and for tyranny to be brought to an end when, after the arrest and imprisonment of the leaders of the *Etoile* in 1934, they declared: "[q]uand prendra fin cette mise à l'ombre indécente et brutale? Quand? Le jour où nous serons groupés, disciplinés, exiger que nos droits d'hommes, nos droits de citoyens soient respectés" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934).

To return to the question of the movement's discourse on France, our analysis of the newspaper *El Ikdam* and of its successor *El Ouma* would tend to suggest that it evolved over the two decades of the inter-war period. Up until the early 1920s, politically active North African migrants in France were still ideologically close to the *Jeunes Algériens*, and viewed Metropolitan France as the true home of Revolutionary principles. They considered at the time that there was a dichotomy between the "Hexagone" and the values it stood for, and the colonial system which oppressed North Africans. They also argued that Muslims were fortunate to depend on a central government and parliament whose concern for justice would guarantee a fairer system in North Africa, if only the terrible conditions in which Muslims lived were better known in Paris (*El Ikdam* Numéro 22, vendredi 11 mars 1921).

The birth of the *Etoile nord-africaine* in 1926 coincided with North Africans' condemnation of France as an imperialist power whose ideology, marked by racism and oppression, suppressed the legitimate rights of the colonised. At the end of 1934, an *El Ouma* article denouncing the arrest and imprisonment of nationalist leaders and militants on both sides of the Mediterranean developed the movement's interpretation of the relationship between France and colonialism:

Les lois républicaines ont cédé la place aux lois féodales. La démocratie s'incline et s'efface devant le code de l'Indigénat qui s'installe en maître souverain dans la capitale de la France «libérale». Quelle dérision! Quel recul ... C'est le retour vers la Barbarie! D'ailleurs les lois qu'on nous impose «chez-nous» sont-elles autre chose que des lois barbares? Et maintenant, c'est dans la capitale de la révolution, c'est dans la ville des droits de l'homme, ô ironie, que les lois abjectes nous sont appliquées! C'est dans la ville des grands juristes et des grands penseurs qu'on nous empêche de nous réunir, de fonder une association pour réclamer nos droits à la vie et à la liberté. C'est dans la ville de Victor Hugo et de Jaurès que l'on fait la chasse à l'homme, que l'on fouille, que l'on bouscule, que l'on arrête et l'on condamne les Musulmans. (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934)

In this passage, the movement presented universalism and colonialism in dualistic terms: a dichotomy was made between France and her colonies, between Revolutionary principles and feudalism, between civilisation and barbarity, between freedom and oppression, and between tolerance and racism. Paris was seen as the home of the Declaration of Human Rights, of a great civilisation and of the rule of Law, while the colonies («chez-nous») were steeped in barbarity, not because of the supposed "savage" nature of the autochthons, as colonialists argued, but because of colonial domination. However, the persecution which North African migrants were subjected to in the "metropole" revealed that France no longer was the land of rights and freedom it used to be. Through the imposition of the *Code de l'indigénat* in Paris, barbarity/feudalism was in the process of imposing its tyrannical rule on France. Liberal France had turned into a parody of herself ("la France «libérale»"), as colonialism was corrupting and

contaminating the revolutionary principles that had inspired her for so long. In a way, colonialism and racism had turned back the clock of history, and feudalism was, once again, imposing its barbaric rule on France. Within that context, the fight for rights and freedom of the *Etoile nord-africaine* was not only depicted as consistent with France's true values, but also as crucial for the survival of those values in the "capital of the Revolution" and in the "city of Human Rights".

This diasporic perspective on the colonial problematic posited universalism and imperialism as two distinct and conflicting ideological and spatial loci. In order to understand the way in which that dichotomy was constructed, the nationalist movement's recurrent evocations of France as the repository of revolutionary principles need to be further examined. Which France did nationalists refer to when they emphatically proclaimed "Oui, vive la France de la Révolution de 89! Vive la France des Droits de l'Homme!" (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)? To put it differently, who did incarnate that country which they still admired and whose values they adhered to?

Let us start by looking at the representation of the central government in nationalist discourse. The French authorities were no longer perceived as the "protector" of the colonised, unaware of what was really going on in North Africa. The movement argued that if the government had really wanted to help North African Muslims, then they would, long ago, have abolished the *Code de l'Indigénat* on both sides of the Mediterranean (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933). Furthermore, the universalist discourse developed by Paris was also interpreted as hypocrisy: the nationalist movement pointed out that it had been aware for some time that "dans cette France qui se dit une démocratie, les fameux slogans «Liberté», «Egalité», «Fraternité» ne sont que de vains mots, du moins en ce qui nous concerne" (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938).

The government was also stigmatised for being at the core of the imperialist project. Paris and Algiers were described as "deux pôles où des mains rouges de sang frappent inlassablement" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934). The authorities were denounced for betraying France's Declaration of Human Rights and the legacy of 1789, and letting their representatives in the colonies behave as "potentates" (*El Ouma*

Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936). Colonialism was depicted as an anachronistic system rooted in feudalism which was encouraged by the Third Republic:

[J]e voulais dédier cet article à tous mes frères. A ceux qui souffrent là-bas, en Afrique du Nord, de l'oppression impérialiste, obligés de courber la tête sous l'autorité féodale au XXe siècle, sous la République démocratique qui fait couler à flot la «justice et la paix». (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

The *Etoile nord-africaine's* struggle for independence was also discursively placed within a universalist framework of reference in which nationalists were the true bearers of revolutionary principles fighting against a feudal government. In a tract announcing a meeting in Lyon on 9 September 1934 in support of the victims of colonial repression in Tunisia and in Constantine, where Muslims had protested against the desecration of a mosque, the movement called for mobilisation "contre l'occupation armée, contre le plan de servage que poursuit le gouvernement" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 99) (1). Another tract explaining how the meeting of the *Etoile* planned for 13 October 1934 had been banned by the government, and which invited North Africans to attend another political meeting on 28 October 1934 in rue Grange-aux-Belles in Paris, developed the same themes. Nationalists asserted that the fundamental values of rights and justice which France claimed to champion were being denied to Muslims, and that the oppression which they were condemned to endure under the tyrannical rule of colonialism would only reinforce their resolve to be free: "[Le gouvernement] espère-t-il ... continuer à nous maintenir en état d'esclavage perpétuel? ... Le peuple est décidé à briser ses chaînes et à arracher ses droits, coûte que coûte" (*Ibid*: 111-112). A further parallel was made between the *Etoile's* fight against colonialism and France's revolutionary past when the PPA denounced the imprisonment of some of their militants in the Barberousse prison in Algiers in 1938: "Trente-trois musulmans algériens sont actuellement dans la Bastille moderne de Barberousse. Deux d'entre eux, arrêtés depuis plus de six mois, n'ont même pas subi un premier interrogatoire. Comme

au temps des lettres de cachet et des oubliettes, la justice dite «républicaine» ne s'embarrasse d'aucun scrupule" (*El Ouma* Numéro 65, 24 juillet 1938).

France's evocation of colonisation as a "mission civilisatrice" was also denounced. It was derided as "l'œuvre de «syphilisation», entreprise par la généreuse et humaine France républicaine" (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934). For the movement, its only purpose was to further France's imperialist project of oppression and dispossession:

La prétendue civilisation dont la France se montre si fière en Algérie, n'est pas bien différente de la barbarie dont elle est issue, puisqu'elle repose sur le droit du plus fort". (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933)

N'est-ce pas manifester le cher désir de chloroformer [le peuple algérien] pour empêcher tout mouvement réactif en criant hautement que la France remplit une mission civilisatrice alors qu'en fait elle remplit ses coffres-forts des multiples ressources tirées de l'exploitation de notre sol, sous-sol et de nous-mêmes. (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934)

The French Republic and imperialism were therefore seen as one and the same thing. The government was accused of hypocrisy, as its policies and actions were at odds with the values it claimed to stand for. It was discredited for the feudal system which it had introduced in the colonies. Algerian nationalists also viewed its attempt to prevent Muslims from having access to education as another illustration that colonialism was not about enlightening the colonised, but about oppression and racism. In 1938, they argued that millions of Muslims were maintained in a state of complete ignorance by France "dans un but racial ... pour des fins d'exploitation éhontée et indigne d'une grande nation se prétendant civilisée et se réclamant des glorieux principes de 1793" (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938). Racism was not simply seen as something which affected education (or rather the lack of it) in the colonies, it traversed every aspect of government policy:

Ni l'infériorité de certaine[s] race[s], ni la protection assurée aux esclaves en échange de leurs services ... ne sauraient justifier, ni même atténuer une iniquité aussi criante. L'étroite dépendance où se trouve réduit le serf vis-à-vis de son maître est manifestement contraire à sa dignité, au développement de sa personnalité et au droit de jouir librement de la vie. L'esclavage et le servage ont disparu de nos mœurs ... Cela n'autorise cependant pas le gouvernement d'aller nier et violer les grands principes politiques et moraux comme par exemple ceux du «Droit de l'Homme» pour lesquels une grande révolution s'est faite et des torrents de sang ont coulé. (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938)

The fact that the nationalist movement considered the racism which informed the government's colonial policy as incompatible with the universalist values that France represented proved that, to them, the source of revolutionary legitimacy lay somewhere else than in the structures of the state. In an open letter addressed to the Interior Minister in December 1934, the *Etoile nord-africaine* condemned the police oppression against North Africans in Paris orchestrated by the "services de la rue Lecomte" as barbaric, unjust, and unworthy of a civilised nation, and called for the Minister to intervene on the basis of those principles: "Nous vous demandons ... d'y mettre un terme, si vraiment vous représentez encore cette France, laquelle nous voulons encore le croire est la dernière tranchée de liberté" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934). This passage suggests that there was a dichotomy between the French government on the one hand, and France as a "civilised nation" on the other. Indeed, when the *Etoile* called on the Minister to bring an end to police injustice, they appealed to "cette France ... dernière tranchée de liberté", to that civilised *nation* which the government was supposed (but so blatantly failed) to *represent*. It could be argued that herein lies the key to the Algerian nationalists' evocation of France's universalist values: the true bearer of those principles was the nation and by extension, the people of France.

4.4 The French people and the legacy of 1789

The struggle of Algerians for rights and freedom, and against "feudalism" was identified by nationalists with that of the French people in 1789. Their own longing for independence was conjured up in terms which were reminiscent of their discourse on the French revolution: "nous voulons déchirer le baillon et briser nos chaînes. Nous voulons notre part de la vie, de la lumière et de la liberté" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934). Algerian Muslims and the French people were presented as sharing the same values, and both were depicted as inherently hostile to the colonial project supported by the French authorities. In a speech made at La Mutualité after the arrest of her husband, Madame Hadj (who was French) asserted that the French people would never tolerate the injustice of colonialism:

Le rôle de l'indigénat, les mesures d'exceptions font du peuple algérien, une proie pieds et mains liés au colonialisme. Cela, le peuple français ne le permettra pas, lui qui a fait la révolution de 1789 pour briser les chaînes monarchiques qui l'étouffaient et pour donner la liberté à tous les peuples. (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934)

The French people were described as the repository of revolutionary legitimacy and the interests of the Algerian people were presented as inalienable from those of the French. A tract which announced a meeting of the *Etoile* on 26 May 1934 ended with a call for the French to support North Africans' struggle for emancipation: "Peuple français, épris de la liberté, viens parmi nous, peuple opprimé, ta présence sera un puissant concours pour obtenir nos revendications" (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 80) (1). In Algerian nationalist discourse, the French people appeared as a privileged interlocutor, whom the Algerian people could address as an equal. The oppression to which both people were subjected had also created a sense of mutual understanding and shared interests. Their common enemy was the imperialist state which not only subjugated the colonised but also trampled on the revolutionary legacy of 1789, and by extension on the integrity and fundamental rights of the French people:

Au véritable peuple de France, nous nous adressons pour que son prestige, pour que sa gloire d'avoir fait 89 ne s'éteigne pas ici. En nous défendant ... le peuple de France se défendra lui-même et défendra la cause de la démocratie. Que ces véritables *Français de France*, au cœur si franc et si accueillant, ne restent pas indifférent à notre asservissement ...

Tous à l'action pour ... l'application de l'article premier de la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du citoyen:

«*Tous les hommes naissent libres et égaux en droits*». (*El Ouma* Numéro 63, 22 avril 1938)

The emphasis put on the authenticity of the French people ("[a]u véritable peuple de France", "ces véritables *Français de France*") aimed not only to differentiate the latter from the oppressive state structure which claimed to represent it, but also, more importantly, to distinguish them from the European settlers in North Africa, whose Frenchness was questioned. Indeed, the Pieds-Noirs were discredited in the eyes of Algerian nationalists for their racism, their disdain for human rights and their unflinching support for the colonial project. The *Etoile* and the PPA denounced the bias and inconsistency of the imperialist system which marginalised Muslims and treated them as subjects on the basis of their constructed difference (their religion, ethnicity, language and so on), while ignoring the cultural and linguistic differences of European settlers (many of whom had come from countries such as Spain, Italy and Malta and whose knowledge of French language and culture was often limited) and granting them "feudal" privileges and French citizenship.⁶⁸

In the ideological framework of reference of Algerian nationalists in the inter-war period, the boundary between "us" (the Algerian people) and "them" (the "true" French people) was negotiated positively. Independence from France was not posited as a rupture, but as a *rapprochement* of two equal peoples who shared the same values, as the logical outcome of the spread of those universalist values granted by the French to

⁶⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, settlers from southern Europe accounted for the majority of the European population in Algeria. Second generation Italians, Spaniards and Maltese became French citizens thanks to the law of 26 June 1889 (Talha 1981: 19-21).

the rest of the world. Algerian emancipation was therefore presented as crucial to the survival of those ideals and as reinforcing the rights of the French themselves by challenging the rule of imperialism which threatened the very foundations of universalism.

What was implied by this interpretation was that there was a dichotomy between the French people on the one hand, and the state - which was supposed to emanate from it - and its colonial policies on the other:

Il faut protester par de fréquentes réunions dans la région parisienne, comme dans les départements limitrophes afin d'attirer l'attention du peuple français trompé par ses gouvernants et lui exposer la situation misérable et les abus dont est victime le peuple nord-africain. (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1933)

This representation was, to some extent, informed by the concept of class, as a distinction was made between the French people who, just like the Algerian people, was depicted as the "classe laborieuse" oppressed and misled by the French government, and the ruthless imperialist state controlled by the privileged.

However, this representation was problematic as it was based on the premise that there was a chasm between the "real" French people and the state which emanated from it. Nationalist discourse idealised the French people as the true heir of the Revolution, and failed to acknowledge the fact that a significant proportion of French public opinion could be far from hostile to the colonial project, as the success of the "exposition coloniale" in 1931 showed.⁶⁹ More crucially, it did not mention the fact that in a democratic system such as the one which was in place in metropolitan France, government policy and actions were not necessarily at odds with popular will. Even French workers and workers movements, which the Algerian nationalist movement viewed as natural allies, were too often favorable to colonialism and frequently and explicitly referred to the colonised as inferior people, as Bédarida shows:

⁶⁹ The *Exposition coloniale* which took place in Marseille in 1906 was also very popular (Bédarida 1974: 38). The *Exposition coloniale* of 1931 was castigated in a tract of the *Etoile* as France's celebration of the oppression and exploitation of the Algerian people ('Frères musulmans, alerte!', janvier 1929) (1).

Au soutien ou à l'acceptation de la colonisation contribue aussi un autre sentiment, assez répandu dans la classe ouvrière et qu'il ne faut pas sous-estimer: un complexe de supériorité à l'égard des populations indigènes jugées primitives et inférieures. (Bédarida 1974: 38)

The second premise upon which nationalist discourse was based was to posit universalism and colonialism (and by extension racism) as irreconcilable opposites. It has been shown previously that colonisation was justified by Western states on the basis of those universalist principles. Civilising the colonised was presented as their duty, as the "white man's burden". To become truly universal, those values had to be spread to the rest of the world. Inherent in this ideology was the belief that European civilisation was intrinsically superior to others and that the uncivilised had to be put under its "protection". Algerian nationalists also wrongly assumed that the French Revolution was carried out by the French to grant freedom to other people (see *El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934). Indeed, it is worth noting that none of the colonised who lived in territories which were under French control during and after the Revolution of 1789 were granted any more rights and freedom.

At a conceptual level, there is also a link between universalism and racism which goes beyond their apparent contrariness. Balibar (1994: 191-204) points out convincingly that universalism developed in the Enlightenment, at a time when race acquired its modern meaning and when the natural bases of slavery were spelt out, and that the idea of Man so central to universalism implies a latent hierarchy. He goes on to suggest that:

you cannot find a clear-cut line of demarcation between universalism and racism or, if you prefer, you cannot designate two sets of ideas with no intersection, one in which you would put all the (potentially) universalistic ideas, and the other in which you would put all the (potentially) racist ideas ... universalism and racism are indeed (determinate) contraries, and this is why each of them has the other one inside itself - or is bound to affect the other from the inside. (Balibar 1994: 198)

Wallerstein (1988: 42-54) considers that gender ("the Rights of *Man*") and racial biases inflect the "egalitarian message" of universalism, and that, as a concept, universalism fails to include non-whites and women. He views the relationship between universalism and racism/sexism as one of tension constructed and sustained by the capitalist system, in which racism "ethnicises" the workforce in order to maintain low costs of production (in other words low wages for the "ethnicised") and sexism ensures that women's non-paid work remains so.

One of the feats of universalism as a concept was therefore to appear, and be exported, to the rest of the world as truly "universalistic" whilst being so marked by those underlying tensions.

The idea that universalism could not be reconciled with the limited framework of the nation because it was, by nature, limitless, also needs to be challenged. Universalism was one of the most efficient ideological tools used by French nationalism in its conquest of an Empire. The boundless character of it as an ideology suited France's expansionist ambitions. Yet, at the same time, the central place which it occupied within nationalism marked it as limited. Universalist principles were evoked by the French not so much to emancipate and free other peoples as to posit their own civilisation as inherently superior, and justify the colonial order as a generous mission which had to be carried out for the greater good of humanity.⁷⁰ Césaire explained that when, during a conference about the concept of civilisation which gathered historians and philosophers in 1930,

un homme politique comme M. Doumer interrompait l'historien Berr ou l'ethnographe Mauss c'était pour leur signaler les dangers politiques de leur relativisme culturel et qu'il fallait laisser intacte cette idée que la France avait pour mission d'apporter à ses colonies «la civilisation», entendez la civilisation française. (Césaire 1956: 197)

⁷⁰ From Doriot's extreme right-wing *La Liberté* (20 janvier 1938) which praised the progress brought about by imperial France in the colonies, to the "laxist" attitude adopted by many workers movements which favoured moderate and peaceful colonialism (Bédarida 1974: 29), a large consensus seemed to exist across the political spectrum on the benefits that colonisation could bring to the colonised.

In that context, universalism as an ideology was closely tied to French civilisation and exclusively tolerated within the sphere of the dominant party, the coloniser. It was also used to rally the autochton elites educated in French schools to its national project and make the assimilation myth appear as credible to them.⁷¹ It was clearly not intended to be taken literally and seized by "uncivilised" indigenous people to claim independence and threaten France's colonial empire. When it was, autochtons' nationalist aspirations were interpreted by the French as fuelled by religious, tribal "fanaticism" and as political extremism which was inconsistent with universalism, or as a "fanatisme moyen-âgeux, voire préhistorique" (Fanon 1956: 126).

When faced with the realities of a racist colonial system whose discourse was traversed with references to universalist principles, Algerian nationalists failed to recognise that universalism could indeed contain those inherent tensions, and argued instead that the French authorities had betrayed their own people by paying lip-service to those revolutionary values whilst oppressing Muslims. The complex intrinsic nature of universalism and its relationship with colonialism, racism, and nationalism could explain why the *Etoile* and the PPA could develop a nationalist agenda marked by anti-colonialism and inspired by the values of 1789, and at the same time, justify their claim for independence on the basis of the past greatness of an "Arab nation" which had had, in its time, its own colonial empire.⁷²

4.5 Antiracism and racism within Algerian nationalism

The tension between racism and antiracism in Algerian nationalist discourse needs to be further investigated. It was argued earlier that the racism to which North African

⁷¹ On 15 April 1930, the congress of the *Association des instituteurs indigènes* ended with a declaration by S. Faci which stated that "la politique indigène de la France ne peut être qu'une politique d'assimilation". During the nineteenth congress of the *Union des associations générales des étudiants de France*, Ferhat Abbas who, at the time, was president of the *Amicale des étudiants musulmans*, asserted that Algerian Muslim students' ideals were to "s'incorporer dans la grande famille française" (Ayache 1972: 97).

⁷² See for instance the movement's evocation of the past Arab nation: "c'est parce que nous formions une nation unie et prospère, que nous pûmes organiser un domaine colonial" (*El Ouma* Numéro 64, 27 mai 1938).

Muslims were subjected was evoked as a justification for emancipation. Their fight was therefore equated with a struggle against racism. In a number of articles and political speeches, they called for the instigation of "un parlement algérien élu au suffrage universel ... sans distinction de race ou de religion", and invited Muslims to join their movement "contre les injustices et la haine des races" (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935). They asserted that they were "ni antifrçais, ni anti aucune race, ni fanatiques, ni anarchistes, mais ... nous sommes anti-imprialistes" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934), and that their nationalism "n'a ... rien de xénophobe car il ne se fonde sur aucun préjugé ni complexe de race" (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, janvier 1938). Dr Ben Sliman, representing the ENA at a debate on Algeria organised by the Club du Faubourg on 18 March 1936, reiterated the nationalists' antiracist agenda when he declared that "on a dit que l'Etoile Nord-Africaine est une organisation antifrçaise et antijuive [;] elle n'est ni l'une ni l'autre, elle est anti-colonialiste et anti-imprialiste ... et dans une Algérie libre et indépendante, il n'y aura ni Juif, ni Français, ni indigène, mais des Algériens réconciliés dans la liberté" (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936). Nationalists argued that their antiracism was based on what they saw as the inherently tolerant nature of Islam: "les Juifs n'ont jamais été molestés ni dans leurs biens ni dans leur religion, en pays islamique, car ce qui honore l'Islam, c'est sa tolérance" (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, février-mars 1935).

However, those antiracist claims could not hide the fact that their nationalism, just like other nationalisms, was also marked *internally* by racism. In the context of the 1930s when anti-Semitism was rife, the Algerian nationalist movement also played the race card for political purposes. The events of Constantine in the summer of 1934 were a case in point. The riots which took place in Constantine between 4 and 6 August 1934 were triggered by the desecration of a Mosque by a drunk French Jewish soldier. A number of political rallies were organised by the *Etoile* to debate the issue. *El Ouma* denounced the fact that the soldier had been condemned to spend only two days in prison when Muslims who had taken part in the demonstrations had received sentences of two to five years imprisonment, and accused the French justice system of racism (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934). This was the principal framework within

which anti-Jewish discourse was developed by the movement. Jews in North Africa were accused of betraying Arabs who had welcomed them, by becoming *French* through the Crémieux Decree of 1870 and siding with French imperialism:

Les Juifs, amis et serviteurs de l'impérialisme français, ont trahi le peuple arabe en se faisant naturaliser en masse en 1870, faisant ainsi le jeu du colonialisme, en se mettant du côté du plus fort ... Presque tous les Juifs sont de dévoués serviteurs du colonialisme au détriment du peuple arabe. (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934)

In the same issue, Imache Amar's article was traversed by more virulent racist rhetoric and conveyed many of the common stigmas that racism has historically attached to Jewishness:

Les Juifs ingrats, les Juifs félons, trahissant ceux qui leur ont ouvert les bras, alors qu'ils étaient pourchassés des pays chrétiens; les Juifs, obéissant à leurs instincts sordides et cauteleux sont passés armes et bagages au service du plus fort dans le camp de l'impérialisme qui, en échange, a favorisé leurs desseins cupides, leur amour de l'usure et leur soif de richesse à notre détriment ... Ceux qui ont crucifié Jésus, le divin martyr, ne reculeront devant aucun sacrilège à l'égard de Mohamed. (*El Ouma* Numéro 25, septembre-octobre 1934)

How can those occurrences of racism within a discourse otherwise marked by universalist references be accounted for? How could North Africans, who denounced and fought against all forms of colonial racism and developed a vision of an independent Algeria where Muslims, Europeans and Jews could live together as equals, also use anti-Jewish rhetoric?⁷³ Part of the answer may possibly lie in the very nature of nationalism as a political ideology and its relationship with racism. As Anthias and Yuval-Davies argue, race and racism act as a structuring principle for national processes (1992: ix), and "[w]herever a delineation of boundaries takes place, as is the case with

⁷³ For examples of the ENA/PPA's inclusive discourse presenting Muslims, Jews and Europeans as equals, see section 2.4.

every ethnic and national collectivity, processes of exclusion and inclusion are in operation (Ibid: 39). What is remarkable in the way in which the racism directed against Jews by Algerian nationalists was constructed and the racist terminology and themes that it uses, is the resemblance that it bears to anti-Jewish discourse in European nationalism.

As Balibar (1990: 65-66) points out, even if the nationalism of the dominant ("le nationalisme de conquête") should not be equated with that of the dominated ("le nationalisme de libération"), they both share some common ground. The discourse of the Algerian nationalist movement shows that, however antinomic the relationship between universalism and racism may appear, it could be argued that nationalism is the ideological terrain on which universalist and racist discourses do not so much coexist as form two sides of the same tension. Within the field of nationalism, inherent to the processes by which the former (universalism) "idealises" and the latter (racism) categorises individuals and societies, is the idea of a hierarchy which leads to a reification of the "Other".

This tension could justify domination and exclusion in the case of a dominant and expansionist nationalism such as France's. It could, for different reasons, also affect a nationalism of liberation such as Algeria's. Universalist values were embraced and were presented as vindicating their independentist agenda. However, the events of Constantine show that European anti-Semitism, which stigmatised the "Other" (incarnated by the Jew) as "privileged", "treacherous" and exploiting the people (etc.), could be taken on and reinterpreted by Algerian nationalists within the colonial context.

This upsurge of anti-Jewish feelings during those incidents was in sharp contrast with the movement's main nationalist discourse which, essentially, put an emphasis on tolerance and equality.⁷⁴ It is indeed worth noting that once the agitation surrounding the events had abated, it became far more moderate in its evocation of conflicts which had opposed Muslims and Jews, such as in Constantine and in Orléansville, and put the blame mostly on imperialism for the violence which had occurred. In an article

⁷⁴ In a way, this apparent dichotomy between both spheres of discourse echoes French republicanism, whose discourse of freedom and equality coexisted with universalist rhetoric justifying colonialism and its corollary, racism.

published a few months later, the *Etoile nord-africaine* expressed regret for those clashes during which there had been as many victims in both communities, and called for a general amnesty. The movement referred to all those who had been condemned as "[les] victimes d'une provocation qui a desservi aussi bien les Juifs que les Musulmans". It argued that it was colonialism which had made Jews "arrogant", that Muslims had been manipulated by French anti-Jewish groups, and that the violence of the North Africans' reaction had been exacerbated by 105 years of misery and colonial domination (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Algerian nationalist movement was acutely aware that at the core of colonialism was racism. It affected the North Africans' whole experience as subjects of the French colonial empire. As a consequence, racism informed *externally* their nationalism, as it was evoked as a key motive for their desire to gain freedom and independence. The only possible way of bringing to an end the racism to which they were subjected, was not to reform but to end the colonial rule of Algeria.

Universalism was explicitly acknowledged as a key inspiration for nationalists' own struggle for emancipation. They still regarded France as the true repository of those values inherited from the Enlightenment and the Revolution. However, a shift took place in the way they perceived the role played by metropolitan France in the colonial project. Until the early 1920s, a dichotomy was still made between on the one hand, a tolerant and generous "metropole" and French government which were seen as the protector of those values, and on the other hand, the feudal rule of imperialism in the colony. From the mid 1920s onwards, a period which coincided with the development of police oppression against North African migrants within France, the French state was denounced as being the real instigator of imperialist domination in North Africa.

The true heirs of the Revolution were no longer seen to be the Government and Parliament in Paris but the people of France. The movement often called on the latter to support the struggle and demands of the Algerian people on the basis of the universalist

values that both people shared. This vision was problematic as it failed to recognise that the government which carried out those colonial policies emanated, to a large extent, from the will of people of France, that colonisation was very popular amongst the French population, and that the relationship between universalism and colonialism was not necessarily an antinomic one in French nationalist ideology. Furthermore, even though the *Etoile* and the PPA declared themselves to be antiracist and tolerant, the events of Constantine in the summer of 1934 showed that, like all nationalisms, their nationalism of liberation could also be informed by racism.

Chapter 5

Algerian nationalists in the French political arena and beyond

5.1 Introduction

At least until 1938, when the PPA moved its headquarters from Paris to Algiers, the nationalist movement's ideology and actions were not simply rooted within the North African political context, but also shaped by their experience in the French social, economic and political arena.⁷⁵ It was an organisation which was created and developed within the North African diaspora in France and which acknowledged, when addressing fellow Algerian Muslims in North Africa, that "nous avons commencé notre lutte loin de notre pays, loin de vous!" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, janvier 1935). Beyond metropolitan France, international issues, such as Palestine and the Middle East, as well as Ethiopia, were also considered as important to their own political fight and were discussed extensively both in political meetings and in the nationalist newspapers, *L'Ikdam* and *El Ouma*. The aim of this section is to assess some aspects of the ENA/PPA's discourse pertaining to the nationalists' relationship with political groups of the left and other immigrants in France, and to examine the attention given in their discourse to international events in the Middle East and in Africa.

5.2 Links and conflicts with the French Left

Until 1914, the French Socialist Party had paid little attention to the colonial question and to the fate of Muslims in North Africa. However, on 5 March 1919, the first Manifesto of the International pressed French socialists to side with the colonised and bring "colonial slavery" to an end (Ageron 1972b: 8). The "Eurocentric" strategy that had been adopted, which viewed any changes in the colonies as the result of a proletarian revolution in Europe, enabled many socialists both in France and in North

⁷⁵ In spite of strong opposition within the comité directeur, Messali Hadj decided to transfer the headquarters of the PPA to Algeria on 18 June 1937. This transfer came into effect in November 1938 (Stora 1992b: 49-52).

Africa to sit on the fence and support the status quo on French colonialism. This strategy was challenged by the Third Congress of the Communist International and by Lenin's writings in June 1920. The colonies were now considered to be a key focus of the revolution. This forced the French communists to adopt a clearer position vis-à-vis the colonies and led to rifts and tensions within the party (Ibid: 9).

Therefore, it was under the influence of the Komintern that the French Communist Party and the communist trade union (the CGTU) came to play a significant, but nonetheless ambiguous, role in the fight against French imperialism in the 1920s and in the creation of the *Etoile nord-africaine* in 1926 (see Stora 1982, 1992a).⁷⁶

By the end of November 1927, the *Etoile* had become an important political organisation. They had thirteen sections in France, including eight in Paris, and had correspondants in many French towns and cities. The movement had 3500 members, who were all members or sympathisers of the Communist Party and its publication, *L'Ikdam*, had a circulation of 3,000 copies (*Note de police*, 16 novembre 1927) (3). Many North Africans in France, including Messali Hadj, started out as political activists within that party. Some had been trained at the Communist School of Bobigny or at the School of Propaganda at the Marxist University in Moscow (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA: 23-24*) (1).

However, the close relationship which existed between North African nationalists and the French Communist Party was marked by tensions (see Hadj 1982). The attempts made by North Africans to develop a more independent organisation, whose agenda did not necessarily conform to that of the Communist Party, led to a number of crises which culminated at the end of the 1920s. At the beginning of the 1930s, after the dissolution of the movement by the French government in 1929, attempts made by the PC to revive it as a movement close to its views failed.

On 28 May 1933, Messali Hadj managed to reorganise the *Etoile nord-africaine*. During the 1930s, he gave the nationalist movement a truly independent voice which

⁷⁶ For a study of union activity in North Africa during the colonial period, see, for example, Ayache (1969 & 1972), Bédarida (1974), Bessis (1974), Gallissot (1969 & 1969a).

put Islam at the core of its political ideology. Even though contacts were maintained with the communists, hostility between the two parties grew and turned into an open conflict during the second half of the decade, by which time the French Communist Party and the newly created Algerian Communist Party had abandoned their commitment to an independent Algeria and adopted a more assimilationist stance.⁷⁷

The movement's relationship with the SFIO was more problematic. The socialists' discourse on the colonies was indeed far more moderate than that of the Communists. In the 1920s, some socialist MPs such as Nouelle and Blum expressed in Parliament their support for a progressive and cautious move towards autonomy in some of the French colonies (*Note du Ministère des Colonies No 17, 15 janvier 1929*) (4), but in the 1930s the party moved away from that position and favoured policies which would gradually improve the socio-economic and political rights of North Africans within the French Empire.

In 1934, during the trial of Messali Hadj, the nationalist movement acknowledged the support provided to them by left-wing parties and intellectuals (such as Daniel Guérin) and stated that "[n]ous nous réjouissons ... de la sympathie agissante des [p]artis de la classe ouvrière, qui, au moment où le Gouvernement s'acharne contre nous sont venus tous à notre secours" (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934). This support was expressed by key figures such as Francis Jourdain, president of the *Ligue Anti-impérialiste*, Paul Hirtz, of the *Jeunesses Laïques et Républicaines*, Ferrat of the Communist Party, Cudenet of the *Parti Radical-Socialiste*, as well as Jean Longuet and André Berthon, both lawyers supporting the ENA, who spoke during the meeting organised by the *Etoile* in Paris to protest against the condemnation of Messali Hadj and the leadership of the movement. Representatives of the PC, the CGTU, the SFIO and the *Secours Rouge International* (SRI) also took part in a meeting organised in Lyon on 8 September 1934 (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934).

However, tensions with the communist and socialist left were always present. The polemic which surrounded the meeting organised by the ENA at La Grange-aux-

⁷⁷ The *Parti communiste algérien* was created on 17 October 1937. During the first congress marking its foundation, the party voted for a manifest "pour une Algérie libre et heureuse fraternellement unie au peuple français comme à tous les autres peuples" (Stora 1992b: 48).

Belles in September 1934 after the Constantine events, illustrates the growing tension between the nationalist movement and the PC. *El Ouma* (Numéro 29, septembre-octobre 1934) published a "mise au point" denouncing the report on this meeting which had appeared in *L'Humanité*. That report had failed to mention the role played by the *Etoile* and the speeches made by Algerian nationalists, and had presented the event as a communist initiative.

Socialist politicians, members of Parliament and left-wing governments and ministers (particularly those in charge of the colonies) were frequently criticised for their reluctance to challenge the colonial status quo established by the Right:

[C]ombien avons-nous eu de gouverneurs de droite et de gauche, sans oublier ceux membres du Comité Central de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme[?] La situation a-t-elle changé lorsque ces messieurs de la gauche nous gouvernaient? Ont-ils supprimé le code infâme de l'indigénat? Non, non et non. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

In spite of those conflicts and arguments, the movement often acknowledged that its political affinities lay with the French left. When the *Etoile* decided to join the *Front Populaire* in 1936, it had high hopes that the left-wing coalition would introduce sweeping reforms in the colonial system. During the debate on the Algerian question organised by the Club du Faubourg on 18 March 1936, Dr Ben Sliman, representing the ENA, praised the *Front Populaire* and recalled that the movement had presented its programme of demands to the *Comité National du Rassemblement Populaire* (which later became the *Front Populaire*) and that 7,000 of its militants had taken part in the procession of 14 July 1935 with the French Left (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

However, the colonial policy led by the *Front Populaire*, after it had won the general election on 3 May 1936, was a great disappointment to the *Etoile*, which felt betrayed by the Left. Nationalists opposed the timid reforms of the "projet Blum-Viollette" which planned to extend the right to vote to a mere 20,000 Muslims in Algeria and failed to address the fundamental question of democracy and rights in North

Africa (*El Ouma* Numéro 59, janvier 1938, *El Ouma* Numéro 62, 1er avril 1938). The conflicts and recriminations which developed between the two sides after 1936 led the government to dissolve the ENA on 27 January 1937 and to arrest the leadership of the nationalist movement.

Even though contacts were maintained between some French politicians of the mainstream Left, such as Guérin of the Commission Coloniale of the SFIO, and Algerian nationalists, the *Front Populaire's* accession to power marked the end of an era of difficult coexistence between the movement and the French Left. The PPA, created on 11 March 1937 by the ex-leadership of the *Etoile* to continue with their nationalist struggle, was consistently attacked by both the Left and the Right. The nationalist party, which still hoped to win over the Left to its cause, regretted the fact that "dans les journaux de droite, le PPA n'est ni plus ni moins qu'une cellule de Moscou ... par contre dans les journaux de gauche, on se plaît à nous représenter comme le prolongement du fascisme international" (*El Ouma* Numéro 63, 22 avril 1938). The movement also condemned the Communist Party's hostility towards them, and criticised it for aligning its colonial policy with that of the SFIO:

Le fait que le PPA revendique son indépendance politique et l'oriente résolument dans la voie de la défense des intérêts des masses laborieuses algériennes, suffit pour que le P.C. trouve plus d'un motif de haine contre lui. Car le PPA s'avère un dangereux rival, qui tend de plus en plus à étendre son influence sur des couches de plus en plus larges de travailleurs algériens, et cela au détriment de l'influence du P.C. (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)

The Algerian nationalists' co-operation with French parties of the left in the 1930s, which was considered crucial to the success of their struggle, was all the more difficult as the effects of the economic recession, which were felt throughout the French working class, exacerbated xenophobia. The crisis and unemployment that affected France during that decade were imputed to foreigners within the ranks of the French Left. Radicals such as Edouard Herriot and Pierre Mendes-France, socialists such as Roger Salengro and George Monnet (who was also a leading member of the *Ligue des Droits*

de l'Homme) called for a reduction in the number of immigrants, while the CGT declared that they were in favour of giving preference to the French on the job market. The *Parti communiste français* and the CGTU also denounced the xenophobia which was rife amongst their members and militants (Milza 1985a: 128-129, Schor 1996: 120-127).

If the relationship between the nationalist movement, the communists and the socialists was often problematic and conflictual, it was essentially within parties of the French extreme-left such as the *Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste* that Algerian nationalists found consistent support for their cause:

chaque fois que nous avons été victimes de la répression, nous n'avons trouvé pour la dénoncer que les partis et les organisation d'extrême-gauche, et certains groupements de gauche, les gens et la presse réactionnaires nous ont toujours accablés d'injures. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

While the *Etoile* and the PPA's political strategy was to work with all the democratic (and in particular proletarian) organisations in France, they defended their independence from other parties (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937). They also considered that the unity of North Africans within nationalist organisations was paramount if their fight for independence was to succeed:

[L]es Nord-Africains n'ont aucun intérêt à adhérer aux partis politiques français, qu'ils soient de droite ou de gauche. Leur place se trouve dans les groupement nationalistes anti-impérialistes. Ils doivent d'abord arracher l'égalité avec les autres hommes par la libération de leur pays, soumis à l'oppression coloniale. Après cette libération, ils peuvent, chacun suivant son idéologie, adhérer à des conceptions politiques et sociales. Avant cela, il n'ont pas le droit de se disperser devant les forces immenses de l'impérialisme colonial. (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936)

For the *Etoile*, anti-colonialism was a cause which was above ideologies. It was an organisation which was posited as a *mouvement d'union nationale* which transcended

socio-political differences. The nationalists' call for political mobilisation against imperialism along ethnic lines showed that, for them, ethnicity took precedence over political allegiance and beliefs. They considered it to be the only way to counter the imperialist agenda, which, in the 1930s, had managed to gain support from all sides of the political spectrum. Only in an independent state could North Africans express their democratic right to belong to different political groupings.

5.3 Solidarity with other colonial workers in France

The *Etoile nord-africaine* and the PPA made consistent attempts to establish links with other North African groups and with Arab organisations based in Europe and the Middle East, as well as with other colonial migrant organisations in order to create a united front against colonialism. Some of them were more successful than others, and it showed that the Algerian nationalist movement wanted to develop beyond the limited boundaries of the social class from which it had emerged in order to develop into a truly "national" organisation, which would gather manual workers, intellectuals and traders belonging to the oppressed colonial population, and promote Arab nationalism from the Maghreb to the Middle East.

Even though Algerian nationalists maintained close relations with North African-based parties such as the *Destour* in Tunisia and the *Jeunes Marocains* during the inter-war period, they did not manage to create any real alliance with Muslim intellectuals, politicians and religious groups in Algeria (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 119) (1). Algerian organisations which failed to respond to the movement's call for unity were systematically stigmatised during political meetings.

The movement's efforts to win over North African organisations in France focused mainly on student associations and traders' organisations. They were far more successful with the former than with the latter. Students from the *Association des étudiants marocains* and from the *Association des étudiants tunisiens* were politically far more radical than Algerian students, who were often criticised for their reformist stance. Moroccan and Tunisian students, including the leaders of the *Association des*

Etudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains de Paris, Ben Milad and Belafredj, respectively Tunisian and Moroccan, often took part in, and made addresses during, meetings organised by the ENA and the PPA (*Lettre du Préfet de Police au Ministre de l'Intérieur*, juillet 1933) (3). They also played an active part in the running of the organisation and provided assistance with the writing and editing of the nationalist newspaper. For instance, El Kholti, who was president of the *Association des Etudiants Marocains* in the early 1930s, was a regular contributor to *El Ouma*, while Messali Hadj was invited to make a speech at the *Congrès des étudiants musulmans* which took place in December 1933 (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA: 70-71*) (1).

The presence of North African intellectuals and traders during meetings of the *Etoile* organised after specific events, such as the clashes of Constantine or the arrest of nationalist activists, was interpreted by nationalists as the start of a process of mobilisation of all Maghrebis against colonialism:

Les brimades et les vexations de la police ont réussi à rallier à notre cause ceux de nos compatriotes, intellectuels et commerçants, moins malheureux que la masse et qui conservaient encore quelques illusions ... C'est ainsi que nous avons eu la satisfaction de voir à notre meeting, outre la masse de nos compatriotes, des intellectuels musulmans, notamment ceux que naguère encore notre mouvement laissait indifférents ... Les intellectuels viendront tous nous aider à dénouer les crimes et les méfaits de l'impérialisme français. (*El Ouma* Numéro 28, décembre 1934)

However, as far as North African traders' associations were concerned, this judgement was more incantatory than based on the realities on the ground. The *Amicale des commerçants*, created in the early 1930s, remained staunchly faithful to France. In June 1934, a number of meetings were organised between Messali Hadj, the leader of the *Etoile nord-africaine*, and Mansouri Ahmed, president of the *Ligue de défense des Musulmans*, which was the main North African traders association in Paris, in order to establish closer ties between the two organisations. But those attempts failed and

constituted a serious setback in the *Etoile's* aim to unite and mobilise all North Africans against imperialism (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA*: 86-104) (1).

Algerian nationalists also had connections with movements from the Arab world in Europe. During the "Congrès Islamo-Européen" which took place between 12 and 15 September 1935 in Geneva, contacts were also established by the leadership of the *Etoile* with the organiser of the event, Chekib Arslan (of the *Académie Arabe* in Lausanne and editor of *La Nation Arabe*) and with the representatives of Muslim groups based in Europe attending the Congress (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935). The presence of Arabs belonging to the *Association syrienne de Paris* in some of the movement's political meetings would also suggest that links with Middle-Eastern organisations also existed within France.

The movement was also keen to create a front uniting all the colonised subjugated by the French colonial empire. The involvement of many North African nationalists in the Communist Party's *Union Intercoloniale* in the 1920s had enabled them to build strong relationships with the Annamese and Black organisations.⁷⁸ Chabila Djilani, for instance, who was described by the police as "one of the best propagandists" of the ENA, had worked very closely with the Martiniquais community. Leaders of the Annamese movement and *Ligue de défense de la race nègre* were also invited to speak during meetings of the *Etoile* (*Notes du Ministre des Colonies*, 31 décembre 1928 & 31 mars 1929) (2).

In the 1930s, those links were maintained and reinforced as the "coloniaux" became more radical. Emile Faure, president of the *Ligue*, made a speech during a meeting of the PPA organised at the Salle Wagram in Paris in December 1937 denouncing the sentencing of the leadership of the Algerian nationalist movement by the French government as a "déli de justice" (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937). And Nguyen The Truyen, the Indochinese delegate and president of the *Rassemblement Colonial*, made a key address at the PPA's meeting of 18 February 1938

⁷⁸ For an account of Vietnamese immigration and political activism in France in the inter-war period, see Hémerly (1975).

commemorating the death of Emir Khaled, Abd-el-Kader's grandson and leading figure of the *Jeunes Algériens* movement (*El Ouma* Numéro 61, 11 mars 1938).⁷⁹

Through those links, the Algerian nationalist movement aimed to establish a united front with all the colonised. In an article which condemned the *Conférence Impérialiste* which had taken place in Paris on 3 December 1934, the ENA called for the unity of all the colonised:

Il est indispensable que tous les opprimés des colonies, Algériens, Marocains, Tunisiens, Annamites, Malgaches, Sénégalais etc., se réunissent, s'entendent, forment leur comité d'action pour arracher leurs revendications immédiates, et travailler ensemble, coude à coude, près du prolétariat intellectuel et manuel français pour leur indépendance économique, politique et sociale. Opprimés des colonies, unissez vous pour défendre vos intérêts". (*El Ouma* Numéro 29, janvier 1935).

Solidarity between all the colonised and the French people was therefore considered necessary in order to challenge French colonial rule. However, the vision of the "coloniaux nationalistes" was problematical. It was, to a certain extent, structured around the idea of class (the oppressed colonial and French proletariat united against an oppressive imperialist system) and universalist principles, and did not take into consideration the fact that racism did create divisions between the French population (it even affected the French Left) and the colonised.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ngue The Truyen was a leading Vietnamese nationalist. He arrived in France in 1919 and was a science student in Toulouse between 1919 and 1921, and in Paris between 1922 and 1923. He became an engineer in chemistry and succeeded Ngyuen Ai Quoc at the "section coloniale" of the *Parti communiste français* (Hémery 1975:6).

⁸⁰ For example, Ageron (1972b) and Bédarida (1974) highlight the racism which existed within the French Left and workers' movements in the inter-war period.

5.4 Anti-imperialism in the colonies and in the Arab World

5.4.1 The Ethiopian crisis

Events which took place in the rest of the world influenced North African nationalists' ideology and actions. As a letter addressed on 16 January 1925 by Algerian nationalists to the President du Conseil shows, the Russian revolution, the rebellion against the French led by Abdelkrim in Morocco, Egyptian nationalism and Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence were all acknowledged as sources of inspiration for their own fight (Letter addressed by Algerian nationalists to the President of the Conseil des ministres, Mr Herriot, 16 January 1925) (2). To those could be added Mustapha Kemal's accession to power in Turkey, which was often evoked by Messali Hadj as an example that an independent Algeria should follow (Stora 1982: 38-39).

In the 1930s, other developments both in African colonies and the Middle East came to occupy a more prominent place in the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, enabling them to reinforce their relationship with other anti-colonialist groups. During the war waged in Ethiopia by Italy in 1935 and 1936, the links between the Algerian nationalist movement and the *Ligue de défense de la race nègre* became stronger. Both movements held joint meetings to protest against Italy's aggression and letters of protestation against Italy's invasion were addressed to the French President du Conseil, to the British and Ethiopian embassies and to the Society of Nations (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935). In the Algerian nationalist publication, leading figures of the *Ligue* such as Emile Faure and Tiémoko G. Kouaté denounced the invasion of Ethiopia as the latest illustration of a European imperialist expansion facilitated by France, which had complacently allowed Italy to carve out its own colonial domain in Africa. In October 1936, the *Etoile* and the *Ligue* called for the mobilisation of all the colonised against the invasion of Ethiopia, and for the creation of a committee bringing together Black, North African and Indochinese anti-colonial organisations (*El Ouma* Numéro 34, octobre 1935, *El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

A *Comité de Coordination des Associations noires et arabes*, whose aim was to further the cause of Black and Arab emancipation, was created in Paris at the end of 1935 by the *Comité intercolonial pour la défense du peuple éthiopien*. It was led by the left-wing députés Paul Perrin and Jean Longuet. Mme Leo Vanner, an anti-colonialist militant of the extreme-left, became its first secretary. A number of organisations joined the newly created Committee. It included movements representing the colonised (*the Etoile nord-africaine*, the *Ligue de défense de la race nègre*, the *Union des travailleurs nègres*, the *Ligue de défense des musulmans nord-africains* and the *Association syrienne de Paris*) and anti-colonial groups led by French politicians and intellectuals (Paul Perrin and Professor Marcel Cohen's *Comité intercolonial pour la défense du peuple éthiopien*, Madeleine Braun's *Comité d'assistance aux victimes de la guerre en Ethiopie*, Francis Jourdain's *Ligue contre l'impérialisme et l'oppression coloniale*, Professor Cenac Thaly's *Comité d'étude et d'action coloniale*, and Hanna Charley's *Comité permanent Victor Schoelcher* (*Note de police*, 21 mai 1936) (3).

5.4.2 The Middle East and the Palestinian question

The origins of Arab nationalism can be traced to *Nahda*, a movement which developed in the late nineteenth century and which had a long term influence on nationalist organisations in that region (Said 1995: xiii). The consistent support of Algerian nationalists for Arab liberation movements illustrates the extent to which the dominant faction within the *Etoile* and the PPA considered that North Africa was ethnically, culturally, politically, religiously, historically and linguistically anchored within the Arab World. The call made by Messali Hadj, during a political meeting on 13 January 1934 at the Maison du Peuple in Boulogne, for North Africans to unite with Syrians and Egyptians in order to form one Muslim people highlights the ideological tension which existed at the time within the nationalist movement between, on the one hand, their long term vision of an "Arab nation" which would cover the Middle East and North Africa and, on the other hand, their fight for the establishment of independent "Arab states" as

separate national entities, building on their shared culture in order to establish closer links (*Note sur l'activité de l'ENA: 71-72*) (1).

The struggle of Arab nationalists in Irak and Syria was followed with great interest by North African militants, who considered it as an inspiration for all Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa (*El Ouma* Numéro 15, octobre 1935). During the negotiations which took place in Paris between Syrian nationalists and the French High Commissioner in Syria in March 1936, the *Etoile* organised at La Mutualité in Paris a political rally with the *Ligue anti-impérialiste* and the *Ligue syrienne des Droits de l'Homme* in support of Syrian independence, and published an article stating that "l'Afrique du Nord musulmane suit avec un vif intérêt et une grande joie la marche vers l'indépendance du peuple frère syrien, et avec l'aide de Dieu et la lutte quotidienne, elle saura suivre la même voie pour aboutir également à son indépendance" (*El Ouma* Numéro 39, mars-avril 1936).

Even though those events were of great significance to North African nationalists, it was the Palestinian question which came to occupy centre stage in their discourse on imperialism beyond North Africa. The conflict which opposed Palestinians to British imperialism and Zionism was regularly evoked and discussed during political meetings and reported in *El Ouma* as affecting the whole Muslim World: "des bords du Gange aux rivages de l'Atlantique, aucun Arabe ou Musulman ne reste insensible aux sacrifices et aux souffrances de ses frères de Jérusalem et de Jaffa" (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937).

The Algerian nationalist movement considered Zionism to be the "stalking horse" of British - and by extension European - imperialism, which was also referred to as "l'impérialisme anglo-sioniste". It denounced the Jewish colonisation of Palestine as a further act of dispossession and oppression of Muslims whose aim was to ensure the future presence of imperialist powers in the region and to prevent the unity and independence of the Arab nation (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, septembre 1933).

North African nationalists argued that the claim of Arabs on Palestine was all the more justified as it was a land which had been theirs for fourteen centuries and for which they had made so much sacrifice: "[les Arabes] n'accepteront jamais que les

[J]uifs deviennent maîtres dans ce pays ... qu'ils ont arrosé de leur sang pour le défendre et qui n'est par surcroît qu'une province de la nation arabe, au même titre que l'Auvergne en France, ou l'Ecosse en Angleterre" (*El Ouma* Numéro 66, 27 août 1938).

By contrast, the PPA considered that the Zionist claim on Palestine, which was also very much based on history, was unfounded, and stated that Arab hostility to the creation of a Jewish homeland was not motivated by anti-Jewish xenophobia, but by anti-Zionism:

[L]es Arabes ne luttent pas en Palestine contre les Juifs en tant que Juifs, mais contre le Sionisme et l'Impérialisme anglais.

*Non et non, ce n'est ni un conflit à caractère racial, ni confessionnel, ce n'est que la réaction juste et légitime d'un peuple qui ne veut point signer son arrêt de mort en acceptant d'être dépouillé ... Il y a des braves gens dans tous les pays qui s'imaginent que les Arabes sont sectaires ou xénophobes en voulant empêcher l'émigration juive en Palestine, et que le [J]uif a bien le droit à un «chez-lui». D'accord, mais il ne faut pas que ce soit en s'accaparant le foyer d'autrui ... Et si les sionistes revendiquent la Palestine comme «terre irrédente», autant dire que les Grecs vont revendiquer bientôt Marseille? Pourquoi pas du moment qu'elle fut créée par leurs aïeux il y a quatre mille ans? (*El Ouma* Numéro 58, décembre 1937)*

For Algerian nationalists, the parallel which may have been made between the Palestinians' and their own colonial experience probably contributed to a reinforcement of their conviction that Jewish expansion in Palestine was part of a plot to further European imperial domination. Indeed, their discourse implies that Jewish nationalists' claim on Palestine bore some similarities with France's historical justification for imperial expansion in a North Africa once dominated by Romans. It was based on a historical interpretation which presented their "colonisation" as a return to their past, to their roots, resurrecting and rebuilding the once great nation, and carrying on with the achievements of their forebears.

At another level, their discourse was not without contradictions as it could, within the same article, assert that their opposition to Zionist expansion in Palestine had

nothing to do with racism, yet refer to Jewish violence against Palestinian Arabs as characterised by their inherent nature, their "lâcheté et ... perfidie légendaire" (*El Ouma* Numéro 66, 27 août 1939). In other words, they claimed that Arabs were opposed to Zionism, not to Jews, but could also refer to the latter in racist terms. Those apparent contradictions in their discourse raise a number of questions about the nature of, and the relationship between, racism and nationalism, both phenomena which developed in and were "exported" from Europe (Banton and Harwood 1975: 8, Kedourie 1985: 9), and illustrate the impossibility of their nationalism (just like all nationalisms of liberation) to be articulated outside of the tension that exists between universalism and racism, as previously argued.

The Palestinian question was a symbol which was crucial to the articulation of Arab and North African nationalist discourse based on Arabness, just like, for different historical and political reasons, it was central to Jewish nationalist ideology. Indeed, Palestine was the land where both Arab and Jewish nationalisms contested the validity of each other's historicised imagining of the nation. This process, which implied a negation of the other's history and existence, and therefore of the other's legitimate claim to a homeland, was too often marked by racism.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the relationship which existed between the Algerian nationalist movement and the French Left was a difficult one. Tensions with the Communist Party grew from the end of the 1920s onwards as the *Etoile* asserted its independence and its nationalist agenda, and as the position of the Communist Party on the colonial question shifted to become closer to that of the SFIO. Those tensions became more pronounced with the economic recession of the 1930s and with the difficulty left-wing politicians had in countering the spread of anti-immigrant racism within the French working class.

The great hopes which the ENA had in supporting the *Front Populaire* were dashed when Leon Blum's coalition government failed to introduce bold reforms in the

colonies. The "Projet Blum-Viollette" was condemned by the *Etoile* as timid and as a betrayal of the commitments which they had made. The left-wing French government ordered the ban of the Algerian nationalist movement and arrested its leaders in 1937.

In spite of those rifts, close links with left-wing intellectuals such as Daniel Guérin and Jean Longuet remained. But it was mainly within the extreme-Left, in organisations such as the *Parti ouvrier internationaliste*, that Algerian nationalists found consistent support.

The movement also attempted to spread its base of support - which consisted mainly of North African workers in France - by establishing a close relationship with North African groups on both sides of the Mediterranean. In North Africa, they had regular contacts with Tunisian and Moroccan parties which had a clearly nationalist agenda such as the *Destour* and the *Jeunes Marocains*, but failed to rally the traditionally reformist Algerian-based political movements. In France, while they managed to work closely with Moroccan and Tunisian student leaders of the *Association des étudiants musulmans nord-africains de Paris*, they failed to mobilise the assimilationist Algerian students organisation, and their attempts to build links with North African traders in France were unsuccessful.

The Algerian nationalist movement also had contacts with other Arab organisations such as the *Association syrienne de Paris* and Chekib Arslan's Lausanne-based *Académie arabe*. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it also reinforced its links with the Indochinese and the *Ligue de défense de la race nègre* in France.

International events in the Muslim World and in the colonies were often evoked by the movement and followed with great interest. The events in Ethiopia, during which the *Etoile* called for the establishment of a front uniting all the colonised and the French against imperialism, led to the creation of the *Comité de Coordination des Associations noires et arabes* at the end of 1935. In the Middle East, colonial struggles in Syria and Egypt were also mentioned as a source of inspiration. However, the Palestinian problem was the international issue which was raised most frequently in Algerian nationalist discourse. The fight of Palestinian Arabs against Jewish expansion was described as a cause which epitomised the fight of all Arabs against domination, and Zionism was

depicted as an ideology whose aim was to further the imperialist project of dispossession and oppression of Muslims in the Arab World.

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Part 2

**North African nationalism during the 1970s in France:
the case of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes***

Chapter 6

Ethnicity and nation-ness in the discourse of the MTA

6.1 Introduction

In the wake of the colonial era, North Africans in France had established a tradition of anti-colonial political struggle. Their political discourse was structured around a common denominator: their identity as Arabs and Muslims fighting against French colonial oppression. The Algerian anti-colonial movement, born within the structures of the French Communist Party in the mid-1920s was to distance itself slowly from the direct influence of this party. The *Etoile nord-africaine* developed a discourse that initially encapsulated all North Africans, but soon evolved to focus mainly on Algerian issues, the construction of a "modern" Algerian identity and the struggle for independence. Maghrebis in France had played a central role in Algeria's anti-colonial struggle.

But how did the political action of Maghrebis in France develop, and how did their discourse on and reference to identity and nation evolve in the aftermath of the fight for independence? And what socio-economic and political factors both within French society and abroad affected their discourse, their identity and their struggle for rights and recognition? These questions will be assessed through the detailed analysis of a second case study: the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* (the MTA), a movement created by Maghrebi students in the early 1970s, and which developed during that decade to become one of the most powerful alternative voices of Maghrebis in France.

The MTA was born and developed during the 1970s in a particularly difficult socio-political context. Immigration was changing nature, and was no longer seen by analysts as being temporary, but rather becoming structural (see, for example, Weil 1991, Schor 1996, Ageron 1985, Abou Sada et al. 1990, Allouane 1979, Khellil 1979, 1991 & 1994). That decade also marked the end of the often idealised and prosperous three decades that followed the Second World War, and that Jean Fourastié later popularised as the *Trente Glorieuses* (1979). With all the tensions created by the

changing profile and economic role of immigration within the wider context of French societal changes and international events affecting North Africa and the Middle East, the Maghrebi community in France developed socio-political strategies which aimed at addressing issues which were seen as affecting them both in France and in a wider international context.

In September 1970, solidarity with Palestinians' struggle in the Middle East acted as a catalyst for the formation of French-based committees called *Comités Palestine* which were composed of North African students and workers, and whose purpose was to explain the "Palestinian Revolution" through debates, discussions and films. They collected money and sent medication in order to help the Palestinian Red Cross. Maghrebi militants who took part in those *Comités* later compared their involvement in the Palestinian cause with their earlier support for the Algerian revolution (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, Numéro 1, janvier 1973) (3).

However, in the light of the discrimination and racism they experienced in France, they realised that unless they extended their action to address issues closer to the concerns of Maghrebis in France, their movement might run out of steam (*Akhbar El Haraka*, 1976, *Frontière* 1973) (3). Two years later, in June 1972, these committees evolved to become one organisation: the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* (MTA). In France, they fought for improved working and living conditions for Maghrebis, for the *sans-papiers* and against deportations and racism. This movement was also concerned with international issues related to Palestine and Lebanon, as well as to the Maghreb, and saw support for the Palestinian revolution as a catalyst and example for immigrants' fight for freedom. Through a detailed analysis of archival documents, this chapter will assess how the discourse on ethnic identity and nation-ness was constructed by the MTA in the 1970s.

6.2 Ethno-national identity and the Arab nation

During the *Conseil national du Mouvement des travailleurs en lutte* on 8 October 1972, a number of militants from Paris, Grenoble, Marseilles, Aix, Lyon, Amiens, Toulouse,

Dunkerque and Paris discussed, amongst other things, the necessity to unite all "Arabs" within France. In reaction to the call made by the Grenoble representative to all North African workers to organise within Arab organisations, the Dunkerque delegate expressed his concern that in regions - and factories - like his where there were fewer Arab workers, it was difficult to mobilise workers effectively along ethnic lines. Unity with French and other immigrant workers within multi-ethnic *comités de lutte* was necessary in order to get results. The delegate from the fourteenth *arrondissement* of Paris replied that even though solidarity of action with the French and other immigrants was encouraged in struggles within the workplace and beyond, North Africans had to belong to an Arab organisation:

Il faut mener la lutte au sein des Comités de lutte, en fonction des besoins dans l'usine. En même temps, on peut appartenir à l'organisation arabe. Les travailleurs arabes ont tous à un moment donné le besoin d'appartenir à quelque chose de central qui les unisse, à une organisation arabe. ('Procès verbal du Conseil national des travailleurs en lutte', 8 octobre 1972) (3)

The delegate from Gennevilliers supported this view and insisted on the fact that Maghrebi workers should not make common cause with other workers in the factory individually but as a group representing the Arab organisation.

This debate about strategy and action reflected the entire discourse of the MTA in that it posited Arabness as a given and unchallenged marker of identity for all Maghrebi workers in France. The *Mouvement's* discourse systematically referred to North Africans in France as "les Arabes", "frères arabes", "les ouvriers arabes", "les travailleurs arabes" or as "les masses arabes".⁸¹ Its perception of ethnicity was, to some extent, consistent with that of the North African nationalist movement in the inter-war period. Indeed, as with the ENA and the PPA, North Africans' identity was defined through a process which essentialised the varied ethnic make up of the North African

⁸¹ This terminology appeared consistently in MTA documents. The report produced on the campaign of mobilisation after Djellali Ben Ali's death in October 1971 is a good illustration of this: "ouvriers arabes", "travailleurs arabes" and "masses arabes" are all used on page 6 of the report to refer to North Africans in France ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali') (7).

population. However, whereas the *Etoile* did acknowledge the existence of a Berber people, if only to describe them as Arabs, nowhere in the MTA's discourse did this happen. This may partly be explained by two factors: firstly, unlike the *Etoile* and the PPA, and even though many members of the MTA may have been Berbers (a large proportion of Maghrebis in France are Berbers), the leading militants within the MTA were often from Morocco and Tunisia, countries where the Berber movement has, perhaps, not been as politically active as in Algeria. Secondly, the 1960s and 1970s were two decades when the Arab nationalist movement was very popular, not only amongst Maghrebi governments, but also within the population in North Africa and in the diaspora.⁸²

Nonetheless, ethnic identity is not simply the result of essentialisation, it is mainly shaped and negotiated at the boundary between "us" and "them" (Wallman 1979: 3). Indeed, it was through a process of interaction, conflict and negotiation that ethnic identity was constructed within the MTA's discourse. During the above-mentioned *Conseil national*, the Gennevilliers delegate's evocation of his identity illustrates the extent to which the militants' Arabness was informed by confrontation with "them" when he stated that "[n]ous sommes arabes, nous faisons partie de la nation arabe qui lutte contre les sionistes et les réactionnaires" ('Procès verbal du Conseil national des travailleurs en lutte', 8 octobre 1972) (3). The aim of the MTA was to create a mass movement which could confront and address the problems experienced by North Africans:

C'est un courant de lutte pour la dignité, contre le racisme, pour le soutien à la révolution palestinienne et au peuple arabe en lutte contre le sionisme et la réaction arabe ... pour des conditions de vie décentes et la défense de nos droits, contre la misère matérielle et morale. A travers ces luttes s'est formée une conscience nationale arabe (qui est aussi une conscience ouvrière). (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3)

⁸² The re-emergence of Berber identity and movements on the political scene can be traced to the 1980s when the "Printemps Berbère" in 1980 challenged the government's repression of Kabyle culture and language and the imposition of an Arab identity in Algeria.

As with the *Etoile* and the PPA, the movement's perception of North African national identity was very much informed by the Other, by what it was against. Maghrebi immigrants' Arab identity was therefore shaped by their struggle for rights and dignity and against oppression in all its forms. The movement's discourse and action were targeted towards a number of socio-political problems affecting Maghrebi workers in France (racism, hostile authorities and employers, housing and working conditions, the struggle of the *sans-papiers* for their regularisation and against deportation) as well as questions related to Arabs in the Maghreb, the Middle East and in other European countries.⁸³

Conflicts at a local, national and international level which were perceived to be relevant to the Arab people were all conflated into one ideological locus which informed their sense of identity and their actions. Within the discourse of the MTA, each issue was considered to be of significance to another. For instance, racism in France, events in North Africa and in Palestine were all discussed during strikes in factories or in the foyers:

En tant qu'ouvriers arabes, dans l'usine, le foyer et dans la rue, nous nous unissons et nous luttons en France contre le sionisme et tous les réactionnaires pour soutenir la lutte du peuple palestinien et des autres peuples arabes. Les travailleurs arabes qui prennent en main ces luttes sont conscients d'appartenir à un peuple arabe en France. ils sont conscients de participer au mouvement qui soulève tout le peuple arabe contre ses oppresseurs. (MTA document, untitled)

(3)

This extract also shows that MTA militants' ethnicity was marked by a binary process reflecting that of the ENA/PPA, in which identity was closely linked to action. On the

⁸³ On 25 September 1973, the main French unions (the CGT, the CFDT and the FEN) and the *Amicale des Algériens* called for a general strike against racism which was very much inspired by the success of the general strikes organised by the MTA on 3 September 1973 in the south of France and on 14 September 1973 in the Paris region. They also organised a meeting at the *Bourse du Travail* on that day during which MTA militants were prevented from addressing the audience. In their publication, the MTA denounced these organisations for attempting to marginalise its militants during that meeting and declared that "les Arabes ne sont pas contre les Français, mais contre les racistes" (*La Voix des travailleurs arabes*, octobre 1973) (3).

one hand, their sense of ethnic belonging informed their mode of political mobilisation and action against these various forms of oppression ("[e]n tant qu'ouvriers arabes ... nous nous unissons et nous luttons..."), and on the other hand it was through these struggles that the consciousness that they belong to the Arab people was shaped.

Solidarity and mobilisation against all those issues (which were interpreted as constituting tropes of imperialist oppression against Arab workers) were what gave form to their sense of ethnic identity. To some extent, their discourse echoed that of the ENA/PPA which linked its sense of ethnic identity with its struggle against imperialism affecting not only Arabs in North Africa, but also in France (racism, economic exploitation and police oppression), in the Middle East and in other colonies in Africa.

In the context of the 1970s, the MTA viewed the ethnic identity of Maghrebis in France as inherently Arab, and considered that ethnicity was at the core of their sense of nation-ness. It asserted that all Arabs belonged to the Arab nation. Unlike the *Etoile* and the PPA, its sense of nation-ness was not tied to the limited borders of a specific state.⁸⁴ During the inter-war period, the nationalist movement endeavoured to create a nation within the narrow constraints of the colonial territory and prove that an Algerian nation rooted in Arabness existed before French colonisation. In contrast to the ENA/PPA, the MTA's evocation of nation transcended the boundaries of established nation-states. It was a nation which encapsulated all Arabs in the Arab World and in the diaspora, and events taking place in the Arab World were viewed as affecting them as Arabs, whatever nation-state they belonged to.⁸⁵ The Palestinian struggle and the repression of Palestinians in Jordan in September 1970 which led to the creation of the *Comité Palestine* and later to the MTA, as well as the Algerian Revolution were seen as inspiring the MTA's Arab national feelings and giving a national character to its anti-racist action in France ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali') (7).

⁸⁴ Even though the struggle of Muslims in the Arab World was often evoked in the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, the inter-war nationalist movement never really considered the establishment of an Arab nation embracing all the Arab World. Its nationalist ideology was very much rooted within the colonial borders established by imperialist powers.

⁸⁵ However, it is worth noting that in the discourse of the MTA, North Africans were sometimes described as Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians in specific contexts where their nationality was pertinent (for instance, the deportation of Moroccans and Tunisians to their home country, or the oppression of North African political activists by the oppressive regimes in the Maghreb).

The Arab nation evoked here was the expression of a self-aware ethnic group, a group aware of its uniqueness (Connor 1978: 388-389). The fact that the movement's reference to North Africans as Arabs did not necessarily reflect their ethnic make-up is not crucial to our understanding of the movement's discourse on nation-ness. What is more revealing is the movement's belief in its ethnicity and the way that ethnicity was imagined (Connor 1978: 380, Anderson 1983: 15). The MTA's realisation of the uniqueness of Arabs as an ethnic and national group was shaped by the socio-political context of its time, and was rooted in the diasporic experience of Maghrebi immigrant workers.

Like nationalists in the inter-war period, most first-generation Maghrebi immigrants did not see France as a potential repository of nation-ness. Their very experience as immigrants, their socially marginal status had turned them into almost "invisible" workers who were seen as instrumental in meeting the needs of French industry and agriculture in the eyes of many French people. Furthermore, the legacy of colonial conflicts had equipped Maghrebis with a strong sense of national pride in their home country. Ties with France as a nation would have been all the more difficult and problematic as they would have been perceived as a kind of betrayal in favour of 'their host country' which they used to see as their colonial oppressor.

In its discourse which was reminiscent of that of inter-war nationalists, the MTA put the emphasis on the temporary nature of Maghrebis' presence in France and the return to their home country was described as their main objective. This was highlighted in a letter written by an MTA activist in 1974:

Nous ne pouvons oublier que notre pays ce n'est pas la France ... notre horizon ne doit pas s'arrêter au racisme en France, mais pousser jusqu'au retour au pays et pour mieux comprendre notre pays ... l'idéologie occidentale essaie de nous enfermer dans un étau; pour nous séparer entièrement de notre peuple. L'idéologie européenne est une idéologie d'intoxication, elle vise à réduire notre jeunesse au style de vie occidental, alors que notre peuple est bien loin. ('Chers camarades') (3)

Here, France was perceived as a space of racism, of social, economic and cultural oppression, and French culture as an instrument of Western domination. This discourse echoed that of the North African nationalist movement in the inter-war period. French culture was seen as close, all pervading and oppressive. It was characterised by its limited horizon, its ability to divide and separate Maghrebi immigrants from their home country, to "reduce" and "intoxicate" rather than develop and enrich them culturally. In that context, strengthening their ties with their country of origin enabled them to break the "stranglehold" of Western/French ideology and escape cultural entrapment.

On the other hand, in spite of its evocation of an eventual return to the home country and of the importance of keeping North African traditions alive in emigration, and despite the fact that it consistently invoked its faithfulness to the Arab nation, the movement acknowledged that France was also the social space within which the life and socio-political experience of Maghrebis were being shaped (see El Yazami 1997: 119-120). Indeed, France was not only viewed as a space of social, political and economic alienation for immigrants, it was also seen as the framework within which the socialisation, political action and self-definition of Arabs as an ethno-national group were constructed and expressed. In that sense, the movement differed from the ENA and the PPA in that it acknowledged the embedding of the social experience of Maghrebi immigrants in a French context. This was emphasised by an MTA document which stated the aims of its theatre company, *Al Assifa*:

Barbès est la capitale [a]rabe de la France, c'est aussi un ghetto et il fallait le faire éclater ... Les immigrés essentiellement les Arabes sont rejetés des autres quartiers. Aussi peut on voir à Barbès la répression sexuelle et tout ce qui tourne autour: les cafés pour se saouler et la délinquance en particulier chez les mômes. Notre but est de montrer qu'il existe autre chose et faire venir les Français dans les quartiers[,] ceux-ci ne venant jamais à Barbès. ('Al Assifa', avril 1976) (3)

In its discourse and actions, the movement recognised the realities of North Africans' diasporic experience and aimed to improve their socio-economic situation in France.

Maghrebis were fighting for the right to stay, live and work in the *hexagone* and argued that they were "[des] travailleurs arabes de France [qui] aspirent à s'unir et à unir leur lutte dans un cadre national en France" (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3).

Beyond the ideological discourse of the MTA, which presented Arabness as the main locus of national sentiment amongst North Africans, the political actions of MTA militants in France were often structured around solidarity between Maghrebis from the same country and the same region. This phenomenon was not inconsistent with the inter-war nationalists' political action. During hunger strikes by 'illegal' immigrants which followed the adoption of the *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet* in 1972, a decree which brought the process of regularisation of immigrants after their arrival in France to an end, the movement's actions gained impetus through mobilisation based on shared neighbourhood in France, and on their country and region of origin in the Maghreb. The case of the hunger strike of rue St Maur in Belleville in 1973 illustrates this:

Le travail de popularisation des grèves de la faim, l'impact idéologique des grèves de la faim sont tels que se regroupent des centaines de sans-papiers autour de la rue St Maur, qui seront la force motrice de la lutte pendant plusieurs mois, et qui, un mois après le début de la grève de St Maur, descendront dans les rues à Belleville dans une manifestation au nombre de 7000. Comment cela s'est-il passé? Les réseaux naturels des masses ont joué: sur la base du quartier, de la nationalité, de la région d'origine, des centaines de personnes viennent rendre visite aux grévistes de la faim. ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3)

Those bonds of solidarity which united Maghrebis in France in the 1970s, and which were used by the MTA as the basis for political mobilisation, mirrored those of North African workers in the 1920s and 1930s whose working and living patterns also tended to be informed by their country and region of origin (MacMaster 1997: 94-102).

6.3 Kinship and class: within and beyond ethnicity

As was seen previously, the MTA not only saw "Arabness" as a marker of Maghrebis' ethnic identity, it also considered that it constituted the basis of their national belonging ("la nation arabe"). But the movement viewed North Africans' national consciousness as Arabs very much from a class perspective. Its documentation highlights the extent to which its militants' class consciousness had developed through political struggle:

A travers ces luttes s'est formée une conscience nationale arabe (qui est aussi une conscience ouvrière), chez les travailleurs arabes de France. Le Mouvement des travailleurs arabes a servi un tel courant de masse. De fait, il s'est lui-même formé à travers les luttes menées par les travailleurs arabes. Les grèves des travailleurs arabes contre le racisme (septembre 1973) lancées par le MTA, tout comme les initiatives de soutien à la Révolution [p]alestinienne et au peuple arabe (octobre 1973) au cours de la guerre démontrent la réalité[,] la vitalité et la force du courant de lutte dans la communauté arabe en France. (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3)

This sense of belonging to the working class which informed national awareness was more marked in the MTA's discourse than it had been in that of the ENA/PPA. The latter considered that Muslims were the main victims of colonial domination, but that did not mean that its discourse was devoid of references to class. As Muslims constituted the vast majority of the under-class in the North African colonies (Gellner 1983), class belonging was subsumed by religious belonging in the ENA/PPA's discourse.

For the MTA, there was a direct correlation between identity and class. But before we can assess how that correlation was established, it is necessary to define what we mean by working class. Jenkins defines the working class within the Marxist interpretation of the development of class consciousness as:

a social category that was initially defined with reference to their immiseration and alienation of the means of production, and to their threat to the established order, by others such as capitalists,

agencies of the state, or socialist activists [which] becomes a social group, the members of which identify with each other in their collective misfortune, thus creating the possibility of organized collective action on the basis of that identification. (Jenkins 1997: 55)

The socio-economic position of Maghrebis in France reflected that of colonial workers before them. It was anchored at the lower end of the working class hierarchy, and many amongst them belonged to what Marx defined as the *Lumpenproletariat*.

Furthermore, in the 1960s and 1970s, as Pinot (1973) argues, immigration remained the reserved domain of the state and of the police, and immigration policies were adopted by the government through decrees. This enabled the government to avoid parliamentary and public scrutiny in that area of policy-making, and to apply these "circulaires" in an arbitrary way:

Si «clandestinité» il y a eu, c'est d'abord celle de l'administration et du pouvoir qui contournaient tout à fait officiellement les textes de lois dans les faits, sans contrôle parlementaire, par le jeu de circulaires. Le pouvoir s'est, ce faisant, plié aux demandes des entreprises ... *l'arbitraire est de règle*. Les textes ne sont pas publiés ou inutilement compliqués, ils sont diversement interprétés par les fonctionnaires d'un même service, fréquemment modifiés, variant d'un département à l'autre ... Les décisions de rejet arrivent souvent sans la moindre explication. (Pinot 1973: 32-33)

The experience of Maghrebi immigrants in the hands of the authorities in 1970s France was marked by arbitrariness and was very much reminiscent of that of their colonial forebears. The adoption of the *Circulaire Fontanet-Marcellin* in 1972, in particular, aimed to further weaken immigrants' position in France and contributed to their alienation from the rest of society. It did so by privileging the national workforce and putting the police in charge of all the administration of immigrants, by making it impossible for illegal migrants to regularise their situation (Labracherie 1973: 1169), by making the renewal date of residence and work permits' coincide and by forcing foreign workers to remain in one specific region and job with one employer for one year. A year was not long enough to become a "délégué du personnel", but sufficient for employers

to dismiss employees who were deemed undesirable for a number of reasons. Those who, at the end of a contract, became unemployed or who were unable to work because of a disability resulting from an industrial accident could see their residence and work documents "not renewed".⁸⁶ This in turn enabled the authorities to expel immigrants without resorting to the lengthy and complex legal process that the deportation procedure entailed (Pinot 1973: 46-47, 57, Jordan 1972: 733). To some extent, this decree weakened immigrants' rights in the 1970s, and their experience was not unlike that of the *coloniaux* under the *Code de l'Indigénat*.

Within such a context marked by social, economic, political and cultural alienation within French society, immigrants' ethnic and national identity had to be constructed in such a way as to provide an empowering sense of belonging to a particular group. Like inter-war nationalists in France, empowerment through the imagining of a strong ethnic and cultural realm ('Arabness') amongst Maghrebis could constitute a strategy allowing them to question and challenge the implacable forces of economic and social marginalisation that they were subjected to in 1970s France.

Using Roosens' argument about ethnic identity, it could be said that in the 1970s as well as in the inter-war period, ethnic groupness provided Maghrebis with a tool which made it possible to challenge the social, political and economic inequalities they experienced:

Those who identify with an ethnic category, network, or group can find psychological security in this identification, a feeling of belonging, a certainty that one knows one's origin ... One can commit oneself to "a cause", fulfill oneself, realize oneself to be unique, original, irreplaceable as a member of an ethnic group and irreducible from the outside to something else ... One can feel ... different from the others, and in this being different define and experience oneself as incomparable or as *primordially* equal. (Roosens 1989:16)

⁸⁶ Most immigrants who were recruited and allowed to work in France had been rigorously "selected" and their health condition had to be excellent. Disabilities amongst migrants were often the result of poor and dangerous working conditions in France.

Roosens' statement illustrates the empowering processes by which ethnic identification constituted a strategy which made it possible for socially marginalised Maghrebis to bypass some of the stigmas and prejudice attached to their conditions as workers, as immigrants and as North Africans.⁸⁷ Belonging to the imagined "Arab nation" could also be interpreted as a claim for the right to difference, "uniqueness" and beyond this to equality.

While the primordial focus of the ENA and the PPA's discourse on kinship was on ethnicity and the modern nation rooted in religion, it appears that for the MTA, greater emphasis was put on ethnicity as informed by class. The latter movement's discourse on class and identity, which was marked by a will amongst Maghrebis to have their rights recognised and be accepted as equals within France, could not be better illustrated than by the declaration of candidature to the 1974 French presidential elections of Djellali Kamal, a Maghrebi *sans-papiers* and key militant of the MTA (Interview with Driss el Yazami, 22 January 2001). He was a hunger striker fighting against the Circulaire Fontanet-Marcellin who had been chosen by other immigrants to represent them ('Déclaration du candidat immigré aux élections présidentielles', 1974) (3). His candidature highlights the extent to which Maghrebis militants' experience in France was far more rooted in a French socio-political context than that of the "coloniaux". Indeed, the ENA/PPA's political action focused more on emancipation from France and on political representation in elected bodies in North Africa in order to defeat colonialism.

Even though Djellali acknowledged that, contrary to other candidates, he did not want to become president, he nonetheless wanted to show French people that "même si nous ne votons pas, nous existons comme tous les autres travailleurs de France" (Ibid.). His agenda was to condemn the way immigrants were exploited by France and Europe, treated as slaves and subjected to racism and racist attacks. Djellali argued that immigrants' culture and identity were rejected and despised by France and that the only

⁸⁷ It is worth noting that Roosens' reference to identification poses a problem as it makes a parallel between "ethnic category" and "group". Indeed, it could be argued that a distinction should be made between a *group* and a *category* as the former, to quote Jenkins, is "a self-conscious collectivity, rooted in processes of self-definition" while the latter is "externally defined" (1997: 54).

right that they had was the "right to silence". His plea was very much consistent with that of North Africans in the 1920s and 1930s who denounced their lack of political rights and freedom of expression. He saw this election as an opportunity to speak in the name of immigrants and express their hopes and demands: "contre cet étouffement et ce ghetto dans lequel on nous maintient, nous nous emparons de cette occasion pour prendre la parole et nous adresser à tous les travailleurs de France" (Ibid.).

According to Djellali, immigrants in France rejected the discourse of French politicians and candidates who tried to introduce restrictive measures such as the much-hated *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet* and who talked of "un problème de l'immigration". Indeed, they questioned the implacable political rhetoric which endeavoured to present immigration as a problem. This echoed the ENA/PPA's criticism of the *Code de l'Indigénat* and of French politicians. Similarly, Djellali's discourse was very much addressed to the French population, and aimed to build solidarity between immigrant and French workers, just as the inter-war nationalist discourse aimed to bypass oppressive political structures in France to call for solidarity with the French people. However, it was an attempt to create a new type of kinship which put more emphasis on class.

Let us now look at the interplay between ethnicity and class. By using Anderson's concepts of "kinship" and "sacrifice" as markers of community belonging (1983), this analysis will suggest that Djellali's discourse illustrates the extent to which MTA militants' identity and *nation-ness* as "Arabs" were anchored within a French class context and imbued in universalist values. In so doing, it will highlight the contrast that existed between the MTA and the inter-war nationalist movement. Indeed the latter's evocation of kinship through sacrifice was rooted in difference and ethnic belonging, and it aimed to construct a national state distinct from France. In his declaration, Djellali Kamal criticised left-wing candidates who wanted to consolidate the "unity of the working classes" because their answer to the Right's representation of immigration as a problem was to propose a "statute governing immigration". He argued that:

Ce que nous voulons, ce n'est pas un statut de l'immigration qui nous diviserait de la classe ouvrière française, mais nous voulons bénéficier des droits acquis par les années de lutte que la classe ouvrière de France paya de son sang. ('Déclaration du candidat immigré aux élections présidentielles', 1974) (3)

Djellali clearly wanted to establish a relationship of solidarity and *disinterestedness* between immigrant and French workers. That feeling of kinship was based on shared experience and struggle ("mes frères"), and it is revealing to notice that he referred to the broader "classe ouvrière de France" which could unite all workers of different origins and from all national groups. The rights of workers had been won through sacrifice, through the "don du sang", which no longer related to sacrifice for a nation, as it did in the *Etoile* and the PPA's discourse, but rather to workers' rights within France. Indeed, the divide was no longer between national groups but between classes. MTA militants such as Djellali inscribed their own sense of sacrifice within the tradition of the working class in France:

nous voyons les sacrifices auxquels [la circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet] contraint aujourd'hui 37 grévistes amen[és à] la grève de la faim, je suis de ces grévistes, amené par cette circulaire à dire à mes frères: NOUS MOURRONS POUR VIVRE. (Ibid.)

He justified his sacrifice and that of his fellow immigrants who were on hunger strike as a price worth paying to gain rights and recognition in France. This declaration was characterised by its inclusiveness and was infused with a particular sense of belonging in which sacrifice for a greater cause could be seen as a marker of class identity. Therefore, it contrasted with the ENA/PPA's exclusive discourse which did not aim to gain recognition within France, but rather to mark difference and distinctiveness.

According to Djellali, Maghrebi and other immigrant workers saw their culture, history and traditions as different from the French, but they dismissed the exclusive discourse and differentialist policies on immigration which were adopted by French politicians on the basis of their cultural specificities. This reflected the ENA/PPA's

discourse which emphasised North Africans' cultural specificity, but denounced the French authorities whose discriminatory policies towards the "coloniaux" were based on cultural, ethnic and religious difference. But the MTA went further and sought Maghrebi and other immigrants' inclusion into French society. As Djellali's declaration illustrates, migrants' identity was very much marked by their sense of belonging to a particular class and they saw their experience as immigrant workers in France as tied to that of French workers:

On ne nous reconnaît que notre force de travail, avec en prime le droit de SE TAIRE, LE DROIT AU SILENCE ... Si chaque homme a ses traditions, sa culture, son histoire, son pays à exprimer [,] en tant que travailleur, il ne connaît pas de frontières. Pour parler de nos problèmes de travailleurs immigrés, il n'y a que nous qui puissions le faire et nous saurons les poser dans l'unité avec nos frères français ... ceux qui nous calomnient et cherchent à briser nos luttes sont les ennemis de la classe ouvrière. (Ibid.)

There was a will here to break the vicious circle of silence that immigrants were subjected to, seize the discourse on immigration from the hands of French politicians and appropriate it. It was a declaration stating that immigrants wanted to be considered as human beings. Differences in tradition, culture and history were certainly acknowledged, but migrants' identity was also marked by their sense of belonging to the working class in France and beyond. In that sense, it differed from the perspective of the inter-war nationalist movement as the latter developed an empowering and universalist discourse on cultural identity that informed its demand for emancipation from France.

Djellali's declaration was also universalist in its approach to rights. However, differences were not described as national ones; they were seen as a constitutive part of each human being and did not openly connote any allegiance to a particular nation-state. His discourse constructed the fight of immigrants in France as a class struggle, and he warned that "nous sommes conscients que la situation de terreur et de surexploitation qui est la nôtre ... risque de s'étendre à l'ensemble des travailleurs de France; ceux qui

nous calomnient et cherchent à briser nos luttes sont les ennemis de la classe ouvrière" (Ibid). The rhetorical process used here echoes that of the ENA/PPA which presented the repression to which the colonised were subjected ultimately as a threat to the hard-won rights of the French. It aimed to win the support of the French people by warning them that any oppression against immigrants would one day also undermine the rights of the French.

Markers of kinship and sacrifice here show that, at the time, Maghrebi militants in France saw their own identity as somehow rooted in the French social and economic space and marked by their belonging to the "classe ouvrière de France". This discourse on solidarity and belonging to a particular class was structured around its inclusiveness.

Characteristic of the French universalist tradition and echoing the discourse of the nationalist movement in the interwar period, Djellali's declaration was informed by a dialectic interpretation of the immigrants' experience.⁸⁸ It framed the fight for immigrants' rights within the wider context of class struggle in France and Europe, and dismissed the way cultural and ethnic differences were (re-)constructed by French authorities to segregate against them. Immigrants' struggle for rights and against racism and exploitation was also seen as a fight between French revolutionary and universalist principles on the one hand, and pre-revolutionary "feudal" oppression on the other. Similarly, the ENA/PPA presented its own fight against colonialism as consistent with the French revolutionary fight against feudalism. Djellali argued that the central contribution that immigrant workers made to the wealth of France and Europe was not recognised, and that immigrants were dehumanised. His discourse referred to the Common Market, not as a space of opportunity, but as one of "slavery", "serfdom" and continuing exploitation in the post-colonial era:

Les travailleurs immigrés sont plus de 3 millions en France. A travers l'Europe, nous sommes un peuple de 14 millions d'ouvriers. Nous sommes exploités de notre première goutte de sueur à notre dernière goutte de sang. Nous participons à la production des richesses et sommes à la base du

⁸⁸ See section 4.3 on colonialism, universalism and the state.

développement de l'économie des pays d'Europe: depuis des siècles les pays d'Europe pillent nos richesses naturelles, ils continuent de le faire et nous traitent comme une marchandise.

[Des] millions d'hommes sont aujourd'hui enchaînés dans le marché commun de l'esclavage ... Ma candidature n'est pas une plaisanterie, ce n'est pas une opération publicitaire, elle est le cri de millions d'hommes réduits au servage en plein 20ème siècle. (ibid)

This extract, as well as the ones mentioned above, highlights the similarity between the discourse of Maghrebi militants in the inter-war period and in the 1970s. Oppression and exploitation by imperialism (here Capital, France and by extension Europe) are viewed as echoing both feudal times when people were subjected to serfdom, and colonial times with their legacy of exploitation, slavery and denial of human rights ("depuis des siècles les pays d'Europe pillent nos richesses naturelles, ils continuent de le faire et nous traitent comme une marchandise"). Here, the terminology anchors imperialism within a framework transcending history (feudalism, colonialism and modern European capitalism) to construct it as a continuous reactionary machine of oppression. It is, therefore, consistent with the inter-war nationalist discourse on imperialism. This discursive representation was not only relevant to immigrants (a large proportion of whom came from ex-colonies of France) but also to French workers who were the heirs of the revolutionaries who freed themselves from serfdom.

This discourse constructed exclusion in such a way that it allowed immigrants to pose their own demands and concerns as well as those of other workers in France as inalienable and intrinsically just. Thus, they could position their requests and struggle in a progressive and universalist framework consistent with the values that France and Europe had always considered their own since the Enlightenment but visibly failed to implement as far as immigrants' rights were concerned. This reflected the inter-war nationalist discourse which presented North Africans' anti-colonial struggle as consistent with the values of the French people, viewed as the repository of the revolutionary legacy.

For the ENA/PPA, this process of demarcation of the sphere of imperialism aimed to gain the support of the French people for its fight against colonialism and the

establishment of independence in North Africa. By contrast, in the 1970s, the denunciation of imperialism enabled MTA militants such as Djellali to gain rights and recognition within France, and to reinforce their inclusive sense of kinship and solidarity with the "classes ouvrières de France". The "serfdom" that they were subjected to was based on their ethnic and national origin. This discourse showed how the authorities' legislation insisted that immigrants should be excluded from the national political process, thereby preventing them from having their demands and grievances heard. By contrast to the authorities' exclusive policies, Djellali appealed to intrinsically universalist values of equality, fairness and rights for immigrants. He endeavoured to have their human rights recognised and their right of expression granted:

J'irai interpellier les candidats là où les appareils d'information d'Etat sont à leur service et leur poserai des questions. Nous couvrirons la France d'affiches, nous serons partout pour qu'on nous entende, comme nous sommes déjà dans les mines, les usines et sur les chantiers, mais réduits au silence. NOUS N'IRONS PAS AU BUREAU DE VOTE MAIS NOUS VOTERONS A NOTRE MANIERE. (Ibid.)

Djellali Kamal's political declaration of candidature constituted in itself a symbolic act of citizenship. It marked immigrants' will to be fully included in the nation's social and political life. To some extent, it was a lesson in citizenship given to the French political establishment and showed how much immigration policies were at odds with migrants' concerns and hopes and with France's universalist values. By contrast, the ENA/PPA's emphasis on the compatibility of its anti-colonial agenda with the revolutionary values of the French aimed to isolate discursively the French state and gain French support for the establishment of a nation-state.

Numerous other examples can be found within the discourse of the MTA which show that forces of oppression against Maghrebi and other immigrants were always interpreted within a class perspective. To name but a few, the internal report assessing the campaign of mobilisation of the *Comité Palestine* after the murder of Djellali Ben Ali, a young Algerian killed in the Goutte d'Or district of Paris in 1971, emphasised the

"caractère d'unité populaire" between French and immigrant workers and viewed its action as part of the wider class struggle against repression of all workers ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali') (7).⁸⁹ In the October 1973 issue of *La voix des travailleurs arabes* which was published after the wave of racist murders which had taken place in Marseilles and other parts of France in the summer of that year, the MTA denounced racism as an attempt to divide the working class and declared that "nous sommes des ouvriers et non des esclaves ... notre lutte continue avec tous les immigrés et les travailleurs français" (3). In a tract, the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* and the *Comité de défense de la vie et des droits des travailleurs immigrés* stigmatised the government's immigration and deportation policy for forcing migrants into "un[] nouvel[] esclavage" and argued that "[n]ous faisons partie de la classe ouvrière en France, sans en avoir pour autant les moindres droits" ('Halte aux expulsions des immigrés!!! Halte à la politique d'esclavage et de refoulement du gouvernement!!!') (4).

More generally, the particular dominant-dominated relationship that Maghrebi immigrants experienced (which, in Kamal's declaration and in other MTA documents, had a colonial resonance to it) influenced the way in which they defined their own identity. On the one hand, it was informed by a process of inclusion whereby being part of the 'Arab nation' was compatible with their belonging to the 'working classes of France'. In that sense, it contrasted with the inter-war nationalist view that North Africans' belonging to the 'Arab nation' would lead them to emancipation from the French, and that only when North Africans were independent could equality with the French be reached.

On the other hand, in the 1970s, Maghrebi militants' identity was shaped by processes of exclusion and of vilification of imperialism (racism, Capital, the Common Market, the French authorities and political class, illegitimate governments in the Maghreb, Zionism, etc.). To some extent, this mirrored the anti-imperialist discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA. Those different markers of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, of identification and rejection were not fixed in time or in a particular order of importance.

⁸⁹ The *Comité Palestine* became the MTA in June 1972.

They were shifting components of a constantly changing "construction identitaire" in the discourse of the movement.

How much does the discourse of the MTA tell us about Maghrebis' identity in France in the 1970s? Part of the answer could lie in Stuart Hall's discursive definition of identification. He states that it is a "construction never completed - always in progress" and that "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected". Every identity has its 'margin', an excess, something more" (Hall 1996a: 2-5). The shifting markers of belonging amongst Maghrebi members of the MTA that were discussed earlier reveal the extent to which identities as points of identification are constructed. It was through that shifting process of identification that Maghrebi militants of the MTA were able to negotiate their own identity at the boundary between "us" and "them". In this context, their identity dealt with differences from within (cultural differences between them and other workers) in an inclusive manner, through kinship and solidarity ("nos frères travailleurs français"), as well as sacrifice ("nous sommes exploités de la première goutte de sueur à notre dernière goutte de sang", "nous voulons bénéficier des droits acquis par les années de lutte que la classe ouvrière classe ouvrière paya de son sang", "[n]ous mourrons pour vivre"). More so than with the *Etoile* and the PPA in the inter-war period, ethnic boundaries were thus subsumed by class solidarity in the discourse of the MTA. It was - in an exclusive manner - also informed by the Other (imperialism), by what it was not, what it was against.

6.4 Islam as a cultural marker and the role of the Catholic Church

What role did religion play in the construction of nation-ness amongst Maghrebi members of the MTA in a context of constant negotiation of identity?⁹⁰ Hastings views every ethnicity as being "shaped significantly by religion just as it is by language", which was undoubtedly the case for the shaping of ethnic and national identity in the

⁹⁰ Bruno Etienne defines religion as "un système de croyances et de pratiques relatives au sacré qui produit des conduites sociales et qui unit dans une même communauté l'ensemble des individus qui y adhèrent" (1989: 68).

Etoile nord-africaine and the PPA during the interwar period in France (Hastings 1997: 185). However, his acknowledgement that "Christianity has of its nature been a shaper of nations, even of nationalisms; Islam has not, being on the contrary quite profoundly anti-national" (1997: 185-187) is more problematic. It may be well founded in the broader context of Islam and the Umma, but it is more problematic in the North African, and more specifically Algerian, case. As was seen in Part One, the ENA and the PPA reconstructed Islam as a unifying, modern political force underpinning Algerian ethnic and national identity. But was it also the case with the MTA?

A thematic study of the latter would tend to draw a different picture. The first striking element coming out of a detailed analysis of the MTA's documentation is that Islam and religion were rarely part of its discourse. Clearly, this did not mean that Maghrebi immigrants in France were not seen or did not consider themselves as Muslims. On the contrary, in the context of France in the 1970s, they were often marginalised not only on the basis of their origin, but also on religious grounds. The often negative and sometimes derogatory images that were attributed to them in French society (particularly in the media) was that of Muslims.⁹¹ It was a religion which was seen as intertwined with their ethnic identity and which, as Clément points out, was deemed to be incompatible with Western society (1991: 89). This shows the extent to which North Africans' marginalisation on the basis of their religion in colonial times continued in the post-colonial era.

Even though Islam was the second religion in France, it was often portrayed as the religion of the poor immigrant from the Maghreb, as an inherent part of the identity of the Maghrebi underclass in France at the time, and was constructed as a marker of difference. What better example could be given to highlight this point than the official terminology used by the French state ("les Français musulmans") to refer to the *Harkis*?⁹² In the context of a secular France proud of its universalist values and whose foundations were marked by separation of the state and religion, it would seem that those French citizens were designated according to their religious faith or origin. It

⁹¹ See, for example, Hamès (1989).

⁹² *Harkis* were Algerian Muslims who had opted for, and fought on, the French side during the Algerian war of independence.

would, for example, be hard to imagine some other sections of the French population being officially labelled as "Français catholiques", "Français protestants" or "Français juifs". Beyond the official discourse of "intégration des Français musulmans", it could be argued that this term was used to differentiate and marginalise rather than "integrate" those populations (see Fabre 1990: 355, Fysh and Wolfreys 1997: 30, Silverman 1992: 102). This phenomenon is not inconsistent with France's earlier infringement of its political credo when, in colonial times, a distinction had been established between French citizens and Muslims in North Africa.

Islam did play an important role in Maghrebis' life in France in the 1970s. In 1976, there were two million Muslims in France, including 400,000 French nationals. It was the most important religion amongst immigrants, yet was "une religion qui n'a pas droit de cité dans ce pays" (Bissekri 1976: 19). Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties that Muslims met, the number of places of worship in France - most of which were no more than a room in foyers and sometimes in flats - grew from thirty three in 1970 to 274 in 1980 whilst that of Islamic associations increased over that decade from seven to 192 (Kepel 1991: 229-231).⁹³ A Pakistani movement called the "jama'at el tabligh" (the "Society for the Propagation of Islam"), founded in British-ruled India in 1927 played a key role in the creation of mosques and prayer rooms in France in the late 1960s and mainly in the 1970s (Kepel 1991:178-179). Together with some Algerians and Mahmoud Medjahed, an Egyptian imam who had graduated from the prestigious Al-Hazar University, they founded the "Association culturelle islamique" in 1968 and after a split, created the "Association musulmane Foi et Pratique" in 1972. Both were to become highly successful, as Muslim organisations and places of worship in France were scarce in the early 1970s:

Le mouvement ["Association musulmane Foi et Pratique"] fonde à Paris en 1973 ... la mosquée Abou Bakr, dans un petit immeuble vétuste ... Puis d'autres mosquées se créent, en banlieue - à Créteil, Goussainville, Mantes, Corbeil-Essonnes, Creil - et dans les villes de province dont le tissu

⁹³ A number of other studies of Islam in France have been carried out (see, for example, Andezian 1981, Etienne 1988, 1989 & 1991, Kepel 1994, Leveau 1988, Schor 1985a, Bariki 1984).

industriel attire une concentration de main-d'œuvre banale immigrée: Le Mans, Lyon, Marseille, Roubaix, Sochaux, Montbéliard, Mulhouse, Rouen notamment. (Kepel, 1991: 97, 191-192)

Supporters and activists in the MTA were certainly representative of the rest of the Maghrebi population as far as religion was concerned. Indeed, similarly to the *Etoile* and the PPA, the movement recognised that religious festivals were important to Maghrebi immigrants and sometimes organised social events to celebrate them. For instance, a tract written in 1974 called for a preparatory meeting aimed at organising a National Conference, and also a "Nuit de l'Immigration" on the eve of the "Aïd El fitr" on 12 October of that year (MTA tract, untitled, 1974) (3). As in the discourse of inter-war nationalists, celebrating Muslim festivals was described as a form of political struggle against oppression and for rights. It was also seen as a way of maintaining traditional cultural values amongst Maghrebi immigrants and their children:

Les ouvriers et les familles à Barbès qui en plein[e] occupation policière fêtent l['] Aïd el Kébir, les ouvriers de Mantes-la-[J]olie qui imposent par une Assemblée Générale dans leur foyer le droit d'apprendre ... c'est tous les jours que notre peuple lutte pour garder en France ses traditions et sa culture, apprendre sa langue et son histoire à ses enfants en émigration. (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3)

The January 1977 issue of *El Assifa*, an MTA publication in Marseilles, celebrated the fact that Maghrebi immigrants on strike in a SONACOTRA *foyer* in December 1976 in Aix had won the right to hold meetings, to watch films on Palestine and use some of the *foyer's* cultural budget to buy some sheep to celebrate the "Aïd el Kebir" on 2 December of that year (*El Assifa*, Numéro 12, janvier 1977) (3).

However, while the few examples given above show that religious festivals and references to Islam were acknowledged, they nonetheless appeared very rarely in the documentation of the *Comité Palestine* and the MTA. When they did, they were only mentioned to support a particular political point. Islam as such was almost completely absent from their discourse and was neither viewed as a main rallying force nor as an

end in itself. Religion, or rather the visible signs of religious celebration, were seen as markers of cultural identity and tradition. Their symbolic value was also acknowledged in as much as they could be (re-)interpreted and used to reinforce their justification for socio-political struggle and demands. This differed markedly from the inter-war nationalist discourse which posited religion at the heart of its political ideology.

However, just like for the *Etoile* and the PPA's militants in the 1930s, the Mosque represented a political symbol and rallying point for the *Mouvement*. After the murder of Djellali Ben Ali on 27 October 1971, the *Comité Palestine*, with *Secours Rouge*, organised a march towards the Paris Mosque ('Halte au terrorisme anti-arabe!') (7).⁹⁴ Similarly, when, on 14 September 1973, the MTA launched its "journée de protestation contre le racisme", it asked all Arab workers in the Paris region to stop work, and held a public meeting which gathered about 1000 workers outside the same symbolic place: the Paris Mosque (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, octobre 1973, *Frontière*, octobre 1973) (3). The ENA and the PPA had already chosen the Mosque as a rallying point and a political symbol, but they also denounced the construction of the Mosque by France as a further sign of colonial oppression. For the MTA, the Mosque was simply viewed as a religious symbol.

At a more grassroots level, a pamphlet written by Maghrebi strikers supported by the *Mouvement* at the Clichy plant of Cables de Lyon, and calling for solidarity and support amongst "Arab and immigrant brothers", showed that religion could nonetheless constitute a point of reference for political action:

Ce que nous comprenons, c'est que nous n'avons pas de valeur dans ce pays ... nous devons nous battre pour garder notre santé. Nous sommes en chair et en os et non en fer ... un proverbe arabe dit: "à celui qui perd sa santé il ne lui reste que la folie" ... Aujourd'hui, nous vous lançons, frères arabes et immigrés, un appel pour vous unir car comme dit un proverbe de l'Islam: "l'unité c'est la force. ('Appel des travailleurs des Cables de Lyon en grève à tous nos frères arabes et immigrés', undated) (3)

⁹⁴ Tract signed by the *Comité Palestine*, *Secours Rouge 18ème* and "[d]es habitants du quartier antiracistes".

The parallel between Arabness and Islam which is made here aims to make sense of Maghrebis' experience as immigrants, and to justify their action. Whilst the "Arab" proverb refers to the domain of the personal and is used to make sense of their plight and warn them against the implications that their state of alienation and dehumanisation ("nous sommes en chair et en os pas en fer") in French society might have, the Muslim proverb provides strategies of empowerment and ways of fighting against oppression.

For the *Etoile* and the PPA in the 1920s and 1930s, Islam constituted the very core of their ethno-national identity and the basis upon which their nationalist demands were based. How can the relative absence of religious references in the MTA's political discourse be accounted for? It would be erroneous to see it as a sign of secularisation of forms of political expression amongst Maghrebis in 1970s' France. After all, the MTA also fought for the introduction of prayer rooms in foyers and factories. However, the emphasis of the movement's political discourse was not really based on a modern reconstruction of Islam as a core political weapon, as it had been for nationalists in the inter-war period, but on other shifting and 'flexible' markers of identity (Arab-ness, class belonging, solidarity with Palestine, etc.) as 'points of identification' (Hall 1996a). Religion, or rather religious belonging was certainly one of them, but by no means the most important one. Indeed, religious celebrations were seen as one of the strategies available to Maghrebis to maintain their traditions and culture in France. Islam was integrated as one trope of cultural identity, but their sense of belonging to, and solidarity with the working class of France was over-riding, as was seen in the previous section. This may reflect a greater anchoring of Maghrebi immigrants' experience within a French class structure in the 1970s than in the 1920s and 1930s.

The movement's response to the "differentialist" and exclusive discourse of the French government, politicians and the media (who stigmatised immigration and considered Islam as incompatible with French democratic values) was to develop a universalist and open political discourse of inclusion and solidarity where religious and cultural differences, even though they were described as important, did not constitute an obstacle to unity between Arab, immigrant and French workers. By contrast, in the

ENA/PPA's discourse, religion was viewed as an irreconcilable marker of difference, and as the driving force for the establishment of an independent national state.

Let us now turn to the MTA's relationship with the Catholic Church. In the Algerian nationalist discourse in France in the 1920s and 1930s, the Catholic Church was consistently stigmatised for being an intrinsic part of France's project of colonial domination, and for attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. In contrast, in the 1970s, even though most of France's institutions were seen as prejudiced against immigrants, the key role that the Catholic Church played with regard to the *sans-papiers* meant that it was perceived differently within the MTA. Indeed, many Catholic leaders actively supported illegal immigrants who fought against the *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet*, and who demanded a work and resident permit. On 15 February 1972, three Tunisians and two Moroccans started a hunger strike in St-Hyppolite Church in Paris, as did thirteen Tunisians at 154, rue St Maur, in the annex of a church ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). This was a form of action that the inter-war nationalist movement had not adopted. Similar action took place at the Notre Dame de Ménilmontant Church in Paris where fifty six immigrants managed to get a work permit after six months of struggle ('Victoire. La carte de travail pour les 56 grévistes de la faim') (3).

By 1973, hunger strikes had spread to about twenty French towns and cities which led to the regularisation of 50,000 immigrants. The most revealing case, however, took place in Valence in December 1972, where nineteen Tunisians who were threatened with expulsion under the new *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet* went on hunger strike. Four Catholic priests in the city did not celebrate the Midnight Mass to show their solidarity with the *sans-papiers'* action (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 8 août 1996). The help and support of Catholic priests was fully acknowledged by members of the MTA. This shift in North Africans' perception of the Catholic Church from the colonial to the post-colonial era was a reflection of the major change in its approach towards Muslim migrants. In a hand-written document, an MTA activist reported the events in Valence in a rather lyrical way:

La richesse de l'expérience de Valence est que la grève de la faim rassemble immigrés et Français. Les Chrétiens, les curés, la jeunesse soutiendront les [T]unisiens en lutte. Dans toute la ville de Valence, Noël sera un Noël en Deuil: [u]ne grande manifestation de jeunes et d'immigrés traversera la ville de Valence à Minuit; ce sera une marche au flambeau rythmée par le martellement des tambours. Toutes les églises sonneront le tocsin, et les prêtres célébreront leur messe sur le thème de la grande misère matérielle et morale des immigrés en France: ils refuseront de célébrer la joie alors que des immigrés sont menacés dans leur vie et leur liberté en France.

('Lettre à un camarade en prison')

La voix des travailleurs arabes (Numéro 1, 1er janvier 1973), the MTA's publication, stated that two demonstrations in which immigrants and French people participated had taken place in Valence, and described how "après quelques semaines de lutte, et après cette marche silencieuse et le soutien de toute la population de Valence nos frères ont obtenu[] leurs droits: la carte de séjour et la carte de travail" (3). While the inter-war nationalist discourse argued that an insurmountable dichotomy existed between the French people and a Catholic Church which sided with imperialism, the MTA interpreted the Church's role as central to the welfare of immigrants and as embodying the generosity of the French people.

Actions such as the hunger strike in Valence were not presented solely as a way of securing rights for immigrants; they were seen as socio-political frameworks within which solidarity between immigrants and the French could be developed, by appealing to France's Christian values of compassion and tolerance. This contrasted with the view of inter-war nationalists who viewed Christianity as a danger, a threat to the last sphere that the coloniser had not conquered, that of the spiritual. Furthermore, their nationalist struggle was presented as a fight between the Cross and the Crescent.

What characterised the discourse of the MTA was the representation of the Catholic Church as close to the values of the French people, and therefore as anti-imperialist. Echoing a theme which had also been developed by the *Etoile* and the PPA, the MTA's discourse rhetorically showed the extent to which the status and treatment of immigrants in the hands of the French authorities were at odds with France's religious

and political values, as well as with public opinion. Here, religion was described in its most symbolic form: immigrants' "material and moral misery" in France became the main concern of Catholics. By contrast with what had happened during the colonial era, the French state no longer had the support of the country's moral guardian (the Catholic Church) to further its imperialist agenda. French legislation and policies on immigration and the officials and politicians behind them were seen as discriminatory and exclusive whilst immigrants, the French people and the Catholic Church were described as sharing the same values and concern.

Those signs of solidarity were used to define the boundaries of inclusiveness and shared values within French society. Indeed, a shift in representation took place: those who were officially marginalised became included and accepted by France's population and by the Catholic Church, whilst the authorities which introduced alienating and differentialist measures towards them were shown as inherently isolated and removed from the concerns of people whom they were meant to represent. The political class and the legal system were thus rhetorically marginalised.

To conclude, it is interesting to note that the MTA, through the relative decoupling of Islam from the political sphere in its discourse, only acknowledged visible forms of Muslim religious expression in as much as they conveyed markers of tradition and culture that could sustain social cohesion within a Maghrebi community fighting for recognition and rights. The lack of emphasis on religious belonging in the MTA's discourse may have facilitated the establishment of links of solidarity with the Catholic Church. Islam was mostly described as a facet of cultural identity and ethnic belonging which could sometimes be used as a rallying point of reference, as the antiracist demonstrations of November 1971 and September 1973 showed, but which never played as central a role as it did in the nationalist discourse and actions of the ENA and the PPA.

6.5 Culture as politics

The relationship between ethnicity and culture is as central to the understanding of the construction of the MTA's discourse on nation-ness as it is with that of the ENA/PPA. Jenkins argues that ethnicity is generally understood - in anthropology - as being about cultural differentiation and as being centrally concerned with culture. It evolves within and as a component of a particular cultural framework, and as a "social identity [it] is collective and individual, externalized in social action and internalized in personal identification" (1997: 12-13). In the MTA, like in the ENA/PPA, the shifting nature of ethnic boundaries was constantly defined through transactional cultural processes. Amongst Maghrebi supporters of the MTA, ethnic and cultural identity was often modulated and negotiated through the shifting boundaries of inclusion ("us") and exclusion ("them"). Both were by no means discrete spaces. Defining and constructing the Other often informed self-definition. Hall echoes this view when he argues that:

Identities are constructed through, not outside difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that this is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to what precisely it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside*, that the 'positive' meaning of any term - and thus its 'identity' - can be constructed ... Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected. (1996: 4-5)

The MTA's references to cultural identity were perhaps more informed by the experience of Maghrebi immigrants in France than had been the case in the ENA/PPA. The movement's aim was twofold: firstly, like the inter-war nationalist movement, culture was about maintaining North African traditions in France. Secondly, it was about developing and negotiating cultural strategies aimed at addressing North Africans' concerns, experience and socio-political action in the *Hexagone*, rather than in North Africa as had been the case of the ENA/PPA.

Those objectives were not dichotomous. They reinforced each other through a process of inclusion and exclusion. The extract of the letter written by the MTA supporter mentioned previously showed how French racism and ideological domination informed his argument that France was not the country of Maghrebi immigrants ('Chers camarades') (3). It argued that "nous ne pouvons oublier que notre pays ce n'est pas la France" and that it was only through a better understanding of their home country, and by extension its culture, that Maghrebis could develop a viable identity within France.⁹⁵ Thus, culture and national identity were defined through difference and the conviction that North African immigrants were made to feel different in France (e.g. through racism). Echoing the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, the MTA argued that Maghrebis did not see themselves as French as it was perceived that France rejected them and their culture only to impose triumphantly on them her own Western ideology.

Therefore, developing its own cultural response to French rejection and oppression was seen by the MTA as a viable way of constructing Maghrebis' diasporic identity and strengthening communitarian solidarity through cultural practice. This strategy reflected that of the *Etoile* and the PPA. It was an empowering and humanising process aimed at countering their alienation and challenging the reductive economic role in which they had been confined within French society, that of the "eternel Homo Oeconomicus", to use Talha's phrase (1981b), and to which the MTA often referred as slavery.⁹⁶ As Marié points out, the workplace was the only sphere where immigrants' existence was acknowledged:

ce n'est pas sur [le] terrain de l'urbain que le travailleur immigré trouve sa légitimité: elle est sur le terrain de la production. Là, la discrimination se fait sur le mode du corps machine, bête, pure force de travail. (Marié 1981: 339)

⁹⁵ See section Chapter six, section three.

⁹⁶ The MTA frequently referred to Maghrebis' experience in France as "slavery". See, for example, MTA documents such as the 'lettre à un camarade en prison' (1) (3), as well as their newspaper *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (3).

Within such a context, cultural activity was considered by the MTA as an efficient way of countering Maghrebi immigrants' alienation and exploitation in French society. Culture was a polysemic concept which was constructed as an inherent part of the MTA's political struggle. Indeed, as in the ENA/PPA's discourse, the celebration of a religious festival, immigrants' will to learn their language, and cultural activities organised by Maghrebis in the *foyers* and occupied factories were all seen by the MTA as markers of cultural expression.

El Assifa, the theatre company founded by some members of the MTA, played a key role in the movement's cultural strategy. Its role went beyond that of artists and theatre companies performing for the ENA and the PPA. For the latter, cultural action and political mobilisation were essentially taking place within an intra-ethnic framework. Even though these cultural performances were seen as important for the nationalist movement in the inter-war period (political meetings and rallies often featured plays and music to reinforce the political message of the organisation), it put more emphasis on the discursive evocation of a high culture within the context of a higher Arabo-Islamic civilisation rooted in history and in the sacred than in the importance of cultural practice.

By contrast, *El Assifa* described itself as "un collectif composé de travailleurs immigrés et de travailleurs français, participant directement aux mouvements et luttes des travailleurs immigrés en France" which expressed itself through theatre, cinema, songs, dance, street events, and so on. Its objectives were quite different from those developed by inter-war nationalists. Firstly, it aimed to "désacraliser la culture" and make it accessible to all ('Collectif Al Assifa').⁹⁷ Secondly, its purpose was to fight what it saw as "le racisme culturel" ('Qu'est-ce que Assifa?') (3). Thirdly, it endeavoured to ensure that immigrants' experience and struggles were better known in France, as well as develop and foster cultural expression amongst migrants in order to fight against racism, exploitation and oppression. *El Assifa* argued that "[c]ontre la situation d'acculturés qui nous est imposée, contre le racisme culturel, nous cherchons à faire

⁹⁷ *El Assifa* started to perform in August 1973 during the strike action at the Lip factory, after a meeting between immigrant and French workers. Their first play was entitled "Ça travaille, ça travaille et ça ferme sa gueule" ('Collectif Al Assifa' and 'Qu'est-ce que Assifa?') (3).

reconnaître notre culture d'origine dans le respect des différences" ('Qu'est-ce que Assifa?') (3).

Therefore, within the MTA, culture was perhaps more open and rooted in practice and action than it had been in the ENA/PPA. It was not only about cultural preservation but also about opening a front of solidarity with the French. Occupied factories and *foyers*, demonstrations, parties, celebrations and theatre performances were considered as privileged frameworks for cultural manifestation. *El Assifa* ("the Storm") also produced "Radio Assifa", a monthly series of programmes on tape (made by the *El Assifa* theatre company, music groups, as well as other MTA militants) about the life and struggles of immigrants which had similar social and political aims as the theatre company:

«La Tempête» - symbole de la volonté de l'immigration arabe de prendre la parole; de combattre, au-delà des problèmes de chaque jour et du racisme, l'écrasement culturel auquel elle est soumise ... Cela fait des années que les immigrés arabes démontrent [qu'ils] ne sont pas seulement des ouvriers de chantier qui travaillent, travaillent, travaillent; «ils savent aussi ouvrir leur gueule»... pour imposer leurs droits, l'existence de leur culture ... «Radio Assifa» ... rendra compte de la vie et des luttes qui écrivent peu à peu l'histoire de l'immigration arabe en France; elle se fera l'écho de toutes les tentatives qui jettent les bases d'une nouvelle culture. ('Ici Radio Assifa') (3)

How can this relationship between culture and politics be interpreted? It could be argued that they were mutually shaped within the MTA by a binary process: that of politicisation of culture and culturalisation of politics. On the one hand, and to a far greater extent than the nationalist movement in the inter-war period, the MTA endeavoured to construct and use culture and cultural practice as political tools, a strategy which could be defined as politicisation of culture.

The editorial of the MTA's publication *Akhbar El Haraka* (1 May 1976) (3) evoked the problem that the movement was faced with when defining the strategic role that the MTA's theatre company, *El Assifa*, could play as part of the cultural life and political struggle of Maghrebi immigrants in France. The author wondered whether

"l'animation culturelle se réduit ... à des représentations théâtrales? L'animation culturelle peut-elle transformer la vie culturelle d'un quartier ou d'une usine et contribuer à sa lutte de manière réelle et durable?". This question was answered in the same editorial as it recalled how, since 1975, strikes in the Sonacotra *foyer* of St Denis and the refusal of residents of the Nanterre *foyer* to pay their rent had led to a spread of the strike action to many other *foyers* throughout the country in 1975 and 1976, and how the immigrants involved in those actions had developed their own political and cultural life (Ibid.). In an interview given in April 1976, *El Assifa* stated that it put on performances in a number of foyers SONACOTRA such as Romain Rolland, Pierrefitte, St Denis where strikes were taking place and that in each foyer, they also organised political and cultural debates ('El Assifa') (3).

The MTA differed from the ENA/PPA in that it questioned and assessed far more explicitly and extensively the role that cultural practice could play within its wider political aims. Both the political and the cultural were seen as inseparable. The fundamental relationship between the two and their complementarity were spelt out even more clearly when the editorial referred to the action of *El Assifa* in St-Bruno and that of the MTA in Barbès :

L'intervention culturelle de Assifa à St Bruno, l'intervention militante du MTA à Barbès (Palestine-Maroc-campagne Sonacotra) et surtout la jonction de ces deux mouvements furent des pôles de résistance à l'encerclement du mouvement comme à la liquidation interne (quoique cet acquis reste encore très fragile). (*Akhbar El Haraka*, 1 May 1976) (3)

The movement's theatre company also emphasised the political importance of its action when it declared that apart from the shows that it organised in Barbès, members of the company also focused on their work as militants of the MTA:

Théoriquement, on est censé faire un travail militant à Barbès, ceci faisant partie du travail du MTA dans son ensemble. Animer le quartier c'est être présent: connaître les gens, les problèmes du quartier ... Et aussi théoriquement les membres de la troupe doivent faire partie d'un noyau

militant ... sachant Barbès occupé par la police, le fait de jouer dans la rue avec les instruments de musique attire la sympathie de la population ce qui empêche une intervention répressive, montre l'aspect autoritaire de la police et en même temps sape son autorité. Notre but est que l'animation créée avec la participation effective des gens continue après notre départ de Barbès ... notre activité culturelle ne s'arrêtant pas seulement au théâtre. ('El Assifa') (3)

As these extracts illustrate, culture was posited as an inherent part of the movement's political and antiracist struggle, and as an effective way of mobilising and maintaining cohesion amongst Maghrebi migrants, reinforcing solidarity between immigrants and the French, and countering oppression in all its forms. Therefore, the role of cultural practice in the MTA's political project was far more important than in the ENA/PPA. For the latter, plays and musical events involved North Africans. They focused mainly on their experience in the colonies rather than in France, and only aimed to fulfill the first of the above-mentioned objectives of the MTA (socio-cultural cohesion and political mobilisation).

In the 1970s, the *Mouvement's* ambitious multi-ethnic framework for cultural action was emphasised by *El Assifa*, which defined itself as more than a theatre company:

Assifa n'a jamais été une "troupe de théâtre", mais un collectif d'action culturelle composé de [F]rançais et d'immigrés et dont la vocation demeure de favoriser un courant d'expression et d'action auprès des immigrés et [F]rançais, contre l'esclavage, contre le racisme. ('Collectif Al Assifa') (3)

For the MTA, the cultural action of *El Assifa* was important. It enabled the movement to develop a cultural strategy which countered the cultural marginalisation of Maghrebis, and to fight racism and imperialist oppression by involving French people.

Within the movement, the politicisation of culture was also accompanied by a process of culturalisation of politics. The MTA embodied the idea that the political rights of a particular ethnic group in France were better served by an organisation

representing and gathering immigrants who shared a common 'ethnicity' and 'culture'. It viewed Maghrebis as the main victims of racism and social, political and economic marginalisation in France. In a context in which they saw 'Arabs' as being stigmatised in France and abroad, it elaborated Arabness and Arab culture as an empowering tool capable of unifying Maghrebis around common values and projects in order to counter alienation and victimisation.

This process of establishing Maghrebi identity and culture as the foundation of MTA militants' political identity, in other words of structuring the latter along ethnic lines (culturalisation of politics) had several roots. On the one hand, Arab nationalism was certainly an ideology shared by a number of post-colonial Maghrebis on both sides of the Mediterranean and by Arabs in the Middle East. And on the other hand, the underlying or open racism towards Maghrebis which was noticeable in both mainstream and extreme political discourses in France also informed, to a large extent, the movement's ideology and discourse. Indeed, it considered that the best way of countering the politicisation of Maghrebi culture (described as 'too different', 'inassimilable', 'intertwined with religion' and inherently incapable of accommodating 'Western democratic values') by French politicians and the media was to (re-)define and sustain their culture as a means of resistance against stigmatisation. This was a process which, in turn, also strengthened the movement's political struggle (politicisation of culture).

Therefore, culture as practice played a far more central role in the action and discourse of the MTA than it did in that of the *Etoile/PPA*. By contrast with the nationalist movement in the inter-war period, culture, for the MTA, was no longer rooted in history and in evocations of the greatness of Arab culture and civilisation, but rather, closely linked with the immediacy of political struggle on the ground. In the dehumanising context of immigration in France, it allowed Maghrebis to convey and maintain their cultural heritage in 'exile' and 'humanise' their experience. It was a quintessentially empowering political process.

However, this analysis of culture within the discourse of the MTA would be incomplete if it focused only on the tension between politics and culture. The interplay

between ethnicity, culture, nation and nationalism needs to be examined. Bauer defines the nation as a cultural community whose "national character is determined by the common cultural values transmitted from earlier generations" (1996: 43), and Gutiérrez (1997: 163) argues that "culture ... as the medium of communication and cohesion of peoples of industrial nations ... claims ethnicity". But can those cultural values underpinning ethnicity and the nation be taken at face value? It could be said that Gutiérrez inaccurately asserts that "the nation's display of prestigious ethnic past which recollects solid experience and tradition, not artifice, invention or fabrication, is the source that provides authenticity and a collective desire for renovation and posterity" (Ibid). Indeed, he does not acknowledge the extent to which "dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite pristine purities restored" (Gellner 1983: 56).

Most nations are founded on a number of precepts, ethnic and cultural values which were invented, re-constructed or modified, as Hobsbawm has shown (1984). Therefore, as Gellner puts it, "nationalism is not what it seems, and above all what it seems to itself. The cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition" (1983: 56). But for what purpose? As was seen in the above analysis of the MTA's discourse, cultural practice on the one hand, and political activism on the other, were seen and used as synergic forces to enhance the social and political projects of Maghrebis in that movement. Indeed, as an internal document of the MTA highlighted, "le travail d'explication s'accompagne d'un épanouissement culturel" ('Introduction: Bilan sur la lutte pour la carte de travail, sur la base de Ménilmontant par rapport à St Maur (le passé), pour en tirer des enseignements et des règles de travail', 1973) (3).

Not only was culture seen as the natural repository of political legitimacy (Gellner 1983: 55) but political action, in turn, sustained, developed and legitimised Maghrebi/"Arab" culture, or a certain vision of it promoted by the movement. It was therefore a binary process of legitimation, giving Maghrebis the autonomy of action that was required by the nature of the movement's socio-political action. It was an empowering tension aimed at turning isolation and marginalisation into autonomy of thought and action.

Even though culture played a different role in the colonial and post-colonial movements, this binary process of legitimation within the MTA also characterised the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA. But a major difference was that for the latter, culture was also constructed in exclusive terms (as inherently irreconcilable with, and superior to, French culture), and structured on modalities similar to those used by the French to refer to their own culture and civilisation at the apogee of their colonial power. The aim of nationalists at the time was to build a national culture strong enough to underpin the modern nation-state that they wanted to establish. By contrast, the MTA posited culture along inclusive lines in order to build a multi-ethnic front of solidarity. Cultural expression, which was rooted in practice, aimed to present Maghrebi/"Arab" and French cultures as different, yet compatible with each other.

To conclude, it could be said that the cultural dimension of Maghrebi immigrant workers' identity in France was central to the MTA's political struggle. In the inter-war period, the ENA/PPA's discourse emphasised the fact that culture was a marker of ethno-national difference and never really acknowledged the specificity of North African migrant workers' cultural experience in France. On the other hand, the Arab nationalist stance developed by the MTA placed culture in its diasporic context, as rooted both in emigration (the "Arab" culture and traditions that immigrants had brought with them), and immigration (a shared experience anchored in France and underpinned by class kinship). The MTA saw Maghrebis as Arab workers of France who shared common values with French workers, but who were distinct as far as culture and traditions were concerned.

Furthermore, culture itself was defined within a politically strategic framework and was rarely sustained by markers of religion. However, by contrast with the *Etoile* and the *Parti du peuple algérien*, religion was limited, to a large extent, to visible signs of cultural belonging.⁹⁸ Culture was perceived amongst immigrant political activists of the *Mouvement* as an empowering means of challenging racism, exploitation and marginalisation, of mobilising and establishing solidarity with the French population.

⁹⁸ This trend also marked the relationship of many so-called "Second Generation" Maghrebis with religion in the 1980s (see, for example, Bariki 1984: 427-445).

Moreover, it could be argued that the movement's discourse on culture and traditions, which aimed to reinforce socio-cultural cohesion amongst Maghrebi immigrants, implicitly evoked a connection and some continuity with the past, with history. But how was this link constructed in the movement's discourse?

6.6 Memory and history: anti-colonialism and the Algerian War

The study of the MTA's discourse carried out in the previous sections highlights the salience of cultural practice in the socio-political action of the movement. However, it should not hide the fact that many tropes of Maghrebis' identity, including their perception of tradition, were "embedded", reconstructed and redefined within a historical framework through a process of memory. In the inter-war period, this had enabled the ENA/PPA to give a sense of timelessness to a culture and traditions that it had re-constructed to form the basis of a national culture indispensable to a modern nation-state. In the 1970s, Maghrebis' traditions and culture were posited as transcending nation-states, and as markers of Arabness.

This process of celebrating certain traditions, as well as cultural and religious practices aimed to give them a character of continuity and, as a corollary, legitimised the MTA's own political role, discourse and action, as it had done with the *Etoile* and the PPA during the inter-war period.

This political perception of culture, however, contained a number of dilemmas and ambiguities. Indeed, the sense of timelessness attached to one's culture and traditions, and the identification to cultural values and characteristics seen as quintessentially different from the Other's, both conjure up the idea that culture is a 'vehicle' of identity *par excellence*. This discourse also implies that culture is ancient, unchanged and unaffected by processes of cultural and socio-political interaction, in other words that it conveys a form of stable truth and "purity", as well as constitute a rigid framework of reference. How can this tension be accounted for? In the light of our interpretation of cultural and ethnic identity being transactional and shifting, this historical view of Maghrebi culture and traditions deserves to be assessed, if not

challenged. The very process of nation-building among North African countries both in the colonial and post-colonial eras underlines the evolutionary, circumstantial, negotiated and imagined (Anderson 1983) nature of ethnic and cultural identity.⁹⁹ However, this perception of culture may also have something to do with another historically defined dimension of ethnic identity which, as Jenkins notes in a study of Barth's work, is to some extent stable:

While Barth's more recent discussions of ethnic diversity and pluralism (1984, 1989) still focuses on interaction and negotiability, something else emerges: ongoing 'streams of tradition' or 'universes of discourse' in which individual actors differentially participate, and which - despite the use of imagery which suggests movement and practice - possess a degree of stability over time. History combines with the give-and-take of the moment in the social construction of ethnic boundaries and identities. (Jenkins 1997: 142)

This analysis opens up a space where both sources of ethnic identity formation and boundaries not only coexist, but also interact and complement each other (i.e. the transactional present and the somewhat 'stable' past). But even this interpretation does not provide all the answers to the problem posed. Indeed, the argument put forward here would probably prove salient in a number of studies of ethnicity and nationalism, but it does not address issues pertaining to cultural and ethnic hybridity, particularly in the post-colonial era.

For Papastergiadis, "the clash of cultures that colonialism invariably provoked, rather than producing a neat bifurcation between coloniser and colonised, encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids" (1997: 264). This statement is even more relevant within the context of post-colonial Maghrebi immigration in France whose identity was shaped through transactional cultural processes within a dominant cultural framework (see Sayad 1984: 387). To understand better the question of hybridity, one needs to assess the extent to which it relates to the tension informing the boundaries of ethnic identity and nation-ness. Papastergiadis states convincingly that:

⁹⁹ See the study of nation-ness in the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, chapter two, section four.

Hybridity evokes narratives of origin and encounter. Whenever the process of identity formation is premised on an exclusive boundary between 'us' and 'them', the hybrid, born out of the transgression of this boundary, figures as a form of danger, loss and degeneration. If, however, the boundary is marked positively - to solicit exchange and inclusion - then the hybrid may yield strength and vitality. Hence the conventional value of the hybrid is always positioned in relation to the value of purity, along axes of inclusion and exclusion. In some cases, the 'curse' of hybridity is seen as a mixed blessing. (Papastergiadis 1997: 259)

It seems clear from this quote that there is a direct correlation between the way in which the boundary of identity is constructed and perceived and the very nature of the hybrid. The positive and transactional shaping of the former will contribute to the creation of a positive hybrid identity. It could be argued that both post-colonial societies in North Africa and Maghrebi immigrant workers in France developed hybrid identities which were somewhat problematic. The socio-political and cultural specificities of North African countries informed, to a large extent, the identity of migrants arriving in France and, therefore, should be assessed in their own right.

In the colonial era, the Algerian nationalist movement was characterised by its hybrid nature. The *Etoile* grew in France in the mid-1920s before developing in Algeria, which was itself a country whose people had been very much marked by French colonial domination and cultural influences. It could be argued that Algeria herself was a nation whose nature was hybrid. French culture had left a legacy that the new government could not ignore. Algerians were also traditionally rooted by their Arab and Berber cultures.¹⁰⁰

Before 1962, the questions of identity and language had been closely linked to each other and had been clearly problematic for the French colonial authorities. Indeed, the French coloniser viewed hybridity as a dangerous "transgression" of the boundary of identity, a threat to the stability of colonial rule and made every possible attempt to

¹⁰⁰ To a lesser extent, the presence of a Jewish community in North Africa left lasting cultural influences which the Algerian nationalist movement did not recognise as part of a national culture marked by what Gallissot refers to as "l'algérianité" (1984: 49).

impose French - a marker of colonial cultural domination - as the official language of Algeria. Classical Arabic, the only written language in pre-colonial North Africa, was seen as the only serious challenger to French and was declared a foreign language in 1938. Vernacular languages (colloquial Arabic and Berber) were denigrated as inferior languages (Benrabah 1995, Granguillaume 1990 & 1997).¹⁰¹

In the wake of Algerian independence, the opportunity to recognise the full cultural and linguistic diversity and the inclusive hybrid nature of the new nation-state was there. Intellectuals such as Kateb Yacine suggested that French should be used as a "butin de guerre" (Provost 1996: 44) and both vernacular dimensions of identity ("arabité" and "amazighité") could have been recognised as inherently part of Algeria's persona.

However, the Algerian authorities rejected all the opportunities that such a choice would have offered and opted to (re-)create or, many authors would argue, reinvent (a term whose pleonastic nature reflects the ambiguities of the Algerian regime's cultural project) a single and exclusive Arab identity closely tied to liturgic Arabic and Islam, an identity which did not reflect that of many Algerians, but which would legitimise their grip on power, as the FLN government hoped.

In so doing, they indirectly espoused and carried on with the destructive cultural and linguistic policies of the French by denying any space for Algerian ethno-cultural specificity. They merely replaced French with another language that most Algerians could not understand (Benrabah 1999). Colloquial languages were again denigrated and Francophones and intellectuals were seen as a "fifth column" by the ruling party.¹⁰² As Provost argues, "toute l'histoire de l'Algérie depuis son indépendance a été marquée par cette proclamation anti-française du régime algérien, comme si celui-ci ne pouvait exister hors de cette geste de libération contre l'ex-puissance coloniale" (Provost 1996: 26). This exclusive cultural policy, which saw any form of hybridisation as a "danger" and a "loss", greatly contributed to the destructuring and alienation of Algerian society

¹⁰¹ Further studies of the role of language in the Maghreb include Santucci (1984) and Schliesendinger (1973).

¹⁰² It is interesting to note that even though the ruling classes aimed to "arabise" the country through education, French continued to play an important role amongst the Algerian middle class (see Santucci 1984) and politicians in the ruling party often sent their own children to bi-lingual schools.

and is one of the underlying factors behind the civil war which simmered throughout the 1980s and started with the cancellation of the legislative elections in 1992 (see Stone 1997: 58-80).

The shaping of a cultural identity and memory in the Maghreb is relevant to this analysis as "first generation" Maghrebi migrants had been influenced by the cultural and historical environment of their home-country. However, beyond this "cultural baggage" that they carried with them, it could be argued that immigration in France created a favourable terrain for the emergence of a hybrid cultural identity which appears to be even more complex. The diasporic nature of the experience of post-colonial workers living within the dominant cultural framework of France (the ex-colonial power) created a whole new set of variables, each intervening to some extent in the interplay of identity formation. But how can those "layers" of identity be defined and how did they interact?

In his case-study on multi-ethnic alliances, Baumann (1997: 209) pertinently stresses the distinction that exists between two complementary discourses amongst ethnic minorities: the "dominant discourse", where differences of culture are seen as consistent with differences of ethnic identity, and the "demotic discourse" which is an alternative discourse opening up possibilities of alliances between ethnic groups:

Where the dominant discourse views 'culture' as the reified possession of 'ethnic' groups or 'communities', the demotic discourse questions and dissolves this equation between 'culture', ethnos, and 'community'. On the basis of this dual discursive competence, 'culture' and 'community' are rendered into terms of active negotiation and debate, the social processes that underlie the forging of multi-ethnic 'communities of action' out of reified 'communities' and 'cultures'. (Baumann 1997: 209-210)

This description reflects the ideological tension which existed within the MTA's discourse even more so than in that of the ENA/PPA. The negotiation of identity is characterised by its shifting nature and informed by a binary process. On the one hand, references to cultural, ethnic and religious differences are sometimes put to the fore in an exclusive and affirmative strategy of empowerment and socio-political counteraction

(dominant discourse). On the other hand, calls for multi-ethnic support and solidarity become prominent, and differences are either played down or acknowledged selectively when they are seen as a unifying factor with multi-ethnic forces in order to create or participate in 'communities of action' (demotic discourse).

Even though these two forms of discourse on the past could also be noted in the documents of the *Etoile/PPA*, they were rooted in frameworks which were different from those of the MTA. For the former movement, the dominant discourse on the past referred mainly to what it saw as a great Arabo-Islamic civilisation, and the demotic discourse to French revolution and its legacy. The dominant discourse on the past informed the movement's nationalist agenda of building intra-ethnic solidarity and mobilisation in an exclusive manner, whilst its demotic discourse shaped its demands for equality, highlighted the legitimacy of North Africans to self-determination, and characterised its evocation of a multi-ethnic independent Algeria.

The interplay between dominant and demotic discourses was structured differently within the MTA, and it transcended the constraints that the *Etoile/PPA*'s struggle for a national state had imposed on its discourse. It was very much rooted in the movement's action for rights and against racism within France. The dominant part of the MTA's discourse related to more recent history, that of colonial oppression and post-colonial racism, in order to construct and sustain markers of identity, and justify strategic political choices and actions. The events related to the Diab case clearly illustrated this. On 29 November 1972, Mohamed Diab, a mentally ill Algerian immigrant was killed at Versailles police station. *Le Monde* (1 décembre 1972) reported the tragic incident as being the result of Diab's violent attack, injuring several policemen. The article, which reflected the conclusions reached by the police enquiry, stated that after he was arrested for indecent behaviour in a hospital where he was a patient, he was taken to the Versailles police station where he hit several policemen with a chair and tried to escape:

Toujours armé de sa chaise, M. Diab aurait alors tenté de gagner la sortie du commissariat.

Trouvant sur son passage le sous-brigadier Robert Marquet ... Il le menaça à son tour. M. Marquet

déclare avoir alors ouvert le placard dans lequel se trouvaient les armes et s'est emparé d'un fusil mitrailleur. M. Diab se serait alors jeté sur lui, et au cours de la lutte, une rafale serait partie, atteignant l'ouvrier au thorax et le tuant sur le coup. (*Le Monde*, 1 décembre 1972)

The judge in charge of the case heard the testimonies of key-witnesses such as Diab's wife and his neighbour, both present at the station at the time of his death. Their version of the incident drew a completely different picture of the circumstances of his death from the one produced in the police report. Indeed, their account suggested that, far from being "armed with a chair", he had been killed by the policeman whilst he was standing unarmed (*Le Monde*, 7 décembre 1972).¹⁰³ The case, however, looked bound to be closed and the policeman involved would avoid prosecution.

However, the reaction of the MTA was immediate and played a central role in the fight for justice for the Diab family. The movement's support for the victims of racism was more pro-active than that of the ENA/PPA in the inter-war period whose role was often limited to denouncing these racist acts in its documentation.¹⁰⁴ The MTA's action was two-pronged: it was based on solidarity between "Arabs" on the one hand (dominant discourse), and on a strategy of multi-ethnic alliance and mobilisation on the other (demotic discourse).¹⁰⁵

The case was presented by the MTA within a clear historical context. The fact that the murder had taken place in a *commissariat* was symbolically important for the movement which described it as "[un] assassinat de sang[-]froid à la mitrailleuse, sous le drapeau français, par un policier" ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). The policeman was seen as a representative of the state and the location of the incident came metaphorically to embody France and her flag. This description of the killing illustrates the fact that the MTA's assessment of the case was within a historical and dialectical

¹⁰³ The use of the expression "armé d'une chaise" in this *Le Monde* article is far from innocent. It somehow reinforces the threatening nature of Diab's behaviour and prepares the reader to the reaction of the policeman, which is discursively condoned as an act of "légitime défense".

¹⁰⁴ See section 4.2.

¹⁰⁵ December 1972 marked the creation of the *Comité de défense de la vie et des droits des travailleurs immigrés* (CDDVTI) which the MTA saw as "the start of a mass organisation in which unity between the French and immigrants would be achieved". This Comité played a key role in the Diab campaign ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3).

interpretative framework where Maghrebi immigrants were the victims of oppression from the French state: "La réponse est rapide et vive. C'est la réponse du cœur. Les ouvriers comprennent tout de suite la vérité sur ce crime car ils en ont l'expérience historique et sociale" (Ibid). This very much echoed the ENA/PPA's interpretation of racist violence as involving the French state and as a characteristic of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The Diab case was put into a historical framework of oppression of North Africans consistent with that of the inter-war nationalists. Diab's murder became a further demonstration of racism and violence on the part of the French state against Maghrebis.

The movement developed a binary discourse on this case. On the one hand, this discourse was of a dominant nature. It drew upon North African immigrants' experience of French colonial and post-colonial repression in order to mobilise them on this issue in the "foyers", in local markets, as well as in the workplace (in large factories such as Renault and Chausson). This reflected the inter-war nationalist discourse which drew upon the memory of colonial oppression to mobilise Maghrebis on specific issues. On the other hand, the MTA's dialectical interpretation of the case was set within a class perspective which presented the murder as affecting all workers and as a further illustration of oppression against workers (demotic discourse). This account highlights the attempts made by the MTA to build solidarity and consensus against racism and oppression on the basis of class. This is an illustration of MTA militants' self-definition as workers caught in a class struggle and marks one of the aspects of their demotic discourse. This contrasted with the ENA/PPA's demotic discourse, which attempted to establish solidarity with the French not on the basis of class, but rather on the basis of shared universalist values inherited from the French Revolution.

The dominant nature of the MTA's discourse was undeniably strong and was closely tied to history and memory. History gave them an interpretative framework of reference on issues affecting Maghrebis in France, and inversely, current events reinforced the pedagogical nature of those historical events. In that sense, this process which characterised the MTA's use of history evoked that of the ENA/PPA. Indeed, far from being only a one way process where the MTA extracted elements of history to

apply to its current discourse and action, past and present mutually informed each other and shaped the movement's interpretation of past and present events and trends. Memory encapsulated past struggles and experience and its content could be recalled and unleashed by the present, as the MTA's incantatory discourse and reaction to the death of Mohamed Diab showed:

La réponse exigée par les arabes [sic] doit être à la hauteur du cri de désespoir et de haine qui s'échappe de leur poitrine: l'assassinat par la police a touché les arabes, il a touché la mémoire et fait remonter les souvenirs: toute la rancœur du passé, la rancœur accumulée fait surface. Ce crime a choqué ... et tout cela va chercher très loin dans les tréfonds de la mémoire collective, donc par définition, toute réponse doit chercher très haut. La réponse sera de taille, de la taille du crime, ou ne sera pas. Telle est la réflexion des arabes. (Ibid.)

In this passage, a direct dialectical correlation is made between the present (the incident) and the past ("l'assassinat ... a touché la mémoire"). It is a tension in which memory informs action ("donc par définition, toute réponse doit chercher très haut"). The use of this particular kind of discourse is revealing of the way in which those concepts and spheres of interpretation interact at different levels, both literally and figuratively. Feelings of "rancœur", buried in the depth of memory, are evoked. They "resurface" from the distant past to inform their current experience and interpretation. There is a metaphorical use of language where the past belongs to, and shifts upward from, the lower sphere of memory of suffering ("les tréfonds", "remonter", etc.) and the future of their reaction is seen as belonging to the higher sphere of action ("réponse [...] à la hauteur du cri de désespoir ... La réponse sera de taille"). This form of metaphorical representation of the relationship between past and present did not appear in the discourse of the inter-war nationalist movement in the colonial era. This could be explained by the fact that, for the ENA/PPA, evocations of colonial oppression were still rooted in the present or the recent past.

Let us now examine the interaction between dominant and demotic discourses on memory and suffering, and the way in which these discourses informed present action.

The temptation was high amongst Maghrebi militants of the MTA to let the dominant discourse on memory lead to the adoption of a dominant strategy. In that case, the reaction to the racist murders would be initiated and carried out along ethnic lines. After all, Maghrebis were well aware that they were the main focus of prejudice and that many racist attacks targeted them as "Arabs". This reflected the ENA/PPA's awareness that racism and discrimination affected Muslims on both sides of the Mediterranean. MTA militants' sense of being the victims of persecution, racism and exploitation was directly correlated to the recent past of colonial oppression and struggle in North Africa. Indeed, the "ghosts" of the past, and more specifically of the Algerian war, were omnipresent in the way they structured their action and discourse. In *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (1 janvier 1973), the MTA publication, Fatna Diab made a direct link between her brother's death and the killing of Algerian pro-independence protesters by the French police on 17 October 1961 when she declared:

J'ai vu mon frère mourir assassiné par la police fasciste. Des dizaines d'autres arabes ont été assassinés. On les jette dans la Seine et on entend dire les racistes que les arabes s'entretuent. En réalité tous ces frères sont victimes des racistes. Si nous, les arabes, on ne fait rien, comment voulez-vous que les français se rendent compte de quelque chose? Si on s'unit, alors les français viendront avec nous, parce que ce qu'on demande, c'est la justice. On veut que chaque fois la Vérité se fasse. Les racistes mentent, et nous, nous luttons pour la Vérité. (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, 1 janvier 1973) (3)

This dominant discourse was mainly addressed to North African immigrants and was, as in the case of the ENA/PPA, rooted and interpreted within a colonial context. However, while the inter-war nationalist movement focused mostly on historical figures (such as Abd-el-Kader) and events (such as racist crimes committed by colonists) which had happened in North Africa, the MTA referred to examples of colonial oppression and to figures who had fought colonialism on both sides of the Mediterranean. Several examples of this connection between past and present in the MTA's documentation illustrate this. An internal document shows that the movement sent one of its activists,

who had just taken part in the demonstration organised after Mohamed Diab's death, to Valence where Maghrebi *sans-papiers* were on hunger strike, in order to explain, as a representative of the Paris Committee, the similar fight of hunger-striker Saïd Bouziri in Paris and create unity of action. The nick-name of the MTA activist (Ali la pointe) was reminiscent of the Battle of Algiers and of one of the leading figures of this episode of the war of independence. An internal report assessing the impact of the *Comité Palestine's* action after the murder of Djellali Ben Ali on 27 October 1971 stated that tracts were distributed outside a cinema which showed *La Bataille d'Alger* ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali').¹⁰⁶ This report also argued that by mobilising and protesting against this racist murder, "les ouvriers arabes renouent avec leurs traditions nationales, les traditions nationales révolutionnaires. Ils entonnent l'hymne du FLN. Ils renouent avec la tradition qui leur est propre" ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali') (7).

At the end of 1973, after the wave of racist murders which took place in Marseilles following the killing of Désiré Guerlache, a bus driver, by a mentally ill Algerian, the MTA declared that:

Nos pays furent colonisés et tout fut mis en place pour qu'ils demeurent sous-développés ... Le colonialisme de papa est peut-être mort, mais il y a en France et en Europe des colonisés: les travailleurs immigrés ... Depuis Hitler, les fascistes emploient partout les mêmes méthodes: hier le juif, le métèque, aujourd'hui l'arabe. Mais les travailleurs arabes ont réagi. Ils ont réagi justement en utilisant l'arme commune des ouvriers: la grève. (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, octobre 1973) (3)

Those few examples of mostly dominant discourse on the past illustrate the extent to which concepts, events and people could shift in time, find a new role and be internalised to create trans-historical commonalities and new interpretative frameworks for identity and action. Evocations of the past undoubtedly affected, if not informed the perspective, discourse and action of the movement. The above-mentioned extract also

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Pigot was judged in 1977, some six years after he had killed Djellali. The court declared that his act was not motivated by racism, and he received a prison sentence of five years, three of them suspended (see, for example, *Le Matin*, 22 juin 1977, *Libération* and *Le Monde*, 23 juin 1977).

shows that the ENA/PPA's nationalist project of bringing racism to an end by defeating colonialism failed. In the eyes of MTA militants, colonialism had left deep wounds in North Africa and still oppressed immigrants.

The strategy that the MTA decided to adopt after the death of Mohamed Diab was more open to alliances and consensus. After all, it had learnt the lesson from past actions and saw the limits of such an exclusive strategy. Indeed, after the death of Djellali Ben Ali on 27 October 1971, the *Comité Palestine* organised a large protest in which about 4,000 people took part. In spite of a real will on the *Comité's* part to involve more French people in their antiracist activities, most of the protesters were Maghrebi ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). The scale of their protest action did not lead to a reduction in the number of racist murders and it proved to have little impact on racism. This reflected the ENA/PPA's awareness that its anti-colonial and therefore anti-racist fight was less effective without the support of the French people. The MTA's strategy needed to be of a demotic and inclusive nature. "Bridges" between immigrants and French public opinion had to be built.

After Diab's death, MTA supporters were aware that solidarity based on Algerian nationality could be taken for granted, and that it would constitute the starting point for a broadening of support ("Diab était algérien, et l'émigration algérienne est dès lors partie prenante. Elle entraîne le reste avec elle") (Ibid.). But this wider basis for solidarity had to be fought for. Similarly, the inter-war nationalist movement viewed its support by Algerian Muslims as a basis upon which wider mobilisation had to be built. The MTA considered that its efforts should focus on initiatives aimed at educating and encouraging the creation of alliances with the French population. The "low" dominant nature of memory of past suffering should inform a "higher" demotic purpose which would touch a wider audience, interpellate both the French and the state, and lead to concrete political action such as a protest march to the Justice Ministry:

Il faut toucher l'ensemble de l'opinion, il faut ébranler les consciences tranquilles, faire savoir, atteindre l'état ... tel est le raisonnement que font les travailleurs immigrés ... de là naîtra l'idée: Marche sur le Ministère de la Justice - marche de protestation. (Ibid)

This was a strategy which was characterised by its hybrid nature where the boundary between "us" and "them" was "marked positively to solicit exchange and vitality" (Papastergiadis 1997). It conveyed tropes of political action which are, as in the case of the ENA/PPA, inherently universalist and empowering.

However, the interaction between a dominant discourse on the past and a more open and inclusive strategy for the present might not have been the only link between memory on the one hand, and current action and discourse on the other. It is indeed essential to assess whether there were other relationships between them. As was seen above, the MTA had occasionally been attracted by a more dominant strategy which reflected their discourse on memory of the past with points of reference such as past racist attacks, colonialism and other types of struggle. But the demotic dimension of memory also needs to be analysed. That sphere of reminiscence conjured up past events, concepts and ideas which were inclusive and open in their nature. A case in point was the anti-racist demonstration organised in Paris on 16 December 1972 after Diab's death (*Le Monde* 19 décembre 1972). This included references such as common struggles of the working class, but unlike the *Etoile/PPA*, never explicitly referred to the French Revolution.

Beyond the reference to cross-ethnic class unity, the MTA, by contrast with the ENA/PPA, also drew upon past examples of solidarity between French and North Africans against colonialism and racism. In December 1972, the Diab demonstration involved key French intellectuals such as Jean Genet, Michel Foucault, Alain Geismar and Claude Mauriac and was directly inspired by the "Appel des 121" made by intellectuals such as Sartre during the Algerian war ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3).

Even though the modalities of cross-ethnic mobilisation of the colonial and post-colonial movements differed, both invoked another kind of past which could inform the building of a universalist discourse and a multi-ethnic solidarity front in the present. Bouziri's declaration against his expulsion in 1972 illustrates this universalist stance within the MTA:

[A]ujourd'hui, les fascistes, les flics, les racistes essaient de semer la terreur chez les arabes, comme au temps de l'OAS ... Pour la première fois depuis la guerre d'Algérie, des centaines de travailleurs sont descendus dans la rue aux côtés des français ... pour la Palestine, contre le racisme ... [T]ous, français, arabes, antillais, espagnols, portugais, nous avons les mêmes ennemis et nous menons le même combat: pour la justice et pour notre dignité. ('Déclaration d'Hamza Bouziri') (4)

However, the movement's universalist discourse was different, but no less problematic than that of inter-war nationalists. Indeed, French universalism was built on a sense of French essentialist superiority and domination of other cultures. It never allowed expressions or tolerance of political, cultural or even linguistic difference, and even saw them as threats. It could be argued that in both the colonial and post-colonial movements, Maghrebis' construction of universalism was based on different premises. It was a hybrid discourse which decoupled universalism from the rigid and culturally dominant characteristics that the French had given to it, in order to endow it with a more hybrid, demotic and "truly" universal nature, where equality can be compatible with difference, and alterity with solidarity. However, by contrast with the nationalist movement in the inter-war period, the MTA never presented the universalist ideas that it defended with reference to France and her revolutionary legacy. It was, in a way, a strategy allowing Maghrebi immigrants to reappropriate and reinterpret the concept of universalism to rid it of its narrow French revolutionary framework. In that sense, the tension between dominant and demotic discourses within the MTA was more than a tension between particularist and universalist perspectives as it was also marked by hybridity.

We can therefore see that, as with the *Etoile* and the PPA in the inter-war period, memory played a central, if differing role in the formation of the discourse of the MTA. And it did so at different levels. Dominant historical interpretative strategies were adopted to reinforce ethnic cohesion and action through a direct link with anti-colonial and antiracist struggles. However, while inter-war nationalists often referred to

the past and to French Revolutionary principles to construct a national culture, the MTA essentially focused on North Africa's opposition to colonialism, and also on the struggle of the whole of the working class as a tool for mobilising Maghrebi immigrants and the French against racism.

6.7 Conclusion

The MTA was a movement whose discourse and strategy were structured around a number of internal markers of identity. Reflecting the predominant discourse within the ENA/PPA, MTA militants saw themselves, first and foremost, as Arab nationalists. However, their sense of belonging to the Arab nation transcended narrower affiliation to a particular nation-state and never acknowledged the ethnic specificities of North Africans. More so than in the discourse of the ENA/PPA, class and culture were probably the most important frameworks of reference which allowed militants of the *Mouvement* to both interpret their diasporic experience in France and negotiate their identity, action and strategy at a social and political level.

Faced with the demeaning representations of immigrants often made by French politicians and the media, the MTA reacted by creating a strong political voice for North Africans in France. This discourse expressed a will amongst North African militants not to be treated as a passive entity and workforce, but as human beings. The movement reappropriated the debate by developing its own empowering process of politicisation of culture, and its use of culture went further than in the case of the ENA/PPA. It was based on the premise that culture not only had to be nurtured and used as a tool allowing North Africans to reinforce social communal cohesion, but it also had to be rooted in practice, shaped to serve the political purposes of the movement, and opened up to establish a multi-ethnic front of solidarity with the French.

This process extended to religion, which was mostly referred to as a cultural trope of identity. By contrast with the inter-war nationalist movement, Islam did not play a central role in the MTA's political discourse. Furthermore, the support provided by Catholics to the cause of the *sans-papiers* meant that the Catholic Church was no

longer represented as an arm of imperialist domination, but as an ally against racism and oppression.

In the MTA's discourse, far more emphasis was put on class and on immigrants' action within France than in that of the ENA/PPA. Maghrebi workers' identity was described by the MTA as being based on class kinship and solidarity, and their experience as "Arab workers" was perceived as being anchored within France's working class. References to memory and history rooted in the struggle of North Africans for independence, but also in the fight of the French against colonialism, informed a binary discourse which could mobilise Maghrebis and establish a multi-ethnic front of solidarity against racism.

All these inner constitutive markers of identity were constantly shifting and to some extent unstable. They allowed militants within the MTA to develop a flexible discourse which could maximise political opportunities, unite around dominant identity points of reference, and widen support through demotic discourses and strategies. This gave Maghrebis a strong and independent voice which was at odds with the general perception that the French had of immigrants, that of a "silent", "invisible", "dehumanised" and "passive" workforce.

Chapter 7

The outer boundary of ethno-national identity: antiracism, universalism and difference

7.1 Introduction: the context of racism and antiracism in the 1970s

What perhaps differentiated the nationalism of the colonised in the metropole and in the colonies from that which inspired and shaped the French nation-state was its roots. The discourse of North African migrants engaged in nationalist politics was a reflection not only of their will to establish a national state of their own along modern lines, and therefore be accepted as citizens of a nation equal to others, but also of their desire to defeat a system of domination, that of the French colonial order steeped in nationalism and rooted in racism. For Algerian nationalists in the colonial era, vanquishing colonialism also meant defeating racism. Therefore, as was shown in part one, fighting for independence was very much a humanising process which was equated with antiracism. This implied, for many, the end of all forms of economic, social and political oppression on the basis of "race".

But what form did racism take in the 1970s? If the independence of Algeria and of other ex-colonies marked the end of an era of overt colonial domination, it failed to address the other dimensions of imperialism, racism and domination which persisted and evolved in the post-colonial era, and which continued to affect a North African diaspora still part of the 'internal colony' in France during the 1970s.¹⁰⁷ By that decade, the nature of racism had changed. Indeed, the 1950s and the 1960s marked the challenge to, and loss of influence of racism as a "doctrine biologique de l'inégalité des races" (Taguieff 1992: 21) which had characterised the years during which the ENA/PPA developed. These two decades also saw the emergence of a neo-racism positing cultural differences as irreconcilable ones that Taguieff refers to as "racisme différentialiste" (1992: 21-35). Taguieff points out that:

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of the concept of the 'internal colony', see Lloyd (1998: 131-148).

ces nouvelles théorisations racistoïdes, qu'on trouve dans la littérature politico-philosophique des nouvelles-droites, sont fondées sur le postulat de l'irréductibilité, de l'incomparabilité, de l'incommunicabilité, de l'absolue séparation des *cultures* ... des structures mentales, des mœurs, des traditions communautaires, brefs des manières collectives différentielles d'être, de penser, de faire, de désirer. La «biologisation» s'est effacée au profit de la «culturisation» (les *cultures* étant transformées en *natures* secondes), en même temps que l'axiome d'inégalité inter-raciale faisait place à la nouvelle évidence absolue de la *différence* inter-culturelle [...]. (Taguieff 1989: 77)

This shift in racist ideology and discourse was partly the result of the loss of credibility of biological racism in the aftermath of the Second World War and of the collapse of colonial empires. Even though the term "race" as a valid scientific concept began to be rejected after World War Two by the United Nations (Lévi-Strauss 1987), it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that it was fully challenged. This was as a consequence of the growing consensus amongst scientists on the absence of scientific foundations for "race" as a biological marker and the emergence of an anthropological discourse based on cultural characteristics (Guillaumin 1972 and 1992: 64, Bonniol 1992: 187-195, Piazza 1992: 159, see also Darlu 1992). Not without tensions, this latter interpretation influenced the discourse of many antiracists who argued that equality and the universalist principles that informed their ideology and discourse could be consistent with the respect of difference (Lloyd 1998, Taguieff 1992, Memmi 1973).¹⁰⁸ This leads Taguieff to argue that racist and antiracist discourses are rooted in the same pluralist logic (Taguieff 1988). Gallissot goes further when he points out that:

L'antiracisme est en retard d'une guerre parce qu'il reste prisonnier de l'antifascisme et de l'antisémisme; il se trouve pris au piège du jeu de la différence et de l'identité, de la seule considération de l'autre comme si il s'agissait encore de la particularité juive ... quand la chasse est aux basanés. Le défi est maintenant celui de l'immigration, et les conflits sont donc

¹⁰⁸ Of course, this did not mean that biological references had disappeared from racist discourse and accusation, as racism could rely on the shifting interplay of biological, cultural and character differences as justification for discrimination (Memmi, A., September-December 1964, 'Essai de définition', *La Nef*, Numéro 19-20, p. 42, cited in Taguieff 1992: 40).

immédiatement sociaux, à l'entreprise, dans les immeubles et dans la rue, comme les relations directement interethniques. (Gallissot 1985a: 8)

In her study of antiracist discourse in France, Lloyd partly acknowledges the sometimes cautious and delayed response of antiracist organisations such as the MRAP to anti-immigrant racism and to the autonomous mobilisation of immigrants for rights and against discrimination (1998: 200-227). However, she criticises Taguieff's presentation of anti-racism as a defensive discourse and as the logical opposite of racism, and points out that, far from being purely the antithesis of racism, anti-racism is a hegemonic force playing a central role in society. Lloyd's analysis of antiracism is essentially based on the *Mouvement contre le racismisme, l'antisémitisme et pour la paix* (MRAP), a well-established and institutionally recognised antiracist organisation in France, and as such does not focus on the specificity of autonomous immigrants' movements. By contrast, this chapter will focus on the latter through an analysis of the MTA's antiracist discourse and practices. I will first examine the process by which the movement interpreted racism as systemic in French society and as a characteristic of imperialism, a discourse which echoed that of the ENA/PPA. I will then assess the way in which its antiracist discourse could be, on the one hand, informed by a differentialist perspective and, on the other, by universalist values and class belonging.

7.2 The MTA's systemic interpretation of racism

The 1970s was a decade marked by racism, and particularly by racist violence. In that sense, and even though the nature of racist discourse had evolved, the racism that North Africans suffered from during that decade reflected that endured by North African Muslims in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰⁹ As Gallissot points out, "[l]e racismisme vise aujourd'hui l'immigration, et directement les immigrés de couleur et même de

¹⁰⁹ Racist violence during the 1970s was frequently echoed in a number of periodicals (see, for example, Badday (1972), Meury (1975a & 1975b), *Africasia*, *Contact*, *Droit et Liberté*, *France-Pays Arabes*, *L'Algérien en Europe*, *Le Droit de vivre*, *Jeune Afrique*, *Réforme*, *Révolution africaine*, *Vivre en France*) as well as in French daily newspapers and weekly news magazines.

préférence de type nord-africain" (1985a: 7). Between September 1973 and January 1974, the MRAP stated that twenty-two racist attacks, mainly against Maghrebi immigrants, took place, many of them fatal (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 30-33, see also Bitterlin 1973 and Toumi 1973a). In 1973 alone, forty crimes were committed against North Africans by people who were never detained by the police (*Croissance des jeunes nations*, mars 1973: 14). These occurrences of anti-Maghrebi racism in the post-colonial era showed the limits of the ENA/PPA's anti-racist project, which was to bring racism to an end through the destruction of colonial imperialism. Indeed, French racist violence which had affected Maghrebis in the colonial period had not abated after independence.

On a different level, the life of Maghrebi migrants during the 1970s was not necessarily better than that of their colonial forebears. *Politique Aujourd'hui* (mars-avril 1974: 42) described the experience of immigrants at work and in hostels as "surexploitation" and traversed by racism. It also stated that French legislation against migrants was particularly repressive: they were denied basic rights, such as freedom of expression and association, and were left at the mercy of their employers and of frequent police controls. In 1974, Albert Levy, then National Secretary of the MRAP, echoed this point when he declared that racism was expressed not only through individuals, but also through organised groups. And when he stated that "le racism fait partie de la politique française d'immigration", he implied that racism was also present at a higher level, within policy making (1974: 23-27).

Wieviorka views these levels of racism in contemporary France as "fragmented" because even though racism can traverse institutions, lead to violence, inform people's behaviour in public services and in the workplace, and form part of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated, it cannot become a real mobilising force as long as it does not reach the level of active institutionalisation in the political sphere (1991: 86-87).¹¹⁰ However, analysis of the MTA's discourse would seem to suggest that

¹¹⁰ Wieviorka defines four levels in what he refers to as the empirical space of racism. The first level is infraracism, a minor and disarticulated phenomenon marked by the presence of xenophobic doctrine and the spread of xenophobic rather than racist opinions. At the second level, racism is less fragmented, and expressed in a more visible way in polls and in numerous xenophobic publications. The third level is characterised by the fact that racism becomes the central characteristic of a political or para-political force mobilising large sections of the population and creating a favourable context for racist violence. The fourth and last level is reached when the state is organised on the basis of racist orientations (1991: 83-86).

its interpretation of racism differed markedly from that of Wiewiorka, and was more consistent with the systemic interpretation proposed by Guillaumin. Guillaumin argues that racism is a *system* whose meaning is shaped by concrete acts, and that racist ideology is closely tied to its material dimension (1972: 8, 47, 61, cited in Wiewiorka 1991: 89, see also Balibar and Wallerstein 1988: 18).

The MTA was well aware that Maghrebi immigrants were the prime target of racism, and that it affected all aspects of their life (*Sans Frontière* (10), octobre 1973: 31). This can be illustrated by the movement's discourse on anti-Arab racism in France in 1973, a period of heightened racist violence against Maghrebis which echoed previous incidents that had affected North African migrants in France.¹¹¹ In the aftermath of the wave of racist murders which had taken place during the summer of 1973 after Désiré Guerlache, a French bus driver, was killed in Marseilles by a mentally ill Algerian, *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (octobre 1973), the MTA's mouthpiece, stated: "le racisme? Nous travailleurs arabes, le vivons chaque jour dans notre âme et notre chair! A l'embauche, dans la rue, dans le métro, nous sommes chaque fois humiliés et offensés. Aujourd'hui, on nous tue" (3). To some extent, the MTA's evocation of racism varied from that of the ENA/PPA. The former put greater emphasis on racism in its discourse and focused on racist incidents in France, while the latter viewed racism as a characteristic of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in French colonial society and was mostly denounced in North Africa.

Let us now look at the way in which the MTA considered that racism affected the life of immigrants. In the movement's discourse, racism was seen as a characteristic of their experience in, and contact with French society. It affected them in the world of work ("à l'embauche"), in the street and in the underground (which could refer here to French people's perception of immigrants, but also to violence towards them from racists and constant harassment and checks by the police), and had reached a new level of violence with the murder of many Maghrebis. The MTA further denounced racism in the world of work when it declared in its bulletin *Akhbar el Haraka* (undated) that "nous occupons les postes les plus durs et nous subissons les injures des chefs" (3). This

¹¹¹ See, for example, MacMaster's study of the murders of rue Fondary in 1923 (1995).

reflected the ENA/PPA's denunciation of racism towards, and exploitation of North African workers which was equated with slavery.

The 1970s Maghrebi movement put more emphasis on denouncing the difficult living conditions of North African immigrants than the *Etoile* and the PPA. It argued that racism was at the core of housing arrangements for immigrants, and supported residents who fought for better living conditions: "Nous ne voulons plus accepter la loi raciste des propriétaires et des gérants, des patrons et des mairies qui nous méprisent et imposent des logements là où un homme ne peut vivre dignement" (Déclaration de Hamza Bouziri) (3). The use of "loi raciste" to refer to the discrimination that immigrants were subjected to in hostels ("propriétaires"), at work ("patrons") and in local councils ("mairie") implied not only that there was a link between all those forms of oppression, but also that racism was legitimised by the law.

At another level, acts of violence against Maghrebi and other immigrants were also stigmatised. To some extent, this aspect of the MTA's discourse reflected the ENA/PPA's denunciation of racist acts against North Africans. For instance, in a report published in the mid-1970s, the movement described how Mohamed Laïd Moussa, an Algerian teacher, had been murdered on 18 March 1975 by "[un] tueur [qui] appartient à une organisation chargée de pourchasser les Arabes" ('Mohamed Laïd Moussa, jeune travailleur algérien, a été lâchement assassiné à Marseille') (3). While inter-war nationalists systematically castigated colonialists for being responsible for racist violence, the MTA saw this crime as part of a series of racist attacks and murders committed by "de véritables organisations racistes" whose aim was to murder Arab workers systematically.

However, the MTA's analysis did not stop there. This racist violence was interpreted as being made possible because it was tolerated by the authorities and the judiciary. The letter addressed by Larbi Boudjenana, a militant of the MTA and of the *Comité de défense*, to the Minister of the Interior, on 10 May 1973 illustrates this. In this document, he protested against the Minister's decision to expel him after political books were found in his home. He also stigmatised the authorities and the judiciary for failing to arrest and condemn racist killers such as Pigot who had killed Djellali Ben Ali

in 1971, and *sous-brigadier* Marquet, the policeman who had murdered Mohamed Diab in November 1972. This was redolent of the ENA/PPA's accusation that racist violence against Muslims was condoned by the French authorities. Another extract of Boudjenana's letter illustrates the movement's interpretation of racism:

Ce que vous n'avez pas vu, ce sont les assassins ... que la justice n'a toujours pas puni; ce sont les centaines de crimes commis par des groupes racistes encouragés par une ignoble propagande autorisée, par leur impunité et aussi par l'indulgence de certains de vos services. Mais celui qui réclame avec ses frères immigrés et ses amis français que la justice soit rendue, parce que je suis, comme tous les immigrés, victime du racisme, vous voulez l'expulser. ('Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur', 10 mai 1973) (3)

Indeed, the MTA criticised the authorities for failing to investigate and arrest any of the perpetrators of such attacks, and denounced "un ordre fasciste qui commence à régner dans ce pays" ('Mohamed Laïd Moussa, jeune travailleur algérien, a été lâchement assassiné à Marseille') (3). Referring to Laïd Moussa's death (which they attributed to an extreme right wing organisation called *France Libre*), to the wave of racist murders which took place in the south of France after the death of Guerlach in August 1973, and to the bombing of the Algerian Consulate in Marseilles in December 1973 (which *Le club Charles Martel* claimed to have carried out), the MTA stated that:

Si des organisations racistes (tel le groupe Charles Martel) ont pu sévir pendant des années pour en arriver aujourd'hui à assassiner Laïd Moussa (par l'intermédiaire de l'organisation fasciste de la France libre), c'est parce qu'elles ont pu jouir d'une impunité totale de la part de la justice et du gouvernement ... Si tant de crimes sont aujourd'hui possibles, c'est parce qu'ils s'inscrivent dans un climat général d'incitation au meurtre [et d']oppression raciste dont les autorités portent la responsabilité: occupation par la police de nos quartiers, rafles dans le métro, ratonnades et expulsions de travailleurs immigrés. Ces assassinats spectaculaires et couverts par les autorités ont donné à chaque fois le signal à des vagues d'exactions racistes. ('Mohamed Laïd Moussa, jeune travailleur algérien, a été lâchement assassiné à Marseille') (3)

In the discourse of the MTA, which to some extent evoked that of the inter-war nationalist movement, racism was clearly posited as a system which traversed all aspects of French society from individual acts to the highest echelons of the state. The authorities were directly incriminated for failing to arrest, and for protecting those responsible, who could therefore act with impunity. This discourse reflected that of the *Etoile* and the PPA which consistently stigmatised the judiciary for failing to prosecute French murderers of North Africans, and which the inter-war nationalist movement referred to as "justice de race". In the MTA's discourse, the authorities were also portrayed as the accomplices of such violence ("ces assassinats ... couverts par les autorités"). More importantly, the state was stigmatised for fostering an environment within which murdering North Africans was not only tolerated, but also encouraged. The declaration of the MTA made during a press conference on 21 March 1975 made this point explicitly. It stated that:

L'apparition aujourd'hui de milices privées qui prétendent "faire justice" contre les Arabes n'est que la suite logique du développement des organisations racistes depuis 1971, de l'impunité totale dont elles ont toujours joui de la Police et de la Justice, donc de la "couverture" que leur ont assuré aussi bien l'Etat que la plupart des différents moyens d'information ... La responsabilité de la Police (et donc de l'Etat) est d'autant plus engagée que des policiers eux-même participent à l'action des groupes racistes organisés ... Et ce sont des policiers qui tous les jours, organisent tous les jours des "ratonnades" anti-arabes ... confirmant ainsi la responsabilité de l'Etat-Policier dans le racisme anti-arabe. (Déclaration du Mouvement des travailleurs arabes (MTA) à la conférence de presse du vendredi 21 mars 1975) (9)

This extract illustrates the extent to which the government was seen as responsible for the climate of racism and violence within which immigrants lived. It also reflects the contiguity of discourses of the MTA and the ENA/PPA on racism. Firstly, the violence perpetrated by racist organisations was described as benefiting from total impunity on the part of the police and the judiciary, and therefore the state. Secondly, the complicity

and direct involvement of the state in racist crimes, which was highlighted by the numerous "ratonnades" involving policemen, led the MTA to refer to the French state as "l'Etat-Policier".

In the movement's discourse, all forms of racism to which Maghrebis were subjected, whether they originated from the state and its representatives, from the economic system or from clandestine and violent racist organisations, were posited as consistent with each other. To the MTA, they formed a systemic chain of racist oppression against North African migrants (racist murders, violence and terrorist attacks by individuals and organisations of the extreme right, the government's immigration policy, the expulsion of immigrants, the judiciary, police harassment in the underground, and so on).¹¹² This interpretation echoed that of inter-war nationalists who viewed racism as traversing all aspects of French society on both sides of the Mediterranean, and as a corollary of colonialism.

The MTA's discourse also reflected that of nationalists in the 1920s and 1930s in that its interpretation of racism transcended and blurred the normally distinct boundary between, on the one hand, the lawfulness that the state, the government and the judiciary were meant to incarnate, and on the other hand, the unlawfulness of racist crime, violence and repression. In the MTA's discourse, binary oppositions in French society were therefore ideologically collapsed into one sphere of systemic racism. The established dichotomies which marked out the terrain of what the French describe as *l'Etat de droit* were challenged as smokescreens. The policies and acts of the government and its representatives (such as the "administration", the police and the justice system dealing with immigrants) which were supposed to be the guarantors of justice, order and social peace were not only seen as racist, and thereby as contributing to the spread of racist practices in French society, but were also accused of covering up for the murders and violence committed against Maghrebis by racist organisations such as *le Club Charles Martel*. The MTA's argument that "[e]n France, nous nous trouvons

¹¹² It is worth noting that the MTA's emphasis on the illegal character of France's immigration policies was not necessarily inconsistent with the facts, as they were not subjected to normal legislative scrutiny. As Bonnechère points out, "la réglementation de l'immigration est encore souvent le fruit de circulaires confidentielles ou illégales" (1976: 128).

face à une nouvelle politique de répression de l'immigration (arrêt de l'immigration, opération "coup de point", attentats racistes à Toulon, Marseille et Paris)" is reminiscent of the ENA/PPA's denunciation of racism in the colonial era. It illustrates the extent to which these multiple aspects of racism were viewed as forming part of a coherent whole and as constituting a well-defined policy (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3).

This interpretation of racism in French society by the MTA can be traced to a report produced by the *Comité Palestine* (which became the MTA in June 1972) after the murder, on 25 October 1971 in La Goutte d'Or, of a young Algerian called Djellali Ben Ali. This report, which assessed the impact of the organisation's antiracist campaign organised in the aftermath of Djellali's death, denounced the "tendances fascistes qui se développent dans l'Etat" and viewed all forms of racism and violence against North Africans as the "expression systématique du racisme" ('Bilan de la lutte Djellali') (5).

However, as was the case with the inter-war nationalist movement, the MTA's analysis of racism went further. Racism was not simply perceived as a trait which traversed all aspects of French society, but also viewed as serving a purpose: that of furthering economic exploitation of the dominated through imperialism. The wave of racist murders which took place in Marseilles in the summer of 1973 was interpreted by the MTA as a reaction by capitalism against the campaign of mobilisation of immigrants in the workplace, in the foyers and against the *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet*.

The MTA's discourse on racism put more emphasis on class belonging in France than that of the *Etoile* and the PPA, which saw racism as an expression of the colonial paradigm. Indeed, racism was also viewed by the 1970s movement as a means of castigating Maghrebi workers and dividing the working class in France. *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (octobre 1973) emphasised the movement's interpretation of racism based on ethnicity and class when it stated that "c'est parce que nous sommes apparus comme une force ouvrière autonome et combative que le patronat a senti le danger. C'est donc pour intimider et réprimer la lutte des travailleurs arabes que cette vague de racisme a été orchestrée" (3).

Nonetheless, the discourse of the MTA evoked that of the ENA/PPA in the inter-war period, as both movements portrayed racism and racist violence as being encouraged by the authorities and as a central trope of imperialist oppression. However, whereas the inter-war nationalist movement saw racism as informing the relationship between coloniser and colonised, the MTA viewed anti-Maghrebi racism in the 1970s as being both the legacy of the colonial era and the continuation of anti-semitic racism which traversed French society.

This binary interpretation of racism in the 1970s can be illustrated by an article entitled "Le racisme fait diversion, le racisme tue!" written in *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (octobre 1973) (3), and which denounced the wave of racist murders which had taken place in September 1973. On the one hand, it described the exploitation and racism that marked Maghrebi immigrants' experience as consistent with that of the colonised when it stated that "[l]e colonialisme de papa est peut-être mort, mais il y a toujours en France et en Europe des colonisés: les travailleurs immigrés". On the other hand, this racism was also viewed as the continuation of anti-semitism ("hier le juif, le métèque, aujourd'hui l'arabe"). In this respect, the movement's discourse differed from that of the ENA/PPA, as the latter did not make any direct correlation between the racism that the colonised experienced and anti-semitism.

7.3 Antiracist discourse and actions of the MTA

In the 1920s and 1930s, the *Etoile nord-africaine* and the PPA frequently denounced racism as one of the most important characteristics of the colonial oppression to which North Africans were subjected on both sides of the Mediterranean. Racism was also presented as a key motive behind their demands for an end to colonialism, for emancipation and independence, and greatly contributed to the creation and development of the nationalist movement structured around a sense of ethnic and religious belonging. Similarly in the 1970s, the fight against racism informed, to a large extent, the process of political mobilisation of North African migrants in the *Comités Palestine* and in the MTA. However, what differentiated its discourse was its focus on

ethnicity and class. In *Akhbar el Haraka* (1976), an article which emphasised the antiracist nature, and universalist aims of a strike against racism and working conditions at the Peugeot-Cycles factory in 1976 highlighted this process of using antiracism as a force for mobilisation. It stated that "[c]'est dans la lutte qu'on efface le racisme pour mettre en place une fraternité durable, c'est dans la lutte qu'on retrouve notre dignité et notre liberté d'homme" (3).

It has been shown previously that the discourse of the MTA against racism and exploitation was, like that of the ENA/PPA, marked by universalist references, but that it was also grounded in class belonging.¹¹³ This section will go further and demonstrate how the nationalist movement developed a binary antiracist discourse marked by universalism, but also by differentialist references. Indeed, what can also be noted in the MTA's antiracist discourse is that it can be characterised by its focus on an exclusive reference to ethnicity (which was essentialised), and that it used a terminology which was very much evocative of universalist discourse.

Let us now examine this process of construction of a differentialist antiracist stance within the nationalist movement. When looking at the MTA's documents, what is striking is the recurrent reference to the Palestinian cause as a catalyst for mobilisation against racism and oppression in France. The role that the Palestinian question played in the MTA's discourse was therefore far more central than it had been for the ENA/PPA. The latter referred to it in broader nationalist terms and as an inspiration for its fight against imperialism in North Africa and for Algeria's search for independence. On the other hand, the MTA also posited the Palestinian Revolution as being inextricably linked to Maghrebi's fight against racism within a French metropolitan context. To mention one example, Hamza Bouziri's declaration against his expulsion in 1972 illustrates the role that the Palestinian Revolution played in such a process of antiracist mobilisation:

[N]ous avons compris que les travailleurs arabes unis, organisés pour soutenir la Palestine, constituent une force que les racistes ne pourraient pas briser. Dans les Comités de soutien à la

¹¹³ See section 6.4.

Révolution palestinienne nous avons retrouvé notre dignité, nous avons repris le droit à la parole qu'on nous refuse. Nous avons cessé d'être "des bicots", des esclaves, nous sommes devenus des combattants, des fedayins. ('Déclaration de Hamza Bouziri') (4)

In this extract, Bouziri focuses on support for the struggle of Palestinians as a force enabling North Africans to fight against racism. The link between the two is justified at a political and ethnic level. On the one hand, Palestine epitomises the struggle of an oppressed people against Zionism which was seen by the movement as a racist ideology serving the interests of imperialism, a view reflecting that of the ENA/PPA.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the claim that all North Africans were Arabs allowed MTA militants to identify with the Palestinians' cause and justify even further their support for it. This process had also informed the ENA/PPA's support for the Palestinian struggle, but the 1970s movement took it further. For the MTA, it was a cause which transcended geographical boundaries and was deemed exemplary not only for "Arabs" in France, but also for all Arabs who were the victims of racism and oppression. Supporting it was perceived as a humanising process. Bouziri's declaration was very much imbued in universalist terminology, and portrayed Maghrebis' mobilisation as a revolutionary process whose aim was to restore Arabs' dignity and end racism and "slavery" in France.

By contrast with the inter-war nationalist movement, the MTA viewed North Africans' experience in France and the events in Palestine as inalienable. This can also be noted in an article in *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (octobre 1973) (3). It focuses on antiracist and political actions carried out exclusively by Maghrebi immigrants and uses a similar stylistic approach. It describes the movement's general strike against racism on 3 September 1973 (which brought many companies and building sites in the south of France to a stand-still) and demonstrations held by North Africans during the October War as consistent with their aim of fighting capitalist and imperialist oppression: "La dernière grève générale contre le racisme et de grande manifestations pendant la guerre

¹¹⁴ See section 8.7 for a detailed analysis of the MTA's discourse on the Palestinian Revolution.

d'octobre ont montré l'unité de la communauté arabe et sa détermination à vaincre contre [sic] tous les oppresseurs capitalistes et impérialistes".

The second antiracist approach adopted by the movement was very much rooted in universalist values and in class belonging. What differentiated the MTA's strategy from that of the *Etoile* and the PPA was that the latter had tried to create a front of solidarity between the French and North Africans which focused more on anti-colonialism than on anti-racism per se. Indeed, the fight of the inter-war nationalist was subsumed by its struggle for independence. Through its antiracist discourse and strategy, the MTA sought to establish multi-ethnic solidarity around common values. This approach led to the creation of the *Comité de défense des droits et de la vie des travailleurs immigrés* (CDDVTI), a multi-ethnic antiracist organisation founded after the hunger strike of Saïd and Faouzia Bouziri in Paris in October 1972, and led by a leading militant of the MTA, Mohamed Selim Najeh (*Sans Frontière*, mardi 11 janvier 1980).¹¹⁵ Here, the discourse of the MTA goes further than that of the ENA/PPA, as Maghrebis are not only described as Arabs, but are viewed as a community which transcends national boundaries.

By contrast with the movement's differentialist discourse on antiracism which was rooted in the Palestinian struggle, this universalist approach sought its inspiration in the past, thereby transcending historical boundaries. The antiracist mobilisation which followed the murder of Mohamed Diab, an Algerian worker, by Robert Marquet, a French policeman in a Versailles police station on 29 November 1972 is a case in point. The MTA supported Diab's family and organised a demonstration with the CDDVTI on 16 December 1972 to demand Marquet's arrest. This "marche silencieuse", which involved 137 intellectuals (including Jean Genet, Michel Foucault and Claude Mauriac), had been banned by the Préfecture de Police, and was met with extreme violence by policemen and led to many arrests (*Le Monde*, 19 décembre 1972). *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (1er janvier 1973) (3) emphasised the universalist character of this demonstration when it stated that "[l]e 16 décembre, nous étions des milliers, Français,

¹¹⁵ Mohamed Selim Najeh was expelled by the French government after the antiracist strikes successfully organised by Maghrebi workers in September 1973 to protest against the wave of racist murders targeting North African immigrants (see *Le Monde*, 5 septembre 1973).

immigrés et Arabes, unis comme des frères". By contrast, and even though the ENA/PPA had won the support of some leading French intellectuals (who were mostly politicians), it did not develop the same form of common protest action with the French as the MTA. Indeed, expressions of cross-ethnic solidarity were mostly limited to speeches during political rallies.

In the MTA, the inspiration for this multi-ethnic, universalist action against racism came from past initiatives developed during the Algerian war. On the one hand, the MTA tried to re-establish a front of solidarity with French intellectuals consistent with that which was created by intellectuals such as Sartre against the Algerian war ("l'appel des 121"), and on the other hand, the route chosen for the demonstration was very much inspired by the March of the 17th of October 1961 in Paris, when a peaceful pro-FLN demonstration by Algerian immigrants was met with a violent response from the police, who proceeded to mass arrests and killed an estimated 300 marchers:¹¹⁶

De là est venue l'idée des 121. Ceux-là qui pendant la guerre d'Algérie avaient dénoncé les crimes et la torture des coloniaux, lançaient un appel au soutien des Arabes contre les crimes racistes et la nouvelle colonisation. Ils faisaient appel à la mémoire historique des Français et choisissaient comme point de départ la marche sur le ministère: Bonne-Nouvelle-le cinéma Rex où les Algériens avaient ensanglanté les pavés de leur sang en octobre 1961. Second appel à la mémoire et à la conscience des Occidentaux. Cet appel à la mémoire permettait de faire plein feux [sic] sur les horreurs que connaissent aujourd'hui les immigrés. ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3)

Both past events aimed to draw upon the French people's memory of the racism inflicted on Maghrebis and highlight the fact that in the 1970s, their experience was still marked by racism and required a wide consensus encompassing immigrants and the French against what was referred to as "la nouvelle colonisation". So the link between the MTA's antiracist struggle and the ENA/PPA's fight for independence is stronger

¹¹⁶ For a study of the events of 17 October 1961, see for example, Einaudi (1991, 1994). For an exposition of French opposition to the Algerian War, see Vidal-Naquet (1986), and Evans (1997).

than it seems. Both were interpreted as fights against imperialism. Furthermore, the 1970s movement wanted to resurrect this prominent front of multi-ethnic solidarity and action ("l'appel des 121") which, it could be argued had been constructed on foundations laid by the ENA/PPA.

By ensuring that a parallel was made between North Africans' fight against colonialism and their own antiracist struggle, and by attracting the support of leading intellectuals, some of whom had already taken part in the "Appel des 121", the MTA sought to set their own experience and demands within a dialectical framework which could win the support of the French population. Clearly, this attempt to establish a united multi-ethnic front of solidarity against racism was also informed by the realisation that purely ethnically-based responses had less impact, were met with more violent police response, and did not reduce the number of racist attacks (ibid). It could be argued that the movement's antiracist discourse was more prominent, complex and rooted within a French metropolitan context than that of the ENA/PPA. By contrast with the latter organisation, and even though the MTA's discourse was universalist through the terminology and themes that it used, it never referred to the French Revolution or the *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme* as sources of inspiration for its own struggle, and never described the French people as the repository of these values. This highlights the considerable shift which had taken place in Maghrebi immigrants' perception of France from the colonial to the post-colonial era.

As was seen in the previous section, the MTA's focus on differentialist and universalist forms of mobilisation against racism marked much of its discourse, ideology and action. To some extent, it reflected the binary discourse of the ENA/PPA. These two antiracist approaches were not necessarily seen as dichotomous frames of reference for the movement as it sometimes combined, in different ways and with different emphases, both forms of antiracist discourse. For example, the MTA's reaction to the wave of racist murders which took place in the south of France in the summer of 1973 was not exclusively based on a differentialist, intra-ethnic approach. Echoing the discourse of the ENA/PPA which stigmatised France's representation of the colonised, it sought to address wider antiracist considerations by challenging discursively the way in

which immigration was referred to in public, media and political discourse. This strategy was consistent with the movement's perspective on racism in society as systemic.

Within the context of the 1970s, numerous posters which featured the slogan "Halte à l'immigration sauvage" appeared in Paris (Guillaumin 1984: 43). However, contrary to what Guillaumin (1984) argues, the use of the expression "immigration sauvage" was not limited to racist groups and to popular discourse. Examples show that it was also integrated into mainstream media and political discourses. For instance, an article in *Le Monde* (7-8 janvier 1973) about the hunger strike of four Tunisians and one Algerian *sans-papiers* in churches in La Ciotat and Marseilles was entitled "L'administration ne parvient pas à maîtriser l'«immigration sauvage»". It talked of a "phénomène de saturation de la main-d'œuvre étrangère" and of a "population difficilement contrôlable" before ending with the assertion that "[l]'application de la circulaire Fontanet connaît de nombreuses vicissitudes et consacre une impuissance chronique à maîtriser l'immigration sauvage qu'on entendait combattre".¹¹⁷

This term was also very much present in mainstream political discourse. In a *Le Monde* article (9-10 septembre 1973), ex-Minister Eugène Claudius-Petit described the violent reaction against North Africans which followed Guerlache's death as "la colère, dont les excès sont excusables". He saw the protest of French workers against what he called "l'immigration sauvage" as being justified, and shifted the blame for immigrants' bad housing conditions from the state to the migrants themselves when he stigmatised "cette immigration sauvage [qui] a provoqué la prolifération et le gonflement des bidonvilles et des îlots défectueux".

The MTA denounced this expression which was widely used at the time. In a declaration about the media and political outcry and the appearance of posters calling for an end to "l'immigration sauvage" which followed the murder of Désiré Guerlache, Mohamed Selim Najeh, a leading member of the MTA, declared:

¹¹⁷ The reference to *immigration sauvage* without quotation marks in the latter assertion is quite revealing of way in which it was adopted as a valid notion by the mainstream media.

En quoi le crime est-il plus horrible s'il est commis par un Algérien que par un Français? ... A Marseille, un travailleur immigré a tué un travailleur français, voilà le drame: c'est quand un travailleur tue un autre travailleur ... la terreur raciste existe en France ... Il n'y a pas d'immigration sauvage. Il y a des travailleurs dont le souci est de travailler et une exploitation sauvage des hommes ... A quoi ça sert de faire la une sur le crime commis par un Algérien: à permettre les agressions racistes contre les immigrés, à les faire accepter par les Français, le crime de Marseille autorise les crimes racistes et les crimes racistes les affrontements contre les communautés. ('Déclaration de Mohamed Najah Selim [sic], Secrétaire général du Comité de défense des droits et de la vie des travailleurs immigrés, Paris, 29 août 1973') (5)

This passage shows that the antiracist discourse of the MTA on these events was also inherently universalist and based on class. It called for Algerians to be treated in the same way as the French. It denounced not only racists, but also mainstream journalists and politicians who, by focusing on the fact that the murderer was Algerian, only contributed to dividing the working class and encouraging further racist acts. The pertinence of the expression "immigration sauvage" was challenged. Mohamed Selim Najeh emphasised the fact that immigrants were first and foremost "workers" whose aim was to work, and the adjective "sauvage" was discursively displaced to describe what he considered to be the true nature of the capitalist system ("une exploitation sauvage des hommes").¹¹⁸ The use of the adjective "sauvage" by the MTA aimed not only to counter French popular, political and media discourses, but also to denounce the French state, whose action sustained the systemic racism that traversed French society, as inconsistent with the progressive and universalist values it claimed to stand for.

To some extent, this form of counter-discourse mirrors that of the ENA/PPA. In 1933, Imache Amar also castigated the mainstream press for referring to Maghrebis' immigration in France as "l'invasion des Kabyles", "les Arabes ont envahi la France" and so on, when in his view, their presence in France was a consequence of France's

¹¹⁸ The adjective "sauvage" had also been applied by the Comité Palestine in 1971 to police repression, which was referred to as "l'intervention sauvage de la police" ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali', Dossier France - racisme - lutte contre les crimes racistes, 1971-1974 - Affaire Djellali (octobre-novembre 1971), Mfc 218/7, BDIC.

invasion of North Africa and of her colonial project of dispossession of Muslims (*El Ouma* Numéro 17, décembre 1933).

In the 1970s, another, more wide-spread expression used in French media, political and academic discourse to refer to the presence of immigration in French society was the dubious and a-scientific concept of "seuil de tolérance", which was closely linked to that of "immigration sauvage" (De Rudder-Paurd 1980: 3, 9). It was constructed by the French as a scientifically sound sociological tool which could help national and local politicians, as well as the "administration", the judiciary and the police to define with "scientific precision" the proportion of immigrants that the nation, cities, towns and neighbourhoods could "tolerate" without ethnic tensions.

Reflecting the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, the MTA interpreted the wave of anti-Maghrebi racist violence which had followed the death of Guerlache in the summer of 1973 as a further illustration of racism in society and as a tool of imperialist oppression against the dominated. It rejected the "causes sociologiques: le fameux seuil de tolerance" which had been frequently evoked by the French media, as an explanation for the racist murders which had taken place (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, octobre 1973) (3).

In fact, this sociological notion of "seuil de tolerance", which did not exist in the inter-war period, had no valid scientific basis and was systematically defined arbitrarily. But its influence on the way in which immigrants were viewed, on the manner in which policy and discourse on immigration was structured, and on racism in French society was significant. In her study of this concept, de Rudder-Paurd (1980), states pertinently that:

l'idée de seuil ... évoque celle d'une limite, d'une frontière entre le dedans et le dehors, le soi et le non-soi que l'on ne franchit pas sans conséquence. Par le "seuil" (de tolérance) on affirme implicitement les contours d'une société française une et indivisible et l'on désigne plus clairement l'étranger comme intrus. L'immigration est, par ce biais, présentée à la fois comme un phénomène anormal, voire pathologique, et comme une invasion". (1980: 9)

The idea that a "seuil de tolerance" existed also implied that French society was inherently tolerant, but that her hospitality towards immigrants was not to be abused. This enabled the French media and politicians to interpret any act of violence committed against immigrants as sociologically understandable (the proportion of immigrants in the neighbourhood, or their behaviour had undoubtedly transgressed that threshold).¹¹⁹ It also allowed them to remove all sense of responsibility for racist behaviour and violence from French society, and ultimately to put the blame of such tragic incidents on migrants themselves (racist murders were the regrettable, but logical consequence of their behaviour and presence in France).

Within this framework, any act of delinquency or crime committed by immigrants was not interpreted within the normal sphere of law enforcement in popular, political, media and legal discourse, as any crime committed by a French person would be, but as a further sign that migrants were abusing the trust, tolerance and hospitality of the French people.

It contributed to an atmosphere of victimisation whereby immigrants bore common responsibility for any unlawful act committed by individuals who were immigrants, or seen as such. It confirmed the prejudices that the French attached to immigrants, and further denigrated the vast majority of law-abiding immigrants. For instance, a murder committed by a French person may have been seen as a terrible crime, but in no sense would it have been interpreted as revealing anything about the nature and character of the French people. By contrast, had this act been committed by a migrant, it would have been put within a wider interpretative framework whereby all isolated cases of unlawful behaviour (ranging from minor offences to violent acts) by immigrants would reinforce prejudice and confirm the general pattern of stigmas that the dominant population attributed to immigrants, and more particularly to North African and other post-colonial migrants.

The consequences of this type of discourse, in which the concept of "seuil de tolérance" plays a central part, are serious and multiple. It creates a culture of guilt and

¹¹⁹ Eugène Claudius-Petit's article in *Le Monde* (9-10 septembre 1973), which is quoted above, illustrates this point.

common responsibility amongst immigrants. If an unlawful act is committed by an immigrant or his children, the origin of the perpetrator or suspect is systematically highlighted in the French media. Any such act might be "internalised" by immigrants worried that it will further worsen their image in French society. This process of "devalorisation de soi", to use Noiriel's term (1988: 167), is very much consistent with the phenomenon of marginalisation of the dominated (migrants) by the dominant in French society. The vilification of immigrants has also constituted a crucial tool in the integration of earlier immigrants, who have attempted to conform to the norms of French society.¹²⁰

Beyond the climate of "déresponsabilisation" vis-à-vis racism that it fosters amongst the French, this notion of a "tolerance threshold" also has an impact on the widely used, yet no less problematic concept of "intégration". Too often, this concept puts the onus on immigrants to integrate. "Integration" is generally portrayed by the French as a commendable aim of the state which is consistent with France's universalist values. But this integration is perceived as all the more arduous, if not impossible to achieve as the behaviour, culture, acts and presence of immigrants in France are systematically constructed as markers of irreconcilable difference, and as a dangerous transgression of the "seuil de tolérance", that "frontière entre le dedans et le dehors, entre le soi et le non-soi" (de Rudder-Paurd 1980: 9). In that sense, the notion of integration is as problematic in the post-colonial era as the concept of assimilation was during the colonial period. As Silverman - who views both notions (assimilation/integration) as linked - points out, "[t]he concept of assimilation (or integration) is ... a smokescreen for complex ordering of social relations, in which a process of racialisation and racism has played a fundamental role" (1992: 102).

Finally, another aspect of the MTA's discourse on racism is worth noting. As early as 1971, the *Comité Palestine* had already evoked the use of self-defence and violence as useful weapons against racists. This aspect of immigrants' discourse in the 1970s differed markedly from that of inter-war nationalists who did not call for

¹²⁰ Noiriel also gives an early example of this phenomenon affecting Italian immigrants when he points out that "... à Lyon en 1894, à la suite de l'assassinat du président Carnot par un anarchiste italien, de nombreux immigrés de cette nationalité enlevèrent le *i* ou le *o* final de leur nom" (1988: 170).

immigrants to establish self-defence groups against racists. The report produced to assess the impact of the movement's campaign which followed the death of Djellali called for the *Comité* to adopt "des formes d'organisation politico-militaire large et multinationale" and create autonomous groups called "des groupes de vigilance", whose aim was to oppose police repression, carry out surveillance operations on racists, and counter any racist aggression committed by individuals and organisations ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali') (7). Another MTA document shows that violence, a less often acknowledged response to racist attacks, had sometimes been adopted by the movement. It argued that:

Nous avons pour tâche de résoudre le problème de cette nouvelle étape de répression des masses arabes en transformant le rapport du MTA avec la question de la violence ... En effet, si nous voulons casser l'encerclement et la répression qui s'abat sur nous en France [,] il est fondamental d'examiner comment exercer la violence contre ceux qui nous opprime[nt]; ainsi, après les derniers attentats racistes il n'y a pas eu de réponse spontanée des travailleurs arabes comme par le passé. (MTA document, untitled, June 1972) (3)

Given the fact that references to violence rarely appeared in the MTA's discourse, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the movement relied on such an approach to fight racist violence. But what appears clearly in this quote is that ethnically-based forms of violent action were also used to counter racist attacks. This form of action adopted by the MTA differed from that developed by the *Etoile* and the PPA in the inter-war period. Indeed, even though the latter often called for armed rebellion against French colonial rule, it could be argued that its discourse served the purpose of mobilisation and was evoked within the context of national liberation.¹²¹ Nowhere in its documentation did the inter-war nationalist movement explicitly admit to, or consider using violence to fight the daily racism that the colonised endured.

¹²¹ It was only after the Second World War that the PPA favoured explicitly an armed uprising against French colonialism (Droz and Lever 1982: 49).

7.4 Conclusion

What emerges clearly from the study of the MTA's discourse is that it viewed racism not only as one of the key markers of Maghrebi immigrants' experience in France but also as one of the most important mobilising forces for its militants. In that context, the movement's antiracist action and discourse mirrored, to some extent, that of Algerian nationalists in the inter-war period. The movement interpreted racism as a systemic force which traversed all aspects of French society from the individual to the state, and which served the interests of capitalism and imperialism.

The MTA's antiracist discourse and strategy were three-fold: firstly, it developed a differentialist approach which positioned Arabness as a key reference and a mobilising force against racism and oppression. The Palestinian Revolution constituted a central reference and a catalyst for the MTA's ethnically-based antiracist mobilisation. Zionism was viewed as a racist ideology serving the interest of imperialism and oppressing Arabs, and the Palestinians' struggle epitomised Maghrebi/"Arab" immigrants' own fight against racism and exploitation in France. Secondly, the MTA's antiracist approach was also marked by universalist values which, to some extent, reflected the discourse of the ENA/PPA, although in this case, through class belonging, as highlighted by the movement's response to Mohamed Diab's death. By evoking the Algerian war in its action and discourse, by gaining the support of leading intellectuals (which echoed the influential "appel des 121"), and by developing a counter-discourse challenging French politicians and media representation of migrants, the movement sought to establish a multi-ethnic front of solidarity against racism capable of attracting the sympathy of French public opinion. Finally, this movement's discourse differed from that of the ENA/PPA in that it explicitly acknowledged its reliance on violence to counter racist aggression. The differentialist and universalist antiracist perspectives adopted by the movement were not necessarily discrete and dichotomous forms of antiracism, but could sometimes be combined, in different ways, to increase support for the MTA's cause.

Chapter 8

North African nationalists in the French socio-political arena and abroad

8.1 Introduction

As was seen in the previous chapter, racism permeated all aspects of French society from the individual to the State, and constituted the main focus of attention for the MTA. However, like the ENA/PPA, its discourse and ideology were also informed by conflicts and alliances with, and evocations of, external determinants in the social, economic and political arena both in France and beyond.

This chapter aims to discuss the movement's relationship with, and discourse on various groups, organisations and political parties, as well states and governments. Some of these relationships and discourses were constructed in conflictual terms, whilst others were posited as close to the movement's aims and ideology, and as crucial in its endeavour to create wider commonalities and solidarity. It also aims to highlight some noteworthy similarities between the MTA and the ENA/PPA, regarding the way in which these various spheres were evoked.

I will do so firstly by looking at the way in which the MTA's actions in, and discourse on the workplace, in the foyers and on illegal immigrants' rights was constructed. Secondly, I will examine the cross-ethnic links of solidarity that this movement established with other immigrants in France. In section three, the often antagonistic, but sometimes close relationship between the *Mouvement* and French trade unions will be analysed. I will then focus on the conflict that opposed the MTA and the *Amicales*.¹²² Section five will look at the movement's discourse on North African states and their governments. Finally, I will consider the movement's discourse on the Palestinian revolution and the extent to which the Palestinian question became the central point of reference which shaped the MTA's identity and ideology structured around antiracism, universalism, ethnicity and class-consciousness.

¹²² The *Amicales* were organisations set up by North African governments to represent and "control" their nationals who had emigrated to France.

8.2 The MTA's struggle in the workplace, in the foyers and for the *sans-papiers*

In the 1970s, the MTA was faced with accusations, often voiced by opponents of the movement, such as the CGT, that it was a sectarian group exploiting the cultural and religious specificity of Maghrebi immigrants for its own political ends.¹²³ The movement strongly rejected these allegations and argued that on the contrary "nos mots d'ordres s'adressent avant tout aux Arabes parce que ce sont eux qui, plus que tout autre ethnie, sont les victimes du racisme" (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 33). As chapter seven has shown, this racism informed the discourse and process of mobilisation of the MTA, as it had done with the ENA/PPA during the inter-war period. For the 1970s movement, "Arabness" was viewed as an empowering reference and as a mobilising force against racism which targeted Maghrebis. In that context, it placed ethnicity at the core of its antiracist ideology and strategy, and presented it as consistent with its wider universalist aims.

In this section, I will examine the MTA's discourse on Maghrebis' experience as illegal immigrants, workers and hostel residents and argue that it was more rooted in migrants' life in France than that of the ENA/PPA. I will assess the processes by which the movement managed to use these spheres of immigrants' life as frameworks for action, and will see how it then attempted to mobilise militants beyond those narrow spheres in an attempt to broaden, nationalise and politicise immigrants' actions. I will argue that the overall aim of the MTA's strategy was to posit immigrants' demands for rights as inherently universalist, to oppose the state's segregationist policy and force it to recognise migrants' presence and role in French society as legitimate.

The role that had been ascribed to immigrants in 1970s France was that of workers (see, for example, Talha 1981a & 1981b).¹²⁴ Their presence was seen by the state as purely functional and instrumental in sustaining and furthering the French

¹²³ To some extent, this echoed the way in which, in the late 1930s, the PCF and the CGTU accused the PPA of being a fascist, fanatic religious organisation close to the PPF.

¹²⁴ This functional and dehumanised view of immigrants was derided and challenged by *El Assifa*, the theatre group close to the MTA, in its play entitled "Ça travaille, ça travaille et ça ferme sa gueule".

economic interest.¹²⁵ Their experience in France, which was described by Mauco as one of "[e]xploitation tous azimuts" (1973a, see also 1973b & 1973c), was therefore not dissimilar from that of colonial workers in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the workplace, migrant workers were systematically paid less than their French counterparts and occupied the most difficult and dangerous jobs. One in six suffered from tuberculosis, and in the metal industry where immigrants represented less than 11% of the workforce, they accounted for 20% of accidents (*Politique aujourd'hui*, mars-avril 1974: 41-42).¹²⁶ These difficult working conditions reflected those endured by Maghrebis during the colonial period.¹²⁷ The difficult conditions within which immigrants worked led the MTA to organise and/or support a number of strike actions in factories (such as Perranoya, Cables de Lyon, Peugeot-Cycles, Renault and Margoline) for improved working and pay conditions, and for the granting of work and residence permits to illegal immigrants working in the French industry ('Le bilan de la grève de Peugeot-Cycles à Beaulieu-Mandeur') (3).

Immigrants were also subjected to spatial/residential segregation which was very much reminiscent of that experienced by their inter-war forebears. A large proportion of them lived secluded from French society in hostels and bidonvilles where their living conditions were so appalling that they often led to health problems and accidents, such as in Valenciennes in 1973 (Williame 1976a: 36-37, see also Bada-Pache 1972, Ariès 1973, Granges 1981, Viet 1999). Conditions in SONACOTRA hostels were not necessarily better, as residents were subjected to stringent rules and could be expelled at any time by hostel managers (who were often ex-soldiers who had served in Indochina and Algeria). They could not receive visitors, hold meetings or express their views. Their difficult living conditions, together with the fact that rents almost doubled

¹²⁵ In 1973, there were 3,775,000 immigrants in France (7% of the population). The proportion of workers amongst them (48%) was higher than that of the French (41%). In 1971, 72% of immigrants were unskilled workers, and by 1981, Maghrebis represented 42% of immigrants in France (*Politique aujourd'hui*, mars-avril 1974: 41-42, Granges 1981: 143).

¹²⁶ For an analysis of Maghrebi immigrants' experience in the workplace see, for example, Bouhouche (1973), Cornu (1982), Gharbaoui (1969), Lahalle (1972), Le Bras (1985), Manangy (1976), Migrinter (1986), Ouhadj and Trébous (1972).

¹²⁷ A number of studies of the experience of colonial migrants have been carried out - see, for example, MacMaster (1997: 76-83), Bouguessa (1981), Gallissot (1985b), Ghazi (1952), Horne (1985), Mauco (1932), Ray (1938), Stovall (1993).

between 1971 and 1976 without any improvement in their environment led to large scale rent strikes in the *foyers* (Williame 1976b: 34).

The absence of legal rights for migrants who were too often the victims of administrative and police arbitrariness further contributed to their marginalisation, as the adoption of the *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet* on 18 September 1972 illustrated (Castells 1975: 22-23). In that sense, their experience was reminiscent of that of North African colonial migrants during the inter-war period. The fact that immigration was controlled by the *administration* and the police, echoed the way in which inter-war colonial migrants had been subjected to the *Code de l'Indigénat* in France and to the arbitrary rule of police departments such as the *Services de surveillance, protection et assistance des indigènes nord-africains* (SAINA).

It was within these three spheres of administrative, spatial/residential and economic segregation of immigrants by the state that the MTA's action was articulated. The anchoring of the MTA's political discourse and protest action within these spheres of Maghrebi immigrants' life illustrates the extent to which its approach differed from the more discourse-based strategy of the *Etoile* and the PPA. The latter movements discussed immigrants' strike actions in the workplace only occasionally, and did not see North African immigrants' difficult living conditions and the expulsions that they were subjected to as central frameworks for political action. They interpreted them as further expressions of colonial domination which would be brought to an end by independence, and their political project focused almost exclusively on a discourse of national liberation.

In contrast, the MTA's political discourse was more rooted in action. The wave of hunger strikes by illegal immigrants which followed the introduction of the *Circulaire* in the early 1970s marked the start of a two-way process which aimed to develop a united front of solidarity between immigrants and the French, and to broaden the movement nationally by establishing links between similar actions taking place in France.¹²⁸ In October 1972, the hunger strike of MTA activists Saïd and Faouzia Bouziri in the Saint-Bernard chapel in the eighteenth *arrondissement*, led to their

¹²⁸ For an account of immigrants' action against the Circular, see, for example, Verbunt (1973).

regularisation, to the development of other hunger strikes, and to the creation of the *Comité de défense de la vie et des droits des travailleurs immigrés (Sans Frontière, mardi 1 janvier 1980, 'Lettre à un camarade en prison')* (1) (3).

The MTA's documentation provides crucial details about the way in which the hunger strikes spread to other parts of the country and how they were structured. It also highlights the greater importance that the MTA gave to the spread of protest action within France, as compared with the inter-war nationalist movement. Rabah Saïdani, a Tunisian worker from Valence, played an important role in this process. He had met Saïd Bouziri at the MTA's first "Congrès des comités de lutte d'atelier" and had started a one week hunger strike of solidarity with Bouziri. In mid-December, 18 Tunisian sans-papiers, including Saïdani, were arrested in Valence and faced expulsion. The MTA saw Saïdani's role in the hunger strike that some of them started in an annex of Notre-Dame church in Valence as central:

Le trait d'union entre la grève de Valence et celle de la Chapelle Saint-Bernard à Paris 18ème (celle de Saïd) sera ce Tunisien de Valence ... confronté à l'expulsion de 19 [sic] Tunisiens, il aura recours à la méthode vue en pratique à Paris: la grève de la faim défensive. ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3)

The broad base of support that it attracted from the Church to the CFDT, and from the PSU to the Communist Party, and the popular demonstration which took place on 23 December were described by *Al Assifa* (Numéro 7, janvier 1973), a bulletin linked to the MTA, as the most extraordinary event since 1968 (3).

The second dimension of the movement's strategy, which distinguishes it from the inter-war nationalist movement, was to establish bridges between the various spheres of action in which it was involved. The arrival in Valence of two militants of the *Comité Mohamed Diab* (formed after Diab's death in a Versailles police station at the end of November 1972) during the Tunisians' hunger strike illustrates how the MTA attempted to relate the hunger strike of the Tunisian *sans-papiers* with its action against racist violence (see *Le Monde*, 19 décembre 1972).

This approach can also be noted in the way in which the May 1973 strike at Margoline, a recycling plant in Nanterre which employed mostly *illegal immigrants* (*Le Monde*, 25 mai 1973), was structured. Even though the MTA often denounced the reductionist role that the French had cast for immigrants (that of a labour force), it was within that narrow definition of their role in French society that Maghrebis tried to reconstruct an empowering identity. This very much echoed the way in which the ENA/PPA endeavoured to build a strong national identity as Muslims and Arabs, two terms used by the French to discriminate against North Africans. On the other hand, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Etoile/PPA's discourse did not perceive the important role that immigrants played in the French economy as a potentially powerful political tool to further its nationalist agenda.

It is worth noting that other differences existed between the two movements. The MTA's mobilisation process was helped by the particular political context of the 1970s. What distinguishes it from the inter-war movement was that the events of May 1968 had weakened the credibility of established organisations, official institutions and of nation-states as repositories of political legitimacy and authority, and reinforced the marxist ideological premise that political legitimacy rested first and foremost within the working class. In such a context, the workplace constituted the framework *par excellence* within which immigrants' action had to be developed. As Bonnechère argues, "l'immigré est en France parce qu'on attend quelque chose de son travail ... et c'est d'abord dans sa condition de travailleur que peuvent être défendus ou niés ses droits" (1976: 127). In a society where immigrants were marginalised, immigrants' action in factories constituted a potentially powerful weapon which could affect sensitive areas of the French economy.¹²⁹

Furthermore, unlike the ENA/PPA, the MTA acknowledged the importance of the workplace as a terrain for political action when it stated that it had to work towards "l'élargissement nécessaire de la lutte pour la carte de travail au front principal, l'usine" ('La grève chez Margoline (Nanterre-Gennevilliers du 21 au 23/5/73), douze règles

¹²⁹ For example, the general strikes against racism organised by the MTA on 3 and 14 September 1973 crippled large sections of industry in the South of France and in the Paris region.

tirées de l'expérience') (3). It was on these most sensitive grounds for the French authorities that the MTA considered that it could challenge the state effectively. Indeed, as Verbunt argues, "[l]'administration française confond ... facilement la contestation d'un pouvoir (économique) avec la contestation contre la nation" (1972: 1220). In that context, protest actions within the workplace were consistent with the movement's aim to challenge the state. This approach differed from that of the ENA/PPA which presented its anti-colonial project in broad terms as one of national liberation, without specifying the concrete characteristics of its struggle for independence. The discourse of the 1970s movement was more specific and rooted in action. The Margoline strike, which started on 21 May and ended on 25 May 1973 marked this shift in emphasis in the MTA's strategy, and was to influence other strike actions in the workplace. The movement successfully mobilised illegal immigrants who worked in this plant and linked their strike to other actions such as the *sans-papiers'* hunger strikes by organising meetings involving both Margoline workers and hunger strikers from Ménilmontant. However, MTA militants did not want to limit their demands to better working and living conditions, and work and residence permits for workers:

La seule revendication de la carte de travail ... sous prétexte qu'elle était principale, aurait été trop abstraite, suspendue entre ciel et terre, limitant d'emblée la lutte à son caractère administratif et juridique. Donc aider les gars à traduire ce qu'ils disent EN FAIT: "On veut VIVRE, on veut nos DROITS". ('La grève chez Margoline (Nanterre-Gennevilliers du 21 au 23/5/73), douze règles tirées de l'expérience') (3)

This passage shows that the movement aimed to place this action within a universalist framework which was consistent with the wider aims and ideology of the movement, and with its attempt to win over French public opinion.

It is also worth noting that the year when the Margoline strike took place (1973) coincided with the MTA's adoption of a far more pro-active approach to protest action which distinguishes it from the inter-war nationalist movement. Whereas in the early 1970s, illegal immigrants went on hunger strike once they had been arrested and were

faced with expulsion (for example in actions such as the Valence hunger strike, which the movement called a "grève de la faim défensive"), the movement now supported a more assertive stance whereby illegal immigrants came out and started hunger strikes voluntarily ("grèves de la faim offensives") ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). This was the case for the hunger strike started on 15 February 1973, by Tunisians and two Moroccans in the St-Hyppolite Church in Avenue de Choisy, and the one which began on 22 February of the same year in a church annex in St Maur, when thirteen Tunisians stopped feeding themselves and demanded basic human rights and legal documents (Ibid.).

This was also accompanied by a bolder strategy when dealing with the authorities. The MTA's approach highlights the greater importance that the movement gave to challenging the authorities directly as compared with the ENA/PPA. The creation of delegations of *sans-papiers* or workers on strike, whose representatives then met French officials to present their demands (such as on 28 February 1973 when a delegation of hunger strikers went to the Ministry of the Interior) proved largely ineffective. This reformist approach, which was referred to as a "politique syndicaliste", was then replaced by a more offensive and empowering strategy ("politique maoïste") which aimed to attract publicity and ensure that immigrants' case was heard in the media. This "politique maoïste" was put into practice on 16 March 1973 when a group of 200 *sans-papiers* occupied the *Bureau de la Main-d'œuvre* in Paris and presented its regional director, Mr Bois, with 1500 applications for work and residence permits which had been collected at rue St-Maur (ibid).

The MTA's involvement in actions in the workplace was far greater than that of the ENA/PPA during the inter-war period. Indeed, the former also adopted a similar strategy in factories. Margoline strikers went to the *Préfecture* and to the *Bureau de la Main-d'œuvre* to tell secretaries and other staff, as well as the media (*Le Monde*, 25 mai 1973) about their experience at Margoline, and force the authorities, which, according to them, were aware of the employment of illegal immigrants by this factory, to act. In so doing the movement hoped to discredit racist authorities and the state:

L'intérêt politique en est évident, non seulement du point de vue des grévistes mais aussi de toute la population: on soutient les premiers en informant les seconds, en "mouillant" tous les responsables administratifs et policiers, en aiguisant toutes les contradictions au sein de l'appareil d'état. ('La grève chez Margoline (Nanterre-Gennevilliers du 21 au 23/5/73), douze règles tirées de l'expérience') (3)

Therefore, by developing a national base for its actions, by adopting a bolder strategy and linking all forms of protest actions with each other, and by placing immigrants' experience and demands within a universalist framework, the MTA aimed to renegotiate the boundary of political action in immigrants' favour. It also endeavoured to challenge the French state's discriminatory rule against immigrants, a strategy which the MTA also referred to as "des affrontements successifs mais mesurés avec l'ennemi" ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). Thus, unlike the ENA/PPA in the 1920s and 1930s, the movement's political agenda challenging the state went beyond discourse to embrace a more pro-active strategy of protest action in all spheres of immigrants' life.¹³⁰

8.3 Solidarity between the MTA and other immigrants in France

Echoing the *Etoile* and the PPA's call for solidarity with all the colonised in the inter-war period, the discourse of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* positioned France's inherently "repressive" and "racist" state as part of a larger systemic order aimed at exploiting all immigrants throughout Europe and beyond. The movement reacted by expressing the need to create a newspaper (*La Voix des travailleurs arabes*) which would allow it to unite Maghrebi, immigrant and French workers "de Toulouse à Paris ... partout en France et pourquoi pas en Europe" (*Les travailleurs arabes luttent, les travailleurs arabes veulent s'exprimer. Un journal est indispensable*) (3).

¹³⁰ This does not mean that Messali Hadj's movement remained purely "légaliste". In February 1947, Messali's MTLA created the *Organisation spéciale* (OS), a secret paramilitary organisation whose aim was to prepare the uprising. Several OS members were at the origin of the development of the FLN (Droz and Lever 1982: 48-51).

In meetings, demonstrations and other types of protest actions, its reference to issues affecting immigrants, in particular North Africans in Germany, and the contacts that it had established with other Maghrebi militants of the Arab Left in Brussels may have been signs that the MTA tried to develop a European strategy based on solidarity amongst Maghrebis. This was reminiscent of the ENA/PPA's attempt to develop European links with other Muslim and anti-colonialist organisations to further its nationalist agenda. By contrast, the MTA's struggle aimed mainly to ensure that the rights of Maghrebi and other immigrants within France and Europe be respected. Because racism, marginalisation and exploitation affected all immigrant workers, MTA militants viewed it as essential that these ethnically-based links should not be an end in themselves but should constitute the foundation for wider inter-ethnic mobilisation amongst all immigrants in France and beyond in order to fight what Djellali Kamal coined "le Marché Commun de l'esclavage" ('Déclaration du candidat immigré aux élections présidentielles') (3).

The future success of this embryonic supra-national strategy and network was very much dependent on the effective mobilisation of all immigrants within France. Indeed, like the ENA/PPA which had established close links with Black and Annamese colonial workers and political activists, the MTA tried to establish a front of solidarity with other immigrant workers and organisations by presenting the experience and fight of Maghrebis as inextricably tied to those of other immigrants. This was illustrated by the movement's complex hybrid discourse which was rooted both in ethnicity and class belonging. In its framework of reference, the terms "Arabs" and "immigrants" were often used as interchangeable signifiers.¹³¹ This could be interpreted as being the result of a binary process which reflected, within different parameters, that of the ENA/PPA (Arabs/Muslims). On the one hand, the MTA's interchangeable use of "Arabs" and "immigrants" ethnicised a socio-economic phenomenon (immigration), and on the other hand, it reduced one's ethnicity to a specific socio-economic dimension.

¹³¹ This made the interpretation of the movement's discourse all the more complex to clarify, as "immigrés" could sometimes refer to immigrants who were specifically Maghrebi, and sometimes to all immigrants.

Within a French socio-political context where, in popular discourse at least, the qualifier "immigrant" was progressively becoming a euphemism for "Arab", this process showed that the MTA, like the ENA/PPA, was able to adopt this reductive framework of reference imposed on it by French society as a basis for identification, and as a starting point for mobilisation in order to better challenge it.¹³² If the struggle of Arabs was seen as epitomising that of all immigrants, then it enabled the movement to emphasise commonalities with other migrants and facilitated multi-ethnic mobilisation. Furthermore, by combining ethnically-based actions with alliances between Maghrebi and other immigrants in France, the movement was able to break that reductive mould, and fight more effectively against what it saw as segregation and economic exploitation.¹³³

Various actions in the workplace (Peugeot-Cycles, Perranoya, Cables de Lyon, etc.), in the *foyers* and on the streets were considered to be ideal loci for such alliances to be formed. This further illustrates that even though both the ENA/PPA and the MTA sought to establish solidarity with other immigrants, the latter built a front of solidarity which went beyond political rallies, and was involved in common protest action within French society. The struggle of Mauritian and other immigrants for regularisation, rights and better living and working conditions was often evoked in the MTA's internal documents and in its newspaper, *La voix des travailleurs arabes*.¹³⁴ For instance, links of solidarity were established with the Pakistanis in France who went on hunger strike in Paris in March 1974 with the support of Père Louis Gallimardet, a French priest. Led by Abdul Razak, they demanded that residence permits be granted for the 400 or so Pakistanis who lived in Paris, that an agency be set up by the French government in Pakistan to recruit workers, and that better accommodation be provided for those already living in France ('Situation des travailleurs pakistanais sous contrat' and tract written in English by Pakistani activists entitled 'We demand') (3). The fact that the MTA also consistently supported the *Mouvement des travailleurs mauriciens* and their

¹³² This was consistent with the MTA's adoption of the workplace, to which Maghrebi immigrants' role was limited, as a basis for mobilisation (see previous section).

¹³³ In *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (octobre 1973), the MTA emphasised this when it stated that "notre lutte continue avec tous les immigrés et les travailleurs français" (3).

¹³⁴ See, for example, *La voix des travailleurs arabes*, 1975 (3).

actions against the proposed expulsion of 2000 illegal immigrants to Mauritius suggests that it was more involved in the daily struggle of other migrants than the ENA/PPA. It was particularly active during the Silvério case when Mauritian illegal immigrants successfully sued their employer (Silvério) in Troyes in February 1974. They had been recruited in Mauritius, brought to France illegally through Belgium and had to work as builders without pay for months (supposedly to pay back their air fare) or face expulsion (*Akhbar el Haraka*, bulletin N°4, 15 décembre 1975) (3). The MTA welcomed the verdict as the first case where an employer had been sanctioned, and accused the authorities of hypocrisy:

La mobilisation a été considérable tant dans les organisations que dans les ateliers et les lycées de Troyes ... Les pouvoirs publics vont faire semblant de lâcher un patron pour essayer de se blanchir et prendre l'initiative, mais la détermination des plaignants de faire de ce procès tant celui des pratiques gouvernementales que patronales de l'immigration a dissuadé Dijoud de se présenter à la barre, bien qu'il se soit fait annoncer à France-Soir. (Ibid.)

Here again, the MTA targeted the state and the authorities for being responsible for the exploitation of Mauritian immigrants. Immigration Minister Dijoud was rhetorically put in the dock ("[...] a dissuadé Dijoud de se présenter à la barre") after the plaintiffs had accused not only employers, but also the government. To some extent, this discourse reflected that of the ENA/PPA which accused imperialism and the state of oppressing the *coloniaux*. Indeed, the Mauritian immigrants' experience at the hands of their employer and of the government was presented as another illustration of exploitation of all immigrants, and the prosecution of Silvério was also that of the government and employers' treatment of migrants.

Other inter-ethnic protest actions took place which further highlight the greater emphasis that the MTA put on protest action, as compared with the ENA/PPA. The hunger strike by thirty-seven immigrants in rue Dulong in Paris in May 1974 which was supported by 200 North African, Pakistani, Mauritian immigrants and French supporters

(*Libération*, 9 mai 1974),¹³⁵ and the occupation of a building in construction at 69, rue Servan, in Paris by fifty North African, Pakistani and Mauritian immigrants on 22 May 1974 to draw the attention of public opinion and of the authorities to their difficult living and working conditions in France (*Le Monde*, 24 juin 1974).¹³⁶ On 20 January 1975, seventy Maghrebi, Pakistani and Mauritian *sans-papiers* occupied the *Direction départementale de la main-d'œuvre* and some of them joined French militants who were on hunger-strike in the St Hippolyte Church in Paris in support of illegal immigrants ('Les hors-la-loi. Scandaleuse intervention policière contre une grève de la faim', 1975) (5).

Both Pakistani and Mauritian movements shared much of the MTA's political outlook. Indeed, they were autonomous groups which had opted for pro-active action (strikes, hunger strikes, court cases, demonstrations, etc.) against what they saw as employers' and the French authorities' discriminatory policies. They established links with other immigrants and the wider French population and were highly critical of their government's perceived complicity with European countries in supplying cheap labour obediently to the West. Solidarity between the MTA and other immigrants in France was based on class and on an awareness that immigrants represented "les couches opprimées en France" (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3). Similarly, the Black and Annamese workers and organisations with which the ENA/PPA had established close links had comparable political objectives: to end imperialist oppression and fight for independence.

¹³⁵ This action led the French authorities to accept the demands of the thirty-seven strikers for a work permit, housing and training (*Libération* 9 mai 1974).

¹³⁶ The protesters were arrested and taken to the Opera police station where they accused the police of trying to gas them whilst they were in cells (*Libération*, 24 mai 1974). A Commission of inquiry was set up by the *Mouvement d'action judiciaire* and thirty-five plaintiffs, with the participation of the *Comité de défense des droits et de la vie des travailleurs immigrés*, the *Syndicat de la Magistrature* and CFDT *Police* to examine this case (*Le Monde*, 26 juin 1974). This incident also led to an attack against the commissariat by an antifascist group on 9 June 1974 (*France Soir*, 11 June 1974).

8.4 Tensions between the MTA and French trade unions

In this section, the link between French and immigrant workers, often seen as conflictual, and the way it has informed union strategies in relation to immigration will be examined. I will then move on to analyse the MTA's discourse on, and difficult relationship with French trade-unions which, in many respects, reflected that of the nationalist movement during the inter-war period.

Beyond the political references to Socialism underlying the ideology of unions such as the CGT, the CFDT or the more reformist stance of *Force ouvrière*, the subtext in trade union discourse could also be rooted in nationalism (Lemarquis 1975). The CGT's pro-assimilationist agenda in the colonies during the late 1930s (particularly during the years of the *Front Populaire*), and *Force Ouvrière's* ambiguous position during the Algerian war are good illustrations of this (see Gani 1972: 175-177). As Lemarquis points out:

La guerre d'Algérie met à nu le point d'échoppement d'un syndicalisme qui porte les revendications d'une classe ouvrière de plus en plus économiquement conditionnée nationalement ou étatique, dont les luttes sont réglées par les impulsions d'une vie politique elle aussi nationale, et qui en outre n'admet l'action des immigrés que dans sa propre gravitation.

(Lemarquis 1975: 69)

The Algerian war highlighted the tensions between French trade unions marked by nationalism and their stance on immigration. In order to assess the MTA's difficult relationship with unions, the ambivalent nature of nationalism and its relationship to racism need to be briefly discussed. As Balibar argues, "cette imbrication [du nationalisme et du racism] renvoie aux circonstances dans lesquelles les Etats-nations ... se sont efforcés de contrôler les mouvements de population, et à la production même du «peuple» comme communauté politique supérieure aux divisions de classe" (1988: 69). The tensions arising from the predominance of the sense of belonging first and foremost to a "people" rather than a class was one of the key obstacles to the MTA's

attempt to create a broad solidarity movement based on class which would encompass both French and immigrant workers. Large unions and parties of the left were the locus of such tensions in the 1970s just like they had been during the inter-war period.¹³⁷ Trade unions argued that they had difficulties in reconciling the often contradictory interests of French and immigrant workers (*Frontières*, octobre 1973: 32-33).

It was generally acknowledged that racism, and the belief that immigrant workers were the source of unfair competition and brought wages down was not uncommon amongst French workers (see Denantes 1973: 1232-1240, Denantes 1973a, Anizon 1973). In the 1970s, as during the inter-war period, this could create tensions within union movements whose choices were informed by their mainly French base of support. But as Tripier points out, this interpretation was too simplistic and did not take into account the efforts made by the main trade-unions to develop strategies to incorporate immigrants (1972: 332-323).¹³⁸ In her view, the combination of a process of substitution of the French workforce by migrant workers in unskilled jobs, the increase in "socio-cultural differences" and the isolation of immigrants led to a widening of the gap between French and migrant workers both in the workplace and in the wider society. However, Tripier's interpretation of the increasing "socio-cultural" gap between French and immigrant workers (Portuguese, Yugoslavs, Maghrebis, Sub-Saharan Africans, Turks, and so on) is problematic as those differences do not appear to have been necessarily and fundamentally dissimilar to those which had previously "divided" the French and older groups of immigrants such as Italians, Poles or Spaniards. For example, Ponty shows that in the 1920s and 1930s, during what she describes as their "difficult integration", Polish immigrants also suffered from racism and were viewed as "inassimilables" and as competitors by French workers (1985: 51-58, see also Schor 1996: 121-123).

It could be argued that immigrants' rights within the workplace had not improved significantly since the inter-war period. Until the mid-1970s at least, non-EEC foreign workers were not allowed to manage or administer a union and the function of union

¹³⁷ For an analysis of the conflictual relationship between the PCF and the ENA/PPF in the 1930s, see Schweitzer (1972: 115-136).

¹³⁸ See also Gani (1972) for a study of trade unions' efforts to incorporate immigrants.

delegate was only open to those who could read and write in French. This condition, which was to be partly abolished by the law of 11 July 1975, excluded almost 70% of immigrants from holding positions within trade unions (Bonnechère 1976: 128). In effect, legislation deprived most immigrants from union representation and just like in other areas such as employment, housing, social rights and professional training, "l'ensemble du cadre institutionnel français légalement ou de fait, entérine la discrimination, la ségrégation et l'isolement du migrant" (Tripier 1972: 334).

In that context, unions such as the CGT and the CFDT tried to develop policies aimed at incorporating immigrant workers as members. This policy echoed that of the CGTU which recruited colonial and other immigrants in its ranks. The Third National Conference on Immigration organised by the CGT in Montreuil in November 1972 established the main lines of its policy towards immigrants. The trade union adopted a number of measures and fundamental principles which emphasised its will to recognise immigrants as an integral part of the working class whose rights and demands should be incorporated into the programme of the CGT (*Politique aujourd'hui*, mars-avril 1975: 88-95).

The resolutions adopted by the CFDT during their 36th Congress which took place in Nantes in June 1973 emphasised the fact that the fight against discrimination, racism, colonialism and for equality were priorities for the union. By contrast with the CGT, the involvement of immigrants in conflicts such as at Perranoya or Renault was acknowledged by the CFDT as further proof of immigrants' maturity in social conflicts (*Politique aujourd'hui*, mars-avril 1975: 96-98). The CFDT called for a review of the structures put in place within the union to deal with immigrants, as the units dealing specifically with migrant workers within unions such as the "Secrétariat des travailleurs immigrés" were deemed inefficient.

The dilemmas faced by trade unions in the 1970s were not dissimilar to those they had experienced in the 1920s and 1930s. The CGT and the CFDT wanted to counter the racism and xenophobia attached to the image that a number of French workers had of immigrants as "disloyal competitors" belonging to culturally distant and somewhat inferior communities, a prejudice which had been wide-spread during the

inter-war period. Instead, they wanted to promote the image of the immigrant as a fellow worker who is both vulnerable and exploited. Unions condemned employers for using cheap immigrant labour as a means of avoiding the need to invest and modernise the tools and methods of production. Their claims that immigrants should be paid the same salary as the French offered the advantage of both reflecting immigrants' demands and defending the rights of their French members who feared that immigration might have a negative impact on salaries (Tripier 1972: 341).

The CFDT, for instance, favoured the universalist perspective that "la lutte avec et pour les travailleurs immigrés est partie intégrante de la lutte syndicale «qui ne connaît pas de frontières»" over the second option which "en isolant les immigrés «parce que plus défavorisés», parce que «marginiaux» ... nous conduit tout droit au paternalisme, «à l'action sociale» que nous prétendons rejeter dans le système capitaliste" (*Formation*, Numéro 92, mars-avril 1971: 7-8). These choices were an attempt made by that union, as well as others, to adopt a more universalist and inclusive stance on immigration and distance themselves from the kind of paternalism and nationalism tainted by xenophobia which had marked past union policy on immigration. However, adopting the former whilst rejecting the latter was all the more difficult as the universalist position was itself traversed by tropes of paternalism and potential contradictions and tensions. Indeed, in spite of some real reflexion on ways of bringing issues pertaining to immigrants to the heart of their activity, trade unions often proved unable to cater for the specific demands of immigrants which were not necessarily consistent with those of French workers, and they consistently stigmatised any attempt made by immigrant workers to organise in an autonomous way. To some extent, this illustrates the fact that trade unions's stance on immigration in the 1970s reflected that of the inter-war period.

Furthermore, the CGT and the CFDT's choice to hold common talks with the government on France's immigration policy and their attempts to take part in the running of organisations such as the *Office national de l'immigration* (ONI) made them less likely to support openly, or take the lead in the struggle for legal and illegal immigrants' rights for fear of jeopardising their relationship and ongoing negotiations

with the government. This tension also marked French trade unions during the inter-war period and informed much of their policy towards immigrants and colonial workers. In the 1970s, the French authorities exploited the divisions between unions and immigrants by introducing discrete measures and making promises in favour of immigrants in order to keep unions on board (*Politique aujourd'hui*, mars-avril 1974: 41-50).

Hence, in a socio-political context which prevented many immigrants from being involved in union activities and where trade unions did not always cater for their needs, the emergence of the MTA marked a significant shift in the way Maghrebis articulated their discourse and demands within the workplace. In the 1970s, the development of such an ethnically based, autonomous organisation was perceived by French unions as a threat. This was reminiscent of the impact that the emergence of the ENA/PPA as a truly independent organisation had had on French trade unions and political parties during the inter-war period.

In the 1970s, accusations made by unions about Maghrebis' lack of both political motivation and experience in union activities were not always founded. Clearly, the nature of the political system and of work relations in North Africa did not necessarily equip Maghrebi migrants with the relevant political practices and traditions to fight for their rights within a Western industrial environment. However, it could be argued that historically, North African migrants had a tradition of protest action within the workplace. The Algerian nationalist movement had been closely linked with the CGTU from the mid 1920s to the early 1930s, and North African migrant workers had taken part in strikes and other actions in the workplace from the inter-war period to the 1970s.¹³⁹ Furthermore, many Maghrebis had developed a sense of the political through their struggle for independence on both sides of the Mediterranean, and immigration in France had played a key role in this process as early as in the inter-war period. Indeed, the MTA argued that the politicisation of the Maghrebi community was anchored in its role in the movement for Algerian independence:

¹³⁹ The CGTU admitted North African and Indochinese colonial workers as members and organised the first "Congrès des Travailleurs nord-africains de la région parisienne" in 1924 (Lemarquis 1975: 56).

Les souffrances et les luttes des travailleurs arabes, sur le sol même de la métropole colonialiste dans les usines (par les grèves) par les actions armées et surtout les immenses manifestations des travailleurs arabes (algériens, tunisiens, marocains) en 61 sont une contribution importante et propre aux travailleurs arabes en France au mouvement de libération du peuple algérien. ('Histoire des luttes des travailleurs arabes face au nouveau développement du racisme et le rôle du MTA', 1973) (3)

This sense of the political developed throughout history against capital and colonialism. It had already started during the inter-war period, and was further reinforced by what the MTA saw as a crucial socio-political phenomenon: May 1968 (see Tripier 1972: 338). The events of 1968 saw the establishment of links between French students and workers, left-wing and anarchist organisations, and foreign workers and students, and a significant number of immigrants became involved in strike action (Gastaut 1993: 9-29). As Gastaut argues, "C'est dans le prolongement de la crise de mai que s'organiseront, au début des années 70, des campagnes à l'initiative des immigrés, plus sûrs d'eux, car plus soutenus et plus politisés après la Révolution" (Gastaut 1993: 18). Indeed, the involvement of Maghrebi immigrant workers in the events of May 1968 was one of the inspirations behind the creation of a socio-political movement whose ideology was grounded in its belief in autonomy of action and which gave primacy to militants over structures:

Déjà en mai 1968, les travailleurs arabes avaient participé au mouvement de contestation, et étaient sur la brèche dans les usines occupées, le souffle de mai avait gagné la communauté arabe et durant les années 68-70 des luttes se sont développées dans toute la France, surtout des révoltes dans les foyers pour des conditions de vie décentes et les libertés essentielles chez eux. ('Histoire des luttes des travailleurs arabes face au nouveau développement du racisme et le rôle du MTA', 1973) (3)

Therefore, the May 1968 events were one of the contributing factors behind the mobilisation amongst North Africans for rights and better living and working conditions.

The MTA's will to build on these past struggles and develop as an autonomous force led to tensions and conflicts with French trade unions reminiscent of those which had marked the ENA/PPA's relationship with French trade unions during the inter-war period. However, the movement did make a clear distinction between the CGT and the CFDT. The *Confédération Générale du Travail* was openly hostile to the MTA, which it accused of dividing the working class. On the other hand, the Maghrebi movement accused the "centrale syndicale" of refusing to support the hunger-strike movement, and of opposing immigrants' initiatives in the workplace. During the 1970s, the strike at the Peugeot-Cycles factory in Beaulieu-Mandeur epitomised the tensions that existed between the two organisations. The workers, who demanded better working conditions and pay decided to go on strike in spite of the objections of the unions. The MTA argued that the CGT, whose close links with the PCF meant that they were keen on resolving the dispute as quickly as possible in order not to jeopardise the chances of the Communist candidate (Paganeli) at the local elections, contributed to the relative failure of the strike action ('Le bilan de la grève de Peugeot-Cycles à Beaulieu-Mandeur', manuscript document, 1976) (3). By contrast, the main reason behind the conflict between the inter-war nationalist movement and the CGT was that it had adopted an assimilationist stance on the colonial issue.

If the MTA's relationship with the CGT was always tense, the Maghrebi movement believed that its disputes with the CFDT were not fundamental ones, and that "à la CFDT on trouve toujours des gens qui sont de notre avis" (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 32). The relationship between the MTA and the CFDT in the first half of the 1970s could, in that sense, be compared with that between the ENA and the CGTU until the early 1930s. Indeed, the CFDT also offered tactical help and support to the MTA on a number of occasions. The trade union's premises were sometimes used by the MTA for their meetings, such as Place des Martyrs de la Résistance in Aix (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3). A number of hunger-strikes, such as the one carried out by three

Tunisians on 30 December 1972 in rue Montholon, Paris, also took place in the union's building ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3). MTA militants also participated in some political meetings of the CFDT such as the one organised in November 1972 at Barbès-Palace in Château-Rouge to discuss the implications of the *Circulaire Marcellin-Fontanet* (Ibid).

However, the MTA was often critical of the CFDT. It regarded the union's action against the *Circulaire* as being inefficient "parce qu'ils ne partent pas du besoin des masses tels qu'ils se posent dans la vie mais qu'ils partent de textes: le Journal officiel, d'idées toutes faites, de décisions bureaucratiques" (Ibid). In a document produced on 5 May 1975, the MTA also accused the CFDT of organising smear campaigns against the movement and illegal immigrants in Montpellier who wanted to regularise their situation. It marked a clear shift from their previously close relationship with the union, and the MTA interpreted this attack as a sign that the CFDT was, in a way, supporting the repressive policy of the government:

La commission exécutive de la CFDT ainsi que l'UR Languedoc-Roussillon viennent de prendre la responsabilité de diffuser à la presse un compte-rendu mensonger et calomnieux sur la lutte des travailleurs saisonniers et sans-papiers en France [...] Ce que la C.E. CFDT craint le plus depuis 2 ans de lutte contre la circulaire Fontanet-Marcellin, c'est que les travailleurs immigrés s'organisent de manière autonome à partir de leurs propres besoins et construisent sur cette base l'unité avec les travailleurs français. ('Déclaration du Mouvement des travailleurs arabes', 5 février 1975) (3)

From the mid-1970s onwards, the MTA expressed its will to become more independent from the "centrale syndicale". The movement's mistrust of unions was justified by history and by recent confrontations. It rejected the unions' policy on immigration as a "pseudo-unité des travailleurs qui aboutit à l'unité paternaliste avec le bougnoule" (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 32). This type of discourse echoed that of the ENA/PPA during the second half of the 1930s after the split between Maghrebi nationalists on the one hand, and the PCF/CGTU on the other became more evident.

The clashes which had opposed Maghrebi immigrants and unions in Renault in 1970 or in the Chausson factory in 1971 where CGT activists had torn Palestinian flags brought by Maghrebi militants were seen as further proof that unions were hostile to the movement's support for the Palestinian cause ('Notre politique par rapport aux syndicats') (3). Further events highlighted the attempt made by unions to appropriate militant actions initiated by immigrants. Even though the CGT opposed, and then decided rather belatedly to join the antiracist protest movement in September 1973, it tried nonetheless to confiscate it and marginalise the MTA. Representatives from the movement were also prevented from speaking during the political meeting which took place at the "Bourse du Travail" after the National Day of Action against Racism that the CGT, the CFDT and the FEN had organised on 25 September 1973 (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, octobre 1973) (3). In a letter addressed to Messrs Séguy and Maire, respective leaders of the CGT and CFDT, the MTA claimed that it worked for the development of a workers' movement and rejected accusations that creating an ethnically-based organisation was playing into the hands of racism and dividing workers. The movement's aim was to unite Maghrebi and French workers and "expliquer aux travailleurs français intoxiqués par les syndicats, quel est le sens de notre lutte, leur faire comprendre que si la C.G.T. a bougé, c'est parce qu'on a bougé" (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 32-33).

MTA documents also highlight the extent to which the movement was divided over its position vis-à-vis unions. In a meeting which took place on 24 January 1974, MTA delegates from all over France (Avignon, Aix, Marseilles, Toulouse, Grenoble, Lyon, Sochaux, Lille, Guebwiller, Nanterre and Paris) emphasised the importance of developing as an autonomous force. They accused unions of having systematically opposed any autonomy of action on the part of immigrants ('Deuxième partie du mouvement dans les usines: débat') (3). The movement was faced with a dilemma: should Maghrebi immigrants develop their autonomous movement within or outside union structures? Because the MTA had not yet developed nation-wide structures capable of founding a completely independent movement in the workplace, the participation of MTA militants in the CFDT presented a number of material benefits,

just like the *Etoile* had benefited from material and financial help from the CGTU until the early 1930s. For the movement, Maghrebis' involvement in the CFDT could also facilitate the establishment of a grass-roots front of solidarity between "Arab" and French workers and bypass the trade union's leadership, as the Chausson delegate acknowledged:

Je dis que le M.T.A. doit mener un combat sur tous les fronts ... on peut récupérer à la C.F.D.T. ses sigles, son fric pour faire passer nos idées ... nous voulons faire de la C.F.D.T. un syndicat qui reflète nos aspirations, on se fout de Maire, et de la confédération, on veut que la base prenne en charge le syndicat. (Ibid)

However, the position adopted by the MTA did not manage to resolve the tension between its will to develop as an autonomous force and the benefits that its involvement in an established union might bring. The movement decided nonetheless to "composer avec les syndicats" even though it was aware that its own aims often differed from those of unions and that every important initiative it had taken had been opposed by them only to be later appropriated ('Notre politique par rapport aux syndicats') (3).

To conclude, it appears that even though the MTA made a distinction between the CFDT on the one hand, and the CGT on the other, it believed that unions represented another conservative structure which prevented French and immigrant workers from creating a united front against a racist and exploitative imperialistic order. To some extent, the MTA's complex and often conflictual relationship with the CGT, and to a lesser degree, with the CFDT reflected that between the ENA/PPA and French trade unions during the inter-war period.

In a society where immigrants felt marginalised, the MTA considered the workplace as being one of the key spheres of socialisation and protest action for immigrants. In that sense, it differed from the ENA/PPA. It did not want to see its action, demands and experience being taken over by unions which it viewed as paternalistic and motivated by an agenda which often differed from its own. What also distinguishes the MTA from the inter-war nationalist movement was the former's

conviction that as a political organisation, it should be inspired by the "masses" or the rank and file. This put it at odds with traditionally hierarchical and "dirigiste" unions. Also different was the movement's realisation that such trade unions could not address a number of issues relating to their home country and to the Arab World - yet relevant to Maghrebis' experience in France. The MTA's belief that the political groupings which could legitimately represent North Africans had to be "ethnically-based" was also shared by the *Amicales*, which presented themselves as the natural representatives of Maghrebis in France. The latter claim was to be challenged by the MTA.

8.5 The relationship between the MTA and the *Amicales*

After 1962, the *Amicale des Algériens en France* (later to become the *Amicale des Algériens en Europe*) replaced the FLN structures in France, which had themselves more or less eradicated and replaced Messali Hadj's MTLD in France during the early years of the Algerian war. The Tunisian and Moroccan governments also created similar official structures (*Amicale des Tunisiens* and *Amicale des Marocains*) whose mission was to represent and "control" their nationals in France, and promote the policies of their respective government. Their hierarchical and rigid political structure reflected the one-party system of their home country.

Amicales, which had no real equivalent during the inter-war period, were strongly implanted amongst immigrants and, in their discourse, they often denounced the racism and difficult working and living conditions that their nationals had to endure. During the "Journées d'Etudes sur les travailleurs immigrés" organised by the journal *Croissance des Jeunes Nations* on 1 and 2 December 1973, Abdelkrim Gheraieb, president of the *Amicale des Algériens en Europe* condemned all forms of discrimination against Algerian workers (1974: 5-6). But an assessment of this organisation's role in the social and political conflicts which involved immigrants in the 1970s tends to show that the *Amicales'* declarations were often at odds with their deeds as they frequently tried to contain rather than fight for their nationals in France.

One of the key objectives of the *Amicale des Algériens*, and by extension of the Algerian government, was to promote the "politique du retour" amongst their fellow nationals in France. Their mission was also to ensure that immigrants were not adopting and developing political views and practices which may be hostile to, or critical of the government in their home country.

In that context, the emergence of the MTA - a movement which wanted immigrants to return to their home country with what the movement called "un petit capital révolutionnaire" - was interpreted by the *Amicales* as a direct threat to the political order in the Maghreb. Even though the MTA openly declared that its position was to ignore rather than fight the *Amicales*, the relationship between the MTA and the North African *Amicales* was a very tense and difficult one (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 33). To some extent, this reflected the conflictual relationship which existed between the ENA/PPA and North African reformist organisations during the inter-war period.

The wave of racist murders in Marseille in August-September 1973 showed the extent to which the position of this official organisation was ambiguous. The *Amicales* both condemned racist aggressions and called for Maghrebi immigrants not to respond to any provocation (*Le Monde*, 30 août 1973). During the national day of strike action against racism that took place on 14 September 1973, the *Amicales* tried to withhold the strike action whilst officially supporting it. Militants of the *Amicale des Algériens en Europe* in Barbès, for instance, could be seen distributing leaflets backing the movement and at the same time advising immigrants not to go on strike and ripping up MTA posters (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 33). In the workplace, in the "foyers" or in the street, this strategy was also applied to most conflicts and actions in which Maghrebi immigrants were involved in the 1970s.

The failure of the *Amicales* to represent Maghrebis faithfully and fight for their rights in France may explain the success of autonomous movements such as the MTA amongst immigrants. As a social movement, the latter was able to shape its political discourse and strategy independently from established socio-political structures. The movement's emphasis on developing a democratic organisation based on the needs of the "masses" and its rejection of all forms of paternalism appealed to many immigrants

who felt segregated and marginalised by the state, as well as abandoned by the unions and *Amicales* which were supposed to defend their rights.

The MTA was a movement which encapsulated the binary nature of Maghrebi migrants' experience which was both anchored in France and in North Africa. Like the ENA/PPA, the 1970s movement was the locus where their longing for rights in France and their will to question the undemocratic political status quo in their home country could be articulated. In the social context of the 1970s, this was a role that the *Amicales* could not play, marked as they were by their rigid organisational structure, their close links with North African regimes and their political programme which did not reflect the complex democratic aspirations of North African workers.

By contrast, the MTA defined itself as a mass revolutionary movement of the Arab left whose aim was to mobilise Maghrebis against reformist and reactionary forces. During a training course for militants organised by the MTA on 6 and 7 July 1974 in Paris, the movement emphasised the need to prepare "l'affrontement pour briser l'encerclement (réformismes, amicales arabes, partis traditionnels)" (MTA tract, untitled, juillet 1974) (3). As had been the case in the ENA/PPA, the reactionary forces which the MTA saw as threatening North African workers were not structured along ethnic lines. Indeed, the *Amicales* were perceived as an inherent part of the oppressive forces against which Maghrebis should fight, and as "[des] structures répressives en France ... en connivence avec le pouvoir réactionnaire (*Hakbar el Haraka*, Numéro 2, 2 juillet 1975) (3). During the "rent strikes" which developed in 1975 in SONACOTRA hostels in Bezons, Colombes, Argenteuil and Nanterre, the MTA condemned the attempt made by the *Amicale des Algériens* and the Algerian Consul to stop the residents' protest action and criticised them for siding with the management and the Communist party (*Akhbar el Haraka*, 1er mai 1976) (3). The role of the *Amicales* was interpreted by the MTA as central to France's repressive policy against immigrants:

Un des aspects de la nouvelle politique de répression de l'immigration est l'intervention croissante des appareils de répression nationaux (amicales et néo-destour) qui se sont attaqués ouvertement cette année aux initiatives des travailleurs arabes contre le racisme (amicale des

Algériens à Marseille et à Grenoble), dans les usines (amicale des Marocains) à Paris et à St Etienne. (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3)

The *Amicales* were not only seen as serving the interest of France's exploitative order and actively opposing the antiracist protest actions of immigrants, but were also described as part of North African governments' repressive apparatus: "l'arrestation des travailleurs immigrés rentrant au pays, tout comme la constitution d'une "amicale des marocains" pour les encadrer en France, entrent dans le cadre du mouvement de répression antipopulaire mené par le régime marocain" (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, numéro 1, 1er janvier 1973) (3). The MTA's discourse on the *Amicales* was very much reminiscent of that of the ENA/PPA on the *évolués* and on North African reformist political organisations seen as the servants of imperialism.

In its documentation, the MTA mostly blamed the *Amicales*, rather than the individuals who belonged to it, for their obstructionist role in the conflicts that the movement was engaged in. This can be explained by the fact that those official organisations were composed of Maghrebi workers who, the MTA argued, were somehow duped by propaganda, but would one day rally to their cause.

In 1970s France, where immigrants' experience was often compared by the MTA to that of Maghrebis under colonial rule, the *Amicales'* "collaboration" with France's racist and imperialist project was evocative of the divisions and betrayals amongst Maghrebis which had marked past struggles for rights and independence. The MTA questioned the legitimacy of the revolutionary and anti-colonial credentials of the *Amicales* and, by extension, of North African governments. Reflecting the ENA/PPA denunciation of pro-assimilationist North African organisations such as *Algérie française* (see chapter 2, section 3), the MTA accused the *Amicales* of being mere servants of a racist neo-colonial and imperialist order and argued that "avec la fin de la guerre de libération d'Algérie, il n'y avait plus de lieu, de centre de mobilisation, de drapeau pour unir les combats isolés des travailleurs arabes en France". This enabled the MTA to portray itself as the true repository of revolutionary and anti-colonial values

and principes ('Histoire des luttes des travailleurs arabes face au nouveau développement du racisme et le rôle du M.T.A.', 1973) (3).

8.6 The MTA's Arab Revolution in the home country

Much of the MTA's discourse and action which focused on the socio-political situation in the Maghreb reveals the extent to which the movement's sense of nation-ness was shaped by its contentious relationship with North African governments and by the necessity for its revolutionary project to encompass the home country of North Africans. To some extent, this was redolent of the ENA/PPA's political project which aimed to defeat colonialism in North Africa. The movement consistently condemned the regimes of the Maghreb (particularly Morocco and Tunisia) for being reactionary machines at the pay of Western countries and called its militants to fight against the "manœuvres d'écrasement de la révolution arabe dans nos pays" (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3). These reactionary regimes in North Africa were castigated for furthering the interests of Western imperialism and for betraying North Africans who had suffered during the colonial era, and made so many sacrifices during the fight for independence. This highlighted the limits of the ENA/PPA's political project which presented independence and the establishment of North African nation-states as the precondition for the true emancipation of Maghrebis.

The MTA's will to mobilise Maghrebi immigrants in France and export its revolutionary message to the home countries was a source of concern for the non-democratic governments in North Africa. Indeed, not unlike the inter-war colonial authorities, they feared that the process of politicisation of their emigration might backfire on them. This was probably one of the reasons why Algerian President Houari Boumédiène decided to stop officially emigration to France in 1973.¹⁴⁰ However, the MTA seemed to be far more critical of Hassan II and Bourguiba than of Boumédiène,

¹⁴⁰ The main reason given by Boumédiène for stopping Algerian emigration was the rising number of racist attacks against Algerians in France.

who was the then president of "socialist" Algeria (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 31-33, *L'Express*, 24-30 septembre 1973).¹⁴¹

In order to achieve its aim, the movement tried to reinforce the link between Maghrebi workers in France and revolutionary groups of the Arab left in North Africa. This echoed the ENA/PPA's efforts to establish structures and develop a front of solidarity with progressive forces in North Africa. In 1975, this is what Arfaoui Béchir, a Tunisian migrant worker and an ex-activist of the MTA, emphasised in his declaration protesting against his expulsion from France. He stated that "nous, immigrés, nous avons besoin d'avoir des organisations autonomes de travailleurs immigrés pour organiser nos luttes ... et maintenir les liens avec les luttes des travailleurs de notre pays" ('Déclaration', 1975) (3). The development of communication channels and the collection of information on the situation in their home countries were therefore perceived as crucial, given the unreliability of the national media there, as had been the case in colonial times. The minutes of the "Conseil National des Travailleurs en Lutte", which took place on 8 October 1972, show that participants were aware of the difficulty of getting information. Collaborative work between *Fedai* (one of the movement's publications) and *Massira*, written in the home country by the Arab left, was seen as a way of addressing this problem ('Procès verbal du Conseil National des Travailleurs en lutte', 8 octobre 1972) (3).

Contacts in Morocco had also intensified since the expulsion of some of their militants from France.¹⁴² The MTA also emphasised "la nécessité d'établir des liens plus étroits et surtout plus réguliers [...] avec les copains en Algérie et les derniers expulsés", and a detailed report sent by a militant called Driss on his imprisonment, on the contacts that he had established within Morocco and on the political situation within the country

¹⁴¹ Patrick Weil inaccurately defines the MTA as a "mouvement d'opposition au gouvernement algérien" (1991:115). It was an organisation which was far more critical of the Moroccan regime, and to a lesser degree, of the Tunisian government. To a certain extent, this reflected the fact that many, in the leadership, were Moroccan.

¹⁴² Many MTA activists who returned or were expelled from France were imprisoned as they arrived in North Africa. *La voix des travailleurs arabes* (numéro 1, 1er janvier 1973) describes how forty-nine political prisoners (including Anis Belafredj, who had been a pro-Palestinian activist in France until 1972) started an unlimited hunger-strike to protest against their conditions of imprisonment. The same issue published a statement by Mokhtar Mohamed Bachiri, an MTA militant and a member of the *El Assifa* theatre company, describing his arrest and torture in Morocco (3).

was welcomed and discussed by the movement's national meeting of 24 January 1974 (*Akhbar el Haraka*, Numéro 2, 1975) (3). These contacts established between the militants expelled to their home country and other revolutionaries were reminiscent of those which developed when inter-war Messalist militants were arrested and deported to North Africa.

Furthermore, the regular trips that Maghrebi immigrants made to North Africa were seen as the most efficient way for supporters to develop links with the Arab left there. This reflected the way in which Maghrebi militants in France during the colonial era were able to spread the ENA/PPA's political message once they had returned to North Africa. Like the ENA/PPA, therefore, one of the MTA's strengths was to exploit some of the characteristics of its militants' diasporic experience (involvement in socio-political conflicts in France, expulsions from France and immigrants' trips to their home country) to further its revolutionary aims in the home country.

The movement's attention focused on some key socio-political issues in the Maghreb such as the crisis in the Western Sahara. This was evocative of the ENA's discourse on the Rif War led by Abdel Krim during the mid-1920s. Indeed, both were seen as wars waged by imperialists against North Africans. In the 1970s, the future of the Western Sahara, a territory colonised by the Spanish and rich in natural resources, was uncertain. Hassan II's claim on the Western Sahara and his hostility to a referendum on self-determination which could lead to independence was supported by a large section of the Moroccan population. It was also backed by Tunisia and by the United States who feared the creation of another non-aligned country.¹⁴³ Algeria and Lybia, on the other hand, opposed Morocco's ambitions and supported the pro-independence agenda of the *Front Polisario*, which was the Saharaoui's political and military formation (Junka 1975: 8-13). The MTA denounced the imperialist campaign which aimed, through conflicts such as that of the Western Sahara, to prevent the creation of a "Maghreb of the people". It argued that imperialism sharpened rivalries between North African states and divided the people of the Maghreb by fostering "[le] chauvinisme

¹⁴³ This territory was also claimed by Mauritania. For a study of the non-aligned movement, see Gupta (1992).

régionaliste" whose aim was to counter the will of the "Arabs" to establish an Arab nation ('Liban: qu'y a-t-il derrière la guerre civile?') (3). In that respect, the movement's discourse was at odds with that of the ENA/PPA during the inter-war period, as the latter saw the establishment of independent nation-states in North Africa as the best way of ensuring the liberation of the Arab people.

During the MTA's national meeting which took place on 24 January 1974, delegates reiterated the movement's support for the *Front Polisario* (*Hakbar el Haraka*, numéro 2, 2 juillet 1975) (3). They criticised the previous "connivence avec le fascisme espagnol" of the regimes of Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria. This mirrored the ENA/PPA's criticism of North African reformist organisations serving the interest of French imperialism during the inter-war period. MTA delegates denounced Hassan II for persecuting Saharaoui and Moroccan revolutionaries under the orders of American imperialism ('Liban: qu'y a-t-il derrière la guerre civile?') (3). They also accused him of exploiting the Moroccan people's "natural" longing for re-unification with the Saharaoui to further the regime's reactionary aims:

Le Front Polisario mène des luttes armées pour libérer le Sahara du joug colonial et tente de déjouer les manœuvres et les tentatives réactionnaires et colonialistes de la liquidation. Reste à savoir si la carte jouée par le tortionnaire Hassan II et son confrère Ould Dadda peut-elle [sic] effectivement sauver deux régimes fantoches et chancelants et entretenir des confusions au sein du peuple. Quelle est la position révolutionnaire qui mettra en échec les manœuvres colonialistes d'une part, [et permettra] d'avancer et d'amplifier la lutte de classe et le mouvement armé en Mauritanie, au Maroc et au Sahara d'autre part[?]. (*Akhbar el Haraka*, numéro 2, 2 juillet 1975)

(3)

Therefore, the MTA considered that North Africa was still subjected to colonialism and that the reactionary Maghrebi regimes were serving its interest. Even more so than in the ENA/PPA, the movement's wider revolutionary project was a reflection of its own sense of diasporic identity. Its endeavour to defeat imperialist forces on both sides of the Mediterranean contributed to the development of a two-fold strategy. On the one hand it

expressed a will to support the class struggle in North Africa as well as military opposition to regimes which were deemed illegitimate. On the other hand, it insisted that the Arab revolution in North Africa was intrinsically linked to the involvement of North African immigrants in the class struggle in France.

Amongst MTA militants, the boundary of identity was informed by an awareness that their experience was not only inscribed *within* the framework of the working class and class struggle in France, but also informed by a sense of being outside that framework, of belonging to the "Arab people" working for the "Arab revolution". This, to some extent, also characterised the discourse of the ENA/PPA. For the MTA, these two spheres were not contradictory, but complementary. Therefore, belonging to the working class in France as immigrants did not mean that they were in any way assimilated to French workers. They considered that the working class was a framework within which processes of solidarity could be articulated to involve all workers on equal terms and could be consistent with respect for national and cultural differences. However, the MTA's discourse did not imply that both sides of Maghrebis' identity were given equal importance. As in the inter-war nationalist movement, the emphasis in the MTA could shift from one to the other depending on the circumstances and challenges that it faced. When the movement's discourse focused on the need to intensify their efforts on spreading the Arab revolution, it could distance itself rhetorically from the French national context and from the broad-based universalist principles that informed its vision of class-struggle to develop more "ethnically-marked" responses:

Nous ne nous considérons pas comme étant intégrés aux travailleurs français. Nous nous rattachons au monde arabe et notre action se définit par rapport à la révolution qui se lève dans le monde arabe. Les Arabes qui sont ici, en France, rentreront un jour dans leur pays et notre but est qu'ils reviennent chez eux avec un petit capital révolutionnaire. (*Frontière*, octobre 1973: 33)

The shift from the universal that characterised their role in the working class in France to the ethnic ("nous nous rattachons au monde arabe"), and vice-versa, was a way of

transgressing the traditionally conflictual boundaries between the two. As in the ENA/PPA during the inter-war period, it showed that the MTA's ethnically-based revolutionary project could be inspired by universalist values. The movement's contribution to the universal cause of the class struggle was a "capital", or an asset that could be brought back home.

However, the balance could shift the other way: the MTA could also construct a more inclusive image of the interplay between both aspects of its identity. Indeed, it often emphasised the complementarity of its fight on both sides of the Mediterranean. MTA militants argued that the movement's aim was to achieve Arab workers' autonomy in France and ensure that the political action of Arab workers in France was part of the wider plan of fostering the revolution in the Arab World (MTA document, untitled, undated) (3). This illustrates the extent to which the identity of Maghrebi immigrants could be shaped by a dual sense of belonging where class and ethnic points of reference were never fixed, but constantly negotiated. This binary, yet shifting, discourse on belonging also characterised that of the *Etoile* and the PPA, which could draw upon themes and terminology which were both universalist and differentialist (mostly based on religion rather than class).

The MTA's sense of national identity was also marked by a further tension which distinguished it from Messali's inter-war nationalism. Maghrebi supporters of the movement defined themselves as "Arabs" who belonged to the "Arab nation" which would be unified once their revolution had ousted reactionary regimes and destroyed the divisive borders of nation-states ('Procès verbal du Conseil National des Travailleurs en lutte', 8 octobre 1972) (3). But they could also refer to their home country in the Maghreb as "le pays" or "la patrie".¹⁴⁴ That tension between two apparently conflicting evocations of nation highlights the shifting, but by no means contradictory, nature of their sense of nation-ness. Whilst the former was informed by their revolutionary political project, the latter was anchored in the sphere of the personal (place of birth, family, etc.). It was all the more possible to reconcile those two references as their

¹⁴⁴ For example, in 'Bilan sur la lutte pour la carte de travail, sur la base de Ménilmontant par rapport à St Maur (le passé) pour en tirer des enseignements et des règles de travail', 1973, and *La voix des travailleurs arabes*, numéro 1, 1er janvier 1973 (3).

political aim was to ensure that one would eventually be subsumed by the other. This form of discourse varied from that of the *Etoile* and the PPA which put Maghrebis' belonging to a nation-state to the fore, and referred to Arabness as a cultural, ethnic and religious reference which sustained North Africans' fight for the establishment of independent states.

The MTA's political vision, which was based on the movement's attempt to justify dialectically the Arab nation as the ultimate result of the "natural will" of the Arab masses and to denigrate the artificial character of post-colonial nation-states in the Maghreb and the Middle East was no less problematic than the inter-war nationalists'. If one accepts the contention that Arab nation-ness, just like race ("Arabness"), is a constructed concept, then the validity of the MTA's political project, which was grounded in the movement's belief in the tangible existence of an Arab nation, appears questionable. As was the case with the ENA/PPA, the MTA's discourse could be interpreted as an attempt to naturalise something which was constructed.¹⁴⁵ However, it could also be argued that this process of "imagining" a nation was no more illegitimate than, or intrinsically different from, that which preceded the birth of other, already established nations, which also emphasised the uniqueness of the national aspirations of a given people or community.

8.7 The MTA, the Arab Left and the Palestinian Cause

The idea of Arab unity was first born in what is now Syria at the beginning of the 20th century before spreading to the Middle East, and the Palestinian question soon came to play a part at the heart of this ideology (Harbi 1974: 27-34). Even though nationalist movements which fought for independence, and governments of North African independent states in the 1970s, defined their countries as Arab both culturally and linguistically, their political outlook was marked by a nationalism which tended to focus on the nation-state, as was the case in the ENA/PPA. By contrast, the movements of the Arab left such as the MTA, which opposed the regimes in North Africa, considered that

¹⁴⁵ See section two, part two, for an analysis of ethnicity and nation-ness in the discourse of the MTA.

even though national movements had defeated traditional colonialism, they proved unable to find solutions to underdevelopment, Zionism and imperialism. For them, only Arab unity could enable them to challenge these forces, and Palestinian resistance constituted a rallying point for the Arab World (Ibid.). On the whole, therefore, the Arab left adhered to the views of the Palestinian resistance (Boukhara 1973: 4-8).

This section aims to examine the role that the Palestinian revolution played in the mobilisation of North African immigrants in France, and assess how the MTA interpreted and fought against Zionism. In 1970, the repression of Palestinians in Jordan during what was to be called Black September led to the creation of the *Comité Palestine* in France, which became the MTA in June 1972. The movement referred to the Palestinian revolution as an example and a catalyst for their own liberation (*Frontières*, octobre 1973: 30). In that sense, the Palestinian struggle played an even more crucial role in the discourse of the MTA than it had done in that of the *Etoile* and the PPA. Clearly, for the latter, the oppression of Palestinians at the hands of Zionism was interpreted as an important illustration of colonial oppression against Arabs outside North Africa, and inter-war nationalists certainly called for solidarity with Palestinians, but this cause was not central to the movement's discourse and ideology.

For most North African activists of the MTA, the Palestinian Revolution was a fundamental source of inspiration. It played a mobilising role and led to the development of one of the most important Maghrebi autonomous movements in 1970s France. The movement saw its support for the Palestinian struggle as an inherent part of the "lutte de libération nationale des peuples arabes" and as a humanising process which enabled North African immigrants to regain their "droit à la parole" ('Bilan de la campagne Djellali', p.143) (7). By contrast with inter-war nationalists, this cause provided MTA militants with a means to regain their dignity and counter racism, exploitation and the stigmas attached to their condition in France. This was highlighted by Hamza Bouziri in his declaration denouncing his expulsion from France in 1971:

[D]es milliers de travailleurs arabes en France sont victimes de menaces, d'intimidations, d'expulsions, de meurtres. Si l'ennemi nous frappe aujourd'hui, c'est qu'il se rend compte que

nous commençons à nous organiser pour rejeter l'esclavage, pour retrouver notre dignité foulée aux pieds par la bourgeoisie française. Nous refusons d'être traités comme des "bicots"; le peuple palestinien qui a pris le fusil pour retrouver sa dignité nous montre la voie ... Depuis qu'en septembre dernier, des milliers de fedayins sont morts en luttant contre le boucher Hussein, nous les Arabes nous relevons la tête. Nous nous sommes organisés dans les Comités de Soutien à la Révolution Palestinienne, parce que pour nous, les fedayins sont l'image de la lutte des peuples arabes. ('Déclaration de Hamza Bouziri', 1971) (4)

The Palestinian Revolution epitomised Maghrebi immigrants' own struggle for rights, recognition and against racism in France. It created a favourable terrain for the mobilisation of Maghrebis through the *Comités Palestine*, in which Maghrebis' support for Palestine could be expressed, issues which affected their own experience in France (such as racism, economic exploitation and housing difficulties) could be discussed and antiracist strategies developed.

Because of its symbolic role, the Palestinian struggle constituted an ideological framework within which Maghrebi's own experience could be interpreted, and it inspired most of the *Comité's* and the MTA's discourse and actions. Palestine was often evoked through speeches, discussions and films during the hunger strikes of the *sans-papiers*, the strike actions in the workplace or in the foyers and antiracist demonstrations. For example, Maghrebi workers who were on strike at Chausson carried a Palestinian flag when they picketed in front of the factory, and Renault workers gathered outside their plant and expressed their support for Palestine after the repression against Palestinians in Israel in July 1972 (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, 1 janvier 1973) (3).

However, and by contrast with the ENA/PPA, the MTA's discourse went further than expressing support for the Palestinian cause. What it conveyed was a sense of identification of Maghrebi's experience in France with that of Palestinians. During immigrants' strike in the foyers SONACOTRA in the mid-1970s, a number of films on immigration and on Palestine were shown, and discussions focused on the notion that "la lutte que mènent les immigrés est identique à celle du peuple palestinien" (*Akhbar el*

Haraka, mai 1976).¹⁴⁶ In 1973, the MTA interpreted the action of the *sans-papiers* who were on hunger strike in Ménilmontant as consistent with the aims of the Palestinian Revolution ('Bilan de la lutte pour la carte de travail, sur la base de Ménilmontant par rapport à St Maur') (3). The prominence of the Palestinian Revolution for the MTA, the fact that it informed much of its discourse and action was therefore a distinctive trait which differentiated it from the *Etoile* and the PPA.

Even though the MTA's representation of Maghrebis as Arabs facilitated this identification with the Palestinians, its discourse on Palestine differed from that of nationalists in the inter-war period in that it was also rooted in universalism. The Palestinian struggle was also seen as epitomising the fight of the dominated against the dominant, and was interpreted as a rallying cause for all the oppressed, whatever their national or ethnic origin, as Hamza Bouziri's call for unity illustrates: "[...] tous, Français, Arabes, Antillais, Espagnols, Portugais, nous avons les mêmes ennemis et nous menons le même combat: pour la justice et pour la dignité. Et si l'un de nous tombe, 10 se lèveront comme en Palestine" ('Déclaration de Hamza Bouziri, 1971, p. 91) (4).

The MTA castigated Zionism as a racist ideology which had to be fought on all fronts. This interpretation of Zionism was very much reminiscent of that developed by North African nationalists during the 1920s and 1930s, but differed in that it saw Zionism as closely linked to the racism affecting immigrants' life within France. In an article denouncing Israel's repression of Palestinians, *La Voix des travailleurs arabes* (1 janvier 1973) referred to the Israeli Prime Minister as "le chef terroriste Golda Meir", and called for French and Maghrebi workers to demonstrate during her visit to Paris. The article also drew upon universalist terminology when it asserted: "travailleurs arabes, travailleurs français, épris de justice et de liberté, nous ne tolérerons pas cette criminelle".¹⁴⁷ In a declaration on his decision to start a hunger strike, Saïd Bouziri, a leading member of the MTA, argued that his support for the Palestinian cause was the

¹⁴⁶ See also *El Assifa*, Numéro 12, janvier 1977 (3).

¹⁴⁷ Golda Meir was received by François Mitterrand, the French socialist leader, and was due to address the Socialist International at the Palais du Luxembourg. The MTA and Maoist groups organised a 2,000 strong demonstration in Paris during her visit on 15 January 1973 ('Lettre à un camarade en prison') (1) (3).

main reason behind the French authorities' decision to expel him, and added that "[c]ette mesure fait partie d'une campagne menée par les racistes et les sionistes ('Aujourd'hui dimanche 5 novembre [1972], Saïd Bouziri commence une grève de la faim illimitée') (5).

Another distinction between the MTA and the inter-war nationalist movement was that the former argued that the Zionist policies of the Israeli government were at odds with the anti-Zionist views of many Jews ('Pour la libération de Monseigneur H. Capucci') (3). The fact that in Israel, Jews who supported the Palestinians were also the victims of Zionist repression proved that "le sionisme, basé sur le racisme anti-arabe ... opprime aussi les Juifs" (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, 1 janvier 1973) (3). In France, it also welcomed the support of Patrick Farbiaz, a French worker of Jewish origin who started a hunger strike in support of Saïd Bouziri in the St Bernard Church in Paris in 1972, and who in his declaration, compared the Zionist oppression against Palestinians with the suffering of his family in Nazi concentration camps ('Patrick Farbiaz. Travailleur intermédiaire') (4). The movement's discourse on Palestine and on Jews was therefore consistently marked by universalist and antiracist principles, and never referred to Jews in derogatory and racist terms. In that sense, it differed from that of the *Etoile* and the PPA. Indeed, the latter movements did not make an explicit distinction between Zionism and Jewishness, and their discourse on Palestine and Jews could sometimes shift from a predominantly universalist perspective to adopt a racist stance, as the ENA's evocation of the events of Constantine in the summer of 1934 shows.

For the MTA, Zionist violence was not limited to Palestine and the Middle East, it also affected "Arabs" in France and in the rest of Europe. It blamed the Israeli secret services for the murders of Mahmoud Hamchari, Bassil Koubeissi and Mohamed Boudia, all prominent supporters of the Palestinian cause in France:

Encore une fois, les services sionistes viennent d'assassiner lâchement notre frère algérien Mohamed Boudia le 28 juin à 11 heures du matin, en plein Paris, en mettant une bombe dans sa voiture ... Après l'assassinat de Mahmoud Hamchari et de Bassil Koubeissi, c'est le troisième frère qui tombe, lâchement assassiné, en terre française, pour une cause juste. Et le

gouvernement français continue à protéger les assassins sionistes et fascistes ... nous appelons tous les frères arabes, tous les amis français, tous ceux qui veulent barrer la route au fascisme, à nous rejoindre. ('Appel des travailleurs arabes en lutte contre les crimes sionistes', MTA tract, undated) (3)

At an ideological level, Zionism was viewed as a racist force which served the interests of Western imperialism in the Middle East and beyond. It could be argued that the MTA's discourse on Zionism and Palestine was more complex and developed than had been the case with the ENA/PPA. Unlike the latter, the 1970s movement interpreted the political situation in Palestine in dichotomous terms and as a conflict between progressive and revolutionary forces (the Palestinian/Arab people *and* anti-Zionist Jews in Israel) and reactionary oppression (Zionism and imperialism) (*Assifa Palestine*, 1974) (3). In Europe, the MTA argued that Zionism used colonial racism as a tool for furthering its aims and as a way of preventing Arab unity:

Le sionisme a trouvé en France et en Europe des bases idéologiques, politiques et militaires pour son développement. Il puise une partie de ses forces dans le racisme anti-arabe qui s'est nourri en France, dans les guerres coloniales perdues[,] pour monter la population contre mouvements nationaux des peuples arabes et du peuple palestinien. (*Assifa Palestine*, 1974). (3)

The movement's political discourse was shaped by this binary interpretation of the political map which was very much marked by its universalist and anti-colonial tone. It viewed Zionism, capitalism, racism in France and reactionary regimes in the Middle East and North Africa as being consistent with each other and as forming part of the imperialist project which aimed to oppress the working class and the Arab people. Its call for the unity of all workers against "le véritable complot préparé par l'impérialisme américain, les états arabes et Israël" was presented as a revolutionary struggle against slavery and for freedom (*La voix des travailleurs arabes*, 1976) (3).

8.8 Conclusion

To conclude, it could be argued that for MTA militants, unlike their inter-war forebears, Arabness had more to do with their *condition* as Maghrebi immigrant workers in France and with the anchoring of their socio-political experience in the World Order of the 1970s than with a sense of ethnic belonging *per se*, tied to, or aspiring to be tied to nation-states viewed as obsolete. Furthermore, the representation of North Africans as Arabs in France and the awareness that the experience of the Palestinians epitomised their own probably explains why the "Palestinian Revolution" played a far greater role in the mobilisation of Maghrebi immigrants in France during the 1970s than it had done with inter-war nationalists.

To some extent, the MTA's discourse reflected that of the inter-war nationalist movement in that it viewed imperialism as being marked by the alliance of Zionist, racist and reactionary forces. For the MTA, imperialism permeated not only Western nation-states and the Zionist state of Israel, but also the post-colonial "reactionary" governments in North Africa which had betrayed the legacy of the Algerian war of independence. Within France, it also affected workers' organisations such as the CGT which systematically opposed the MTA's fight against racism. Even though MTA militants were closer to the CFDT, most trade unions attempted to prevent North Africans from developing their own autonomous movement. This complex relationship with unions echoes the one which linked and opposed the ENA/PPA to inter-war French trade unions.

In its discourse which was reminiscent of the ENA/PPA's vilification of reformist North African organisations in colonial times, the MTA portrayed the *Amicales* as another reactionary organisation whose role was not so much about championing the rights of migrants as about controlling them, promoting the political view of illegitimate regimes in North Africa, and serving Western states' interest.

To fight imperialism, the MTA developed a universalist discourse rooted in class belonging. To some extent, it differed from that of the inter-war nationalist movement whose anti-imperialism was inspired by universalism and religion.

Furthermore, unlike the ENA/PPA, it devised more pro-active strategies in the workplace, in the *foyers* and for the *sans-papiers* which aimed to open a front of solidarity with other immigrants, French workers, intellectuals and the Catholic Church. However, in spite of some success in its fight against racist violence and for the *sans-papiers*, the movement failed to mobilise French public opinion consistently against what it viewed as imperialist oppression.

The MTA also opposed the regimes of North Africa which it viewed as having betrayed the revolutionary legacy of anti-colonialists. This reflected the ENA/PPA's evocation of North African *évolués* and other reformist politicians in the inter-war period. The 1970s movement presented itself as the heir of this anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist tradition and tried to establish links with the Arab Left in the Maghreb to further its revolutionary aims. Finally, the MTA's interpretation of the Palestinian Revolution was marked by universalism: its support for Palestine was informed by its belief that the struggle of the Palestinians against Zionism was of relevance to the whole working class.

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Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Aims, structure, theoretical framework and methodology

In this study, I have set out to analyse the complex processes by which the North African immigrant population in France was able, from the inter-war period to the 1970s, to construct a powerful and consistent political tradition in France. To carry out this analysis, two case studies were examined: the first one is the *Etoile nord-africaine* (later to become the *Parti du peuple algérien*) which was founded in 1926 at the apogee of the French colonial empire and which, by the 1930s, a decade marked by economic recession, racism and political unrest, became the most potent and independent voice of Algerian nationalism. The second case-study is the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes*, a North African political organisation fighting for Arab nationalism and against racism which developed in the 1970s in a post-colonial context also characterised by heightened racist tension, economic crisis and hostility to immigration.

The concepts of ethnic identity and nation were at the heart of both nationalist movements' ideologies. This thesis analyses some of the complex processes by which these concepts were constructed and shaped in their discourse. At a theoretical level, my study of the ENA/PPA and the MTA's discourse on ethnicity is, to a certain extent, developed from a situationalist perspective (see, for example, Barth 1969a, Wallman 1979). This approach views ethnicity not as characterised by fixed cultural markers rooted in history and tradition, but as the result of a process of negotiation of identity. However, this perspective is also counter-balanced by the contention that ethnicity should not be viewed exclusively as an "empty vessel", as Eriksen (1992: 30-31) puts it, which is only shaped at the boundary between "us" and "them". It is a transactional and synchronic process which is "context-sensitive", that is to say rooted in the socio-political, economic and cultural context of its time.

As for nation, it is understood within this thesis, especially in the study of the ENA/PPA, as a modern concept and phenomenon grounded not only in politics, as

Breuilly (1996) argues, but also in ethnicity. Furthermore, the approach adopted here, which is inspired by aspects of the work of authors such as Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983), posits nations as imagined communities shaped by nationalism, and examines the complex processes by which the nation evoked in the discourse of the ENA/PPA in the inter-war period and that conjured up by the MTA during the 1970s were imagined. However, this analysis also incorporates, and evaluates the extent to which the discourse of both movements was a hybrid discourse shaped by the diasporic and historical experience and legacy of North African migrants in France.

I have examined the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA mainly through internal documents, as well as political tracts and publications (especially *El Ouma*), French police and governmental reports, and various other documents relating to the nationalist organisation. I have also assessed the MTA's discourse, for the most part, through internal documents, reports, minutes of meetings, as well as through their tracts and publications such as *Akhbar El Haraka* and *La Voix des travailleurs arabes*.

Discourse is understood here as a way into ideology (Blommaert and Verschuere 1998:32) and as a cognitive process. It is also posited as a "context-sensitive" process of action and interaction in society (van Dijk 1997a: 21). This study has also attempted to demonstrate that discourse is a representation, that it structures our sense of reality and the way we perceived our own identity and that of other people (Mills 1997, Pêcheux 1982). On a political level, it can be used as a tool enabling the dominated to challenge the dominant discourse and ideology.

The thesis is structured around two main parameters based on a situationalist perspective of ethnic identity. This approach views ethnic identity as being shaped at the boundary between "us" and "them", and by a sense of "us" which can also be very much informed by and through difference and conflict. I have therefore considered each case study from two angles. The first one is what is referred to as the "inner constitutive elements of identity" (or the "ins"). It examines the way in which ethnic and national identity is constructed in the discourse(s) of both movements, and looks more specifically at some key features of kinship which may, or may not, have contributed to the shaping of that identity (namely religion, class, history and memory and culture).

The second dimension which I have analysed is the "outer constitutive elements of identity" (or the "outs") which traverse both movements' discourses. These could belong to the sphere of oppression and alienation (such as racism, French imperialism and domination, economic exploitation and so on) or to that of solidarity in France, North Africa and beyond: for example, the concept of universalism, the nationalist movements' discourse on, and sometimes conflictual relationship with, political organisations and unions of the left, their links with, and evocation of, other immigrants, the French people, the Palestinian struggle, and so on. As I have demonstrated, these markers of the "out" played a central role in the construction of identity in the two political movements examined here.

9.2 The inner markers of ethno-national identity

Some of the conclusions which can be drawn from this analysis of the ENA/PPA and of the MTA is that their discourse and action were rooted in the diasporic experience of North African migrants in France, and traversed with a sense of dispossession, alienation and exile ("le lieu de l'épreuve", as Hirt (1988) defines it). For both movements, the interplay between ethnicity and nation-ness was at the core of their ideology.

In the case of the *Etoile*/PPA during the inter-war years, Algerian nation-ness was defined by what it was not, what it was against. It rejected France as a possible repository of national identity for Muslim Algerians and other North Africans and denounced naturalisation as a betrayal of Islam, yet aimed to establish an independent nation-state within the confines of the colonial territory. The nationalists' sense of belonging to a nation was marked by a discourse pertaining to the family and kinship (which was posited as irreconcilable with Frenchness) and by a sense of faithfulness to one's religion. Furthermore, the fact that they also expressed respect for the French nation and nationalism can be explained by the fact that their own nationalism was characterised by a modern political concept of the nation grounded in Revolutionary principles, which bore many tropes of French nationalism. ENA/PPA nationalists

developed a dichotomous, and somewhat problematic view of France whereby the French people was seen as the legitimate heir of the Revolution and as being at odds with French imperialism and the state. Another tension which was noted was that their evocation of an independent Algeria could be based on inclusive concepts of democracy, multiculturalism and tolerance (a nation rooted in the political), whilst their nationalism posited the Algerian nation to be "restored" in exclusivist terms of ethnicity and difference.

Similarly to the ENA/PPA, the MTA did not see France as a locus of nationality for North Africans. Its conception of nation needs to be considered within the post-colonial context where Arab nationalism was particularly strong as an ideology, and where traditional nation-states were seen to have failed to deliver on a number of fronts (from their inability to improve significantly the lives of their populations to bringing an end to imperialism and to racism). In the movement's discourse, nation was apprehended outside the framework of nation-states. The revolutionary aim of its militants was to mobilise and unite in order to establish an Arab nation encompassing all "Arab" people, from the Middle East to North Africa.

At the core of both discourses on nation was the concept of ethnicity, and the assertion that North Africans were Arabs. But whilst the *Etoile/PPA* acknowledged the existence of Berbers (only to present them as Arabs), the MTA consistently referred to North Africans as Arabs without recognising the varied ethnic-make up of the Maghrebi population. For the Algerian nationalists in the inter-war period, this process of essentialising ethnicity aimed to create a unified sense of ethno-national identity shared by all North African Muslims and mobilise against colonialism, as well as counter the French colonial policy of division between Arabs and Berbers. To a certain extent, that conception of ethnicity was problematic as it reproduced the stigmas of French colonialism attached to Algerian vernacular cultures and languages. On the other hand, the MTA's locating of Arabness at the core of national identity aimed to transcend borders and create a new form of polity capable of challenging imperialism and all other forms of oppression.

The markers of kinship which underpinned the sense of ethno-national identity within those two movements could overlap, but could also vary in their emphasis and significance. For the ENA/PPA, Islam constituted the key reference and rallying force which shaped the movement's discourse and embodied its national aspirations. Within the colonial context, it was what characterised a dominated, oppressed and divided North African population (Gellner 1983: 73). It was appropriated by nationalists who gave it territorial shape, and was presented as a high and universal culture which was incompatible with, and could challenge effectively, the cultural premise upon which the French colonial project was constructed. By reasserting the close ties between Islam, Arab culture and language, the process of reification of ethnicity and culture around Arabness at work in the movement's discourse made its demand for the right to an independent nation-state all the more legitimate. This process of politicisation of Islam could be seen as a way of countering that of the Catholic Church which, through its proselytising campaigns amongst Muslims, was viewed as closely linked to the politics of colonial dispossession. Its aim, the movement argued, was to conquer the sphere of the spiritual, of religious belief, the last dimension of Maghrebis' life that colonialism had not yet controlled.

The Catholic Church was seen very differently by the MTA in the 1970s. Its consistent support for the cause of the "sans-papiers" and against racism made it a natural ally for the movement. However, North Africans' religion came to play a minor role in its discourse and ideology, and Islam, or rather visible signs of this religion, were mainly reduced to being markers of cultural identity and traditions to be sustained in emigration. By contrast to the ENA/PPA, one of the MTA's key frameworks of reference for kinship and identity was class consciousness. Its militants' sense of belonging to the working class articulated much of their ideology, and establishing solidarity and mobilising along class lines was seen as the best way of fighting imperialism and racism.

Culture played a central, if differing, part in both movements' construction of ethno-national identity. Their representation of their culture as authentic and rooted in an immemorial past hid the fact that these were the result of complex hybrid processes.

The visible forms of cultural celebration were encouraged to maintain traditions alive in France and challenge the cultural alienation to which North Africans were subjected. This approach enabled the ENA/PPA and the MTA to negotiate cultural strategies aimed at addressing Maghrebis' concerns and experience, and sustain both movements' political activity by linking various forms of cultural expression to political events and actions. For the MTA, this translated into a binary process of politicisation of culture and of culturalisation of politics. In the discourse of the ENA/PPA, evocations of culture were, to some extent, more linked to the sphere of history and memory, which constituted one of the most important characteristics of its ideology. Indeed, at the core of the movement's evocation of history lay the concept of civilisation. Its reference to civilisation and culture was an inherent part of a process of national consciousness in formation which was presented as embedded in the past. This framing of the past was historically problematic as it focused on the greatness of Arabo-Islamic civilisation and ignored the history of North Africa prior to the Arab conquest. Nonetheless, identifying with a great civilisation provided nationalists with an empowering sense of ethno-national identity and emphasised difference by reinforcing the boundary between "us" and "them". On the other hand, the historical perspective developed by the MTA centred mainly on the evocation of past anti-colonial struggles in North Africa, and more particularly in Algeria. Indeed, the Algerian revolution constituted an important point of reference for the movement.

Both movements' discourses on the past were inherently hybrid. They were informed by present circumstances and aimed to legitimise their political stance and ends. Beyond the ENA/PPA's insistence on the authenticity and uniqueness of its Arabo-Islamic civilisation, it appears that the hegemonic terms in which it was evoked mirrored France's own sense of civilisation in order to surpass it. In the case of the MTA, the interplay between racism and exploitation in 1970s France and the Algerian Revolution enabled its militants to make sense of the state of alienation they found themselves in (and by extension to "re-interpret" the past), and to develop political strategies which were marked by a tension between a dominant intra-ethnic discourse and a demotic discourse rooted in inter-ethnic solidarity based on class. Immigrants'

involvement in the events of May 1968 was also acknowledged by the movement as a political watershed which contributed to the politicisation of immigrants and to their will to develop autonomously and distinctly from established political and union structures.

9.3 The outer markers of ethno-national identity

For both nationalist movements, racism epitomised the various forms of oppression to which North Africans were subjected. They considered that there was a dichotomy between the French state which was considered as imperialist and racist, and the French people who were the repository of revolutionary legitimacy. This meant that the boundary between "us" (Maghrebis) and "them" (the French people) was negotiated positively. What made their universalist discourses problematic was their positing of racism as somehow conflicting with universalist values which inspired them and the French people, when in fact, racism and universalism are linked and affect each other from the inside (Balibar 1994: 198). Furthermore, the ENA/PPA considered that racism had created a chasm between Muslims and the French people, and as such constituted an obstacle to emancipation. It viewed the violence which marked the relationship between coloniser and colonised as informed by racism. For its militants, it dehumanised and reified the "indigène". This had implications for the development of Algerian nationalism as racism was posited as a justification for emancipation from French rule. However, the anti-Jewish rhetoric which could be found in the *Etoile's* discourse during the events of Constantine in the summer of 1934 shows that its nationalism of liberation, like all other forms of nationalism, could also be informed by racism.

As far as the MTA was concerned, post-colonial racism was inextricably linked to colonial racism. The movement argued that it affected and pervaded all aspects of North Africans' experience in France, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, and that it was at the core of imperialism. In its discourse, it highlighted the coherent, organised and systemic nature of racism from the individual through racist organisations

to the higher echelons of the state. Within that context, antiracism became the main focus of its discourse and action. Support for, and identification with the Palestinian struggle provided its activists with an empowering identity and inspiration for their fight against racism in France. They saw each protest action undertaken by the movement (strikes in the workplace and in the "foyers", demonstrations, hunger strikes and so on), as contributing to fighting racism and establishing multi-ethnic fraternity. The movement developed and sometimes combined several strategies to tackle racism such as ethnically-based violent counter-action against racists, ethnically-based reformist action, and multi-ethnic protest action. The latter strategy led to the creation, in October 1972, of the *Comité de défense des droits et de la vie des travailleurs immigrés*, a cross-ethnic antiracist organisation.

Whilst both movements' relationship with the French left and left-wing organisations and unions was always complex and tense, the organisations which often provided them with the most consistent support came from the extreme-left (such as the *Parti ouvrier internationaliste* for the ENA/PPA, and Maoist groups for the MTA on the basis of ideological commonalities). The ENA was created by the French Communist Party in 1926 and supported by the CGTU. But soon tensions appeared and developed between both organisations until the French government banned the *Etoile* in 1929. The nationalist organisation was re-established in 1933, but its relationship with the communists remained strained throughout that decade, particularly during the *Front Populaire* era when the PC embraced the SFIO's reformist colonial policy. As for the MTA, it was faced with constant opposition and hostility from the communist trade union (the CGT) which feared the creation of an ethnically-based union. Its relationship with the CFDT could be more constructive as it occasionally provided the movement with tactical support. The inability of unions to cater effectively for the specific needs of immigrants in France could be partly due to their fear of jeopardising their negotiating position with the government if they supported immigrants' protest actions overtly, and to the difficulties that they had in reconciling the interests of French workers (who could be hostile to immigration) with those of migrant workers. Beyond party politics,

however, the ENA/PPA and the MTA both managed to attract support from prominent French intellectuals and activists on the left.

Both nationalist organisations considered that the establishment of links with other Maghrebi organisations and with other immigrants was crucial. In the inter-war period, Messali Hadj's movement had successfully developed contacts with the Tunisian *Neo-Destour* and the *Jeunes Marocains* in North Africa, with Tunisian and Moroccan student leaders in France and with Chekib Arslan in Lausanne. However, it failed to attract more reformist, mainly Algerian, movements on both sides of the Mediterranean. In that context, those moderate political and union leaders whose movements remained distant or hostile to its nationalist project were stigmatised as supporting colonialism and betraying the cause of Muslims and their religion. The links which had also been established with Annamese and Black anti-colonial organisations since the first years of the *Etoile* were maintained, and common political rallies were organised in order to build a united Front with all the colonised, as was shown by the common denunciation, by the *Etoile* and the *Ligue de défense de la race nègre*, of the Ethiopian war in the mid-1930s.

Similarly, the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* worked with political movements of the Arab left in North Africa (especially in Morocco) and condemned the *Amicales* in France for failing to truly defend North Africans' rights, and for serving the interests of imperialism and of the illegitimate governments that they represented. Furthermore, the movement saw it as essential that ethnically-based political solidarity in France should not be an end in itself, but rather should constitute the foundation for wider multi-ethnic mobilisation amongst immigrants. Various strike and protest actions such as those which also involved Pakistani and Maurician immigrants, both inside and outside the workplace, were seen as ideal frameworks within which such solidarity could be built. This was all the more important as many could not express their demands and concerns effectively through trade unions as, at least until the mid-1970s, they were prevented from holding positions in such workers' organisations because of their status as foreigners, as illegal immigrants, or because they were illiterate.

On another level, the MTA's ideology was also shaped by its contentious relationship with North African regimes and by the necessity for its revolutionary project to encompass Maghrebi immigrants' home countries. The movement was far more critical of the pro-Western governments in Morocco and Tunisia than it was of the "socialist" Algerian regime. It focused primarily on Hassan II's systematic persecution of Arab left-wing organisations and on the treatment of political prisoners (including MTA militants who had been expelled from France). It also denounced the monarch's taking over of Western Sahara and its integration into Moroccan territory at the end of Spanish rule, and supported the *Front Polisario*, the Saharaoui independentist movement.

However, what emerges clearly from both movements' discourses is the salience of Palestine as an ideological reference and inspiration for their own political struggle. In the inter-war period, the Algerian nationalist movement saw it as the most important illustration of imperialist domination of Arabs outside North Africa. It castigated Zionism as the stalking-horse of British, and by extension, Western imperialism, and stigmatised the Zionist territorial claims based on history which echoed France's own justification for colonial expansion. The Palestinian struggle played an even more crucial role in the birth and political development of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* in the 1970s. It saw Arab resistance in Palestine as a rallying point for the Arab world, and a catalyst for the Arab people's own liberation in France, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Contacts were established with Palestinians in Paris, and militants expressed their support by collecting funds, and organising meetings and demonstrations such as the one which took place in Paris during Golda Meir's visit in 1973. In its support for the Palestinian cause and for the *Fatah*, which echoed the discourse of the *Etoile* and the PPA, the MTA consistently denounced Zionism as a racist and imperialist ideology aimed at furthering the West's domination of the Arab people.

9.4 Contribution to wider field of research

By studying the discourse of the ENA/PPA in the inter-war period and that of the MTA in the 1970s, this multidisciplinary study (which draws on history, anthropology, politics, sociology and discourse analysis) aims to make a contribution to academic research on the concepts of ethnicity, national identity and nationalism, and to understand the complex processes of interaction and tension that exist between them. One of its main objectives is to historicise the experience of Maghrebis in France which is too often described in the French media and through public opinion as a recent phenomenon and problem, and show that the "diaspori-sation" (to use Hall's term) of North African migrants in France has been accompanied by an empowering process of politicisation which has led to the formation of a political tradition. It also aims to reappropriate the "parcours" and discourse of the ENA/PPA in the inter-war period, which has too often been assessed as part of North African politics and history (see, for example, Julien 1972, Ageron 1972, Droz and Lever 1982) and frame it within the context and history of Maghrebi emigration. This thesis also examines the political discourse of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes*, a political organisation which, to my knowledge, has not yet been the subject of any academic study. This analysis has, therefore, allowed me to examine some of the ways in which Maghrebis' sense of identity was constructed within those two diasporic movements, and show that some striking consistencies existed in several areas of their discourse on ethno-national identity.

Furthermore, by examining the ways in which ethno-national identity was shaped amongst North African migrant workers and students in France, this thesis also contributes to a better understanding of colonial and post-colonial nationalisms. Indeed, many studies which have been carried out in this field have focused mainly on the development of nationalist movements and discourses in the colonies themselves and essentially amongst the autochton elite (see, for example Gellner 1983, Anderson 1983, Horowitz 1985, Smith 1989, Hobsbawm 1992), while others have looked at the

development of Zionism in the Jewish diaspora as a rare illustration of the development of nationalism in a diasporic context.¹⁴⁸

9.5 Project limitations and directions for future research

This thesis focuses on aspects of the discourse and ideology of two main immigrant political organisations belonging to two distinct eras in France. This has enabled me to carry out an in-depth analysis of their discourse on ethnic identity and nation-ness, as well as on their relationship with their social, political, religious, cultural and economic environment, both in France and beyond, which also shaped their political beliefs, strategies and actions. However, what constitutes a strength in this research may also be perceived as a limitation. Because this analysis looked at two case-studies, the conclusions that have been drawn need to be cross-examined by carrying out an evaluation of the discourse of other autonomous Maghrebi movements which were politically active at the time of the emergence and development of the ENA/PPA and of the MTA, but also during different historical periods. Therefore, both synchronic and diachronic discourse analyses of other Maghrebi political organisations in France are required to further substantiate or challenge some of the conclusions which have been made in this thesis. For example, further research could include the political discourse of so-called "second generation" Maghrebis in the 1980s (particularly the case of *Jeunes Arabes de Lyon et sa Banlieue*), and other groups and political activists who were involved in the Marches of the 1980s.

A further limitation is that the question of gender has been broached only briefly (see, for example, chapter two, section four). This can be explained partly by the nature of the discourses of the ENA/PPA and of the MTA, which were addressed essentially to a Maghrebi immigrant population mostly composed of single men.¹⁴⁹ But a discourse in which women are rarely evoked also reveals something about gender, as male-oriented

¹⁴⁸ Other cases of "diasporic nationalism" could include the development of nationalism in the Irish and Cuban diasporas.

¹⁴⁹ For a study of immigrant women in the 1970s and early 1980s, see, for example, Andezian and Streiff-Fénart (1981), Wisniewski (1974).

discourses do inflect the way in which ethno-national identity is constructed in both movements. Clearly, given the wide scope of this study and the word limit which has been set, it is an issue which cannot be looked at with the depth that it requires. Therefore, further research needs to be carried out on this aspect in the discourse of Maghrebi immigrants.

Other important areas need to be researched. Whilst the birth and development of Algerian nationalism, of the *Etoile nord-africaine* and the PPA have been the subject of several historical studies (see, for example, Stora 1982, 1986, 1992a, 1992b, Stora and Daoud 1995, Carlier 1984, 1986, 1991, 1995, Collot 1971, Nouschi 1962, Ouamara 1986, Vatin 1974, Gallissot 1987a), the history and actions of the *Mouvement des travailleurs arabes* have not yet been examined and charted in a systematic and chronological manner in any academic work. Such a study would contribute to a better understanding of Maghrebi immigrants' political history in France.

By extension, a detailed study of the *Comité des Droits et de la Vie des travailleurs immigrés*, a movement closely associated to the MTA and involving French intellectuals and political activists whose support for immigrants was crucial in the 1970s, would need to be carried out in order to apprehend the complex nature of the links of solidarity between the French and immigrants and the way in which the former mobilised in their favour. Another area which deserves more attention is the examination of the role that other French political and religious organisations, groups and individuals played in solidarity with immigrants during actions such as the hunger strikes of illegal immigrants over the last three decades, the *Marches pour l'Égalité* of the 1980s, and other forms of support to immigrants. While academics have looked at the French political parties and unions' discourses on, and policies towards, immigrants (see, for example, Gani 1972, Wihtol de Wenden 1988, 1988a, 1990 & 1991), no in-depth historical and political study seems to have been carried out on the role played by Catholic and Protestant priests and their respective Church, and also by extreme left-wing political organisations and activists in immigrants' struggle for rights. In the 1970s, the former and the latter often appeared to constitute the main French base of

support for immigrants.¹⁵⁰ However, this thesis has contributed towards a better understanding of the complex historical, social and political processes which inform immigrants' diasporic identity, discourse and mobilisation in France.

¹⁵⁰ Verbunt (1974) is one of the few analysts to have examined the role of Catholic priests in the immigrants' movement in the 1970s.

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