

From the Sétif Massacre to the November insurrection: the origins of the Algerian women's movement, 1945–54

The centre of gravity of this study lies in the French emancipation campaign from 1956 to 1962, but to understand the extent to which this was innovative or marked a break with the past requires some idea of that which preceded it. This chapter explores a number of issues: first, it provides a brief background sketch of the overall social, economic and political situation of Algerian women during the post-war decade. The triple colonial oppression of women by ethnic or racial discrimination, class and gender goes far to explain why it was so difficult for them to become politically conscious or to engage in any kind of emancipation movement. Secondly, despite these impediments various factors contributed to the emergence of the first significant women's organisations in the main urban centres. Despite the marginalisation of women, the modernisation of large colonial cities like Algiers, Oran and Constantine inevitably led to the appearance of a small, but highly significant strata of young, educated women, mainly students, teachers, secretaries and health workers, who were drawn into the nationalist struggle and provided the backbone of the new women's organisations.

During the decade activism was inspired by the close collaboration between European women, many of them left-wing, communist or Christian militants from metropolitan France, and Algerian women. The former, who had made significant political and social gains after the Liberation, including the vote, now campaigned to extend these rights to Algerian women. Thirdly, the colonial General Government¹ responded to this challenge by close police surveillance of the new women's organisations, and by careful structuring of the Algerian electoral system and 'representative' institutions so as to totally exclude Muslim women. This containment, which was symptomatic of the overall blockage of reform by settler interests intent on preserving their domination, helped drive the nationalists from a reformist towards a revolutionary solution. The failure of reform through the decade 1944–54 enables us to see how the military-led programme of emancipation after 1954, examined in

chapter 2, represented a significant reversal in colonial policy, and why the long accumulation of under-development and neglect of the rural and urban poor presented almost insuperable problems of investment. Lastly, a close examination of the three key women's organisations reveals various tensions, in particular an incipient division between those currents that were drawn to a more secular or socialist agenda and those influenced by an Islamo-nationalist vision of cultural resistance. These tensions show that the divisions on the issue of women that internally fractured the FLN during the war and on into the post-independence era were already emerging well before the insurrection.

Following the invasion of Algeria in 1830, the basic policy of the French was to establish a settler colony through which European immigrants from the Mediterranean basin would settle on land appropriated from the indigenous nomadic and peasant population by conquest and 'legal' destruction of communal rights.² By 1920 the *colons* had largely completed the process of taking over the richest and best irrigated arable land in the valleys, a process achieved by breaking up tribal society and its forced relocation into poor, rocky and arid marginal zones. Unable to survive, even at subsistence level, the Algerian rural population was compelled to seek external resources either by working as day-labourers for local *colons*, or by temporary labour migration to northern cities and France. By the 1930s and 1940s the rural population was trapped in a desperate situation: per capita production of grain and livestock was falling; traditional handicraft industries collapsed as cheaper, factory-made goods were imported; the majority of men faced massive under-employment, finding waged labour for one hundred days a year or less; and cyclical famine, like that of 1942–45, ensued. The demographic historian Louis Chevalier, in a report of 1947, described a classic Malthusian crisis:³ the population growth rate had doubled between 1921 and 1930, and this demographic transition was to carry enormous negative consequences for women.⁴ Large numbers migrated from the inhospitable rural interior towards the urban centres, but the colonial economy was unable to provide enough employment since metropolitan capitalists had protected their own interests and prevented Algerian industrialisation.⁵ The Algerian urban population expanded dramatically, but most of this growth consisted of impoverished, illiterate migrants who swelled the rapidly expanding shantytowns (*bidonvilles*).⁶ However, despite accelerating urbanisation, by 1948 Algeria was still a predominantly rural society in which 84 per cent of the indigenous population lived outside the forty-seven urban centres,⁷ and provided the centre of gravity for a War of Independence that was predominantly a peasant-based phenomenon. Table 1 provides a summary

Table 1: Geographical distribution of European and Muslim populations c. 1954

Area	European population	Muslim population
Zone 1		
47 major towns	800,000	1,430,000
Zone 2		
Evolved small towns and communes 30,000km ²	180,000	1,830,000
Zone 3		
Under-developed rural areas 200,000km ²	36,000	5,450,000

Source: *L'Effort algérien*, 1,167 (20–26 February 1959)

of the geographical division of Algeria by 1954 into three zones, with a massive concentration of Muslims in the impoverished interior where very few Europeans chose to live:

While the situation of Algerian women can be understood against this wider background, in general, as the ‘prolétaires des prolétaires’, they experienced an even more deprived and oppressed way of life than their husbands and brothers.⁸ On the eve of war in 1954, while virtually all European children aged six to fourteen years received primary schooling, this was true for only one in five Algerian boys, and one in sixteen girls.⁹ In 1948 some 90 per cent of males aged over ten years were illiterate in French and Arabic, and 96 per cent of women.¹⁰ Of the two million women of working age in 1954, some 1.1 million or about 95 per cent of the active female population were engaged in agricultural work,¹¹ undertaking a range of heavy manual tasks within the peasant economy that were in addition to their domestic role as mothers of large families (fetching wood and water, weeding, harvesting, tending vegetable gardens and livestock, weaving). Outside the domestic economy, particularly within the towns, remarkably few women worked outside the home since any form of labour was regarded as dishonourable: in general, with the exception of a tiny strata of educated women who were entering the service sector (secretaries, nurses, teachers), most female workers came from the pool of desperately poor women who were forced to do so from necessity, repudiated, abandoned or widowed women who had no extended family group to protect them.¹² As will be seen throughout the study, the backward position of women did not derive only from the negative effects of an exploitative colonial order, such as the failure to invest in schooling for Muslim girls, but also from

a patriarchal system that secluded women within the household, isolated them from external political and cultural forces, and removed the minority of girls who did receive education from school at puberty.

The first organised Algerian women's movement that appeared in the decade 1944–54 was confined to the towns and made little impact in rural society because of extreme poverty, isolation and illiteracy. However, this first urban-based movement appeared historically very late compared to most other countries in the Middle East. During the 1920s and 1930s dynamic women's organisations were already active in Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and India and a series of international conferences held in Damascus (1930), Tehran (1932), Istanbul (1935), Cairo (1938) and elsewhere was leading to the global sharing of ideas on everything from veiling to the franchise.¹³ Algerian women delegates appear to have been totally absent from these international meetings, a fact that may in part have reflected the wider intellectual isolation of the Maghreb, and especially of Algeria, from the more advanced political and religious ferment of the Middle East. Recent scholarship has shown that Algeria was far less sealed-off from currents in the Middle East than previously thought,¹⁴ but the repressive French regime, ever paranoid about any revolutionary or pan-Islamic or pan-Arab threat to the most prized of the colonies, exercised a formidable policing of ideas and persons circulating across the borders.¹⁵

Equally significant was the fact that between c. 1900 and 1944 the debate on the issues facing Algerian women was monopolised by metropolitan and colonial Frenchwomen.¹⁶ French feminists like Hubertine Auclert had, since 1900, engaged in a campaign for the emancipation of Muslim women who were perceived through Orientalist and racist stereotypes as degraded victims of child-marriage, veiling, seclusion, polygamy, repudiation and 'feudal' patriarchy.¹⁷ French feminists, such as the lawyers Maria Vérone and Suzanne Grinberg, were active within the *Union française pour le suffrage des femmes* (UFSF) and campaigned for the extension of republican rights, including the vote and secular law, to Algerian women, as well as for 'modernisation' through education, employment opportunities and welfare or maternity benefits.¹⁸

European feminists shared the predominant position of French male politicians in the more reformist liberal, socialist, communist and left-republican parties that fundamentally upheld a colonial paternalist model of the 'civilising mission' and assimilation as in the best interests of the 'natives'. However, French feminists found it almost impossible to develop links with, or gain support from, Muslim women, and the UFSF delegates to the conference of the *Alliance internationales des femmes* in Istanbul in 1935 bemoaned the absence of grass-roots activity compared

to other Middle Eastern states that were represented: 'In Algeria we live side by side with millions of Muslim women, who are the most backwards of any land'.¹⁹ Compared to most other colonies in the Middle East, Algeria had a large and deeply embedded settler society, and since Europeans dominated most of the spheres of intellectual life, from lycée and university teachers to newspaper editors and writers, French thought and culture exerted a hegemonic power over the small and relatively weak class of educated Algerian women (*évoluées*). Down to c. 1945 any potential for an independent Algerian women's movement to develop was smothered by, or incorporated into, European-led organisations, from charitable networks to ladies associations and circles.

How and why did this situation change after 1944? While there exists almost no information about the political activity or attitudes of Algerian women prior to 1944, a fairly rich body of oral and archival evidence points to the growth of a dynamic movement in the post-war decade, one that succeeded in reaching for the first time down into the ranks of the urban proletariat.²⁰ At its peak in 1948–50 this represented a level of autonomous women's mobilisation that was not to be seen again until after 1980. The emergence of a women's movement was an integral part of the wider and almost continuous political ferment in Algeria between 1936 and 1954 as pro-independence nationalism penetrated deep into society, and aroused a bitter and often violent response from colonial interests. After the Allied landings in Algeria in November 1943 and the fall of the Pétainist regime, the nationalists increased in self-confidence, buoyed up by the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 which pronounced the rights of people to self-determination. The end of the Second World War led in the Maghreb, as it did globally across the declining European empires, to a massive acceleration in the pressures for decolonisation. Algerians were highly optimistic that the new political order that emerged from the long war to defeat fascism would finally lead to radical change. The immediate response of the colonial regime to this challenge was to unleash the extremely violent repression at Sétif in May 1945, and to imprison thousands of nationalists, but far from bringing the independence movement to a halt this simply deepened the political crisis and drove the nationalists towards the preparation of an armed insurrection.

The women's movement that appeared after 1943, far from being unified, was divided by deep and often bitter internal divisions that reflected the more global tensions between different political strands of the anti-colonial struggle. The three main umbrella parties under which the women's organisations grouped were the *Parti communiste algérien* (PCA), the reformist *Union démocratique du manifeste algérien*

(UDMA) headed by Ferhat Abbas, and the nationalist, pro-independence *Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratique* (MTLD) and the associated *Parti du peuple algérien* (PPA) of Messali Hadj.²¹ Eventually, after the outbreak of the War of Independence, the communists and the reformists disbanded their organisations and dissolved their membership into the FLN. This assertion of FLN hegemony from 1956 onwards was to carry important consequences for the future women's movement since it marked the marginalisation of a more secular and 'western' brand of feminism, and the dominance of a more conservative and religious current. The following sections look at these three movements in turn to show in more detail the new forms of activism and organisation that emerged after 1944, and the differing ideological currents at work.

The Communist Party and the *Union des femmes d'Algérie*

Throughout the history of the Algerian nationalist movement, between the foundation of the ENA in 1926 through to the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1954, the relationship between the French and Algerian communists and the Messalist movement was one of bitter antagonism. The *Parti communiste français* (PCF), and the PCA which fell very much under its control, was opposed to the idea of Algerian nationalism and the struggle for independence, a movement which it derided as backward and manipulated by conservative, fascist and fanatical interests, a 'xenophobic nationalism of primitives'.²² True liberation would only come about under the aegis of France, through the prior revolutionary and class struggle of the French proletariat. This 'Marxist' analysis tended to go hand in hand with an 'assimilationist' and colonialist agenda: Algerians were far too backward to manage their own affairs in an independent state,²³ and they would best find the road to full citizenship and civilisation by full integration into metropolitan France. The deep, almost visceral hostility of the rank-and-file European militants in the PCA towards the PPA reflected the general fear of the 'poor white' settlers towards being outnumbered by a growing Algerian population that was facing endemic poverty, and which threatened at any moment to boil over into a bloody insurrection.

However, as the PCF came to recognise the growing strength of the nationalist movement after 1934, so it came to see the need to establish a more autonomous Algerian Communist Party, which through a programme of 'arabisation' would seek to extend its influence among urban and rural Muslim workers, and to develop policies that would reflect their experience and ambitions. Between 1935 and 1936 the number of Algerian party members increased from 60 to 700.²⁴ In 1946, after

the violent repression of Sétif by a Gaullist government which included communist ministers, the PCA made a significant change in policy by approaching the Messalists, as well as the more moderate nationalists of Ferhat Abbas' UDMA.²⁵ The PCA tried to re-establish contact with the Algerian masses by organising party cells in both urban and rural zones, and by campaigning on a range of progressive issues, including agrarian reform, extension of equal state welfare provision, health care, education, and an end to discriminatory distribution of rationed food to settlers.²⁶ It was as part of this wider change in the Algerian Communist Party towards 'arabisation', and a drive to organise among the peasantry and urban proletariat, that the first significant women's movement appeared, the *Union des femmes d'Algérie* (UFA).²⁷

The leading figure in the UFA, which was established in 1944, was its general secretary and leading politician Alice Sportisse. After de Gaulle's ordinance of 21 April 1944 which granted the vote to metropolitan and European women in Algeria, she was one of thirty-three women who were elected to the Constituent Assembly. In the Assembly she campaigned for the extension of the franchise to Algerian women, and although the Organic Law of 20 September 1947 in principle granted this, underhand measures were taken to ensure this would not be implemented.²⁸ In the early years of the UFA the organisation was run largely by and for European women: for example, at a major public meeting in Algiers on 9 April 1946 only two Muslim women were present among the 300 European women and fifty men.²⁹ However, the movement was able to attract talented and highly dedicated radicals (exiled Spanish republicans, Marxist intellectuals from metropolitan France, left-Catholic militants) who were prepared to organise among the largely illiterate and impoverished mass of Algerian women in the *bled*, or in the shantytowns and 'native quarters' of the urban centres.

These militants were particularly successful in establishing a communist organisation that reached out from the urban centres into the rural hinterland of the Department of Oran: a penetration that may have been more successful than anywhere else in Algeria because of the more 'advanced' proletarian condition of labourers on the *colons* estates.³⁰ Typical of these new women activists were Lisette Vincent, Myrian Ben and Jacqueline Guerroudj, who were posted as teachers to rural schools where they were shocked by the hardship faced by peasant women and children, the constant malnutrition, their primitive dwellings, and an almost total absence of any modern infrastructure, including roads, electricity, water supply and primary health care.³¹ Jacqueline Guerroudj travelled on foot with her husband into the outlying *douars* (villages) of Ouchba, Chouli, Terny and Oum Oulalou, where she held

meetings with local women, providing advice on hygiene and child-care, reading from newspapers and debating current events.³²

The UFA militants became radicalised through their ability to break through the normal segregationist barriers and to gain a direct, personal experience of indigenous society.³³ The UFA provided a framework in which women from the three religious communities (Christian, Muslim, Jewish) were brought into contact and could share elements of their differing cultures. The European militants began to develop a first-hand experience of the cultural and linguistic problems of organising among Muslim women who were largely illiterate, spoke only Arabic or Berber dialects, and were hampered by the strict rules of gender segregation. The extent to which female seclusion served to prevent wider education or involvement in the main-stream associational and political life of the colony should not be under-estimated. Once girls reached puberty or were married extremely powerful forms of family, community and self-regulation came into force, the main object of which was to prevent women having any contact whatsoever with males outside the boundaries of the immediate family and household grouping.³⁴ In general Algerian males were prepared to tolerate women's social networking outside the domestic space within certain 'traditional' female spheres such as private houses, Turkish baths, weddings, circumcision fêtes, or visits to cemeteries and holy sites, activities from which men were excluded or in which mutual surveillance and kinship links could guarantee that honour was safe. By 1947 the UFA had adapted to this situation by organising strictly female meetings in the major urban centres and this succeeded for the first time in drawing in Muslim women in large numbers. Baya Allaouchiche, perhaps the most influential of Algerian women in the UFA, notes:

Everywhere was used to hold discussions: cemeteries, Moorish baths, marriages and baptisms. We were always ready to explain the rights and role of women in the world. We thought we could advance the cause of women in this way. On their side they found pretexts to get out of the house saying they were going to the Moorish baths. We organised cinema shows with hired films. One or two women explained the film [in French, Arabic or Berber], the meaning of the theme, and discussion then took off . . . they used extraordinary ingenuity to come and get educated.³⁵

Such women-only meetings, which also used Arabic and Berber interpreters, and cinema and theatrical performances to appeal to the illiterate, succeeded by 1948 in attracting, at least by Algerian standards, enormous numbers of Muslim women to UFA public meetings. Police informers reported in October 1948 the presence of 800 Algerian

women at a meeting in the Algiers' *Foyer Civique* to mark Aïd-el-kébir, at which the general secretary Alice Sportisse attacked the failure to implement the vote for women, 'who have to struggle in a situation close to poverty'.³⁶ The UFA, probably through studying the methods of the PPA nationalists, also proved adept at using propaganda techniques and cultural forms that would appeal to illiterate Arab or Berber speaking women, particularly through popular films like the Egyptian *Gawhara*, theatrical sketches, and Arab female orchestras such as 'Aïssa', and 'El Nedjema'. Success can also be measured by the spread of UFA women's groups across Algeria into the main urban centres of Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Relizane, Bône, Sétif and Sidi-Bel-Abbès.³⁷

The UFA also helped to create for the first time an internationalist dimension to the Algerian women's movement, which before 1945 had been so isolated from external contacts. This was an era during which the Cold War reached its zenith and the UFA, in line with international communism, attacked the danger to the Soviet Union of global imperialism led by the United States and NATO. Equally prominent was the theme of the international solidarity of women engaged in anti-colonial struggles across the globe. At the Third Congress of the UFA held in May 1949 in the Algiers town hall the number of Muslim women outnumbered Europeans by 400 to 250, and among the main speakers was a delegation of women from the *Women's International Democratic Federation* (WIDF), the socialist and anti-colonialist organisation founded in 1945. Archimède Gertie, a lawyer and deputy from Guadeloupe, described how in her country 'natives, as in Algeria, were considered in the same way as "beasts of burden"', and encouraged Algerian women to engage in the struggle of all peoples against colonialism. The delegate Thai-Thi-Lien denounced the ongoing French colonial war in Vietnam and emphasised the key role of women in the 'struggle for total liberation', both through support for combatants and, on the social front, through a mass drive against illiteracy.³⁸ Algerian women delegates attended, and reported back from, international women's conferences held in Budapest, North Korea, Peking, Cairo and Stockholm. By 1952 the attention of the UFA had turned to the violent military and police repression taking place across the border in Tunisia and on international women's day, 8 March 1952, at a meeting attended by 300 women in the Cinema Suffren Mme Mandouze spoke against, 'The massacres of children, the rape of women, the destruction of crops, carried out by the forces of repression in Tunisia'.³⁹

The UFA played a particularly prominent role in organising campaigns that were directed more towards social and 'class' issues, than towards the nationalist struggle. During 1944–45 the Algerian populace was

confronting a situation of widespread famine, and the communists demonstrated against the high cost of living, black-market traders, and the discriminatory supply of rationed rice to European families.⁴⁰ They also demanded the extension of social security and pension rights to Muslim women on a par with those available to European women, attacked the conditions in the *bidonvilles*, and encouraged women to challenge the exclusion of their children from state primary schools by getting them enrolled. The movement also attacked the deepening repression of the Algerian government as it tried to keep a lid on the growing strength of the nationalists, campaigned for the release of political prisoners, and exposed the flagrant corruption of electoral procedure by the Governor Naegelen after 1948, including the refusal to implement the vote for Muslim women. Quite exceptional, if not unique, was the decision of the PCA to stand two Muslim women in the municipal elections of 1945, Bendjaoui Kateb at Bône and Mérâmi Fatma at St-Cloud in the Oran department, both of whom won council seats.⁴¹

Through the organisation of petitions, protest meetings, strikes and street demonstrations the UFA undoubtedly succeeded in raising the political awareness of large numbers of lower-class women. These Muslim women were not, as was often claimed, quiescent victims of Islamic patriarchy or the passive followers of European militants. Algerian women, records Lucette Laribère, were always at the forefront of demonstrations, which could be met with extreme levels of police violence, including gunfire. 'I remember how during the dockers' strike in Beni-Saf an Algerian woman gave birth, and she had absolutely nothing to clothe her baby, she wrapped it in newspaper'.⁴² The UFA had a particularly strong presence in the Oran region and on one occasion a column of about a thousand veiled women marched on the Prefecture of Sidi-Bel-Abbès to hand in a petition demanding the right to vote. During the agricultural workers strike of 1951–52 women in the same region lay down on the railway line to stop a train departing with male prisoners for the notorious prison of Berrouaghia.⁴³ During the 1953 strike to blockade ships destined for Indochina during the colonial war, women interposed themselves between the *Compagnie républicaine de sécurité* (CRS) riot police as they were about to attack the dockers, and removed and tied their long veils (*haïks*) around their waists so that their hands could be free to bombard the police with stones.

How successful was the UFA movement during the decade 1944–54? As a section of the wider communist apparatus, the UFA possessed the advantages of a sophisticated, well-funded and experienced party, with its own printing presses, journalists, bureaucracy, communications and links into both the trade unions and local and national government.

Between January 1945 and April 1946 the membership climbed rapidly from 7,000 to 20,000.⁴⁴ Algerian historians have often claimed that this dynamic movement in the long term undermined the PPA and weakened the key battle for national independence. In reality the extremely turbulent politics of the period, the constant tensions and battles *internal* to different currents, the complex and cross-cutting party alliances and splits, makes it difficult to impose a simple grid, a binary opposition, between the pro-independence PPA and the ‘assimilationist’ PCA. During 1946–47 Alice Sportisse made repeated efforts to approach Messali Hadj to create a united front organisation, the *Front national démocratique*,⁴⁵ and the UFA and the nationalist sister organisation, the *Association des femmes musulmanes algériennes* (AFMA), maintained a dialogue through members who attended joint meetings.⁴⁶ However, any move to unity was doomed to fail: the Messalists could not overcome their hostility towards the communists who had for decades sought to obliterate their movement, and the PCA retained a deep ambivalence towards nationalism. European communists frequently betrayed an underlying assimilationist stance towards Algerian identity, the assumption that in time and with progress Muslims would cast aside their supposedly inferior religion, culture and society for a secular and modern way of life. At a UFA rally in September 1947 one speaker reported on her attendance at a meeting of the recently formed nationalist AFMA at which the audience had ‘declared itself in favour of keeping the veil until independence of the country’, but on the contrary, she claimed, the veil should be suppressed.⁴⁷ Tensions were exposed within the UFA in the preparation for the 1949 Congress when Muslim delegates, supported by a minority of Europeans, objected to the decoration of the stage with numerous red, white and blue flags.⁴⁸ Many of the rank-and-file women supporters of the PCA were unable to overcome the visceral racism and superiority towards Algerians that was endemic in *pieds-noirs* society.⁴⁹ As Muslims attending UFA meetings began to outnumber Europeans after 1947 there are signs of the latter withdrawing in increasing numbers and failing to re-new membership,⁵⁰ precisely the same pattern of ‘white-flight’ that, as will be seen later, army Women’s Circles began to experience after 1958.

The *Union démocratique du manifeste algérien* and secular feminism

The second strand in the Algerian women’s movement was smaller in scale than the UFA, but of interest for the light it throws on an important secularist and westernising tendency. This feminist current grew under the aegis of Ferhat Abbas’ party, the *Union démocratique du manifeste algérien*,

which was created in early 1946 by a generation of reformist politicians who had originally subscribed to a moderate assimilationist agenda.⁵¹ This movement found its early roots in an elite strata of professionals, mainly doctors, lawyers, politicians and teachers, who had received a high level of education within the French lycée and university system. This francophile group, sometimes referred to as 'évolués', was headed by Ferhat Abbas who during the 1930s was unreservedly in favour of full assimilation: 'either the population becomes completely French or it will perish'.⁵² With the Manifesto of 12 February 1943 Abbas was forced to recognise the failure of the assimilationist project and accepted that some form of Algerian independence was desirable, but he still favoured close links with France, a kind of Dominion status, and preferred to achieve this goal through peaceful parliamentary and legalistic methods.⁵³

On 1 May 1949 the UDMA established a new youth organisation, the *Jeunesse de l'union démocratique du manifeste algérien* (JUDMA), which during 1951 to 1954, in the columns of the party weekly *La République algérienne*, widely debated the issues facing Algerian women. In 1951 the paper carried a number of interviews with leading Egyptian feminists, including Saiza Nabarawi and Mounira Charaoui of the Egyptian Feminist Union, and Fatma Nimet Rashid of the National Feminist Party.⁵⁴ Egypt had a far more advanced and mature women's movement than Algeria and during the post-war era served as a beacon for emerging feminist and Arab nationalist struggles.⁵⁵ The message conveyed by the Egyptian militants to their Algerian sisters was a highly radical and political one, by the standards of the repressive French colony. They described the enormous role that Egyptian women had played, including in the mass street demonstrations of 1919, in the revolt against British rule: 'For the first time ever one saw veiled women taking the lead of demonstrations'.⁵⁶ Most crucial was the Kemalist idea that the Arab nation could only liberate itself through harnessing the full potential of women through education.⁵⁷ But if women were to liberate themselves and play a full role through education, training and employment, they would have to battle against traditional customs, seclusion and the veil: 'against the absurd, if not criminal, habits and customs that keep the Arab woman a slave outside the life of the nation . . . The veiled woman cannot assume any meaningful role in society . . . The veil is a rampart that it is absolutely necessary for Arab women to climb over if they wish to definitively emancipate themselves from the tight restrictions of imperialism'. This liberation was entirely legitimate, they claimed, since veiling and seclusion had no basis in the Koran and 'had nothing to do with Islam'.⁵⁸ Throughout 1951–54 *La République algérienne* internationalised the issue of Muslim emancipation through articles on the

women's anti-colonial struggle in Pakistan, India, Syria and elsewhere. Numerous photographs of strong Muslim women as uniformed soldiers, aviators, telephonists, doctors and engineers provided icons of unveiled, liberated women placed in association with visual symbols of scientific progress and modernity (aeroplanes, cars, electric machines).⁵⁹

The liberationist message made an enormous impact on young, educated Algerian women and through the letter columns of *La République algérienne* during 1953–54 they launched an extraordinary and virulent frontal assault on conservative religious forces in Algerian society, propounding the thesis of a 'double imperialism' that depicted custom as a form of oppression that was equal to colonialism itself. One correspondent, 'Nadia G', attacked the daily suffering of young women forced to work for derisory wages or into prostitution: we are told 'it's the fault of colonialism', but more blameworthy were the prejudices of parents and Muslim opinion, 'who insult us, denigrate us, expel us from their bosom like evil beasts that one wants to crush'. The male leaders of political parties and of Islamic organisations were indifferent to their fate, blind to 'this pain that gnaws young hearts smothered by the "protective" shadow of white veils that conceal so much dark suffering'.⁶⁰ The idea of a double oppression seems to have gained some currency in 1953, and Fadila Ahmed, in an article in the Arab newspaper *Al Manar*, entitled 'The twin jailors of women', wrote: 'we Algeria women have two jailors: colonialism . . . and those listless beings who cling to the customs and traditions inherited, not from Islam, but from their ignorant fathers. The second jailor is worse than the first'.⁶¹ Another young woman from Constantine wrote, 'In the atomic age it is absolutely unacceptable that women be odiously locked up, sequestered, ridiculed', and also opposed the veil, 'noxious ancestral ideas' and the 'double imperialism' of both colonialism and conservative Muslim society.⁶² A woman from Tlemcen attacked the veil and spoke of the humiliation of being photographed in the street by American 'gentlemen' tourists like freaks, 'a spectre looming up from by-gone ages'.⁶³ These militants were demanding, in particular, to be freed from the constraints of arranged marriage, not to be traded like cattle between families and thrown into 'the bed of a stranger who rapes them' and for the right to chose a partner on the basis of mutual attraction, 'to make a marriage of love'.⁶⁴ As will be seen in later chapters, this feminist discourse was identical to that which was solicited and reproduced by the army psychological warfare campaign for emancipation after 1956, and provides an important clue as to how one key current in the pre-war nationalist movement, that of the *évoluées*, resurfaced later in the French camp.

The radical voice of the young feminists was not, however, representative of the wider, male-dominated leadership of the youth movement and parent UDMA. The anonymous editor (J. A) of *La République algérienne* dissociated himself from the more outspoken letters, chastised one contributor for talking of 'noxious ancestral ideas', and warned against abandoning principled behaviour for the superficial licence and decadence of the west.⁶⁵ The JUDMA feminists were undoubtedly aware of the contemporary campaign being orchestrated by populist elements in the PPA and *Ulema* to attack, often through violent street actions, alcohol consumption, dance halls, cinemas and cafés in which Algerian women were thought to flaunt themselves unveiled, in make-up, aping European fashion and insulting all notions of honour, morality and national integrity.⁶⁶ JUDMA feminists who went unveiled reported that they were being subjected to constant harassment in the street by men who 'follow them right along the road, wolf whistle, bother them and finally even insult them', so that they were being driven back into domestic seclusion.⁶⁷

Such male aggression can be seen as a hostile reaction to the threatening 'invasion' of women into the previously banned public spaces of the city. The UDMA press received numerous letters from men who deployed a standard discourse of westernised female decadence to attack an emerging Muslim feminism.⁶⁸ The Third Congress of the JUDMA in 1954 passed a resolution which warned against Algerian women who were taking, 'only the superficial varnish and licentious libertinage of western civilisation, deliberately neglecting their role as women, spouses, mothers and citizens'.⁶⁹ Faced with this male backlash the female militants of the JUDMA went to great pains to argue that emancipation was perfectly compatible with Islam, and that customary restraints on women represented a corrupt deviation from the Koran upheld by archaic patriarchy or conservative Islamic scholars. They emphasised that the veil was no guarantee of moral behaviour, indeed it was argued that some women used the anonymity of the *haïk* to engage in clandestine liaison, and engaged in a form of self-policing to show that unveiled women could demonstrate an irreproachable modest, respectful and pure bearing: 'Have no fear dear brothers and dear fathers . . . Above all do not think that we imitate certain European women in their flashy finery, fancy show and low-cut dresses. On the contrary, we walk with our head held high, always maintaining for ourselves the modesty of the young Muslim girl'.⁷⁰ Some JUDMA feminists argued that the dispute about the veil was sustaining a false and divisive debate, and sisters had the right to veil or not as they chose.⁷¹ Afsaneh Najmabadi has argued that the simplifying and damaging binary opposition that contrasted secular modernisation (unveiling) with conservative Islam

(veiling) failed to see that Iranian feminism contained a strand that regarded modernity, the veil and Islam as perfectly compatible, and some elements of this voice can be recognised in Algerian feminism.⁷²

Overall the UDMA leadership, despite its modernist pretensions, maintained a quite conservative and cautious position on women's emancipation, and the focus on specific issues like the veil, education and training helped disguise a failure to address the issue of political rights, including the female vote which was not included in the party programme until 1955.⁷³ The reformist movement was in constant struggle to try and find an equilibrium or *juste milieu*, what one leader, Oussedik, called 'a harmonious synthesis between the two currents of civilisation: the materialism of the West and the spirituality of the East'.⁷⁴ But the UDMA leaders clearly felt ill at ease with the mixing of sexes in party or public meetings, and photographs show rigidly separated audiences with men to one side, and veiled women to the other.⁷⁵ While the party press gave space to young women, it sought to distance itself from what it viewed as the intemperate language of inexperienced juveniles. There existed a tension between those young women who were feeling their way, under exceptionally adverse conditions, towards a concept of personal development and individual fulfilment *as* women, and a party which subordinated their interests to those of the nation or 'people'. In general the UDMA discourse, including that of many women, saw the education and progress of women as instrumental or secondary to the needs of national liberation led by men. Ibnou Cherqui emphasised three key roles for women: first as providers of 'the constant comfort of her help' to militant husbands, brothers and fathers; second, of moral support for combatants; and third, as mothers and educators of children 'in the course of nationalism'.⁷⁶ Once again nationalism was threatening to lock women into the private family sphere in their 'natural' gender role as reproducers. Soon the small number of young and educated Algerian women who shared a more radical, secularist and personalist agenda were to find themselves politically isolated, particularly as the UDMA was first banned by the French government and then absorbed into the far more integral nationalist movement of the FLN.

Religious reformism and the *Association des Ulema musulmans algériens*

The reformist movement of the *Ulema* (or Islamic scholars) is of considerable importance to this study overall since, although it was not directly involved in any women's organisation, it helped formulate the core ideology of Messali Hadj's PPA-MTLD and of the FLN which

became dominant after 1954, including the position on women. Until the 1980s the historiography of Algerian nationalism, most of it written from a left or Marxist perspective, tended to ignore or under-estimate the deep religious continuities within the independence movement and post-colonial state: but this has begun to be revised by historians following the post-1988 resurgence of Islamism.

From the moment of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830 until about 1920 the dominant form of religion was constituted by the holy men or *marabouts* castes, and the Sufi mystical confraternities (*tariqa*) that were located in monastic-type centres of pilgrimage and scholastic teaching (*zaouias*). By the early twentieth century scholastic learning was moribund, and both *marabouts* and official *imams* declined in popular legitimacy since they were closely associated with the colonial regime that funded and nurtured them as an instrument of political control. This sclerosis was challenged by the Islamic reform movement that arrived from the Middle East in the early 1920s and was led by Sheikh Abd al Hamid Ben Badis, member of a patrician Constantine family, who helped to found the AUMA in 1931 which rapidly spread through the urban centres of Algeria.⁷⁷ Islamic reformism, not unlike the Protestant Reformation in Europe, represented a rejection of populist forms of superstition, magic and saintly intercession, and a return to pure scriptural sources (*salafiyya*). This austere, disciplined and individualistic faith lent itself well to the rationality and modernising ambitions of the Algerian urban bourgeoisie that expanded with the rapid economic growth of the early twentieth century.

Although Ben Badis attempted to keep the *Ulema* clear of any political entanglements, it provided a powerful vehicle for emerging nationalism.⁷⁸ The assertion of Algerian exceptionalism, the deep historical roots of identity, Arabic language, culture and Islamic faith that could never be assimilated into French civilisation, expressed a new found pride, a cultural nationalism that stood firm against the humiliating and depersonalising impacts of colonialism. In April 1936 Ben Badis refuted Ferhat Abbas' famous statement that he could find no evidence for the existence of an Algerian nation, by noting: 'this nation has its history, illustrated by innumerable remarkable deeds; it has its religious and linguistic unity; it has its own culture, traditions, and values . . . it is a nation totally unlike France by its language, its values, ethnic origins and religion. It has no desire for assimilation. It has its very own fatherland, Algeria, with its established and well known frontiers'.⁷⁹ Unlike the highly fragmented and segmentary structures of moribund tribalism and *maraboutism*, that were rooted in particular localities and shrines, the puritan individualism of the *Ulema* provided a kind of 'Jacobin Islam',⁸⁰

the basis for a new national identity that unified Algerians across space, class and clan.⁸¹ Reformism also separated Islamic spirituality from the sphere of natural science, which meant that Koranic orthodoxy was compatible with material progress, so that its followers could simultaneously defend religion against the inroads of westernisation while embracing the techniques of modernity, economic change and rational organisation.⁸² Finally, under a highly repressive colonial regime that constantly harassed and crushed any overt form of Algerian political or party opposition, reformism constituted a 'non-political' religious base of cultural resistance that the government found difficult to proscribe.⁸³

During 1930 to 1936 Messali Hadj distanced himself increasingly from secular communism and moved towards reformist Islam. He proposed the teaching of courses in Arabic language and history to migrant workers in France, deployed a political rhetoric infused with Islamic *jihadist* terms, and abandoned European dress for the beard, long gown and head-wear (*chéchia*) of the religious leader and prophet.⁸⁴ Much of the basic thinking and attitude of the PPA towards women derived from the *Ulema* which, Ali Merad notes, was 'both defensive and conservative'. The *Ulema* rejected the ideas of the progressive Muslim feminists of Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Tunisia, and adopted the ideas of the conservative Egyptian reformist Rashid Rida (1865–1935) as the supreme authority in this field.⁸⁵

Rida was a puritanical moralist who expressed horror at the spectacle offered by the life-style of American women, the nudity in sea-side resorts, the rampant hedonism and individualism of western women who had ready access to divorce, and who destroyed the sacred unity and stability of the family. It was essential to combat what he perceived as a Christian and atheist conspiracy to weaken Islam from within by an insidious subversion of morality and family life, and this could be best achieved by a stout defence of traditional Sunni orthodoxy. Rida, unlike the Egyptian feminists, opposed the abolishment of veiling, and reaffirmed patriarchy, polygamy and unilateral male repudiation. Ben Badis and his followers stood at the opposite spectrum from the Kemalist *evolués*, from Ferhat Abbas and the young radical women of the JUDMA, who by abandoning the veil and women's segregation, represented a kind of dangerous Trojan Horse through which Algerian society might be subverted from within by a creeping westernisation. This form of conservative orthodoxy, as will be seen throughout this study, leant itself to one of the most powerful and enduring myths or ideological constructions of Algerian nationalism, the idea that women constituted a bastion and core defence of traditional religious and cultural identity.

The *Ulema*, in an attempt to halt the corrosive effects of westernisation transmitted through the secular French school system, began to expand the number of ‘free schools’, the secondary *médersa* schools that could provide both boys and girls with a modern Arabo-Islamic education.⁸⁶ The free schools played a crucial role in the formation of a whole generation of youth who became nationalist militants between 1936 and 1954. Although the data are unreliable or contradictory, the number of schools appears to have increased from 70 in 1934–35 to 181 in 1954, and by 1955 to have taught 21,093 boys and 14,097 girls.⁸⁷ The *médersa* received no government funding and were organised by a central association and local committees which allowed them a degree of independence that was worrying to the French authorities which subjected them to close police surveillance. Many of the male pupils, including the future FLN military leader and President Houari Boumédiène, went on to complete their education at the universities of Zitouna in Tunisia and El Azhar in Egypt, a connection that facilitated the flow of external Arab and Islamic cultural and nationalist influences into the Algerian lower middle class. Eventually, when the *Ulema* rallied to the FLN during 1956–57, the *médersa* were subjected to severe repression and some 133 schools were closed and many teachers were interned.

Typical of these centres of nationalist culture was the *médersa* ‘Chabiba’ of Algiers, a school that was funded by an association of parents and supporters, which had been temporarily closed by the government in July 1934 after the arrest of a militant teacher, Chama.⁸⁸ Nationalist families that nurtured Arab culture as a form of resistance frequently moved their daughters from French state schools into the *médersa*. The PPA militant Isa Benzekri was withdrawn from the French school when thirteen years old on the insistence of her maternal uncle and placed in the Algiers ‘Chabiba’, as was another future activist Malika Zerrouki. There they received a modern education in both Arabic and French language, infused with a strong nationalism including Algerian history and the learning and singing of patriotic hymns or songs (*nachid*).⁸⁹ Another activist Fatiha Bouhired comments: ‘I was in the French school up to CM2 [Cours moyen 2, age group 10–11 years], then I studied Arabic in a “free” school of the Casbah, the “Lalla Chemma”. It was a modern school, not like the impoverished Koranic schools [*Sid el Ouhate*]. We studied the Coran, the holy sayings [*hadith*], Koranic commentary [*tefsir*], arithmetic. It was a political school. Although the nationalist hymns were banned, we still learned them. It’s there that we learned, still young, that we were colonised and that one day we would have to make a revolution against colonialism’.⁹⁰ Among the five members of the first clandestine women’s cell of the PPA

in 1946 were two future *médersa* teachers,⁹¹ and the key activists of the youth branch, the *Jeunes filles musulmanes algérienne* (JFMA) created in June 1948, were predominantly teachers and students from the free schools. A police report noted that the JFMA, like the parent UDMA, was opposed to “the occidentalisation” of the indigenous woman.⁹²

The *Ulema* thus supported girls’ education as integral to the process of national regeneration, as long as they were segregated from boys in the classroom, their moral behaviour was closely policed, and knowledge, according to Ben Badis, was diffused ‘on the basis of our religion and our national character’.⁹³ The reformist thinkers did not advocate education for girls and women on the basis of equality of opportunity and individual emancipation, but rather as a key to an Arabo-Islamic renaissance. Most of these young *médersa* women, who came to form the backbone of the PPA women’s organisation, were drawn from a particular strata in urban society, a class of relatively well-off small shopkeepers, traders and skilled artisans who remained independent from the state patronage system and retained a degree of ‘traditional’ Arab culture and learning.⁹⁴ The petit-bourgeois nature of the *médersa*, influenced by a European disciplinary model, is captured in class photographs of Tayeb El-Okbi’s *médersa* in Algiers which, notes James McDougall, ‘show girls in neat, knee-length white dresses, their hands folded in their laps, and rows of boys in jackets and fez, flanked by their teachers (all in European dress, sometimes with a *burnūs* over the jacket)’.⁹⁵ The reformist-led *médersa* schools played a progressive role in facilitating the expanding education of girls: the *Ulema* leader Ahmed Tawfiq al-Madani, who represented the liberal wing of the movement,⁹⁶ in a speech to a meeting of 800 young women in Algiers stated: ‘In order to be free, independent, it is necessary that our women be instructed and educated. She must be the equal of man and not his slave’.⁹⁷ But the overall position of reformism towards women was conservative and sought to reinforce Sunni regulation of family, marriage and gender segregation. Thus in one *médersa* programme dedicated to Arab language and history Sheikh Belkacem Djebali taught women from behind a curtain,⁹⁸ while the president of the AUMA Bachir al-Ibrahimi wrote in the newsletter *El Basaïr* (28 February 1950) opposing the extension of the vote to Algerian women on the grounds that it would provoke discord among Muslims.⁹⁹

Populist nationalism and the *Association des femmes musulmanes algériennes*

The fourth and final strand in the growth of women’s organisations between 1944 and 1954 concerns the foundation by the PPA-MTLD in

1946 of a network of clandestine women's cells, followed by the establishment of the AFMA in July 1947.

Throughout the long period from the foundation of the *Étoile nord-africaine* in 1926 through to the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1954, the Messalist movement never formulated a detailed or clear policy in relation to women.¹⁰⁰ Until 1936 the ENA organised a political base among the community of emigrant workers in mainland France, but this was a society of single men with which Algerian women, left behind in the colony, had little direct contact or input.¹⁰¹ From 1936 onwards Messali Hadj changed the centre of gravity of PPA activism from France to Algeria, and during the following phase of rapid penetration of the nationalist organisation in the colony, women began to be drawn into the radical political currents. The presence of women, uttering characteristic ululations, was noted in mass demonstrations of 1936 and 1939, when many were injured, and Messali acknowledged the presence of 'women who had come to hear the voice of the people', during his key speech in the Algiers municipal stadium on 2 August 1936.¹⁰²

However, Messalism, which has been described as a form of populist nationalism, was in general characterised by a certain disdain for intellectuals, and appealed to the masses more through fiery rhetoric than by any detailed elaboration of a programme.¹⁰³ For Messali everything was subsidiary to the immediacy of the struggle for independence. Any mention of Algerian women emphasised their exploitation, poverty and victim status solely at the hands of the colonial system. Women were always under 'the yoke of colonialism', or 'suffocated by the poverty and ignorance that were carefully nurtured by imperialism'.¹⁰⁴ This analysis of the purely destructive impacts of colonialism on women and the family continued to provide the staple of FLN discourse through to 1962, and found its most detailed elaboration in Saadia-et-Lakhdar's sociological treatise of 1961, *L'Aliénation colonialiste et la résistance de la famille algérienne*.¹⁰⁵ Since, the PPA argued, Algerian women's plight could only be resolved through the defeat of colonialism there was no point in elaborating any interim programme: liberation of women would come about almost instantaneously and totally, as if by magic, from the removal of the causes of exploitation. 'The Algerian woman could never advance as long as Algeria was bent under the yoke of French colonialism',¹⁰⁶ a position that was reflected in a meeting of the AFMA at which it was agreed the veil should be maintained, 'until the independence of our land'.¹⁰⁷ This meant in effect that the PPA, as well as the FLN later on, could avoid making any policy statements on the issue of women, and a potentially explosive issue could be both delayed and marginalised. The issues surrounding women were lacking

in any specificity, and were subordinated to or absorbed into the wider demands of the nationalist struggle.

Not until 1954, probably under the pressure of communist and UDMA campaigning, did Messali openly recognise the need for women to participate in the liberation struggle, although he shied clear of taking the issue further: given 'the delicate and sensitive nature of this problem, it is important to approach it with prudence and care'.¹⁰⁸ The masculine discourse of the MTLD-PPA in effect denied women any meaningful role as autonomous political agents, but reduced them to the function of heroic procreators, educators of the nation, and moral supporters of male warriors. 'And you', proclaimed the Central Committee of the MTLD in December 1953, 'women of our Algeria, mothers, sisters, spouses! . . . Remember that it is on you that falls the noble task of giving life and to forging the future generations! It is on you that the future of Algeria rests'.¹⁰⁹ The PPA was relatively at ease with the mobilisation of women in so far as it fitted into a traditional Middle East and Maghrebian myth of women taking over from effeminate or failing men a combative role in a time of danger to the people: the party journal, *El Ouma*, declaimed a Kabyle saying, 'Women take up arms, since men refuse to'.¹¹⁰

But overall nationalism was deeply ambiguous, Janus-faced, in simultaneously politicising women and making them aware of colonial exploitation, while drawing them into an ideology of domesticity and traditional gender roles that would in the long term act as an iron corset on emancipation. In the former area, the PPA was highly successful in bringing women for the first time into the sphere of political activism, an engagement that, apart from the *médersa* schools, was achieved through new forms of cultural activism and via the family cell or kin networks. The nationalists penetrated into urban civil society through a whole range of activities which were aimed particularly at youth, from sports clubs and scouting, to musical circles and festivals.¹¹¹ Fatima Zekkal has described the nationalist plays and theatrical sketches written and performed by militants of the AFMA, including male roles that were played by women. At the Algiers Opera, close to the Casbah, they staged 'tableaux that symbolised Algeria before and after colonisation and as we imagined it after independence. I appeared dressed in the Algerian flag. It was the first time that the Algerian flag was shown on stage. The hall was full, bursting at the seams, the police were there'. Later, when Zekkal moved to Tlemcen she seized the opportunity of her wedding celebration to encourage women who were present to set up an AFMA section. 'There was a male orchestra and at the end the gathering sang the PPA hymn [she sings and translates]:

I sacrifice for Algeria my life and possessions
 For Liberty
 Long live the Party of the Algerian People dear to my heart
 And long live North Africa.

Everybody stood to attention, the men separate down below [in the inner courtyard], the women up above and everyone standing and singing. The women made their *yoyous*'.¹¹² While the AFMA made ready use of family celebrations to overcome the claustration of women, there was at the same time indications of a significant innovation in the major cities as meetings moved away from private houses towards mass performances organised in spacious public halls and cinemas. For many women who attended these mass meetings this was the first time they had ever been inside a cinema, theatre or hall, and the extent to which they were defying convention is indicated by the fact that the turbulent male followers of the reformist leader in Algiers, Sheikh Tayeb El Okbi, disrupted normal cinema or theatre performances in early 1954 to protest against the presence of women.¹¹³

The most crucial factor preventing the politicisation of women was their high degree of illiteracy, combined with radical seclusion and isolation from political life beyond the threshold of the house. Muslim women were expected to remain silent in the presence of men, not to speak unless first spoken to, and not to express any ideas regarding the external male sphere of politics. To do so was to run the risk of incurring the wrath, and even physical violence, of fathers, husbands and brothers. Fatima Baichi reports how she was beaten and dragged by her hair when her brother caught her 'doing politics'.¹¹⁴ Mériem Madani, an FLN agent who was later arrested and tortured in May 1959, notes that she had no idea what the revolution meant when it began in 1954, 'I did not know what it was, because I was not educated, I had never studied, I had never been to school, and in our homes the men never talked in the presence of women'.¹¹⁵ For the tiny minority of urban Algerian women who did become militants before and during the War of Independence, the best chance of achieving a degree of political consciousness and engagement was if they happened to be located in households or extended family networks in which the men were active nationalists. Fatiha Hermouche notes that she was 'through the family circle in touch with the movement of nationalist ideas. One relative militated actively, he brought friends home, and I overheard their discussions. For girls, the influence of the family milieu is vital'.¹¹⁶ The father and two brothers of Baya Hocine were PPA activists: 'politics was much discussed among the men. What's wonderful about women is that they do not discuss

politics, but they understand everything, and suddenly this silent mass, faced with a particular situation, can assume an active role'.¹¹⁷ But the fact that women's nationalism emerged largely as a component of the politics of the male-led family group, and from which it was unable to break free, meant that this radical current was subsidiary to or dependent on males who would rapidly reverse or demobilise the new-found momentum at independence.

Equally significant was the fact that patriarchal or kinship solidarities bound together members of the same family, fraction or clan in which individualism had little place, so that if 'conversion' took place to support the PPA, or later the FLN, the *Mouvement national algérien* (MNA), or the French side in the war, it was frequently the whole group that would 'go over' collectively (*ralliement*) in a single instance.¹¹⁸ Such en bloc political mobilisation included all wives and daughters as an integral part of the collective. Baya Hocine notes that all in her family, which lived in the Algiers Casbah, were PPA militants, and that this was the case for all those who had emigrated to the city from their Kabyle village: 'It's the whole village that agrees on this, that's how it is with us, the Ighil Imoula'.¹¹⁹ Committed PPA nationalists were more willing to admit women into the previously male-dominated and closed sphere of politics or to attend AFMA meetings, even if this meant some breaching of traditional boundaries of female exclusion and segregation, since this was legitimated by the exceptional circumstances of clandestine nationalist struggle. The FLN militants Malika and Louise Ighilahriz recall the solemn occasion when their father, instead of eating separately from the women as was usual, called all the family around the table and announced his political engagement and his expectation that they too would suffer and sacrifice themselves for the liberation of their country: 'I want you to be very courageous and that you follow my example'.¹²⁰ However, as will be seen, this channelling of women's political energies into the nationalist struggle was to carry portentous implications, since there was no guarantee, no implicit 'contract', that women would be compensated for such a sacrifice by recognition of their political right in the post-independence order.

The response of colonial government to the emergence of the Algerian women's movement, 1944–54

This concluding section examines the response of the Gouvernement générale (GG) to the challenge offered by the growth of Algerian women's organisations. During the decade after 1944 the government was intensely preoccupied with the rapid extension of the nationalist

movement, and how to weaken or contain it through repressive means, including mass arrests of militants, seizure or closure of the press, fixing elections and other well-worn techniques. The women's organisations, especially the AFMA, were undoubtedly weakened by the general climate of repression, and the interest of the Algiers government to keep a close eye on the various associations is shown by the extensive volume of intelligence and informer reports. But, given the relatively small membership of the various organisations, the GG showed no particular concern, and was happy to monitor the situation through surveillance. What the archives reveal is concern in a rather different field, a high-level ambition to block the access of Algerian women to the franchise and to do this in such a way as to fend off international criticism of the colonial regime.

A fundamental political issue that faced the colonial regime throughout the period after 1900 was how to retain settler domination, despite the republican rhetoric of universal rights, and in a situation in which indigenous Algerians greatly outnumbered Europeans. The *sénatus-consulte* law of 1865 codified a radical difference between Europeans (and soon after Jews under the Crémieux decree of 1870) who had full French citizenship and Algerians who were given second-class status as 'subjects' since they fell under Muslim personal status law (*statut personnel*). The dike which was constructed to retain the flood of Algerians that threatened to inundate the settler monopoly of political power was crucially defined in religious terms: as long as Algerians remained Muslims then they fell subject to the separate laws and customs of Islamic courts which regulated marriage, the family and inheritance. The French exclusionary ideology claimed that as long as Algerians remained subject to 'barbaric' Islamic practices such as arranged and child-marriage, polygamy, repudiation, dowry and veiling so it was inconceivable that they could become full citizens since this would be in contradiction with 'universal' French law that, by definition, should apply to all individuals without exception.¹²¹ In principle the 1865 law enabled Algerians to become French citizens through 'naturalisation' by renouncing Muslim personal status: time and again colonial spokesmen cynically offered Algerians this immediate and ready access to citizenship as a warranty of their own 'democratic' principles, while knowing full well that such an act of apostasy was deeply abhorrent to almost all Algerians: as General Reibell remarked in 1928, 'If they [the Algerians] want to become French citizens, then they can naturalise, that's up to them. They can become French citizens any time they choose'.¹²² The settler regime thus used personal status, constantly reiterated through an Orientalist discourse of female oppression and male sexual violence,

as a key blocking device: in such a system colonials had every interest in sustaining and exaggerating the 'backward' features of Algerian family law rather than emancipation.¹²³

From time to time the settler regime conceded, under intense pressure from liberal reformers and Algerian elites, as with the Jonnart law of 1919, tiny additions of carefully selected categories of male Algerians to the European electorate, such as war veterans, property owners and the holders of educational qualifications. However, with the Liberation the political climate in metropolitan France was one of intense expectation of radical change and the institution of a new, democratic constitutional order, an optimism that was symbolised by the extension of the vote to all French women. The challenge facing the colonial regime in Algeria was how to engineer an electoral system that could be defended in the republican language of universal rights and democracy, while in reality built to guarantee the political domination of the European minority. Basically this was achieved in relation to the Algerian male electorate through the device of a dual chamber. After lengthy debate in the First and Second Constituent Assemblies (October 1945 to October 1946), as well as the first National Assembly, the Organic Law of 20 September 1947 continued the classic colonialist system of separate and grossly unequal electorates.¹²⁴ The law established a quasi-parliamentary body of limited competence, the *Assemblée algérienne*, divided into a First College of sixty delegates, elected by 469,000 Europeans and 63,000 Muslims from the conservative elites, and a Second College of sixty delegates elected by 1,300,000 Muslim male voters. Since all major decisions had to pass both Colleges and by a two-thirds majority, the European minority could always control the agenda and block any legislation to which they took exception.¹²⁵ Even with this institutionally corrupt system, designed to guarantee settler hegemony, the GG was finding it difficult to contain the explosive pressures of nationalism and Naegelen was appointed Governor in February 1948 to keep a lid on the situation by overseeing the first elections to the Algerian Assembly. Under his supervision the regime proceeded to rig the elections on a huge and systematic scale, using a range of corrupt practices from the intimidation and arrest of nationalist candidates to the stuffing of ballot boxes.¹²⁶

However, the colonial regime was faced with a further dilemma in that the enfranchisement extended by De Gaulle to all European women in metropolitan France and Algeria would, in principle, have to be extended to Muslim women. Under Articles 4 of the Organic Law of 20 September 1947, 'Algerian women of Muslim origin possess the right to vote', but a decision on how this would be implemented was left, by a slight of hand, to the future Algerian Assembly which in turn was

so rigged as to carry an automatic European majority.¹²⁷ During the decade from 1948 to 1958 the Algiers government repeatedly claimed that the women's franchise was *not* blocked by the French powers but by Muslims themselves in the Second College. Deputies of the Algerian Communist Party, most notably Alice Sportisse and René Justrabo,¹²⁸ the mayor of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, continued to push for implementation of the franchise in the National Assembly and the Algerian Assembly during 1948 and 1949, and also through the campaigns of the UFA. For example, at a UFA meeting in Algiers during October 1948 attended by some 800 women, nearly all of them Muslims, Sportisse made a speech in which she noted that the Communist Party 'had fought and continues to fight to obtain the right to vote for Muslim women', and indicated that a UFA campaign for the political education of Muslim women would prepare them for the exercise of this duty.¹²⁹

Naegelen, in concertation with the Minister of the Interior, responded in 1949 to such pressure with the trivial proposal that some 300 women from the Muslim educated elite be added to the electoral list of the First College, a measure that the European delegates quickly buried.¹³⁰ Given the predominance of highly conservative Algerian delegates in the Assembly, so-called 'Yes-men' or 'Beni-Oui-Oui', supporters of the colonial regime chosen through corrupt electoral procedures, it is not surprising that they clamped down on any meaningful extension of the female vote. Naegelen's cynical and widespread use of electoral fraud represented the final blocking of the way to any peaceful solution to the Algerian crisis and drove the PPA towards the only option left to it: armed rebellion.

The Algiers administration seemed quite relaxed about its cynical fixing of the electoral system and its exposure in the media: this, after all, is what it had been doing for over a century. Nor did it see the communist-led campaign for implementation of the female franchise as a matter of concern. But behind the scenes, largely unknown to the Algerian nationalists, Paris and Algiers appear to have been much more anxious about the potential impacts on international opinion. The source of this preoccupation in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and the Interior originated from pressure that was bought to bear by Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux, a politician who played a leading role in the post-war international women's movement. From 1945 Lefauchaux was elected as deputy for the Aisne for the *Mouvement républicaines populaires* (MRP), a Christian Democrat party which in the immediate post-war years, inspired by the experience of the Resistance and progressive Catholicism, adopted with exuberance the mantle of the Gaullist 'liberation' of women.¹³¹ Lefauchaux held a powerful, diplomatic position in

the French delegation to the UN, and in 1946 she played a leading role alongside Eleanor Roosevelt in the establishment of the *Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW), as well as in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). During 1946–47 Lefauchaux pressed the Commission to monitor the status of women in protectorate and colonial territories, and in the following years the CSW, which aimed to achieve ‘equality with men in all fields of human enterprise’, engaged in centralising a huge volume of comparative information on women’s political, economic, civil, social and educational rights across the globe.¹³² Between 1948 and 1952 Lefauchaux, as chairwoman of the CSW, played a key role in overseeing the monitoring of the legal rights of women in marriage, especially in relation to repressive customary practices, and in advancing full political suffrage for women, a radical agenda at a time when only twenty-five of the fifty-one UN member states allowed women equal voting rights with men. Lefauchaux travelled widely to the French colonies of North and Sub-Saharan Africa and, as will be seen later (chapters 5 and 8), came to play a crucial role in the formulation of Algerian emancipation policy and reforms during 1957–59. Her work as chairwoman of the CSW culminated in the adoption by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 1952 of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, an instrument that helped highlight the ongoing denial of rights of indigenous women under colonial regimes.¹³³

Lefauchaux, as chair of the CSW, was placed in an uncomfortable position by her own government’s policy in Algeria. During 1951 and early 1952 she kept the French government informed of the CSW preparation of the Convention which was to include, ‘the political rights of women, their situation in common law and their access to education’ and in a report she recommended ‘it would be advantageous to our country to show evidence of initiative in relation to the advancement of women’.¹³⁴ In a letter of 1955 Lefauchaux explained that her concern for women’s rights in the French colonies did not arise from her ‘feminism’, but her deep regret that the government failed to recognise the political interest in favouring ‘the progress of women’. In particular she was aware of the bitter discontent among young educated women, the ‘elite’ of nurses, teachers and students, who ‘harbour much bitterness because of the total indifference with which the administration allows unacceptable customs to continue’. France should be offering their best chance of progress, but these women were being drawn into, ‘movements with communist or nationalist leanings’.¹³⁵

Lefauchaux had clearly recognised the nature of the frustration building up among the Algerian *évoluées*, and the appeal that she was

making to the French government during 1951–52, in order to head off the growth in nationalism, was directly in line with the policy that Algiers would adopt after 1956. The Minister of the Interior, who had authority over the Governor General, relayed Lefauchaux's concerns as UN delegate, as well as those of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Algiers and recommended in a letter of 16 January 1952, 'vis-à-vis international opinion, that France could show evidence of progressive measures in this area', and requested a report on the voting rights of Muslim women.¹³⁶ Although the French government was concerned primarily with diplomatic window dressing, rather than with the substance of reform, its anxiety was justified since in the long term the political battle within the UN over the Algerian colony was to prove almost as decisive in opening the way to independence as the FLN armed struggle.¹³⁷ There was evident French government concern over this issue and the Ambassador in Moscow, the former Governor General Yves Chataigneau, sent a dispatch to the Foreign Minister, Robert Schumann, providing evidence of the failure of the Soviets after thirty years to emancipate Muslim women in Central Asia from the veil (*parandja*) and other repressive practices.¹³⁸ These facts, he suggested, could be used against Soviet delegates in the CSW if they should attack French policy in the Maghreb.¹³⁹

Over a two-year period between July 1951 and August 1953 there was an extensive correspondence between the Minister of the Interior and the Governor General Léonard, on the position that France should take in regard to the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. This is of interest for the insight which it provides into the standard arguments and discourse deployed by the colonial regime to deny rights to Algerian women throughout the Fourth Republic between 1944 and May 1958.¹⁴⁰ Léonard advised Paris that the colonial distinction between French citizens and Algerian-Muslim subjects meant that as long as the latter remained wedded to 'the principal institutions of Muslim law, contrary to our Western concept of social equality', such as the abhorrent practices of polygamy, enforced child-marriage, repudiation, segregation and the veil, Muslim women were not able to exercise the vote freely.¹⁴¹ Léonard, utilising a standard argument of settler society, remarked that the UN and international opinion should be informed that all Algerian women were free to exercise the right to vote by the simple choice of naturalisation.

Léonard went on to construct a smoke-screen: resistance to the franchise, he claimed, did not stem from the French government, which had laudable progressive motives, but rather from Muslims themselves. International opinion should be told that France had

already granted voting rights to Muslim women by the Statute of 20 September 1947. But implementation lay with the Algerians themselves and when Naegelen, it was claimed, had proposed in 1949 adding 300 Muslim women to the electoral lists of the First College in the Algerian Assembly, this had sunk without trace under the 'indifference, or even the hostility of Muslims'. Léonard brushed over the concern expressed by Lefauchaux that the fate of Muslim women lay in the hands of an undemocratic quisling Assembly, 'hostile to any advancement of women', one which was so constructed as to prevent any power reaching the Algerian electorate. The government had no power to intervene in the 'private' sphere of religion and, 'It has to take account of the reactions of a society attached to its customs, essentially religious, and extremely touchy and oversensitive to any measure which may appear to violate their conscience'. The UN, he noted, should be informed that the best means of achieving full rights for Muslim women would be through the education of Algerian girls, 'that is when the Muslim milieu does not itself oppose its doubts', a long-term evolution that the administration would need to approach with 'prudence'. The Governor was thus able to relegate political change to some distant and indeterminate future, while concealing the fact that the colonial regime carried prime responsibility for preventing access of Muslim girls to state education.

Lastly, Léonard quickly skimmed over the most crucial political issue in all this, that of settler opposition to enfranchisement of women. Even the tiniest concession, he admitted, 'will be disliked by the European element of the population, hostile to any numerical increase in the first college'. Since the 1930s settlers had been deeply worried by the rapidly growing birth rate of the Muslim population and by the prospect of Algerians virtually swamping the European minority.¹⁴² It had proved difficult enough to gerrymander the electoral system so as to contain the voting power of Algerian men, without engaging in the folly of granting the vote to women which would double the Muslim electorate from 1,900,300 to 3,800,600. By mid-1957 the Algiers administration estimated that a female franchise would reduce the European proportion of the electorate from 25 per cent to 14.5 per cent, and that such a change would radically alter the electoral balance of power, would lead to the European loss of control of all urban municipalities, with the possible exception of Oran and Algiers, and result in 'such an abrupt loss of influence for the Europeans that a sharp reaction is to be feared on their part'.¹⁴³ The administration in 1957 was secretly examining various ways to restrict women's access to the vote, through requirements of literacy, age and marital status, or by the argument

that Muslim women were unsuited to exercise such a right because they were illiterate, would be forced to vote according to the interests of male family members, or because of the veil, which would prevent identification at polling stations. The idea of registering only those women who requested it might backfire since nationalist women might do so, while 'moderate women would fear a collision with tradition'.¹⁴⁴ It was on similar grounds that Léonard had opposed the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women,¹⁴⁵ and when Lefaucheu eventually signed the protocol on behalf of France on 31 March 1953, this was not a ratification, and a get-out clause was added: 'The French government, given the customs and religious traditions in existence in its territories, reserves the right to suspend the execution of the present Convention in relation to women residing in these territories'.¹⁴⁶ French diplomats were thus able to present themselves to international opinion as keen supporters of the Convention, but would have to wait on conservative Algerian public opinion and their Assembly to change before progress could be made.

In conclusion to this chapter, it can be noted that the decade from 1944 to 1954 witnessed the first significant political organisation of and by Algerian women. This movement, after a peak in 1948–49, began to lose impetus during the early 1950s. This reflected in part the decline of the post-Liberation women's movement in metropolitan France, to which the Algerian movement was closely linked, particularly with the advent of the Cold War and the exclusion of the PCF from government.¹⁴⁷ The Algerian nationalist movement also entered a phase of deepening crisis after 1949, a process of internal fission that paralysed the PPA until a final split between the Messalists and the new FLN in late 1954. Because of the major electoral advances made by the MTLN in November 1946, as well as the constitution of a clandestine terrorist network, the *Organisation spéciale*, the French government appointed two successive hard-line General Governors, Marcel-Edmond Naegelen and Roger Léonard, who engaged in a ferocious repression of the nationalists. The fledgling women's movement fell victim to this harsh phase of repression and the decline in attendance at meetings of the two principle associations (UFA, AFMA) provides a barometer of the overall crisis in the nationalist movement. By early 1953 attendance at UFA meetings had declined from gatherings of several hundred to meetings of ten to forty,¹⁴⁸ while the PPA militant Isa Benzekri, after returning in 1951 from a year's absence in a French sanatorium, found 'the Association [AFMA] had practically ceased to exist, it had suffered from the repercussions of the divisions in the heart of the PPA/MTLN'.¹⁴⁹

The women's organisations, even at their peak, only attracted a tiny percentage of Algerian women, mostly educated women in the main towns. Estimates of the communist UFA that it had at its peak between 15,000 and 20,000 female supporters appear to be inflated while the all-Muslim AFMA, lacking the elaborate organisational base of the PCA, was even smaller with a peak membership of several hundred women.¹⁵⁰ However, although the Algiers government had no difficulty in keeping the fragile women's movement under close police surveillance and restricting its activities, this phase of militancy undoubtedly helped to politicise a whole generation of young women who were to form the core of FLN militants during the War of Independence.¹⁵¹

But the history of this immediate post-war mobilisation is most interesting for what it tells us about the emergence of deep underlying tensions internal to the women's movement, ideological oppositions that prefigure the profound contradictions that were to bedevil Algerian nationalism throughout the War of Independence, and on into the post-colonial age. While Algerian women showed remarkable resilience in mobilising and finding cultural and political expression within the constraints of a patriarchal society, at the same time we can see the inner tensions emerging between the minority who were drawn to a more secular, 'western' and 'Kemalist' agenda of liberation, and those who accepted the *Ulema*/Messalist formulation of a nationalist struggle that embedded women in the subordinate gender position of mothers and guardians of the home. The FLN essentially inherited the latter position from the PPA, and was able to exert its ideological hegemony over the 'westernising' trend when it forced both the PCA and the liberal reformists (UDMA) to dissolve and join its own organisation during 1956–57. At the same time the colonial regime moved in the opposite direction. While during 1944–54 it had bitterly resisted any form of female franchise or emancipation of women, it now engaged in a 'U-turn' and moved to recuperate precisely the most radical and secularist trend that had been voiced by young women nationalists in their attack on the 'dual imperialism' of retrograde colonialism and reactionary Islamist patriarchy. During 1944–54 women who shared these two positions, which cut across the communist UFA, secularist JUDMA and Messalist AFMA in complex ways, could still engage in open dialogue, but with the coming of war the opposing visions became radically split and fixed by association with either French power (western female liberation) or Algerian national authenticity. In the process the Algerian women's movement was diverted into a suffocating cul-de-sac for the next quarter of a century.

Notes

- 1 The General Government (*Gouvernement générale*), the central colonial administration, employed some 2,000 civil servants located in a vast building in Algiers. Before the balconies of the façade was situated the ceremonial square, the Forum, on which the unveiling parades of May 1958 took place.
- 2 Space does not allow a detailed treatment of the complex history of Algerian society. There exists a large literature on the subject: for the English reader the following provide an overview: Mahfoud Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830–1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria. The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present* (London: Hurst, 1991); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962); Benjamin Stora, 'Introduction' to *Algeria 1830–2000. A Short History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); and MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants*, chapters 1, 10.
- 3 Louis Chevalier, *Le Problème Démographique Nord-Africain*, Institut National d'Études Démographiques, Travaux et Documents, Cahier No. 6 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947).
- 4 J. H. Meulemen, *Le Constantinois entre les deux guerres mondiales. L'évolution économique et sociale de la population rurale* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985), 184.
- 5 Daniel Lefeuve, *Chère Algérie. La France et sa colonie, 1930–1962* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005).
- 6 R. Descloitres *et al.*, *L'Algérie des bidonvilles. Le Tiers monde dans la cité* (Paris: Mouton, 1961).
- 7 Maurice Borrmans, *Statut personnel et famille au Maghreb de 1940 à nos jours* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), 459.
- 8 Caroline Brac de la Perrière, *Derrière les Héros.. Les Employées de maison musulmanes en service chez les Européens à Alger pendant la guerre d'Algérie, 1954–1962* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987), 25–47.
- 9 Stora, *A Short History*, 24. However, the average statistics conceal considerable geographical variations: some 26.5 per cent of girls were in primary education in Algiers, but in rural areas this could fall to 2 per cent or less; see Borrmans, *Statut personnel*, 460–1. Mahfoud Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme Algérien. Question nationale et politique Algérienne, 1919–1951* (Algiers: Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion, 1981), 743, estimates that in 1948 some 6.57 per cent of all Algerian children (aged six to fourteen years) were in primary education.
- 10 Borrmans, *Statut personnel*, 462; see also Kamel Kateb, *École, population et société en Algérie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 26–35: three times more was spent on the education of each European child than on one Algerian.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 462.

- 12 Willy Jansen, *Women Without Men: Gender and Marginality in an Algerian Town* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987); Dahbia Abrous, *L'Honneur face au travail des femmes en Algérie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989).
- 13 The rich proliferation of international conferences in which Muslim women were involved in the inter-war period is under-studied, but some details, including the Congress of Eastern or Oriental Women (*Congrès musulman général des femmes d'Orient*), can be found in Fleischmann, 'The Other "Awakening"', 113, 117; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 138–9, 144, 272–5; Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Authority and Agency', in Atabaki (ed.), *The State*, 171–3; Charlotte Weber, 'Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911–1950', *Feminist Studies*, 27: 1 (Spring 2001), 125–57; Borrmans, *Statut personnel*, 88–92.
- 14 Odile Moreau, 'Echoes of National Liberation: Turkey Viewed from the Maghrib in the 1920s', *Journal of North African Studies*, 8: 1 (Spring 2003), 59–71; and especially James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 15 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, Vol. 1, 37–42, 286–8.
- 16 For the background on female European writing or perceptions of Algerian women see, Benjamin Stora, 'Women's Writing Between Two Algerian Wars', *Research in African Literature*, 30: 3 (Fall 1999), 78–94; Lazreg, *Eloquence*, 20–97; Peter R. Knauss, *The Persistence of Patriarchy. Class, Gender, and Ideology in Twentieth Century Algeria* (New York: Praeger, 1987), chapter 4; Jeanne Bowlan, 'Civilizing Gender Relations in Algeria: The Paradoxical Case of Marie Bugéja, 1919–39', in Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 175–92. For inter-war ethnography see Mathéa Gaudry, *La Femme Chaouia de l'Aurès* (Algiers: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929; re-edited Algiers, Chihab-AWAL, 1998); Thérèse Rivière, *Aurès-Algérie, 1935–1936. Photographies de Thérèse Rivière, suivie de Fanny Colonna 'Elle à passé tant d'heures. . .'* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1987); Nancy Wood, *Germaine Tillion, une femme-mémoire. D'une Algérie à l'autre* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2003), chapter 1.
- 17 Hubertine Auclert, who lived in Algeria from 1888 to 1892, published *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Littéraires) in 1900: see Julia Clancy-Smith, 'Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830–1962', 167–72, in Clancy-Smith and Gouda (eds), *Domesticating the Empire*, 167–72.
- 18 Sara L. Kimble, 'Emancipation Through Secularization: French Feminist Views of Muslim Women's Condition in Inter-war Algeria', *French Colonial History*, 7 (2006), 109–28.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 123–4. At a UFSF conference held in Constantine in 1932, one rare Muslim delegate, Sehir Hacène, condemned the European women present for ascribing the suffering of Algerian women to Islam, rather than to social deprivation.

- 20 The key oral sources have been recorded by Djamila Amrane/Danièle Minne (see bibliography), and by Andrée Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie dans la guerre de libération* (Paris: Karthala, 1995). A particularly rich source are the police intelligence reports, based in part on the evidence of informers, contained in CAOM 10CAB155.
- 21 The MTLD represented the electoral machine and facade for the more clandestine PPA.
- 22 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 142; Danièle Joly, *The French Communist Party and the Algerian War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).
- 23 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 139, a Muslim victory would inevitably, 'reduce women and children to slavery'.
- 24 On the process of 'arabisation' see Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry (eds), *Le Mouvement national Algérien. Textes, 1912–1954* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1978), 54–60, 85; Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 321–7, 576.
- 25 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 746–7.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 656–9.
- 27 The PCA had established an earlier women's organisation in April 1937, the *Union franco-musulmane des femmes d'Algérie*, with the aim of establishing 'a rapprochement between European and Algerian women', but the initial membership of well-off women was only thirty-six: see Fatima Zohra Saï, *Mouvement national et question féminine. Des origines à la veille de la guerre de libération nationale* (Oran: Éditions Dar El Gharb, 2002), 66.
- 28 Diane Sambron, 'La Politique d'émancipation du gouvernement français à l'égard des femmes musulmanes pendant la guerre d'Algérie', Doctoral thesis, Paris IV, October 2005, 315: the Communist deputies Sportisse, Djemeed, Mokhtari and Fayet placed a bill before the National Assembly as early as 13 March 1947 with a clause, 'All Algerian men and women, without distinction of origins, race, language or religion enjoy full democratic liberties', later amended in August to include specifically the 'right to vote'.
- 29 CAOM 10CAB155: report of police commissioner; this European dominance is confirmed by its Muslim General Secretary Baya Allaouchiche, in her recent book under her married name, Baya Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 94, 97.
- 30 On the proletarianisation of day-labourers in the wine-producing area of Oran see Michel Launay, *Paysans algériens. La Terre, la vigne, et les hommes* (Paris: Seuil, 1963).
- 31 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 181–4; Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie*, 36–9, 167–70, 179–84., Saï, *Mouvement national*, 71, notes among the leading urban militants Gaby Gimenez, Joséphine Carmona, Mme Espasa and the Laribère sisters.
- 32 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 182–3.
- 33 For a vivid account of rural activism see Jacqueline Guerroudj, *Des douars et des prisons* (Algiers: Bouchène, 1995), 12–15.

- 34 On the system of female segregation in Algeria, as for the Maghreb and Middle East in general, there is an extensive literature, but see in particular the ethnographic work of Camille Lacoste-Dujardin, *Des mères contre les femmes. Maternité et patriarcat au Maghreb* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996).
- 35 Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie*, 30.
- 36 CAOM 10CAB155.
- 37 See Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie*, 31.
- 38 CAOM 10CAB155, report of *Renseignements généraux* (RG), 25 May 1949.
- 39 CAOM 10CAB155. Mme Mandouze's husband was Professor André Mandouze, a leading anti-colonial academic.
- 40 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 696, lists numerous riots across Algeria involving thousands of women, including by 2,000 women in Oran who on 6 March 1945 besieged the Governor General shouting 'bread, bread'.
- 41 Saï, *Mouvement national*, 68; both candidates held French citizenship.
- 42 Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie*, 33.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 33–4; Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 42; Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 859–60, notes this action concerned the transfer of forty-seven prisoners of the clandestine *Organisation spéciale* (OS) after their trial in Oran; Baya Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 105–7 also notes the extreme militancy of Muslim women, and gives a figure of 8,000 involved in an Oran march on international women's day, 8 March 1952.
- 44 Saï, *Mouvement national*, 68; Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie*, 31; Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 41. These figures appear to be inflated and are identical to those given by Mohammed Harbi, *L'Algérie et son destin. Croyants ou citoyens?* (Paris: Arcantère, 1992), 92, for the entire PPA. Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 105, indicates a membership of 15–16,000 after 1951. It is of interest to note that of the 480 new members who joined during January 1945 alone, 180 (38 per cent) were Muslim.
- 45 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 756.
- 46 Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 101–2, notes links between the two organisations.
- 47 10CAB155, RG report, 1 September 1947.
- 48 Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 102–3.
- 49 Tensions between European ex-Communists and Algerian nationalist women may have surfaced later when they were forced to share prison space: see Meynier, *Histoire intérieure*, 183, note 155.
- 50 Jurquet-Bouhoune, *Femmes algériennes*, 104.
- 51 On the 'liberal' current in the nationalist movement see William B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954–1968* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), 25–42.
- 52 *La Défense*, 3 May 1935; in February 1936 Abbas published his notorious

- article claiming that there was no such thing as an Algerian nation: see Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 375, 421–2.
- 53 On the Manifesto see Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 641–7.
- 54 On these Egyptian feminists see Badran, *Feminists*; Lazreg, *Eloquence*, 92–4, is critical of the Egyptian feminist Huda Sha‘rawi for giving advice in 1951 that failed to recognise the specific conditions facing Algerian women, but Sha‘rawi had died in 1947.
- 55 See Badran, ‘Arab Feminism’ in *Feminists*, 223–50.
- 56 *La République algérienne*, 9 March 1951, Mostafa Bechir, ‘The Egyptian Feminist Union and the Role of the Woman in the Nation’. On the demonstrations, during which several women died, see Badran, *Feminists*, 74–8.
- 57 Such a position had been adopted by the First Congress of the UDMA at Sétif, 25–27 September 1947. ‘If our women do not become our equals, informed and educated, our society will remain amputated from half its body and remain backward from modern society’, quoted by Saï, *Mouvement national*, 32.
- 58 *La République algérienne*, 9 March 1951.
- 59 See, for example, *La République algérienne*, Supplement to No. 18, February 1954, with numerous photographs of Pakistani women; more generally for such modernist images see Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women. The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860–1950* (London: Quartet Books, 1988).
- 60 *La République algérienne*, 23 October 1953.
- 61 *Al Manar*, 24 July 1953.
- 62 *La République algérienne*, 30 October 1953.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 30 October 1953.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 30 October and 20 November 1953.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 30 October.
- 66 On these violent campaigns see Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 671, 674–5; CAOM 81F1218, police note dated 24 April 1954.
- 67 *La République algérienne*, 15 January 1954, ‘Young Muslims Respect Our Young Girls in the Street’, a letter signed ‘B. A of Constantine’; for an identical pattern in Iran, see Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 154–5.
- 68 See for example, *La République algérienne*, 12 March 1954, a letter signed ‘Omar M. A. of Montpellier’, which argued that the veil protects, ‘our family better than a whole arsenal of laws. A people is strong through the strength of the family. A civilisation dies most often through an overturning of morality; such disarray is a consequence of the indulgence of women, their ascendancy over men through turning them aside from their religious and political duties’. On the image of the ‘westoxicated’ woman in Iran, see Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 8, 138, 154, 239.
- 69 *La République algérienne*, 1 October 1954.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 6 November 1953, letter from Tlemcen,
- 71 *Ibid.*, 15 January 1954, letter from B. A of Constantine.

- 72 Najmabadi, 'Authority and Agency', 159–61, 175–6; and *Women with Mustaches*, 133, 136.
- 73 See CAOM 81F1218, report on the UDMA and female franchise, Ministry of the Interior, 18 December 1954.
- 74 Saï, *Mouvement national*, 33.
- 75 See for example a photograph of the UDMA section at Tiaret in *La République algérienne*, 16 March 1951.
- 76 *La République algérienne*, 7 December 1951, 'The Role of the Algerian Muslim Woman in the Anti-colonial Struggle'. M. Z., a JUDMA member, also saw the role of militant women as aiding and supporting 'their brothers, their spouses, their fathers', *ibid.*, 30 March 1951.
- 77 The classic study is Ali Merad, *Le Réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris/La Haye: Mouton et Co., 1967); but see also Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*; and McDougall, *History*.
- 78 See Fanny Colonna, 'Cultural Resistance and Religious Legitimacy in Colonial Algeria', *Economy and Society*, 3: 3 (August 1974), 233–52; Ernest Gellner, 'The Unknown Apollo of Biskra: The Social Base of Algerian Puritanism', a 1974 article reprinted as chapter 6, in his *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 149–73; Jean-Claud Vatin, 'Religious Resistance and State Power in Algeria', in Alexander S. Cudsi and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (eds), *Islam and Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 119–57.
- 79 Merad, *Le Réformisme*, 398–9.
- 80 McDougall, *History*, 110, borrowing a phrase from Jacques Berque.
- 81 Colonna, 'Cultural Resistance', 241–2.
- 82 On this strategy of nationalist ideology see the analysis of Partha Chatterjee, which is applicable to Algeria, in 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India', *American Ethnologist*, 16: 4 (November 1989), 622–33.
- 83 Gellner, 'Unknown Apollo', 167.
- 84 Benjamin Stora, *Messali Haj, Pionnier du Nationalisme Algérien (1898–1974)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986), 108–18, 137–8, 157–8.
- 85 Merad, *Le Réformisme*, 316–31.
- 86 John Damis, 'The Free-School Phenomenon: The Cases of Tunisia and Algeria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5: 4 (September 1974), 434–49; Kateb, *École, population*, 43–6.
- 87 Kateb, *École, population*, 44–5; Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 337; Saï, *Mouvement national*, 17–18; Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 28–30.
- 88 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 221, 302, 358, 493.
- 89 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 26, 88. For the text of typical *nachids* see Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 963–4.
- 90 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 129.
- 91 Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 36.
- 92 CAOM 10CAB155, RG, 16 June 1948.

- 93 Merad, *Le Réformisme*, 328–30.
- 94 Colonna, ‘The Nation’s “Unknowing Others”’, 163–4 defines ‘a highly defined stratum, that minuscule, urban petite bourgeoisie, of middling education in Arabic or French but of relatively marked acculturation’, that furnished the cadres of PPA nationalism. Kateb, *École, population*, 45, notes that the school-leaving certificates of the *médersa* received no recognition from the French administration, which indicates the way in which this nationalist strata remained apart and un-integrated into the French clientele and ‘rewards’ system. The social roots of Moroccan nationalism were almost identical, and from the 1920s women of the urban bourgeoisie inspired by reformism organised a ‘free school’ movement which educated many women who later became nationalist militants in the *Istiqlal*: see Alison Baker, *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 21–2, 47–54, 93–114.
- 95 McDougall, *History*, 112.
- 96 Tawfik al-Madani (1899–1983) illustrates clearly the continuities and links between the AUMA and the independence movement: an important nationalist historian and ideologue, he became general secretary to the AUMA in 1952, and later rallied to the FLN in 1955–56, for which he became an external emissary in Cairo and Minister of Cultural Affairs in the provisional government (*Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne*, GPRA), September 1958: see McDougall, *History*; Benjamin Stora, *Dictionnaire biographique de militants nationalistes algériens (1926–1954)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1985), 348; Meynier, *Histoire intérieure*, 53, 189–91, 248.
- 97 CAOM 81F1218, note of 24 November 1948.
- 98 CAOM 81F128, Ministry of Interior, 18 December 1954; report of 19 May 1953.
- 99 CAOM 81F1218, Ministry of Interior, 18 December 1954.
- 100 CAOM 81F1218, a report of the Ministry of the Interior, 18 December 1954, notes that the MTLN, ‘has never defined its doctrine on the political evolution of Muslim women’.
- 101 Thousands of inter-war Algerian migrants co-habited with or married European women: see Neil MacMaster, ‘Sexual and Racial Boundaries: Colonialism and Franco-Algerian Inter-marriage (1880–1962)’, in Maire Cross and Sheila Perry (eds), *France: Population and Peoples* (London: Pinter, 1997), 92–108. It is possible that European partners (including Messali Hadj’s wife, Emilie Busquant) had more influence in ‘modernising’ male attitudes to women than did distant wives in Algeria.
- 102 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 469, 534; Collot and Henry (eds), *Textes*, 83.
- 103 See especially Carlier, *Entre nation et jihad*.
- 104 Saï, *Mouvement national*, 40–1, quoting from the PPA journal *L’Algérie libre*.

- 105 This book, published in Lausanne in 1961, was probably by Rabah Bouaziz and his wife: communication from Gilbert Meynier.
- 106 *L'Algérie libre*, 18 August 1949, quoted in Saï, *Mouvement national*, 42; see also Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 32–3.
- 107 CAOM 10CAB155.
- 108 Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 34.
- 109 Collot and Henry (eds), *Textes*, 328.
- 110 *El Ouma*, March 1939, quoted in Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 504, 938.
- 111 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 337, 512–13, 536–7.
- 112 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 21–2.
- 113 CAOM 81F1218., police note, 24 April 1954.
- 114 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 112.
- 115 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 116 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 117 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 118 In the peasant village (*douar*) the regulation of ‘political’ life, of law and custom, was undertaken by the collective decision of a council of the male elders, the *djemâa*.
- 119 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 144.
- 120 *Ibid.*, 147; Louise Ighilahriz, *Algérienne* (Paris: Fayard/Calmann-Lévy, 2001), 45–6.
- 121 In December 1936 parliamentarians for the Department of Oran declared that French and Algerians could not exercise equal electoral rights to the same assemblies, ‘when there are on the one hand those completely subject to French civil law and on the other those who can preserve a religious status contrary to those same laws and which notably permits polygamy, the pure and simple repudiation of women, and for the most part denies inheritance to girls’: quoted in Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 413.
- 122 Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 239: see *ibid.* 887, between 1865 and 1916 only 1,725 Algerians were naturalised (a rate of thirty-five per year); on the *Ulema* view of individual naturalisation as an act of apostasy, see 100, 336, 460, 587–8; Laure Blévis, ‘La Citoyenneté française au miroir de la colonisation: étude des demandes de naturalisation des “sujets français” en Algérie coloniale’, *Genèses: Sciences sociales et histoire*, 53 (December 2003), 25–47.
- 123 See Clancy-Smith, ‘Islam, Gender’, 169–70. The instrumental nature of Islamic marriage law as a political barrier was highlighted by the fact that in other French colonial regimes, notably Senegal, citizenship was granted to natives who retained their personal status.
- 124 On the debates that concluded in the voting of an inegalitarian dual chamber see Abderrahmane Farès, *La Cruelle Vérité* (Paris: Plon, 1982), 32–43.
- 125 Collot, *Les Institutions*, 220–2.

- 126 Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, 150–3; the crude nature of electoral fraud is reflected in voting figures, at Ain Témouchent on 25 March 1949, 10,166 Algerians voted for the administrative candidate, nil for the UDMA candidate: see Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme*, 847.
- 127 SHAT 1H246/1*, report of P. Marmey, *Le Droit de vote de la femme musulmane*, Centre de Haute Études d'Administration Musulmane, 16 January 1958.
- 128 René Justrabo's wife was president of the Sidi-Bel-Abbès section of the UFA.
- 129 CAOM 10CAB155, RG report, 22 October 1948.
- 130 CAOM 81F1218; CAOM 10CAB22, letter of R. Léonard to the Minister of the Interior, 12 March 1952; Sambron, 'La Politique' (Doctoral thesis), 320–7.
- 131 Claire Duchen, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France, 1944–1968* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), 34–47, 55. Lefauchaux was a leading member of the Resistance, and later served as president of the *Conseil national des femmes français* and of the *International Council of Women* (1957–63).
- 132 *Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women*, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/CSW/CSW60YRS/cswbriefhistory.pdf (accessed 14 March 2006).
- 133 Devaki Jain, *Women, Development, and the UN. A Sixty-Year Old Quest for Equality and Justice* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), 23–4.
- 134 CAOM 10CAB22. R. Léonard to Minister of the Interior, 12 March 1952.
- 135 CAOM 81F1218, Lefauchaux to de Lacharrière, 4 January 1955.
- 136 *Ibid.*
- 137 See Connelly, *Diplomatic Revolution*.
- 138 Lefauchaux was a close childhood friend of the Schumann family.
- 139 CAOM 81F1218, Chataigneau dispatch to Robert Schumann, 26 July 1951. The USSR, unlike France, went on to ratify the Convention.
- 140 The question of Léonard and the women's vote is discussed briefly by Diane Sambron, 'La Politique d'émancipation du gouvernement français à l'égard des femmes algériennes pendant la guerre d'Algérie', in Jean-Charles Jauffret (ed.), *Des hommes et des femmes en guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2003), 231–2; and in more detail by Ryme Seferdjeli, 'French "Reforms" and Muslim Women's Emancipation During the Algerian War', *Journal of North African Studies*, 9: 4 (Winter 2004), 21–5.
- 141 CAOM 10CAB22, Léonard to Minister of the Interior, 12 March 1952.
- 142 Lefevre, *Chère Algérie*, 73–5, on the 'fear of being submerged'.
- 143 CAOM 81F1218, 'Note sur le vote des femmes en Algérie' (n.d. 1957).
- 144 CAOM 81F1218, 'La condition de la femme musulmane en Algérie. Aspect politique', July 1957; SHAT 1H246/1*, report of P. Marmey, *Le*

- Droit de vote de la femme musulmane algérien*, Centre de Haute Études d'Administration Musulmane, 16 January 1958.
- 145 CAOM 81F1218. Léonard to the Minister of the Interior, 31 March 1953: 'In the actual state of her evolution, the Muslim woman has no opportunity to exercise freely and with dignity the right to vote conferred on her'.
- 146 CAOM 81F1218.
- 147 Duchon, *Women's Rights*, 57–9.
- 148 CAOM 10CAB155, RG reports.
- 149 Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes*, 27.
- 150 Evidence of the AFMA president, Mamia Chentouf, in Amrane, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 37.
- 151 Djamila Amrane's astonishing finding, *Les Femmes algériennes*, 11, 43, that only six of the 10,949 women officially registered by the Algerian government as former *moudjahidates* had any political involvement in the pre-war communist or nationalist movements, seems puzzling and may indicate a massive under-registration or refusal of an older generation of female militants to seek any form of recognition from post-independence governments.