

A Jewish Riot against Muslims: The Polemics of History in Late Colonial Algeria

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THE “GRAVES INCIDENTS” IN ORAN: ROSH HASHANAH, 1961

Newspaper reports provide a detailed account of the events that took place over Rosh Hashanah, 1961.¹ On 11 September, the first day of the two-day holiday, a Jewish barber named Henri Choukroun was taking a walk through the Jewish quarter of Oran. The second largest city in Algeria, Oran lies on the Mediterranean coast, about 350 kilometers southwest of Algiers, and it was then home to about thirty thousand Jews, about 7.5 percent of the city’s population. Like the colons, who were mostly descendants of French and Spanish settlers, Oran’s Jews were French citizens. Unlike colons, Jews were descendants of inhabitants of Algeria at the time of the conquest.² As he strolled, Choukroun held his nine-month-old infant in one arm and with the other held the hand of his four-year-old daughter. Around eleven o’clock in the morning, as he was walking down *rue de Léoben*, a narrow street in the Jewish quarter, a man approached him from behind and stabbed him. The assailant may have been acting on reports that Choukroun was a “colonialist,” an accusation later published in *El Moudjahid*, the Tunis-based mouthpiece of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN).³

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¹ This account is drawn from both North African and French papers: *L’Echo d’Oran*, 12 and 13 Sept. 1961; *Le Monde*, 12 and 13 Sept. 1961; *El Moudjahid*, 1 Oct. 1961; *Le Figaro*, 13 Sept. 1961; *Information juive*, Aug.–Sept. 1961; and the *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1961.

² On the settler population and anti-Semitism, see Michel Abitbol, *Juifs d’Afrique du Nord sous Vichy* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2008), esp. 21–50; Lizabeth Zack, “French and Algerian Identity Formation in 1890s Algeria,” *French Colonial History* 2 (2002): 115–43; Geneviève Dermenjian, *La Crise anti-juive oranaise, 1895–1905* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 1986); Samuel Kalman, *French Colonial Fascism: The Extreme Right in Algeria, 1919–1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

³ Some blame the OAS for Choukroun’s murder. See Henri Chemouilli, *Une Diaspora Mécon nue: les Juifs d’Algérie* (Paris, 1976), 390, cited in Maud Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 55.

Tensions between Jews and Muslims in Oran were already high. Reasons stemmed from their unequal statuses in late colonial society, events in the Middle East, and most immediately, their contrasting experiences of the violence around them, later to be known as the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962). Muslims, as a group, were suffering the worst of it: between French military operations, FLN reprisals and purges, and the collateral effects of France's forcible transfer of 1.8 million Muslim civilians to the *camps de regroupement*, the war had already claimed hundreds of thousands of Muslim lives.⁴ Meanwhile, the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS), a new, right-wing paramilitary group devoted to preserving French rule in Algeria, had spread fear with their own deadly attacks.⁵ Violence disproportionately victimizing Muslims had also spread to France.⁶ In the press, however, it was FLN terrorism against “Europeans” that dominated headlines and, by extension, French anxieties.⁷ While not necessarily targeted for their religion, several hundred Jews had fallen victim by the time of the attack on Choukron. Half a year before the Evian accords ended colonial rule in Algeria, many of Oran's Jews shared with their European neighbors both a relatively privileged position and a deep anxiety about their fate at the dusk of Algérie Française.⁸

⁴ Estimates vary greatly and are subject to dispute. See Alistaire Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–62* (New York: Viking, 1977), 538.

⁵ Most OAS attacks targeted Muslims, but leftist Jews were also victimized. Anne-Marie Duranton-Crabol, *Le Temps de l'OAS* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1995); Olivier Dard, *Voyage au Coeur de l'OAS* (Paris: Editions Perin, 2005); Jean-Pierre Rioux, “Des clandestins aux activistes (1945–1965),” in Michel Winock, ed., *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993), 215–42.

⁶ Struggles between the FLN and rival Mouvement Nationale Algérien (MNA) had killed thousands, while the Paris police massacres of Algerian immigrants were in the near future; up to two hundred Algerian demonstrators were killed on 17 October 1961, and the Charonne metro station killings took place the following February. For more on French police massacres, see Neil McMaster and Jim House, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Alain Dewerpe, *Charonne 8 Février 1962: Anthropologie historique d'un massacre d'État* (Paris: Folio histoire, 2006). On disputed memories of the October massacre, see Joshua Cole, “Remembering the Battle of Paris: 17 October 1961 in French and Algerian Memory,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21, 3 (2003): 21–50.

⁷ Non-Muslim casualties were on a different order of magnitude, with perhaps 2,800 deaths and another seven thousand injuries. This estimate includes non-Muslim victims of OAS attacks. French military casualties were higher, but French car accidents still claimed more lives (*ibid.*).

⁸ Relative privilege notwithstanding, many Algerian Jews were deeply marked by Vichy's legacy. On this, see Jessica Hammerman, *In the Heart of the Diaspora: Algerian Jews during the War of Independence, 1954–1962* (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2013), 66–106; and Henri Chemouilli, *Une Diaspora Méconnue: les Juifs d'Algérie* (Paris: Imprimerie Moderne de la Presse, 1976), 130. Jacques Derrida has also discussed his deeply disrupting experience of being expelled from school under Vichy in, among other works, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Hélène Cixous has also discussed the contradictions of Jewish “belonging” in Algeria; see Hélène Cixous and Mireille Caille-Gruber, *Hélène Cixous: Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

This anxiety contributed to two days of Jewish-Muslim violence in Oran following the stabbing of Choukroun. Immediately after the attack, a group of Jews chased the perpetrator into a nearby Muslim-owned store and attacked him, then sacked the entire store. Angry groups of Jews soon formed and began grabbing and beating Muslims passing through the neighborhood and pillaging and torching Muslim-owned stores there. Shortly after noon, as a band of young Muslim men armed with wooden batons, iron pipes, and knives prepared to mount a response in Place Maréchal Foch, which faced Oran's Hôtel de Ville on the edge of the Jewish quarter, they were attacked by a large crowd.

The police moved into the area and tried to restore order, but shots were soon heard and a young Muslim man fell dead in the Cercle militaire near the Hôtel de Ville. According to one report, the police shot him after he had fired at them. Perhaps in response, a group ran down rue de Gènes and sacked two Jewish-owned shops. When a police truck carrying six detainees, presumably including Choukroun's attacker, tried to navigate out of the area, a tempestuous crowd blocked its way. Described in reports as Jewish, they chanted "Algérie Française," a phrase associated by now with the OAS, and "*A mort!*" until dispersed by police.

Muslim-Jewish violence resumed the next morning. After the Jewish-owned Pharmacie Benhaim was stoned, Jews again set upon Muslims and Muslim-owned property. Four more stores were burnt to the ground, including a shoe store and grocery, and a fifth was sacked. Bands of Jews and Muslims brawled in front of the St-André Church, while Muslims dug in behind a makeshift barricade against the police on rue Wagram. As the police charged the barricade shooting tear gas canisters, Jewish rioters stabbed a Muslim man to death and another was shot soon after. Around 10:30 a.m., police acted to disperse a crowd of some two thousand Jews marching through the neighborhood chanting "Algérie Française!" Muslims reportedly replied with calls of "Algérie musulmane!" Riot police set upon Muslim demonstrators with more tear gas grenades while crowd members ineffectually lobbed homemade explosives at them. By the time calm was restored, Choukroun and three Muslims had lost their lives, ten Muslims, fifteen "Europeans" (presumably mainly Jews), and five policemen and soldiers had been injured, and over a hundred people were under arrest.

Jews were never a primary focus of FLN attacks, but as noted, by the time Choukroun was killed most felt a dim future awaited them in independent Algeria. As early as May of 1956, a grenade exploded in a café near the Jewish quarter of Constantine killing several people, mainly Muslims.⁹ The

⁹ There is a historical debate about this attack. In addition to the number of casualties, the role of French police repression, the extent to which Jews attacked Muslims, and the involvement of Israeli agents are all at issue. I thank Joshua Cole for pointing this out to me. See Gilbert Meynier, "Mise au

following March, Grand Rabbi of Medea Jacob Chekroun was killed at the entrance of a synagogue. By the late 1950s, many Jews in Constantine's Jewish quarter, in the old city, worried for their safety, were moving to the European neighborhoods, to other cities, or even to France.¹⁰ Local Jews were aware of events in neighboring, newly decolonized Morocco and Tunisia. While both governments publicly declared that their Jews were full members of the nation, significant tensions had accompanied independence, including public associations of Jews with Israel, riots, and Jewish emigration.¹¹ A particularly unsettling event for Algerian Jews was the sacking of the Algiers synagogue in December of 1960 during FLN demonstrations. That the vandalism included painted swastikas and messages of "death to the Jews" added to many Jews' increasing conviction that their future in Algeria depended on the French remaining.¹² Another shock came on 22 June 1961 with the murder in Constantine's Jewish quarter of Raymond Leiris ("Cheik Raymond"), renowned *oud* player, admired Jewish artist in the Andalusian musical tradition, and representative of Arab-Jewish culture. Choukroun's killing, in other words, was not seen to be isolated.

NARRATIVES OF SHARED HISTORY—IN RESPONSE TO A GROWING RIFT

If the riots themselves were not a definitive "turning point," responses to them demonstrate how France's colonial hierarchy, coupled with the rise of ethno-nationalisms throughout the region (notably Zionism and Arab nationalisms), created Manichean choices that eclipsed Muslims' and Jews' vast and enduring array of opinions, relations, and attachments.¹³ Particularly interesting about

point factuelle sur les événements de Constantine 12 mai 1956, et jours suivants," posted on *Etudes coloniales: revue en ligne*, 17 Mar. 2007, <http://etudescoloniales.canalblog.com/archives/2007/03/14/4319574.html> (accessed 7 Aug. 2015).

¹⁰ For more on anti-Jewish violence, including the story of his own family's struggles in Constantine, see Benjamin Stora, *Les Trois exils des Juifs d'Algérie* (Paris: Stock, 2006).

¹¹ For example, Habib Bourguiba's demand in July 1961 that France evacuate the Tunisian naval base at Bizerte led to fighting and anti-Semitic violence. Egyptian president Gamal 'abd al-Nasser's 1961 visit to Morocco also accompanied attacks on Jews. See Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Muslims and Jews from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 207, 221.

¹² Katz, *Burdens*, 177; Archives de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, *Appel aux électeurs israélites*. Of course, Algerian Jews were aware of violence against Jews in Tunisia, Morocco, and other decolonizing Arab countries. In addition to Katz, above, see Mandel, *Muslims and Jews*, 44–45, Orit Bashkin, *The New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), esp. 100–40, 183–228; Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 60–89.

¹³ Like Muslims, Jews held wildly divergent perspectives, from the OAS to the FLN. See Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Doris Bensimon, *Juifs d'Algérie hier et aujourd'hui: Mémoires et identités* (Toulouse: Bibliothèque historique Privat, 1989), 215. On Jews who supported independence, see Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015); Denis Guénoun, *A Semite: A Memoir of Algeria* (New York: Columbia

the responses to the violence is how frequently they invoked Algerian Muslims' and Jews' long, shared, and friendly history, often to advance conflicting polemics.

The value of looking at these historical recollections, even though they are always simplified and often simplistic, is in not only how they reveal ethnic and political cleavages taking shape, but how they tellingly obscured the deep historical roots of the violence. Here I will not attempt to use these responses to track or evaluate Muslim-Jewish relations over time, identify the sins or strengths of one religious collectivity or another, or to determine when "the Jews" aligned with France. Rather, I foreground France's longstanding policy of cultivating, codifying, and ultimately reifying ethno-religious difference.¹⁴ This policy deeply shaped Muslim, Jewish, and European identities—including the meaning of "indigenous"—and rendered the meanings of such terms variable and historically contingent.¹⁵ Consequently, I set the scene in France's "taxonomic state," buttressed by influential intellectual and cultural non-state actors, which had created a wide range of mythologies, laws, and practices. These helped ensure that Europeans, Jews, Muslims, and to a lesser extent, "Kabyles," "Arabs," and other subcategories, had different and occasionally fluctuating levels of access to nationality, citizenship, and social

University Press, 2013); Daniel Timsit, *Algérie: récit anachronique* (Paris: Bouchène, 1998); Hammerman, Heart of the Diaspora, 149–87; On Jews who moved toward the OAS, see Sung Choi, "Complex Compatriots: Jews in Post-Vichy French Algeria," *Journal of North African Studies* 17, 5 (2012): 863–80; Mandel, *Muslims and Jews*, 55–56. On French Jews' opinions, see Philippe Boukara, "La Gauche juive en France et la Guerre d'Algérie," *Archives Juives* 29, 1 (1996): 72–79. "Manichean" is Ethan Katz's apt phrase (*Burdens of Brotherhood*, 157).

¹⁴ In metropolitan France, Muslims were also understood to be profoundly different from standard subjects; they were seen to possess an irrevocably religious character that required a set of physical practices that put it at odds with republican citizenship. See Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

¹⁵ On early colonial efforts to separate Jews from Muslims, see Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010). On creating the indigeneness of Saharan Jews, see Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Saharan Jewry and the End of French Algeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Other recent treatments of Algerian Jews' encounter with colonialism include Pierre Birnbaum, "French Jews and the 'Regeneration' of Algerian Jewry," in Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 88–103; Valérie Assan, *Les Consistoires israélites d'Algérie au XIXe siècle: l'alliance de la civilisation et de la religion* (Paris: Armand Colin/Recherches, 2012); Nathan Godley, "Almost Finished Frenchmen": The Jews of Algeria and the Question of French National Identity, 1830–1902 (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2006). On other mythologies that divided the colonized, see Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 267–92; Patricia Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 118–66; Marnia Lazreg, "The Reproduction of Colonial Ideology: The Case of the Kabyle Berbers," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5 (1983): 380–95; Benjamin Claude Brower, *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 222–38.

mobility.¹⁶ Such inequalities, which lasted to the end of French rule, constitute not only the deep roots of these riots, but also the rift that these historical narratives of fraternity simultaneously occluded and sought to bridge.¹⁷

Algeria's Jews, like Muslims, were descendants of either native subjects of the precolonial Algerian Regency or of emigrants from the Moroccan Sultanate.¹⁸ The French had initially categorized Jews and Muslims alike as "indigenous," specifically to distinguish them from European settlers. Illustrating the malleability of this concept, with the 1870 Crémieux Decree the French ruled that Algerian Jews were French citizens, though Muslims (and Jews of the M'zab) remained "indigenous."¹⁹ This remained the case until 1940 when Vichy abrogated the decree, returning Jews to their "indigenous" status. The decree was reinstated in 1943 and in the years that followed officials and the press often identified Algerian Jews as "Europeans," indicating not only their legal status, but for many, an increasing social mobility denied the vast majority of Muslims.²⁰ By the time of the Rosh Hashanah riots, Jews and Muslims, despite the great diversity in their opinions and their social, cultural, and linguistic ties, faced different situations and had different options.²¹

¹⁶ "Taxonomic state" is Anne Laura Stoler's term, usefully applied by Todd Shepard to French Algeria. See his *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 20; the citation is from Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 206–8. On the fluidity of the term "indigenous" in the early conquest, see Schreier, "The Creation of the 'Israélite indigène': Jewish Merchants in Early Colonial Oran," *Journal of North African Studies* 17, 5 (2012): 757–72.

¹⁷ Algerian Muslims were granted citizenship in 1958 but stripped of it in 1962. Jews maintained their citizenship. "Algerian 'Muslims' appeared as a 'nationality' or 'ethnicity' ... Algeria's Jews were discussed not as a group but as French individuals who each 'had a religion,' Judaism"; Todd Shepard, "Algerian Nationalism, Zionism, and French *Laïcité*: A History of Ethno-Religious Nationalisms and Decolonization," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (Aug. 2013): 445–67, 448.

¹⁸ In the nineteenth century, Oran's Jews often distinguished themselves according to whether their origins were in the cities near Oran, notably the towns of Mostaganem, Mascara, Tlemcen, and Nedroma, or towns and oases such as Oujda, Debdou, Figuig, and Tafilalet. See Richard Ayoun, "Problématique des conflits internes de la communauté juive—Simon Kanoui, Président du Consistoire Israélite d'Oran," *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1986): 75–82.

¹⁹ The Crémieux decree was reinstated in 1943. It should be noted that the French use of the term "indigenous" did not parallel the post-1390 (or 1492) Jewish historiographical distinction between *toshavim*, or natives, and *megorashim*, those who had been expelled from Spain or Portugal and their descendants. On the M'zabi (Saharan) Jews, see Stein, *Saharan Jewry*.

²⁰ For a helpful, brief history of French uses of citizenship to manage the population of Algeria, see Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, 19–54.

²¹ The phrasing is Shepard's (*ibid.*, 15). For the most textured history of the dynamics between Jews and Muslims in Algeria and France over the twentieth century, see Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, esp. 155–241. For a treatment focused on roots of conflict, see Mandel, *Muslims and Jews*, 35–58. For postcolonial evaluations, see Claire Eldridge, "Remembering the Other: Postcolonial Perspectives on Relationships between Jews and Muslims in French Algeria," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11 (2012): 1–19.

Nevertheless, the historical narratives of Muslim-Jewish relations that emerged at the time of the riots are revealing, and I make two primary arguments concerning their forms, uses, and legacy. First, both Algerian Jewish spokespeople and (Muslim) Algerian nationalists during this period recalled a common and largely harmonious Muslim-Jewish history in Algeria.²² While this was not an about-face, it was a bit of a departure: from the end of World War I to the 1930 centennial and beyond, most (but not all) Algerian Jewish writers “accentuated differences and obscured commonalities” with Muslims by emphasizing the “progress and patriotism” of Jews since the French conquest.²³ After the Constantine riots of 1934 aroused some insecurity about France’s protection, most Jewish spokespeople continued to highlight France’s “emancipation” of Jews from Islamic oppression, while emergent Muslim leaders sought to blame the riots on Jews’ complicity with colonialism.²⁴ The rise of a mass-based independence movement, and to a lesser extent, events in the Middle East, inspired changes in such historical narratives.²⁵ Furthermore, Algerian nationalists, despite the gulf between their goal of independence and Algerian Jews’ general (but far from unanimous) belief in French Algeria, often agreed with Jewish spokespeople about their shared history.

Jewish community spokespeople and Algerian nationalists, however, drew opposing conclusions from this putatively shared history. The

²² This essay only indirectly intervenes in the robust scholarship on how the Algerian War’s legacy has been “remembered” or “forgotten.” More directly, I build on work examining Muslim and Jewish recollections of their relationship and the colonial experience, *during the war itself*. On the former issue, see Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l’oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992); and *Le transfert d’une mémoire—de l’Algérie française au racisme anti-Arabe* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999). See also Martin Evans, *The Memory of Resistance: French Opposition to the Algerian War* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997). In a subsequent, edited volume scholars framed their interventions as an “end” to this “amnesia”: Mohammed Harbi and Benjamin Stora, eds., *La Guerre d’Algérie 1954–2004: la fin de l’amnésie* (Paris: Lafont, 2004). For the latter issue, see Ethan Katz, “Between Emancipation and Persecution, Algerian Jewish Memory in the *Longue Durée* (1930–1970),” *Journal of North African Studies* 17, 5 (2012): 793–820. Israel-Palestine, among other ongoing historical processes, continues to influence Muslim memories of Jews. For the Moroccan context, see Aomar Boum, *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

²³ Katz, “Between Emancipation and Persecution,” esp. 799.

²⁴ *Ibid.* These riots, appearing at moment of possible reform, may have been rooted in debates about Muslim inclusion. See Joshua Cole, “Antisémitisme et situation coloniale pendant l’entre-deux-guerres en Algérie: les émeutes antijuives de Constantine (août 1934),” *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d’Histoire* 108 (Oct.–Dec. 2010): 3–23. For more on these riots, see Charles-Robert Ageron, “Une émeute antijuive à Constantine (août 1934),” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 13, 1 (1973): 23–40; Yves-Claude Aouate, “Constantine 1934: un pogrom ‘classique,’” *Nouveaux Cahiers, Alliance israélite universelle* 68 (1982): 49–56; Richard Ayoun, “À propos du pogrom de Constantine (août 1934),” *Revue des études juives* 154, 1–3 (1985): 181–86; Robert Attal, *Les Émeutes de Constantine, 5 août 1934* (Paris: Romillat, 2002).

²⁵ As James McDougall explains, “The formulation of historical knowledge is an active production of meaning in which, at every new historical moment, a conception of the past is continually reconnected to the constantly vanishing present”; *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.

nationalists, echoing but rarely acknowledging France's long history of unequal treatment of Muslim and Jews, insisted that these common roots conferred on Jews a special (and onerous) responsibility to unequivocally and collectively side with the struggle for independence. In contrast, spokesmen for Algerian Jewry, who often tried to maintain what Benjamin Stora has called "impossible neutrality" in the face of a nationalist movement that increasingly spoke of Algeria as Muslim, used such narratives to attach value to their North African heritage and express sympathy for Muslim grievances, while simultaneously claiming to be French citizens like any other.²⁶ For many Jewish Algerians, a narrative of Muslim-Jewish harmony served to bolster Jewish *belongingness*—now threatened by Algerian nationalism, but previously threatened by Vichy and by older French arguments that to enfranchise "indigenous" Jews undermined the colonial order.²⁷ Given the diversity of Jewish opinions, varying levels of attachment to Algeria's Islamic and Arab-Berber milieu, and a strong sense of belonging, incidents of Jewish-Muslim violence presented Jewish spokespeople with a new and disturbing estrangement.²⁸ Deployments of Algerian Muslim-Jewish history during this period, whose simple opposition carried the history of the colonial state's divisive ethno-religious policies, served as tacit or explicit polemics about Jewish belonging in Arab-Berber North Africa at a moment when both Zionism and Algerian nationalism colluded to question that belonging.

²⁶ Recall that the FLN adopted the revolutionary slogan coined by Sheikh Abdelhamid ibn Badis, who founded the reformist *Association des Uléma Musulmans Algériens* in 1931: "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, and Algeria is my country." It later became the Algerian state's official motto. On Jewish "neutrality," see Benjamin Stora, "l'impossible neutralité des Juifs d'Algérie," in Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi, eds., *La guerre de l'Algérie, 1954–2004: la fin de l'ambesie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004). This idea is developed further in his *Les Trois exils*. When confronted with worry that France might treat Algerian Jews as a separate ethnic group (following Guy Mollet's 1960 suggestion to this effect), men like Jacques Lazarus vigorously insisted Jews be treated like other Frenchmen of Algeria. See Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, 169–82.

²⁷ Shortly after the Crémieux Decree was passed, Governor General Louis Henri de Gueydon argued that Jewish naturalization, by increasing the "indigenous element" in administration, would lead to the "French element" being overwhelmed. See Richard Ayoun, "Max Regis, un anti-juif au tournant du XXe siècle," in *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah: le monde juif* 173 (2001): 137–69. Many blamed the Crémieux Decree for the 1871 Kabyle revolt. See Richard Ayoun, "Le Décret Crémieux et l'insurrection de 1871 en Algérie," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 35 (Jan.–Mar. 1988): 11–87. On the Jews' attachment to republicanism in France and French Algeria, see Pierre Bimbaum, *Les Fous de la République: Histoire politique des juifs d'Etat, de Gambetta à Vichy* (Paris: Fayard, 1992); "French Jews and the "Regeneration" of Algerian Jewry," in Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Jews and the State: Dangerous Alliances and the Perils of Privilege* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 88–103; and "The Empire Abandoned," in *Antisemitism in France: A Political History from Léon Blum to the Present*, Miriam Kochan, trans. (London: Blackwell, 1992), 247ff.

²⁸ Stora, *Les Trois exils*. Ethan Katz provides the most in-depth account of relations during this period, in *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 155–42. For another account of the diversity of Jews' opinions, see Allouche-Benayoun and Bensimon, *Juifs d'Algérie*, 209–22. See also Eldridge, "Remembering the Other."

An ancillary point is that, outside of Algeria, Revisionist (right-wing) Zionist observers, and some more mainstream Zionists, did not embrace this account of a shared Jewish-Muslim history. Echoing older, “progress and patriotism” narratives that celebrated colonialism, French and Israeli Zionist voices continued to paint Algerian Jewish history in somber tones as having been characterized by oppression and violence.²⁹ Once again, this was particularly notable after the 1961 Oran riots. This portrayal papered over the fact that Jews were some of the most prominent merchants and property owners in pre-colonial Oran, and obscured Algerian Jews’ complicated and enduring history of identities, bonds, and intellectual worlds that bound them to Muslims, North Africa, and the Mediterranean world.³⁰ Zionism was hardly monolithic, and many Algerian Jewish spokesmen publicly supported it, even while they affirmed their republicanism, their support for Muslim calls for equality, opposition to colonial “racism,” and their memories of a harmonious Muslim-Jewish past.³¹ Nevertheless, many French and Israeli Zionists appraising the Algerian situation saw intercommunal violence such as the riots not as a disruptive new development, but rather as an understandable and even welcome reaction to centuries of oppression.

My second major argument is that responses to the riots illustrate how the Israel-Palestine conflict was, from an earlier time than is often recognized, poisoning relations between Jews and Muslims in Algeria, a development that is also palpable in the historical narratives about their relations.³² The FLN continued to issue statements insisting Jews were native “sons of the country” who had suffered from colonialism and that Jews would enjoy equality and protection in an independent Algeria, and called upon them to join the nationalist struggle, notwithstanding assassinations of Jews and the late-1960 sacking of the Algiers synagogue. Yet, responses to the riots suggest how the successes of Jewish nationalism, and especially knowledge of the atrocities against

²⁹ This was in keeping with older Orientalist renderings as well. Contextualized within scholarship on Jews under Islam, the question of Jews in Algeria has been subject to polemics. On the “myth and counter-myth” of Jewish life under Islam and Christianity since the nineteenth century, see Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52–76.

³⁰ Nineteenth-century Algerian rabbis often continued to reflect a wider, Mediterranean context than the legal boundaries imposed by France. See Jessica Marglin, “Mediterranean Modernity through Jewish Eyes: The Transimperial Life of Abraham Ankawa,” in *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture Society* 20, 2 (2014): 34–68.

³¹ Another example of relative privilege: Algerian Jews’ public Zionist sympathies were in accord with France’s pro-Israel policy. Algerian nationalists, meanwhile, were by definition disloyal.

³² In contrast, Maude Mandel sees the Palestine/Israel issue poisoning Muslim-Jewish relations (in France) mainly after 1967; *Muslims and Jews in France*, 45, 52–53. As for the FLN, Ethan Katz has written that “the question of Israel played a significant part in increasing hostility toward Jews” by the early 1960s (*Burdens of Brotherhood*, 206). Allouche-Benayoun and Simon reported, however, that Jewish spokesmen were already nervous that events in the Middle East could sour Muslim-Jewish relations in Algeria; *Juifs d’Algérie*, 215.

Palestinian Arabs, shaped Algerian nationalists' sense of where "The Jews," imagined as a collectivity endowed with an identifiable political personality (again echoing the French colonial heritage), fit into their anti-colonial struggle.³³ The rise of a powerful, self-proclaimed "Jewish state," wherein the very discourses and practices of citizenship and belonging were defined in opposition to Arabs, helped feed narratives, however simplistic, that suggested a global Jewish embrace of colonialism and thus that Algerian Jewish interests were opposed those of Algerian Muslims.³⁴ Paradoxically, by reifying ethno-religious groups and assigning them political characteristics, these Algerian, anti-colonial nationalist narratives were partly products of French colonial policies. Yet, by reducing Jews to a collectivity associated with Israel, such narratives also shared epistemological common ground with Zionism.³⁵

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF MUSLIM-JEWISH RELATIONS

Though the political deployment of Muslim-Jewish relations was far from a new phenomenon, the forms and purposes of historical narratives about them began to change after the Second World War, and most remarkably with the rise of Algerian nationalism. In the aftermath of Nazism and Vichy France, and older colonialist rhetoric that either denied Arab-Jewish commonality or friendship, or conversely deployed Jews' "Arabness" against them—both Algerian nationalists and Jewish communal leaders took an interest in unearthing a history of Muslim-Jewish cultural connection and camaraderie.³⁶ Many of those who spoke for and as Jews simultaneously emphasized their attachment to France, their support for Muslim rights, and Muslims' and Jews' shared culture and origins. This was most pronounced after the Vichy years when, by most accounts, many Muslim Algerians came to the aid of their Jewish

³³ Algerian nationalists debated Arabism's centrality to their agenda, especially given the significant population of Berberophones in Algeria. Nevertheless, links with Arabism were strong. As for the atrocities accompanying Israeli independence, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and "Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948," in Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37–59; Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (New York: Spiegel and Grau/Random House, 2013), 99–134.

³⁴ On citizenship discourses in Israel, see Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On how central institutions of the Zionist state were built in relation to Palestinians, see Gerson Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

³⁵ Some Algerian nationalists occasionally admitted to admiring the Zionist nationalist project. Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 181.

³⁶ This is not to say that the shadow of the 1934 riots vanished entirely after World War II. See Katz, "Between Emancipation and Persecution."

neighbors and friends.³⁷ A notable example of this trend is Raymond Benichou, the Oran-born Algerian-Jewish philosopher. He was an advocate of interfaith dialogue, member of the Union des croyants monothéistes, cofounder with the Sheikh Tayeb al-Okbi of the Association des ‘ulama musulmans algériens, and contributor to *Information juive*, the monthly publication of the Comité juif algérien d’études sociales (CJAES). In 1952, Benichou wrote an article emphasizing how Jews had been totally assimilated into their Islamic environment in the past, except for their religious practices.³⁸ The Algerian-born historian André Chouraqui, who otherwise painted a dim picture of precolonial Jewish life, nevertheless admitted in 1953, “Intense anti-Semitism has never existed in organized form among Moslems [*sic*] of Algeria,” and that Jews and Muslims were “closely linked in their daily life and united by a long, common past.”³⁹ Similarly, Rabbi René Kapel, writing on behalf of the World Jewish Congress, underscored that Muslims “refused to be incited against the Jews even during the French German armistice from 1940–1942.”⁴⁰ Many others also agreed that Muslims and Jews shared culture and a relatively peaceful history of interactions.

When the War of Independence began, this historical narrative became more common and included more references to Muslims’ and Jews’ shared victimization by colonialism.⁴¹ In August 1957, the *New York Times* interviewed several Algerian Jews about the conflict, and optimistically concluded, “Algerian Jews ... do not feel that the nationalist rebellion is aimed at them,” and that while Jews had been victims of terrorist attacks, they were “never a specific target.”⁴² One Jewish physician interviewed insisted, “There is a deep understanding between Moslems [*sic*] and Jews here ... we have both suffered as

³⁷ Katz relates some fascinating and telling episodes, from Algeria and from France, of the temporary “reversal” of racial fortunes during the Vichy period. Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 111–54.

³⁸ Raymond Benichou, “Les relations judéo-musulmanes en Algérie,” *Information juive* 32 (Apr. 1952).

³⁹ André Chouraqui, in *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 13 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, American Jewish Committee, 1953), 372. Chouraqui was a historian, lawyer, translator, politician, and poet. For his rather lachrymose conception (I borrow the term from a Jewish historiographic debate that Salo Baron initiated in the 1920s) of precolonial Jewish life, see André Chouraqui, *Les Juifs de l’Afrique du Nord* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952). Chouraqui settled in Israel in 1958. For Baron’s influential essay, see his “Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?” *Menorah Journal* 14 (June 1928): 515–26.

⁴⁰ “Rabbi Kapel Reports on Situation of Jews in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia,” American Jewish Archives, Series H7/1, cited in Sung Choi, “Complex Compatriots.” Kapel was a former French army captain, internment camp chaplain, and resistance fighter. He had escaped from German custody in 1944 with Jacques Lazarus, another former resister and then head of the CJAES. Background on Rabbi Kapel is from Susan Zuccotti, *The French, the Holocaust, and the Jews* (New York, Basic Books, 1993), 72–79, 202.

⁴¹ It should be noted, however, that Jews were well, if not disproportionately, represented in the anti-colonialist Algerian Communist Party from the 1930s. Attracting more “Arabs” had been a concern. See Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens*, esp. 57–66.

⁴² “Algerians Deny Discord,” *New York Times*, 5 Aug. 1957.

victims of European colonial race prejudice.” The news story went on to explain how many European-owned restaurants and sport and social clubs in Algeria denied entrance to “non-Europeans” both Jewish and Muslim. A 1961 report authored by several Algerian Jewish groups noted that while anti-Semites often used Muslim antipathy toward Jews as a reason to abrogate the Crémieux decree, historically, “Muslims [did] ... not manifest opposition” to it.⁴³ The same report emphasized that Ferhat Abbas, an early leader of the Algerian nationalist movement, had publically criticized Vichy’s anti-Jewish legislation, and that Ahmed Boumendjel (another FLN leader) had decried the use of Muslims’ supposedly anti-Jewish views to justify the decree’s abrogation. Even later in the conflict, Jewish representatives continued to recall a past of Muslim-Jewish coexistence in Algeria.

Algerian Jewish organizations and intellectuals often declared their shared history with Muslims within public declarations that supported full equality, yet implicitly or explicitly expressed trust in the French colonial state to effectuate it. In January of 1944 the bulletin of the Federation des sociétés juives d’Algérie (FSJA) famously declared, “As high as those responsible for the destiny of France are willing to elevate (the Muslim population), so will rise the satisfaction of those of our countrymen with Jewish origins.”⁴⁴ Benichou’s just-mentioned 1952 article, even as it reflected on recent tensions surrounding the Palestine question, repeated this same formula, suggesting that it should “remain ... the charter of the Jewish Community of Algeria.”⁴⁵ Benjamin Heler, longtime president of the FSJA, in a speech to the World Jewish Congress evoked the historically “close links” between Algerian Jews and Muslims, while calling for the social promotion of Muslims and the “complete equality of rights and duties” between all religious groups.⁴⁶ Statements such as these express an awareness of Jewish roots in Algeria, respect for the humanity of their oppressed neighbors, and opposition to France’s racist policies. Yet they also indicate the implicit privilege of those protected by the state, able to patiently wait for others people’s rights to be granted.

The independence movement forced the issue of Muslims’ oppression into the spotlight, which led left-leaning Jewish figures to interlace their historical commentaries with denunciations of colonial racism.⁴⁷ In a March 1961 report that insisted on Algerian Jews’ political and cultural attachment to

⁴³ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XXI, “Memoire sur le Judaïsme algérien, présenté par le Comité juif algérien des études sociales et la Fédération des communautés Israélites d’Algérie, 1 Mar. 1961.”

⁴⁴ Benichou, “Les relations.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, Reference C3/1418, undated speech, attributed to Benjamin Heler.

⁴⁷ Franz Fanon argued that the colonized would only gain their humanity when they resorted to violence. See *Les damnés de la terre*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 2007 [1961]).

France and its liberal traditions, Jacques Lazarus, a former resistance fighter who became one of Algerian Jewry's most visible spokesmen, also asserted that Jews had never "given their accord to the discrimination, for which the history of colonization in Algeria has been the theater."⁴⁸ Furthermore, he stated, "Jewish personalities in Algeria have always expressed their unequivocal abhorrence of racism and colonialism." Even as wartime terrorism spread fear and widened divides between communities, Lazarus' *Information juive* continued to publish articles with an unequivocally anti-racist perspective into the 1960s.⁴⁹ Increasing nationalist violence, having altered Muslim subjectivities in the face of colonial dehumanization, paradoxically, encouraged Lazarus and others to recall a history of common purpose.

Lazarus' statements supporting Muslim equality should be contextualized within a history of Jewish gravitation toward left-wing republicanism, which opposed both anti-Semitic mobilizations and the anti-Muslim racism with which they had previously been paired in Algeria.⁵⁰ Indeed, several French government analyses in the final year of colonial rule noted the marked socialist tendencies of Algerian Jews.⁵¹ This is to say nothing of the overrepresentation of Algerian Jews in the Algerian Communist Party (PCA).⁵² Jews had been pushed to the left by Algeria's anti-Semitic legacy, Vichy, and the long history of right-wing (and often anti-republican) polemics arguing Jews should not have been raised to full citizenship above their fellow natives. These also led many Jews to emphasize both their harmonious history with Muslims and their intolerance of anti-Muslim racism.

These bright renderings of a common Muslim-Jewish past in Algeria did not preclude awareness, often expressed privately, that things were changing

⁴⁸ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XXI, "Mémoire sur le Judaïsme algérien, présenté par le Comité juif algérien des études sociales et la Fédération des communautés israélites d'Algérie," 1 Mar. 1961.

⁴⁹ An example is the coverage of the riot in question, "Oran: les graves incidents de Roch Hachana," *Information juive*, Aug.–Sept. 1961.

⁵⁰ On the overlap between anti-Semitism and anti-Arab sentiment, see Emmanuel Sivan, "Colonialism and Popular Culture in Algeria," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (1979): 21–53. On anti-Semitism forming Algerian settler identity, see Lizabeth Zack, "French and Algerian Identity Formation in 1890s Algeria," *French Colonial History* 2 (2002): 115–43. On Jews and French republicanism, see Pierre Birnbaum, *Les Fous de la République*; and *Destins juifs: de la Révolution française à Carpentras* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1995); Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 64–89.

⁵¹ The *Direction générale des affaires politiques et d'informations* ordered several reports in the early 1962 about the political affiliation of Algerian Jews, all agreeing that the communal leadership, rabbinate, and population tended to vote Socialist. Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes (ADN), 21 PO/A 1958–1962 "Note de Renseignements," Délégation Générale en Algérie, 10 Jan. 1962; Direction générale des affaires politiques et d'informations, report entitled "importance de la communauté israélite dans le département d'Alger," Jan. 1962. Similar reports came to similar conclusions about the departments of Oran and Constantine.

⁵² It is possible that anti-Semitic police overstated Jews' participation in the Algerian Communist Party. Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens*, 57.

for the worse. The most sensitive, and most pessimistic, readings of these changes were not voiced publicly by Jewish communal leaders, but came from the far left. For example, Denis Guénoun, an Oran-born professor of literature at the University of Paris VI, recalled the words that his father René, a communist, used to explain his support for the revolution: “At the same time we [Jews] were lifted up, they [Muslims] were tied down to misery, ill health, and ignorance.” He said further, “Now it’s too late. They want their own country: they have a right to it. There must be a prosperous and inclusive Arab nation.”⁵³ René feared, though, that an independent Algeria would not be inclusive enough for Jews like himself. As such observers correctly saw, French colonialist policies had created or reified differences between Jews, Muslims, and Europeans, and by the early 1950s Jews and Muslims under the French had experienced different privileges and opportunities, and consequently had developed different perspectives.⁵⁴

Particularly important in creating Jewish perspectives was their social mobility, a phenomenon that broadly overlapped with “assimilation.” French government reports on the status of Algeria’s Jewish communities said most Jews were urbanites, spoke French, and held jobs that could be described as lower-middle or middle class. According to one 1953 estimate, Jews made up 21 percent of doctors, 18 percent of dentists, 16 percent of lawyers, and 18 percent government employees (*fonctionnaires*).⁵⁵ Some Jews, when evaluating recent Muslim-Jewish history, perceived their growing estrangement in terms of widening class differences. Raymond Benichou, who agreed with Guénoun that Muslims’ status had to be raised, but disagreed regarding the means, saw in the early 1950s that “assimilation” among Jews had distanced the two populations. He noted that Jews “rose through successive layers of a large and often miserable proletariat” through “university success” and “an increasingly significant ascension to careers in the liberal professions.”⁵⁶ This also occurred, “alas,” through “the forgetting of Arabic” and the “historical attachments ... linking Judaism and Islam.” Daniel Timsit, a Jew who joined the FLN, also recalled that ascending to the middle class implied less contact with Muslims (or poorer Jews). His mother, for example, felt social mobility demanded that he acquire a new set of playmates, one featuring fewer “Arabs.”⁵⁷

⁵³ Denis Guénoun, *A Semite: A Memoir of Algeria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 21.

⁵⁴ Choi, “Complex Compatriots,” 865.

⁵⁵ Richard Ayoun and Bernard Cohen, *Les Juifs d’Algérie, 2000 ans d’histoire* (Paris: JC Lattès, 1982), 185.

⁵⁶ Raymond Benichou, “Les relations.”

⁵⁷ The term used in the memoir. See Daniel Timsit, *Alger: récit anachronique*, 13. Discussed by R. Watson, “Memories (out) of Place: Franco-Judeo-Algerian Autobiographical Writing, 1995–2010,” *Journal of North African Studies* 17, 1 (Jan. 2012): 1–22. We must keep in mind that “Arab” was used broadly, and French writers did not always distinguish between Arabic and Kabyle speakers.

Memoirs of the period illuminate this expanding gap, particularly among leftists committed to Muslim-Jewish solidarity.⁵⁸ Jean Cohen's memoir of his experience in late colonial Algeria, for instance, makes this point clearly. Cohen, like Guénoun a communist, sympathized with formulations that posited not only a shared Muslim-Jewish history, but a shared destiny as well. Yet when he tried to befriend a Muslim colleague he knew through the Algerian Communist Party, social cleavages became clear—when he invited him to dinner, the radically different roles women were expected to play at social gatherings made a friendship seem impossible.⁵⁹ Even while emphasizing common roots, men like Benichou, Guénoun, and Cohen were hardly blind to the cultural and socio-economic developments—long-term products of French policies—that were pulling Jews and Muslims in different directions. It follows that, despite the rise of nationalism that encouraged Jews to emphasize their shared history with and sympathy for Muslims, most Jews, with a number of notable exceptions, did not heed the FLN's call to join.⁶⁰

After the Rosh Hashanah riots, Lazarus painted the recent violence as a rupture, and the riots as an inexcusable, racist response to fear. His and other left-leaning newspapers continued to recall a friendly history. "As the press has signaled," *Information juive* explained, "Terrorist acts have increased in these last weeks, both in Algiers and Oran.... One counts ... in greater Oran notably, a high number of our coreligionists among the victims." And, by means of explanation, "We concede that the exasperation of spirits is at its limit, in an atmosphere of daily murder of innocents." Yet, the article was careful to distance itself from the Jews who had rioted, avoided speaking on behalf of one ethnicity, and shared the FLN's categorization of the events as "racist." The article argued that the attacks on Jews "obviously cannot justify this intolerable reaction of racial hatred, of bloody, punitive operations, and the tragic confrontation between communities traditionally maintaining close relations and neighborliness." Similar sentiments were echoed by the Paris-based Mouvement contre le racismisme, l'antisemitisme et pour la paix, which characterized the Oran riots as "attacks of a racial character." That group condemned the acts that "multipl[ied] innocent victims," and rendered the arrival at a "just and humane solution" in Algeria all the more difficult.⁶¹ *Information juive*, meanwhile, recalled earlier articles it had published emphasizing Jewish-Muslim bonds, and represented Jewish attacks on Muslims as a new rupture.

⁵⁸ Eldridge, "Remembering the Other."

⁵⁹ Jean Cohen, *Chronique d'une Algérie révolue: comme l'ombre et le vent* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 49, cited in Eldridge, "Remembering the Other," 10.

⁶⁰ For the exceptions, see Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale*. Also, Daniel Timsit, *Algérie: récit anachronique* (Paris: Bouchène, 1998). See also Eldridge, "Remembering the Other"; Choi, "Complex Compatriots"; and Hammerman, Heart of the Diaspora, 149–87.

⁶¹ *Le Monde*, 15 Dec. 1961.

In condemning the incidents, Lazarus issued an official statement that followed the pattern of casting the violence as actions of individuals as opposed to a community. Noting the recent history of FLN terrorism, the CJAES insisted, “Neither the pain, nor indignation, nor the anger, as justified as they may be, can legitimate reactions that generate inadmissible acts whose victims are, in their turn, innocent people.” The organization drew on the imminence of Yom Kippur to urge Jews to contemplate the “Jewish” value of respect for life over all other considerations, and called on Jews of Algeria “in these tragic hours” to recall that they are “free men and uniquely responsible for their options and their destiny.” True to the left-republican inclinations of the Algerian Jewish establishment, Lazarus cast the riots as the deplorable acts of frightened and threatened individuals, and not as a statement of Jewish political affiliation. Such commentators continued to brandish the “tradition” of “close relations and neighborliness” between Muslims and Jews, hoping it may carry them through to a just and reformed—but French—Algeria.

THE FLN’S READING OF MUSLIM-JEWISH HISTORY AND RESPONSE TO THE RIOTS

Official FLN pronouncements agreed with these Jewish communal voices that emphasized the long, shared history of Jews and Muslims in Algeria. Even as anti-Jewish violence was being committed in its name, the FLN held that Jews were, like Muslims, an integral component of the Algerian nation.⁶² They also produced a narrative of a shared North African Muslim-Jewish history, similar to that put forth by men such as Cohen, Guénoun, Benichou, Heler, and Lazarus. And yet, while Algerian Jewish leaders generally used narratives of common origins and a friendly history to bolster their republican position recognizing Jews’ rightful place as French citizens, like any other citizens, the FLN put forth narratives that outlined a collective group position for Jews, one that separated them from other classes of the population. In this sense, the FLN’s argument for including Jews in the nation echoed, but turned on their heads, the historical-racial justifications for colonialism that French historians, anthropologists, and military officers had deployed over the previous century. In addition, nationalists’ frustrations with Jewish support for continued French rule (albeit with reforms) were fanned by suspicions that they condoned Israeli violence against Palestinians, and provoked angry responses.

The FLN’s narratives of common Muslim-Jewish origins in Algeria often underplayed how the colonial order, and to a lesser extent Vichy and the rise of Israel, had transformed Jews’ sense of identity and sources of security. The

⁶² It is important to note that these “official pronouncements” did not express the various and often opposed beliefs of FLN members. For internal debates and ideological changes, see Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN, 1954–1962* (Paris: Fayard, 2002). Relating to Jews, see Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 172–76.

1956 Soumam platform, passed at a moment when more moderate voices prevailed within the FLN's contentious and evolving leadership, incorporated text from a letter sent to rabbis and the consistories of Algeria. It stated, "The FLN considers the Jews of Algeria to be sons of our country," and that it hoped Jews would join them in the "building of a free and fraternal" Algeria.⁶³ Calling on a religious organization to take a political stand, the FLN demanded that the "Jewish community" collectively proclaim their support for the revolution. A 1959 FLN brochure reaffirmed that "by fact and by right" Jews belong to the "Algerian community."⁶⁴ History, according to the FLN, showed that Jews were an integral part of the Algerian Nation and ought to take their place in the struggle. In 1960, though the FLN had by now adopted a more ethno-religious, Islam-inflected, nationalist vision, an article in *El Moudjahid* still declared, "For twenty centuries, the Jews have been living in Algeria. At the time when they were suffering their worst persecution in Europe, it was North Africa, the land of tolerance, that welcomed Jews expelled from Spain." The editors further insisted, "On Algerian soil, the Jewish minority has always gotten along well with the Muslims ... sharing joys and pains, together submitted to the heavy tyranny of the fiefdoms..."⁶⁵ The FLN explained Muslim attacks on synagogues or Jews, such as during the Constantine riots of 1934 or the 1960 Algiers synagogue sacking, by drawing on history and rooting these events in colonialism.

Anti-Semitism, insisted FLN spokespeople, was a "sentiment imported by the French colonizer that saw in it both a means of government and the satisfaction of his true sentiments toward the Jews..."⁶⁶ The FLN's version of Muslim-Jewish history privileged tolerance and hospitality and categorized anti-Semitism as a recent, colonialist import.

Algerian nationalists raised the history of colon anti-Semitism and Vichy to bolster their argument that the FLN was the Jews' natural ally. In 1956, the FLN radio program "*La voix de l'Algérie*," broadcast on Radio Tunis, criticized the Algerian delegation at the World Jewish Congress meeting in London for having affirmed their adhesion to the French nation. The report noted, "It is informative to remind our Jewish compatriots of the condition of their coreligionists in France over the course of history; they were mistreated."⁶⁷ In 1959, the

⁶³ ADN 21 PO/A 1958–1962, folio "Question israélite," clipping from *Le Monde*, 8 Mar. 1961.

⁶⁴ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, pamphlet entitled "Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale," *FLN- Documents à l'adresse du peuple français, les Juifs d'Algérie dans le combat pour l'indépendance nationale* (undated brochure), 3.

⁶⁵ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, *Droit et Liberté*, "Les Prises de position du FLN et du GPRA," Jan. 1961. The reference to "fiefdoms" is perhaps a negative reference to Ottoman domination.

⁶⁶ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, Claude Estier, "Les Journées de décembre," *Droit et Liberté*, Jan. 1961.

⁶⁷ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, *La Nation Française*, "Le FLN: 'Israël avec nous!'" 24 Oct. 1956.

FLN lambasted “Europeans” for having deceived the Jews into worrying about their fate in an independent Algeria. The same people who sound the alarm about the fate of Jews in an independent Algeria, the FLN insisted, “in other times, still quite recent, happily abandoned the Jews—of France and elsewhere—to their Nazi executioners.”⁶⁸ That many anti-Semites and former Petainists filled the ranks of forces for l’Algérie Française was not lost on the FLN, either. “Would [the Jewish community] be so naïve,” the FLN rhetorically asked, “as to believe that the victory of the *ultra* colonialists, who are precisely the same people that previously persecuted it, would not bring it the same misfortune?”⁶⁹ Expressing and reproducing French Algeria’s taxonomic legal heritage, while ignoring how this heritage had helped invest most Jews with a different place in, and perspectives on, the colonial hierarchy, the FLN singled out Jews in Algeria by suggesting they were being “naïve” by forgetting Vichy and imagining themselves as “regular” French citizens.

Though the FLN shared a harmonious vision of Muslim-Jewish history with many Jewish communal spokesmen, they differed in seeing them as possessing a collective Jewish political identity; different from Muslims (understood as the obvious constituents of the FLN), and from Europeans, the majority of which were understood and expected to be “colonialists.” The FLN thus cast Algerian Jews as separate social and political entity, with a special and difficult task of *collectively* renouncing the “racism” of the Rosh Hashanah riot and “choosing” their rightful camp. Ironically, this put them in agreement with Zionists who posited that Jews’ ethnic background endowed them with a particular political obligation, though of course Zionists objected to the FLN’s assertion that Jews should work in solidarity with Algerian nationalists. It is not surprising that many Jews read these FLN declarations more as threats than as affirmations of common origins and destiny.

The 1961 riots helped solidify Algerian nationalists’ growing suspicion that Jews’ status as French citizens had trumped their “historic” comradely relations with Muslims. Already, some had admitted the structural reasons for this; at one point student leader Abdessalam Belaïd candidly explained, “We are sorry, [the Jews] are not Algerian like the others, they benefit from different conditions.”⁷⁰ More often, though, stark communitarian binaries prevailed. In December of 1960, after the Algiers synagogue was sacked, unnamed FLN spokespeople denounced the “excesses” in a published interview, but insisted, “It must be said that the Jews have not always had such a favorable

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale,” 3.

⁷⁰ Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani, “Des étudiants juifs algériens dans le mouvement national algérien à Paris (1948–1962),” in Frédéric Abécassis, Karima Dirèche, and Rita Aouad, eds., *La bienvenue et l’adieu: migrants juifs et musulmans au Maghreb (XV^e–XX^e siècle)*, vol. 3 (Casablanca: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2012), cited and translated in Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 176.

attitude towards us,” and that they had “committed themselves to *l’Algérie française*.”⁷¹

After the riots, the FLN’s official journal, *El Moudjahid*, called the 1961 riots a “pogrom,” and situated it within a wave of European violence against Muslims, including a “*chasse à l’Arabe*” in Algiers.⁷² The use of the term “pogrom” was intended to highlight the supposed paradox of Jews, so recently victims of racist violence themselves, being the authors of racist attacks. After this settler violence, reported the paper, “it was the Jews’ turn to incite equally serious events.” The paper described the lynching, shootings, and stabbings as an example of Jews “behaving in the same manner as Europeans.” In stark contrast to *Informations juives* efforts to deemphasize Jewish communitarian identity, the FLN noted that this was not the first time that Jews had “committed themselves to the side of the Europeans.”⁷³ The reduction of Algerian Jews to a single voice or position was also evident in the FLN’s radio coverage of the riots. In one broadcast, the FLN demanded that the Jewish community “face its responsibilities” and asked that it “not permit itself ‘racist excesses (*débordements racistes*),’” or allow itself to be manipulated by the “colonialists.” The “colonialists” had “always sought to pit the Jewish community against the “Algerian people, despite the fact that it is a part of this people.”⁷⁴ Even as FLN representatives reduced Algerian Jews to a monolithic collectivity that was mistakenly siding with the colonial state, it advanced a historical narrative that, like Jewish spokesmen, recounted a shared and fraternal past.

THE ZIONIST EXCEPTION: HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF OPPRESSION

Zionists outside of Algeria frequently did not share the positive view of the Algerian Muslim-Jewish past. There was a vigorous Zionist left during the period under discussion in France, Algeria, and elsewhere, and some did acknowledge the multiple identities and allegiances of Algerian Jews.⁷⁵ But in contrast to the writers explored above, there was a more marked French (and Israeli) Zionist tendency, especially on the right, to maintain elements of the earlier “progress and patriotism” narrative that cast Muslim-Jewish relations as having been

⁷¹ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, Claude Estier, “Les Journées de décembre,” *Droit et Liberté*, Jan. 1961.

⁷² *Chasse à l’Arabe* was the practice of grabbing Muslims in the streets or from cars and beating or killing them.

⁷³ *El-Moudjahid*, 1 Oct. 1961.

⁷⁴ *Le Figaro*, 13 Sept. 1961.

⁷⁵ “Zionist,” was a broad category, but no variant found much success in bringing Algerian Jews to Israel. Jewish leaders, especially in Algeria, were often “left-wing” Zionists, but still maintained a sincere belief in Muslim-Jewish peace (see Stora, *Les trois exils*, 66–70). The farthest left-Zionists in France, such as the *Cercle Bernard Lazare*, held to a discourse of neutrality similar to those in Algeria. More mainstream groups such as the JNF and the *Organisation sioniste de France*, however, unambiguously supported *Algérie française*. Boukara, “La Gauche juive en France.”

brutal before the French occupation, and even to celebrate the racial hierarchy established since. French Zionist readings of the riots in 1961 often did not share the shock and abhorrence expressed by men like Lazarus (also left-Zionist), but instead boasted that “Jewish blood” was no longer cheap. The journalist Joseph Ariel, for example, who wrote for French Zionist publications, recalled a dreary Arab-Muslim past and accused the FLN of trying to “blackmail” the Jewish community into supporting the revolution.⁷⁶ In a 1960 piece in the Jewish National Fund (JNF) journal *La terre retrouvée*, he recalled, “One hundred and thirty years ago ... under the arbitrary and violent reign of the deys,” Jews in Algeria formed a “small and oppressed minority.”⁷⁷ Parroting the most pessimistic of Orientalist scholarship, Ariel recalled, “Everything was forbidden to Jews” including “resisting Muslims who abused them” and “carrying a weapon—even a cane.” Muslims “condemned (Jews of Algeria) to insecurity” and “they lived in permanent terror.” Sardonicly reproducing the FLN’s characterization of the regime, the article asserted, “It was the ‘French oppressors’ that gave Jews the rights deserved by every human being.” Ariel, unsurprisingly, expressed no concern that French “emancipators” had denied Muslims the “rights deserved of every human being” for one hundred and thirty years.

The journal’s one explanatory narrative as to why Jews “deserved” citizenship above their neighbors echoed founding Zionist mythologies, that of a new people arriving in empty or wasted land, and through their ingenuity and sweat, valorizing the country despite the unwelcoming natives.⁷⁸ According to the JNF publication, in the decades since 1870, when Algerian Jews obtained full citizenship, they had enjoyed “an intellectual evolution.” Thanks to “the level of their culture” they attained, Jews helped effectuate the “*mise en valeur* of the country,” contributing to its “economic and technological development, and to all its civilization.” For these reasons, Jews “well deserved” being “part of the elite of 1,200,000 Frenchmen” in Algeria. Employing another trope shared by French colonialists and Zionists—that of formerly victimized or powerless Jews transformed (and masculinized) into brave fighters—the JNF journal also observed that the Jews of Algeria had since that time provided “striking proof” of their loyalty and effectiveness as French

⁷⁶ AIU, Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, “Le Chantage du FLN sur les Juifs d’Algérie,” undated clipping, ca. 1959.

⁷⁷ *La Terre Retrouvée*, 15 Mar. 1960. The Jewish National Fund was an organization established in 1901 by the World Zionist Organization to buy land in Ottoman Palestine and administer it “for and on behalf of the Jewish People.” This was (and remains) contentious, in that JNF land was (and is) barred to Arabs. See Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins*.

⁷⁸ In David Ben Gurion’s 1948 speech declaring the foundation of State of Israel, this narrative is produced as such: “Pioneers ... made deserts bloom ... built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture ... bringing the blessings of progress to all the country’s inhabitants....” For French justifications for colonialism using the notion of “*mise en valeur*,” see Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

soldiers.⁷⁹ Unlike Algerian Jewish writers, both Zionist or not, who underscored their French loyalties while condemning colonial inequality and racism, or the Algerian Jewish communists, the Zionist paper celebrated the caste of European settlers dominating colonial Algeria, and rejoiced in the fact that Jews, once referred to merely as “*Israélites indigènes*,” now formed part of that privileged “elite.”

Other, more avowedly right-wing Zionist publications also used Algerian history to make their case, but focused on assimilation. They took a markedly dimmer view of it than Benichou had in 1953. Back when the FLN demanded that Jews join their struggle in 1956, for example, the Revisionist Zionist journal *Notre Drapeau* (aligned with Israeli leader Menachem Begin’s Herut party, precursor to today’s Likud) criticized the FLN’s menacing comments and said that despite the “decades” Algerian Jews had been citizens, they still hesitated to take sides in the conflict.⁸⁰ They attributed this to the fact that “of all North African Jewish communities, Algeria’s is the most assimilated.” However, they did credit Constantine’s Jews, the least assimilated of the large urban communities, with knowing how to “respond to attempts at a pogrom” in May of 1956, and observed that “since then they have been left in peace.” The writer was referring to the aforementioned incident when the Jewish self-defense group in Constantine attacked local Muslims.⁸¹ The journal also accused the FLN of behaving like “all Arab Nationalist movements” by joining the “fanatics of the Arab League in Cairo.”⁸² For these writers, Algerian Jews’ “assimilation” was less a credit to French colonial policies that allowed such mobility than a potential weakness in the face of “fanaticism.” Revisionists (unlike both Algerian Jewish observers and at least the official FLN position) saw the break between Jews and Muslims, even relatively early in the conflict, as inevitable and ultimately desirable.

After the 1961 Oran riots, right wing Zionists, in contrast to Jewish spokespeople in Algeria, were among the few who celebrated the violence that others, both Jews and Muslims, were decrying as racist. After the article in the *Figaro* discussed earlier accused Israelis of intervening in Algeria,

⁷⁹ Much Zionist rhetoric was deeply masculinist, offering to transform effeminate, weak, or “sick” Jews into the *halvri haHadash* or “the New Hebrew Man.” See, for example, Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (New York: Routledge, 2007). As Daniel Boyarin memorably put it, Zionism offered Jews a “return to phallustine.” See *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 222. Interestingly, some French colonialists also offered a version of this. In his celebrated 1842 “Report on the Moral and Political State of the Israelites of Algeria, and the Means of Ameliorating It,” Jacques Altaras promised that Algerian Jews, if “attached to France,” would make good soldiers. See Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Les Juifs d’Algérie et la France, 1830–1850* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1981).

⁸⁰ *Notre Drapeau: Bi-mensuel des sionistes-révisionnistes de France*, 25 Oct. 1956.

⁸¹ Eugène Mannoni, “Juifs et Musulmans, à leur tour, à Oran,” *Le Monde*, 14 Sept. 1961.

⁸² *Notre Drapeau*, 25 Oct. 1956.

Herut echoed the Israeli government's denial. Responding to discussions in France and Algeria, its spokesmen insisted, "If the Haganah [the Labor-Zionist militia in pre-state Palestine] or the Irgun [the principal right-wing Zionist militia] has ever influenced the Jews of Oran, it is by their struggle for independence. They have learned that the shedding of Jewish blood should not go unpunished."⁸³ In a different statement, *Herut* characterized any Jewish alignment with the OAS in the interest of maintaining the community in Algeria as "suicide," and proclaimed that the only solution for Algerian Jews was to emigrate to Israel.⁸⁴ These writers differed radically from their coreligionists who represented the riots a lamentable, racist backlash, and saw it instead as a sort of historical payback. According to these Zionists, Jewish-Muslim violence was not a rupture, but instead consistent with history, and a justification for their ethno-nationalist ideology.⁸⁵

It should be noted that Herut's nationalist readings of the 1961 Oran riots echoed some elements of the FLN's responses, even if the FLN still paid lip service to the possibility that Jews would join them. We shall see that both understood the Oran riots against the background of the Israel-Palestine conflict. These European and Israeli Zionists also shared the FLN's conviction that Jews, due to their history and racial origins, constituted a distinct collectivity endowed with particular political rights and a specific destiny. The riot, for the Zionists (as well as for the FLN), represented a moment of Algerian Jewish "commitment." For the FLN, Oran's Jews were committing to the French colonialists, while Herut saw the riot as a sign that they were committing to Jewish national "independence." To the FLN this was a mistake, while for the Zionists it represented a hope. Circumstances led both Algerian nationalist and Zionists to reject or abandon the hope that the most prominent Algerian Jewish spokespeople were still expressing: that Muslims, Christians, and Jews could live together in equality in French Algeria.

THE PALESTINE CONFLICT'S INFLUENCE ON MUSLIM-JEWISH RELATIONS

When the Tunisian-based pro-FLN paper *al-Amal* discussed the 1961 Oran riot, it eclipsed the vast spectrum of opinions held by Jews of Algeria with a monolithic "colonialist" collectivity.⁸⁶ But the paper also linked the riot to Zionism

⁸³ ADN, 21 PO/A 1958–1962, telegram to Délégation générale du gouvernement en Algérie, 15 Jan. 1962. In the West, the Irgun was widely regarded as a terrorist organization, including by major papers such as the *New York Times*.

⁸⁴ ADN, 21 PO/A 1958–1962, telegram to Délégation générale du gouvernement en Algérie, 11 Jan. 1962.

⁸⁵ For more on "ethno-nationalist" discourses of citizenship and the Israeli case, see Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*.

⁸⁶ The links between Tunisia and the FLN were strong. The FLN's forces (sometimes larger than Tunisia's) were stationed there for a time, and Tunisia served, early in the conflict, as a springboard for attacks in Algeria. For a time the FLN's military leadership was housed in Tunis. Tunisia helped

and the Palestinian issue. Its editor complained, “We had hoped to see the Jews consider themselves in this region as citizens,” but “events have born tragic and bloody testimony that they side without hesitation with the colonialist caste.”⁸⁷ The journal labeled Zionist crimes “Jewish,” notably when complaining that “Jewish” crimes in Oran received little press coverage, as had also been the case with the “Jewish atrocities in Palestine, the consequences of the war in Palestine, and ... the deportations to which the Arabs of Palestine were subject once dispossessed of their homes and goods.”⁸⁸ Expressing the ethno-nationalist strain in the Algerian independence movement, the editors cast the Oran riots as evidence of a transnational Jewish sympathy for colonialism. The actions of individual Jews, it would appear, had become *Jewish actions*, and those were increasingly identified with Israel.

Other articles also saw the Oran riot as integrally connected to Zionism and events in Palestine, and used Israeli atrocities against Palestinians, or “global Zionism,” to tar the Jewish community of Algeria. An unsigned, 13 September article published in the paper *as-Sabah* (also based in Tunisia), entitled “The Jews and Racist Algeria,” noted that in 1960 a number of followers of Joseph Ortiz—the far-right, *poudjadiste* pied-noir activist who founded the *Front National Français* in 1958 and later co-founded the OAS—had bragged of the Jews among their members.⁸⁹ According to the paper, Ortiz’s lackeys had said that these Jews, “having belonged to the Irgun, considered their struggle in Algeria as one part of the struggle they were leading in Palestine.” The article said that the French had arrested “a certain number of Zionists” who were also members of the OAS. It then asked rhetorically whether the ultras had convinced Algerian Jews that their struggle against “the Algerians” responded to the Jews’ struggle against Arabs in the Middle East. Citing Jewish Agency activities in Algeria regarding local Jewish attitudes, the article suggested investigating the “the links between Jews in Algeria and global Zionism.” This late 1961 article displays how the riots inspired supporters of Algerian independence to cast doubts on Jewish belonging in Algeria, exemplifies how all Jews were being linked to the dispossession of Palestinians, and reveals a strengthening exclusivist, ethno-nationalist current.

the FLN outflank France’s “invisible barriers of censorship and sovereignty around Algeria” in an international arena of politics and media relations. See Matthew Connolly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁸⁷ London Municipal Archives (LMA), Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ), ACC/3121/C/11/013/004, *Al-Amal*, 15 Sept. 1961, reproduced in *Le Petit Matin*, 15 Sept. 1961.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ The paper, while also Tunisian, supported the FLN. LMA, BDBJ, ACC/3121/C/11/013/004, translation of the article appearing in *as-Sabah*, 13 September 1961, submitted in French by American Joint Distribution Committee to the Board of Deputies of British Jews on 19 September 1961.

In addition to official or press statements, the spread of rumors that Zionist provocateurs had directly inspired the Oran riots suggests how the Israel-Palestine conflict had begun to sour Muslim-Jewish relations on a popular level. As Sung Choi has noted, the Israeli Mossad did in fact help organize Jewish “commando” units in Algeria, and the newspaper *Le Figaro* accused Ben Gurion’s government (over Israeli denials) of supporting the OAS.⁹⁰ Additionally, Zionist organizations made significant efforts, with little success, to encourage Algerian Jews to come to Israel.⁹¹ But the rumors about these connections that emerged directly after the Rosh Hashannah riots went farther; according to some, the young Jews who attacked Muslims on Rosh Hashannah had spent time in Israel, where they had learned “Irgun tactics.”⁹² Indeed, these rumors held that the Oran riots of 1961 represented the “first time” a Zionist-inspired “Jewish counter-terrorist organization” had revealed its program, a mission to attack Muslims any time Jews were attacked. This organization would maintain itself, it was said, after what it considered to be the inevitable independence of Algeria. While French officials doubted the existence of anything beyond Jewish self-defense organizations, for at least some of the population the Oran riots suggested ties between Jews and Zionism in Algeria.

Despite these accusations that associated all Jews with Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, *as-Sabbah* still presented a historical narrative in which Jews’ true friends were their Muslim neighbors. “Their future in an independent Algeria,” it insisted, referencing *pied noir* anti-Semitism, “will be infinitely better than their situation in French Algeria where a blind fascism reigned.” To drive home the point, the author—ignoring that some Jews had joined the FLN—called upon “the Jews” to not forget that “those who push them to murder and to hatred against the Algerian Arab, are the same ones who, during the period of Pétain, instituted a blind racism, deprived them of their liberties, closed the doors of schools to them ... and that they found no asylum except among the Algerians. The Jews must remember these truths.... They must renounce the racism of which they were victims.”⁹³

The article echoed the FLN pamphlet issued before the riots that associated rioters with both the OAS and Zionism, and portrayed them both as effectively the ideological inheritors of Vichy. In the riot’s aftermath, during a period when much Algerian and Arab nationalist press painted the whole of Algerian Judaism in the violent colors of Zionism, their portrayals of history

⁹⁰ In 2005, Israeli agents recounted their activities in Algeria during the war in an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv*. See Choi, “Complex Compatriots.” For Israeli denials that they were supporting the OAS, see *Le Monde*, 11 Jan. 1962.

⁹¹ Choi, “Complex Compatriots”; Todd Shepard, *The Invention*, 169–82.

⁹² ADN 21 PO/A 1958–1962, “Note sur les “commandos juifs” d’Oran, 15 Jan. 1962.

⁹³ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/013/004, translation of article appearing in *as-Sabah*, 13 Sept. 1961.

continued to emphasize a shared Jewish-Muslim past, and even implied the possibility of a common destiny.

Even before the riots, and indeed before the public emergence of the FLN and the outbreak of the War of Independence, some Jewish spokespeople had already stated that Zionism and the foundation of the State of Israel had negatively affected Algerian Muslim-Jewish relations. As early as 1953, Benichou traced the beginning of an estrangement between Muslims and Jews to the interwar period. While citing Jewish “assimilation” to French culture, he also blamed the Arab responses to the “Zionist expansion in Palestine” in the Mandate period.⁹⁴ Now, he commented in the early 1950s, the Palestine issue remained the most important force “stiffening” Judeo-Muslim relations in Algeria. Benichou further posited that many Algerian Arabs took Zionist victories as “a personal humiliation,” thus expressing what would become a powerful theme in Western Orientalist explanations of political and social movements in the Muslim world.⁹⁵

Whatever the weaknesses of Benichou’s analysis, his comment indicates how the Palestine issue helped to demarcate and polarize “national” communities in Algeria, often at the expense of individual relationships and experiences. A number of Algerian Muslims boycotted Jewish businesses they had patronized in the 1950s, some said for fear that their profits were supporting Israel.⁹⁶ The FLN linked Algeria’s Jewish community to the cause of liberating Palestine by occasionally suggesting that Jews in an independent Algeria would be barred from emigrating to Israel.⁹⁷ Local actors, too, took note of issues in neighboring, decolonizing Morocco and Tunisia. Morocco, for example, had closed the local Jewish Agency office in 1956 in an attempt to stem collective emigration to Israel.⁹⁸ In early 1961, a rumor circulated that the Jews of Constantine would be “held hostage” until the Palestine issue was resolved.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, French authorities noted with concern that Algerian Muslims were aware (or at least suspected) that Israeli Mossad agents and/or veterans from the Irgun were active organizing Jews in Algeria.¹⁰⁰ Such information

⁹⁴ Benichou, “Les Relations.”

⁹⁵ Bernard Lewis most famously articulated this position in “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” in the *Atlantic* (1 Sept. 1990): “In part this mood is surely due to a feeling of humiliation—a growing awareness, among the heirs of an old, proud, and long dominant civilization, of having been overtaken, overborne, and overwhelmed by those whom they regarded as their inferiors.”

⁹⁶ “Fédération de France du Front de Libération Nationale,” 3.

⁹⁷ “Le problème de l’émigration juive de l’est algérien,” undated report, ADN 21 PO/ A 1958–1962.

⁹⁸ ADN 21 PO/ A 1958–1962, “Le gouvernement de Rabat interdit l’émigration collective des juifs vers Israël,” *Le Monde*, 13 June, 1956.

⁹⁹ “Le problème de l’émigration.”

¹⁰⁰ ADN 21 PO/A 1958–1962, Délégation Générale en Algérie, Direction de Sûreté Nationale en Algérie, Sous-Direction des Renseignements Généraux, “A/S d’une organisation contre-terroriste d’inspiration sioniste,” 22 Sept. 1961. The most detailed treatment of Israeli involvement in Algeria is in Choi, “Complex Compatriots.”

necessarily led people to associate Algerian Jews with Israel, politicizing and polarizing two religious communities, both of which, Jewish community spokespeople and the FLN agreed, shared a history and belonged in Algeria.

It must also be said that, notwithstanding the wide gamut of Algerian Jews' actual opinions on Zionism and Israel, mainstream Algerian Jewish spokesmen (not communist- or FLN-associated), proud as they were of their North African, Arab-Berber cultural heritage, made little effort to distance themselves from events in the Middle East. In fact, they often looked warmly on Zionism and the new State of Israel. The intellectual Elie Gozlan, for instance, maintained his Zionism even as he worked tirelessly for Muslim-Jewish friendship in Algeria through his Union des croyants monothéistes.¹⁰¹ Lazarus declared in 1961 that Israel had become "an integral part of the Jewish People's patrimony," and underlined its importance by referencing the Holocaust.¹⁰² Benjamin Heler, whom we recall served as president of the FCIA, was a Zionist activist. For Algerian Jews, like many other Jews in North Africa and France, the previous decades' Vichy race laws (to say nothing of the Shoah) made Israel's promise of "redemption" resonate, and overshadowed Israel's ongoing ethno-religious discrimination.¹⁰³ For many Algerian Muslims, however, whose history was also scarred by discriminatory race laws, persecution, and massacres, Israel was first and foremost yet another racist, colonial regime in the Arab-Muslim world. This is not to argue that any number of Algerian Jewish voices distancing themselves from Zionists would have changed the fate of Algerian Jews, and indeed such efforts by leftist Jewish writers, for example in Egypt and Iraq, were unsuccessful. Rather, it shows how Zionism, another exclusivist nationalism that both responded to and mirrored historical, officially sanctioned inequalities, influenced Algerian nationalists' increasing tendency to associate all Jews with Israel's atrocities.

CONCLUSION

The narratives of a harmonious and fraternal Muslim-Jewish tradition in Algeria I have discussed, expressed from many quarters of the religious and political spectrum, bear paradoxical testimony to the lethal ethno-religious polarization left in colonialism's wake. I have not highlighted their being products of a specific historical moment in order to deny the elements of truth in them.

¹⁰¹ Gozlan was a committed leftist, co-founder, with Sheik Okbi, of the interfaith group Union des croyants monothéistes, and also a Zionist. Stora, *Les Trois exils*, 66–70.

¹⁰² AIU Fonds Jacques Lazarus, Dossier XVI, Jacques Lazarus, "Tels que nous sommes," *Information juive*, Feb. 1961.

¹⁰³ In addition to preventing Palestinians from returning, Israel continued to subject its remaining Arab inhabitants to harassment, violence, expulsion, and obstacles to obtaining citizenship." See Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). Meanwhile, Zionism had an "unprecedented legitimacy" among French Jews. See Katz, *Burdens of Brotherhood*, 161. Zionists failed, however, to convince Algerian Jews to settle in Israel.

Muslims and Jews *did* share a deep, overlapping, fluid, and interconnected history. But these new narratives served as polemics that aspired, in various ways, to bridge, sometimes forcibly, the vast gap France had opened between Jewish and Muslim prospects in late colonial Algeria. This gap, of course, was due to generations of colonial policies that had powerfully influenced social mobility, identity, and attendant cultural forms. In response, and partly reflecting their very different positions and options, most Jewish communal leaders hoped that France would remain, mend its ways, and bring true republican *égalité* to Algeria. By this time, Algerian nationalists saw such hopes as delusional. The FLN's targeted calls to Jews to collectively join their fellow "sons of the country" in the national struggle—invitations that sometimes sounded like threats—exposed, yet ignored, a certain reality: regardless of their shared history, Muslims and Jews were now in very different positions. It follows that the independence struggle generally, as well as the riots themselves, served as an "incitement to narrate" the shared history of Muslims and Jews.

Historical narratives in response to the riots were also shaped by events in the Middle East, and the polarization between "Jews" and "Arabs" that Zionism had helped cultivate.¹⁰⁴ If events in Europe during the Second World War had convinced many that a Jewish State was necessary, many Algerian nationalists saw Zionism for its continuities (another colonial regime), rather than its disjunctures (a "sanctuary" from persecution). The Israel-Palestine conflict informed FLN association of the Algerian Jewish collectivity with a foreign and hostile nationalism. This, in turn, fueled accusations that the Oran riots were directly linked to Zionism. It also highlights the epistemological common ground between many Zionists and Algerian nationalists: both agreed that Jews' long history in Algeria dictated that they had a collective, political character and associated obligations. They simply disagreed as to what those obligations were.

But even if these (often simplistic) historical narratives emerged as polemics in the wake of the Oran riots, testifying to the new estrangement and polarization, they remind us that Muslim-Jewish history was not so long ago a source of hope for peace. As such, they may also offer another way to think about a powerful telos in Middle Eastern Jewish history, whereby "crisis is the enduring leitmotif and departure the enduring endpoint."¹⁰⁵ Conversely, a

¹⁰⁴ On the fraught terrain of dual Arab-Jewish identity, see Emily Benichou Gottreich, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Maghrib," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, 4 (2008): 433–51; and Lital Levy, "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the Mashriq," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, 4 (2008): 452–69.

¹⁰⁵ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, "The Field of in Between," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46, 3 (2014): 581–84. In the West, we owe the endurance of this telos to Zionist historiography in which the modern period is characterized primarily by the rise of anti-Semitism in the Muslim world. See, notably, Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

great chasm yawns between the official and unofficial anti-Semitism of many postcolonial countries today and the FLN's 1961 condemnation of it as a "colonialist" malady. If Muslim-Jewish violence has come to be accepted as a historical given, this mentality is a recent development—it was not seen as a given when and where the historical recollections of Jewish-Muslim fraternity that I have discussed resonated. Despite the evident ethno-religious rift that these historical narratives sought to bridge, they also convey a not-so-distant mentality among both Muslims and Jews that featured deeply rooted Jewish communities as an integral and eternal part of the North African social landscape. As such, these narratives offer a vantage from which to see through the shadows of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the ruptures of decolonization and shed light on other Middle Eastern and North African "potentialities of modernities."¹⁰⁶ In so doing, they also offer hope that societies—be they European, North African, or Middle Eastern—might cease to invest religious faith or affiliation with political meaning, and hence free individuals from this heavy, divisive, and enduring legacy of colonialism.

Abstract: On Rosh Hashanah, 1961, six months before the conclusion of the Evian accords promised independence for Algeria, riots broke out in the city of Oran. Surprisingly to many, the aggressors were overwhelmingly Jews, while those injured or killed were largely Muslims. The events—widely covered in the media but since forgotten—were a product of Oran's particular social chemistry, but were also shaped by far wider set of debates about a chasm that was growing between Jews and Arabs in France, Algeria, and the wider Arab world. This article focuses on responses to these riots, especially how they drew on polemical renderings of a shared Muslim-Jewish history. I make two interrelated arguments based on printed matter of the period, French government archives, and memoirs. First, Algerian Jewish observers and pro-FLN nationalist writers, groups that only rarely agreed on the question of Algerian independence, both recalled that the two groups' shared a largely harmonious history. They vehemently disagreed, however, on what this shared, harmonious history meant in terms of political obligations. The article's second argument is that the Israel-Palestine conflict helped sour relations between Jews and Muslims in Algeria, as well as historical renderings of these relations, during the Algerian War of Independence. Specifically, the question of Palestine frequently appeared as a reference when interpreting the riots. Together, the two arguments demonstrate how international issues helped occlude the particular, local stories and belongingness of Algerians, while they defined the future, religio-ethnic contours of the Algerian nation.

¹⁰⁶ "Potentialities of Modernities" is Orit Bashkin's term. See "The Middle Eastern Shift and Provincializing Zionism," the first part of the roundtable discussion "Jewish Identities in the Middle East, 1876–1956," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (2014): 577–605, "The Middle Eastern Shift," 577.