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The French Communist Party and the
Algerian war: an ideological turning point?

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Summary

The subject-matter of this thesis is the interaction between the Parti Communiste Français and the National Liberation struggle in Algeria, and the debate that ensued within the Party itself.

For a detailed study of the Party's line on the war, PCF publications were contrasted with the texts produced by the opposition.

Three main axes were identified crystallising discussion within the Party during the Algerian war:

- the relationship between France and Algeria and the Party's attitude to the French nation;
- the nature of the Algerian nation and its genesis;
- France's military engagement in Algeria.

The dichotomy between the Party's national and internationalist responsibilities is shown to have resolved itself by the fundamental integration of the PCF into the political structure and value system of the French Republic. This study demonstrates the birth of a substantial internal opposition to the PCF during the Algerian war.

Key words: Parti Communiste Français
 Algerian war
 opposition

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PREFACE

Preface

The general aim of this work is to evaluate the evolution of PCF policies towards the question of Algeria, during the Algerian war. The more specific object of the research will be the 'debate' on Algeria within the PCF, or to be more accurate, the divergences between the Party's official political line and a possible 'opposition'.

The corpus of the study was relatively easy to circumscribe, at least with respect to the official position of the PCF. There is abundant literature to choose from and I have systematically reviewed a vast range of Party publications. Starting with Party congresses which crystallise the programme of the PCF, I also studied other publications: among the main ones, l'Humanité, which is read by the largest number of members and sympathisers; more theoretical publications such as the Cahiers du Communisme, Economie et Politique and Nouvelle Critique, which have a more limited circulation, and France Nouvelle, mainly read by Party members. I also surveyed the speeches of PCF members in the Assemblée Nationale and occasional publications such as pamphlets, course texts and books.

The problem encountered was much greater when I attempted to investigate the 'debate' within the Party, as the PCF still preserved organisational principles dating back to its creation, inspired by Lenin's Party of a new type¹. According to the Leninist model, any debate must take place strictly inside the Party through the correct channels permitted by Democratic

Centralism²; this rules out factions and forbids the voicing of differences outside the Party. The official position, agreed upon by the highest instance of the Party, its congress, is the only one to be known to the public and must be defended by all the Party members, even if they have or have had any reservations on it, or frankly disagreed.

The 'monolithic' nature of the organisation as described above, makes it plain that the expression of divergences or disagreements will be difficult to locate.

These may nevertheless be gathered from varied sources:

- prior to each congress, a forum is opened in l'Humanité, the Tribune de Discussion, for the publication of letters on the proposed congress theses. The debate is then officially allowed in the open though in practice limited, because the editorial board carefully selects these letters. On the whole they present a mild version of the criticisms that may be expressed within the Party and an immediate answer to these letters is often provided on the same page, through another letter, or a statement by a PCF official.
- Sometimes official answers and explanations on a point of policy reveal the existence of substantial criticisms on the issue.
- During the period under study (1954-62), a number of reviews were initiated and published by Party members who were intent on expressing their opposition; these reviews were generally dispatched to a mailing list composed of Party members or ex-members. They were naturally in breach of the rules and rarely had signed articles.

- In addition actions and participation in broad organisations other than the Party's approved activities reveal some members' differences with the official line.

- In order to complement this fragmented information, I carried out a large number of interviews with individuals who were active during the Algerian war, Party members, oppositionnels* and FLN activists. These interviews on their own cannot constitute any historical evidence; they were instrumental in confirming or nuancing what the texts revealed; they often provided a good guideline on the mood within the Party at a particular period in time and enabled me to conduct an enlightened study of PCF texts which can be sibylline and lend themselves to different possible interpretations.

Other documents have also been consulted such as FLN texts and non-communist publications dealing with the Algerian war, in order to attain a broader perspective on the question.

The nature of the 'opposition' itself imposed upon the research a thematic approach. There was no organised, coherent, well-defined opposition, but rather a collection of oppositionnels, who questioned the Party line in varying degrees. On the other hand, there were a few main issues around which the debate was crystallised.

My approach is therefore diachronic insofar as a particular question is examined in its historical development - comparing texts dealing with the same theme written at different dates. It is also synchronic insofar as different texts written during the same period have been confronted.

The character of the documents under study necessitates certain comments. The overall importance of texts must be borne in mind in a study of the PCF. Texts published by the Party are discussed at length beforehand, each word is carefully weighed up, and no part of a declaration is accidental. This is particularly true of official texts, such as congress theses, which become law within the Party. For the PCF, texts provide the whole basis of its policies. Consequently most of this thesis is mainly a text analysis.

A number of rules can be applied to identify the full meaning beneath the surface of the written word.

The PCF speech can only be grasped in the light of its heritage.

- The Party is in a way a prisoner of its own principles, or rather the principles laid down by the mentors universally recognised by the International Communist Movement. So that the PCF texts generally prefer to nuance those principles instead of refuting them. Rather than being rejected, a principle will be vehemently reaffirmed, to prove the Party's fidelity to it, before it is qualified to such an extent that its significance is reversed: for instance, the Party insisted on the right of nations to self-determination in the same breath as it stated that French colonies should remain French.

- The Party rarely disputes Marx Engels and Lenin's authority; on the contrary, they are paid due respect. If the PCF wants to justify a policy, it quotes its 'classics'; all the more so as its position differs from whatever happens to be the orthodox 'Marxist Leninist' view at the time. In such

cases, reference to Lenin or Marx serves as a legitimisation of the PCF's policy; their name suffices as a guarantee even if the meaning of what they said has first been reinterpreted by the Party.

The reader of PCF documents needs to have some prior knowledge of Marxism and of the Party's history and phraseology. Seemingly trivial differences [which have very precise significance in Marxist terminology] may uncover two diametrically opposed lines of policy - the proposal of 'liberté' or 'indépendance' applied to French colonies had totally opposite implications.

It is often more important to notice what has not been said than what is spelt out. The reader familiar with communist ideology learns to predict the likely response of the Party to a specific situation and the absence of an expected slogan assumes great significance: one had to notice that the Party failed to promote Algerian independence when the insurrection started.

Indeed, particular attention must be paid to euphemisms, connotations and implications. The same slogan has differing meanings at different times according to the context wherein it has been held up³. The reader must beware when a slogan or a policy is being reasserted. It may indicate that the Party's understanding of it is undergoing changes, and only a slight nuance in the formulation of it betrays a radical change: in 1958, the PCF proclaimed 'unité d'action à la base' with socialists as it was launching a virulent attack against the Socialist Party; earlier on [in 1956], it would have said

'unité d'action' without qualification.

Alternatively, the PCF official emphasis on a slogan may indicate that it has encountered the fire of internal criticism. It would then be accompanied with additional explanations.

If those criticisms are strong and numerous and if the development of events lends them too much credence, the Party will rarely recognise that it was in the wrong. Self criticism is not common practice in the PCF (though it has happened in the past). Instead of acknowledging that it was mistaken, the Party would simply change the interpretation of what it declared previously to suit its most recent position or it speaks of an erroneous 'implementation' of its policy: this was the answer supplied to critics about its vote in favour of the Special Powers in 1956.

The greatest difficulty resides in the fact that one rarely obtains a precise, explicit and definitive formulation from the PCF. Formulae are left vague and open to interpretation; only a careful observation of their context brings their significance to light; this could be compared to Dominique Labbé's 'axe métaphorique'⁴ on a larger scale. The position of words or resolutions, the rank of the person speaking translates the hierarchy of priorities in the eyes of the Party, sometimes better than what is being said. One of the persons I interviewed told me that his first task whilst reading the congress theses consisted of singling out the word independence for Algeria; whether it appeared in the first, fourth or tenth line in the Party programme would tell the real importance accorded to it by the PCF.

One essential characteristic of the PCF is that its policies derive from global theoretical analyses, combined with the 'scientific' study of specific situations and phenomena. This is what the PCF claims and it needs to be verified; as a result one must necessarily pay attention to the possible discrepancies between words and deeds, between reality and the Party's version of it. One finds that the scientific approach is frequently lacking. The Party can portray the reality it strives towards as though it had been attained already, or selects the facts that suit its preconceptions. However, the interactions and dynamism between its practice, its policies, its theory and ideology remain the most interesting element of research on the PCF.

The writing up of the thesis presented a few technical problems. A phenomenon that took place in France cannot be so easily expressed in a language other than French. Some terms describe realities that have no equivalent in another language or culture. In those instances, I used the 'foreign' i.e. the indigenous word in French. Oppositionnel, though rather awkward, was kept for that reason. The settlers in Algeria remained in the text as colons^{*}, which is a term loaded with emotional content; French features of civilisation, such as the characteristics of the army, were retained, such as the appelés^{*} and rappelés^{*}, the contingent^{*} and others relating to legal or administrative definitions, indigènes^{*}, Union Française etc. A few Arab words have remained, because they were in use in French texts themselves.

* glossary

The designation of Algeria's inhabitants introduced an ideological dilemma because it depended upon the definition of 'Algerian' and of the Algerian nation. In order not to preempt on that definition, I tried to avoid the term 'Algerian'. I chose to use the word 'colon' whenever I referred to settlers of French or European origin in Algeria; for the original inhabitant of Algeria (already there before French colonisation), I generally said 'Arab-Berber',* which appeared to be the most accurate appellation. Other words such as 'Moslem',* were used by both the PCF and the French administration.

A last remark needs to be made. After the writing of this thesis was almost completed, the PCF published a comprehensive history of the Algerian war. An epilogue has been added to the thesis to take into account the PCF's book.

* glossary

GLOSSARY

Vocabulary

Appelés

The French army is composed of conscripts and professionals. The conscripts are called up for their national service, hence their designation as 'appelés'; they may be recalled for a further period of service after they have completed their time, they are then 'rappelés'. The 'Mouvement des appelés et rappelés' was a protest movement among conscripts against being sent to fight in North Africa in 1955 and 1956.

Arab-Berber

The Algerian population prior to the French colonisation was mainly composed of Arabs and Berbers who as one group are called Arab-Berbers. This term is preferable to the term Algerians, which leads to confusion as it could be taken to include the colons. Another word was sometimes used to designate Arab-Berbers: les Musulmans, as most of them were Moslems.

Assimilation, assimilationisme

Complete assimilation of the colonies into France would have implied full political rights as French citizens for the 'assimilated' natives, their representation in Parliament and in local assemblies, the application of the same jurisdiction as in France. It would have included cultural assimilation, as well as economic, political and legal assimilation. In practice, this was not carried out except where French

colons were concerned. The rest of the population of Algeria was not 'assimilated'. The doctrine of assimilation was called assimilationisme.

Autochtone

Native of the territory. This was the name given to the deputies from the empire in the National Assembly in 1946 - le groupe autochtone. This term is also sometimes used instead of indigène, which had become derogatory in the colonies.

Code de l'indigénat: see indigène.

Colon

In Algeria, the colons were all the settlers [of varied origins] who became French citizens.

They were also called les Européens. The term 'pied-noir' applies only to colons born in Algeria.

Le contingent

This is the collective noun to designate all the conscripts serving in the army to fulfil their obligation to national service.

Indigène

Literally translated as 'native'; the term assumed a specific significance in French colonies as it implied a legal status. The indigènes did not benefit from the same jurisdiction as the French citizens. They were far from enjoying the same rights, and were treated under a special code [in Algeria since 1881] le code de l'indigénat, which restricted

and controlled all aspects of the life and activities of the indigènes. Infringements of this code, entailing various punishments [fines, jail sentences], included 'offending words' against any representative of the authorities, travelling without authorisation, or holding a public meal without authorisation, etc.

Insoumis, insoumission

The insoumis was the soldier who refused to go and fight in Algeria, performing the act of insoumission. The movement as a whole was sometimes called le refus.

Medersa

These are schools where Moslems learnt reading, writing [Arabic], some arithmetic and studied the Koran.

Métropole

Mainland France, as opposed to the empire, or overseas territories and départements.

Moslem

See Arab-Berber.

Mouvement des appelés et rappelés

See appelés.

Oppositionnels

Members of the PCF who criticised its policies on one or several points, sufficiently consistently or strongly to have become noticeable as an opposition force within the Party. The term came to have a clear meaning during the Algerian war.

Rappelés

See appelés.

Ultras

The ultras were ultra-colonialists, in Algiers, extreme right-wing colons who wanted to maintain Algeria French at all costs.

Main organisations and their leaders

Association des Dulema

See Dulema.

Association des Amis du Manifeste et de la liberté

See Ferhat Abbas.

CRUA

See FLN.

ENA

See Messali Hadj.

Fédération des Elus

See Ferhat Abbas. •

Ferhat Abbas

Born in Taher [1899], Dr in Pharmacy, President of the A.E.M.A.N. [1924-1929] - Association des étudiants musulmans d'Afrique du Nord. He founded in 1927, together with Dr Bendjelloul the Fédération des Elus indigènes. He was at first a supporter of assimilation. During the second world war he wrote the Manifeste du Peuple algérien, which was signed by 56 Muslim 'notables' and was presented to the French authorities [a programme of reforms rejecting assimilation]. He founded the Association des Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté [1944], banned in 1945. Arrested in the aftermath of the May 45 events, he founded the UDMA - Union Démocratique

du Manifeste algérien [1946]. He joined the FLN [May/June 1955]. He became the first president of the G.P.R.A. [Gouvernement Provisoire de la République algérienne] in 1958 and president of the Constituant Assembly after independence in 1963.

FLN

The Front de Libération Nationale was founded as a result of a crisis within the MTLD, which split into Messali Hadj's followers and the 'Centralistes', supporters of the Central Committee [1954]. A third organisation was also created, the CRUA, Comité révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action. It was led by 9 MTLD members, most of whom had participated in the OS, Organisation Spéciale, a para-military organisation founded by the MTLD [1947-1948]. They decided to prepare the insurrection and set up the ALN, Armée de Libération Nationale. They proclaimed the creation of the Front de Libération Nationale.

Messali Hadj

Born in May 1898 in Tlemcen, Messali Hadj emigrated to France in 1923 and worked in various factories including Renault. He joined the PCF which he left to take over the leadership of the Etoile Nord Africaine [June 1926]. After the ENA was banned, Messali founded the Parti du Peuple algérien [March 1937]. Arrested several times and exiled in Brazzaville [Equatorial Africa], he returned to Algeria to create the Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques after the PPA was banned [1945]. He never accepted the leadership

of the FLN and created the Mouvement National algérien at the end of 1954.

MNA

See Messali Hadj.

MTLD

See Messali Hadj.

Oulema

Literally, the word means learned men of the faith [singular, alim].

An association of Oulema was formed in 1931, with the aim of preserving Islam, the Arabic language and Algeria against French colonialism. Sheikh Ben Badis was one of their leaders. Tewfik El Madani became the general secretary of the association.

PCA

The Parti Communiste Algérien [founded in 1936 from a 'region' of the PCF].

PPA

See Messali Hadj.

Sheikh Ben Badis

See Oulema.

Tewfik El Madani

See Oulema.

UDMA

See Ferhat Abbas.

INTRODUCTION

Any student of history will find some interest in the French Communist Party. The PCF today commands a substantial portion of the French electorate despite its relative loss of influence in the 1981 presidential and legislative elections. Election results do not suffice to give an accurate measure of the PCF's importance as an integral part of the fabric of French society. Closely intertwined in sixty years of French history, the PCF also claims for itself part of the French national heritage, its historical figures and its myths. Moreover, the significance of the PCF is enhanced by its international dimension, as one element of the world communist movement which is an essential tenet of the present time.

The Algerian war itself assumed a double dimension. It had the greatest impact on France, marking the final toll of the French colonial empire, shaking the political balance of forces in France, affecting all sections of opinion. It was also the symptom and manifestation of a world-wide phenomenon: the decolonisation process. The old empires were being destroyed, newly independent states flourished, a restructuration of spheres of influence took place. National liberation movements in the colonies contributed a great deal to the shape of the world as we know it now.

During the Algerian war the PCF traversed a continuous period of stress, perhaps the worst one since the Party had become stabilised into a mass party [after 1935]. The PCF had undoubtedly encountered great difficulties before 1954. During the second world war, the Party had to cope with the nazi occupation and a collaborationist French government.

Clandestinity and repression did not facilitate its activities; but apart from the confusion and dilemma resulting from the Germano-Soviet pact [1939] the PCF's task, though arduous, was relatively clear and little internal disagreement could divide the Party over its main objective. Fighting the nazis satisfied both its national and international duties and its perceived role as the Party of the proletariat was fulfilled as well.

It joined in the general struggle against fascism following in the same alignment of forces as the USSR, the 'motherland' of socialism. It also fought for the liberation of France and the French working masses from the nazi yoke. In France itself it gained a lot of popularity.

During the cold war the PCF again journeyed through hard times. It was harassed and isolated, pushed back into opposition. However it went through that crisis relatively smoothly as the menace of repression tightened the ranks of party members and fellow travellers. The Party could feel confident that it was in the right as the very cold war that was directed against the Soviet Union manifested itself in France as an offensive against 'progressive forces' and undermined the political and material gains of the working class. Opposing the USA and the cold war appeared as a defensible strategy from all angles. The war in Indochina could have caused a dilemma for the PCF because it called upon the Party to support a war waged against France. But in reality it did not constitute any substantial problem. The struggle in Indochina was led by communists; they fought against the

French government which threw the PCF into the opposition. After some hesitation, the PCF identified that same government as the ally of the USA [the 'spearhead of imperialism']. Consequently, the PCF was not faced with conflicting tasks. Its various responsibilities were seen by the Party as harmoniously interconnected.

The Algerian war because of its specific nature and its timing posed much greater problems for the PCF. It is in time of crisis and under external pressure that internal contradictions are brought out: the Algerian war played that role for the PCF and exacerbated inner conflicts, enhancing them for the Party's own members and for the benefit of the historian.

France was engaged in a last protracted battle to preserve its colonial empire; it was doomed to lose. This war was of great consequence for France, because of the closeness of ties between France and Algeria; moreover, her perceived moral obligation, to defend the interests of French colons in Algeria, made it more difficult for her to relinquish her hold over Algeria. The insoluble situation, the character of the war, involving a whole generation of young Frenchmen from 1956 to 1962 [after the contingent was sent to Algeria], erecting torture en masse as one of its staple war strategies, destabilised the French national scene. Eventually the fourth Republic fell, opening the way for a 'strong' presidential regime in 1958, with De Gaulle at its head, amongst the threatening shadows of fascist enterprises in Algeria; De Gaulle's coming to power was largely due to pressure from extreme right-wing elements in Algiers, acting with the

sympathies of ruling army circles and bordered on illegality. Some important strata of French society were particularly affected by the war, such as the youth and the army, entailing a polarisation of political opinions.

This period was a time of turmoil for the PCF for other reasons. It witnessed great upheavals in the International Communist Movement, the beginnings of a major split which was not to heal. One of the issues at stake was to lead to a reevaluation of National Liberation Movements in the colonies.

In the midst of these storms the PCF could not remain unscathed and faced a trying test.

The first question to be asked is this: where did the PCF stand vis à vis the Algerian war? Did the PCF concentrate on solving problems within France or on supporting a national liberation struggle which was waging a war against France itself? Did it succeed in reconciling its national and internationalist responsibilities? Surprised by the Algerian uprising like the rest of the French people and politicians, the PCF leaders did not immediately realise the extent and significance of the conflict. Members of the Party became impatient with the PCF's apparent restraint on the Algerian question. They questioned different aspects of the PCF's policy or its whole fundamental approach to the war. This constitutes the subject-matter of the present thesis.

Prior to the examination of Party policies during the Algerian war, a three dimensional perspective must be introduced.

- The specificity of the relationship between France and Algeria - the history of French colonisation in Algeria - throws light on the difficulties met by France and the PCF in negotiating the idea of Algeria's separation from France [Chapter I].
- The PCF's heritage on the colonial question and the evolution of its policy on the colonies since its foundation provides a guideline for an understanding of its attitude towards the Algerian war [Chapter II].
- A synthetic view of the PCF's policies during the Algerian war, encompassing developments in France, on an international level and in the International Communist Movement helps to clarify a very complex situation [Chapter III].

All three chapters are essential to place the research in its right perspective.

A number of works can be found which deal with some aspect of the problématique involved in the PCF and the Algerian war. The first category of books concerns the colonial policy or policies of the PCF.

Monique Lafon¹ compiled a selection of PCF texts on the colonies, adorned with very limited comments which serve mainly as liaisons from one text to the next. The documents are grouped according to specific themes such as 'Aux côtés du peuple vietnamien', 'Avec les peuples d'Afrique'. One of the subtitles is devoted to the Algerian war: 'Les efforts désespérés de l'impérialisme français. La guerre d'Algérie'.

The structure of the texts does not respect any chronological order and thus makes it difficult to follow any evolution of the Party's position. The general outlook is that of a constant position; Monique Lafon, who wrote the book immediately after the end of the Algerian war, visibly endeavours to prove that the PCF has never departed from its 'principled support' for national liberation movements in the colonies. She does not provide any personal analysis of the Party's policies.

Jacob Moneta² organised his selection of documents from a different angle, following the historical developments of the Party's position on the colonial question, subdividing it into main periods:

1920 - 1924 . 1925 - 1935 . 1935 - 1939 . 1943 - mai 1947 .
1947 - 1954 . 1954 - 1962 . and a very short selection on
Subsaharan Africa [1951 . 1960]. His comments propose an
analysis of the Party line on the colonies, which generally
draw attention to what Moneta sees as the PCF's insufficient
support for colonial peoples [after 1935]. Jacob Moneta
thereby attracted the wrath of Jean Suret-Canale³ who, on
behalf of the PCF, took up the task of justifying the Party's
policies; Suret-Canale's conclusions, suggesting the need for
a 'psychoanalysis' of Moneta's 'obsessions' were even more
scathing than Moneta's criticisms of the Party. On both
sides, the tone occasionally partakes more of a polemical
slanging match than of analytical research.

Grégoire Madjarian⁴ has written a very well documented book on the PCF and the colonial question from 1944 to 1947; he thus concentrated on a period during which the PCF was sharing power but he also raised a number of issues which remained topical after the Party had been thrown into the opposition and even during the Algerian war, such as the question of the Union Française and the relationship between France and its overseas territories.

He more specifically addressed himself to events that were on the agenda at the time: the war in Indochina and to an extent the 'troubles' in Madagascar. He wrote two useful chapters [out of twelve] on North Africa, but the scope of his study did not encompass the Algerian war itself.

Emmanuel Sivan⁵ has written on Communism and Nationalism in Algeria [1920 . 1962] and therefore inevitably mentions the PCF extensively, because Algerian communists belonged to a branch of the PCF before they formed a party of their own [in 1936] and because the Parti Communiste Algérien and the PCF retained very close links. However this work cannot be confused with a study of the PCF and the Algerian war.

As for the period of the war itself, Eric Levine's 'French intellectuals and the Algerian war'⁶ has offered a good survey of the movements of opposition to the war, which concerns the PCF insofar as communist intellectuals took part in those movements. It is all the more interesting for our study as intellectuals were the most readily mobilised around the question of Algeria in the Party. But of course Eric Levine did not exhaust this aspect of the much wider problem he broached.

Very few works have specifically investigated the PCF and the Algerian war: two Maîtrises, by Geneviève Bugnod and Irène Eddi, 'Le PCF et la question algérienne du 1^{er} novembre 1954 au 13 mai 1958',⁷ and by Martine Eyrignoux 'Le PCF et la question algérienne du 13 mai 1958 au référendum de janvier 1961',⁸, together cover the Algerian war in a useful study, but which necessarily remains limited.

A useful article by Irwin Wall⁹ has outlined the main positions adopted by the PCF during the Algerian war and pointed to the integration of the Party into the French Republic.

Jacques Jurquet¹⁰ has undertaken a comprehensive work on the Algerian National revolution and the PCF. He has so far published three out of the five promised volumes and has brought the story to 1945. The completed work would no doubt be an essential tool on the PCF and Algeria, bearing in mind that Jurquet's starting point is the Algerian National Revolution [not the PCF itself] as is indicated by his title. In his article on Jean Dresch¹¹, René Gallissot¹² mentioned two important questions: Dresch's concept of Algeria as a nation and his participation in numerous committees against the war. Altogether, my approach is at the same time more general and more specific.

More general because it embraces the PCF's evolution regarding Algeria throughout the duration of the war. More specific because it addresses itself to the matter of contradictions within the PCF on the question of Algeria; it concentrates on the issues that aroused discussions and disagreements. No

other work has devoted itself to the study of the internal opposition to the Party's line on the Algerian war.

François Fejtö¹³ deals with the opposition in his the PCF and the Sino-Soviet Split but does not provide a detailed study as he tackles a broader subject. Richard Johnson¹⁴, in the 'French Communist Party versus the students' touched on the opposition during the Algerian war but he was really more interested in a later period of the students' movement. Some aspects of the PCF and the oppositionnels' position and actions were also studied in Una Resistenza Incompiuta¹⁵, a comprehensive work written by Janine Cahen and Micheline Pouteau, and in Les porteurs de valises¹⁶.

Through my own research on the opposition, I have identified three main axes crystallising discussions within the Party during the Algerian war.

- The relationship between Algeria and France which brings in the Union Française, economic links between them and the Party's concept of the French nation as a determinant factor of its outlook on Algeria [Chapter IV].

- The Algerian Liberation Movement and the nature of the Algerian nation, for which the PCF proposed a highly controversial definition [Chapter V].
- France's military involvement in Algeria and the Party's response to it [Chapter VI].

I tried to investigate the precise developments of the Party line on those questions and the main 'lignes de force' underlying it. Did the Algerian war signify the continuation of an ongoing policy or a rupture?

Did it provoke a major internal crisis for the Party?

Was the 'opposition' qualitatively any different from what it had been previously?

The Algerian war revealed the Party in relation to its national role and its internationalist responsibilities.

Can one say that it is clear from an analysis of the PCF's reaction to the Algerian war that the Party finally revealed itself during the period 1954-62, as fundamentally integrated into the political structures and value systems of the French Republic? Can one date the PCF's 'domestication' from this period. Above all, is it fair to argue that, prior to the Algerian war, any serious gauchiste critique of the PCF was impossible whereas during and after the war, the bases of such a critique which were to inform the politics of the left throughout the 60s and 70s were laid?

Can one therefore speak of the Algerian war as a major ideological turning point in the history of the PCF?

CHAPTER I

Algeria under French colonisation

The Algerian war was eventually to become the classical example of a rearguard battle waged by a colonialist power to retain its empire against the odds of history.

The 3700 French troops which landed in the bay of Sidi-Ferruch on 14 June 1830 were faced with a prolonged armed resistance which was only put down in 1871. Thereafter the resistance to French colonisation remained latent until the armed struggle flared up on a national scale in the 1954-62 war. In Leninist terms, for a communist party, the general analysis of this modern version of the war was that of a national liberation movement fighting for independence against an imperialist power. But the particular form of the war, the issues involved and its impact on France itself are more complex and can only be understood through a concrete observation of the relationship between Algeria and France. The history of French colonisation in Algeria wove tight links between the two territories. Successive French governments showed a constant concern for Algeria which was translated into a specific administrative and political status different from that accorded to other colonies. The existence of an important French colon community in Algeria contributed to the specificity of the relationship between Algeria and France, and provided a powerful 'Algerian lobby'. The geographical proximity, the frequency and intensity of exchanges between the two lands, the century old French occupation added to the particular character of Algeria, and further strengthened its ties with France. Meanwhile, the colonial situation of the Arab-Berber population played its role as a potent centrifugal force, all the more explosive as its needs and demands would be left unanswered for 124 years. The slow awakening of the Algerian national movement accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century leading to the Algerian war.

Part One: French colonisation in Algeria

I Political and administrative status of Algeria

At the moment of the outbreak of the war, Algeria was considered as an integral part of France according to the official interpretation of the French government. This had not changed very much since the nineteenth century. As late as 1956, it was made very clear by Guy Mollet:

'Les départements d'Algérie constituent une partie de la République française. Ils sont français depuis longtemps et d'une manière irrévocable.'¹

Vast numbers of French people accepted this thesis; it was taught diligently on school benches in France and in Algeria. The real situation was more difficult to define, as Charles André Julien noted:

'L'Algérie a toujours occupé une place originale parmi les possessions françaises. On a discuté, à perte de vue, s'il s'agissait d'une colonie ou d'un simple prolongement de la France... La difficulté consistait à la baptiser. Les juristes s'en tiraient en disant qu'elle était une "création sui generis".'²

The dilemma faced by jurists and their conclusion about Algeria, a "création sui generis" underlined the unique nature of the Algerian problem. The dual character of Algeria, in some respects an 'extension of France' but also a colony, and the tight knit relationship between Algeria and France must be examined for a better understanding of the extreme complexity of the decolonisation process.

The initial occupation of Algeria by the army in 1830 placed it under military rule as was to happen in most later French colonial conquests. The Arab Bureaux, composed of military officers, took in hand the administration of each area, fulfilling the task of organising the colony. Algeria was ruled by decrees - le régime des décrets - and a Governor General was appointed. Considerable changes in the administration of Algeria were to be brought in by the Second and Third Republics. These led to an integration of Algeria to France.

The 1848 Republic promoted both the settlement of French colons and the concept of 'assimilation'^{3*} whereby Algeria was to be considered as part of France.

'On défendra le sol de l'Algérie.⁴
comme le sol même de la France'.

The Second Republic, in an attempt to emulate its predecessor took up assimilationisme and proceeded to treat Algeria as being on a par with France - i.e. its benefitted from similar administrative structures and its population could enjoy the status of French citizens. Algeria was to be divided, like the rest of France into départements [three] and a varying number of arrondissements administered by préfets and sous-préfets. General and municipal councils were instituted for the French colons who could also elect representatives [three] to the French Assemblée Nationale. Vast territories occupied by Arabs and Berbers were ruled by the Arab Bureaux, as before⁵. It is clear that assimilation only applied to the colons whereas the Arab-Berber population retained its colonial status.

During the Second Empire policies vis à vis Algeria underwent considerable fluctuations but did not introduce any substantial changes that would outlive the Sedan defeat [1871].

It fell upon the Third Republic to give Algeria its definitive status. On the whole the Third Republic resumed the work of the Second for the continuing integration of Algeria's administrative and political structure into that of the mother country.

In a first stage the three départements of Algeria had préfets responsible directly to the Ministry of the Interior; the system of rattachements subordinated Algeria to nine ministries - Justice, Education, etc. - . By 31 December 1896 with the end of rattachements a Governor General assisted by a Superior Council regained authority over the Administration: its agents were civil servants from the métropole.*

Algeria retained its three deputies in the Assemblée Nationale elected by the colons (i.e. French citizens) and gained a Senator in 1875.

Algeria was subdivided into three categories of communes.

1 - 296 'communes de plein exercices' which could be compared to 'mainland' France communes in administration, with their elected municipality.

2 - 78 'communes mixtes': run by an appointed administrator, assisted by elected representatives.

* glossary

3 - a number of military enclaves, 'communes subdivisionnaires' under the order of an army officer⁶.

Whilst the colons fully took part in the running of the territory, the limitations imposed to Arab-Berber representation rendered their participation ineffectual⁷.

The Arab-Berbers had the worst of both worlds:

On the one hand they suffered the code de l'indigénat^{8*} as though Algeria was the very same as other French colonies.

On the other hand, Arab-Berbers were further disadvantaged by Algeria's official status as French départements, which delivered control to the colons. The indigènes suffered more at the hands of the colons whose interests directly conflicted with their own than if they had been ruled by decisions emanating from the Ministry of Colonies. The 'communes de plein exercices' are a good example of the uncontrolled plundering of Arab-Berber population, all the by-laws on land tenure and taxation being passed by a colons-run municipality⁹.

Whenever an attempt was made from 'Paris' to improve the situation of the indigènes it encountered open hostility on the part of the colons who did their best to neutralise it. Clémenceau on 4 February 1919 opened up possibilities for indigènes to become French citizens¹⁰. This policy of Clémenceau was intended to recompense the participation of Arab-Berbers in French trenches during the war.

* glossary

Little of it materialised, partly because of the numerous restrictions imposed and mainly as a result of the opposition of the colons.

Meanwhile their power had continued to grow thanks to a powerful Algerian lobby in Parliament. Their pressure had already led to the creation of the Délégations Financières in 1898, which the colons controlled. The role of the Délégations, consultative at first, soon had the upper hand over all of Algeria's finances. The budget for Algeria, proposed by the Governor, depended on their approval. This assumed paramount importance when Algeria was granted financial autonomy (except for military expenses) and 'civilian personality'¹¹. The Délégations included forty four French citizens in addition to twenty two, then twenty four Arab-Berber representatives, who had been carefully vetted by the 'Administration' ensuring their total loyalty to the Governor¹².

The situation outlined above remained the same until the Fourth Republic. The Popular Front which raised hopes of amelioration among the Arab-Berbers remained powerless in front of the colons' obstruction. Its most significant proposal, the Blum-Violette project¹³, was not even discussed in the Assemblée Nationale because of the colons' opposition.

The general set up in Algeria had proved to be well established and resilient to change. The colons satisfied with the status quo successfully resisted any alteration in favour of the indigènes intended by the French government. This pattern was to be followed up until the insurrection.

During the Second World War Algeria came under the rule of Vichy until 8 November 1942, when it became a base for the Allies. The relative weakness of Free France and the need to win the support of Arab-Berbers to its side in the war effort led De Gaulle to promise a number of reforms¹⁴.

During and after the war, it had become impossible to totally ignore the pressing demands of Algerian nationalists. The status of Algeria was to be reconsidered by the new government of France (after the Liberation of France). The Assemblée eventually proclaimed the new 'statut' of Algeria on 20 September 1947. It was intended as a limited compromise for a better Arab-Berber representation. For that reason it encountered the open hostility of the Algerian colons.

Algeria was still a part of France though it gained a greater measure of autonomy. It had personnalité civile and financial autonomy and an organisation of its own including a Governor General, a Conseil de Gouvernement, a Central Administration and an Algerian Assembly¹⁵.

The 1947 statute gave Algeria the final shape it was to preserve until the 1954 insurrection.

A Governor General appointed by France remained in charge of all civil servants and the military. A system of double-collège elections allowed non-European representation¹⁶.

Legislative powers were the prerogative of the French Assemblée Nationale which could apply to Algeria constitutional laws, the civil and criminal code. However this process was not automatic as in the rest of the French territory.

New laws would become applicable to Algeria only if the Assemblée Nationale expressly specified so.

It was the responsibility of an Algerian Assembly to extend and adapt 'metropolitan' laws applicable to Algeria. It could also pass bye-laws thereafter to be sanctioned by decrees, and it decided on the Algerian budget and taxation. The Algerian Assembly was a remake of the old Délégations financières with additional attributes, and a different composition:

Out of 120 members, 60 were elected from the first college - 464 000 French electors - and 60 from the second college - 1 400 000 Arab-Berber voters¹⁷.

In the last analysis, although the Algerian Assembly enabled Arab-Berbers to have a say in the running of the territory this participation remained theoretical and inequitable for several reasons.

It was not really representative as far as the Algerian population was concerned; in 1947, 922 000 Europeans were given the same degree of representation as 7 860 000 indigènes, as a result of the double collège system¹⁸.

Moreover, it merely masqueraded as a democratic body since it functioned by openly admitted electoral frauds and the silencing of Arab-Berber organisations. It became so well known that the term of 'élections à l'algérienne' was used as a synonym of rigged elections.

¹⁹ 'A propos des élections cantonales de mars 49, Jacques Fonlupt-Esperaber, écrivait au Ministre de l'Intérieur, le 14 avril:

"Ce ne sont pas les électeurs qui ont choisi l'élu, c'est l'Administration qui l'a désigné en employant les méthodes éprouvées dont en Algérie, une expérience regrettable lui enseigne l'usage. Le fait n'est pas seulement indiscutable. Il est avoué. Aucun des fonctionnaires que j'ai vus n'a eu un seul instant l'idée de contester qu'en Algérie les élections soient l'oeuvre de l'Administration. Tous me l'ont dit plus ou moins clairement. L'un d'eux m'a déclaré expressément, en présence de notre collègue M. Pierre Henri Teitgen, qu'il exécutait les ordres qu'il avait reçus, qu'il "faisait les élections" parce que telles étaient les instructions'..."

'En mars 49, à Boudouka (région d'El-Milia) 101 électeurs seulement prirent part au vote: le procès-verbal attribua 700 voix au candidat de l'Administration'.²⁰

In practice the Algerian Assembly was used as a key instrument of power by the colons, who put a brake on the implementation of laws which did not meet their interests - since laws passed in Paris were subject to the approval of the Algerian Assembly before they were introduced in Algeria. 'Concessions' granted to the Arab-Berbers, such as the voting rights for women, the right to control the Muslim cult (up until then the Islamic clergy was appointed by the administration), the teaching of Arabic, remained empty promises.

This whole state of affairs reflected the inheritance of a well established routine. The peculiar status of Algeria handed over to the colons an overwhelming political weight, which tied the hands of the French government, thus further degrading the situation of the Arab-Berber populations. Meanwhile, official texts continued to declare that Algeria

was France and a good number of French people believed this to be so. The thwarted aspirations of the Arab-Berbers who could witness the inanity of democratic channels, would be all the greater for it. A violent outcome was inevitable.

II Economic aspects of Algeria's relationship with France

Historically, Algeria was the first of the 'new' French colonies. [Most of the old ones such as Canada were lost by the beginning of the 18th century]²¹. For this reason and because Algeria was conquered much earlier than the possessions of the new colonial empire [after the mid-century], it combined the features of two forms of colonisation.

As regards Algeria, both the functions described below by Jules Ferry were fulfilled.

'La forme première de la colonisation, c'est celle qui offre un asile et du travail au surcroît de population des pays pauvres ou de ceux qui renferment une population exubérante. Mais il y a une autre forme de colonisation : c'est celle qui s'adapte aux peuples qui ont, ou bien un excédent de capitaux ou bien un excédent de produits. Et c'est là la forme moderne, actuelle, la plus répondue et la plus féconde'.²²

As an outlet for French settlers as well as for capital and manufactured goods this dual role of Algeria explains to a great extent the specific problems faced by the process of colonisation. The substantial settlement of colons brought Algeria closer to France than any other colony. It had in its making the seeds of a difficult conflict to come at the time of separation from France.

From 1830 the French army gradually extended its hold over the Algerian land-mass, confiscating property and land from the Arab-Berber inhabitants. The official occupation of the land started after the defeat of Abd El Kader who had successfully resisted the French until 1847.

In 1848, the law of the 23 September²³ offered settlers 12 ha plots and a grant of 50 million Francs was voted towards the creation of 'centres de colonisation', fulfilling Bugeaud's pledge in 1842:

'La conquête ... serait stérile, sans la colonisation. Je serai donc un colonisateur ardent'.²⁴

A whole procedure was engineered to make land available. Confiscation of lands became the standard punishment whenever any natives took up arms against France or proved to be hostile to the colons. This spiralled into a vicious circle: Arab-Berber peasants revolted against the loss of their livelihood and savage reprisals were followed by the confiscation of the land of the rebellious tribes. Fresh legal means were provided to allow the occupation of the land: the Senatus Consulte in 1863 and the loi Warnier in 1878.

In 1851 all 'uncultivated' land [2 400 000 ha] had become the property of the state²⁵. After the Kabyle insurrection of 1871 [under the leadership of El Mokrani] and its defeat by the French army, severe reprisals were accompanied with the confiscation of around 500 000 ha of land²⁶. Altogether it was a gigantic enterprise of expropriation and spoliation.

From 1871 to 1900, according to Abdalla Laroui, 687 000 ha were given to the settlers. From 1880 to 1908 another 450 000 ha came into the settlers' hands²⁷. The Second Empire started to encourage big enterprises and exports of capital: vast domains were conceded to the Compagnie Genevoise

[200 000 ha], the Société Générale algérienne [100 000 ha of the Constantinois forests], the Société de l'Habra [160 000 ha] and de la Macta [25 000 ha of cork oaks]²⁸. In areas requiring heavy investment commitments, state funds helped to guarantee expansion. French railway companies built a network of 1375 km from 1857 to 1881²⁹.

Laroui shows how big banks started to control the distribution and sometimes the production of industrial cultures since 1851 [la Banque d'Algérie]. Algeria became a thriving lucrative colony attracting capital investments in agriculture and extraction industry from both state and private funds.

The character of agriculture had changed since the French colons had moved in. Agricultural land had been diverted from its original vocation; wheat as a first large scale agricultural product gave way to vineyards after 1880. This viticulture was only in the interests of the colons at the expense of the Arab-Berber population's much needed wheat. The phylloxera crisis in France led to the expansion of Algerian wine production.

Vineyards	15 000 ha in 1878
	110 000 ha in 1890
	167 000 ha in 1903
	400 000 ha in 1936 ³⁰

The production of wine did not cease to increase.

1924 . 1928	9.73	millions hl
1934 . 1938	17.88	millions hl
1948 . 1952	13.5	millions hl
1953	18.29	millions hl
1954	19.30	millions hl ³¹

Algerian wine was produced for export. In 1953, out of 18 million hl, 16 million hl were exported to France³².

The French owners were largely the beneficiaries of this land revolution. The best lands had been devoted to new cultures of which 90% were in the hands of Europeans. Out of

600 000 ha of good land

400 000 ha vineyards

100 000 ha market gardening

30 000 ha citrus fruit

20 000 ha fruit trees

25 000 ha olive trees³³

Small properties gradually diminished, the influx of capital concentrating the land into big latifundia, 6% of owners held more than half the vineyards³⁴, so that the number of small colons decreased. Most of them had migrated to the towns where they found work.

As for industry, it was limited to extraction industries for export, in the hands of few enterprises [i.e. the Ouenza Company, which began in 1921, controlled 78% of Algerian iron ores³⁵.]

How did Algeria fare economically in its exchanges with other countries? Hubert Deschamps has remarked that Algeria was the only new colony to be 'assimilated' economically, the law of January 1851 allowing Algerian products into France, free of duties³⁶.

Unlike Tunisia, Morocco or Madagascar, Algeria 'benefitted' from a Union Douanière with France, as a result of which she

lost 8 million Francs every year - because French prices were above world prices. The same products bought from other countries would have been much cheaper. Algeria imported food and manufactured products, machines, building material from France and exported mainly agricultural products [86% of exports in 1952], together with raw materials [10.6%].

Colette and Francis Jeanson underlined the very close economic links between France and Algeria³⁷: Algeria was France's best customer, 11% of France's exports were shipped to Algeria - mostly manufactured goods, electric goods, cars, etc - 7.1% to West Germany, 5.4% to Great Britain. Algerian imports in France came third [7.3% of all imports] after the USA [9.3%] and West Germany [7.6%].

The commerce between Algeria and other countries was decreasing while France provided 73.6% of its imports and received 70% of its exports³⁸.

The adverse balance of Algerian finances had to be regularly redressed by French state funds. This looks forward to the PCF's arguments concerning the cost of Algeria to the French tax payers. But there is one thing which these few figures make absolutely clear: the fact that the whole way of life and standard of living of the colons was subordinated to the continuation of Algeria's close relationship with France.

III Colons and indigènes

This very brief survey of the judicial and economic history of Algeria would not present an accurate picture without some consideration being given to the distribution of its population.

The census of October 1954 revealed:

1 042 500 'non-Muslims'

[983 100 French citizens out of which 50% were of non-French origin.]

8 484 000 Muslims [i.e. Arab-Berbers], the sum total of the

Algerian population numbering 9 526 000 inhabitants³⁹.

Unlike other French colonies, Algeria was the home of an important contingent of European settlers who came in successive waves. Initially the French government made it a policy to encourage the growth of this population. Many of them were of non-French stock: from Spain, Italy or Malta. The French government passed laws⁴⁰ in an effort to increase the number of French settlers in order to reduce the disproportion between the native population and the settlers' group - to no avail; the imbalance remained. The two groups stood face to face and the discrepancy between them was on the increase. The numbers of French settlers rapidly stagnated whereas the Arab-Berber population was the subject of a galloping birth rate: it doubled between 1901 and 1951 to around 8 million⁴¹.

There was no parity in their standard of living as is revealed by their respective incomes.

National income per inhabitant:

60 000 F per month for a 'French' Algerian

25 000 F per year for a 'Muslim',⁴².

The settlers were greatly advantaged by the distribution of land; the colons had been given the best lands. The majority of Arab-Berbers were below the bread line⁴³. General Bugeaud had argued:

'Partout où il y aura de bonnes eaux
et des terres fertiles, c'est là
qu'il faut placer les colons, sans
s'informer à qui(elles)appartiennent',⁴⁴.

Only 47.3% of the surface of Algeria remained in the hands of the Arab-Berbers⁴⁵. Whilst the colons' land could be irrigated easily, 75% of Muslim lands could not accommodate any equipment and yielded very poor crops⁴⁶. According to André Nouschi⁴⁷ one hectare of land yielded 34 000 F for a colon against 6 400 F for a fellah⁴⁸.

On the political plane the same imbalance existed. The colons maintained the upper hand; even the very limited degree of Arab-Berber participation in political life was rendered nul and void by the inequity of the supposedly democratic channel further discredited by electoral manipulations which installed bogus representatives in the pay of the French colons' interests.

Inequality of rights between indigènes and colons was official; the code de l'indigénat imposed all kinds of restrictions on Muslims. They could be imprisoned without trial, there were no provisions for the protection of employment where natives were concerned and no right to organise.

Salaries for the same amount and type of work were lower for natives and the possibilities of promotion were very slim if not totally absent. Access to the civil service, for instance, was practically barred to Arab-Berbers: out of 2 000 civil servants in Algeria there were 8 Arab-Berbers⁴⁹. Unemployment did not affect the colons at all, whilst it was a permanent feature among the indigènes; Larbi Bouhali estimated 1 500 000 unemployed, without counting the 400 000 Arab-Berbers who emigrated to France in order to seek employment⁵⁰.

Social laws barely touched the Muslim population, whereas the colons enjoyed full social benefits on a par with their compatriots in the mother country. For example, there was no family allowance for the indigènes working on the land, i.e. the vast majority of them, and only restricted allowances for others and if they were sick, sickness benefits would only be paid on the 11th day and only salaried workers had a pension (i.e. a tiny minority of them)⁵¹.

These are only a few instances of the inequity of treatment; it is little wonder that the ground was laid for an open confrontation. As Germaine Tillion has shown, not only were the Arab-Berber inhabitants reduced to below the bread line, they were constantly forced to witness the opulence displayed by the colons' way of life⁵².

From the point of view of the non-French settlers, the assimilation process had been a complete success. Schooling and military service had transformed them all into 'good' Frenchmen. Soon there was hardly any trace left of the

Spanish or Italian community. They merged into the Algerian pieds noirs⁵³ who believed that France was their motherland. The situation for the Arab-Berber group was very different. Having broken up its traditional society, as has been shown by Abdallah Laroui⁵⁴, French colonisation failed to operate a cultural remoulding of the native population. Despite its claims to fulfilling a 'civilising mission', the penetration of French culture did not reach beyond a few individuals. On the contrary the whole process could have been renamed 'decivilisation'. If we take the example of education, the French occupation did not have very positive results. In 1830, there was less illiteracy in Algeria than in France⁵⁵ [over 40% in France]. In 1957, Germaine Tillion assesses illiteracy in Algeria at 94% for men, 98% for women among the Arab-Berbers⁵⁶. Just before the war [1954 - 1962] Charles-André Julien found that only 110 000 out of 1 250 000 children between 6 and 14 years of age attended French schools⁵⁷. Access to higher education was even more limited for Arab-Berbers. At University level there was one student out of 227 European Algerians, and one student for 15 342 Muslim inhabitants⁵⁸.

The cultural oppression - closures of Islamic schools which existed in most villages, control of the Islamic clergy by the French administration despite the 1905 law on the separation of the Church and the state - failed to eradicate Islam or the Arabic language, but drove the indigènes to withdraw into their own culture.

Racism institutionalised by all the discriminatory laws was prevalent among the colons who did not hesitate to assert the

inferiority of the Arab-Berber population. These were treated as sub-humans by the colons. Catroux's quotation of the colons' comments on the indigènes sums up their prejudices.

'Les indigènes sont "congénitalement des mineurs". Ils veulent et ne peuvent "être gouvernés que par voie d'autorité" et ne sont "pas accessibles à l'esprit et à la pratique des idées démocratiques" car leurs sociétés ne connaissent "d'autre alternative que le régime féodal ou l'anarchie"'60.

The situation in Algeria and its relationship to France have to be considered from a triangular point of view. It is not sufficient to study the two poles of the axis: France versus Algeria - imperialist métropole and colony . The problem is further complicated by the special status of a substantial population of French settlers.

Although the colonial nature of Algeria remained at the heart of a fundamental understanding of the contradictions, the most acute conflicts manifested themselves at the level of French settlers and Arab-Berber relationship.

France could not extricate itself from the ambiguity in its policy towards Algeria. The French government had been professing a policy of assimilation claiming that Algeria was part of France; the colons benefitted from it since they were truly 'assimilated'. But the double standard applied to the respective populations left no doubt about the hypocrisy of an assimilation that applied solely to Europeans. Arab-Berbers remained colonials, but in a worse situation perhaps than other colonised peoples elsewhere, because of the colons' presence. Even when the French government attempted

improvements for Arab-Berbers, if they were pressurised to do so by circumstances, the colons would raise hurdles of all kinds to hamper the implementation of these reforms. The Arab-Berbers lost faith in the finding of a peaceful solution to the problem, after they had tried in vain to use democratic channels. Violence presented itself as the only reliable option. It would then be difficult to unlock such a Gordian knot.

Part Two: The Algerian National Liberation Movement

A survey of the relationship between Algeria and France would not be complete without examining the Algerian national movement. The birth and consolidation of the Algerian nation can be observed through the development of the national liberation struggle. Nationalism and national demands are part and parcel of the national phenomena; they provide us with a gauge of 'national maturity' in Algeria.

Mostefa Lacheraf divided into three periods the collective reaction of the Algerian native population to the French occupation⁶¹:

- a first period witnessed recurrent armed rebellions ranging from the beginning of the conquest under the leadership of Abd El Kader till El Mokrani's attempt in 1871;
- in a second stage the people's active resistance appears to have relatively subsided;
- from 1920 onwards, the Algerian movement awakened under new forms.

This latter phase is the one we shall concentrate on.

The first personality to come to the fore was the Emir Khaled who benefitted from the 1919 law brought in by Clémenceau and who won the municipal election on the 'liste indigène' in the Spring of 1920. This election was to be declared void by the administration but Khaled's success had born witness to the support which Algerian Moslems gave to his programme.

- ' - suppression complète des pouvoirs disciplinaires des administrateurs et des juridictions d'exception;
- application du droit commun à tous les habitants d'Algérie sans exception;
- assimilation complète des fonctionnaires indigènes à leurs collègues français à égalité de droits⁶².

Khaled, a captain in the French army and grandson of Abd El Kader, was taking up and developing demands first formulated by the 'Mouvement Jeune Algérien' in 1912; those demands were essentially assimilationist.

The interpretation of Khaled's historical significance remains controversial. André Nouschi includes him in his chapter 'Les débuts du nationalisme'⁶³. Charles André Julien first called him 'le véritable précurseur du nationalisme'⁶⁴ but subsequently qualified his statement to support Mostefa Lacheraf's interpretation of Khaled as part of the movement for assimilation⁶⁵. However, he is generally identified as a sign-post of the Algerian people's national awakening.

From the twenties Algerian organisations were to grow in numbers and strength without any major interruption. The movement naturally did not follow a straight line upwards as it suffered setbacks mainly as a result of colonial repression. As a whole the audience for national demands increased steadily among the Algerian people. Two trends ran parallel to each other: the one striving for assimilation and the other calling for a separate Algerian entity. The second world war and the Setif events followed by the stubborn refusal of reforms on the part of the colons definitely

defeated the advocates of assimilation. The national movement then reached a point of no return.

For a brief account of the national movement, one can retain three important names epitomising the thirties and the first developments of Algerian national consciousness - Ferhat Abbas*, Sheikh Ben Badis* and Messali Hadj*.

1) Ferhat Abbas represented the trend of the 'Evolués' , modern Arab-Berber elites who later formed the Fédération des Elus* in Algeria; it criticised the French policy and praised Moslem civilisation and dignity without promoting a break with France. In his 'Recueil d'études' written between 1921 and 1930 Ferhat Abbas asked for the gradual integration of the Algerian native elite 'dans la cité française'; in 1936 he denied the accusation of nationalist levelled against him in an article which was to become famous:

'Si j'avais découvert 'la nation algérienne', je serais nationaliste et je n'en rougirais pas comme d'un crime[...] Cependant je ne mourrai pas pour la patrie algérienne parce que cette patrie n'existe pas. Je ne l'ai pas découverte. J'ai interrogé l'histoire; j'ai interrogé les vivants et les morts; j'ai visité les cimetières; personne ne m'en a parlé[...] On ne bâtit pas sur le vent'⁶⁶.

Ferhat Abbas's declaration clearly expressed an assimilationist opinion rather than an acute Algerian national consciousness. It is all the more striking in the light of his subsequent

* glossary

political options, which became more and more radicalised. He eventually became the first president of the Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne in 1958.

2) Sheikh Ben Badis, after creating a Moslem intellectual brotherhood and two monthly reviews, emerged as the leader of the Association des Oulema* [Moslem theologians], set up in 1931. They set up new koranic schools which were powerful cultural and religious instruments. Striving for a regeneration of Islamic purity they glorified the Algerian and Maghrebin past in order to enhance all aspects of the Algerian identity. Their ideology is best expressed by Tewfik El Madani*, one of the prominent Oulema.

'L'Islam est ma religion; l'arabe,
ma langue; l'Algérie, ma patrie'⁶⁷.

Though the Oulema only moderately advocated independence 'sous la conduite de la France', they were adamant on the question of the Algerian national character. It is Ben Badis who forcefully refuted Ferhat Abbas.

'Nous avons cherché dans l'histoire et dans le présent et nous avons constaté que la nation algérienne musulmane s'est formée et existe, comme se sont formées toutes les nations de la terre. Cette nation a son histoire illustrée par les plus hauts faits;... elle a sa culture, ses traditions et ses caractéristiques, bonnes ou mauvaises comme c'est le cas de toute nation sur terre. Nous disons ensuite que cette nation algérienne n'est pas la France, ne peut être la France et ne veut pas être la France'⁶⁸.

* glossary

The Oulema influenced important sections of the Algerian Arab-Berbers who were deeply wrapped in Islam. The medersa* or koranic schools created by the Oulema acted as efficient schools of nationalism - Charles-Robert Ageron counted 40 000 students attending those schools by 1954⁶⁹.

3) A third protagonist arose in the same period, furthering the most radical demands: Messali Hadj, who asked for nothing short of independence for Algeria. He was the leading figure of the Etoile Nord Africaine* founded in 1926. The ENA was especially influential among Algerian workers in France; encouraged and supported by the PCF, it enjoyed a working class base and included in its programme social as well as national demands⁷⁰. After it fell under a banning order from the French authorities, it reappeared as PPA, Parti du Peuple Algérien* in 1937.

A definite Algerian awareness was thus being stirred up during the twenties and thirties, despite the lack of organisational unity in Algeria. From the mid-twenties throughout the years leading up to the Popular Front, the Communist Party in Algeria - which was a branch of the PCF until 1936 - took upon itself the task of promoting the slogan of independence, in accordance with the programme of the Communist International concerning the colonies. After 1936, the newly formed Parti Communiste Algérien - PCA* - advocated for 'Union with Democratic France' in view of the fascist threat. Both French and Algerian communist parties adopted the same line on that issue.

* glossary

All these organisations converged in an effort to attain some unity: the Congrès Musulman was convened in 1936, comprising all the political trends, Ferhat Abbas and the Evolués, the Oulema, the Etoile Nord Africaine and the Algerian Communist Party. A 'charte revendicative du peuple algérien musulman' emerged from it which was to be presented to the French government. It was the last significant attempt towards a 'politique de rattachement à la France',⁷¹ to be widely representative among Algerian national organisations. Its platform included economic and political demands but all were to be achieved within the French framework. The Etoile Nord Africaine criticised it and was expelled at the second congress. At all events, the Congrès Musulman was dealt a blow by the abortion of all the expected reforms - the Blum-Violette project - bringing about widespread disillusionment and shaking the unstable unity of its ranks. The hope or possibility of improvements under French tutelage had been shattered, except in the eyes of the Algerian Communist Party.

For all the other organisations a page had been turned and the trend favouring an Algerian identity separate from France set in as the prevailing one. The second world war merely accentuated this tendency. The most spectacular conversion was that of Ferhat Abbas, who had so dramatically denied the existence of the Algerian nation a few years previously and who now became the chief artisan of the Manifeste du peuple algérien, which denounced the colonial system [at the beginning of 1943]. An addition to the Manifeste ['Projet de réformes faisant suite au Manifeste']

presented a detailed political programme to the French authorities to no avail. A summary of these demands can be found in André Nouschi's book⁷².

Two quotations clearly indicated the radicalisation of erstwhile moderate elites.

'Désormais un musulman algérien ne demandera pas autre chose que d'être un Algérien musulman'⁷³.

Algeria must have an autonomous constitution until the end of the war, stated the programme; thereafter

'L'Algérie sera érigée en Etat algérien, dotée d'une Constitution propre élaborée par une Assemblée algérienne élue au suffrage universel par tous les habitants de l'Algérie'⁷⁴.

This Manifeste is defined by Charles-André Julien as 'le début d'une ère nouvelle de l'action nationaliste'⁷⁵.

From then on the nationalist voice rallied round radical demands which increased proportionately to the repression inflicted by the colonial power.

In 1944 an Association des Amis du Manifeste^{*} was formed comprising Ferhat Abbas, the clandestine Parti du Peuple Algérien (Messali Hadj's organisation) and the Ouléma, thus grouping together the three main streams of the nationalist movement. In March 1945, the first congress of the Amis du Manifeste, which counted 350 000 members⁷⁶, decided against an autonomous republic federated with France and in favour of

* glossary

an Algerian Parliament and government.

The hardship of the war situation had certainly aggravated the Algerian masses. And throughout the Arab world the panarab movement was thriving. Even if no direct link was established between the panarab movement and the Amis du Manifeste, the general atmosphere in Algeria must have been impressed by this oriental wind.

Nationalist sentiment was running high and the ray of hope left to advocates of participation with France and assimilation was shattered by the terrible Setif reprisals in 1945, followed by a systematic repression. Even the democratic channels became closed to Algerian organisations because of the generalised electoral fraud orchestrated by the French authorities to instal their yes-men.

It is interesting to note that the Parti Communiste Algérien had not participated in the Congrès des Amis du Manifeste. Neither was its French opposite number, the PCF, favourable to it. Both continued to advocate for Algeria a close association with 'democratic France', for strategic reasons pertaining mainly to the world and French situation. In its 1946 congress the PCA took note of Ferhat Abbas's electoral success - its newly founded party the Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* gained 458 000 out of 633 000 votes, the PCA only had 53 396 votes⁷⁷. The PCA explained its own failure as the result of its underestimation of the national movement, which portrayed the PCA as a 'non-Algerian party' to the electors. It renounced the assimilation

* glossary

doctrine in July 1946 and asked for an Algerian Assembly and government.

However the PCA was unable to put forward a decisive programme which could appeal to the Arab-Berber masses. The leap taken by Algerian nationalism had left the PCA behind; its hesitations, its emphasis on 'association' with France prevented it from acquiring any real influence among the Arab-Berber population.

The nationalist organisations themselves proved unable to budge the carcan of French rule. All their demands, including moderate ones, had been rebuffed; the 1947 Statut which nationalist organisations had considered as an insult because it granted so little, was not even implemented. The situation was explosive and the radicalisation of the movement did not seem to reap concrete results.

The remainder of the years leading up to the 1954 insurrection witnessed unsuccessful attempts at unity of action between the various Algerian organisations. Being divided among themselves and within their own ranks, they showed their incapacity to respond to the pressing needs of the situation.

'Le Nationalisme bloqué' as Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry⁷⁸ described the Algerian situation on the eve of 1954. Unity was realised through the armed struggle launched by the CRUA - FLN - the Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action* founded the Front de Libération Nationale in 1954. The rapid success of this action rallying the support of the population

* glossary

for Algerian independence, and of all the other organisations but one (Messali Hadj's movement from which the CRUA came) leaves no doubt about the intensity of national feelings in Algeria.

The ground for the Algerian national insurrection had been prepared by three decades of increasingly assertive nationalist agitation combined with France's stubborn resistance to any measure of change.

The post first world war period witnessed a steady progression of Algerian national consciousness. The first Arab-Berber interventions on the political scene expressed themselves in terms of assimilationist demands. Those gradually gave way to a more radical programme. The first mentors of the movement, Ferhat Abbas and the Oulema stressed more and more the separate identity of Algeria as a Moslem Arab-Berber community. They eventually joined Messali Hadj's assertive claim for Algerian independence. The second world war marks a turning point for Algerian nationalism, among nationalist organisations and the Arab-Berber masses. From 1945 the general exacerbation of nationalist feelings urged for a solution which was to be found in the 1 November 1954 explosion.

The Communist Party in Algeria appears to have followed an inverse itinerary. From the mid-twenties, the PCF Algerian 'region' adopted a radical policy, despite the difficulties it encountered from its own members - all of them colons to begin with - and the repression from the French administration.

Its programme - for the decolonisation and independence of Algeria - for the recruitment of Arab-Berbers, a process called 'arabisation' - for the cooperation with nationalist organisations⁷⁹, lasted a decade. At that time Arab-Berber Algerian nationalism was only taking shape, still oscillating between an assimilationist and a 'separatist' trend.

For a brief interval [in 1935] virulent anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism were brandished on a par with anti-fascism⁸⁰. Thereafter the new strategy of the PCF Algerian 'region' and the PCA [created in October 1936] played down its anti-colonialist propaganda from 1936 onwards. The slogan of Algerian independence gave way to 'l'Union fraternelle' between French and Algerian people⁸¹, between Algeria and democratic France against the threat of fascism. This was also the policy of the PCF in the mother country. It seems logical that the same theme persisted throughout the second world war.

In 1946, the PCA held out a friendly hand to nationalist organisations and radicalised its demands but did not subscribe to a policy of independence for Algeria; instead it proposed that Algeria became a Territoire Associé in the Union Française⁸².

Despite its efforts to achieve some unity with the main nationalist organisations, the PCA's sincerity remained doubtful in the eyes of nationalists and the Arab-Berber masses⁸³. Its links with the PCF and its prudence when it came to Algerian independence [the PCA preferred autonomy] and the existence of an Algerian nation [the PCA, following

Maurice Thorez's formula, liked to see it as a 'nation en formation'] did not help to dispel the accusation of 'parti roumi',⁸⁴ levelled at the PCA by the Arab-Berbers⁸⁵.

Consequently, the PCA failed to keep up with an overwhelming Algerian nationalism and played a very marginal role in the Algerian national liberation movement.

CHAPTER II

The PCF and the colonial question: an historical perspective

I Anti-colonialism and the socialist movement before 1920

Anti-colonialism in France did not really begin with the Left. Charles-Robert Ageron, in L'anti-colonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914¹ shows how the main 'anti-colonialist' trends in the 19th century comprised mainly non-socialist movements. Liberal economists who promoted free trade saw in colonialism an extension of protectionism. In Guy de Molinari's view:

'Le colonialisme, tel que le comprend
et le pratique l'Etat, n'est autre
chose qu'une branche du protectionnisme',².

They also objected to the losses in productive investments in France caused by various expenses in the colonies. These arguments were often accompanied by humanist, moral reasons, stigmatising the crimes of colonial conquests.

Republican anti-colonialism expressed itself mostly through the radicals who condemned the policy of conquest and adventure in their programme of 1881 and in the Radical Manifesto [1885]³. Clémenceau brilliantly opposed Jules Ferry's colonial policy in his speech to the Assembly on 31 July 1885.

'Mon patriotisme est en France ...
Avant de s'abandonner au luxe, faites
donc pour une heure la politique du
pot au feu, donnez le pot au feu, les
écoles, les travaux d'outillage.
Pendant que vous êtes perdus dans votre
rêve colonial, il y a à vos pieds des
hommes, des Français qui demandent des
dépenses utiles, fructueuses, au
développement du génie français',⁴.

In 1884, he had also argued that the diversion of French military strength in the colonies was playing into the hands of Bismarck⁵.

After 1895, more and more radicals rallied to the colonial 'camp' and from 1907 the majority of the Radical Party had been won over to a colonialist policy⁶.

The Socialists' arguments against colonialism did not differ fundamentally from those of the Radicals. The Socialists, while denouncing military expeditions in the colonies and the profiteering that ensued, also opposed the loss of French soldiers' lives and the crimes of colonialism against defenceless populations. Some, like Vaillant, took up the anti-Bismarck argument⁷. Jules Guesdes' Party - the Parti Ouvrier Français - to an extent used a 'class' phraseology to condemn colonialism, arguing that it enriched 'capitalist' France to the detriment of the proletariat at the Congrès de Romilly (in 1895).

'Au nom de la France ouvrière et paysanne qui fait tous les frais de la politique dite coloniale véritable pêche aux millions avec les cadavres de nos soldats et de nos marins - le Congrès proteste contre l'abattoir de Madagascar ajouté à l'abattoir du Tonkin ...

Considérant que la politique coloniale est une des pires formes de l'exploitation capitaliste, qu'elle tend exclusivement à élargir le champs des produits de la classe possédante en épuisant de sang et d'argent le prolétariat producteur ...

Le XIII^e Congrès national du Parti ouvrier français s'élève de toutes ses forces contre les flibusteries coloniales pour lesquelles aucun socialiste conscient ne votera jamais ni un homme, ni un sou⁸.

Again one of the POF's prime concerns was the death of French soldiers in the 'slaughter-houses' of Tonkin and Madagascar.

According to Paul-Louis, who became the mouthpiece of anti-colonialism in the SFIO, colonialism resulted from over-production and engendered greater over-production. The colonies provided outlets and money in the capitalist mother country and were a source of riches, but colonialism also caused more poverty and unemployment whilst creating an increased number of enemies, the 'proletarianised' natives. Paul-Louis remained a consistent anti-colonialist after numerous other socialists vacillated and came to envisage colonialism as a vehicle of civilisation. Paul-Louis's arguments were the closest to a Marxist outlook⁹.

Among the anti-colonialists, Jean Jaurès must be cited, though a few words cannot suffice to describe the evolution of his position on the colonial question¹⁰. The main grounds sustaining Jaurès's policy towards colonialism were humanism and pacifism. Jaurès virulently reprovved and denounced the atrocities committed by colonialist adventures, but he did not object to all forms of colonialism, which, in his eyes, could become a civilising tool if conducted peacefully. As the first world war approached Jaurès's anti-colonialism hardened because he identified colonial rivalries as important factors of war.

However, in France, as in the rest of Europe, there was no unanimous opinion concerning colonialism in the socialist movement.

The French socialist movement reflected the trends to be found in the International socialist movement at the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries. Socialists often opposed colonialism for a variety of reasons: pacifism, anti-militarism, humanitarianism or simply because it provided a good platform to expose the corruption of governments in power. Others were not so hostile to colonialism, and many changed their position within the space of a few years. Some were even in favour of colonialism. On the whole there was great confusion on the question.

In his analysis of imperialism, Lenin spelled out anti-colonialism clearly and for the first time established the theoretical foundations for an anti-colonialist approach¹¹.

The debates on colonialism within the Second International revealed confused and divergent opinions. The first congresses of the Second International hardly mention the colonial question. Its 5th congress in Paris [1900] included it in its agenda, condemning colonialism and deciding on the creation of socialist parties in the colonies¹².

The Amsterdam congress [1904] which eventually adopted an anti-colonialist stance, nonetheless disclosed a strong tendency in favour of colonialism among its delegates: the Dutch delegate Van Kol spoke for a 'social' colonial policy because socialist society would need colonies in order to better expand economically, adding that the earth and its riches in any case belonged to the whole of mankind. Shouldn't we intervene, he asked,

'dans l'intérêt de l'humanité
entière, pour que la terre, qui est
la propriété du genre humain,
fournisse à tous ses habitants
les moyens de vivre?'¹³

The following congress [Stuttgart, 1907] displayed
similar trends.

David took up the line presented by Van Kol in Amsterdam¹⁴.

Terwagne and Rouanet [French delegate]¹⁵ supported his
position, the former noting the 'civilising' impact of
colonialism on 'backward' peoples, the latter underlining the
advantages of 'vast colonial surfaces' for European peoples,
which could benefit the economy of their countries¹⁶.

Van Kol demonstrated the need of colonies for surplus
population and overproduction in the métropole; he went as
far as to propose the use of arms to conquer colonies, against
the 'cannibalism' of the natives.

'Si nous, Européens, nous allions en
Afrique avec nos machines européennes,
nous serions les victimes de notre
expédition. Nous devons, au contraire,
avoir les armes à la main, pour nous
défendre éventuellement, même si Kautsky
appelle cela de l'impérialisme'¹⁷.

At Stuttgart the commission in charge of the colonial
question had proposed a motion which did not condemn colonial-
ism.

'qui-en régime socialiste- pourra
être une oeuvre de civilisation'¹⁸.

The congress as a whole reversed this resolution, after a
heated debate.

Any recognition of the principle of a colonial policy would amount to supporting the bourgeois system, said Lenin in his comments on the Stuttgart congress¹⁹. Lenin saw in the vote [108 votes for the colonial commission proposal; 128 against] an indication of the 'contamination' of the European proletariat in countries where the passion of conquest prevailed. The votes of 'small nations' saved the day, outnumbering delegates from big nations possessing an empire.

The colonial question was intimately linked with the issue of imperialism. The International Socialist Bureau planned a 'thorough examination of the economic, social and political aspects of contemporary capitalist society'²⁰ and placed it on the agenda of the forthcoming Vienna Congress of the Second International. The preparatory debate brought out one prevailing opinion: the idea that imperialism diminished the menace of world war. This point of view was shared by many socialist theoreticians, although they reached this conclusion through different paths. For Kautsky, imperialism was not an economic system but a policy of capitalism - to annex agrarian territories. In his eyes, monopoly associations in different countries, concentration on an international scale lessened contradictions between countries; this 'ultra-imperialism' produced a peaceful crisisless phase of capitalism²¹. Hilferding saw in imperialism an 'organised' form of capitalism. International trusts signified that competition gave way to a planned economy which could even peacefully grow into socialism²².

Haase declared that capitalism's aggressive tendencies were becoming blunted, thanks to the collaboration between British and German capital on the world market, compounded with the solidarity of the proletariat in different countries²³.

Only some elements of the extreme left such as Pannekoek retained a pessimistic view of imperialism, which engendered the armament race as an inevitable and economically necessary phenomenon²⁴.

Vliegen [the Dutch rapporteur to the International] summarised the general view on imperialism: according to him, the developments of modern capitalism contributed to alleviate rather than exacerbate existing antagonisms. He noted a trend towards peace among the ruling classes themselves and saw the fact that the division of the world had been completed as a guarantee of the stability of the world situation²⁵.

Lenin did not directly participate in the debate at the time but he wrote ample comments on others' writings, refuting what he considered to be dangerous errors of analysis. For Lenin the very nature of imperialism provided the basis for a definite position on the colonial question. Lenin defined imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism.

According to Lenin, with the coming of imperialism, competition gives way to monopoly, the merging of banking and industrial capitals produce monopoly finance capital, export of capital assumes particular importance and the division of the world between great powers has been completed. Violent competition between monopolies and the uneven development of

capitalism, lead to a war for a redistribution of territories between the great powers²⁶.

Thus the colonies represented an important reserve and a source of strength for imperialism providing an outlet for capital, abundant raw materials and a cheap labour force. The struggle of colonial peoples which threatened this reserve of power, undermined imperialism and ought to be supported for that reason, argued Lenin. After the 1917 October revolution, Lenin established even more clearly the necessary alliance between the proletarian revolution and the national liberation movements in the colonies, which shared the same enemy - imperialism.

'The world political situation has now placed the dictatorship of the proletariat on the order of the day. World political developments are of necessity concentrated on a single focus - the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Russian Republic, around which are inevitably grouped, on the one hand, the Soviet movements of the advanced workers in all countries, and, on the other, all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed nationalities, who are learning from bitter experience that their only salvation lies in the Soviet system's victory over world imperialism'²⁷.

A lengthy exposé would be required to describe the evolution of socialist opinion on the colonial question. The few paragraphs above make it clear that a great number of socialists were not hostile to colonialism and envisaged it as a useful instrument of progress; imbued with their 'European' consciousness and the belief in the superiority of their civilisation, they welcomed the supposedly beneficial influence of imperialist penetration in tribal or feudal

territories, in a nutshell 'backward' cultures. Even Kautsky, who was indignant at Bernstein's pro-colonialist stance, accepted the positive 'civilising' aspect of colonialism under the condition that it was not aggressive and carried out forcibly²⁸. The 'old' French socialist leaders such as Jaurès and Vaillant did not reject colonialism altogether. Very few did. And none of them did so on the basis of a solid analysis of imperialism. Contradictions and confusion were bound to persist in the world and French socialist movement even after the creation of the Third International. The history of the French Party's line on colonialism (after it joined the Third International) gives a good illustration of the problem.

II The PCF and colonialism

Opposing the 'Europeocentrism' of Second Internationalists, Lenin had insisted on the importance of the colonies' anti-imperialist movements. In his 1920 theses he clearly recommended that communists cooperate with bourgeois democratic movements in the colonies²⁹.

The colonial question undoubtedly occupied an important place in Leninism; Lenin's analysis of imperialism had brought its significance to light. Naturally, the Third International, 'Lenin's International',³⁰ demanded that all its national sections adopt the same Leninist approach to the colonial movements.

A The Tours Congress

In December 1920 at Tours, the 18th congress of the Parti Socialiste Unifié became the founding congress of the Section Française de l'Internationale Communiste, or Parti Communiste Français. It is alleged that many delegates had not read the 21 conditions which had to be accepted before the Party could join the Third International. Some of these conditions were not specifically referred to at the Tours Congress insofar as the Comité de la Troisième Internationale did not put forward resolutions relating to all the 21 conditions.

However some evidence suggests that a number of delegates had read the 21 conditions.

Paul Faure in his speech proceeded to analyse 'les plus importantes à mon sens de ces conditions',³¹ which implies

that he read them before he could decide upon the most important ones. He also mentioned a 'livre rouge... qui traîne sur tous les bancs de ce congrès. Je parle du livre intitulé 'Statuts et Résolutions de l'Internationale Communiste',³² which contained the 21 conditions. Those were therefore available to the attention of delegates. The 8th condition³³ dealt with the question of colonies.

'Dans la question des colonies et des nationalités opprimées, les Partis des pays dont la bourgeoisie possède des colonies ou opprime des nations, doivent avoir une ligne de conduite particulièrement claire et nette. Tout Parti appartenant à la Troisième Internationale a pour devoir de dévoiler impitoyablement les prouesses de 'ses' impérialistes aux colonies, de soutenir, non en paroles, mais en fait tout mouvement d'émancipation dans les colonies, d'exiger l'expulsion des colonies des impérialistes de la métropole, de nourrir au cœur des travailleurs du pays des sentiments véritablement fraternels vis à vis de la population laborieuse des colonies et des nationalités opprimées et d'entretenir parmi les troupes de la métropole une agitation continue contre toute oppression des peuples coloniaux'³⁴.

The 8th condition did not leave a shadow of doubt as to the tasks facing the Parties belonging to the Third International, whose bourgeoisie possessed colonies. After stressing the need of a clear cut conduct on the part of those parties, it stressed their duty to expose 'ruthlessly' the feats of their 'own' imperialists in the colonies, to support, not only in words but in deeds, all emancipation movements in the colonies, and eventually, they must demand the 'expulsion' of imperialists from the colonies. The formulation of the 8th

condition was extremely forceful. One could perhaps infer from it that a lot of ideological work had to be done in this field among Parties in the 'imperialist' countries. In addition the 8th condition demanded 'a continued agitation' against colonial oppression among the troops of the mother country, proving that it really intended action in favour of the peoples of the colonies and not only slogans.

Three motions were presented at the Tours Congress on the colonial question.

The Comité de la III^e Internationale and the fraction Cachin-Frossard whilst endorsing the Third International line 'Le Parti est pleinement d'accord avec l'Internationale Communiste',³⁵ proposed a milder version than the 8th condition.

'pour dénoncer l'impérialisme colonial
et pour prendre activement le parti des
populations subjuguées par le capitalisme
européen dans leur lutte contre
l'oppression sous toutes ses formes',³⁶.

Exposing imperialism was retained in the resolution and an 'active' support for oppressed peoples whatever their form of struggle remained, indicating that the Party did not qualify its support for colonised peoples. In this sense the resolution of the Third International supporters at Tours remained faithful to the spirit of the 8th condition. Nonetheless the virulent tone against imperialism had been dropped. The Resolution did not explicitly demand the expulsion of French imperialism from its colonies and failed to pledge agitation in the army against colonial oppression. This moderation in attacking French colonialism betrays a

certain lack of commitment or boldness on the part of members who were the very proponents of the Third International in France.

They did not venture to be too offensive against French imperialism. Two possible explanations could account for their hesitation: either they did not clearly understand and accept the 8th condition or they knew of a potentially strong opposition to the 8th condition within the Party. Both explanations forecast future difficulties for the Party on that issue.

The other two resolutions are mainly similar in what they do not state. They do not denounce imperialism and colonialism, as did the Comité de la Troisième Internationale and the 8th condition. They also fail to offer a total support to the struggle of colonised peoples. Both qualify that support. The Comité pour la Reconstruction de l'Internationale excluded war from the acceptable means of support.

'Il [le Parti Socialiste] se déclare prêt a servir, par tous les moyens, sauf par la guerre, l'action émancipatrice de ces populations à qui il reconnaît comme sacré le droit de disposer librement d'elles-mêmes'³⁷.

The Comité de Résistance Socialiste more clearly opposed the 8th condition.

'Il ne cessera pas d'agir comme il l'a toujours fait, en faveur des populations indigènes que le système capitaliste livre à la conquête et à l'asservissement'³⁸.

This resolution proposed simply to pursue the policy of the Second International on colonies; 'comme il l'a toujours fait' indicates that no change is planned, least of all a clean break with the Second International which is what the Third International asked for. The remainder of the resolution rejects the other aspects of the 8th condition.

'Mais il se refuse a confondre le mouvement de révolte des peuples opprimés avec le travail de libération prolétarienne, il ne peut accepter une propagande qui tendrait à fausser la lutte des classes et à déclâner une guerre de races également contraire à ses principes de fraternité et à sa volonté de paix'³⁹.

The analysis underlying the above statement deserves examining as it will reappear more than once within the ranks of the PCF.

The Comité de Résistance Socialiste derived its conclusions from a rather mechanistic class approach and a 'Europeocentric' outlook. The answer to the colonial problem for it lay in the class struggle in the mother country: proletariat versus bourgeoisie. The colonised peoples considered by the Second Internationalists as more backward would receive their deliverance from the advent of socialism in the mother country. In the meantime their society was seen as less advanced than the French one; some were tribal or feudal, whereas France was one mode of production ahead, capitalist. To support the liberation movements in the colonies was therefore construed by some socialists as a step towards regression, leading perhaps to a return to feudalism. It was inconceivable in the eyes of those socialists that the proletariat (from the

'mother country'] supported movements comprising tribal, feudal and bourgeois forces, often led by the nascent colonised bourgeoisie.

This line was diametrically opposed to the Leninist analysis of the colonial movements for emancipation; for Lenin the real class dimension of the issue placed the proletariat of the imperialist country and the liberation movements in the colonies in the same camp fighting a common enemy: imperialism. Hence the duty of Communist Parties to demand the 'expulsion' of imperialists from the colonies as was stated in the 8th condition.

The motion of the Comité de la Troisième Internationale and the fraction Cachin-Frossard won the day in Tours by 3 208 votes [plus 44 from the Leroy proposal]. Only 1 022 votes went to the Comité pour la Reconstruction de l'Internationale⁴⁰. This result meant that the newly formed PCF was bound to implement the 8th condition. In practice, no unanimity had been reached on the issue, no debate had enabled the differing views to be voiced in the open. The Algerian Federations which in their majority [34 out of 41] voted in favour of joining the Third International, disagreed with the 8th condition and supported the other motions⁴¹. According to Charles-André Julien, their delegate, Zinoviev's telegram aborted the exposé his mandatories had asked him to present.

'Le pistolet de Zinoviev a fait pour le moins une victime. Il a tué dans l'oeuf l'exposé colonial que j'étais chargé de faire éclore au Congrès'⁴².

Somehow a number of Party members were under the illusion that a measure of flexibility would be possible in the interpretation of the 8th condition. As a whole the Party had still to undergo a painful process of 'bolchevisation', which required a fundamental reappraisal of its political, tactical and organisational lines. It had just commenced its metamorphosis; for a long time to come the old trends and differences were to be carried through. Lenin himself quoted the example of the French party to demonstrate the difficulties involved in the transformation of a party of the old parliamentary type into a party of a new type⁴³.

The colonial question did not rank among the priorities of the PCF and the recommendations of the Third International were slow to get under way.

A Comité d'Etudes Coloniales was created at the end of August 1921 which was in charge of preparing a report and a resolution for the Marseille congress of the PCF in December 1921. The congress did not discuss the colonial question and merely ratified the creation of the Comité d'Etudes Coloniales. The lack of concern for the colonies on the part of communist parties already drew the attention of the Third International which invited them to

'organiser une campagne méthodique dans la presse, au Parlement et, dans les masses pour la libération des colonies'⁴⁴.

L'Humanité, at the beginning of 1921 [7 January] had published the views of North African communists who opposed the liberation of the colonies on account of the natives'

'backwardness'. This point of view continued to be allowed in Party publications⁴⁵.

Vaillant-Couturier, who belonged to the Comité d'Etudes Coloniales initiated a series of articles in l'Humanité on French imperialism in Algeria. He thereby intended to expose colonial oppression.

Despite a sincere attempt to bring the colonial question to the attention of communists Vaillant-Couturier himself subordinated revolution in Algeria to revolution in the mother country⁴⁶ and failed to take up a clear cut Leninist position in favour of the liberation of the colonies.

The Comité Directeur of the PCF made no real effort to bring its publications into line with the 8th condition. On the contrary, it failed to publicise precise directives emanating from the International Executive Committee on the colonial question.⁴⁷

B The Sidi-Bel-Abbes Scandal

The French Communist Press did not publish the 'Appel de l'exécutif pour la libération de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie'⁴⁸ manifesto produced by the Executive Committee of the Third International on 20 May 1920. It became known mainly through the bourgeois press and brought about an open confrontation between the International and the French communists who most vociferously opposed the Leninist line on colonies, i.e. the North African Federations. These were almost solely composed of French colons and were not representative of the colonised Arab-Berber populations. In their opinion the natives in North

Africa were 'congenitally incapable of economic, social, intellectual and moral development',⁴⁹. Consequently independence would engineer an historical regression in those territories which would return to feudalism and slavery. They argued that it was irresponsible to unleash such a calamity through agitating for the liberation of colonies and they underlined the necessity for France to stay in 'our colony',⁵⁰. North African communists clearly manifested their belief in the superiority of French civilisation and its progressive rule. They considered the independence of colonies neither as possible nor as desirable before the socialist revolution in France.

They reacted very strongly to the International's 'Appel' known as 'Appel de Moscou'. The Sidi-Bel-Abbes section of the PCF in Algeria in particular achieved notoriety by its letter addressed to the higher instances of the PCF, in which it stated its total disagreement with the letter and the spirit of the 'Appel de Moscou'.

The letter found its way to the Third International, which seized the opportunity to castigate what it considered to be erroneous tendencies in the French Party and in the International Communist Movement as a whole on the question of colonies.

At the Fourth congress of the Third International Trotsky gave vent to his feelings in an impassioned speech, calling the Sidi-Bel-Abbes views a 'great scandal' and concluding that

'on ne pouvait tolérer dans le parti ni deux heures ni deux minutes des camarades qui ont la mentalité de possesseurs d'esclaves'⁵¹.

Safarov attacked these

"'petit bourgeois soi-disants
communistes" qui restaient fidèles
aux conceptions de la II^e
Internationale'⁵².

As a result of the debate the IVth Congress of the International vigorously reasserted the Leninist line on the colonies both in the Resolution on the Eastern question and on the French question, passing a final judgement on the Sidi-Bel-Abbes communists and their likes. The International requested that the French Party

'condamne catégoriquement la position
de la section communiste de Sidi-Bel-
Abbés, qui couvre d'une phraséologie
pseudo marxiste un point de vue
purement esclavagiste, soutenant, au
fond, la domination impérialiste du
capitalisme français sur ses esclaves
coloniaux'⁵³.

It also extended its criticisms to all well paid European workers in the colonies imbued with capitalist and nationalist prejudices who shared such colonialist tendencies. Incriminating the French Party for its neglect of colonial matters, the resolution demanded a ruthless ideological struggle against the Sid-Bel-Abbes line and the organisation of a campaign against colonial slavery, in France and in the colonies. The creation of a permanent colonial office adjunct to the Comité Directeur of the Party was requested, encompassing representatives from communist native organisations⁵⁴.

The IVth congress [of the International] also instructed the PCF to

'prendre en mains la cause des populations coloniales exploitées et opprimées par l'impérialisme français, soutenir leurs revendications nationales constituant des étapes vers leur libération du joug capitaliste étranger, défendre sans réserve leur droit à l'autonomie ou à l'indépendance'⁵⁵.

The stress laid on the support to the national demands of the colonised peoples is worth noticing. Sidi-Bel-Abbes had postulated that the main contradiction in Algeria was a class contradiction within the native population, so that the Arab-Berber feudal lords and bourgeois were considered as the principal enemies. This attitude looks forward to some of the views expressed in Laurent Casanova's article published in 1939 which established a similar cleavage within the Arab-Berber population⁵⁶.

The Third International on the contrary followed the Leninist analysis which saw the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed peoples as the main one in the colonies. The two approaches can be traced back to the resolutions put forward at the Tours Congress, by the Comité de Résistance Socialiste and by the Comité de la Troisième Internationale.

The PCF registered the criticisms of the International. A good number of communists in Algeria were expelled or resigned⁵⁷ but the Party showed no haste in its rectification campaign. The Tribune coloniale in l'Humanité even disappeared causing discontent among the Commission coloniale. However in Paris the PCF put forward an Algerian candidate. Hadj Ali AbdelKader, for the electoral contest in a Paris constituency [May 1924]⁵⁸. Evidently conscious of its

insufficiencies in colonial matters, the French party formulated a self-criticism on that question prior to the next International meeting.

In July 1924, the Vth congress of the International, as one might have expected, renewed its criticisms of the PCF. As Jane Degras noted.

'It was a mistake to think that the national question could not be solved until after the proletarian revolution ... Not enough anti-colonial propaganda was done by the parties in the metropolitan countries, not enough attention paid to the common interests of bourgeoisie and proletariat in the national struggle'⁵⁹.

Thereafter the PCF made an attempt to show more interest in the question of the colonies.

The Comité d'Etudes Coloniales prepared a report outlining a programme of work on the colonial front, paying attention to theoretical considerations as well as to questions of propaganda and organisation:

- the role of the colonies in the capitalist system
- the situation of colonised peoples
- the recruitment into the Party of immigrant workers in the métropole
- the recruitment of party members from the native population in the colonies
- the task of building an anti-imperialist united front
- the anti-militarist work giving particular care to the formulation of immediate demands⁶⁰.

C The Rif War

It did not take long before the Party was given the opportunity to put its anti-colonialist programme into practice. A crisis broke out in 1924, which provided the Party with its baptism of fire: the Rif war.

The Rif area of Morocco was under the control of Spain; the Emir Abd El Krim at the head of the Riffan fighters launched a successful insurrection in 1924, defeating the Spanish troops and proclaiming the independence of the Rif Republic. France, though not directly threatened, intervened against the Rif Republic for fear that the wind of rebellion might spread to its share of Morocco and destabilise its North African preserves, Algeria and Tunisia.

The Communist Party did not hesitate to extend its immediate support to the Rif. A message was sent to the Emir, signed by Doriot and Sémart, to pledge the solidarity of the French proletariat for the total liberation of Moroccan soil.

Communist deputies did not spare their efforts to condemn French colonialist aggression in the National Assembly. They denounced the role of the banks and the imperialist interests at stake whilst the working masses had to bear the burden of war expenses; they were the only ones to refuse a vote of confidence to the Painlevé government [29 May 1925]. They openly called on French soldiers to fraternise with the Riffans⁶¹.

In addition to propaganda work the PCF organised action against the war, prompting the creation of a joint Action Committee, which launched a campaign throughout France. Numerous demonstrations and meetings were held in the main big towns. Jacques Jurquet quotes forty simultaneous meetings⁶². The Manuel of the PCF mentions 15 000 Parisians attending a meeting in Luna Park on 17 May 1925⁶³. A general strike was planned for 12 October which was followed by 900 000 workers.

Campaign work among civilians ran parallel to anti-militarist work in the army. According to Nicole Le Guennec anti-militarism and fraternisation occupied the forefront of the communist press⁶⁴. The Jeunesse Communiste newspaper the Avant Garde published an 'Appel aux soldats' as early as 1 October 1924, which was distributed clandestinely to the troops. Soldiers' demonstrations took place at the time of their departure, some instances of fraternisation were recorded, protests among sailors delayed the departure of their ship⁶⁵.

A comprehensive review of actions launched by the PCF would prove very tedious. The few details quoted above suffice to illustrate the Party's efforts against the Rif war. The key axes of its line are best summarised in the Manifesto addressed by the PCF to workers and peasants in France and in the colonies on 13 May 1925. It demanded

- the recognition of the independent Rif Republic
- the evacuation of French troops from Morocco
- the fraternisation between French and Riffan soldiers⁶⁶.

And yet the Party's action against the Rif war was not a complete success. The response to its slogans was limited; the balance sheet must include in the liabilities column the heavy repression that struck the Party and the lack of concrete results in the way of stopping the war. The PCF leadership declared that it had made 'ultra-left' tactical mistakes in its campaign against the Rif war⁶⁷. However, it did not reach the conclusion that its line on colonialism and the Rif war had thereby been invalidated. According to both the PCF leadership and the International, the Party's action during the Rif war was to be considered as positive and even deserved congratulations⁶⁸.

Reflecting upon that episode of PCF history, it is possible to view it as a watershed for subsequent reference. The PCF often prided itself in the years to come, quoting the Rif as proof of its resolute anti-colonialism. The oppositionnels during the Algerian war cited the PCF action against the Rif war to show up the Party's lack of actions against the Algerian war.

in 1924, for the first time since its foundation, the PCF took up a Leninist position on colonialism; legalist and parliamentary aspirations were swept away by députés who did not hesitate, in the Assemblée Nationale itself, to call for fraternisation between French and Rifian soldiers.

Admittedly the slogan of fraternisation was not absolutely new and the party had already striven to implement such recommendations during the French intervention in the Ruhr. Yet, when applied to an enemy engaged in a war against France,



as was the case in the Rif, it sounded even more 'outrageous' to predominantly patriotic attitudes. The PCF had broken with a strong tradition of Jacobinism and national solidarity⁶⁹.

Independence for the Rif is of equal importance, as it is directly inspired by Leninist principles on the right to self determination [meaning independence]. The PCF made a break with the SFIO, as was noticed by André Ferrat.

'Les socialistes qui votent les crédits pour la guerre du Maroc se démarquent comme social-impérialistes, tandis que notre parti popularise dans la classe ouvrière et les masses laborieuses le droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes et l'indépendance des colonies'⁷⁰.

Independence for the colonies was to remain a major demand for a few years to come.

After the 1926 Congress of the PCF it became customary for the Party to stress the need for a strong anti-colonialist struggle in the colonies and in the mother country. This was rendered more urgent as developing movements in Indochina, Morocco and AEF [French Equatorial Africa] faced severe repression.

On the whole, the Party's approach did not vary fundamentally, vouching support not only for proletarians in the colonies but also for the 'revolutionary national movements' fighting for their independence against imperialism⁷¹.

The tasks facing communists would include building an alliance with those movements, in an attempt to draw them

closer to an anti-imperialist united front. Though the anti-colonialist struggle did not occupy the fore-front in the PCF's range of priorities, it was given a reasonable amount of attention. The International continued to keep it under review and encourage it, urging the Party to create local Sections [of the International] in the colonies, concentrating on the recruitment of native workers, i.e. independent communist parties affiliated to the Comintern. At home, the Party promoted the education of its own members of the working class, particularly immigrant workers, on the colonial question.

Independence for the colonies remained a stable constituent of the PCF's speech on the colonies.

'Non seulement le Parti communiste reclame l'indépendance complète [our stress] de toutes les colonies, territoires sous mandat ou terres de protectorat et le droit à disposer d'eux-mêmes pour tous les peuples actuellement soumis au joug de la France mais il lutte contre toutes les expéditions coloniales et apporte à tous les peuples coloniaux en lutte pour leur indépendance sa solidarité active'⁷².

It is worth noticing that the PCF kept up its demand for the independence of the colonies, in the light of subsequent developments in the Party line.

Maurice Thorez reiterated this demand in the Chambre des Députés [4 March 1933]; the early thirties witnessed an upsurge of insurrectionary movements in Indochina followed by a terrible repression.

'Vive l'indépendance des peuples coloniaux!
Vive l'Indépendance de l'Indochine! Vive
notre lutte commune prolétaires de France,
esclaves d'Indochine, contre l'impérialisme
français! Vive l'amnistie générale!'⁷³

The strength of such statements leaves no doubt about the PCF's theoretical commitment against colonialism, but caution must be exercised to avoid oversimplification. In real terms, the Party's anti-colonialist work fluctuated in scope and in quality. The Party itself acknowledged this at its 1932 congress and adopted a resolution designed to promote better work on the colonial question⁷⁴.

Recurrent observations and criticisms from the Comintern, accompanied by the PCF's regular self-criticisms, alternated with more intense 'colonial' work on the part of the Party. Despite the progress made in particular during the Rif war, the PCF's 'bolshevisation' on the colonial question was still far from complete. It is possible to find an explanation for this in the Party's own words. It recognised that it had underestimated the 'mouvement insurrectionnel anti-impérialiste et anti-féodal dans les colonies et semi-colonies',⁷⁵ and neglected the ideological struggle against 'les courants chauvins, xénophobes et impérialistes suscités par la bourgeoisie et la social démocratie',⁷⁶.

Those 'chauvinist' feelings were no doubt more resilient than the Party had expected. The 'imperialist' nature of France had a role to play in the generation of 'chauvinism' in France. The superprofits obtained from colonial exploitation could be used for the distribution of 'crumbs' [in Lenin's words]⁷⁷ to some sections of the French working class, thus blunting its anti-colonialist potential convictions.

D The Popular Front

Despite the attempts made since Tours to apply the line of the Third International, particularly during the Rif war, the PCF's 'bolshevisation' on the colonial question was still difficult. In the mid-thirties, the urgent threat of fascism mobilised the majority of the Party's resources, pushing the colonial task into the background. Thomas-Adrian Schweitzer discloses a transition period from February 1934 to the first three months of 1935 during which the PCF tried to combine anti-fascism and anti-imperialism, more specifically in the Algerian context⁷⁸. But the latter of the two was soon relinquished as fascism became the central preoccupation for the communist parties: it was described as such by Dimitrov in his report to the 7th congress of the International in 1935.

'With the development of the very deep economic crisis, with the general crisis of capitalism becoming sharply accentuated and the mass of working people becoming revolutionised, fascism has embarked upon a wide offensive. The ruling bourgeoisie more and more seeks salvation in fascism, with the object of taking exceptional predatory measures against the working people, preparing for an imperialist war of plunder'⁷⁹.

Dimitrov also held up the PCF as an example for its successes in the building of a United Front against fascism.

The Popular Front came to power in April-June 1936 in France, with the support of the PCF (but not its participation).

From then on the Party's line on the colonies was tailored not to upset the balance of the Popular Front government.

The PCF contented itself with the reforms promised by the

Popular Front to the colonies [general democratic measures, the opening up of jails]. These reforms often remained a dead letter as a reluctant colonial administration hampered their implementation. For instance, the Blum-Violette proposal, despite its moderation, infuriated the Algerian colons, who made sure that it was not even discussed in the Assemblée Nationale [thanks to their powerful lobby].

Two remarks must be made on the Party's support for Popular Front reforms in the colonies:

- the PCF did not object to French control over the colonies
- its prime concern was not the improvement of the colonised peoples' situation. It pressed for reforms in the colonies, mainly for fear that the colonised peoples might otherwise detach themselves from France, falling prey to fascist propaganda⁸⁰.

The Party's position is open to interpretations. It can be seen as a return to a pre-Tours [or rather pre-Rif war] line. Thomas-Adrian Schweizer holds it as an approval of the assimilationist policy, 'la mythologie assimilationiste du colonialisme français'⁸¹. George Cogniot understands those reforms as a transitional stage, but also a qualitative change.

'une politique nouvelle qui serait différente de la politique bourgeoise habituelle, sans être encore la politique d'un gouvernement ouvrier et paysan ... Une démocratie qui, sans devenir encore socialiste, ne serait plus bourgeoise'⁸².

In more simple terms, it is evident that the PCF had subordinated the colonial question to the decisive issue of the day: the struggle against fascism. The future development of events appears to have confirmed the validity of the Party's anxiety concerning fascism.

The PCF consequently stopped agitating for the independence of the colonies and their separation from France, at that particular point in time to counter the risk that French colonies become a 'reserve' of fascism.

The PCF, whilst maintaining the principle of support to the right of self determination for the colonies, ceased to demand their independence. Maurice Thorez in his closing speech to the 1937 Party congress on the contrary advocated closer links between France and its colonies.

'Il faut s'assurer contre le fascisme
qui provoque à la rébellion et à la
guerre civile dans les colonies,
l'union libre, confiante et
fraternelle des peuples coloniaux
et de la France démocratique'⁸³.

This epoch therefore marks a new turning point in the PCF's policy on the colonies: the concept of a union between colonised peoples and democratic France replaced the almost unconditional demand for the rupture of relationships between France and its colonies, i.e. independence. It had come to stay. The Party's analysis was not new; it resembled Serrati's thesis that liberation movements in the colonies would necessarily be absorbed by another imperialist country⁸⁴. It looked forward to the Party's policy on colonies for most of the next two decades. After the war [1945] the Party would feel that independence for French colonies would be tantamount to abandoning them to US imperialism.

E The Union Française

During the second world war, no qualitative change is to be noticed in the PCF's policy towards the colonies. The emphasis on unity between France and its colonies was confirmed all the more after the USSR had been attacked by Nazi Germany in 1941.

The perspective of victory for democratic France, the coming to life of a 'New France' that would be a friend to colonised peoples and establish a fruitful alliance with them made part of a foreseeable future. The concept of a 'Free Union' between colonised peoples and France began to take shape in the realm of probabilities and would be realised after 1945, in the opinion of the PCF.

The conclusion of the second world war not only demonstrated the victory of 'democracy' over fascism. It had a profound impact on the colonial world. France, though victorious, emerged from the war much weakened: she had shown herself to be divided, conquered and occupied. As a corollary the colonised peoples had become aware of their own strength as Free France solicited their help in the war effort. In return they expected a number of concessions; the Brazzaville Conference⁸⁵ had augured limited improvements: pent up hopes fostered latent rebellion.

For the drafting of a new constitution, the Empire was on the agenda. The popular forces in France brought an absolute 'left' majority (Socialists and Communists) to the Assemblée Constituante; the PCF having gained prestige and

votes from its active participation in the Resistance played an important role in the making of the new constitution.

The PCF furthered the line it had established at its 1945 congress: free association between the colonised and the French peoples 'une Union librement consentie'. L'Union Française was incorporated in the Constitution which also brought about changes in the colonial regime, such as the abolition of the indigénat, and of forced labour, the elimination of a double electoral college [except for Algeria], the introduction of a labour code. The Party voted in favour of the Constitution and the Union Française.

There is no need to elaborate more on this vote as a later chapter deals with the Party's position on the Union Française in detail.

Let us just note that the PCF advocated once more the maintenance of links between France and its colonies, specifically discouraging them from demanding independence at that point in time, given the conjuncture. 'C'est pourquoi le départ de la France du Viet-Nam ne servirait pas la cause de la liberté'⁸⁶.

F The war in Indochina

Upon the defeat of the Japanese, the Viet Nameese National Insurrection led to the proclamation of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on 2 September 1945. An agreement with the French government recognised the DRVN (Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam) as

'un Etat libre, ayant un gouvernement,
un parlement, son armée et ses
finances, faisant partie de l'Union
indochinoise et de l'Union française',⁸⁷

on 6 March 1946.

France was less magnanimous in its handling of the Indo-chinese situation than the declaration couched in its constitution suggested and launched a war of colonial reconquest. The PCF adopted a dual approach to the question:

- it disapproved of the war [communist deputies abstained in a vote on military credits on 20 March 1947]
- it did not advocate separation between Indochina and France.

On the one hand France ought to have respected its own constitution, which was violated by the aggression on Indochina. The PCF here posed as the best champion of the Constitution which stated in its preamble:

'La République française n'entreprendra aucune guerre dans des vues de conquête et n'emploiera jamais ses forces contre la liberté d'aucun peuple',⁸⁸.

On the other hand, the Party encouraged Indochina to remain a part of the Union Française⁸⁹.

The PCF's strategy was guided by its analysis of US 'hege-
monist designs' threatening France's independence, and Viet-
Nam's equally. The Party envisaged an alliance between
France and Viet-Nam on the basis of this common interest,
entrusting the French government with the capacity and desire
to further this alliance. This understanding might explain

the relative moderation of the protest organised by the Party against the war. It endeavoured to manifest its opposition without breaking governmental solidarity - whilst communist deputies abstained on 20 March, ministers voted with the government. The Party's analysis of the role of France in a bipolarised world played a part in its policy; this will be examined in the following chapter.

Subsequently the PCF's action against the war in Indo-china widened and hardened. A number of factors contributed to this progress.

The Party eventually realised that there was no comeback after its eviction from the government on 5 May 1947. An anti-communist wave was sweeping over European governments; Italian and Belgian communist parties were also expelled within a few months of each other⁹⁰.

If the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall plan had not sufficiently clarified the situation, the first meeting of the Cominform [September 1947] and the Jdanov report⁹¹ lay down clearly the interpretation of the world situation to be adopted by Communist Parties.

The world had been divided into two camps, the cold war set in. Jdanov outlined the task of European communist parties; to counter the US offensive to gain control of Western Europe, to expose the Socialist Parties for their collaboration with the US, to preserve world peace and avert a possible US aggression against the USSR. The PCF and its Italian counterpart were severely criticised by the meeting for their 'parliamentarism' and their readiness to

compromise with Socialists in order to remain a Government Party⁹². The PCF had to promise to make amends and to mobilise the French people against American imperialism. Jacques Duclos solemnly declared 'Notre parti est placé devant une grande épreuve. Vous pouvez lui faire confiance'⁹³.

In Indochina the emphasis had shifted from a war of colonial reconquest to a crusade against communism, as the USA had become heavily committed to military expenses in Viet-Nam. The Korean war [1950] strengthened this interpretation.

The Party then considered that the Indochinese Liberation movement was waging a struggle against the USA in alliance with France, which they backed politically and financially. France itself was becoming more and more indebted to the USA. In the light of these new data and analysis, the PCF could argue that the Indochinese Liberation struggle, the cause of French national independence and the preservation of world peace, harmoniously converged. Opposition to American imperialism became the PCF's main axis. Consequently, it devoted more resources to the support of the movement in Indochina and intensified its campaign against the war.

- dockers in Marseille and Algeria followed by others refused to load military equipment bound for Indochina
- railway workers followed suit
- in the Renault factory, workers downed tools
- a number of demonstrations took place against the departure of soldiers (Avignon, Mont Valérien)⁹⁴.

The most significant theme of that action was that of peace rather than independence for Viet-Nam, in accordance with the general Peace Movement, all forces being mustered to protect the USSR against a US assault.

'Enfin puisque la lutte libératrice des peuples coloniaux porte des coups sérieux aux fauteurs de guerre, ceux-ci n'étant d'ores et déjà plus assurés de trouver dans aucun pays d'outre-mer le 'climat politique-ment sûr' dont ils ont besoin pour préparer leur agression, il est clair que le soutien que nous apportons à cette lutte fait partie de notre propre lutte pour la paix'⁹⁵.

The slogan of peace in this context corresponded to a world wide cry among communist parties under the leadership of the Soviet Union. It had inspired the creation of the Mouvement de la Paix in 1949 and constituted a preemptive move against a possible US aggression against the USSR.

Its decision to join the Third International compelled the PCF to accept and undertake a process of 'bolshevisation'. The colonial question thus was made to assume particular significance as it was stipulated in the 8th condition - even more so for a party active in an imperialist country such as France which controlled a vast colonial empire.

The PCF was slow to acknowledge the importance of its 'colonial work'. The agenda of its first two congresses does not mention it. The third congress in Lyon [1924] includes part of a section entitled 'la question coloniale' among the questions of sport, children and others. The fourth [Clichy 1925] and fifth [Lille 1926] congresses include a report from the colonial commission. In the meantime the Party had developed an intense activity against the Rif war, turning it into a priority area of party work.

At the Party's 6th congress [1929] a section of the PCF's theses dealt with the 'tâches générales du PCF dans le mouvement révolutionnaire des peuples coloniaux et des minorités nationales'. The thesis No. 33 specifically concerned itself with the Party's tasks in the French colonies. In 1932 [7th congress] a fresh resolution was deemed necessary on the Party's 'colonial work' which in fact constituted a self criticism on account of the Party's insufficient activities in the colonies and on the colonial question.

Throughout this period, the PCF did not in fact sustain a continuous interest for the colonial question. On the contrary, the PCF kept attracting the criticisms of the Third International for its lack of activities in the colonial field.

These were generally followed by self criticisms on the part of the PCF, which found it difficult not to slip back on its good resolutions.

The Rif war constituted a noticeable extraordinary effort from the PCF. However, the Party seems to show a genuine, if not always successful, attempt to expose French imperialism - colonialism. In October 1934 150 000 leaflets were distributed on 'la plus grande France'. In January 1935, the PCF published 5 000 pamphlets about Tunisia 'Que se passe-t-il en Tunisie?' and another 5 000 on Algeria, 'La sanglante provocation de Constantine'.

Independence for the colonies was generally the main slogan put forward by the Party up until 1936.

After 1936 the PCF concentrated all its efforts to combat fascism, and favoured a 'union' between French colonies and 'democratic France'. The world war and the Nazi occupation of France kept the PCF occupied for a few more years. The urgency of the issue at stake and the strategy of the International Communist Movement did not allow for the PCF to devote a lot of attention to the colonies.

When the war was over the PCF did not resume its pre-1936 position and refrained from demanding the independence of colonies.

Only the Indochina war combining with the cold war slowly aroused in the PCF a virulence and activity which reached its peak at the end of the forties and the early fifties. As this struggle fitted within the PCF's general campaign for peace - against a potential aggression of the USSR by

the US, against US hegemony and a possible world war. Peace in Viet-Nam was the main slogan upheld by the Party, though it also came to demand independence for Viet-Nam.

Apart from that episode the PCF's anti-colonialist activities and convictions continued to assume a secondary place, although they were never abandoned totally. They had shifted from a clear-cut demand of 'independence' to a less intransigent position, couched in various slogans: 'Union libre et fraternelle', 'Union Française', insisting on the equality of the partnership between France and its colonial territories rather than their political separation.

CHAPTER III

The PCF, the international situation, and the Algerian war

The very nature of the PCF combining an internationalist and a national vocation makes it necessary to take into account the world situation as well as developments in France itself for a better understanding of its line on colonialism in general and Algeria in particular. The Party generally elaborated its policies in view of a global analysis of the international situation, assessing the balance of forces in the world in favour of or against the cause of socialism. Such analysis was not formulated by the PCF in isolation but together with the International Communist Movement of which it formed a part. In the first place, the PCF's perceived 'duty' of advancing the cause of socialism world-wide, from about 1925 onwards, translated itself into the defence of the USSR 'the motherland of socialism' against all possible threats. Its internationalist duty also imposed on the Party responsibilities towards the working class in other capitalist countries and the national liberation movements in colonial countries. At the same time, at a national level, the Party had to pay special attention to the specificity of the French situation, - the complexities of French political life, the state of the economy, the needs of the working masses, etc. All of these factors intertwined in varying fashions with differing degrees of importance to determine the PCF's policy, which may be altered in its hierarchy of priorities according to the development of events.

For the entire duration of the cold war, the Party line could be pictured in relatively simple terms. The main element taken into account by the PCF was the division of the world into two camps and the resulting anti-communist wave. The USSR and Eastern European countries were seen to be under threat from the USA. The latter were considered as the spearhead of imperialism endeavouring to extend their supremacy all over the world, imposing their diktat among weaker imperialist countries like France, coveting their colonies. Internally, the PCF on the eve of the Algerian war continued to interpret the situation as a reflection of the polarisation of the world into two camps. This thesis had first been expounded at the first Kominform meeting in 1947.

For the Party, the main front all round was therefore a ruthless opposition to the US in all fields of policy on the premisses that any move undermining their power was worth supporting. Consequently the main task outlined by the PCF's 13th Congress in 1954, which in effect had been a constant since 1946, was the campaign for a French policy independent of US influence against:

'la désastreuse politique de soumission
aux impérialistes américains' ¹

This meant opposition to the pro-US stance of the French government. In this task the Party organised the Peace Movement in France with the aim of warding off the possibility of an aggression against the USSR. The same reasons explain its demand for a withdrawal from the Atlantic Pact, its opposition

to the rearmament of West Germany and to the European Defence Community which were deemed to be the instruments of US expansionist policy.

Hoisting the banner of national independence the Party endeavoured to rally 'l'union des forces nationales et démocratiques'² against the encroachments of the US in France. The Party concentrated all its efforts on this front. The question of colonies in general and Algeria in particular were also envisaged in this context. Practically every item of policy was related to the US 'threat' to French national independence. It advocated the safeguard of French industry 'sacrificed to US competition' and jeopardised by numerous American investments. It blamed the difficulties of the French economy and its impact on the working people, on a supposed crisis in the US economy. It linked the struggle for democratic rights to the campaign against US influence denouncing 'maccarthyism' in culture, in the press and in research. These main points were synthesised by the 1954 Congress, quoting Maurice Thorez:

'pour remédier aux maux qui accablent le pays, il est nécessaire avant tout de changer l'orientation de sa politique extérieure' ³ .

The PCF itself had fallen prey to the wave of anti-communism prevalent during the cold war. Whilst it strove to come out of its isolation through a strategy of unity with all patriots, for a policy of national independence, the PCF kept denouncing the Socialist Party for its policy of 'aliénation de notre indépendance nationale' ⁴ - as had been the custom ever

since the 1947 Kominform meeting where the PCF had been criticised for its compromising attitude towards the Socialist Party.

How does the question of Algeria relate to the other aspects of the PCF's approach? Although it may not appear self-evident, for the Party there was no contradiction between the analyses outlined above and its line on Algeria. According to the PCF's official explanations, the latter seemed to follow directly from the former for the simple reason that National Liberation Movements were seen by the PCF through the prism of an underlying anti-US approach. The Party opposed the installation of US military bases in Morocco, and American investments in the Maghreb. Whilst defending the right of peoples to self-determination, it warned French colonies against the danger of falling under the US yoke, after obtaining their independence from France. The alternative proposed by the PCF was that of a 'French Union', wherein Algeria could establish a new relationship with France, 'devoid of colonial ties'. This is one reason why the PCF preferred to demand 'liberté' for Algeria rather than independence when the insurrection broke out and favoured the retention of links between Algeria and France, 'on the basis of equality'. The Union Française failed to fulfil the Party's hopes for a harmonious relationship between France and its colonies. It was dropped from the PCF's programme at its 14th Congress in 1956.

The approach described above discloses a strong coherence running through all PCF policies. For the PCF the interests

of France coincided with the interests of the colonial peoples since the independence of both sides were endangered by the USA, plus the fact that it saw France as being basically the mother of democracy. They were also in harmony with the necessary defence of the USSR against its main enemy, the USA. All the threads of the Party's analysis lead from and to the basic assumption that the contradictions in the world could be reduced in a relatively simple fashion to the main one: in the PCF's outlook, imperialism versus socialism, i.e. the USA against the USSR.

II 1956

The 13th Congress of the Party in June 1954 still gave precedence to matters of foreign policy. A shift of emphasis may be observed thereafter for a number of reasons:

- a new interpretation of the world situation was presented by the 20th Congress of the Soviet Party (CPSU) in 1956, which failed to win the unanimous support of the International Communist Movement and eventually developed into a major split. The PCF could not but be shaken by those events and though it was later to align itself with the Soviet position, it went through a period of adaptation, readjusting old reflexes and habits to the new outlook;
- at a time when the autonomy and initiative of individual parties was stressed more [with the dissolution of the Kominform] ⁵ the specific characters of the French situation and the French Party assumed more importance. This was brought out even more by the great difficulties faced by France and the PCF during the Algerian war.

Developments following Stalin's death [in 1953] punctuated the end of an era and the slow emergence of a new one: the cold war was to be replaced by the epoch of 'detente' [ratified in 1956 at the CPSU 20th Congress]. The 20th Congress of the CPSU was momentous in its consequences for the International Communist Movement.

1 - Recording that 'the forces of socialism' had increased, it introduced as a new concept the possibility of averting a world war. The 20th Congress posited peaceful competition as a concomittant of peaceful coexistence between countries of a different regime: 'international detente' was the order of the day, and must be transformed into a 'lasting peace'.

2 - The diversity of the paths leading to socialism was noted emphasising the concrete possibility of a 'peaceful road to socialism'.

Other aspects of the 20th Congress would undoubtedly affect the PCF, such as the 'Krushchev Report' on Stalin [which the PCF ignored], but it seems appropriate to comment on the two considerations mentioned above as they were the main ones taken up by the PCF itself in its 14th Congress.

'Detente' opened a wider scope of action for the French Party which was not obliged any more to subordinate other issues to the US threat - according to the new line, the threat of a foreign aggression against the USSR was not as acute as previously. The internal situation no longer had to play second fiddle to international questions ⁶.

Indeed the 'cold war' atmosphere in France itself had begun to thaw; the Socialist Party had been thrown into opposition in 1955, the PCF toned down its revolutionary invective against the socialist leaders. A potential alliance between the PCF and the Socialist Party began to develop. After a measure of trade-union unity was achieved during 1955, the PCF campaigned for a victory of the left in the 1956 elections.

Moreover, the notion of a 'peaceful road to socialism' advanced by the CPSU 20th Congress came to confirm both the possibility and the necessity of forging an alliance between 'the forces of the left' in order to ensure

'une majorité solide au Parlement et [de] transformer ce dernier, d'un rouage du système bourgeois, en un organe de la volonté populaire authentique, s'appuyant sur le mouvement révolutionnaire des masses' 7 .

The optimism raised among French communists by the election of the Socialist Party to power was strengthened by the visit of socialist leaders to the Soviet Union auguring what the PCF believed to be a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union. The French situation appeared to be in harmony with the international scene as it had been portrayed by the CPSU 20th Congress.

The main discordant note for the PCF was the war developing on Algerian soil which could hardly be interpreted as a favourable factor for detente in France and in the world. However that need be no major problem since the

question of Algeria was not a priority area for the Party and remained subordinated to the more urgent task of building the United Front. According to J. Fauvet the Algerian question even provided grounds for unity of action with the Socialist Party prior to the 1956 election⁸, as they voted together against the government on that issue.

'Negotiation and peace' in Algeria was one of the themes of the 1956 election. It would be preposterous to assume that the PCF would not otherwise have paid any attention to the Algerian problem but it could be construed that the PCF relied on the election of a left Parliament to bring a solution to the Algerian crisis. Electoral victory failed to achieve this result. However, the Algerian problem still did not come to the forefront of the PCF's policy. It had previously receded in front of foreign policy matters [1954 Congress]; by 1956 it gave way to domestic questions as the Party envisaged the possibility of establishing a new Popular Front. The development of events left no doubt about the prominence attached to the United Front by the PCF over other aspects of its policy such as the Algerian question. The determining incidence of the United Front with the Socialist Party on the PCF's line vis-à-vis Algeria may best be seen by taking note of its vote on the Special Powers, which showed its allegiance to unity with the Socialists. Whether the PCF by then genuinely believed that Guy Mollet required the Special Powers in order to impose peace in Algeria, the main motivation behind the PCF's vote in favour of the Special Powers stands out unequivocally. As M. Thorez put it, in 1'Humanité [27 March 1956], the Party did not want to sacrifice the whole for the part.

The explanation for this vote clearly indicated that the United Front took precedence over the Algerian problem which was relegated to a secondary position. This vote definitely did not lead to appeasement in Algeria. Much to the contrary the Special Powers signified an escalation of the war in Algeria resulting in the involvement of French conscripts in addition to the professional army - by September 1956, 600 000 troops were stationed in Algeria. All hope of a ceasefire had been pushed further away. Among the conscripts, discontent took the shape of demonstrations in barracks, stations and docks. A number of individuals refused to leave for Algeria. The Party, whilst offering moderate support to the demonstrators refrained from openly encouraging those soldiers who disobeyed the departure order. In its 14th Congress [1956] the Party endorsed the decision it had taken to support the Special Powers and abstained from promoting the slogan of independence for Algeria.

This was in glaring contradiction with the demands of the Algerian National Liberation Movement which had been waging an armed struggle for Algerian independence since 1954. During those two years, it had become more difficult to believe that the armed struggle was the work of a handful of terrorists since it was increasingly embraced by a majority of the population. The FLN which had taken the initiative for the insurrection had rallied Ferhat Abbas and Tewfik El Madani, bringing to the Front the support of the Udma and the Oulema. This meant that all the important national parties and organisations in Algeria then became united with the FLN

[apart from Messali Hadj's MNA* which was to become more and more unrepresentative]. One could not claim any more that the FLN was not representative of the National Liberation Movement and the Algerian people. Yet the PCF avoided mentioning the FLN in official declarations, keeping to general formulas such as 'ceux contre qui on se bat' ⁹ .

The year 1956 failed to fulfil the hopes for 'peace and social progress' it had aroused among communists. The Suez Crisis merely added sourness to disillusionment. The Party criticised the Socialist government for its intervention in Egypt but was itself subject to attacks because of the Hungarian events.

The Algerian struggle continued to escalate; on 22 October the French army intercepted a Moroccan plane and arrested the FLN leaders of the Délégation Extérieure who were flying from Morocco to Tunisia - Ahmed Ben Bella, Mohamed Khider, Ait 'Ahmed, Boudiaf and Mostafa Lacheraf (an historian). This action was ratified by the government and dispelled any possibility of negotiation. Combined with the bitter failure of the Suez adventure, such an act of piracy discredited the Socialist government in the eyes of the world and the French people. Generally the situation in France was deteriorating and the Algerian war played an important part in the erosion of democratic liberties at the same time as it weighed heavily on the French economy. The conscripts movement had slowed down to a standstill after 1956 but was replaced by a growing malaise in France as the realities of the war became known: the rule of the army in

Algeria and its atrocities - internment camps, torture en masse, etc. [By December there were 900 000 French soldiers in Algeria]. A number of organisations and committees sprung up in response to these atrocities, with little official support from the PCF though a number of communist individuals joined them. At the beginning of 1957, for the first time, the term independence was pronounced by M. Thorez in relation to Algeria, whilst the Party declared Algeria to be a 'formed' nation - until then it had been described as a 'nation en formation'.

The Party's attention having been diverted to protests against the appointment of General Speidel [an ex-Nazi] as Commander of NATO's European Forces, it took until 17 October 1957 for the PCF to organise a day of action for peace in Algeria:

'Répudier les rapports colonialistes entre la France et l'Algérie, reconnaître le droit à l'indépendance du peuple algérien; négocier entre peuples égaux afin de créer entre l'Algérie et la France des rapports nouveaux et des liens particuliers fondés sur le libre consentement et conformes à l'intérêt mutuel'¹⁰.

The Party did not stress the independence of Algeria but rather the new links that should be established between the two countries. The day of action itself was not called in the name of independence but in the name of peace in Algeria. Such emphasis on the part of the PCF was soon to attract severe criticism from circles more committed to the Algerian struggle inside and outside the Party.

III 1958

All the efforts exerted by the Party towards the consolidation of the United Front bore little fruit. The 4th Republic was nearing its end. During the tormented events leading to De Gaulle's accession to power, the PCF remained on a cautious defensive. Right-wing extremists were stirring up an ominous atmosphere; the uncertainty of the future may have conjured up for the Party the threat of being made illegal. When Pflimlin asked for the Special Powers to handle the situation, the PCF, posing as the champion of the Constitution voted in his favour since it considered the Republic to be in danger and wished to emerge as the best defender of republicanism. The circumstances surrounding De Gaulle's 'election' gave rise to serious concern on the part of the PCF. De Gaulle was 'invited' to step in as a result of a right wing coup staged by the colons in Algiers with the connivance of the army. This new constitution, put to a referendum, rallied 79.25% of the votes against 20.75% inflicting a severe defeat on the PCF. This confirmed the Party's awe of a Gaullist government.

On De Gaulle and his 5th Republic was focused all the attention of the Party as he polarised in its eyes all the most reactionary aspects of French policy.

- On matters of foreign policy De Gaulle was indicted as a clear proponent of 'Americanism', mortgaging French national independence to the USA and sabotaging detente in the world.

- On the economic front, De Gaulle being considered as the arm of the capitalist monopolies could only increase the exploitation of the working masses, inflicting a brake on social progress.

With De Gaulle's coming to power new reasons had cropped up which allowed [or forced] the PCF to continue to give prime attention to the domestic situation at the expense of the Algerian question. For the PCF, De Gaulle's foreign policy as well as his economic policy were the logical consequence of his whole approach to democracy. The Constitution of the 5th Republic concentrated immense powers in the hands of the President. This is why the main thrust of the PCF's programme concentrated on the 'restoration and renovation of democracy' in France, putting forward changes in the Constitution, the electoral system, the legal apparatus, the army [for the abolition of the professional army], the police force, the control of the media. The 15th Congress of the Party [June 1959] introduced the restoration and renovation of democracy as a platform providing the basis for 'the unity of all democratic and national forces', 'inseparable from the establishment of socialism in France' . The aim was to transform the National Assembly into 'a real tool for the building of socialism in France' ¹¹ . It is interesting to note that the 'peaceful road to socialism' was still being pursued. Unity with 'democratic and national forces' was substituted for the United Front with the Socialist Party the leaders of which had been castigated for advocating a yes vote on De Gaulle's constitution.

The Algerian war itself was interpreted by the PCF through the prism of De Gaulle's coming to power: De Gaulle's regime was the child of the Algerian war, brought to rule over France by an extreme right wing putsch in Algeria. According to the Party's analysis in its 15th Congress, De Gaulle was bent on accomplishing the task which the ultras^{*} relied on him for in the first place. The PCF envisaged a solution to the war as a result of the overthrow of De Gaulle. Once again the question of the Algerian war came second, this time to the central task of ousting De Gaulle's regime, whereas in 1956 it gave way to the unity between Socialists and communists, for a solution to the war through the Socialist Party in power. Though the PCF's 15th Congress spoke of the Algerian war as 'un chancre au flanc du pays' ¹², destroying the material and human resources of France, breeding racism and chauvinism among French people, hampering the normalisation of relations between France and the newly independent states of Tunisia and Morocco, yet it was not treated as a separate issue; it is dealt with in a subsection of the foreign policy theses. The key question remained:

'dans la situation actuelle de la France, la première condition de tout progrès ultérieur réside dans l'élimination du régime de pouvoir personnel imposé par les monopoles' ¹³.

For the sake of accuracy, one must add that the Party's analysis of De Gaulle and his regime was not confirmed by later events. De Gaulle's 'national policy' led him to conduct an anti-US policy, for instance withdrawing France from NATO.

In 1960, the divergence between the 'national' character of De Gaulle's policy and 'cosmopolitan' capital [i.e. collusion with the USA] was pointed out by Servin, Casanova and a few other intellectuals. Their approach was vigorously denied by the Party's leading circles and they were demoted from their post [expelled from the Polit Bureau during the 23-24th February 1961 Central Committee] after being accused of opportunism. They had also adopted a more liberal attitude towards the non-communist left, favouring the Party's involvement in unitary actions and organisations against the Algerian war. According to F. Fejtő, Laurent Casanova followed the 'Italian line', towards a wider and deeper 'destalinisation' process ¹⁴ .

IV AFTER 1959

On the question of Algeria, the PCF adopted a very clear-cut position at its 16th Congress in 1961:

'Depuis près de 7 ans la guerre coloniale d'Algérie pèse sur toute la politique française'¹⁵.

'Depuis les premiers jours de la guerre d'Algérie, les communistes luttent pour la reconnaissance du droit à l'indépendance'¹⁶.

The Party was thus attempting to claim that it had campaigned for Algerian independence 'since the first days of the war'. The accuracy of such a statement could be disputed but it undoubtedly betrayed the Party's desire to state its position more categorically in favour of independence - perhaps to refute accusations that it had not done so earlier on.

Moreover it called for immediate negotiations with the GPRA ¹⁷ on which it bestowed the title of the only qualified representative of the Algerian people ¹⁸ .

How had this clear-cut standpoint come about since 1958? A number of factors had led the Party to drop its excessive prudence over the Algerian war. In France the situation accelerated furthermore after 1959 [15th Congress]. Even though the PCF continued to assert that De Gaulle and his 'pouvoir personnel' were the real enemy, it could not ignore the fascist threat clearly emanating from Algiers and the war.

- In January 1960, barricades went up in Algiers erected by colons who enjoyed the tacit support of the army.
- In April 1961, an army putsch captured power in Algiers and made for a landing in Paris.
- Meanwhile the OAS ¹⁹ intensified its campaign of terrorist activities in France and in Algeria.

These events brought home to the French people the pressing need for terminating the war, 'a gangrene' ²⁰ as P. Vidal-Naquet called it. French public opinion became increasingly mobilised against the Algerian war (among the youth in particular: on 27 October 1960 a meeting at the Mutualité called on the initiative of the UNEF assembled 20 000 people (who spilled into the adjacent square) attracting a good number of young communists from the UEC though the Party officially dissociated itself from it.

Wider sections of the French population joined the protest against the war: on 9 January 1961 a Joint Manifesto was signed by 11 parties and trade unions for a negotiated peace in Algeria ²¹ . Numerous committees for peace in Algeria and against fascism were rallying a growing support.

Even international opinion pronounced itself against the Algerian war: in January 1961 the UN adopted the Afro-Asian motion on Algerian independence ²² . If the PCF had any misgivings left about the representativity of the GPRA, those had been dispelled by the USSR's official recognition of the GPRA in October 1960.

The PCF had been very careful in its dealings with the Algerian war. Did it depart from its self-professed anti-colonialism, to what extent and for what reasons? These questions cannot be answered in a simple manner. It is worth remembering that the PCF's line on colonialism had to be 'corrected' more than once in the past on the basis of criticisms from the International. A number of criticisms of the Party's lack of support for the Algerian struggle were voiced from within the Party and the International Communist Movement. But the ICM itself was divided on the issue of anti-colonialist struggles. The Chinese Communist Party laid stress on the utmost importance of national liberation struggles on the outcome of which

'in a sense... the whole cause of the international proletarian revolution hinges'²³

because they are at the 'centre of world contradictions'. Their blows to imperialism could undermine its whole basis.

In the eyes of the CPC, the campaign for peace and disarmament launched from the USSR led to the sacrifice of national liberation struggles on the altar of peaceful co-existence. In 'Apologists of Neo-Colonialism' the CPC censured both the CPSU and the PCF for their 'opposition to wars of national liberation' and called the PCF leaders 'chauvinists' ²⁴. A lengthy exposé of the Chinese theses is not justified at this point. Yet it is necessary to mention them as their earlier writings stimulated some of the opposition within the PCF. The PCF's leading circles paid little heed to China's criticism and preferred to ride with the CPSU.

This chapter briefly outlined a number of factors which influenced the PCF's policies on Algeria; it also intended to provide a few guidelines for the evolution of its line on Algeria for the duration of the war. World events played a part in determining the Party's position but more than events themselves their interpretation by the world communist movement was of paramount importance. The guidelines to this interpretation were provided by the Soviet Union, undisputed until divergences occurred in the world communist movement - from an internal dispute and correspondence between the Soviet Party and its supporters on one side, the Albanian and Chinese parties on the other side, this brought into the open what came to be known as the Sino-Soviet split in the early mid-sixties. The PCF remained unswerved by the CPC and continued to draw its inspiration from the CPSU. However, the analysis of the French scene - the promises of United Front in 1956, De Gaulle's advent to power in 1958 and its sequels punctuated by the dramatic coup attempts staged from Algiers against French democracy - came to play an increasingly prominent role, swaying the PCF's attitude towards the Algerian war. Furthermore, the Party's desire not to 'cut itself off from the French masses' equally lent its weight to its policy making. However, its communist principles of internationalist support for the Algerian war of liberation could not be totally forgotten.

This labyrinth of data did not simplify the PCF's task and complicates our own even further.

From within the ranks of the PCF a fair number of opposing views were voiced prompting the publication of a few dissidents' reviews. The following chapters are devoted to three major questions on which the official party line and its opponents focused their attention:

- the Party's understanding of France's present and future relationship with Algeria; its own approach to the French nation;
- the definition and reality of the Algerian nation; its right to self-determination;
- France's military involvement in Algeria.

CHAPTER IV

The relationship between France and Algeria, the French nation
and the PCF

The Algerian problem was a very complex one and could be examined from different vantage points. Two obvious aspects of the relationship between the mother country and its colony need be broached: the French side on the one hand, the Algerian side on the other.

This chapter is devoted primarily to the role of France in the France/Algeria parameter. This is because the PCF granted a great deal of attention to it.

The PCF's fundamental point of departure for a political analysis may be seen in the following quote:

'Nous nous prononçons pour l'existence de liens politiques, économiques, culturels permanents entre l'Algérie et la France'.¹

A first section deals with the concept of 'Union Française' which the PCF considered as the formula solving the question of political links between France and Algeria.

A second section investigates the nature of the economic links between France and Algeria which the PCF wished to pursue or maintain.

The third section, on the Party and the French nation, was motivated by the objections that were formulated by the oppositionnels against the PCF policies on links between France and Algeria. Raising a fundamental question about the class character of France, they levelled accusations of chauvinism against the Party and challenged it theoretically. This debate necessitated further research into the Party's conception of the alignment of classes and their relationship with the French nation.

Part One: The Union Française

From complete integration to total secession, a whole range of formulas were devised to regulate the relationship between France and Algeria: French Algeria for some, Algerian Algeria for others, each phrase in turn being subjected to different interpretations.

It is important to bear in mind Algeria's real status. Algeria had been conquered by France 124 years previously and was populated by French settlers in addition to its original Berber and Arab inhabitants. When the insurrection broke out in 1954, Algeria was officially composed of three departments; according to the French constitution it was an integral part of France. Most political parties supported this definition, including the Socialist Party. In opposition to this view, the PCF official position stated that Algeria was a colony of France.

'Contrairement à l'ensemble des autres partis politiques de France notre parti considère que l'Algérie n'est pas la juxtaposition de 3 départements français ... Avec à côté de ses 700 000 habitants d'origine européenne, 130 000 Israélites et 8 millions d'habitants d'origine arabo-berbère, l'Algérie est un pays colonial peu industrialisé et administré par un gouvernement général et son appareil colonial'².

In the era of colonial emancipation or 'decolonisation' ushered in by the second world war, Algeria's destiny was not to escape the general course of history. Eventually the colonial shell governing the relationship between Algeria and France would burst asunder to be replaced by a new one reflecting the reality of the situation.

I The Union Française and the PCF

Recognising the vital necessity of terminating French colonial rule over Algeria, the PCF was faced with the task of formulating an alternative proposal. The Party participated in the drawing up of the new Constitution in 1945 . 1946, the longest article of which was devoted to France's relationship with its colonies, and a new phrase was coined to befit the new situation: 'L'Union Française'. The Union Française was supported by the PCF which argued in favour of Algeria as a 'territoire associé', membre de l'Union française'³ until as late as 1956.

The PCF did not consider the Union Française as a continuation of colonial ties between France and its colonies but as a new pattern of relationship.

Even though it is difficult to analyse political institutions separately from their economic base, the first section of this study will concentrate on the political aspect of the Union Française, as it was enshrined in the Constitution. Economic links will be discussed in another section.

A The Union Française is born

The concept of a union between France and her colonial peoples was not absolutely new in PCF propaganda. It appeared first at the time of the Popular Front under the name of a 'free union'.

'Dans l'intérêt de ses peuples et dans l'intérêt de la France, il faut s'assurer contre le fascisme qui provoque à la rébellion et à la guerre civile dans les colonies, l'union libre confiante fraternelle des peuples coloniaux et de la France démocratique'⁴.

The PCF tended to consider France as the mother of democracy and liberty since the 1789 - 93 revolution. In its eyes, the Popular Front, in particular, had brought out the best of France's revolutionary traditions. The colonies could not but benefit from association with such a partner in the face of fascism.

Again in 1945, the Party put forward the notion of such a Union at its 10th congress.

'Créer les conditions de cette union libre, confiante et fraternelle des peuples coloniaux avec le peuple de France'⁵.

No further details were given about the operating conditions of this union and its political expression. These were debated within the arena of the first Constituant Assembly where the 'Empire' was represented by 64 out of 522 deputies. A number of important reforms were introduced concerning the colonies: the abolition of forced labour and the code de l'indigénat, the granting of French citizenship to all the indigènes [loi Lamine-Gueye, 7 May 1946], and a few other reforms. The first Constituante also had established a new terminology: Overseas territories, Associate States, Union Française came to replace the old terms of Empire and colonies. This was interpreted by the PCF as indicators of a new progressive approach.

Henri Lozeray conveyed the PCF position on the Union Française in his speech to the Constituant Assembly on 20 March 1946.

He rejected vehemently the coercive unity of the empire which was implicit in the resolution of the Brazzaville conference [1944]⁶. In his eyes, the accomplishment of the Union Française must bring together more than a hundred million men of diverse races and civilisations united in their common love of freedom and progress. Taking up the phrase inserted in the article proposed by the communist deputies, Henri Lozeray urged for 'une union librement consentie de part et d'autre'⁷.

The first constitution was rejected by a referendum (5 May 1946); a new draft concerning the Union Française was drawn up by Overseas deputies entrusting France with the responsibility of leading overseas peoples to self determination.

'Les progrès que les peuples de l'Union accompliront avec le peuple français devront les conduire à la libre-disposition d'eux-mêmes. En ce qui concerne les territoires ne jouissant pas encore du statut d'Etat libre, ils pourront, dans un délai maximum de vingt ans, opter pour le régime de leur choix'⁸.

In contrast with the above proposals the final version of the Union Française⁹ presented by Marius Moutet (Secretary of State for colonies) adopted a more conservative outlook. The right to self determination at some point in the future had been erased and France's sovereignty over the Union Française was reaffirmed, the French government retaining the control of 'la conduite générale de l'Union' [article 65].

The Haut Conseil and the Assemblée of the Union Française only fulfilled consultative roles leaving decisions up to the French government, as has been shown by Charles-Robert Ageron and Hubert Deschamps.

'Quant aux trois organismes centraux de l'Union Française: présidence, Haut Conseil et Assemblée de l'Union, ils se révélèrent vite sans pouvoirs'¹⁰.

'Le Président [de l'Union] est celui de la République, l'Assemblée n'a guère que des pouvoirs fantômes, le Haut Conseil n'existe encore que sur le papier'¹¹.

The notion of 'free consent' which the Party had insisted upon had also been left behind amongst rejected drafts. Nowhere was it to be found in the new Constitution. Even when it had been written in, there had never been any mention of a possible consultation of the peoples concerned, in order to know whether they wished to be part of the Union. The PCF itself had nowhere presented any concrete proposals for the consultation of the colonial peoples. The final version of the Constitution cancelled out altogether the formula 'libre-consentement' indicating that the Union Française was imposed on the colonial peoples or at best granted to them. According to Marianne Cornevin who wrote a comprehensive history of Africa, the mere phrasing of the preamble of the Constitution 'La France forme avec les peuples d'outre-mer une Union fondée sur l'égalité des droits ...' disclosed the 'caractère octroyé de la Constitution de 1946'¹², as the use of the present tense confronted them with a fait accompli which they had no opportunity to discuss.

However, the principle of equality, dear to the Party, had been retained in the preamble;

'une union fondée sur l'égalité
des droits et des devoirs sans
distinction de race ni de
religion'¹³.

the formulation of which was very close to Henri Lozeray's pledge to make the Union Française into a 'union démocratique et fraternelle d'hommes libres et égaux'¹⁴.

But as Xavier Yacono¹⁵ shows, the application of those principles left a lot to be desired and according to Alfred Grosser, the very institutions within the Union Française contravened the proclaimed equality.

'L'Assemblée de l'Union Française est composée, par moitié, de membres représentant la France métropolitaine et, par moitié, de membres représentant les départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer et les Etats associés. Une loi organique déterminera dans quelles conditions pourront être représentées les diverse parties de la population''

Le texte est clair: la République indivisible est bel et bien divisée en France métropolitaine et en départements et territoires d'Outre-Mer, qui se trouvent mis sur le même plan que les 'associés', la métropole comptant pour un et tous les autres territoires ensemble pour un, quel que soit le nombre des habitants ou celui des peuples. De plus, le dernier alinéa indique que l'égalité individuelle au sein de la population ... n'est pas respectée non plus'¹⁶.

Despite these obvious shortcomings, the PCF maintained its support for the Union Française and cast its votes in favour of the section 8 and the Constitution as a whole.

Presumably the PCF was motivated by its desire to ensure its position in the government and to settle the constitutional question before it took a turn for the worse. The second national consultation had removed the PCF from its position as 'first party in France', giving the Mouvement Républicain Populaire the greatest number of seats in the Constituant Assembly. And the PCF knew that General De Gaulle's charisma could not but influence the country when he pronounced his 'Discours de Bayeux' [16 June 1946], opposing vehemently the Assembly's plans and proposing his own. The Party voted in favour of the new Constitution which was ratified by a referendum on 13 October 1946.

Amongst autochtone* deputies, only Malagasy nationalists and Ferhat Abbas, who called the Union Française 'un corset de fer où personne ne voudra entrer',¹⁷ had voted against it. From the outset, communists refrained from criticising the Union Française in its institutionalised form. The Party tried to make out that France had shed its colonialist policies once it had adopted the Union Française - 'si l'on voulait revenir au colonialisme',¹⁸ said Jacques Duclos. Pierre Cot spoke of colonialism as though it was already a thing of the past, counterposing the Union Française to colonialism¹⁹. The PCF did not acknowledge the existence of two divergent interpretations of the Union Française from its inception. Its enthusiasm sometimes reached lyrical summits, with André Marty calling the Union 'l'un des plus beaux apports de

* glossary

notre démocratie',²⁰, and quoting approvingly Mr Saravane Lambert, deputy from India, 'L'Union Française est un fait révolutionnaire qui peut changer le monde',²¹.

For a better understanding of the PCF's position, it is useful to bear in mind the fact that it participated in the government hoping thereby to influence the course of events. The Union Française fitted into a long term strategy. In the immediate post-war developments, the upsurge of democratic forces in Europe and in France and the strong popularity of the PCF made it possible, at least in theory, to envisage the perspective of a development towards a French People's Democracy along the lines of Eastern European ones. The French government would then be fully under the control of popular forces and their representatives²².

The colonial peoples, benefitting greatly from their association with France, would be swept onto the road to socialism. Their union with France would in turn serve the interests of the French people as it would ensure that France did not stand isolated to bear the brunt of threats and assaults from imperialist countries, especially the USA. The Union Française as an alliance between France and the overseas peoples could then be considered as a strategic weapon, in Jean Suret-Canale's words

'Ainsi, l'alliance des forces démocratiques françaises et des forces anti-colonialistes d'outre-mer, utilisant les dispositions favorables de la Constitution de 1946, apparaissait comme l'arme stratégique la plus efficace pour conduire à l'émancipation réelle et du peuple français, et des peuples coloniaux dominés par l'impérialisme français',²³.

Unfortunately, despite the PCF's predictions or hopes, France was to follow another path.

B The Union Française and the PCF in opposition

In May 1947, communist ministers were ousted from government not to return. In Indochina, a full scale war had been confirmed by the Assembly's ratification of military credits, although the Indochinese states were Associate States in the Union Française. Meanwhile a tentative insurrection in Madagascar at the end of March was ruthlessly suppressed: Malagasy deputies were arrested in defiance of their parliamentary immunity and the victims of the repression were to reach tens of thousands. André Marty's declarations in Algiers on France, 'bearer of the flame of liberty', were in stark contradiction with those harsh realities. In response to events overseas the PCF did not launch an indictment against the Union Française but stood in defence of it. Both before and after their expulsion from office, communists did not criticise the principle of the Union as it was defined on paper, but objected to its application and accused the French government of betraying the Union Française.

'Nous n'avons pas encore dépouillé
l'esprit colonial et adopté l'esprit
de l'Union Française'²⁴.

To insist on a correct application of the Constitution may have been an efficient tactical move by the Party rather than a genuine belief in the Union Française; indeed it became difficult for the government to reply to the PCF when it backed its point of view by arguments found in the very letter

of the Constitution. However, since the Party never clarified its position to the public, such statements in favour of the Union Française ran the risk of persuading l'Humanité readers that the Union was really different from colonial ties.

The 11th congress of the Party paid homage to the Constitution and censured the government's attitude towards overseas peoples 'en violation formelle de la constitution',²⁵. Paradoxically enough, the Party posed itself as the supreme champion of the Constitution, even more so after it had been thrown into opposition. Etienne Fajon deplored the loss of trust in France amongst overseas peoples and proceeded to describe how French policy in the Union Française flaunted principles 'adoptés naguère d'un common accord',²⁶.

Taking note of a general increase of right-wing influence in policies concerning the Union Française, Fajon recalled the 'anti-constitutional' measures adopted overseas: the war taking place in Viet-Nam, the ferocity of reprisals in Madagascar without prior investigation, the anti-democratic measures taken in Tunisia and Morocco and the delay in the application of reforms in Sub-saharan Africa.

Far from joining in with those who argued against the Union Française, Etienne Fajon makes it clear that the PCF did not share such views, and warned the government against the risk of providing fodder for the propaganda depicting the Union Française as an 'enormous dupery'. According to Etienne Fajon, this propaganda could facilitate the penetration of 'foreign' powers (e.g. USA) in the territories of the Union Française and was therefore very dangerous at a time when these

territoires 'sont ... l'objet de convoitises étrangères évidentes',²⁷.

The Party in June 1947 did recognise that the Union Française laid itself open to other interpretations than its own, whilst it had not said so earlier on, probably because it hoped that it would call the tune.

'La formule de l'Union Française, même quand ils [les colonialistes] acceptent de la prononcer du bout des lèvres, n'est pour eux qu'un artifice, qu'une étiquette nouvelle, à coller sur le vieux système colonial',²⁸.

Until May 1947, as long as it shared power, the PCF supported the Union Française unconditionally; in June 1947 it began to express its support in more relative terms, defining the Union as 'un progrès très sérieux par rapport au passé',²⁹.

Nonetheless, the Party continued to work for the preservation of the Union Française. Whereas it had initially supported the Union in the hope that France would become a people's democracy, another strategy motivated the Party's support after May 1947: French independence itself was at stake. In the eyes of the PCF, the maintenance of the Union Française was necessary to offer a better front against the drive for world hegemony on the part of the 'most imperialist elements', the USA.

'Nous sommes résolus à défendre contre les chevaliers du dollar, l'indépendance de la France et les intérêts de l'Union Française',³⁰.

'La désagrégation de l'Union Française réduirait le rôle de la France dans le monde, et la mettrait hors d'état de défendre efficacement son indépendance',³¹.

Once more the high hopes vested in the Union Française by the Party did not materialise; France drifted into the 'Western camp' under the aegis of the USA, and its policy towards the overseas territories did not assume a more progressive orientation. In Indochina the war escalated even further and the Viet-Nameese liberation movement gained the open support of the PCF.

This may help explain why the Union Française maintained a low profile in PCF publications thereafter, for a few years. Jacques Duclos' political report [13th congress, 1954] just mentions it to prove Ho Chi Minh's bona fide intentions at the same time as to expose Bao Dai, who was seen as becoming 'more and more americanised',³². But it was not included in the theses of the Party's 1954 congress.

C An 'authentic' Union Française

After the conclusion of the war in Indochina, the Union Française made a come back for the benefit of the Algerian question. The Party appears to have seen it as a suitable solution for the dramatic Algerian events. Confirming the renewed PCF support, Le Monde [13 January 1953] reported that Raymond Barbé postulated for the presidency of the Union Française.

Whilst French soldiers were fighting in North Africa to contain the independence movements, Maurice Thorez propounded

the Union Française as a viable formula for peace in North Africa.

'notre accord pour une politique de négociation avec les peuples de l'Afrique du Nord pour la création d'une véritable Union Française' (my stress)³³.

This proposal enabled the Party not to commit itself on the question of independence for Algeria.

Surprisingly, Maurice Thorez expressed his agreement with the 'creation' of the Union Française, whereas it had come into existence in 1946, with the support of the PCF. The use of both words 'création' and 'véritable' could be interpreted as manifesting the Party's desire to create a 'new' Union Française, which would be an 'authentic' one, as opposed to the Union Française already existing. Maurice Thorez thereby implicitly criticised the Union Française as it stood. An easier solution would have been to bury it altogether rather than refurbish a soiled formula. The war in Indochina had come to an end in 1954 but the armed conflict in Algeria, far from subsiding, was leading France into another colonial war. The Party's decision to include the Union Française in its draft theses for the 14th congress may be explained in the light of Léon Feix's comments.

'nous avons à convaincre de la justesse de notre position bon nombre de Français pour lesquels le vocable d'Union Française évoque un aspect, de la sauvegarde de l'intérêt national'³⁴.

The Party opted to keep the Union Française because it made it possible to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. On the one hand it was an acceptable solution for French

people who saw in it an aspect of the 'national interest', i.e. preserving France's interests. On the other hand it permitted a measure of improvement taking into account the expectations of the Algerians, or rather the Party's assessment of those expectations.

II Opposition to the Union Française

A France rules in the Union 'Française'

The publication of the draft theses of the 14th congress attracted a number of questions about the 'French' nature of the Union, in the Tribune de Discussion, opened up by l'Humanité.

'Est-il juste de parler d'Union française comme dans les points 20 et 21³⁵ ... N'est il pas juste de parler simplement d'une véritable Union librement consentie entre ces peuples et notre pays qui n'impose pas le nom d'une nation à l'Union librement consentie avec d'autres?'³⁶.

It is interesting to note that by then such doubts were not only expressed by a few isolated elements within the ranks of the communist left. Leopold Sédar Senghor was never considered as an extremist; he supported the Union Française when it was founded and is today still favouring strong links between France and Senegal. And yet in 1955 he demanded the elimination of the adjective French, 'in the name of dignity and equality'.

'Sur le plan de l'Union française, les Etats associés n'acceptent plus, on le sait, l'épithète ... Le mot est devenu un symbole, celui de la domination'³⁷.

Such objections may appear rather superficial or even facile. However this stylistic quarrel only constitutes the tip of the iceberg: the real argument concerned France's colonialist attitude in its relationship with other members of the Union.

Léon Feix did not fail to identify the nature of the objections which he answered in his speech on the draft theses. After acknowledging the risk of an erroneous interpretation of the formula,

'La formule Union française pourrait être interprétée comme la manifestation d'une volonté tendant à imposer la prédominance de la France dans l'Union que nous voulons réaliser'³⁸.

Léon Feix finds it necessary to spell out clearly the Party's understanding of the term.

'La "véritable" Union française, c'est une "association volontairement consentie de peuples libres et égaux"'³⁹.

The Union Française as the Party portrays it was yet to be built.

A new letter came as a reply very promptly reemphasising the same point as Alain Menez quoted above. If the Union Française was meant to provide genuinely equal status between its partners, equality there must be; therefore no good reason could justify the term of Union 'Française', France being only one of the partners among many.

'Et ce terme même d'Union française en donnant la prééminence à la France n'est-il pas contradictoire avec l'égalité des partenaires'⁴⁰.

Various facts confirmed suspicions on the epithet 'Française': the prevailing role of France had been written into the section 8 examined above. Most historians agree today with P.F. Gonidec in defining the French government as 'le véritable

organe directeur de l'Union',⁴¹.

As for the ten years of life of the Union, they had been traversed by a blazing trail of repressions and colonial wars. A reminder of Nguyen Duc Khe's sarcasm seems very appropriate at this point, especially as he spoke from the bitter experience of Viet-Nam.

'Singulière Union que celle là. Une Union dont le seul résultat est de permettre à un Etat de contrôler les autres. Où les associés ne le sont pas entre eux mais seulement avec un autre qui ne se considère pourtant pas comme leur propre associé',⁴².

And yet the criticisms of the Union Française which appeared in l'Humanité's discussion column remained rather mild, presumably because the editorial board operated a careful selection of letters. Jean Baby in Critique de base, written four years later, launched a more severe condemnation of the Union Française going as far back as May 1947 (after Communists were ousted from the government). He argued that the Party's declarations in favour of the Union had become sheer opportunism since there was no hope left that the government might adopt a liberal policy towards the colonised peoples after the eviction of the communist ministers. Baby denounced the draft theses on the Union Française in 1956 as inadmissible and questioned the whole concept itself. Quoting Jacques Duclos in l'Humanité of 19 March 1947 'Nous devons écarter tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire' he asked if there could be any other.

'En régime capitaliste une "véritable"
Union française est-elle concevable
autrement que comme une forme hypocrite
de l'exploitation coloniale la plus
traditionnelle?'⁴³.

The Union Française clearly concretised the political links between an 'imperialist' power and its colonial territories which were not independent. Naturally the 'superstructure' would reflect the nature of the relationship between France and these territories: that of domination. Whatever the formula devised, the equation remained the same: the political framework had to further the interests of French imperialism.

An analysis of the economic links between France and its overseas territories [i.e. colonies] proves necessary in order to identify the real content of the Union Française and the next section will be devoted to that aspect of things.

Similar judgements on the Union Française can be found in some oppositionnel reviews. According to Le Communiste, there were no two possible interpretations of the Union, contrary to the PCF's claim. The formula could only represent one reality 'le maintien d'une tutelle ... de la métropole sur les peuples arriérés'⁴⁴. No matter whether this tutelage was intended to benefit the colonial peoples, by leading them towards an improved colonialism, in the last analysis, said Le Communiste, there was no difference between the policy advocated by the PCF and that of the Socialist and Radical Parties. As a conclusion the slogan of the Union Française was 'un mot d'ordre non communiste'⁴⁵.

In Le Communiste's view, the PCF should have demanded independence for the colonies.

B The PCF abandons the Union Française

It is difficult to assess the breadth of criticism formulated against the Union Française among PCF members. The assumption that the Party encountered widespread resistance to the slogan may be a fair one. At any rate objections voiced against the Union Française must have been sufficient to justify the withdrawal of the formula from the theses, which took place at the Party 1956 congress. In his report on the amendments to the draft theses, Georges Cogniot did not refer to any of the objections expressed during the preparation of the Congress. He never even went so far as to imply that the Party had ever made an erroneous appreciation of the situation. 'Ce n'est absolument pas pour des raisons de principe'.

The explanation given is rather puzzling.

'Seulement, le fait est que depuis un mois, une situation nouvelle s'est créée. Le mot 'd'Union Française' disparaît du vocabulaire politique et juridique en usage. Il ne correspond plus à la situation. La commission de l'Assemblée nationale qui a commencé de soumettre à un nouvel examen le titre 8 de la Constitution de 1946, a écarté d'emblée le maintien de l'expression dont nous parlons'⁴⁶.

Georges Cogniot's statement was self contradictory. If the Party supported the principle of the Union Française, the absence of the term in the new Constitution did not need to be taken into account; for the simple reason that it is in the nature of the Party line to remain independent of the opinion of a 'bourgeois' government. On the other hand if the slogan was only tactical it should certainly have been

removed much earlier. One is tempted to conclude that the strength of hard facts - the ugly face of the French policy in the Union, combining with the pressure of the Party membership, led the PCF to drop the Union Française from the proposed theses. The revision of the title 8 in the National Assembly provided a golden opportunity for the Party's executive bodies to withdraw the notion of Union Française without further ado, at a time when it had become so discredited in the eyes of the colonial peoples and also among communist members, that it was a real embarrassment. It could not play any sort of positive role in the PCF strategy. The Party thereafter dropped epithet 'Française' from its slogan.

Léon Feix was more daring in his speech to the 14th Congress [1956].

'Ce que nous préconisons est tout le contraire de l'Union Française, telle qu'elle existe et qui n'est que le camouflage de l'Empire Français',⁴⁷.

Admitting that the term Union Française had been used to cover the Empire, he nonetheless pleaded in favour of a 'Union' which would be based upon 'une égalité absolue des droits et des devoirs' between overseas countries and France.

The career of the Union Française in French communist policy had come to an end but it laid itself open to numerous subsequent criticisms from both Communists and non-Communists. The most substantial one is that coming from another Communist Party: the Communist Party of China. On 22 October 1963, the Chinese Party launched a scathing accusation against

'apologists of neo-colonialism' castigating the PCF for its neo-colonialist policies and referring specifically to the Union Française.

'For the past ten years and more the leaders of the French Communist Party have followed the colonial policy of the French imperialists and served as an appendage of French monopoly capital. In 1946, when the French monopoly capitalist rulers played a neo-colonialist trick by proposing to form a French Union, they [the PCF leaders] followed suit and proclaimed that "we have always envisaged the French Union as a "free union of free peoples," and that "the French Union will permit the regulation, on a new basis, of the relations between the peoples of France and the overseas peoples who have in the past been attached to France"'⁴⁸.

As confirmation of the CPC's assessment of the Union Française, one may cite Marchés coloniaux (23 November 1946).

'Fort habilement, nos gouvernants ont transformé la maison de la rue Oudinot en un "ministère de la France d'outre-mer" et l'empire est devenu l'"Union" [...] Mieux vaut changer le nom et garder la chose'⁴⁹.

'Marchés Coloniaux' was a colonialists' review reflecting the opinions of those who had a direct interest in the preservation of colonialism. If they expressed satisfaction at the change of terminology - from Empire to Union Française - it provided good evidence that nothing changed in reality. They said so and they must know it.

Jacques Julliard, who generally would find himself at variance with ultra-colonialist circles, shared their views on the Union Française. 'L'ancien empire colonial rebaptisé pour la circonstance'"Union Française"'⁵⁰.

Altogether the record of the Union Française could hardly justify the PCF's continued support for it.

The few reforms it brought about could not compensate for two colonial wars - a first one in Indochina lasting eight years and the beginning of a second one in Algeria - ferocious reprisals in Madagascar in 1947 and repression throughout African territories. Another explanation lies at the heart of the PCF support for the Union Française. The Party did not wish for a rupture of the relationships between France and its overseas territories; it considered that both of them would benefit from a continued partnership - until 1947 because it hoped for the establishment of a people's democracy in France - afterwards because of American encroachments everywhere. However, the PCF naturally did not want to advocate a preservation of the colonial status quo. Hence its support for the Union Française which it envisaged first as the ideal solution, then as a good compromise. In practice the Union was never either but only a bad camouflage for the continuation of French colonialism.

The Party eventually abandoned the slogan of Union Française partly under the pressure of its own members - letters to the Tribune de Discussion of l'Humanité testify to their objections. Oppositionnel journals also opposed it vehemently; although they generally expressed their criticisms retrospectively, since most of them appeared after the Union Française had been withdrawn from the Party policy, it is fair to assume that the oppositionnels held those views before the publication of their reviews. Generally the Union Française had by 1956 been so badly discredited by France's action in overseas territories that it had become totally unacceptable, even for the French govern-

ment.

Part Two: Economic links between France and Algeria

Any consistency which may be discernible in the PCF's line on Algeria is to be sought in the analysis guiding its varying policy: the essential point was the continuation of links between France and Algeria.

Georges Cogniot was correct in stating that withdrawal of the Union Française from the 14th congress theses did not signify a change in the Party's fundamental line.

From 1947 until 1956 the Party warned against advocating independence for Algeria - instead it argued that Algeria should become a member of the Union Française as an associated state, as this was deemed to be the best framework for the maintenance of links between France and Algeria. These links were further qualified as based on friendship, equality and mutual interest.

Later on, as the war escalated more and more violently, it became impossible to envisage any institutionalised political links such as the Union Française. The more France tried to impose its domination over Algeria through war and violence, the more definitive became the divorce between the two countries. The PCF began to see that separation and hatred would be likely to result from the continuation of the war; whereas on the contrary peace and independence might allow 'fruitful' economic exchanges between France and Algeria to continue. In 1957 the PCF therefore began to call for the recognition of Algerian independence at the same time as promoting the maintenance of their relationship.

I The PCF and the links between France and Algeria

The importance of the retention of links between Algeria and France was stressed by the PCF long before the insurrection started. At the end of the second world war economic exchanges occupied a prominent place in PCF writings on the colonies in general and Algeria in particular. The structure of the Union Française also entailed a network of economic links between France and her overseas territories. In 1945 . 46 the Party therefore did not limit itself to a denunciation of the 'colonial pact' but also proposed an economic alternative.

'Enfin ne conviendrait-il pas de se préoccuper très sérieusement de notre commerce avec les territoires français d'outre-mer? Et d'abord d'en modifier la contexture, c'est à dire au fond de renoncer aux méthodes colonialistes. Nous ne devons pas simplement tirer de ces pays matières premières et produits alimentaires. Nous devons aider au développement de leur industrie et des cultures indispensables à l'alimentation de leurs populations. Nous devons leur fournir des machines.

Prenons comme exemple l'Algérie. Nos plus gros achats étaient constitués par les phosphates, le fer, le zinc, le plomb, le vin, c'est à dire des produits miniers et agricoles où l'indigène n'a aucune part. Et nous vendions à l'Algérie avec des autos pour les gros colons, des cotonnades et de la pacotille pour la masse des indigènes. L'Algérie pourrait exporter du blé; elle aurait pu en ces années de difficultés pour la métropole, combler notre déficit en céréales. Que fallait-il pour cela? Avant tout des charrues ... Cette politique typiquement colonialiste, fait qu'aujourd'hui la famine s'étend en Algérie, quand nous mêmes en France, subissons des restrictions de plus en plus sévères⁵¹.

In his political report to the 10th congress Thorez presented a detailed description of colonial ties and their detrimental consequences for France and Algeria; he then proceeded to give concrete examples illustrating how a re-organisation based on a new economic approach would benefit both. The supply of adequate ploughs to Algeria could have avoided a famine in Algeria and rationing in France. Henri Lozeray, in his speech for a 'fraternal and democratic' Union Française⁵², elaborated on this plan in his proposal for the establishment of a new system of exchanges: the nationalisation of trusts would lead to a real 'mise en valeur' of the Algerian territory with the participation of the autochtones, aiming at a development of the productive forces.

The Party was then sharing power and hoped to influence the implementation of these measures, designed to improve the situation of the autochtones. The colonies were also considered as major contributors to the recovery of the French economy; the Party, relying on a popular government believed that exchanges between the métropole and the overseas territories could be established on a new basis benefitting everybody within the Union.

Until 1956 the Party stressed the importance of the Union Française, both as a political and as an economic relationship. After the FLN had launched an insurrection for the independence of Algeria, the PCF's attention was brought to bear primarily on the economic aspects of France's relationship with Algeria, and Party leaders devoted a number of articles to this question.

Two remarks emerge from a study of these publications:

- the main axes of the Party propaganda remained unchanged until 1960, converging towards the retention of economic links but on a new basis between France and Algeria without any qualification of their advantages;
- the Party mainly concerned itself with the French side of the relationship, showing how it affected the French economy rather than its impact on Algeria.

A The colonial ties are against the French people's interests

The Party's line of argument generally combined a denunciation of the colonial ties with the promotion of a new system of ties.

In a first stage the PCF endeavoured to prove that France did not benefit from Algeria's status as a colony. According to Raymond Barbé, Algerian agricultural products reached the French market at a higher price than world prices because of the protectionist measures imposed by colonial companies⁵³.

French consumers therefore spent more, for the preservation of Algeria as a colony, which also burdened the budget of the métropole: public expenses for investments and the maintenance of a heavy administrative apparatus came out of the taxpayers' pocket. Moreover, after the war started, additional military expenses cost France 640 Millions in the year 1957 alone. Altogether, Barbé argued, the flight of capital to Algeria depleted home investments. An issue of Cahiers du Communisme gave further details intended to dispel the 'lies' of the

French government which claimed that Algeria was the source of multiple advantages for French people. Even small producers were losing out because of the ruinous competition of the 'gros vinassiers d'Algérie'. Last but not least, Cahiers du Communisme vehemently denied the government's argument that Algeria provided one day of work a week to French workers.

'Il reste l'"argument" si répandu à propos de l'Algérie suivant lequel celle-ci procurerait aux ouvriers français une journée de travail par semaine. On sait sur quelle équivoque repose ce mensonge tendant à faire croire que les ouvriers ne travaillent que pour l'exportation, alors que cette dernière ne représente que 12 à 15% de la production nationale, et que la part de l'Algérie dans les exportations est d'environ 2,5%'⁵⁴.

According to this arithmetic, 12% out of 2.5% constituted much less than one day a week. In Cahiers du Communisme again the final figure was quoted.

'en réalité 1,25% seulement de la production nationale est exporté en Algérie'⁵⁵.

Such arguments were obviously designed to alleviate the fears related to the 'loss' of Algeria. They were addressed to all sections of French society and could also appeal to French capitalists [to the exclusion of colonial companies].

The Party appeared genuinely concerned with the possible loss of outlet for France in Algeria, and reassured itself and the readers that this was not the case. Ultimately, the arguments revolved round France's interest and French people's interests.

Economie et Politique also devoted a number of articles to the Algerian question⁵⁶. In 1956 André Prenant and Raymond Barbé both concerned themselves with exchanges between France and Algeria. They both endeavoured to show that Algeria cost the French taxpayers a great deal. André Prenant quoted the report presented by Mr Texier [who was Directeur Général des Finances] to the Algerian Assembly on 23 and 28 February 1956.

'En 1955, l'apport net de fonds publics en Algérie, compte non tenu des frais occasionnés aux finances françaises par le développement de la répression, représentait 140 milliards'⁵⁷.

They both concluded that neither the Algerian people nor the French people benefitted from the present links between Algeria and France; the beneficiaries of the situation were the 'capitalist monopolies', which continued to increase their capital.

'En 1953,...on évalue les profits à 239 milliards, soit 51% du revenu national, [algérien] contre 160 milliards de salaires [34% du revenu national]'⁵⁸.

Raymond Barbé specifically addressed himself to the governing politicians who were echoing the slogans of the 'ultra-colonialistes d'Algérie'. Barbé found it useful to quote Bourguès Maunoury, while he was Minister of the Interior.

'Ne nous y trompons pas: si demain l'Algérie et, par conséquent l'Afrique, venaient à être séparées de la France, la Métropole verrait son niveau de vie baisser d'un seul coup dans des proportions dont elle se rend mal compte. Le quart des usines métropolitaines seraient amenées à fermer, et dans certaines branches de l'industrie [le textile en particulier].

ce serait la mise en chômage de
centaines de milliers d'ouvriers'⁵⁹.

Raymond Barbé then proceeded to refute him. Barbé confidently stated that official statistics belied those dramatic assertions. It was correct to claim that Algeria was France's best customer admitted Raymond Barbé, but out of the French national production estimated at 13 800 milliard F in 1954, only 172.6 milliard F accounted for exports to Algeria [i.e. 1.25%]. Even the most heavily committed industries such as cars and lorries, textiles [cotton finished products], respectively represented 3.5% and 2.8% of French production⁶⁰. As a conclusion, exports to Algeria provided half a day of work to French workers.

'C'est pourquoi dans "le Monde" du
7 février, Mr Philippe Minay pouvait
écrire "Il est permis de dire que le
débouché algérien actuel assure aux
métropolitains une demi-heure de
travail par semaine environ'⁶¹.

French taxpayers subsidised the adverse balance sheet of Algeria's exchanges with France; the deficit never ceased to increase after 1948, reaching 69.3 milliard F in 1954, said Raymond Barbé, selecting data from the official government report prepared by Mr Maspétiol.

In the meantime, the Algerian market represented a 'chasse gardée' for the monopolies, and overpriced products yielded healthy profits; out of 172 milliard F of merchandise exported to Algeria in 1954, 32 milliard F derived from overpricing which was made possible by 'colonial protectionism' - Union Douanière. The same calculation made by Raymond Barbé

was valid for Algerian products in France - out of 115 milliard F in 1954 over 28 milliard were due to overpricing⁶². Military expenses reaching gigantic sums were grafted onto the heavy financial losses of French public expenditure in Algeria. Raymond Barbé, concluding that the present state of affairs benefitted neither the French nor the Algerian people, proposed the setting up of a true Union Française and peace for Algeria.

It is interesting to note, as Jean-Marie Domenach pointed out, that such a line of argument was not exclusive to the PCF⁶³. Among the right wing and non-communist left, the notion that Africa was too expensive and should be abandoned was gaining ground.

On the whole, it is reasonable to assume the validity of the general economic trends underlined by the PCF. They are in parts confirmed by Francis Jeanson and Robert Aron⁶⁴. Moreover, Raymond Barbé and André Prenant mainly quoted figures from an official government report [the Rapport Maspétiol] which could not be suspected of a favourable bias towards the PCF. Pure economic figures demonstrated that Algeria's balance of exchanges with France suffered an increasing deficit. In addition, the war expenses definitely escalated the cost of maintaining Algeria French. Of course, these figures did not include the wealthy profit expected from the extraction of Saharan oil. Nonetheless, the PCF fulfilled a useful role in belying the propaganda of the government to justify its war effort. But this was only one of the axes of the PCF speech on Algeria: it also emphasised

the need for continued exchanges, on a new basis between France and Algeria.

B New links would benefit France and the French people

The PCF had two good reasons for opposing the war:

- on the one hand it castigated the war since it was pursued for the preservation of colonial ties prejudicial to France;
- on the other hand, the war was said to jeopardise the possibility of new links between Algeria and France and the fruitful exchanges resulting from it.

The latter assumed a greater significance than the former as far as the Party was concerned.

During the 14th congress of the PCF in 1956, Maurice Thorez accused the government of mortgaging the future through its policy of war in Algeria:

'la politique de répression et de guerre conduit à la rupture des liens économiques'⁶⁵.

On the contrary, the perspective of peace in a free Algeria would be very profitable to the French economy, he continued:

'une Algérie libérée voudrait asseoir son indépendance sur des bases économiques solides. Dès lors, elle offrirait à l'industrie de notre pays un débouché beaucoup plus important que n'a jamais pu le faire l'Algérie . '⁶⁶.

Thorez's argument pertains to 'pure' economic realities and should have been able to persuade bourgeois economists: French industry cannot but thrive if it is supplied with increased outlets for its products. The colonial status reduced Algerian purchasing power whereas a developing Algeria would import more, added Cahiers du Communisme in 1957.

'La suppression de l'état colonial de l'Algérie qui maintient les masses dans un état permanent de sous-consommation offrirait, sur la base de rapports nouveaux d'égalité et de collaboration, des débouchés infiniment plus vastes à la production française' 67.

The Party also concluded that links woven by history between France and Algeria would naturally lead Algeria to turn to France for cadres and technological know-how. Algeria ruined by colonialism would require aid and assistance which France would be happy to provide.

'Libérée du système colonial, l'Algérie pourrait alors entreprendre un immense effort d'édification économique et elle ne manquerait pas de recourir à la technique et à l'industrie françaises, tandis que la poursuite de la guerre conduit à la rupture entre l'Algérie et la France' 68.

Through those statements the PCF proved to be 'progressive' only in so far as it was twenty years ahead of its time. The Party's economic argument could be said to transpose the Keynesian approach onto a world scale. What it presented as a most desirable solution is comparable to what has been recently proposed under the name of 'the Brandt report'.

There was nothing specifically 'communist' or revolutionary about the PCF's position. The most frequent reason which the Party advanced to support the breaking of colonial ties between France and Algeria was the financial loss suffered by France through those ties. This line of thought implied that the Party did not reject the colonialism of earlier years when the Algerian balance of payments was not in the red [until 1947] and did not need to be subsidised by the French taxpayers. One could even construe that the Party was happy to accept and support colonialism as long as France found it advantageous. I believe that this is the message which the French 'masses' drew from the PCF's writings. Once more the Party manifested its prime and sole concern for 'France's interest'. Once more, its propaganda objectively tended to reinforce the nationalist feelings of French people rather than combat it.

II The oppositionnels and the links between France and Algeria

A Against the retention of links between France and Algeria

The PCF's recurrent stress on the need to foster continued links between Algeria and France, even on a new basis, laid it open to a number of criticisms from its own members.

Some communists were of the opinion that the Party should concentrate on the denunciation of colonial ties rather than give priority to the promotion of new ties.

Maurice Moissonnier particularly resented the 'confusion' entailed by Yves Moreau's formulation insisting on the importance of outlets for the French economy in Algeria: he judged that the reader might draw the conclusion that colonial ties must be preserved as such.

'On se contente trop de termes vagues sur les intérêts réciproques des peuples algériens et français et Yves Moreau dans l'Humanité du 31 écrit une phrase qui peut prêter à confusion. "Qu'on imagine notre économie privée des ressources et des débouchés Nord-africains ... Cette formulation est dangereuse parce qu'elle peut laisser penser qu'il faut conserver tels qu'ils sont les débouchés algériens, or les rapports actuels sur le plan économique et politique devront être radicalement modifiés"'⁶⁹.

L'Etincelle protested that the Party did not have any authority to anticipate future links between Algeria and other countries; this was the prerogative of the Algerian people.

'Il appartiendra au peuple algérien et à lui seul de décider de ses rapports avec telle ou telle puissance et qu'il nous appartiendra à nous de lutter contre toute nouvelle forme de domination que notre bourgeoisie voudrait lui imposer',⁷⁰.

More interestingly, l'Etincelle also implicitly questioned the validity of 'new links' already foreseeing the need to combat 'new forms of domination' attempted by the French bourgeoisie. No such danger had been signalled by the Party which gave the impression of not realising the possibility of a 'post-colonialism' taking the shape of new forms of domination at the hands of France.

Clarté issued a similar warning to the Algerian people, but attributed to the United States only this striving for hegemony in the colonies, under 'new forms'.

'L'activité de l'impérialisme américain dont la doctrine postule l'éviction de la France, partout où il se peut, et le remplacement d'une forme périmée de colonialisme par une forme 'moderne', plus forte et plus active',⁷¹.

The same phrasing can be found in the Déclaration des représentants des partis communistes et ouvriers des pays socialistes réunis à Moscou (14.16 May 1957).

'ils [USA] veulent imposer, sous une forme nouvelle, le joug colonialiste aux peuples émancipés',⁷².

It is worth noticing that Clarté and the PCF did not at that time envisage that France could also try to introduce a 'new form' of colonialism. The Party kept considering the retention of links between France and its ex-colonies as

positive. In 1958, when De Gaulle launched the 'Communauté', Sékou Touré and the Guinean people answered 'no' to the referendum on the Communauté and preferred independence. What Clarté underlined with satisfaction was the fact that Sékou Touré intended to preserve friendly links with France.

'Dans les rapports de la Guinée avec le monde extérieur, il n'y a pas de doute que la France gardera toujours la première place'73.

Le Communiste cited an astonishing statement by Monique Lafon, who pointed out the simultaneous loss to the French capitalists and to the French people if the relationship between Guinea and France was severed.

'Du côté français, s'il y a rupture, les trusts français sont sans doute lésés comme Sékou Touré l'a fait remarquer, mais des possibilités économiques intéressant tout le peuple français disparaissent aussi'74.

Le Communiste accused the Party of drawing the French people and the capitalists closer together.

Jacques Arnault did his best to answer the objections brought out against the Party's position on the utility of establishing 'new links' with Algeria, which, according to oppositionnels 'smacked of imperialism'. Jacques Arnault drew an extremely controversial analogy, quoting Lenin.

'La destruction des liens qui furent imposés à la Norvège par les monarques européens et les aristocrates suédois a renforcé le lien qui unit les ouvriers norvégiens et suédois'75.

Either Arnault completely misunderstood Lenin's quote or deliberately distorted its real meaning. Arnault was making a parallel between two different situations. Lenin referred to the solidarity between the working class in two different countries and explained how the severing of Norwegian subordination to Sweden strengthened the friendship between these countries' working classes. The PCF spoke of economic links between countries, which is quite a different matter. Secondly, Jacques Arnault presented the Party's urge to establish new links with Algeria as a proof that it categorically opposed the continuation of French rule over Algeria. Quite simply, argued Arnault, because 'new economic' links presupposed the economic development of Algeria, which in turn could not take place before Algeria's independence. This, in fact, is contrary to what the PCF had been accustomed to saying earlier on. In previous years, the Party had argued that the economic development of Algeria would be facilitated if Algeria did not acquire independence but stayed within the Union Française⁷⁶.

The ultimate argument advanced by Jacques Arnault to justify the Party's policy was that of history.

'Ces liens tissés historiquement ... ouvrent la possibilité de rapports fructueux entre peuples libres et égaux en droit.

L'exemple du Maroc appelant de nombreux enseignants français ... confirment cette constatation de fait.

Les liens historiquement tissés peuvent être le support de liens contractuels, nouveaux, utiles pour le proche avenir'⁷⁷.

After noticing the inherent weakness resulting from the underdevelopment of the Algerian economy - which was itself due to

French colonialist exploitation - the Party paradoxically concluded that history pointed to France as the best one to offer its assistance.

La Voie Communiste drew opposite conclusions from its observations of history and responded to the disingenuousness of the Party leaders with astonishment.

'Ainsi donc le colonialisme oppresseur,
à peine vaincu, se transformerait en
tuteur loyal? L'expérience de la
Tunisie et du Maroc démontre chaque
jour l'aberration de telles vues.
Une colonie qui obtient son indépendance
politique doit aussi assurer son
indépendance économique. Pour ce faire
son intérêt est de n'être liée à
personne, de n'utiliser les offres
qu'en fonction de ses intérêts'78.

La Voie Communiste touched on an essential point concerning the future of newly independent ex-colonies - their economic independence. If they had to rely on France for capital, technology, administrative and teaching cadres, to what extent did these countries control the real seat of decision?

La Voie Communiste also implied that the same France which used to impose its colonial rule over Algeria would not easily shed its old habits of domination and therefore would utilise the 'assistance' granted to these countries for a better exploitation of independent Algeria for the benefit of French capitalist interests.

The same misgiving was expressed by other circles than those of the oppositionnels. Francis Jeanson voiced them.

'En règle générale donc il ne nous semble pas qu'un responsable révolutionnaire [algérien] puisse faire confiance à un spécialiste désigné par l'Etat français'⁷⁹.

Similar doubts were expressed by the FLN itself:

'L'idée de coopération est en elle-même confuse, lourde d'équivoques et devait par la suite se révéler illusoire et dangereuse.

Telle qu'elle a été conçue au Maroc et en Tunisie elle signifiait l'acceptation d'un compromis aux termes duquel la France pouvait maintenir un certain nombre de positions héritées de l'époque coloniale, notamment dans les domaines culturel, militaire et économique'⁸⁰.

Neither of them proposed a real alternative. History has shown that the problem of maintaining a true economic independence was a difficult one for ex-colonies. However, La Voie Communiste, Francis Jeanson and El Moujahid have made a judicious remark on the supposed sincerity and advantages of France's 'aid'.

B The danger of neo-colonialism

At the end of the 1950s, the word 'neo-colonialism' began to appear regularly to portray this 'new form' of domination. Neo-colonialism was identified as a major danger by the under-developed countries. The Third All African people's conference meeting in Cairo in March 1961, assessing the new dangers arising for the independent states in Africa, adopted a special resolution on neo-colonialism.

'Neo-colonialism, which is the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means, is the greatest threat to African countries that have newly won their independence or those approaching this status'⁸¹.

According to the oppositionnels, instead of recommending a preferential relationship with France, the newly independent states would be well advised not to limit themselves to one trading partner. Algeria must avoid 'les servitudes du "tête à tête"', argued La Voie Communiste⁸², to enjoy a greater margin of manoeuvrability in order to extort better terms for its own interest. 'To shop around' in N Krumah's words. Neo-colonialism made use of all the channels available and these were all the more pernicious as they were more subtle: even cultural links with the métropole were to be held under suspicion.

'Though the aim of the neo-colonialists is economic domination, they do not confine their operations to the economic sphere. They use the old colonialist methods of religious, educational and cultural infiltration. For example, in the independent States many expatriate teachers and 'cultural ambassadors' influence the minds of the young against their own country and people'⁸³.

The FLN had expressed similar views (see above, p.142) and Francis Jeanson in La Révolution Algérienne also warned against an education system deriving its models from France⁸⁴.

N Krumah, who was not a communist, nevertheless posited the

existence and availability of Socialist countries as a propitious factor counterbalancing the prevailing weight of imperialist powers - he thought that it was possible to extort better terms of contract for his country if there was a choice of offers. Surprisingly enough the PCF did not even mention the Socialist countries as possible trading partners. Everybody would have expected the Party to posit them as more beneficial to the newly independent states than imperialist France. It did not. The PCF probably had great faith in the potential advantages to be granted by France to its ex-colonies. In its view, France represented a superior type of partnership.

However, from 1960 onwards the PCF began to cast a certain amount of doubt on the type of 'aid' to be provided by France to Algeria.

In 'Caractéristiques du colonialisme français',⁸⁵, Raymond Barbé identified French neo-colonialism with De Gaulle's policies which combined reaction at home with enterprises of domination in the colonies 'under a new form'.

Clarté gave a more detailed account of French neo-colonialist methods in 1961; the 'plan de Constantine',⁸⁶ was the main target of its criticisms showing how De Gaulle, on behalf of big capital, even planned for an 'industrialisation' of Algeria so that its economy could be intimately linked [i.e. subordinated] to the French one. Building houses and schools would serve the same aim.

'le développement de la scolarisation [doit] intégrer les esprits en francisant les jeunes musulmans et former de la main d'oeuvre et des cadres pour le capitalisme industriel',⁸⁷.

And Waldeck Rochet in his Central Committee report denounced the 'statut d'association' between Algeria and France proposed by De Gaulle as 'néo-colonialiste'⁸⁸.

Neo-colonialism had come under attack from the Party - in September 1962 a special supplement to Cahiers du Communisme was devoted to an extensive article by Marcel Egretaud.

'Réforme constitutionnelle. Qu'est-ce que le néo-colonialisme?' However, the 16th congress, whilst opposing a 'neo-colonialist' solution, continued to express its faith in a new relationship between France and Algeria.

'C'est l'issue favorable d'une négociation menée dans cet esprit qui permettra d'établir entre la France et l'Algérie libérée de toute forme de colonialisme des relations nouvelles basées sur l'amitié, l'égalité et le libre consentement, profitables à nos deux pays'⁸⁹.

For an alternative to De Gaulle's solution, which the PCF regarded as coercive, the PCF proposed a 'freely agreed' relationship between France and Algeria. The Party did not elaborate on the workings of such a relationship, in practice. It contented itself with stating the principle of it.

With hindsight, we can now question once more the possibilities of realising such a partnership 'profitable to both France and Algeria'.

III A class question

A study of the PCF's policy over the Union Française and the continuation of economic links between France and Algeria cannot be complete without considering the curious habit the Party had of overlooking the imperialist nature of France. The oppositionnels within the Party did not fail to notice it and had pressed that point early on. Quoting the Party statement, in the Politbureau declaration of 2 March 1956.

'Nous sommes pour l'existence et pour la permanence des liens politiques, économiques, culturels particuliers entre la France et l'Algérie'.

Gabriel le Rousseau replied by a rhetorical question 'indépendamment du contenu politique français?'⁹⁰. For Gabriel le Rousseau, it is clear that the Party took little account of the 'capitalist' character of the French socio-economic system. His opinion is confirmed by other PCF documents: when Jacques Arnault attempted to provide a theoretical backing for the validity of continued economic exchanges between France and Algeria, he neglected to ever mention such concepts as 'capitalism', 'imperialism' or even classes.

'Certes, une solution qui conduit à la coopération est préférable à une solution qui conduit à l'isolement. La première peut faciliter le développement des forces productives de la société, la seconde le freiner. La première est conforme au développement social du monde, la seconde lui tourne le dos.

Sans aucun doute, s'assigner comme tâche la mise en commun du plus grand nombre possible de richesses naturelles

et de forces humaines, physiques, morales, intellectuelles, est juste et conforme à l'intérêt des peuples.

Le rôle des Français, en tant que citoyens d'une nation avancée du point de vue du développement social et susceptibles, de ce fait, de fournir une aide - dont nul ne nie l'intérêt - peut-être considérable⁹¹.

Jacques Arnault's demonstration abandoned any trace of Marxist class perspective. Looking for an alternative to France's rule over its colonies, he argues that cooperation is preferable to isolation. Such a generalisation is fundamentally unmarxist and inaccurate. Cooperation between countries may or may not be preferable, depending on the specific historical circumstances which need be analysed before a conclusion can be reached. One may infer that Jacques Arnault has in mind cooperation between France and its colonies, in which case an analysis of the class and power relationships involved would indicate that 'cooperation' is preferable from the point of view of French imperialism, but detrimental to the colonial peoples whom France exploits. For Jacques Arnault, in another sweeping generalisation, the centralisation - 'la mise en commun' - of human and physical resources is in conformity with the interests of the peoples. Again, the validity of this statement depends on which class controls those resources, in which mode of production, within specific historical circumstances. If it means that the human and physical resources in question fall in the hands of imperialist France, she would no doubt further her imperialist interests, and not 'l'intérêt des peuples'.

Jacques Arnault indeed took no account of the fact that the capitalist class was ruling in France and that France was an

imperialist country. To use the PCF's own phraseology, 'bourgeois cosmopolitanism' would characterise Arnault's discourse better than 'proletarian internationalism'. There is a class dimension to the relationship between France and Algeria which cannot be ignored. The oppositionnels postulated that the Party glossed over the class contradictions within France. Contrary to the Party's vague formulations on 'France's role', the oppositionnels themselves always specified to what class they were referring. L'Etincelle pointed out that the 'loss' of Algeria would in no way be harmful to 'French workers' rather than to France in general.

'Sur le plan économique, on ne voit guère ce que les prolétaires français auraient à perdre si l'Algérie se séparait de la France'⁹².

For the PCF the threat of US imperialism and its encroachment on French national independence assumed particular importance and the US could not be ignored in their attempts to take over France's role in its ex-colonies.

The discovery of profitable oil fields in the Sahara rendered the question more urgent for the Party. Setting itself up as the champion of national independence, the PCF viewed Saharan oil through the prism of France's independence in energy.

'Les gisements de pétrole du Sahara, gisements d'importance mondiale, posent des problèmes qui ne peuvent nous laisser indifférents car leur exploitation a une influence directe, non seulement sur les conditions de vie du peuple français, mais sur les bases énergétiques de l'indépendance française'⁹³.

In this context, it became imperative for the Party to encourage the continuation of links between France and Algeria; in the PCF's interpretation, a complete break would tilt Algerian oil into US hands [Algeria being too weak to survive economically would fall under the control of the powerful USA].

These policies gave ample ammunition to those opposition-
nels who claimed that the Party's concern for national independence [that of France not Algeria] blinded its class perspective.

'Faut-il soutenir que le blé, le vin récoltés sur les terres enlevées aux Arabes, sont un blé français, un vin français? Ou même épouser la thèse, que le pétrole du Sahara est le gage de l'indépendance de la France? ... Tout se passe comme si, face aux appétits menaçants de l'impérialisme américain, le prolétariat français devrait avoir partie liée avec son propre impérialisme'⁹⁴.

Although this article did not elaborate on all the implications, it revealed a manifest divergence between its interpretation of the French situation and the PCF's; l'Etincelle criticised the Party for sponsoring some kind of 'Union sacrée' between the French proletariat and its class enemy to confront US imperialism, at the expense of the Algerian people.

It seems timely to close this debate as any further discussion of this question would encroach on the following section which devotes itself to the relationship between the working class, the bourgeoisie and the PCF in France.

Altogether the PCF's focus of concern does not seem to differ from other parties in France. Better outlets for France in Algeria and the usufruct of Saharan oil were equally the concern of the communist and non-communist left; the same could be said of De Gaulle. Different parties followed different paths to reach apparently similar results in the fulfilment of the 'national interest'. Whilst the PCF advocated independence and peace for Algeria in order to secure economic links between France and Algeria, the Socialist Party⁹⁵ and right-wing parties opted for a 'French Algeria' - incidentally the PCF itself had earlier on advocated a political union, the Union Française with the aim of inducing more fruitful exchanges between France and Algeria. The PCF distinguished itself from all the others because it had upheld independence sooner and because of its insistence on the equality of the relationship between France and Algeria. However, it did not demonstrate how to arrive at that equality⁹⁶.

The oppositionnels expressed strong doubts on the viability of a relationship between France and Algeria which, in their opinion, would turn into France's economic domination over its ex-colony. The oppositionnels inferred from it that the Party had taken no account of France's imperialist nature. This latter point will be studied in detail in the following section on the Party and the French nation.

Part Three: The French nation

In their polemics on the French nation both the Party and the oppositionnels quoted Marxist classics. However, it is not a study of the Marxist thought on the nation that can help us elucidate the PCF's outlook. Marx himself did not produce an exhaustive exposé on the national question; none of his major works was devoted to it. Altogether the writings of Marx, Engels or Lenin do not provide any comprehensive blueprint. Their approach to the nation and their application of Marxism to the national question varied in accordance with the concrete historical circumstances under examination. This facilitated the possibility of giving different interpretations to a text thereafter. Rather than the quotations themselves their interpretation by the Party or the oppositionnels reveals the real nature of the debate.

Consequently, the significance of a quotation did not lie solely or mainly in the text of the quote as such; its real meaning was implied rather than spelt out by the choice of a specific quote in a particular context. The PCF and the oppositionnels thus used quotations and sometimes manipulated them for the purpose of justifying their point of view and actions.

A careful study of the whole text, including quotations, can enable us to understand and analyse the Party's approach to the French nation and the views of the oppositionnels.

I The PCF and the 'grandeur' of the French nation

French national independence and grandeur emerged as regular themes in PCF post-war propaganda. The numerous occasions on which the Party posed as the champion of national independence and French grandeur helped to turn these slogans into political leitmotifs. This position assumed particular importance during the Algerian war for two main reasons:

- the Party's approach to the French nation was an essential factor determining the Party's line on Algeria;
- it came under criticism from within, and remained an object of debate throughout the Algerian war for the oppositionnels, who wished to devote more efforts and resources to combatting colonialist and chauvinist ideology.

An original aspect of the Party's view of French national independence and grandeur was that it extended beyond the borders of the hexagone.

The Party's positions on the overseas territories and Algeria remained in careful harmony with the general defence of French national independence. In 1947, the Party was in favour of the continuation of a 'French presence' in the Far East and regretted the 'loss' of Lebanon and Syria.

'Nous sommes pour la présence de la France en Extrême-Orient, mais nous avons la conviction profonde que la politique que l'on suit aboutira tôt ou tard à nous faire chasser de là-bas, au lieu de nous y maintenir',⁹⁷.

Jacques Duclos in 1947 asserted again that it was in 'France's interest' to maintain a French influence in the Far East⁹⁸, and Pierre Cot in 1955 vouched the French people's desire to see the continuation of a French 'presence' in North Africa.

'Tous les Français sont d'accord pour souhaiter le maintien de la présence française et de l'influence française en Algérie comme au Maroc et en Tunisie'⁹⁹.

In 1958 Saharan oil was considered by the Party as a potential instrument of French energy independence¹⁰⁰.

Partial explanations related to strategic or tactical considerations do not account for the consistent emphasis laid by the PCF on French national independence. Jean Martelli finds that the notion of national independence has been a permanent feature of Party policy since 1934.

'Dans l'histoire du PCF, la notion d'"indépendance nationale" est sans cesse présente depuis 1934; il mène à plusieurs reprises de grandes luttes, avec d'importants succès, autour de la défense de la paix et de la sauvegarde de l'indépendance nationale. Mais la manière dont il a conçu ces batailles, le lien qu'il établissait lui-même entre son intervention sur l'indépendance nationale et son activité politique d'ensemble n'ont pas toujours été les mêmes. On peut même dire que la réflexion nationale a été d'autant plus riche et efficace qu'elle pouvait s'articuler sur une réflexion générale concernant la voie française au socialisme, les conditions nationales de la lutte des communistes français'¹⁰¹.

The stability and persistence of the slogan is overwhelming: it could be construed as an indication that the PCF posited national independence as a principle guiding its policy,

rather than a slogan depending on strategic and tactical objectives. My study of the Party's texts on nation, bourgeoisie and proletariat revealed an underlying assumption: the permanence of the French nation and its valuable contribution, past, present and future to the progress of mankind. The PCF theoretical approach about the French nation tended to demonstrate that it was worthy of support and deserved to live on.

A Historic law and the nation

In the first place, the Party claimed that it had 'discovered' a new historical 'law' governing the evolution of nations:

'L'étude scientifique de l'évolution des sociétés humaines a permis de dégager la loi suivante:
Quand une classe a achevé son rôle historique et devient donc un obstacle au développement de la société, elle se détache de la nation, tandis que les intérêts de la classe montante coïncident avec l'intérêt national'¹⁰².

According to this new law, a class, which has completed its historical role, which is not progressive any more, detaches itself from the nation. The formulation of the text leads one to believe that this is true for all societies. 'L'étude scientifique de l'évolution des sociétés humaines a permis de dégager la loi suivante' stated the text. Nowhere does it specify that it refers to the birth and life of capitalist societies or any other. This general declaration implies the perenity of the nation as though it had existed throughout

a number of historical epochs and modes of production.

The Party document quoted the example of the feudal Emigrés in Coblenz, allying with European monarchs to attack France and of the French bourgeoisie at the time of the Commune (1871) to illustrate that law.

Moreover, having registered a number of historical examples proving the 'betrayal' of the French nation by the bourgeoisie - the Commune, Munich, Vichy and the Atlantic Pact - the PCF then proceeded to absolutise the 'anti-national' character of the bourgeoisie.

'Le cosmopolitisme bourgeois, fondé sur la communauté des intérêts de classe des capitalistes du monde entier, comporte le mépris des nations, de leurs civilisations et de leurs traditions; il entraîne la négation du sentiment national',¹⁰³.

According to the Party's analysis, the French bourgeoisie had definitely departed from the nation and forsaken it. The PCF unilaterally stressed the 'cosmopolitan' aspect of the bourgeoisie, neglecting its dual character. It failed to notice the existence of a French bourgeoisie which was anxious to preserve its own French interests against US or German rivalry. The French bourgeoisie which was alive and kicking was erroneously regarded by the Party as unimportant on the national scene.

What the Party saw as a definitive 'divorce' between the bourgeoisie and the nation served a clear purpose: it purified the French nation from reactionary aspects since the reactionary class had abandoned it. At the same time, for the PCF, the French nation also gained in value since the above-

mentioned law stated that the progressive class, i.e. the working class, had taken over the national banner.

'Dans chaque pays la classe ouvrière est porteuse de l'intérêt national'¹⁰⁴.

Through this 'law' the Party inevitably presented the nation as an inherently 'progressive' reality which it was the task of progressive classes to carry forward as they would social progress for instance. What was national had to be progressive: this came as a natural conclusion. At least this is what the PCF tried to make out, arguing that the progressive and national characters of the working class had always been intimately linked. In order to prove this point, it subjected quotations by Marx and Engels to a most original interpretation.

'Son [la classe ouvrière] rôle national et progressif s'exprime dans les objectifs et le caractère même de sa lutte:

" Cette lutte a atteint une étape où la classe exploitée (le prolétariat) ne peut plus se libérer de la classe qui l'exploite et l'opprime sans libérer en même temps et pour toujours la société [my stress] toute entière de l'exploitation, de l'oppression et des luttes de classe". (Engels)

"Ce n'est qu'au nom des droits généraux de la société [my stress] qu'une classe particulière peut revendiquer la suprématie générale". (Marx)¹⁰⁵.

Engels referred to the fact that the proletariat had to free the whole of society from exploitation in its struggle for emancipation. In Marx's statement, the proletariat can only have a claim to 'general supremacy' for the same reason. Nowhere is the nation mentioned. In Marxist thought it is

very clearly its class structure that should enable the proletariat to bring an end to exploitation and to liberate humanity, not its national quality.

And yet the PCF takes Marx and Engels' statements to mean that the proletariat's historical role consists of freeing the nation and holding up its interests.

According to Roger Garaudy, the proletariat regards it as a 'mission' to serve the nation, rather than uses the national framework as a convenient theatre for its battle against exploitation and oppression.

'C'est une mission que le prolétariat tient de la dialectique de notre histoire que de prendre la relève de la bourgeoisie à la tête de la nation pour en assurer l'avenir et la grandeur'¹⁰⁶.

At the same time as substituting 'nation' for 'society' (as was shown above) the Party often equated 'nation' to 'people'.

'L'unité la force et le rayonnement de la patrie sont menacés dès qu'une classe privilégiée oppose ses intérêts propres à ceux de la nation [my stress] avec le seul souci de maintenir ses privilèges contre l'ensemble du peuple' [my stress]¹⁰⁷.

For the PCF, nation and people have become practically interchangeable. For Marxists this ought not to be the case. This confusion between nation and people may be one of the key concepts explaining the new attributes bestowed on the nation by the PCF; the Party wrongly applied to the nation what was perhaps valid for the people, for instance the fact that the exploiting class/ruling class had detached itself from the people.

B The proletariat becomes the nation

Altogether one would be justified in saying that the PCF's elaborations on the nation lacked depth and clarity. This impression is reinforced by my study of its analysis of the relationship between the proletariat and the nation. The French Communist Party - which considered itself as the Party of the proletariat, in the Marxist tradition - also claimed to be the Party of the nation, 'le seul parti authentiquement national',¹⁰⁸.

The terms of nation and proletariat often occur simultaneously in tandem in PCF statements revealing a certain kinship. A simple explanation is advanced by the Party, the fact that the working class tends to become the nation.

'La classe ouvrière est devenue la classe ascendante du monde moderne et elle tend à devenir elle-même la nation',¹⁰⁹.

Both Laurent Casanova¹¹⁰ and Roger Garaudy¹¹¹ submitted the Communist Manifesto to a fresh study, with the aim of refuting as obsolete Marx's historical words 'les ouvriers n'ont pas de patrie'. They argued that this formula was applicable to the absolute destitution of the proletariat in the mid-19th century, but the situation had changed since then: the working class had strengthened itself in numbers, in organisation, in class consciousness and could participate in the national life. For the Party, there was no contradiction left between the proletarian and national interests, which in its view on occasions almost became synonymous. The theme of the proletariat as the driving force of French national unity ran

through most basic PCF texts such as congress theses on theoretical texts. The Party generally did not accept that there could be a bourgeois interpretation of the word national. It remarked that the bourgeoisie tried to portray a number of 'enterprises' as national, but those were nothing of the sort, said the PCF, they were in fact 'anti-national' (e.g. colonial enterprises).

The real national interests, according to the Party, corresponded to a proletarian interpretation of the term, and it acted in conformity with this assumption. In its 14th and 15th congresses¹¹², a programme of renovation of the French national economy was introduced, making an optimum use of French resources, encompassing investments in productive industries and in education, for the benefit of the national interest. The 1959 congress proposed in greater detail the development of energy resources and industry, such as machine tools, electronics and building industries, in order to safeguard French interests and independence. This comprehensive programme was meant to further the proletariat's/nation's interest. The PCF kept acting as though it was on the brink of ruling France. But one cannot help drawing attention to the contradiction between the PCF's wishful thinking and the reality of the situation. In 1959, the political power was undoubtedly well in the hands of the bourgeoisie - in imperialist France - which would not fail to wield it to harness any economic development in France to its own interests. In practice the Party's discourse and proposals merely caused confusion among the French 'masses' as to the real nature of the state.

II The oppositionnels and the nation

Most oppositionnel reviews concerned themselves with the rampant racialism and chauvinism unleashed by the Algerian war. A number of articles were written pointing out the danger of allowing nationalism and colonialist ideology to spread unhampered. In their view, the PCF's response to these phenomena was inadequate and inefficient. It indulged in a complacent attitude towards the French nation, neglecting the task of exposing French imperialism and the ensuing chauvinist prejudices.

'Le problème est de savoir si nous n'y avons pas cédé, et si nous avons pris la meilleure voie pour les combattre',¹¹³.

A The French nation: a bourgeois nation

Thus the more theoretical publications such as Voies Nouvelles were led to delve into the Party's approach to the nation, which according to them caused a number of illusions and misunderstandings. Maurice Caveing in Réalité du Nationalisme¹¹⁴ found it necessary to reassert the bourgeois nature of the French nation. The nation he said was an organic entity. Hence the capitalist socio-economic formation in France expressed itself in a specific ideology which permeated the whole nation. He added that nationalism, as a component of that ideology, pervaded the spontaneous consciousness of the working masses, leading up to the conclusion that only an organised and conscious vanguard could combat nationalism. France's attempt to preserve its colonial empire

through a war in Algeria exacerbated chauvinism. The Party as 'vanguard' bore a special responsibility in the struggle against the chauvinism which prevailed in France and Maurice Caveing blamed it for neglecting this task. He accused the PCF of bringing confusion to its own members and the French masses, because it had lost sight of the basic analysis of the French nation which he, Maurice Caveing had just reemphasised.

Subsequent issues of Voies Nouvelles elaborated on the theme that the PCF spread illusions among the French masses about their 'own' imperialism. The Party propaganda stressed the US so much as the main enemy of the French masses that the French bourgeoisie was portrayed as a negligible quantity. Voies Nouvelles convincingly argued that the Party's policy of national independence against the USA, accompanied with a concert of praises for the French national heritage and its democratic traditions, references to the Rights of Man and republican ideals masked the reality of France as an imperialist country¹¹⁵. This was a very judicious remark. Voies Nouvelles also quoted the example of the pre-first world war period to demonstrate how the bourgeoisie was skilful at taking advantage of republican ideals to fool its class enemy.

'La bourgeoisie impérialiste proclama l'Union sacrée, au nom des idéaux républicains et des souvenirs de 1789, face à l'Allemagne impériale, agressive et réactionnaire. Les résolutions internationalistes des Congrès socialistes fondirent alors comme neige au soleil devant l'évocation de la France démocratique, patrie de la liberté, libératrice des opprimés, volant au secours des victimes d'agression'¹¹⁶.

According to l'Etincelle, the Algerian war was a case in point where the bourgeois use of national myths was assisted by the very propaganda of the PCF.

'Nous continuons à entretenir la confusion en nous référant, dans notre lutte contre la guerre à des notions comme celle de "grandeur française"...Mais "grandeur nationale", de façon vague, n'a aucun sens, et ne fait qu'apporter de l'eau au moulin du chauvinisme'¹¹⁷.

The oppositionnels voiced further criticisms particularly of the Party's policy regarding the colonies. In their opinion,

- long developments on the preservation of the 'French presence' in the colonial territories,
- emphasis on the possibility of equal relationship and friendship between France and its 'overseas territories' within the Union Française,
- the promotion of permanent links between France and its colonies over and above any other consideration,

all these aspects of the Party's line on the colonies gilded the image of French imperialism¹¹⁸. It was thereby coloured into a gentle, more acceptable imperialism; in the last analysis one could have drawn the conclusion that it was hardly imperialist at all!

Jean G  r  me's [alias Jean-Pierre Vernant] criticisms reached a higher degree of severity; he accused the Party of objectively colluding with the bourgeoisie.

'Ainsi, au moment même où s'amorçait la crise dans tout l'Empire français, dernier empire colonial de type traditionnel, alors que la France s'engageait dans une chaîne ininterrompue d'actions répressives et de guerre coloniales, le parti le plus représentatif de la classe ouvrière française aurait choisi pour axe central de sa lutte, non le combat contre son propre impérialisme, mais la bataille contre un impérialisme étranger menaçant les 'intérêts nationaux', du pays. La logique de cette stratégie accordant toujours à ce qui pouvait renforcer l'indépendance française à l'égard des Etats Unis la priorité absolue sur la lutte des colonies pour l'indépendance à l'égard de la France aurait conduit le PC dans l'affaire algérienne, sur des positions finalement plus proches de celles de la bourgeoisie française que celles du peuple algérien' 119.

Jean Gêrôme's conclusion is very clear: the Party's political choice to give 'absolute priority' to French national independence against the USA led it to side with the French bourgeoisie rather than the Algerian people.

Further studies of Party documents copiously confirm the oppositionnels' allegations that the PCF underestimated the nature and strength of French imperialism. Georges Cogniot even utilised Lenin's polemic with Rosa Luxemburg on the national question in order to justify the campaign for French national sovereignty against US imperialism.

'"Des guerres nationales contre des puissances impérialistes sont non seulement possible et vraisemblables, elles sont inévitables, elles sont progressistes et révolutionnaires" (dit Lénine).

Tout le déroulement des événements historiques depuis la première guerre mondiale jusqu'aujourd'hui équivaut à une suite ininterrompue de preuves à l'appui des idées bolcheviks sur la

question nationale. ... Qu'on pense enfin au programme de lutte qui est aujourd'hui appliqué en France, en Italie et dans une série d'autres pays, pour la défense de l'indépendance et de la souveraineté nationale contre l'impérialisme américain¹²⁰.

In an attempt to prove the correctness of the Party line on French national independence, Georges Cogniot brought in Lenin, saying that national wars against imperialist powers were progressive and revolutionary. When he wrote these words, Lenin was referring to national liberation movements in the colonies or oppressed nations fighting against imperialism. This does not apply to the French situation unless one assumed that France was a colony of the USA. Quite the contrary, France itself is imperialist, France itself oppressed colonies of its own.

B The PCF nourishes nationalism

Since the PCF underestimated the bourgeoisie's strength, it was consequently unable to make an accurate appreciation of the proletariat's influence, as both counterparts exist and act relatively to each other in a dynamic whole. Misconceptions about their relative position reinforce each other and lead to greater inaccuracy in the respective evaluation of the bourgeoisie and proletariat poised against each other.

The oppositionnels were greatly alarmed by the Party statements on the proletariat and the nation. L'Etincelle believed that Laurent Casanova had lost sight of the class contradiction itself between proletariat and nation, making them indistinguishable from each other. In reality, the bourgeoisie

was part of the nation which therefore could not be identified with the proletariat.

'Il [Casanova] préfère affirmer avec Julien Benda que "les revendications de classe du prolétariat français tendent de plus en plus à se résoudre dans la grande revendication nationale". Et il ajoute : "Donc le sentiment de classe, comme Marx l'avait prévu, pousse le prolétariat à devenir lui-même la nation"¹²¹.

L'Etincelle also charged that Laurent Casanova had doctored the Communist Manifesto so that it fitted in with his own interpretation of the relationship between nation and proletariat. L'Etincelle shows how Casanova, quoting the Manifesto which stated that the proletariat must constitute itself as the nation, carried out a little surgery which considerably altered the meaning of the text: he left out the section specifying that the proletariat must first seize power¹²² before it becomes nation. This cancels out the validity of the statement as far as France is concerned, because the proletariat had not yet conquered power.

'La raison profonde de ces entorses systématiques à la pensée marxiste apparaît ici clairement: arriver progressivement à affirmer que déjà, en France comme en URSS, le prolétariat est la classe dirigeante, qu'il s'identifie à la nation'¹²³.

Similarly, Victor Leduc argued that a policy of identification between proletariat and nation led to the denial of the class struggle.

'Dire que le prolétariat s'identifie
à la nation, c'est effacer l'existence
des classes et leurs luttes'¹²⁴.

Objectively, the Party would thus be acting as an agent of the bourgeoisie.

In his endeavour to answer the oppositionnels, Jacques Arnault denied the connotation of 'chauvinism' attributed to the phrase 'national interest'. In a brief historical retrospective, he explained how the Party in its infancy made a break with nationalism and rejected everything national. He implied that this stage of Party development was a necessary 'infantile disorder'. Such an attitude has become outmoded, said Jacques Arnault; in point of fact, he went on, the Party had, by 1958 striven for 25 years to assess 'national values' in conformity, with a proletarian interpretation of the term¹²⁵. Rejecting all national values nowadays would amount to national nihilism, argued Jacques Arnault, clearly pointing at Voies Nouvelles.

Jacques Arnault's remarks only give a partial answer to the oppositionnels. His sweeping statement against national nihilism did not apply to the review under attack, i.e. Voies Nouvelles. Far from being national nihilist, Voies Nouvelles merely underlined the bourgeois nature of the French nation and called for more discretion in the glorification of French 'national grandeur'. Indeed, it is relatively easy to recognise the need to nurse 'proletarian' national values; the difficulty lies in the definition of what constitutes such a value. The debate

therefore needed to concern itself with the choice of national values to be upheld by communists. This cannot be done in the abstract but only with careful consideration given to the concrete historical circumstances. The Party did not appear to do so. On the contrary, oppositionnel reviews generally made their objections very specific, taking into account the significance of a particular slogan in the context of a particular situation.

'Dans la situation présente, [my stress]
l'appel à une politique de "grandeur
française" va dans le sens des intérêts
de l'impérialisme' 126.

Eventually history would confirm that l'Etincelle was not mistaken.

In its letter to the Party leadership¹²⁷ the cell Sorbonne Lettres precisely relied on its observation of events - De Gaulle's popularity - to criticise the Party: Sorbonne Lettres argued that De Gaulle was objectively helped by the PCF's policy on the French nation and the colonies.

'Par son retard considérable à porter ces problèmes [coloniaux] au premier plan de la conscience et de la lutte des masses, par son incapacité à proposer, sur la base d'une analyse sérieuse, des solutions concrètes pour la décolonisation, le Parti s'est trouvé dépassé par la vague de nationalisme qui, faute d'être clairement combattue, a fini par atteindre des secteurs de la classe ouvrière' 128.

Commenting on the 'defection of more than one and a half million communist voters', who voted in favour of De Gaulle, Sorbonne Lettres severely incriminated the Party for the

'wave of nationalism' sweeping over France. The cell considered that the PCF's appeal for the defence of the 'national interest' had contributed to De Gaulle's overwhelming success. Obligated to acknowledge the existence of a 'chauvinist trend' among the French people and a section of the working class - it was impossible to deny it in view of the referendum results - the Party refused to accept any of the blame cast upon itself by Sorbonne Lettres. Instead, it produced another explanation for its failure against De Gaulle. The 15th congress of the PCF quoted Marx to remind its members and its critics that the 'ruling ideas were the ideas of the ruling class'.

'Cependant, comme le rappelait Marx, les idées dominantes sont les idées de la classe dominante, qui possède les moyens de réprimer, de corrompre et tromper; les courants colonialistes et chauvins ont influencé notre peuple, et même une partie de la classe ouvrière, comme l'ont montré les difficultés rencontrées dans l'organisation de grands mouvements pour la paix en Algérie'¹²⁹.

The oppositionnels had to agree with this statement. They had themselves written extensive articles on the material basis of nationalism in Voies Nouvelles and other journals. The PCF had refused to pay any heed to their warnings against rampant nationalism in France. Consequently, the oppositionnels were not appeased by the Party's explanations and its belated discovery that nationalism was 'taught in primary schools'. Voies Nouvelles found, in the PCF declaration, a fresh opportunity to castigate its lack of ideological struggle against 'the ruling ideas', i.e. nationalism.

'Devant les échecs on a invoqué le chauvinisme, l'école primaire, ses manuels d'histoire. Que n'y a-t-on pensé en octobre 54, Que n'a-t-on pris alors les mesures idéologiques qui s'imposaient pour engager une grande bataille contre le nationalisme?'¹³⁰

Moreover, the conclusion that 'chauvinism' was mostly taught in primary schools remains questionable. Grégoire Madjarian quite to the contrary quoted opinion polls [from 1958] to show that opposition to Algerian independence was directly proportionate to the level of education.

'Les "plutôt non d'accord" sur la question de l'indépendance de l'Algérie sont 31% parmi ceux qui ont le niveau d'études primaires; 38% parmi ceux qui ont un niveau "primaire supérieur" et technique; 45% parmi ceux du niveau études secondaires; 60% parmi ceux qui ont le niveau études supérieures'¹³¹.

This whole polemic proves again that the PCF had not sufficiently taken into account the imperialist nature of France and all its implications for the French working class. The Party could not even plead ignorance since its mentor, Lenin, had correctly observed the penetration of 'social chauvinism' among the ranks of the workers; according to his analysis of imperialism, the bourgeoisie could afford to 'buy off' some sections of the working class through 'crumbs' from the superprofit yielded by colonial exploitation¹³². Had the PCF matched its policies with the theory it professed to follow - a Leninist one - it would have been more careful in its handling of 'national values' for fear that 'French national grandeur and influence' be interpreted as a slogan encouraging French colonialism.

The PCF patriotism and national pride were outstanding features of the Party policy from 1936 onwards. They blossomed fully during the second world war in the struggle against the Nazi occupation of France. Tribune Marxiste quoted a Party brochure published during the war to show that the Party bordered on chauvinism.

'La France installée à Alger et à Tunis comme à Marseille, la France gardienne de grands intérêts de civilisation et d'un équilibre nécessaire dans l'Orient méditerranéen, ne peut considérer la Méditerranée que comme une véritable mer intérieure. Elle est et doit rester une grande puissance africaine. La plus grande France a 110 Millions d'habitants'¹³³.

The PCF continued to uphold French 'grandeur' in the fifties and early sixties throughout the Algerian war, although that episode of French history could hardly be glorified.

The Party put forward an additional argument to justify its position - the desire not to hurt the national feeling of the profoundly patriotic French people. The oppositionnels had but one word to describe this attitude: 'opportunism'. They also accused the Party of nationalism, a more pernicious one than that of the right wing, because it is convinced that it remains immune to nationalism.

'Ne faudrait-il pas considérer que la forme la plus dangereuse, la plus subtile, du nationalisme se trouve dans la croyance invétérée et ingénue qu'on en est exempt'¹³⁴.

It appears from my study that the PCF leadership itself was profoundly patriotic; it genuinely felt for the glory of

France and considered itself the repository of the French heritage - there is no doubt that Party members had studied the very same school history books that had been blamed for the influence of chauvinism among the working class.

What rendered the matter more serious, and what gave the oppositionnels greater cause for concern, was that the Party attempted to produce philosophical justifications for its approach. Hence its analysis of the relationship between nation and proletariat; this in turn reinforced the Party's beliefs in the grandeur and mission of France.

This confused line on the question of France and the French nation constitutes a very large part of the explanation for the PCF's confused and paradoxical position on the Algerian war itself.

In this chapter I examined the PCF's policies regarding France's relationship with Algeria, on the political plane and in the economic field. This study threw light on the need to research into the Party's position towards the French nation. Until 1956, the Party consistently campaigned for the preservation of constitutional links between Algeria and France - a political link translated into the Union Française. When the Union Française was abandoned by the government (not through lack of support from the PCF) the Party focused its attention primarily on the retention of economic links between France and Algeria with a somewhat disconcerting insistence.

On both occasions the Party invoked pell-mell the interests of the French people, of France, and even of the French state.

'Ce n'est pas seulement l'intérêt national que vous ne savez plus reconnaître, ce sont les intérêts d'état les plus simples - militaires, économiques et culturels - que vous ne savez même plus garder'¹³⁵.

In a nutshell the mighty 'national interest' and sometimes the 'true' national interest, which the Party claimed coincided both with the interests of the French people and the Algerian people.

A full understanding of the Party's policies could not be found without taking a closer look at the Party's interpretation of the 'national interest', hence the French nation. The theoretical confusion between the nation and the people was the key problem. If the French proletariat identified

itself with the French nation and vice versa, as could be construed from an exegesis of a few theoretical documents. anything furthering the 'national' interests had to be supported, in the eyes of the PCF - since the interests of the proletariat converged with the interests of the nation. A profound coherence ran through the three facets of the Party's position, political, economic and philosophical.

The Party met resistance from its own members on all three of these issues. But the oppositionnels do not appear to have gained great success in influencing the Party line, though their criticisms were sufficient to justify official answers and explanations on the part of leading circles of the PCF, which reasserted the Party line.

CHAPTER V

The PCF and the debate on the Algerian Liberation Movement
and the Algerian nation

Part One: The national liberation movements in the colonies

I Lenin, the colonial question and self-determination

Although the national and colonial questions have often been studied separately, the Algerian problem brought to the fore the intimate relationship between both. Naturally, the French Communist Party called upon Lenin's writings for guidance or as a justification of its policy. This makes it necessary to present a brief outline of Lenin's thoughts on those matters. It is beyond the requirements of this thesis to enter fully into the debate which took place between Lenin and his protagonists. The whole problem is a controversial one, subject to divergent interpretations. Lenin himself can be used to support different and sometimes opposite viewpoints depending on the aspects of his speech which are selected and stressed. The attitude of communists towards the national and colonial question remains a key element of Leninism and deserves to be investigated.

Lenin himself always made a point of considering the nation's existence as an historical phenomenon born with capitalism and doomed to die with the coming of socialism. Consequently Lenin insisted on examining the national question within 'definite historical limits'¹. For him the nation was an historical category and he did not want to deal with it as an absolute, but in the context of specific geographical and historical circumstances. His treatment of the 'right of nations to self-determination' derives from the same 'historical' approach. It was mostly based on his study of the

problems posed in Russia itself, which was a multinational empire.

In the first place, Lenin confirmed the decision taken by the Second International in London (July-August 1896) to uphold the right of nations to self-determination².

There was a great deal of confusion among social democrats over the interpretation of this resolution. Rejecting the view that 'self-determination' could mean cultural autonomy, Lenin dispelled any possible confusion as to his interpretation of the term 'self-determination'.

'Consequently, if we want to understand the meaning of self-determination of nations without juggling with legal definitions, without 'inventing' abstract definitions, but examining the historical and economic conditions of the national movements, we shall inevitably reach the conclusion that self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from other national bodies, the formation of an independent national state'³.

Lenin expounded the main reasons for his position in 'On the right of nations to self-determination' [1914]⁴. He underlined the importance of the issue at stake: the need to convince the proletariat of oppressed nations that it should remain united with the proletariat in the 'oppressive' nation (i.e. Russia). The proletariat and its party - in Russia - could, according to Lenin, prove that it did not pursue the aim of 'national oppression' like the ruling class of 'oppressive' countries it professed to combat; the only way to gain the trust of workers in the national movements was.

in his view, if the party of the proletariat upheld the principle of the right of nations to self-determination⁵. Lenin liked to quote Marx and Engels to stress the fact that a nation could not be free if it oppressed other nations. Socialists in 'oppressive' countries had, according to Lenin, the responsibility of campaigning for the right of nations to self-determination, because it would fulfil the task of teaching internationalism to the working class, and eradicate an all pervading chauvinism - great nation chauvinism⁶.

Lenin believed that imperialism brought new depth to the problem: according to his analysis of imperialism in 'Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism', a small number of countries subjugated all the others, creating a great divide in the world between oppressive and oppressed nations⁷; this situation had spurred national liberation movements in the latter.

The colonial question had thus become an integral part of the national question.

Lenin classified countries into three main types in relation to self-determination⁸:

- 1) advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States of America;
 - 2) Eastern Europe: Austria and in particular Russia;
- Both types oppressed other nations either within their own boundaries or in their colonies.
- 3) the semi colonial countries like China, Persia, Turkey and all the colonies which had a combined population amounting in all to one thousand million.

In these countries the bourgeois democratic movements had either hardly begun or were far from being completed. According to Lenin, it was essential that socialists in imperialist countries demanded the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation - 'this demand in its political expression signifies nothing more nor less than the recognition of the right to self-determination'⁹ - they must also render concrete support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois democratic movements for national liberation in semi-colonial and colonial countries, they must assist their rebellion, 'if need be their revolutionary war', against the imperialist powers that oppressed them.

Lenin very clearly extended to the colonies the right of nations to self-determination and the concomitant comments he had applied to oppressed nations earlier on. His analysis of imperialism lent an additional importance to national liberation movements in the colonies; by undermining imperialism these movements objectively served the cause of the proletariat in the imperialist countries. Their degree of 'democracy' was not the important criterion for an appreciation of these movements; Lenin judged that the key character to be taken into consideration by the proletarian party [in the mother country] was their standpoint vis-à-vis the imperialist countries.

The oppositionnels quoted this aspect of Lenin's thoughts in their criticism of the PCF, arguing for a full support to the FLN because of the objective solidarity between the Algerian

liberation movement and the French working class, both fighting the same enemy, French imperialism. The oppositionnels also liked to refer to Lenin's very affirmative statement on the proletariat's duty [in the imperialist mother country] to prove its internationalism through the support of the right of 'political secession' in the colonies. In their view, the PCF had fallen short of this duty. In Lenin's words.

'The proletariat of the oppressing nations cannot confine itself to the general hackneyed phrases that may be repeated by any pacifist bourgeois against annexations and for the equal right of nations, in general ... The proletariat cannot but fight against the forcible retention of the oppressed nations within the boundaries of a given state, and this is exactly what the struggle for the right of self-determination means. The proletariat must demand the right of political secession for the colonies and for the nation that 'its own' nation oppresses. Unless it does this, proletarian internationalism will remain a meaningless phrase'¹⁰.

Paradoxically, it is precisely to serve the final goal of classless, nationless society that Lenin can be said to encourage the proliferation of new nation states¹¹; in the first place the aim was to be the 'union' of nations, facilitated by the trust between nations. This trust was to be built by the proletarian party's sincere recognition of the right of nations to self-determination. The fact that Lenin's theories were not purely opportunist is attested by the USSR Constitution, with the 'Déclaration des droits des peuples de Russie' [2 November 1917]¹². But he also indicated that the right to secession did not make secession compulsory. This

can be explained by the specific situation of the bolshevik revolution. Whereas Lenin had until then done his best to win over the national movements to the proletarian revolution, he was in 1917 concerned with the possible consequences of a balkanisation creating numerous states which might fall into the hands of counter-revolutionaries and contribute to the overthrowing of the socialist state, in the USSR.

'Il n'est pas permis de confondre le droit des nations à se séparer librement avec l'utilité de se séparer pour telle ou telle nation...Ce dernier problème, le Parti du prolétariat doit le résoudre, dans chaque cas particulier, d'une façon absolument indépendante, en se plaçant au point de vue des intérêts de l'ensemble du développement social et des intérêts de la lutte de classe du prolétariat pour le socialisme'¹³.

This was to become a fundamental reference for the PCF, whenever it wished to support its decision to advocate against the independence of French colonies (i.e. very frequently). The fact that Lenin's declaration contains a major internal contradiction [the nation's self-determination to be decided upon by the proletarian Party] merely exacerbated the problem of the interpretation of Lenin's thoughts.

However, on his death bed, Lenin felt the need to stress again one aspect of the debate: the importance of combatting 'great Russian chauvinism'¹⁴. This theme was to be taken up by the oppositionnels who were anxious to fight 'French chauvinism'.

The two main axes of Lenin's thought on the right of nations to self-determination left it open to interpretations and perhaps to distortions.

On the one hand, he stressed that the party of the proletariat had to uphold and campaign for the right of all nations to self-determination, more particularly so in the imperialist countries.

This aspect was consistently taken up by the oppositionnels who believed that the PCF was neglecting its internationalist duty.

On the other hand, Lenin brought in some qualifications about the 'utility' of secession, which he did not think should be implemented if it jeopardised the socialist revolution.

The PCF whilst quoting the first part of Lenin's statement, generally emphasised the second part, in an effort to prove that it remained faithful to Leninism, through advising the national movements in the colonies against secession.

II The PCF and the national liberation movements in the colonies

The French Communist Party, professing to follow Lenin, had to give careful consideration to the national liberation movements in the colonies.

The length and breadth of the Algerian liberation war waged against France brought the Algerian question to the forefront even more so than others. A debate arose within the Party throughout the Algerian war. Both PCF official texts and oppositionnel publications made ample use of Lenin's writings to enhance their viewpoint. But the ongoing dispute was more than a quarrel over Marxist-Leninist texts: it concerned the line to be adopted by the PCF regarding the Algerian national liberation movement.

The PCF seems to have been aware of its internationalist duty towards national liberation movements as it ostentatiously proclaimed its fidelity to the principle of the right of nations to self-determination [i.e. in Leninist terms, independence].

'La reconnaissance du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes, c'est à dire à se séparer et à se constituer en Etat national indépendant est donc un principe fondamental du marxisme-léninisme'¹⁵.

However, the Party's declarations on the right of nations to self-determination were regularly followed by a number of qualifications which argued the case against the separation of nations. Sheltering behind Lenin's polemic with Rosa Luxembourg the Party liked to quote that 'le droit au divorce

ne signifiait nullement l'obligation du divorce¹⁶. In other words the PCF upheld the right to self-determination for nations but carefully reserved its judgement as to whether it should uphold separation itself. This generally implied that the Party in reality disapproved of separation. The Party liked to quote Lenin again and again in order to explain and support its own position, perhaps as a safeguard against possible criticisms.

'En effet "les différentes revendications de la démocratie, y compris le droit des nations à disposer d'elles-mêmes, ne sont pas un absolu, mais une parcelle de l'ensemble du mouvement démocratique. Il est possible que dans certains cas concrets la parcelle contredise le tout: alors il faut la rejeter" Lénine . La question de la séparation d'avec la métropole des pays coloniaux doit donc être examinée en fonction de ce qu'elle représente exactement dans chaque cas particulier et à un moment déterminé par rapport à la lutte générale'¹⁷.

Léon Feix stressed here that, in Lenin's very words, the separation of nations' colonies from the mother country must be decided as a function of the 'lutte générale'. This quotation secured the possibility for the PCF to decide against separation.

The oppositionnels challenged the Party and claimed that it had denied even the right of nations to self-determination. Independence appeared to have been permanently postponed: in 1936, 1945, 1947, 1954, Voies Nouvelles showed how union with France rather than secession was recurrently selected as the optimum solution.

'Si les contradictions entre l'impérialisme français et ses prétendus concurrents se résolvent toujours par la supériorité pour les peuples coloniaux de l'impérialisme français, alors le droit au divorce disparaît car ces contradictions ne disparaîtront qu'avec l'impérialisme colonisateur. Cela revient en fait à refuser aux colonies le droit à la séparation, donc à l'auto-détermination',¹⁸.

The Party continued to quote Lenin to justify its position.

'Lénine a raison lorsqu'il dit que le mouvement national des pays opprimés doit être apprécié, non du point de vue de la démocratie formelle, mais de celui de ses résultats effectifs dans la balance générale de la lutte contre l'impérialisme, c'est à dire "non isolément, mais à l'échelle mondiale"',¹⁹.

'Implementing' Leninism, the PCF interpreted the struggle against imperialism as though it meant that Algeria should not gain its independence from France.

'Dans le moment présent et pour les raisons déjà indiquées "l'indépendance" de l'Algérie constituerait à la fois un leurre et une consolidation des bases de l'impérialisme en Algérie',²⁰.

The PCF thereby established a distinction between the camp of imperialism as a world system headed by the USA and France itself. For Léon Feix, if Algeria became independent from France to fall under the control of US imperialism, it would strengthen imperialism on a world scale. Therefore independence for Algeria was not seen as a desirable solution by the PCF.

For the oppositionnels advocating the independence of Algeria, the Party's fear of US hegemony had led to an erroneous conclusion. According to Tribune Marxiste the Algerians must combat the imperialist country which directly oppressed them and were entitled to the full support of the French Communist Party.

'"Cette circonstance que la lutte pour la liberté nationale contre une puissance impérialiste - écrit Lénine - peut-être, dans certaines conditions, exploitée par une autre "grande" puissance dans ses buts exclusivement impérialistes, ne peut pas plus contraindre la social-démocratie à renoncer à la reconnaissance du droits des nations à l'auto-détermination que les nombreux cas d'exploitation par la bourgeoisie des mots d'ordre républicains, dans des buts de duperie politique et de brigandage financier, par exemple dans les pays latins ne peut obliger les sociaux-démocrates à abandonner leur républicanisme". C'est là une vérité qu'il est bon de rappeler au moment où d'assez nombreux camarades - et la direction du Parti, c'est le moins qu'on puisse dire, ne fait rien contre cet état d'esprit - pensent qu'après tout il ne faut pas trop soutenir le droit de séparation des colonies, car cela pourrait bien faire le jeu de l'impérialisme américain'²¹.

For Jean Baby, the best way of protecting the Algerians against US deception or aggression was to steel them in their struggle against French imperialism.

'La position du parti qui signifiait que la domination française était un moindre mal peut-être considérée comme typiquement opportuniste. Pour que le peuple algérien puisse prendre en main sa destinée, il faut avant tout qu'il mette fin à l'oppression coloniale existante, c'est à dire celle de l'impérialisme français'²².

Let the FLN speak for itself in answer to the PCF's anxieties:

'Au fur et à mesure que les peuples se libèrent du colonialisme européen, l'Amérique, qui se présente en héritière de celui-ci, est progressivement acculée à jeter le masque anti-colonialiste dont elle se déguise volontiers pour apparaître sous son véritable jour aux peuples qu'elle a pu ou voulu tromper'²³.

Tribune Marxiste rejected any possible justification of the Party's position. In any case, those oppositionnels argued, it was not the prerogative of the French Communist Party to decide whether Algeria should secede or not; as a communist party active in the imperialist mother country, its sole task was that of agitating for the right to self-determination in order to fulfil its internationalist duty.

'Le centre de gravité de l'éducation internationaliste des ouvriers des nations qui oppriment doit obligatoirement, dit Lénine, porter sur la propagande et la défense par eux de la liberté de séparation des pays opprimés. Sans cela, il n'y a pas d'internationalisme. Nous avons le droit de traiter tout social démocrate d'une nation qui opprime, ne menant pas cette propagande, comme un impérialiste et un gredin'²⁴.

Most of the oppositionnels concluded that the PCF ought to have upheld the slogan of independence for Algeria earlier than it did [early 1957] and more vigorously.

'Et aujourd'hui? M. Thorez reconnaît en paroles le droit de l'Algérie à l'indépendance. Il le fait sous la pression de l'insurrection algérienne, et parce qu'il ne pourrait, sans se ridiculiser, se tenir sur les positions de 1939 ou de 1945, alors que les Faure

(sic)
et les Mitterand en sont à l'autonomie
interne et à la création d'un Etat
algérien ...!
Alors, bien sûr, le groupe dirigeant doit
tout de même se situer plus à gauche
que l'UDSR ou le RGR²⁵.

The Party appears to have felt uncomfortable about its position. Ten years later Elie Mignot made an apologetic reference to criticisms concerning the Party's lack of commitment for Algerian independence.

'Cependant, certains donneurs de leçons nous reprochent parfois d'avoir parlé dans nos documents du droit du peuple algérien "à la liberté" de son "droit de gérer ses propres affaires", du "fait national algérien"²⁶.

The PCF had indeed demanded the recognition of the right to 'liberté' for the Algerian people on 8 November 1954.

'reconnaître le bien-fondé des revendications à la liberté du peuple algérien'²⁷.

Both the Party and its critics knew exactly the significance of such a choice of term, liberty rather than independence. The semantic distinction between the two may not appear outstandingly important. However, they reflect two different realities: liberty may mean a democratisation of institutions and a number of democratic rights, it may indicate the elimination of repression but does not necessarily imply the political secession, which is expressed by 'independence'. Algerian nationalists fought for the independence of Algeria. The French ruling class itself was well aware of the difference. The anecdote of the encounter between Ho Chi Minh and

d'Argenlieu is worth recalling in this context: the main obstacle to an agreement consisted of a single word, the French general insisting on the 'liberté du Viet-Nam' and the Vietnamese leader demanding that 'l'indépendance du Viet-Nam' be stated in the agreement. They eventually settled for the Viet-Nameese term which luckily combined both meanings and left it vague²⁸.

Elie Mignot attempted to justify the Party's policy; he invoked the need to protect the Party publications from censorship.

'Un parti communiste développant son action dans un grand pays impérialiste doit parfois ruser avec l'ennemi de classe et tourner les pièges de la censure, éviter la saisie de ses journaux',²⁹.

This argument bore little persuasive power since the Party later paid little heed to censorship, upholding the right of Algeria to independence from 1957 onwards, whereas repression was continuously on the increase. Elie Mignot was much more convincing when he quoted the colonialist ideology prevalent in France, which necessitated a very careful approach on the part of the Party.

'La majorité des Français restait sous l'emprise de l'idéologie colonialiste. Parlant de cette constatation de fait, la tâche primordiale consistait à élever progressivement la conscience de notre peuple à la compréhension exacte de ce problème et à la nécessité d'agir pour la paix et pour l'indépendance de l'Algérie',³⁰.

Léon Feix had already put forward a similar explanation for the Party's support of the Union Française in 1956³¹.

The colonialist ideology of the French people was not indeed a negligible quantity and had to be counted in the PCF's strategy. The Party claimed to have 'moderated' its slogans - 'liberté' rather than independence, 'fait national algérien' instead of Algerian nation - with the aim of winning over the French people to the Algerian cause.

The oppositionnels would call this attitude 'opportunist'. Perhaps a clear-cut position in favour of independence and a continuous propaganda exposing French imperialism in Algeria concretely would have been more effective in the uprooting of colonialist prejudice among the French people. All the more as it was to be confirmed by their own bitter experience of a dreadful war.

But the real question still has to be answered: was the PCF itself wholeheartedly, uncompromisingly, in favour of Algerian independence?

A number of elements reveal considerable hesitation from the Party on the question of independence.

In the first place, it appears that for a long time the Party did not select 'independence' as the best formula. It argued that a continued relationship - on a new basis - between France and its overseas territories would best serve the interests of both. The Party believed that a positive role could be played by France in the leading of overseas territories to economic and political maturity. It was shown in chapter IV that the PCF had faith in the French 'grandeur' and felt a genuine concern for 'France's interest' which could benefit from the retention of links with its overseas

territories. This line of thought tends to indicate that the Party postponed taking up the slogan of Algerian independence because it did not want to promote independence rather than on account of 'colonialist ideology' among the French masses or in order to avoid 'les pièges de la censure'.

Another element seems to have motivated the PCF's hesitations regarding Algerian independence: the nature of the Algerian movement's leadership, which was not proletarian. The Party was not ready to give unqualified support to the FLN despite Jacques Arnault's declaration of principles.

'Dans les conditions de l'oppression impérialiste, le caractère révolutionnaire du mouvement national n'implique pas nécessairement l'existence d'éléments prolétariens dans le mouvement, l'existence d'un programme révolutionnaire ou républicain, l'existence d'une base démocratique du mouvement'³².

The PCF took a very long time before acknowledging the FLN as representative of the Algerian people; as late as 1959, the Congress did not cite the FLN in its theses. In his political report, Maurice Thorez spoke of political negotiation with 'les représentants des Algériens contre qui on se bat depuis quatre ans et demi'³³. He thereby used a periphrase rather than naming the Algerian people's representatives or the national liberation organisation. In the same Congress, the GPRA (Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne) was not mentioned at all, although it had been founded on 19 September 1958 in Cairo.

This approach can be contrasted with the Party's declarations during the war in Indochina. Pierre Cot had not hesitated to name the leader of the Indochinese Liberation Movement in his speech to the Assemblée Nationale. His appeal was 'Négocié avec Ho Chi Minh'³⁴. Admittedly, Ho Chi Minh was an international communist figurehead, and the liberation movement in Indochina was led by communists. This was not the case for the Algerian National Liberation Struggle. The attitude of the PCF definitely expressed distrust towards the FLN. This caution and distrust were compounded with the PCF's concern for French colons in Algeria. The following section - on the Algerian nation - demonstrates the paramount importance accorded to the colons by the PCF.

As a whole, one might construe a certain reluctance on the part of the PCF to consider the Algerian problem as a clear case of a national liberation struggle versus imperialism. The Party generally gave priority to broad democratic or economic demands to the detriment of the national question: equal status for Algerians of all origin, democratic rights for Arab-Berbers, improvements in wages and conditions of work for both Arab-Berbers and colon populations³⁵.

One could even say that the PCF preferred to encourage an alliance or rather a merger between French 'working' colons and the Arab-Berber working masses against a handful of colonialists³⁶, and that to an extent, the Arab-Berber bourgeoisie was also looked upon with distrust by the PCF³⁷. Was this attitude the sequel of a 'Second Internationalist' influence which feared the independence of Algeria because it

thought that Arab-Berber feudal or even tribal traditions might take Algeria back in the history of human progress; whereas the benefits of French culture and democracy could take it forward³⁸ ? There is no absolute evidence that this is the case. And yet my study of the PCF's conception of the Algerian nation, which is to come in the following section, reveals undertones that could confirm such an interpretation of the PCF's attitude.

The oppositionnels on the contrary stressed the solidarity between the Algerian national liberation movement [the FLN] and the French working class against French imperialism. They saw this line of cleavage as the primary one and criticised the Party for not making it absolutely clear to its readers and followers.

'Il s'agissait d'une solidarité de classe d'abord entre ouvriers français et insurgés algériens'³⁹.

This whole question assumed special importance at the end of the fifties and the early sixties as it constituted one of the axes of disagreement within the international communist movement. The 1957 declaration of Communist Parties did underline the significance of the rising storms in the colonies. The question was taken further by the Communist Party of China. Some of the oppositionnel reviews, such as La Voie Communiste published the Chinese texts; other oppositionnels discussed such texts carefully in Party cell meetings - the Ecole Normale Supérieure Saint-Cloud cell as early as 1956 debated the English issues of Peking Review in April 1956.

To the Soviet line arguing that the struggle against a possible world war and for disarmament absorbed all others, the Chinese Party answered that National Liberation struggles must not be treated as secondary matters. La Voie Communiste published an extract from a Chinese publication [Kuo Chi Chou. Hongqi n:1 1962].

'A la récente conférence des pays non-alignés, certains ont exprimé la vue selon laquelle "l'ère du colonialisme classique est achevée et périmée" et l'anti-impérialisme, l'anti-colonialisme et la lutte contre la discrimination raciale sont des questions d'importance 'secondaire'.
... Le danger d'ébranler la paix du monde vient de l'impérialisme. Pour défendre cette paix, on ne peut donc que s'opposer à l'impérialisme et au colonialisme. Défendre l'idée que le combat contre l'impérialisme revêt seulement une importance 'secondaire' comme s'il y avait un meilleur moyen d'obtenir la paix que de lutter contre l'impérialisme revient, en réalité, à aider la politique impérialiste de guerre et d'agression'⁴¹.

These international divergences translated themselves within the PCF into slogans for 'peace' in Algeria versus 'independence', the official line naturally promoting the former. L'Etincelle which consistently upheld the slogan of Algerian independence also emphasised the need to attach high priority to support for National Liberation Struggles.

'Mais il fallait comprendre qu'après la deuxième guerre mondiale, le point faible pour la bourgeoisie française était son système colonial. Un des soucis majeurs de l'avant garde ouvrière devait être... d'apporter à leur [peuples coloniaux] bataille, dans la forme nationale qu'elle revêt nécessairement, un soutien sans réserve'⁴².

Altogether a number of reasons motivated the PCF's reluctance to throw all its weight in favour of Algerian independence: its concern for French national interest, its desire not to shock the profoundly patriotic French people, its faith in the generosity of the French nation, the responsibility it perceived as its own vis-à-vis the colons, its lack of trust in the FLN and its fidelity to the Soviet word outlook. For the PCF all those reasons converged towards the same end: the postponement of Algerian independence. The oppositionnels in their majority disagreed with the Party on all those points, and held up 'independence' as a key slogan which epitomised their position on the Algerian question. It is interesting to note that the Party subsequently felt the need to retract on its earlier statements, changing their meaning retrospectively. Léon Feix in l'Humanité [19 November 1963] claimed in the face of all the evidence that the Party had all the time meant independence for Algeria.

'Personne ne s'y est trompé, en France
comme en Algérie, c'est de l'indépendance
qu'il s'agissait'.

Having presented this brief theoretical overview of the overall problématique, attention must not be turned to the Party's theory of the Algerian nation.

Part Two: The Algerian nation

I The theory of the PCF

Algeria had always occupied a privileged place among the French colonies. As it has been shown in the first chapter of this thesis, Algeria was the most closely associated with the mother country. It was considered as an integral part of France by the French government and many French people. It was, for the PCF itself, a special case: 'L'Algérie est une colonie d'un type particulier',⁴³.

The Party took a particular interest in the Algerian case. For Algeria and Algeria alone did it elaborate a theory of the nation, as early as 1939. The main reason for such a privilege was clearly the presence on Algerian soil of one million French settlers alongside the several million Arabs and Berbers:

'C'est ce qui donne une particularité à l'Algérie, par exemple, par rapport au Maroc et à la Tunisie et qui amène à trouver une solution propre à l'Algérie en tenant compte des intérêts légitimes de tous ses hommes d'origine diverse',⁴⁴.

By sheer weight of numbers, the colons differentiated themselves from the few thousand settlers in Morocco or Tunisia. In their status too they differed radically from the mobile civil servants who constituted the colonial apparatus in Sub-saharan Africa. These people were unattached to any particular territory and considered themselves as expatriate Frenchmen when they took up work in the 'colony'.

Moreover the support enjoyed among French colons by the PCF

section in Algeria (which became the PCA after 1936) was by no means negligible. In 1951, 22% of the colons voted for the PCA programme in the legislative elections⁴⁵.

The Party's theory on the Algerian nation attempted to accommodate these numerous colons in an original manner, and this theoretical development constituted one of the underlying components of the Party's policy on Algeria. The question was not straightforward, and added fuel to the internal debate over Algeria. It is therefore well worth studying the various conceptions formulated around this subject.

Maurice Thorez inaugurated the theory of the 'Algerian nation in formation' in a speech in Algiers on 11 February 1939; this speech remained the basic reference point for the PCF. It was to be elaborated on by subsequent articles, thus assuming great historical significance.

A The French nation and Algeria

Before proceeding to define the Algerian nation itself, Thorez, in his speech, revealed areas of uncertainty concerning the nature of Algeria's national characteristics. He openly expressed certain views which may well have been interpreted as identifying Algeria with France.

'Quand je dis Français d'Algérie, je vous entends tous ici présents, vous les Français d'origine, les Français naturalisés, les israélites, et vous aussi les musulmans arabes et berbères, tous les fils, sinon par le sang, du moins par le coeur de la grande Révolution

française, qui ne faisait aucune distinction entre les races et les religions quand elle affirmait que la République Française était une et indivisible'⁴⁶.

Such reference to the French Revolution was in the late thirties by no means rare in the PCF speech. However in that specific context, on Algerian soil, the slogan of a France 'une et indivisible' could be politically misleading and historically anachronistic.

This passage from Thorez's speech, which was quoted again and again in Party documents during the Algerian war, provoked sharp criticism from the oppositionnels.

'Si la Révolution française "ne faisait aucune distinction entre les races et les religions quand elle affirmait que la République française est une et indivisible", c'est en ce sens qu'elle a brisé les obstacles hérités du féodalisme à l'unité politique de la nation française. Elle a rejeté les particularismes régionaux et religieux au nom précisément de l'unité nationale fondée sur la communauté de langue et de culture. Comment, au nom de cela, aller dire aux Algériens qu'ils sont des Français? Que signifie cette démarche sinon voiler pudiquement l'impérialisme avec la feuille de vigne de la Révolution française de 1789'⁴⁷.

The Party had displayed its jacobinism; but jacobinism corresponded to a particular period in the formation of the French nation itself. When the bourgeois revolution and the Republic did away with feudalism, the Jacobins laid the foundation for a nationalist ethic in France; the unity of the French nation had to be cemented politically and ideologically - all the more so as the enemy was threatening its borders. The jacobinism of the 18th century assumed a different significance in the 20th century. The jacobin

doctrine was used to further the aims of French imperialism and justify the annexation of the colonies. This is the rationale behind Serge Weinstock's quote which implied that Thorez himself, in Algiers, whitewashed these enterprises and endorsed them, as he spoke the same language as bourgeois politicians. Indeed Thorez's words could have been uttered by many a 'bourgeois' politician.

Mendès-France - Président du Conseil in the Assemblée Nationale, 12 November 1954.

'On ne transigera pas lorsqu'il s'agit de défendre la paix intérieure de la nation, l'unité et l'intégrité de la République. L'Algérie, c'est la France. Nous ne céderons jamais sur ce principe fondamental'⁴⁸.

François Mitterrand - Ministre de l'Intérieur in 1956.

'L'Algérie c'est la France et...des Flandres au Congo, il y a la loi, une seule nation, un seul Parlement'⁴⁹.

Jacques Soutelle in 1955 - Governor General in Algeria.

'La France ne quittera pas plus l'Algérie que la Provence ou la Bretagne'⁵⁰.

Further criticisms were levelled at Thorez's speech: in a later study Jacques Jurquet accused him of advancing an assimilationist policy:

'il se plaça dès ses premières paroles, sur le terrain exclusivement assimilationniste qu'il allait défendre'⁵¹.

Jacobinism and assimilationism pertained to the same ideology. It had guided France to nationhood as it was to guide her to

Empire. The overall declared aim was to turn the indigènes into French men, culturally and politically, and to incorporate the territory they inhabited into the French state and nation. Assimilationism meant the denial of all indigenous national character, or the forcible elimination of such character. Emmanuel Sivan, in his study of the PCA, on the other hand claims that Maurice Thorez's prime concern was the threat of fascism. According to Sivan, Thorez was endeavouring to strike an emotional chord among the colons, by reminding them of the 1789 ideals of democracy and equality - in order to counter fascist influences; he was thus associating Arabs, Berbers, Jews and Frenchmen alike in the defence of those ideals pointing out their 'common' interest in the preservation of peace and liberty. In his view Thorez called for

'la défense de la République; de
l'union avec la France contre le
fascisme, du danger d'une main-
mise fasciste sur l'Afrique du Nord'⁵².

This interpretation could conceivably be born out by the existence of concrete Italian and Spanish claims over North Africa at the time. Laurent Casanova in his article 'Après le voyage de Maurice Thorez en Algérie' mentioned the specific menace of fascism for Algeria. 'Franco est au Maroc, Mussolini en Tripolitaine'⁵³.

Yet the PCF's attitude towards the Algerian nation remained confused and confusing. Laurent Casanova, in 1939, emphasised the close links between Algeria and France rather than the separate identity of the Algerian nation.

'Du point de vue géographique, économique, historique et politique, elle [l'Algérie] est beaucoup plus que tout autre colonie, intégrée dans la Métropole. Les liens entre elle et la France sont plus étroits',⁵⁴.

Laurent Casanova clearly stressed all the factors that united France and Algeria such as the presence of French colons and what he saw as a process of assimilation of the Arab-Berber and Jewish populations.

'Ces Français d'origine, ou qui le sont devenus, sont là depuis plusieurs générations. Tous ne participent pas de la bureaucratie, de l'appareil d'autorité et de contrainte colonial, tous ne sont pas de grands colons expropriateurs ou les représentants des puissantes compagnies bancaires et des trusts qui ont accaparé les sources de matières premières. Dans leur immense majorité ce sont des ouvriers, des travailleurs des services publics, des employés, des fonctionnaires. Ils bénéficient d'un système politique calqué sur le système métropolitain; l'Algérie dépend, non du ministère des Colonies, mais du ministère de l'Intérieur. Du fait des contacts qui se sont établis, la population urbaine d'origine arabo-berbère ou juive est en voie d'assimilation; cette assimilation est même particulièrement avancée chez les éléments de la petite bourgeoisie et de la bourgeoisie citadine',⁵⁵.

Casanova adopted a similar approach towards Algeria as he would towards France. He explained the comparable political trends in both.

'Tout cela a rendu l'Algérie très sensible aux courants politiques et sociaux qui agitent la France métropolitaine',⁵⁶.

Casanova referred to political life in Algeria and in 'la France métropolitaine', i.e. mainland France. This very

formulation could be taken to imply that Algeria was part of France, that is to say of overseas France.

He also established political cleavages along class lines rather than national lines: the majority of colons are opposed to the 'grands colons expropriateurs' (see quote above) who are the potential agents of fascism. As for the Arab-Berbers' 'national' organisations, they are envisaged with distrust by the PCF which suspected some of them of collaboration with fascism⁵⁷ [in reality no such collaboration was ever proven]. Casanova notes that they all share the same 'contenu social', they represent the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie. The PCF indicates that the important strata to be taken into consideration by communists is the 'Arab workers'.

'Fait nouveau, une intervention plus directe, plus active de la masse même des travailleurs arabes'⁵⁸.

On the basis of Thorez and Casanova's writings, one could already draw the conclusion that they both consciously or unconsciously selected the theoretical elements which supported their political strategy; that they built a picture of Algeria suited to their policy of unity against fascism. A careful study of the other aspects of the PCF theory concerning the Algerian nation is needed for a better understanding of the problem.

B Algeria: 'nation en formation'

The original feature to be quoted by subsequent PCF publications was the nature of Algeria as a 'nation en

formation', a concept inaugurated by Maurice Thorez in his speech about Algeria in 1939. The composition of the Algerian nation-to-be merits special attention. In his 1939 speech Thorez recalled the genesis of the French nation⁵⁹ as a parallel to that of Algeria: 'Il y a une nation algérienne qui se constitue, elle aussi, dans le mélange de vingt races'⁶⁰. Reviewing the history of migrations and invasions on Algerian soil, he included amongst the components having equal claim to the title of artisans of the Algerian nation, Numids, Romans, Berbers, Arabs, Jews and Turks alike as well as European settlers of Spanish, Italian and French origins. No qualitative difference was posited as between these groups. His formulation erased the distinction between the oppressed colonised section of the population and the colons, and merged them all into a crucible as if they already constituted a cohesive entity. The notion of 'twenty races' proved extremely durable even after the PCF began to define Algerian society as composed of two main groups. René Gallissot identifies Maurice Thorez's theory as the last offshoot of 'colonial socialism', which used to be prevalent among Tunisian socialists.

'C'est la thèse de la formation nationale par amalgame, qui n'est pas sans rappeler le "melting pot" de l'immigration aux Etats-Unis, et le rêve algérieniste du mélange des races, qui aura un dernier écho, par la perpétuation des influences socialistes coloniales en Algérie, dans la conception de "la nation en formation par le mélange de vingt races" que soutiendra Maurice Thorez à Alger en 1939'⁶¹.

Tunisian socialists believed in the 'civilising mission' of French colonisation through the merger of all the races on North African soil, so that the colons had an important role to play in the national edification. Gallissot compared it to the PCF's 'nation en formation'. The Party thereby betrayed the sequel of its 'second internationalist' past.

The process of the formation of the Algerian nation was further expounded by other prominent PCF officials. After the second world war the concept of 'twenty races' gave way to the merger between two main groups - the Arab-Berber population on the one hand, the European settlers on the other. Although the composition of the nation through the mixture of twenty races was never refuted and occasionally reappeared until 1956, most texts emphasised the existence of two principal elements. Such a modification of the 'nation en formation' theory can be explained by developments taking place in the Algerian situation, which the Party could not ignore. The polarisation of the Algerian populations into two groups had become more evident. Arab-Berber nationalist organisations increased their influence which translated itself into a major electoral success - shortly after the war, a showdown between communist lists and the UDMA resulted in 72% of the votes being cast in favour of the UDMA⁶². Arabs and Berbers thus proved that they had to be taken into account as a separate single group.

André Marty reasserting the claim of all the inhabitants of Algeria to contribute to its formation as a nation, stated the existence of two main groups in 1946. He liked to quote

the PCA on 'la nation algérienne en formation' as a 'mélange heureux des civilisations orientales et occidentales', which referred to the Arab-Berber populations on one side, the colons on the other.

'Algériens de toutes origines, nous formons déjà sur notre sol commun, une communauté stable. Nous sommes liés par des intérêts généraux communs et par la lutte contre les mêmes ennemis.

Cette communauté constitue la base de la nation algérienne en formation, riche des apports de tous ses enfants dans la diversité de leurs origines et mélange heureux des civilisations orientales et occidentales'⁶³.

It is necessary to quote further sections of André Marty's speech in order to understand who are the 'common enemies' of all the Algerians.

'Ainsi donc, les gens des trusts sans patrie, les hommes des deux cents familles, qui ont trahi la France, ouvertement dès l'arrivée d'Hitler au pouvoir [1933] et en collaborant ignominieusement avec les nazis avant et pendant l'occupation, eux qui ont tout fait pour empêcher le redressement économique de la France, après la libération, ces ennemis de la nation française sont en même temps exploitateurs impitoyables des populations algériennes, musulmanes et européennes; ils sont les hommes du colonialisme'⁶⁴.

The 'trusts', the 'two hundred families', the 'men of colonialism', are, according to André Marty, the oppressors of both colons and Arab-Berbers. This approach is similar to Laurent Casanova's 'Discours sur le voyage de Maurice Thorez en Algérie', which opposed the majority of French colons, workers, civil servants and public employees, to the 'grands

colons expropriateurs'. The PCF considered that the majority of colons in Algeria were exploited and victims of colonialism, at the same time as the Arab-Berber working masses. This aspect of the PCF standpoint was to be challenged by a great number of oppositionnels who argued that the colons enjoyed privileges directly related to colonialism.

The two main components of the Algerian nation, distinct from France, figure in a later speech by André Marty [1947] reformulated into 'la civilisation arabe', the Arab-Berbers, and 'la civilisation moderne démocratique', the colons.

'Ainsi sera hâtée la constitution de la nation algérienne dans la fusion de deux civilisations, de la civilisation arabe et de la civilisation moderne démocratique'⁶⁵.

C The colons belong to the Algerian nation

The colons were evidently an essential element to be taken into consideration by the PCF in its analyses of the Algerian nation, and they soon became the focal point of the entire controversy surrounding its definition.

The Party was caught between its 'socialist' duty of presenting Algeria as a colony rather than as a French département and what it considered to be its 'national' responsibility towards the settlers in Algeria. Thorez's 'nation en formation' enabled the PCF to conciliate both these tasks at least in the short term. On the one hand, the Party could positively deny that Algeria was part of France:

'Peut-on dire que la masse de la population algérienne a assimilé la langue, les traditions et les mœurs du peuple français ce qui serait le cas si les Algériens faisaient partie de la Nation française?'⁶⁶

On the other hand, it was not compelled to deny French colons the right to remain in Algeria; the Party insisted that they were part and parcel of the Algerian nation 'en formation'. The colons would belong to a newly forming entity which was different from France.

Being unaccomplished, the Algerian nation could find room to integrate the colons. In 1955, the Party again claimed that both 'Arabs' and 'colons' were equally worthy of building the Algerian nation.

'Il serait vain de nier les réalités nationales en train de se développer et de se former en Algérie et un jour viendra où la nation algérienne avec toute la diversité qu'elle porte en elle, enrichira la communauté des peuples d'un apport original dont on voit déjà se dessiner les contours.

Les Algériens d'origine arabo-berbère et d'origine européenne qui constituent les éléments composants de la nation algérienne en formation ont tous intérêt à ce que l'Algérie cesse d'être rançonnée et pillée par une poignée de profiteurs et d'exploiteurs capitalistes'⁶⁷.

In 1956, the PCF coined a new phrase to describe the stage reached in the formation process of the Algerian nation: 'le fait national algérien'. Le 'fait national algérien existe' announced Maurice Thorez in his political report at the 1956 congress, taking care to include the colons.

'La population algérienne dans son ensemble est parvenue à la conscience nationale, comme le montre l'attitude pratique de beaucoup d'Algériens de souche européenne qui sont des partisans actifs de la liberté nationale.

Il y a place dans l'Algérie nouvelle pour tous ceux qui travaillent, quelle que soit leur appartenance ethnique ...',⁶⁸

At the beginning of 1957, Thorez declared that Algeria had become a 'formed nation', comprising Arab-Berbers and colons.

'Et maintenant, en accord avec l'histoire, avec la vie qui se développe et qui avance, nous avons modifié notre formule et nous parlons à juste raison du fait national algérien, de la nation algérienne constituée, dont la réalité reposant sur la fusion des éléments de diverses origines ...',⁶⁹

Algeria motivated the publication of additional writings. In April 1957, Marcel Dufriche published an article entitled 'le fait national algérien' in which he dwelt on the US 'desire' to take over France's place in Algeria. He also developed the customary theme of a merger between Arab-Berbers and colons⁷⁰. The year 1957 also witnessed the publication of Marcel Egretaud's booklet 'Réalité de la nation algérienne'. Once again the same idea was reiterated.

'La masse des Européens installés en Algérie est devenue un des éléments constitutifs de la population algérienne'.⁷¹

Egretaud found a confirmation of his analysis in Charles-André Julien's assertion that the character of the population in the colony was 'le produit d'une fusion ethnique et d'une adaptation aux conditions naturelles du pays',⁷². However Egretaud

interpreted Charles-André Julien's description as though it applied to all the inhabitants of Algeria, Arab-Berbers and colons; Charles-André Julien, in reality, did not include the Arab-Berbers but attempted to define the colon population only. René Gallissot did not fail to notice this distortion of Julien's thought⁷³ and argued that Egretaud forcibly tried to include the colons in the Algerian nation. According to Gallissot, the long list of ethnies settling on Algerian soil, given by Egretaud, masked a justification for the presence of French colons.

'La chaîne commence aux Phéniciens, comme dans la version coloniale d'histoire du Maghreb; chaque apport est un enrichissement ...',⁷⁴.

Egretaud's historical presentation described the settling on the Algerian soil of successive waves of outsiders, who came in as conquerors and thereafter merged with the autochtones, thus enriching the Algerian stock. Egretaud indicated that the colons, like their predecessors, had an equal right to belong to the 'Algerian' nation, which they enriched.

D Analysis of the colons' situation

Up until the very end of the war the Party insisted on maintaining a special place for the European settlers within the Algerian nation. This notion was, and remained, a fundamental cornerstone of the PCF's theoretical approach to Algeria. Jacques Arnault, confirming the importance of the colons, argued that the Algerian nation was not conceivable without them.

'Il apparaît en effet que la thèse de la nation algérienne accomplie depuis toujours a pour résultat, sinon pour but, de tenir pour négligeable le fait que constitue l'implantation, au cours de plus d'un siècle (et pas n'importe quel siècle, mais le siècle des transformations capitalistes de la société) d'une très forte immigration d'origine européenne, qui considère, non par choix, mais en fonction de ce qui est déjà son passé historique, de son existence quotidienne, de son activité sociale, l'Algérie comme son pays, sa patrie - quoiqu'elle puisse même parfois juger utile d'en dire . . . La thèse de la nation algérienne existant depuis toujours conduit à faire de l'Algérie une nation 'musulmane', elle ne tient pas compte du caractère particulier de cette immigration'⁷⁵.

According to Jacques Arnault the Algerian nation could not possibly have existed before 1830 - contrary to what was claimed by some Algerian nationalists - because this would render Algeria an exclusively 'moslem' nation and therefore exclude the French colons. Arnault does not bring in any further evidence to prove his point. The proposition 'colons, part of the Algerian nation' had become the fundamental premise, whereas it still needed to be evidenced. The definition of the Algerian nation by the PCF was tailored accordingly so as to include the colons. Jacques Arnault's argument is a circular one which takes for granted precisely what needed to be proved.

Marcel Dufriche in 1957 had advanced an additional argument intended to demonstrate that Algeria could not have been a 'formed' nation in 1939: the lack of a strong national consciousness.

'Des hommes aussi bien d'origine musulmane que d'origine européenne, n'avaient pas jusqu'alors, dans les conditions du colonialisme, pris conscience de l'idée de patrie'76.

Dufriche claimed that the Arab-Berbers and the colons had not yet become aware of their 'patrie', which indicated that the Algerian nation was still 'en formation'.

If one accepted Dufriche's viewpoint, a difficulty was bound to arise if the Party wished to explain later developments. The 'national consciousness' of the Arab-Berbers became sufficiently evidenced by their mass participation in the emancipation struggle for Algeria's independence. Meanwhile the colons continued to accept and welcome France's rule over Algeria, and showed no real sign of an 'Algerian' national consciousness. Did it mean that the Algerian nation was not 'formed' since the colons, a part of it (in the eyes of the PCF), had not acquired an Algerian national consciousness? Or did it imply that the Algerian nation was 'formed' excluding the colons ? This, the Party did not accept, even after it had officially recognised Algeria as a 'nation constituée'.

The Party endeavoured to support its theory of the Algerian nation, including the colons, with two categories of arguments which appear to the careful reader of PCF texts as totally contradictory.

In the first place, Marcel Dufriche, quoting Thorez, asserted that the colons themselves had risen to national consciousness like the Arab-Berbers, citing the 'sacrifice of many colons in the national liberation struggle'.

'Et maintenant en accord avec l'histoire, avec la vie qui se développe et qui avance, nous avons modifié notre formule et nous parlons à juste raison du fait national algérien, de la nation algérienne constituée, dont la réalité reposant sur la fusion des éléments de diverses origines, est tragiquement attestée par le sacrifice de tant d'Algériens d'origine européenne, à côté des algériens musulmans, dans la lutte pour l'émancipation nationale ... Nier l'existence d'une nation algérienne, c'est actuellement nier l'évidence. Le peuple algérien tout entier lutte pour son émancipation. Y compris les Algériens d'origine européenne'⁷⁷.

Historical exactitude compels us to note that the colons never embraced the Algerian national liberation struggle as a group. Quite the contrary, they opposed it. A few individuals joined the struggle, and many of those were members of the PCA [Maillot, Laban, etc]⁷⁸. Their action was probably not due to their attachment to the Algerian nation but rather to their political consciousness as communists.

Such optimism picturing the French settlers community united with Arab-Berbers in the struggle for Algerian liberation, does not appear to have satisfied Party members. Jacques Arnault was entrusted with the task of explaining once more how French colons could belong to the Algerian nation whilst remaining indifferent to the national liberation movement. Arnault's explanation clashes on a major issue with that of Dufriche: he does not attempt to claim that the colons have any Algerian national consciousness as Dufriche did, but endeavours to supply the reasons why they lack it.

'On peut dire dans une certaine mesure que la conscience nationale d'une large part des populations d'origine arabo-berbère, comme élargissement et prolongement du patriotisme, était en avance sur la réalité de la nation algérienne, telle qu'elle a été définie. Au contraire, le patriotisme des éléments d'origine européenne, longtemps tourné vers l'ancienne patrie, en particulier la France, fut un frein à la prise de conscience de la nouvelle réalité; la conscience nationale, chez nombre d'Algériens d'origine européenne, peut retarder sur la réalité nationale'⁷⁹.

Arnault accounts for the discrepancy between the colons' and the Arab-Berbers' attitude by the time lag between the 'objective reality' of the Algerian nation and the perception of this reality among its members: the Arab-Berbers were 'ahead of the objective reality', the colons were 'late developers' in national consciousness. This interpretation allowed Arnault to present the colons in their vast majority as members of the Algerian nation.

'Il existe... aujourd'hui en Algérie une nation qui a la possibilité d'être, non musulmane ou européenne, mais algérienne, embrassant l'ensemble des populations d'origine arabo-berbères et une partie importante, la plus enracinée, des populations d'origine européenne'⁸⁰.

Such conclusions inevitably attracted objections. The oppositionnels amply questioned the Party's analysis and this will be studied in the next section. Jacques Arnault acknowledged the existence 'de questions, d'incompréhensions voire d'objections'⁸¹ over the content of the Algerian nation and devoted his 'Trois Observations sur la nation algérienne' to answering these critiques.

He compared the French colons in Algeria with English settlers in North America, for whom the motherland was not England any more but the USA or Canada. Had historical conditions been different, said Jacques Arnault, the settlers in Algeria might very well have fought for an independent Algerian state. He attributed the divergent course of events in America and in Algeria to the fact that Algeria was inhabited by a great number of natives who could not be 'exterminated or absorbed'. The French colons who feared being swamped by the 'Moslems' preferred to retain their links with the mother country in order to maintain their rule over the Arab-Berbers.

'La bourgeoisie capitaliste d'origine européenne n'eût pas en Algérie les mêmes intérêts que sa soeur américaine à se séparer de sa métropole ...'82

In other words the historical comparison breaks down altogether. Jacques Arnault's endeavours to rewrite history turn his demonstration into a spurious speculation based on the reading of stale tealeaves. The analogy with North American pioneers breaks down everywhere and proves nothing.

Finally, Jacques Arnault made some concessions to his opponents. Noting that a large section of Algerians of European origin opposed the Algerian resistance in its struggle for national liberty - as the ultras plot demonstrated, he concluded.

'Il ne s'agit donc pas de faire à tout prix des descendants de cette immigration européenne des Algériens. Mais il paraît seulement historiquement faux - et politiquement dangereux - de les exclure par principe de la communauté nationale'83.

The Party's analysis of the Algerian nation was never satisfactory. Maurice Thorez inaugurated the concept of 'nation en formation' for Algeria in 1939. Rather than carrying out a thorough analysis, Thorez appears to have proposed his definition in order to serve the Party's policy of union between Algeria and France in an anti-fascist front. Political preconceptions continued to dictate the Party's definition of the Algerian nation after the second world war. It aimed to secure the continuation of links between Algeria and France and it was possessed by an obsessive desire to integrate the French colons into the Algerian nation. The PCF's approach was shown to be quite unscientific. Its theoretical elaborations on the Algerian nation should have proceeded from an unprejudiced observation of historical realities, without anticipating any given result. On the contrary, the Party first lay down its conclusions: Algeria was a nation in formation of which the colons were an integral part. And thereafter, the Party tailored its theoretical developments to suit its policy and ideology. The fact that events increasingly contradicted the Party's assumptions, invalidating more and more its definition of the Algerian nation, did not lead the Party to modify its position. It endeavoured to justify its analysis through the most acrobatic and sometimes self-contradictory explanations. It is little surprising that a number of criticisms were hurled at the PCF on this issue; they will constitute the main body of the next section.

II An alternative definition of the Algerian nation

The oppositionnels generally felt that the Party's theoretical pronouncements on the Algerian nation were both insufficiently researched and based on erroneous preconceptions. The oppositionnel reviews devoted a good many articles to the question of the Algerian nation and showed far greater insight into the reality of the Algerian situation than is to be found in official Party publications.

I have tried to put together the alternative picture of Algeria presented by the oppositionnels, through a study of the different aspects or 'indices' (in Jean Dresch's words)⁸⁴ of the Algerian nation. According to the oppositionnels, its genesis was to be found in the study of history and a careful observation of contemporary Algeria. They strove to describe the development of the Arab-Berber population into a national community and attempted to demonstrate the failure of the merger between the Arab-Berbers and the colons (under colonialism) - which was one cornerstone of the PCF's theory.

The oppositionnels insisted on the Arab character of the Algerian nation, excluding the colons, thus directly contradicting the definition of the Algerian nation in formation including the colons put forward by the PCF. I found it useful in this study to use sources other than those of the PCF or oppositionnels in order to widen the scope of the debate. I quoted individuals such as Francis Jeanson, a left-wing intellectual who organised a clandestine network of support for the FLN; catholic intellectuals such as Jean-Marie Domenach who devoted a lot of attention to the Algerian

problem in Esprit. I also used FLN and PCA texts because their views are essential to the debate. A number of historians and sociologists complete the picture. This variety of documents enabled me to evaluate the PCF and the oppositionnel stand-points in the light of other analyses of the Algerian nation, and to situate them in the spectrum of opinions on the question.

A Demystification of Algerian 'history'

Tracing back the formation process of the Algerian nation, the oppositionnels strove to demystify false pre-conceived notions about the history of Algeria.

Colonial historiography constantly emphasised the existence of scattered tribes populating Algeria prior to the conquest. The subtitle of Robert Aron's first chapter on the origin of the war introduced Algeria as 'l'Algérie de 1830: une poussière de tribus'⁸⁵. It is interesting to note that Léon Feix's version comes very close to Robert Aron's.

'La population, morcelée en tribus, vivait de l'agriculture et de l'élevage. Les échanges s'effectuaient essentiellement sur les marchés ruraux et régionaux. Il n'existait pas de véritables relations économiques et humaines entre les diverses parties du pays. La langue, le mode de vie, les traditions variaient suivant le groupe ethnique ou la région'⁸⁶.

'Algérie passé et présent', written by Yves Lacoste, André Nouschi and André Prenant, which I quote extensively in this section, was based on very thorough research and refuted these assertions which in effect permitted a 'justification' of the French occupation.

Jean Dresch in an article in Clarté ridiculed the stereotypes ('images d'Epinal') taught in French schools and which needed to be dispelled concerning Algeria.

'Nous autres Français, notre régime nous a enseigné une histoire falsifiée qui nous imprègne le cerveau. Nous l'avons absorbée et assimilée comme le lait de nos mères. Nous sommes persuadés que les Algériens sont une race inférieure... qui a toujours été incapable de créer une civilisation originale et d'organiser un Etat solide. Ils auraient comme le génie du désordre, de l'anarchie, du morcellement, ne sauraient dépasser l'esprit du clan ou de la tribu, ou de la zaouia, de la confrérie...
Donc, en 1830, nous avons apporté aux Algériens ... tout: la liberté ... la civilisation matérielle et culturelle',⁸⁷.

The oppositionnels stress the existence of an Algerian state, with fairly well defined boundaries, distinct from its neighbours Tunisia and Morocco, prior to the French conquest, but they do not try to argue that Algeria existed as an accomplished nation before 1830 - although they did publish [in 1958] an FLN statement putting forward such a view⁸⁸.
They normally argued that Algeria had, prior to 1830, achieved a relatively advanced degree of territorial, political and cultural unity.

'Loin d'être un agrégat de populations dont le seul lien aurait été de se trouver sous la dépendance du même maître turc, l'Algérie de 1830 constituait donc un ensemble territorial marqué par plusieurs siècles d'évolution commune, où se retrouvaient partout, à des degrés divers, la même hiérarchisation sociale, les mêmes rapports économiques et juridiques entre des communautés étroitement mêlées bien que différenciées',⁸⁹.

This view, formulated by Lacoste-Nouschi-Prenant can be considered here as expressing a view divergent from the official Party line, although their book was published under the auspices of the PCF. A personal interview with two of the authors confirmed that they were in disagreement with the Party position over Algeria. It appears that they were discouraged by the Party leading circles from publishing a second volume that was due to follow. According to the oppositionnels, colonisation completed the process of formation of the nation, introducing capitalism and the economic unity which provided a basis for the consolidation of other elements such as language, culture, psychological make up. The oppositionnels argue that colonisation speeded up the unification of Arab and Berber populations by opening up arteries of communication, shifting populations and building up a common hostility and resistance against the oppression.

The Party's proposition that Algeria became a nation in 1957 was countered by different alternatives.

Lacoste-Nouschi-Prenant saw the beginning of that process as dating from the defeat of Abd El Kader (mid-19th century) whom they called

'avant tout l'homme qui supprime la distinction entre tribus makhzen et tribus raïas et abolit le kharedj.

Ce faisant il détruit la base essentielle de la féodalité un pays d'Islam et apporte "l'ébauche d'une transformation sociale et morale de l'Algérie"⁹⁰.

Serge Weinstock from Tribune Marxiste regarded the Algerian nation as having been completed by the first world war.

'Le processus de formation de la nation algérienne (que l'on peut considérer comme achevé dans la période qui va de 1871 - écrasement de l'insurrection kabyle, dernier soulèvement de type tribal et féodal - à la première guerre mondiale'⁹¹.

Voies Nouvelles on the other hand saw the second world war as a hypothetical date for the completion of the Algerian nation⁹².

B Arab-Berber population and colonialism

Whilst the oppositionnels expressed varying views on the precise dating of the Algerian nation, they were unanimous over the question of the colons. On this issue they were totally opposed to the Party's theory.

Jean Baby in Critique de Base virulently opposed the thesis which encompassed the colons into the Algerian nation.

'Il est fondamentalement faux de considérer qu'ils [colons] font partie au même titre que les colonisés de la nation algérienne. Celle-ci est composée essentiellement de tous les éléments ... qui subissent à titre divers l'exploitation coloniale'⁹³.

This quotation by Jean Baby is worth pondering over. Indeed the two groups, Arab-Berbers and colons, stood at two opposite ends of a spectrum, the first one regarding France as an invader and oppressor, the latter identifying with France. The colonised population, i.e. the Arab-Berbers had good reasons for considering their interests as directly antagonistic to French rule. Their character, the fruit of a long

common history was enhanced by the traumatic experience of colonialism, which decimated the indigenous population and plundered their land. From 1830 onwards, it was a history of oppression and exploitation at the hands of French imperialism assisted by the colons. This analysis was a standard point of departure for the oppositionnels.

The immense deprivation of the Arab-Berber populations and the atrocities they suffered need not be recounted in detail; historians such as Mostefa Lacheraf⁹⁴, Charles-Robert Ageron⁹⁵ and many others have brought the matter sufficiently to light already.

However, France's pillage of Algeria and the real situation of the Arab-Berbers was less well-known at the time of the war. Nouschi-Lacoste-Prenant and Voies Nouvelles found it necessary to dispel any illusions the French people may have had about France's 'civilising mission' in Algeria, and exposed these matters to allow a better understanding of the conflict in Algeria.

The oppositionnels showed that the history of French colonisation in Algeria had not contributed to bridging the gap between the colons and the Arab-Berber population as the PCF had claimed. Quite to the contrary, it strengthened the Arab-Berber separate identity. The Arab-Berbers did not suffer from cultural 'virginity' but possessed an indigenous culture which proved far more resilient than expected. Their very struggle to maintain it against the process of acculturation attempted by France reinforced their national identity.

Emphasising the high level of Arab-Berber culture, Lacoste-Nouschi-Prenant were able to show an advanced stage of literacy in Algeria before the French conquest. This was noticeable to historians who were not intent on portraying the 'uncivilised' character of the natives in order to serve colonialist propaganda.

'Entre ces groupes humains aux intérêts souvent contradictoires, le lien s'établissait par la culture islamique, qui, sous des formes diverses était celle de 99% de la population...

Il ne s'agissait pas seulement d'une communauté de religion, mais aussi du contenu d'une instruction, de l'organisation juridique et des relations sociales.

On a généralement cru pouvoir considérer le peuple algérien comme illétré: la colonisation lui aurait apporté l'instruction. Rien n'est plus faux: Rozet écrit en 1830 que cette population "a peut-être plus d'éducation que le peuple français, presque tous les hommes savent lire, écrire, compter". C'est également l'opinion de Walsin Esterhazy, telle que l'a reprise le professeur Emerit, lorsqu'il estime que la proportion d'illétrés était alors moins forte qu'en France, où elle dépassait 40%. La proportion des signatures en arabe, dans les registres d'état civil des premières décennies de l'occupation française, ne peut que confirmer cette notion. Dans les villes, la plupart des enfants pouvaient suivre l'école coranique: à Alger, dit Rozet, il y avait cent écoles publiques et particulières ... avant notre entrée, où l'on apprenait aux enfants à lire et à écrire le Coran, et quelque fois un peu de calcul, avec de dix à quinze enfants par école; de même, à Tlemcen Tatareau remarque "bon nombre de petites écoles", comme Rozet à Médéa⁹⁶.

Having closed down the local koranic school the French administration created an insufficient number of French schools to replace them. The result was disastrous and can

plainly be defined as a decivilising operation.

In addition to the scanty numbers of French schools, their influence was limited by the reluctance of the native population to accept the 'indoctrination' of its children by colonialist institutions.

'L'inclination des populations pour l'enseignement en français demeurait profondément utilitariste. On envoyait les enfants en classe jusqu'au certificat d'études, pour éviter la répression de la loi, et pour qu'ils apprennent à peine à lire, à écrire et à compter. ... Des contradictions étaient relevées entre ce qu'enseignait l'instituteur et ce que disait le mouderes. Pour équilibrer les influences et éviter les critiques des élèves, les parents astreignaient leurs enfants à des journées de classe interminables et qui n'aboutissaient qu'à l'abrutissement des jeunes'⁹⁷.

Linguistic and religious reasons accounted for the attitude of the Arab-Berber population. In a concerted effort to reduce the population to total submission, French colonisation made a deliberate attempt to obliterate any trace of indigenous culture. The closure of koranic schools corresponded to other measures intending to control the Islamic religion and to eradicate the Arabic language. The French state took over the moslem religion, instituting an islamic clergy, appointed by the administration.

'On ignore généralement que le gouvernement en Algérie a nationalisé le culte, s'est approprié toutes les mosquées ... ainsi que la fondation des biens habous. C'est lui qui nomme les imans, muphtis, oukils, muezzins, etc...et les rétribue pour autant, bien sûr, qu'ils restent fidèles et loyaux, vis-à-vis du gouvernement général'⁹⁸.

A number of mosques were closed down and some of them turned into cathedrals.

French had been imposed as the official language to the detriment of any other.

It had become virtually illegal to teach Arabic as was revealed by Francis and Colette Jeanson.

'Malheureusement les medersas, qui seules en Algérie diffusent une culture traditionnelle, sont depuis longtemps en butte aux pires difficultés: le fait même qu'elles enseignent la langue arabe justifie leur fermeture ou l'arrestation de leurs instituteurs. Car le 3 mars 1938, un arrêté du Ministre Chautemps déclarait la langue maternelle des Algériens "langue étrangère au pays"⁹⁹.

Even as late as 1954, after the teaching of Arabic had been officially recognised and accepted by the French government, it could never be implemented because of the obstacles raised by education officers¹⁰⁰.

Jean Dresch, in 'Le fait national algérien' stressed the significance of both Islam and Arabic as 'indices' of the Arab-Berber national identity. Islam which united Arabs and Berbers also implied a specific way of life and governed customs and culture.

'Le Coran règle même les actes, les gestes de la vie quotidienne, même les plus humbles'¹⁰¹.

The Arabic language spread with the Moslem religion so that both were intimately related.

'Arabisation se confond ainsi plus ou moins avec islamisation. Mais l'arabe citadin est aussi une langue de culture et la culture traditionnelle est nécessairement islamique: un homme cultivé est celui qui connaît bien le Coran et la tradition. Il est aussi celui qui parle une belle langue'¹⁰².

These two elements could not but widen the gap between the Arab-Berbers and the colons all the more so as the Arab-Berbers remained obstinately faithful to their religion and their language.

'Il n'en reste pas moins vrai que les masses musulmanes d'Algérie ont conscience que leur langue de culture, leur langue maternelle, leur langue nationale est l'arabe'¹⁰³.

The resistance of Arab-Berbers to 'gallïcisation' was evidenced by the poor results reaped by 'naturalisation' measures.

'Le Senatus Consulte de juillet 1865 et la loi de 1919, prévoyant la possibilité pour les Algériens considérés évolués mais renonçant à leur statut indigène, donc à leur personnalité, d'accéder à la citoyenneté française par naturalisation ont donné jusqu'en 1936 le chiffre officiel de 7 817 naturalisés ou convertis au christianisme. Ainsi il n'y eut que 2 500 naturalisations de 1865 à 1934 soit environ 36 par an. Ce fut un échec total'¹⁰⁴.

In addition to a variety of restrictions set up by the administration for the sake of a careful selection, naturalisation failed to attract Arab-Berbers despite its advantages - not to be treated under the code de l'indigénat - because it demanded that naturalised Arab-Berbers renounce their 'statut

personnel'. As has been explained above by Jean Dresch, muslims were governed by a specific set of laws derived from the Koran, which differed from Roman law; this became known as their 'personal status'. This, the Arab-Berber population was not prepared to abandon¹⁰⁵.

As we can notice, the historical experience of the colonised Algerian people therefore was not limited to passive subjection but also expressed itself in various forms of resistance: from armed rebellions with Abd El Kader and Al Mokrani to organised purchases of land in order to win it back from the colons¹⁰⁶. The Arab-Berber preserved a religion and a language which was not that of the French. All those actions blossomed into an Algerian culture enriched with poems, songs and literature.

' Qu 'on nous dit: naturalisez-vous!
Maintenant ils disent: plus de passé.
Ils nous disent: la religion, inutile.
Qu'on oublie nos traditions
En Français nous serions teints.
Le harnais français, nous le rejetterons
... Pour notre patrie ... la sauvegarderons¹⁰⁷.

This culture could not bring the Arab-Berber closer to the colons, who themselves could not possibly share it because it stemmed from a very specific experience and history enriched by the resistance to colonial oppression.

C The colons, the colonisés and colonialism

It is difficult to imagine that the colons' collective memory could build on similar experiences and operate a

rapprochement with the Arab-Berber psychological make-up. In opposition to the PCF's interpretation of the Algerian situation, claiming that the majority of colons had 'nothing to do' with colonialism¹⁰⁸, the oppositionnels argued that they saw their interests at one with the existence and continuation of a French imperialist presence in Algeria. Tribune Marxiste explained that the presence of colons in Algeria took its roots in the plundering of Arab lands and continued to rest on vast privileges ensured by French colonial rule.

'Une appréciation objective de la réalité ne doit pas non plus ignorer que le rôle de la minorité européenne d'Algérie découle, dans la plus large mesure, du régime colonial, de faits tels que la main-mise sur les meilleures terres, la concentration dans les régions les plus riches, le monopole économique des capitalistes européens, l'exercice des emplois les plus qualifiés par les seuls Européens, l'inégalité de statut juridique et politique'¹⁰⁹.

Consequently they would fear a move towards a liberalisation of the system or the armed rebellion of the Arab-Berbers which would put their privileges at risk. As Jean-Marie Domenach pointed out.

'Le peuplement européen n'a pu en effet s'installer et croître en Algérie que sous le couvert et la protection d'un régime colonial qui lui a permis de prendre les meilleures terres, d'accaparer la fonction publique [...] de s'adjuger l'essentiel des profits. Dès lors que ce régime disparaît, la colonie européenne devient vulnérable'¹¹⁰.

As a result the colons were to constitute a force actually opposing any breaking down of the watertight partition between the Arab-Berber community and their own. The stronger the Arab-Berber national liberation movement, the stronger the centrifugal force driving Arab-Berbers and colons apart as the latter would feel more threatened.

It is no wonder that Jacques Arnault found it difficult to account for the colons' lack of enthusiasm vis-à-vis the Algerian national liberation movement. He put it down to a 'belated Algerian national consciousness' resulting from a situation 'warped by colonialism' with which the colons 'identified'¹¹¹. The oppositionnels' analysis is far more convincing, as they point out the absence of an objective basis for any national consciousness shared in common between Arab-Berbers and colons, excluding the colons from the Algerian nation.

Obstacles to the merging of the colons and the Arab-Berbers were multiplied by the colonial situation to the point at which the two societies in fact lived alongside each other without ever making contact. While the Party overlooked this fact, the oppositionnels did not fail to underline it.

'La population européenne vit au-dessus de l'abîme musulman comme les habitants de l'Ile Volante de Laputa visités par Gulliver'¹¹².

Henri Raymond, in Voies Nouvelles gave a concise description of what he calls the 'fait colonial'.

'Deux fractions de population très inégales (de un à neuf), une ligne de partage économique, linguistique, coutumière, voilà ce que l'on peut appeler le "fait colonial" '113.

A specific relationship took shape governing the colon/colonisé parameter, which was the direct reflection of their objective situation. Voies Nouvelles concerned itself with this relationship, analysing it with the kind of sensitivity that can be found in Albert Memmi's Portrait du colonisé or in Frantz Fanon's works. In Henri Raymond's article:

'le colonisé est inoccupé parce qu'il est paresseux; la preuve c'est qu'il ne travaille pas. Le colonisé mange peu, n'a pas de vêtements, parce que ses besoins sont réduits; la preuve, c'est qu'il continue à vivre dans des conditions qui seraient insupportables pour l'européen. Le colonisé se dresse contre ses maîtres parce qu'il est ingrat et excité par l'étranger; la preuve c'est que, depuis cent ans, il se tenait tranquille.

Tous les éléments de la situation concrète sont ainsi réifiés dans le colonisé qui devient l'incarnation même de ses maux'114.

Henri Raymond's article on the stereotype imposed on the 'colonisé' by the colon fulfilled a very useful function at a time when those who understood this point were extremely rare, even among the left and within the ranks of the PCF: idle for laziness, incompetent, an innate criminal, sly, barbarian and congenitally minor, all notions that justify the superiority and the rule of the colons. It is interesting to compare Henri Raymond's article to Albert Memmi's¹¹⁵ on the portrait drawn by the colons of the Arab-Berbers.

The complex instilled in the 'colonisé'¹¹⁶ may lead him to 'accept the white man's value'. Colonialism having persuaded the colonised individual that his culture is inferior, posits the French culture as the one worthy of being pursued. The 'colonisé' may strive to become identical to the coloniser; this is to no avail.

Even time and history have been unable to achieve this result: 'assimilation' was made impossible by the colonial situation.

'Or, dans le cadre colonial, l'assimilation s'est révélée impossible ... il [le colonisé] rencontre le refus du colonisateur'¹¹⁷.

More concretely, this was illustrated many times by the colons' stubborn refusal of any improvement in the Arab-Berbers' conditions, which would have raised them closer to the colons' level. Even if one individual could achieve success, collective success on the part of the indigenous population was incompatible with the colonial relationship based on the inequality between the two groups.

'Dire que le colonisateur pourrait ou devrait accepter de bonne grâce l'assimilation, donc l'émancipation du colonisé, c'est escamoter la relation coloniale ... Or, nous l'avons assez montré, la condition coloniale ne peut être changée que par la suppression de la relation coloniale'¹¹⁸.

If any real trend had been observed which pointed to the bridging of the gap between the two communities, patience and time might possibly have accomplished the merging process. But, on the contrary, the two groups drew further apart, in

spite of the Party's wild optimism:

'Dans la vie, dans la lutte contre ce régime et pour une Algérie libérée de ses chaînes se resserrent les liens existants entre les divers éléments ethniques'¹¹⁹,

declared Léon Feix very confidently in 1955.

Voies Nouvelles in 1958 more realistically gave an opposite picture.

'l'absence à peu près totale de mariages mixtes [unissant des européens et des musulmans] témoigne de cet infranchissable fossé entre deux populations qui cohabitent'¹²⁰.

J.J. Mayoux draws attention to the violent rejection of the colonisers' culture brought about by the century old oppression and cultural alienation suffered by Arabs and Berbers¹²¹. The validity of Mayoux's observation has been amply demonstrated in Frantz Fanon's works¹²². A violent denial of all aspects of French oppression became necessary as an ideological weapon in the struggle against French colonialism. In the eyes of the Arab-Berbers, the French colons were at once the symbols and the instruments of colonialism. The fruitful exchange between 'Occidental and Oriental culture', advocated by the PCF¹²³, stood no chance at all under the circumstances of colonialism.

'l'annexion coloniale n'est pas la fusion de deux sociétés, avec ce que ce contact de civilisations pourrait avoir de bon et de mauvais; c'est l'oppression d'une société'¹²⁴.

D The PCF under criticism

The oppositionnels

Despite all those counter-indications, Léon Feix in 1955 attempted to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Algerian nation in an effort to prove the merger between the two communities into one nation:

'L'Algérie est aujourd'hui une communauté pouvant être considérée comme stable, qui s'édifie historiquement sur la base d'un territoire commun et d'une vie économique commune bien que faussée par le régime colonial. Dans la vie, dans la lutte contre ce régime et pour une Algérie libérée de ses chaînes se resserrent les liens existants entre les divers éléments ethniques. En même temps se développe un caractère national algérien, se manifestant déjà depuis quelques années - sur le plan culturel - par l'éclosion d'une mystique, d'une peinture, d'une littérature algérienne ... Le problème de la langue pourra être résolu [plus tard]'125.

Léon Feix's definition follows Stalin's classic text on the nation, enumerating each of the nation's components one by one, except for the language. Serge Weinstock did not fail to notice the absence of a common national language in Feix's definition.

'Mais la langue nationale, sans laquelle il n'y a ni nation, ni culture nationale? L. Feix l'a simplement escamotée ... Qu'un écrivain comme Kateb Yacine doive écrire en français - de même que l'Ukrainien Gogol écrivit, en russe - c'est là une conséquence du joug culturel et du développement encore insuffisant de la langue nationale en tant que langue écrite et instrument d'une littérature. Même si l'écrivain exprime dans ses romans les traits de son caractère national propre.

c'est à la littérature française qu'il fait un apport ... Une littérature de langue française ne pourrait être une littérature algérienne que si le français devenait la langue nationale algérienne ... Si L. Feix est contraint d'"oublier" la langue nationale, cela découle du caractère non-marxiste de la théorie officielle, qu'il tente de faire entrer dans la formule marxiste de la nation, en triturant cette dernière'¹²⁶.

Even assuming that the national language was undergoing a transformation, what was it to be? A new language, a mixture of French and Arabic? It was unlikely that the colons would adopt it and at any rate languages have proved to take more than a few dozen years to be born. In circumstances where France and the French colons controlled the seat of power, one could not conceive of Algerian Arabic becoming the national language, since France, having the upper hand, would have continued to impose its language. In that case French would have become the Algerian national language; but could this solution be accepted by a communist party which claimed to oppose 'assimilation based on coercion'.

It was inconceivable that French would be adopted as a national language by millions of Arab-Berbers who mastered their own medium of communication, and considered the French language as that of the oppressors, alien to them. B. Merghoub quoted the popular adage: 'le français est la langue du pain, l'arabe celle de la parole'¹²⁷, indicating that French was only used by Arab-Berbers if they needed it in their employment, but not as a real tool of communication.

It is very clear that, for a very long time, the PCF did not wish to contemplate the 'Arab' character of Algeria, being primarily concerned with the contribution of a French character via the colons. This approach definitely oriented Algeria towards a rapprochement with France rather than other Arab countries.

Jean G  rome made a point of quoting L  on Feix in 1956 in order to outline the Party's bias.

'Certains dirigeants nationalistes pr  conisent la fusion des 3 pays au sein d'un Maghreb arabe ou musulman li      tous les pays arabes ou musulmans, depuis le Maroc jusqu'au Pakistan... Il est naturel que les Alg  riens, les Tunisiens, les Marocains   prouvent les uns pour les autres des sentiments fraternels ... Mais cela ne justifie pas une communaut   politique contre laquelle jouent tant d'  l  ments historiques, g  ographiques,   conomiques et autres. Une autre voie est possible,... pour les peuples de l'Afrique du Nord: la voie de l'Union Fran  aise'128.

The PCF was unfavourable to the establishment of a relationship between Algeria and its North African neighbours Tunisia and Morocco, which would divert their attention from political and economic links with France. The Party found an argument in the somewhat 'French' character of the Algerian nation bestowed upon it by the colons to promote close links between Algeria and France.

Oppositionnels such as Jean G  r  me and the Sorbonne Lettres cell, on the contrary stressed the 'Arab vocation' of Algeria and the need for Algeria to establish links with Tunisia, Morocco and other Arab countries rather than with France.

'Le problème de ses liens futurs avec la France passe,objectivement,après celui de ses liens avec les autres pays maghrébins et le monde arabe'129.

The FLN

The Party's theory of the 'nation en formation' designed to include French settlers was directly rejected by the FLN itself.

In an article addressing itself to the PCF, the FLN refuted Maurice Thorez's theory and pointed to its inherent contradictions.

'Et c'est ainsi que M Thorez,qui soutint des années durant que,sans fusion entre Européens et Algériens, il n'y aurait pas de nation algérienne constituée, déclara le 15 février 1957,la fusion réalisée et la nation algérienne constituée alors que la quasi totalité des Européens était unie autour des colonialistes'130.

This statement is a direct contradiction of the earlier PCF assertions that a good number of Europeans were supporting the Algerian national liberation struggle. History has demonstrated after the 13 May 1958 and subsequent events including the colons' massive flight to the métropole at the end of the war, that the FLN's interpretation was the most accurate one.

Alternatively, the FLN laid stress on the existence of an Algerian state, internationally recognised prior to 1830; and on the fact that the territorial, historical. linguistic and cultural unity could not be destroyed by colonialism. This was stated by El Moujahid, acknowledging the existence of a

European minority but 'en aucune manière assimilée à la nation algérienne',¹³¹. The impossibility of a rapprochement between the colons and Arab-Berber populations under the conditions of colonialism had already been emphasised by the oppositionnels. It is interesting to note that this line on the problem was also an important element of the FLN position.

An additional document clarified the FLN's position on the Algerian nation. To those who did not cease to reproach the FLN with its reference to an Algerian nation existing before Bugeaud's arrival, El Moujahid explained the ideological significance of such a statement:

'C'est qu'en insistant sur cette réalité nationale, en faisant de la réalité nationale, en faisant de la révolution du 1er novembre 1954 une phase de la résistance populaire commencée avec Abd El Kader, nous enlevons au colonialisme français sa légitimité, sa prétendue insertion dans la réalité algérienne.

... La 'nation en formation', 'l'Algérie nouvelle', le 'cas unique dans l'histoire' toutes ces expressions mystificatrices ont été balayées par la position du FLN et il n'a subsisté en plein soleil que le combat héroïque de tout un peuple contre l'oppression séculaire',¹³².

According to the FLN, the theory of the 'nation en formation' was an ideological instrument against the armed struggle, or used as such, and therefore deserved to be rejected outright.

The PCA

Another major and similar criticism against the nation in formation was to be voiced by the PCA in 1958.

Until the mid-fifties, the PCA had generally followed the same line as that of its elder 'brother-party', the PCF. The pressure of events engineered by the 1954 insurrection led the PCA to radicalise its position. A first decision to participate in the liberation struggle with the FLN [taken in June 1956] culminated in a PCA-FLN agreement in the middle of 1956¹³³. Members of the PCA even took part in activities which were condemned as 'terrorist' by the PCF¹³⁴. In the meantime the PCF was voting for the Special Powers, which eventually led to the escalation of the war. The PCA had embraced the demand for Algerian independence since March 1956¹³⁵ whilst the PCF delayed it until the beginning of 1957. The PCA recognised the GPRA as soon as it was founded, whereas the PCF waited nearly three years [beginning of 1961]. The main bone of contention between the two parties concerned the analysis of the Algerian nation. When the PCA produced its 'Essai sur la nation algérienne' the PCF at first refused to publish it.

'Ce ne fut qu'au terme de longues chamailleries et à l'aide d'adroites manoeuvres du PCA - utilisant l'atout de ses rapports naissants avec le Parti communiste italien - que le PCF s'inclina; il prit soin cependant de publier ce document dans un supplément des Cahiers et non pas dans un numéro régulier'¹³⁶.

The PCA did not directly attack the PCF theories; instead it made a self criticism. Despite their disagreements there was never an open rupture between the two parties, which both maintained their allegiance to the CPSU.

In its Essai sur la nation algérienne, the PCA traced the formation process of the Algerian nation in a brief survey of the Algerian national movement, showing how all the premises necessary to the formation of the nation had been accumulated.

'C'est une communauté stable, historiquement constituée, de langue [l'arabe], de territoire...de vie économique [indice dont la formation a été accélérée par les relations économiques capitalistes introduites par le système colonial], de formation psychique [dont la plus indiscutable est l'aspiration profonde à l'indépendance], se traduisant par une communauté de culture [arabo-islamique ouverte à l'apport de la culture occidentale, française en particulier]',¹³⁷.

This definition stood as a parallel to Léon Feix's (1955) [see page 230] and in clear opposition to it.

The national consciousness of Algerians was said to have come to maturity with the second world war. This notion can be compared to the one expressed by the cell Sorbonne Lettres in Voies Nouvelles [quoted above, page 218].

As regards the nature of the Algerian nation, the verdict of the PCA did not leave a shadow of doubt about the colons. 'La nation est formée d'Algériens autochtones. Elle ne comprend pas les Européens d'Algérie',¹³⁸.

This was a definite refutation of the PCF theory of the 'Algerian nation in formation' including the colons. However the PCA did not directly attack the PCF on this question. It blamed itself for having applied Maurice Thorez's theory dogmatically. The PCA claimed that it was its own former erroneous interpretation of Maurice Thorez's concept of 'nation en formation' which had implied that the process of formation

could not be completed before the merger of all its components, including the colons.

'il apparaissait que la nation ne pouvait se former avant la fusion de tous les éléments ethniques, y compris des Européens'¹³⁹.

The PCA reached a conclusion which had been expressed by other protagonists concerning the possible integration of a good number of Algerian colons into the Algerian nation: it could only happen after independence. Colonialism itself prevented such a merger.

'la fusion ou le mélange des deux principaux éléments ethniques actuels est impossible dans le cadre colonial'¹⁴⁰.

This notion was also expressed by the oppositionnels and the FLN, but was to be voiced only much later by the PCF.

The PCA blamed itself for attaching an exaggerated importance to the 'nation en formation' concept which hampered a firm struggle against the pressure of colonialist ideology bred by the colons. Rejecting its old affirmation that Algeria was 'ni française ni arabe' based on Maurice Thorez's mixture of 20 races, the PCA restored, in its theory, the 'Arab' nature of the Algerian nation.

'Par ses caractéristiques profondes, elle [l'Algérie] est de civilisation arabe, incontestablement'¹⁴¹.

The condemnation of the PCF's theoretical pronouncements on Algeria was transparent through the PCA self criticism.

In a later document, the PCA did not refrain from formulating a sharp, direct criticism of the PCF policy. Accepting that Thorez's theory of the nation in formation could have played a relatively positive role in 1939, it exposed it as pernicious for the Algerian national liberation movement shortly afterwards.

'De 42.43 à 56 on peut dire qu'elle apparaissait en fait comme un frein, un obstacle au développement du mouvement de libération nationale algérien; on peut dire qu'elle conduisait en fait dans une certaine mesure à favoriser le maintien de la domination impérialiste'¹⁴².

This accusation is all the more telling in that it comes from a 'brother' party; the oppositionnels had voiced it as early as 1957.

'La théorie de la nation en formation servait à voiler le caractère foncièrement colonial des rapports entre la France et l'Algérie, elle masquait la portée révolutionnaire de la lutte nationale des colonisés algériens contre l'impérialisme français, elle brisait la solidarité de la classe ouvrière de France avec les mouvements nationalistes d'Algérie'¹⁴³.

The criticism here bears not only on the erroneous nature of PCF theory but also on its objective role once applied to the Algerian war situation: in practice an 'anti-revolutionary line'.

The publication of this document by the PCA at the beginning of 1960 seems to confirm my view that the PCF did not modify its interpretation of the Algerian nation after the

PCA's self criticism. By 1961, changes can be noticed in Jean Bruhat's article 'Nation algérienne et opinion française'. Referring to Maurice Thorez's speech in 1939, Bruhat leaves out the customary reminder about 'the nation in formation' including the colons, but recalls 'la vocation nationale de l'Algérie',¹⁴⁴, supposedly stressed by Thorez. As regards the integration of the colons into the Algerian nation, Bruhat expresses no firm opinion.

'Cette fusion s'opérera-t-elle?...
Personne ne saurait aujourd'hui
le dire',¹⁴⁵.

Eventually Bruhat specifies that only the severing of colonial links can enable the 'colonial minority' i.e. colons, to shed its racial prejudices against the 'natives', so that they might be able to merge into the Algerian nation, which Bruhat earlier defined as an Arab nation.

The Party had partially been made to align itself with its critics, but never refuted its theory of the 'nation algérienne en formation'.

A number of writings by Party members, whose views differed from the official PCF line on Algeria, elaborated an alternative analysis of the Algerian nation. Two main features counterposed this analysis to the Party definition.

- The Algerian nation had become a 'nation constituée' at the latest by the end of the second world war (and not in 1957 as the PCF claimed).

- The Algerian nation was Arab in character and did not include the colons: moreover any rapprochement between colons and Arab-Berbers was deemed impossible under the conditions of colonialism.

Both the FLN and the PCA confirmed these views and joined their voice to the concert of criticism against Maurice Thorez's concept of the Algerian nation in formation including the colons.

The Party's analysis was not only considered by its opponents as theoretically erroneous, but it was also seen as an objective disapproval of the Algerian liberation movement fighting for Algerian independence.

The uncompleted state of the Algerian 'nation in formation' could have been taken to imply that Algeria was not ready for independence and therefore could be used as an ideological weapon against the Algerian national liberation struggle. The PCF denied any connection between its support for Algerian independence and its recognition of a 'nation algérienne constituée'; but it is a strange coincidence that the Party declared the formation process of the Algerian nation completed precisely at the same time as it raised the slogan of Algerian independence - at the beginning of 1957.

It is possible to establish a correlation between the PCF's definition of the Algerian nation and its position on Algerian independence.

The PCF upheld the demand for Algerian independence at the same time as it declared that Algeria had become a 'nation constituée', in 1957. The oppositionnels and the FLN stated that the PCF's theory of Algeria as a 'nation en formation' objectively militated against the struggle for independence. One could even take this proposition further and posit that it was precisely the rationale behind the PCF's line: the Party advanced the non-completion of the Algerian nation in a deliberate attempt to justify its postponement of Algerian independence, at a time when it did not judge it to be an appropriate slogan.

In the light of my study and of the oppositionnels' remarks, it is made clear that the PCF did not welcome the idea of Algerian independence for nearly two decades, for a variety of reasons. In 1936 it feared that Algeria might fall into the fascist camp. At the end of the second world war it hoped that a French people's democracy could bring socialism to France and Algeria; and after 1947 it preferred French control over Algeria to what it saw as a potential US rule in Algeria.

The Party's analysis of the Algerian nation, designed to include the colons, supported its policy against Algerian independence because it pointed to a continued relationship between Algeria and France. For the Party, the French colons

on the Algerian soil had woven historic ties between the two countries; as an integral part of the Algerian nation [following Maurice Thorez's definition], they reinforced the possibility and the necessity of preserving links between France and Algeria. The PCF, as a result, twisted its analysis in order to integrate the colons into the Algerian nation, in the face of its observations of reality.

At the same time the Party shared with the French people a sincere concern for the welfare of the colons and insisted that they be taken into account.

Throughout that period the PCF's policy was carefully studied not to alienate the French people, who might not have welcomed the independence of Algeria.

However the reasons underlying the Party lines on Algerian independence and on the Algerian nation lie in its attitude towards the French nation. Even as late as 1957 Marcel Dufriche formulated Algerian independence in terms of French interests.

'Car, répétons-le, la question est moins de savoir comment l'Algérie conquerra son indépendance, la question est de savoir si elle l'obtiendra avec la France ou contre la France'¹⁴⁶.

The Party remained convinced of France's revolutionary heritage and of its own duty towards the interests of the French nation. It was suspicious of the FLN islamic and non-communist tendencies. In its procrastination and in its hesitations to support the Algerian struggle, the PCF revealed

once more its confusion over the nature of the conflict, in practice refusing to acknowledge that it was a national liberation struggle against French imperialism.

The oppositionnels criticised the Party on all these points. Their first concern was the support of the Algerian Liberation Struggle, regardless of the degree of maturity of the Algerian nation. Their support was motivated by the FLN's standpoint 'against imperialism', and they adopted an unequivocal position in favour of independence.

As regards the character of Algeria, the conclusions of the oppositionnels on the Algerian nation 'à vocation arabe' seemed to derive from a more scientific approach than that of the Party and certainly more accurately reflected reality. As a final remark, a Party member writing to Vérité Pour questioned the Party's prerogative of defining the Algerian nation.

'Sur la question nationale les partis de gauche ont beaucoup bavardé sur l'existence et le contenu de la nation algérienne mais ils ont tourné le dos aux enseignements constants du mouvement socialiste international. C'est la nation opprimée qui seule a le droit de se définir, de reconnaître les éléments qui la composent, de rejeter ou d'accepter ceux qu'elle considère comme des étrangers, de dénoncer ses ennemis. Ce point a aussi été souligné par Lénine quand il rappelait que "Quand on revendique l'émancipation des colonies on n'exige pas autre chose que la reconnaissance du droit des nations à se définir elles-mêmes"'147.

From a Marxist point of view, a nation cannot be examined as a static phenomenon. The notion of 'nation en

formation' could have been an interesting concept and a useful tool for the study of Algerian evolution, if such a study had scientifically examined the cumulation of 'indices' contributing to the formation of the Algerian nation through history. It could be compared to what Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou termed 'national consolidation' in his studies on Kurdistan¹⁴⁸.

Unfortunately, the PCF's method was not based on a sound historical approach. Contrasting Jean Dresch's article with other customary PCF documents, René Gallissot pointed out the diverging approaches.

'[La démarche de Jean Dresch] est faite, sans le dire, du rejet des appréhensions idéologico-politiques pour leur substituer un examen par historicisme total'¹⁴⁹.

The PCF failed to notice or to accept that the national consolidation of Algeria was driving it further away from France.

CHAPTER VI

France's military involvement in Algeria: the PCF and the
oppositionnels

In the previous chapters, the two aspects that were examined concerning the PCF and the Algerian war placed the emphasis on theoretical considerations. But neither PCF official circles nor the oppositionnels saw the Party as a debating society. Quite the contrary, theory was in the best Marxist tradition intended to provide a 'guide for action'. In the context of the Algerian war a multitude of problems arose requiring concrete solutions. France had thrown herself into a war directly affecting major aspects of her political and economic life. The extent of France's commitment to the war might not have been seen clearly as early as 1954 but the participation of the conscripts, i.e. every 18 year old ready for his national service, did not allow the perpetuation of ignorance among the French people. The issue of conscription necessitated a definite standpoint from the communist party. Eventually many of the pressing questions relating to the Algerian war were to become polarised around aspects of the military intervention.

I The PCF and the army

The PCF did not elaborate a response in isolation from its theoretical appreciation of the role of the army in capitalist society and it is therefore necessary to give a brief summary of the Party's approach to the army. It is possible to outline a number of recurrent features in the main Party documents on the army from the second world war up to the Algerian war.

The peculiarity of the situation is that France combines both a strong professional army and a conscript army; the Party generally reserved a different treatment for each. In addition, one needs constantly to bear in mind the Party's analysis of the French nation, since this underlies the interdependence of the two aspects: professional and conscript army.

A The professional army

In the first place, at a very general ideological level, the professional army is assessed by the Party along the same lines as Lenin [and before him the French left in the 19th century] described it: 'a weapon of oppression'. It is seen to be solely at the service of the bourgeoisie.

'Nous savons avec Lénine que "l'armée permanente et la police sont les principaux instruments de la force du pouvoir de l'Etat".

L'appareil d'Etat - donc l'armée - est un instrument de domination d'une classe et destiné à servir la politique de cette classe'².

According to the PCF, the bourgeoisie itself had lost its national character, detaching itself from the nation as early

as 1871. 'Dès 1871, la bourgeoisie faisait la preuve qu'elle serait toujours prête à sacrifier les intérêts de la Patrie'³. The PCF believed that the army had followed the same path and equally lost all its characteristics of 'national defence'. The Party quoted Pétain as the best representative of an army of 'national betrayal'. Raymond Guyot described the rule governing this phenomenon.

'En régime bourgeois, l'armée sert les intérêts de la bourgeoisie. Lorsque celle-ci trahit la nation, l'armée est mise au service de la trahison'⁴.

The concept of the professional army as an army of 'national betrayal' had been formulated by the PCF. In 1946 Alfred Malleret, a communist deputy, in his speech to the National Assembly called the 'armée de métier', an 'armée de la défaite'⁵. Raymond Guyot had made it clear that, in his view, it was the same bourgeoisie, the same 'deux cents familles' who, from Versailles to Munich and Vichy had 'betrayed' the French nation and 'surrendered' both the French people and its army for the benefit of their selfish class interests⁶.

In the Party's eyes, France's participation in NATO, under the control of the United States, was a repetition of the same scenario: the bourgeoisie had allowed French national integrity and independence to be violated once again.

The loss of the army's national character had even been institutionalised, added the Party, insofar as the Atlantic Pact incorporated sections of the French army, subordinated to US or German supervision.

'Dans la France d'aujourd'hui, il est clair qu'il n'y a plus d'armée nationale: les troupes françaises sont une fraction - la piétaille - de la grande armée atlantique, donc américaine'⁷.

Raymond Guyot, expressing the view that no national defence can exist without national independence, noted the general 'mortgaging' of France to foreign powers, since the expulsion of communists from the government in May 1947. Guyot's words, in 1951, could be assumed as simply strengthening a campaign against the cold war. Yet the same theme was still being reiterated in 1958:

'Pendant ces onze années, depuis l'exclusion des ministres communistes du gouvernement on s'est systématiquement employé à éliminer le sentiment national de l'armée, pour lui faire accepter d'être subordonnée à un commandement américain, voire allemand, en vue d'une guerre contre un ennemi ouvertement désigné, l'Union Soviétique et contre le peuple français'⁸.

For the Party, the national 'betrayal' of the professional army was compounded with and evidenced by its attitude towards the French people. The Party's identification between the national interest and the people's interest - studied in Chapter 4 - confirmed the professional army's 'betrayal' of the nation, since it was used against the French people. The mission of the professional army was described as the protection of the bourgeoisie's interests against its 'internal enemy', i.e. the working class and all those who opposed capitalist exploitation and foreign rule.

'L'armée est utilisée et le sera de plus en plus contre les ouvriers en lutte pour leur pain... D'autre part certaines unités commandées par des officiers gaullistes sont déjà utilisées pour accomplir attentats et provocations contre les organisations démocratiques et leurs militants'⁹.

Guyot recalled as an example the violent interventions of the army against the striking miners in 1947, and its role as a strike breaker against the transport workers. In this the PCF follows the traditional line of the French left ever since the 19th century.

According to Claude Chevalier, the declarations of the Président du Conseil, stressing the importance of the 'défense en surface de la métropole', 'sécurité intérieure', and 'guerre psychologique contre-révolutionnaire', contributed to the propagation of fascist ideology¹⁰. 'Fascist' trends in the army were exacerbated by the war in Algeria; the need to purge what the PCF called fascist officers was reiterated by Claude Chevalier. A favourite theme in the immediate post-second world war period, it assumed a renewed urgency with the rising influence of Massu, Salan and Zeller.

On the other hand, further readings reveal a rather 'optimistic' outlook on the part of the PCF, concerning the very same professional army. Whether dealing with the question of national independence or a possible 'fascist threat', the Party claimed that the bulk of the professional army showed 'healthy reactions'.

'Au XIII^e Congrès, le rapport central n'a pas manqué de refléter fidèlement les sentiments des officiers français qui "se sentent humiliés d'être placés sous un commandement étranger et ils sont indignés de voir les traditions militaires françaises mises au service d'intérêts étrangers"'11.

In reality there is no hard evidence that a substantial number of officers did protest against their subordination to 'un commandement étranger' and the Party failed to quote any such actions.

During the Algerian war, the Party refused to cast blame on the professional army as a whole for the terrible torture perpetrated en masse against the Algerian people. Its condemnation fell solely on a 'few regiments'.

'Seuls quelques régiments de parachutistes et de légionnaires s'abaissent à jouer, féroce^{ment}, d'ailleurs les policiers et les tortionnaires'¹².

These assertions could be considered as whitewashing the rest of the army, which was involved as a whole in various atrocities; this was demonstrated and exposed by anti-torture committees and publications during the Algerian war [the Comité Audin and La Gangrène¹³ devoted their efforts to this task.]

Jacques Debouzy, who contributed to oppositionnel reviews at the time stressed the importance of dispelling the illusions and the confusion spread by the Party about the French army¹⁴.

And André Marty, after his expulsion, revealed that an excessive faith in the French army existed in the PCF at the time of the Indochina war. In his opinion, the Party, which attributed all

the most horrible crimes to ex-Nazis or other motley criminals, was exposed as 'chauvinist', because it would not accept that French soldiers were capable of atrocities.

'En effet, de 1946 à 1949, nos propagandistes, nos journalistes, nos députés, en parlant des atrocités commises en Indochine, les mettaient sur le compte d'anciens SS et miliciens engagés dans la Légion'¹⁵.

Meanwhile, the Party concentrated on the foreign legion and the parachutists as its main target, identifying contradictions of a varied nature among the ranks of the army. Quoting the example of General de la Bollardière, who resigned in protest against the use of torture in Algeria, the Party reached conclusions too positive to be true.

A pamphlet published by the Comité Maurice Audin explained the case involving General de la Bollardière.

'Dans une directive datée du 16 février, le général Massu recommandait une accentuation de l'effort policier. Interrogé par ses subordonnés, le général de la Bollardière devait diffuser dans la zone qu'il commandait une directive d'application où l'on peut lire: "La tentation à laquelle n'ont pas résisté les pays totalitaires de considérer certains procédés comme une méthode normale pour obtenir le renseignement doit être rejetée sans équivoque et ces procédés condamnés formellement".

Général de la Bollardière

Le général Massu fit convoquer le général de la Bollardière. Ce dernier refusa de modifier sa directive. Le débat fut porté successivement devant le général Allard, le général Salan, Robert Lacoste et Bourges-Maunoury.

Personne ne voulut donner tort à...
Massu. La démission du général de La
Bollardièrre fut acceptée'16.

Unfortunately the example of General de La Bollardièrre was all
the more celebrated as it was exceptional. Most officers
allowed torture to continue, unhampered.

And yet the PCF felt confident in stating that the vast
majority of the army was indignant at these 'fascist methods'.

'On constate heureusement que la grande
masse de l'armée - les hommes du
contingent, la majorité des sous-
officiers et officiers et jusqu'à
des généraux manifeste son indignation
contre ces méthodes fascistes'17.

The Party established a dividing line within the army,
identified and classified soldiers on the basis of their
attitude to the Republic.

'Il [le parti] a toujours distingué en
elle [l'armée], d'une part les tenants
du militarisme et de la réaction,
d'autre part sa masse fondamentale que
constituent les soldats, les sous-
officiers, les officiers subalternes
et les officiers supérieurs et généraux
républicains'18.

After the 1958 alarm, the same 'optimistic' interpretation
persisted:

'Certes la sédition n'a été que l'oeuvre
d'une faction dans l'armée. Le corps
des officiers et sous-officiers de
carrière, dans sa masse fondamentale
ne veut pas être identifié avec les
factieux d'Alger pas plus qu'avec
les ultras'19.

In searching for an explanation of the Party's attitude, one could formulate several hypotheses. The PCF which was often branded as the 'parti de l'étranger' might have hesitated in criticising the French army more vehemently lest it be accused of anti-French propaganda. Alternatively it might have stressed 'traditional' values such as chivalry in an effort to mobilise French professional soldiers, officers in particular, against the more 'modern' methods such as torture. A third possibility appears to be consistent with the Party's general tactics against fascism: an appeal to republican ideals in the army against the threat of an extreme right-wing military take-over. The latter reason appears to be the essential one. It was not, however, only a tactical proposal. The Party's approach to the Republic, its own patriotism and its interpretation of the French nation tie in with its analysis of the army and must be taken into consideration. This is done in the following section on the contingent.

B The contingent

The Party's approach to the contingent was very different. The conscript army corresponded to the PCF's idea of a 'national army'. Against the notion of the professional army, the Party constantly counterposed the 'nation in arms'.

'Cette armée nationale de la Grande Révolution'²⁰.

Either quoting texts from the Resistance, or Jean Jaurès's 'armée nouvelle', or even more often the French Revolution, the Party developed the concept of a national army at the service of the nation. This army of a new type was promoted in the wake of the second world war at a time when the army included a number of communist officers; the Party then strove for the purging of fascist sympathisers and the promotion of 'true republicans'. Later again, Guyot in 1951 set off against the traitors of Coblenz, the Versaillais and Gaullist officers²¹, which he deemed incapable of fulfilling the army's task of national defence, safeguarding national independence against foreign encroachments. To the bourgeoisie's efforts 'pour isoler en fait l'Armée de la Nation, et en faire un instrument de guerre civile et d'agression extérieure'²², the PCF opposed an army close to the people.

'Il est temps que l'armée comprenne qu'elle ne se dépouillera de ce rôle humiliant qu'en rejoignant le peuple, en s'unissant à lui dans le même idéal républicain'²³.

The PCF also constantly stressed the republican nature of the ideal national army.

'Pour que l'armée soit l'armée de la nation, il faut qu'elle soit à son service et rien qu'à son service. Cette nation est républicaine. Elle veut être souveraine et régler elle-même par le choix de ses élus les problèmes qui se posent devant elle ... Ce n'est pas au peuple qu'il faut faire la leçon et demander des comptes, mais c'est lui qu'il faut servir de toutes ses forces et de toute son intelligence. Tout lui revient finalement, puisque tout vient de lui. Il est la nation'²⁴.

The relationship posited by the Party between nation, people and republic, which gave the army its character, requires analysis. As we have already seen, nation and people tend to be identical in the eyes of the PCF; hence it is understandable that a national army cannot but be linked to the people. As the bourgeoisie had 'betrayed' the nation and detached itself from it, it also followed that the 'national' army [or conscript army] would defend the interests of the people against bourgeois interests. The Republic, emanating from the nation through its chosen representatives, therefore had to be upheld, and the national army had to fulfil this role of defending the Republic - since military power was regarded as subordinated to civilian power.

The Party here failed to specify which republic it was speaking of; the actual French Republic, which by all Marxist accounts was a bourgeois republic, or the ideal 'social republic'.

The total identification between nation and people fostered the illusion that the French Republic was not a bourgeois institution but was truly representative of the people. This illusion also applied to the army which suddenly lost its class character, that of defending the interests of the ruling class, i.e. the bourgeoisie.

The grey areas in the PCF's analysis of the army, which is sometimes self-contradictory, can be clarified if we approach the problem from another angle: the Party's concern with internal and external 'fascist machinations', which was a recurrent theme in its propaganda. At the time of the campaign against German rearmament, the need to promote France's independence against a strong Germany in Europe was always

accompanied with references to Nazism. As the successive coup attempts in Algiers revealed a definite menace, the Party intensified its campaign against De Gaulle, against the 'Généraux Factieux' and against the OAS, assimilating them all under the label of 'fascism'. The republic needed to be preserved against such threats.

In Marxist terms, the French Republic nonetheless remained bourgeois, the form of government assumed by bourgeois democracy - i.e. democracy for the bourgeoisie. The PCF nevertheless judged that it was advantageous for the working masses to live under bourgeois democracy rather than under fascism, the ravages of which they had experienced during the Nazi occupation of France.

The Party's dual approach to the army may thus be clarified:

- 1 on the one hand, the PCF stated that the majority of soldiers, both conscripts and professionals, were good 'republicans', opposed to fascism.
- 2 on another plane, the Party's analysis of the army derived from the class contradictions in France: the professional army was considered as the arm of the bourgeoisie, the 'armed band of capital'.

Both propositions were not necessarily contradictory, since the republic could be both bourgeois and anti-fascist.

However, the PCF never made these points clearly.

On the whole, the Party concentrated on the first aspect, so that short term political considerations enabled it to gloss over a more basic analysis of French society and of the republic.

The Party's long developments on the 'nation in arms' - its unqualified praises for the republic and its identification between all three concepts, nation/people/republic - lead one to conclude that the PCF had a view closer to that of the traditional French left in the 19th century; in other words, of the view of the people and the republic outlined by Jean Jaurès in l'Armée Nouvelle.

This attitude of support for Parliament, the Constitution and the law of the republic - 'la république n'a pas d'ennemis à gauche' - was reinforced by the Party's new strategy for seizing power.

'La voie parlementaire se présente comme un cas particulier des voies pacifiques vers le socialisme. A condition d'associer à la lutte parlementaire un puissant mouvement populaire, dirigé par la classe ouvrière et son Parti, la possibilité n'est pas exclue à notre époque de convertir le Parlement, d'un instrument de la domination bourgeoise, en un outil de la transformation socialiste du pays'²⁵.

Maurice Thorez in his political report introduced Parliament as an instrument for the building of socialism. It would therefore be all the more important for the Party to pledge its full support for Parliament. And the preservation of the republic assumed a fresh significance in the eyes of the PCF, which seemed to hope for a peaceful transformation of the bourgeois republic into the 'république sociale'.

II The special powers

One instance of the PCF's action in Parliament concerning the Algerian war deserves special consideration; the 1956 Special Powers which irrevocably threw France into an all-out war for the preservation of its domination over Algeria. 1956 was an important year for the PCF: for the first time since 1947, it appeared that the PCF was in a position to come out of its isolation. The PCF pinned a lot of hopes on the victory of the 'left' in the January elections. On the trade-union front, 1955 witnessed a positive move towards a rapprochement. In the spring of 1955, 27 agreements were concluded between the CGT, FO and the CFTC on the question of salaries²⁶. During the same year the PCF launched a number of appeals for a United Front with the Socialist Party. On 30 November 1955 the Bureau Politique declared:

'Il est possible d'établir un programme des forces ouvrières et démocratiques, un programme de gauche basé sur l'indépendance nationale, la paix, la laïcité, les libertés et le progrès social, un programme qui est acceptable par tous les démocrates'²⁷.

The Socialist Party did not actually respond positively, but nonetheless the PCF campaigned actively as the elections approached. 11 million voters decided for 'une politique de gauche' and the PCF reasserted its readiness to come to an agreement with the Socialist Party.

'afin de promouvoir une politique nouvelle, conforme aux espérances qui se sont exprimées dans les élections du 2 janvier'²⁸.

The situation looked more optimistic as a whole for the PCF: the 20th congress of the CPSU initiated the process of détente and developed the concept of the peaceful road to socialism, which the PCF took up at its 14th congress. This outlook enhanced the importance of the United Front even further. To an extent, Guy Mollet's visit to the Soviet Union was interpreted as an encouraging step by the Party and seemed to confirm its predictions for a change of governmental policies in France. A new Popular Front could be in the offing, it thought.

It is in this general context that the Socialist Party in government asked for the Special Powers in order to enjoy carte blanche in its dealings with the Algerian problem, to take

'toute mesure exceptionnelle commandée
par les circonstances en vue du
rétablissement de l'ordre, de la
protection des personnes et des biens
et de la sauvegarde du territoire'³⁰.

The PCF voted in favour of the Special Powers, and thus became responsible, before history and its members, for the consequences of that vote.

Initially, the explanation put forward for such a vote mobilised three main types of argument:

- the PCF hoped that it could have a voice in the future policies of the Socialist government if it gave its vote to Guy Mollet; whereas a vote against the Special Powers from the PCF would make the government 'un ôtage de la réaction' (since

Guy Mollet would have to rely on the right-wing to secure the stability of his government]).

- the Party assumed against all the odds that the Socialist government might use the Special Powers to impose peace in Algeria.

- a vote in favour of the Special Powers would create favourable conditions for unity between socialists and communists.

'Le but essentiel de ce vote était de faire pencher la balance à gauche et de soustraire le gouvernement aux pressions et aux exigences de la réaction.

Il était d'obtenir que les pleins pouvoirs soient utilisés non pour accentuer une néfaste politique de force qui a déjà fait tant de mal à la France mais pour aboutir dans les plus brefs délais, par une négociation menée avec les représentants du peuple algérien à une paix solide ...

Le but de ce vote était enfin de créer les conditions de plus en plus favorables à la réalisation, au développement de l'indispensable unité entre communistes et socialistes'³¹.

This statement indicates that the Party did not detect any contradiction between the support for peace in Algeria and the United Front in France: it voted for the Special Powers as a means to further negotiation and peace. Did the Party genuinely believe that Guy Mollet was able and willing to make peace in Algeria? A number of factors would seem to support such a hypothesis:

- the fact that the Socialist Party had pronounced itself

for the recognition of an 'Algerian personality',³² [without defining the term];

- the real swing in public opinion revealed by the January elections towards left-wing policies including peace in Algeria.

However, Guy Mollet himself made it absolutely clear at the time that he would not yield to communist pressure; it looks as though he was much more afraid of falling under the PCF's influence than of becoming the 'hostage of the right-wing' when he reassured the right-wing deputies that the government had 'no intention' of following 'la politique que ces messieurs [les communistes] voudraient qu'il fit',³³.

And he also hinted at his designs with respect to Algeria - an escalation of the war.

'Nous avons actuellement en Algérie un cinquième de l'armée française. Il est possible, j'en suis convaincu, de faire plus et mieux',³⁴.

Upon closer examination, the PCF itself did not seem overconfident that Guy Mollet was intent on concluding peace.

This was made clear by Jacques Duclos in a meeting with Guy Mollet:

'L'article 5 du projet gouvernemental, qui tend à donner au gouvernement des pouvoirs plus étendus pour prendre toutes mesures exceptionnelles en vue du rétablissement de l'ordre, peut ouvrir la voie à de très graves événements qui, loin de favoriser le règlement du problème algérien, contribueraient au contraire, à l'aggraver dangereusement',³⁵.

It is more plausible to assume that peace in Algeria was not really the main target of the PCF in voting for the Special Powers, but that the Party was essentially striving to secure the right conditions for the United Front. For a better understanding of the PCF's historical dilemma in 1956, one must remember the terrible isolation and ghettoisation of the PCF during the Cold War. In 1955-56, the PCF was psychologically and politically desperate for reintegration into French politics. It felt that the United Front with the Socialist Party was both possible and desirable and would be the instrument to accomplish everything else - without it the PCF thought that nothing else could be achieved. This general perspective can render the PCF's attitude understandable.

The Party stated clearly that it was favourably impressed by the Socialist government for its 'politique sociale' (paid holidays, retirement pension) and for its positive foreign policy towards the USSR.

'Le 12 mars, nos députés votaient la confiance. Guy Mollet voulait un vote sur l'ensemble de sa politique qui comptait des aspects positifs: obtention de trois semaines de congés payés, réduction des abattements de zones de salaires, fonds national vieillesse, politique de détente avec le voyage en URSS de Mollet et Pineau, octroi de plus d'indépendance au Maroc et à la Tunisie'³⁶.

The Party feared that a vote hostile to Guy Mollet might jeopardize its cherished concept of a United Front.

The PCF did not want to sacrifice the 'whole', the United Front and the achievements of the Socialist government, for the 'part', Guy Mollet's policy on Algeria.

'Le vote du groupe communiste a été inspiré par notre théorie éprouvée, qui nous enseigne à ne jamais sacrifier le tout à la partie ... Parce qu'il préserve toutes les possibilités d'un large essor du Front unique avec les ouvriers socialistes, le vote de nos députés peut être décisif pour l'orientation à gauche de la nouvelle législature et pour la marche en avant vers un nouveau Front populaire, donc pour un règlement positif de toutes les questions...'³⁷.

In the 1956 Congress resolutions, it was also emphasised that a communist party must consider the whole [the United Front] and that the perspective of a new Popular Front should not be sacrificed to a disagreement over a specific area of policy: Algeria. [The PCF's reservations had been formulated by Jacques Duclos in a meeting with Guy Mollet prior to the vote³⁸, as we have already seen]. The numerous official explanations and justifications for this vote disclose the existence of internal disagreements. The debate was already running high within the Party prior to the actual vote. Many cells held heated discussions over it and so disturbed were the militants that numerous cells had to be honoured by the visit of a Federal delegate to explain the vote³⁹. Léon Feix himself is alleged to have cried when he was told the final decision on the telephone⁴⁰. It is difficult to evaluate the span of protest inside the PCF in actual numbers over the Special Powers vote, but one feels confident in asserting that an important wave of protest shook the Party, before and after the vote, through individual cases quoted in the oppositionnels' newspapers and their comments.

'Grande est l'inquiétude de nos militants à propos du vote des pouvoirs spéciaux par notre groupe parlementaire... Les lettres affluent à la direction du Parti, les motions de cellules et de sections...'41.

This is corroborated by many persons I interviewed who recall an extremely agitated period over the Special Powers vote. The cell of Saint-Cloud [Ecole Normale Supérieure] sent a telegram urging a negative vote⁴². In Plessis-Robinson a petition circulated by young communists collected 600 signatures against the vote and a delegation was deputed to lobby the National Assembly, comprising one socialist, one catholic and one communist delegate, against the Special powers. In front of the Assembly, eight hundred persons demonstrated against the Special Powers⁴³.

Criticisms varied in depth and severity.

For some members of the Party, this vote involved a question of principle; no tactical necessity could justify it, argued Jean Tamarelle [cell Gabriel Péri à Marmande], in his letter to the Central Committee.

'Au Comité Central.

Camarades,
Par trois fois, en moins de huit jours,
le groupe parlementaire a émis des
votes injustifiables.

La gravité du dernier en date est
telle qu'il ne semble pas exagéré
de parler de trahison de l'inter-
nationalisme prolétarien, de coup
dans le dos à nos camarades algériens'⁴⁴.

In practice, this vote entailed a qualitative change in France's military engagement in Algeria through committing the

contingent to the war. The oppositionnels claimed that the PCF made itself the accomplice of the reaction and participated in a decision to crush the Algerian liberation struggle. Either this violation of principles amounted to 'opportunism', argued Tribune de Discussion, or Lenin's analysis of National Liberation struggles in the colonies had been reappraised by the Party.

'Leur [principes léninistes] violation révèle soit une chute dans l'opportunisme - ce qui nous semble être le cas - soit la nécessité d'un changement total d'orientation dans l'appréciation des mouvements coloniaux'⁴⁵.

On the home front, the PCF's support for the Special Powers did not prove to be a very successful move; repression in France itself increased as a result.

Anti-democratic measures were taken, restrictions on the liberty of the press were imposed and torture increased in Algeria whilst being introduced in France. As an immediate measure, prominent individuals such as Claude Bourdet and Henri Marrou were arrested or their domicile searched by the police; on 11 May 1956, l'Humanité was seized⁴⁶.

The PCF had woven a rope to hang itself with, falling victim to its own vote, being hamstrung by the general anti-democratic measures that followed. The cell Sorbonne Lettres even established a direct causal link between the Special Powers and the 1958 events, indicting the Party for it.

'Il est inadmissible que notre Parti ait voté les pouvoirs spéciaux, assumant ainsi sa part de responsabilité dans les mesures qui sont, les événements ne l'ont que trop confirmée, à l'origine même de la prise en mains de toute l'Algérie par les hommes du coup d'Etat anti-républicain'⁴⁷.

In a letter addressed to Jacques Duclos shortly after the vote on the Special Powers, François Marty, a member of the PCF, pointed out the contradiction between the Party's position of principle for a cease fire and its vote in favour of the Special Powers. His position was thereafter approved by the section committee (Velmanya Baillestavy in the Pyrénées Orientales) and by the Mayors and Municipal Councillors of Velmanya and Baillestavy - who were also members of the Party. This unanimity gives a good indication of the general strength of feeling against the vote.

This vote led, according to Marty, to confusion, not only among communist members but also among the French masses, which trusted the Party's judgement:

'beaucoup de braves gens se rangent à l'avis du gouvernement auquel nous faisons confiance'⁴⁸.

François Marty countered the main arguments deployed by the Party to account for its vote, and exposed their implications:

- they revealed the Party's 'parliamentarist' tendency, relying excessively on 'action' in the Assembly, making little of the masses' action which alone could prevent the Socialist Party from becoming a 'prisonnier de la droite'.

- As for the 'unity of action' between socialists and communists that the Party vote was supposed to stimulate, it turned into 'l'unité d'action avec le gouvernement'. Eventually François Marty described the disarray among communist militants, who had to resort to misleading or incredible stories in order to defend the vote:

'les camarades qui veulent quand même justifier la décision du groupe parlementaire sont amenés à minimiser l'importance des mesures militaires du gouvernement, alors qu'il y a aggravation de la guerre, minimiser au point de prétendre qu'il s'agit de mesures de sécurité indispensables et adopter le langage du gouvernement. Ils disent aussi que le groupe parlementaire est certainement informé des intentions réelles du gouvernement qui probablement cherche les contacts nécessaires pour le cessez le feu et avancent alors la rencontre Pineau-Nasser. Ce qui est admettre le point de vue des colonialistes que la solution du problème n'est pas en Algérie mais au Caire et que la révolte est un mouvement provoqué de l'extérieur et soutenu par "l'étranger" '49.

Obligated to find a justification for the PCF's vote, communist members sometimes minimised the importance of the military measures taken by Guy Mollet; this, according to François Marty, was playing into the hands of the government. Others surmised secret plans of negotiations, arguing that the meeting with Nasser was a step in that direction; Marty believed that it only brought more grist to the bourgeois propaganda mill.

The dialogue between opponents of the special powers and a number of Party officials attempting to defend its position continued throughout the Algerian war. Léon Feix mentioned

'misunderstandings' on the 12 March vote in his answer to Sorbonne Lettres. 'Misunderstanding' is a euphemism in view of the reality of the situation, retaliated la Voie Communiste:

'Ce que Feix appelle "incompréhension", c'est, en fait, la condamnation par la grande majorité du Parti de ce vote néfaste à plus d'un titre'⁵⁰.

Giving the PCF the benefit of the doubt, some oppositionnels acknowledged that compromises may have been necessary and were sometimes useful on condition that they be made to the advantage of the working class. In their opinion, the PCF had proved its 'opportunism' on the 12 March 1956. La Voie Communiste selected a quotation by Lenin to make its point.

'Il faut savoir discerner, dans les questions de politique pratique qui se posent à chaque moment particulier ou spécifique de l'histoire, celles où se manifestent les compromis les plus inadmissibles, les compromis de trahison, incarnant l'opportunisme funeste à la classe révolutionnaire, et consacrer tous les efforts à les révéler et les combattre'⁵¹.

Who benefitted from such a vote, asked la Voie Communiste - the bourgeoisie, or the proletariat?

In agreement with François Marty's conclusion, la Voie Communiste claimed that the Special Powers created or aggravated confusion among the French people over the question of Algeria and dampened down the struggle against the war. Instead of exposing unhesitatingly a very reactionary policy, the PCF is said to have given the green light to Guy Mollet. Hence the disillusionment that followed, paving the way for 1958.

According to la Voie Communiste, the PCF's position on the Special Powers, which was ostensibly designed to secure unity between socialists and communists, paradoxically turned out to be detrimental to this very unity as it slowed down the joint action between communists and socialists against the war.

'A l'origine de ce courant de démoralisation se trouve le vote des pouvoirs spéciaux par le groupe communiste le 12 mars 1956.

Le parti a soutenu l'effort de guerre en Algérie, pour maintenir sur le plan parlementaire l'unité avec la SFIO. Mais à cette époque l'unité réelle se faisait dans le pays dans des manifestations de masse contre le départ des rappelés⁵⁴.

The full significance of the PCF's vote on the Special Powers stands out more clearly in the light of subsequent events, and lends credence to the oppositionnels' criticisms.

The Party never admitted that it had made a mistake on 12 March 1956 or acknowledged the existence of a vast number of criticisms about the vote. However, it is reasonable to assume that the internal protest was widespread as it justified an official explanation from the Party. A key article appeared in l'Humanité in May under the innocuous heading of 'Réflexions sur un voyage en province'. The place of the article on the first page and the rank of its author, Jeannette Vermeersch, revealed that it constituted an important statement emanating from the highest authorities in the Party. The answer she offered to the 'cellule Escarbotin', whose members 'demandaient des explications sur le vote accordant les pleins

pouvoirs à Guy Mollet',⁵³ clearly addressed itself to all who disputed the vote. The United Front was again the central pillar of Vermeersch's demonstration, which reemphasised the need for the unity of action between communists and socialists 'contre la réaction et la guerre'. According to her, it was highly improbable that a socialist worker might support the war in Algeria.

'Pourquoi ne pas lui proposer d'agir en commun contre les ultra - colonialistes qui exercent leur pression sur le gouvernement Guy Mollet',⁵⁴.

Jeannette Vermeersch did not seem to doubt the possibilities of achieving peace in Algeria through 'unity of action' and did not accept that reservations about the vote might be justified.

Many more questions must have found their way to the Party leadership, as is evidenced by Maurice Thorez's speech at the June 1956 congress.

'Naturellement quelque émotion s'est manifestée dans le parti à la suite de ce vote. Je crois qu'il n'y a pas lieu de s'inquiéter outre mesure si des militants demandent des explications: c'est au contraire l'absence de questions qui aurait été grave. Il est absolument naturel que nos militants formés dans l'esprit de l'internationalisme prolétarien soient alarmés par ce qui se passe en Algérie et qu'ils demandent des explications sur les votes du groupe parlementaire',⁵⁵.

Thorez's statement was much more nuanced than Vermeersch's. In an attempt to reassure Party members and pacify critics, he even commended the comrades who asked questions about the vote

for their 'proletarian internationalism'. He then replied that there was no grounds for concern, since the vote itself had enabled communists to develop mass actions against the war whenever Party members were prepared to unite with the Socialists. Thorez made a concession to his opponents, admitting that the PCF had to an extent served socialist leaders.

'bien entendu, il faut aussi tenir compte du fait que notre vote a permis aux dirigeants socialistes de se couvrir dans une certaine mesure'⁵⁶.

This move secured Thorez's position, taking the edge off criticisms against the vote. In the meantime the Party insisted on blaming the 'opportunism' or 'sectarianism' of Party members wherever its expectations of reinforced unity between socialists and communists remained unfulfilled.

'Il [le sectarisme] a abouti, par exemple, dans certains cas heureusement limités, à empêcher les organisations du Parti de saisir assez vite les conditions favorables qu'avaient créées, pour l'unité de la classe ouvrière contre la guerre d'Algérie, les votes du groupe communiste au Parlement en date du 12 mars et du 5 juin 1956'⁵⁷.

'Sectarian' was most likely intended to apply to Party members who had been opposed to the Party's vote.

In other words, the Party continued to consider its line as correct, recognising that there were insufficiencies in the implementation of the United Front policy. Much later, Léon Feix pressed a similar point, more strongly.

'Que, dans la pratique, les nombreuses propositions faites aux dirigeants socialistes n'aient pas toujours été suffisamment soutenues par l'action des masses, c'est ce que Maurice Thorez remarquait le 4 octobre: "peut-être [sic] notre tactique est-elle restée une tactique de sommet" déclarait-il '58.

The formulation of the sentence, which does not only incriminate a few individuals for a wrong implementation of the line, but calls the whole tactics 'une tactique de sommet' imperceptively denotes that the Party was rethinking its vote.

Later the PCF went as far as to accuse the socialists of taking over the policies of the right-wing; yet it never admitted to being in the wrong for supporting the Socialist party. Etienne Fajon, in a recent book, expressed misgivings about the vote, at least in his individual capacity, perhaps reflecting a more official opinion.

'nous irons jusqu'à lui consentir, le 8 mars, des pouvoirs spéciaux, qu'il affirme destinés à rétablir la paix par la négociation.

Cette décision donna lieu à de vives discussions dans nos organismes dirigeants ainsi qu'au groupe parlementaire et, une fois prise, dans l'ensemble du Parti. Je pense personnellement, aujourd'hui, qu'elle était très contestable. Les conditions nécessaires pour qu'elle puisse faire grandir le mouvement populaire en faveur du droit du peuple algérien à l'autodétermination n'existaient pas encore '59.

The PCF was definitely caught on the horns of a dilemma; once it had laid down the United Front as a pillar of its policy - with a long term perspective towards a popular front

and a peaceful road to socialism in France - the PCF was led to commit everything to this United Front and felt it had to vote for Guy Mollet in order to demonstrate its own sincerity and its trust in the United Front. Otherwise the members of the Socialist Party might have suspected that all these appeals for unity on the part of the PCF remained mere verbiage when they were confronted with deeds: could the Party have risked what it saw as compromising the broader aspect of the new possibilities offered by Parliament?

'La possibilité se conçoit de grouper autour de la classe ouvrière la paysannerie laborieuse, les artisans, les intellectuels, c'est à dire la majorité du peuple de France et de transformer, grâce à cette alliance du prolétariat et des classes moyennes, le Parlement lui-même, d'un instrument de la dictature bourgeoise, en un outil de la volonté populaire authentique'⁶⁰.

Maurice Thorez's argument on 'le tout et la partie' might, under certain circumstances, have been convincing but it was a double edged blade. Jean Baby turned it against the Party's theses:

'Ce qui compte, c'est que ce vote traduisait, une fois encore, la sous estimation de la guerre d'Algérie. La tactique du Parti était déterminée par des soucis de politique intérieure: préserver d'éventuelles possibilités d'action unie avec le Parti socialiste et, pour cela, accepter de faire passer au second plan le soutien du peuple algérien en lutte pour son indépendance'⁶¹.

According to Baby, the war was the crucial problem in these historical circumstances and therefore the PCF was actually

sacrificing the whole [the struggle against the Algerian war] to the part [a tactical unity with the Socialist Party]. Baby refuted the argument that peace in Algeria could be attained through Guy Mollet in power. Mollet, he insisted, had 'capitulé devant les ultras'⁶². Other Party members, oppositionnels, shared Baby's opinion⁶³. Yet it is understandable that the home front preoccupied the Party first and foremost, but subsequent developments seem to lend strength to Baby's opinion. The Algerian war was to be a determining factor for the situation in France, as it bred fascist threats to the republic and also brought De Gaulle to power. In 1956, a minority of people in France were aware of the gravity of the situation and could envisage that such dramatic events would emerge from the war. Even among communists, the Algerian war generally came second to other considerations such as the hopes they had invested in the Socialist government.

Nonetheless, the PCF could not deny that its vote in favour of the Special Powers had contributed to the escalation of the war. And a number of communist members had argued at the time that such a violation of principles - the internationalist support they owed the Algerian struggle - could not be excused by tactical considerations. It was the responsibility of the PCF to be able to assess the real consequences of its actions, in view of its analysis of the world situation, and its knowledge that the era of colonialism was doomed. But could the chain of events leading to a dangerous destabilisation in France have been averted? What was the policy to be pursued? The answer supplied by the oppositionnels

called for a more decided involvement in actions against the war. How and what will be the subject matter of the next
se action?

III Action against the war

A) The Mouvement des Rappelés*

In addition to the major decision taken in the National Assembly to approve the Special Powers, and partly as a result of it, the Party was faced with the increasing involvement of the French army in Algeria. This included not only the professional army but also the conscripts and thus affected a good proportion of the youth of France.

As the conflict deepened in North Africa, the regular army could not suffice any more. Conscripts were called and recalled for prolonged national service. Hence the 'Mouvements des Appelés et Rappelés'. Spontaneous movements arose among the young soldiers ready to be shipped to Algeria. A first wave of protests took place in 1955 among the Rappelés. Le Monde reported 'incidents' at the Gare de Lyon at the beginning of September. The feeling was high among conscripts against their departure for North Africa. G. Chaffard explained:

'Devant le renouvellement en Afrique du Nord, et singulièrement en Algérie, des erreurs funestes d'Indochine beaucoup de jeunes se sont émus. La découverte d'une plus claire notion des droits des peuples colonisés provoquait en eux un véritable refus mental de la répression'⁶⁴.

In the Gare de Lyon, four hundred rappelés from the air force refused to board the train bound for Marseille. Scuffles with the police ensued; the station had to be evacuated⁶⁵.

In October six hundred rappelés refused to leave their barracks in Rouen, [Caserne Richepanse]; violent battles took place

between conscripts and civilians and the forces of the law⁶⁶. Many more similar events could be cited, in Limoges, Ussel. Lyon and elsewhere during the same months.

In 1956, the Special Powers enabled the government to commit the army fully to the Algerian enterprise. On 1 April, seventy thousand 'disponibles'⁶⁷ were recalled and more were to follow. A new tide of protests among the rappelés followed suit, wider and more violent than in 1955. In Grenoble, thousands of demonstrators, soldiers and civilians, tried to prevent the departure of trains full of rappelés. Encounters with the riot police caused disruption among trains, and a number of demonstrators were hurt. In Vierzon one thousand demonstrated on 21 April 1956⁶⁸.

The Communist Party supported the Mouvement des Rappelés, at least to a fair extent⁶⁹.

L'Humanité reported the demonstrations and local sections of the PCF took part.

M. Molinier, the communist mayor of Aigues Mortes (Gard) was suspended by the 'préfecture' for a month on account of his participation in the demonstration against the departure of conscripts⁷⁰.

It is highly improbable that the Party might have 'orchestrated' those protest movements, as no instructions are to be found in PCF publications for the organisation of such movements. Of course, one cannot guarantee that no secret instructions were circulated by the PCF to its young members; however, I tend to assume that if that were true, the persons I interviewed would have heard of and mentioned their existence. It is more

plausible to accept the Party's word for it when it vehemently denied that young communists should or would have encouraged disobedience.

'[Ils] n'ont jamais eu l'intention d'exciter les jeunes mobilisés à la désobéissance mais plus spécialement d'accomplir un geste symbolique'⁷¹.

These were the terms of a petition in l'Humanité asking for the acquittal of a communist member who was to be tried for participating in a demonstration.

The Party's formulation made it clear that it would not condone 'disobedience', and supported the notion that the Party in no way launched those movements or had any intention of doing so. The meaning of this conscript's symbolic gesture was provided by Roland Leroy commenting on the Rouen events:

'jamais les soldats n'ont pratiqué ce que les journaux bourgeois ont appelé 'la mutinerie' ou la 'désertion collective' ... et qu'au contraire leur action avait⁷² une signification hautement patriotique'.

The denial that the soldiers could possibly have been staging a 'mutiny' is worth pondering. The Party appears to have been caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it wished to support the young rappelés protesting against the war, on the other hand, it refused to be associated with actions directed against France. This is why Roland Leroy rejected the term of 'mutiny' applied to the young soldiers - although their refusal to go and fight in Algeria strangely resembled mutiny. Instead Leroy called their protest an act of 'patriotism', as they refused to participate in a war which

was seen by the PCF as running counter to France's interests. The Party here restated its allegiance to the motherland, in opposition to the bourgeoisie's 'betrayal' of the French nation.

In 1956, when some demonstrators indulged in expressions of protest in a more radical fashion, such as pouring cement onto the rails to immobilise a trainload of conscripts, the Party disavowed them publicly and accused them of being provocateurs. On another occasion, the Party showed such law-abiding virtues that, according to one oppositionnel journal, it was congratulated by the police.

'Quand il y a du "grabuge", la direction thorèzienne a tôt fait de s'en désolidariser comme à Nantes où la direction fédérale fait un étrange front unique avec Rix, le "préfet des CRS" qui dit: "j'ai la caution... du Parti communiste français. Ce sont des provocateurs, qui ont tiré, des trotskystes si l'on veut ..." pour expliquer le meurtre d'un ouvrier le 19 août '73.

The PCF preferred to rely on more 'dignified' methods like petitions.

'Certes, il mène la lutte "sous toutes ses formes" comme dit l'Humanité du 13 septembre; mais en précisant bien, "délégations, signatures, résolutions" '.

'France Nouvelle du 17 novembre 1956 publie "la Complainte du rappelé", paroles et musique de Florimond Bonte. En voici le 3^e couplet:

"En France, ils ont raison
D' penser à leurs garçons
De faire des pétitions
Pour leur libération".

Comme l'auteur n'envisage pas d'autre forme d'action, on comprend que les soldats aient préféré apprendre "le déserteur" '74.

The limited support offered by the PCF to the Mouvement des rappelés did not gain the oppositionnels' approval. They criticised the Party for its inefficiency. They had hoped for a wide scale action against the war; the intensity of the contingent's discontent bore witness to the scale of possibilities. Without a political leadership, those movements were doomed to failure. The oppositionnels stated openly that the Party ought to have provided that leadership.

'Les manifestations...ne furent soutenues que par des initiatives locales et ne pouvaient pas aboutir à des résultats sérieux. Mais la direction du parti n'a jamais lancé une action d'envergure pour gêner la poursuite des opérations de guerre en Algérie'⁷⁵.

They expected a more radical approach to the Algerian war: 'une action d'envergure' signified devoting important resources to this particular problem, perhaps turning it into a principal item of policy determining the others. The full consequences of such a position were alluded to by la Voie Communiste.

'Finalement c'est l'orientation du PCF qui va être déterminante. Va-t-il mettre à profit "l'état de moindre résistance" du régime pour transposer dans le contexte algérien ses mots d'ordre de la campagne contre la guerre du Rif en 1925-26? Va-t-il dire: Vive l'indépendance de l'Algérie, Vive l'évacuation militaire, Vive la fraternisation des soldats français et des Algériens'⁷⁶.

La Voie Communiste proposed an alternative which meant in the last analysis, taking on the state and preparing for the possibility of civil war in France. How this would be carried out was not dealt with by the oppositionnels.

B) Refus, insoumission*

Subsequently the Mouvements des rappelés lost their impetus. The most prominent actions shifted to the initiatives of a number of individuals, mobilising their fellow conscripts against the war.

Alban Liechti [a member of the communist party] was the originator of such action as early as 1956. On 2 July, Alban Liechti and thirty of his companions sent a letter to the Président du Conseil des Ministres, urging for a cease-fire without delay. In his personal capacity he also sent a letter expressing his refusal to take up arms against the Algerian people fighting for its independence, quoting the Constitution and reasserting his fidelity to the French Republic. He was tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

Party publications initially ignored Liechti's case.

According to Jacques Jurquet, a considerable amount of pressure had to be brought upon the Party for his case to be taken up⁷⁷.

This is corroborated by Tribune de Discussion reporting on the 16th arrondissement conference.

'A la conférence du 16^e, une partie importante de la discussion a porté sur le cas d'Alban Liechti, ouvrier jardinier de la ville de Paris, secrétaire de la 16^e - Trocadéro qui, rappelé l'an dernier pour la sale guerre d'Algérie refusa de porter les armes et se trouve depuis des mois en prison.

C'est seulement dans ces dernières semaines que l'Huma a enfin parlé de lui. Cependant, dès son arrestation sa cellule avait proposé à nos dirigeants que le Parti engage une campagne énergique pour sa libération. Elle s'était heurtée

à un refus formel ["Liechti a commis une faute politique"].

Or, maintenant nous le défendons.
Où donc est la faute politique et qui l'a commise?'⁷⁸.

Leaflets and articles about Liechti surfaced towards the middle of 1957. By then a further number of soldiers had followed in his footsteps and the Party took up their defence - a leaflet entitled 'Des jeunes qui servent l'intérêt de la France',⁷⁹ published twenty-odd names connected with refusals to fight the war. In 1956, Liechti's defence had not been upheld by the Party. One can reasonably assume that this attitude was motivated by the desire not to undermine the United Front. By the end of 1957, and more daringly in 1958, the PCF acknowledged Liechti's actions and supported them. At the same time it reiterated its opposition to 'individual actions'. If the Party treated these acts as 'individual actions', it should not have backed them, either in 1956 or in 1958; if they were not so, as seems to be the case [Liechti, Magnien and others mobilised their fellow conscripts], should not the Party have generated them rather than backing them up a posteriori as an afterthought. There is no evidence to show that these young communists acted upon instructions from the Party. The Jeunesse Communiste counted around one hundred thousand members; if a directive had been addressed to them by the PCF official circles, it would most probably have prompted more numerous youths to emulate Liechti and Magnien. Nearly sixteen years later, Elie Mignot presented Liechti as one of the heroes of the fight against the Algerian war⁸⁰, in an attempt to prove the Party's committed opposition to the

war, claiming for itself Liechti's glory.

As regards individual acts of desertion, which were castigated by the PCF, the oppositionnels laid the blame on the Party.

'S'il ne peut être question d'inciter aux actes individuels (en raison de leur inefficacité) leur critique ne pourraient être justifiée que par l'existence d'un travail spécifique interne en direction des prolétaires en uniforme, démoralisés et abandonnés à une besogne colonialiste contraire à leurs intérêts'⁸¹.

It was, said the oppositionnels, out of desperation that soldiers slipped into individual actions because there was no framework available for them to act in an organised fashion; the PCF failed to provide it. Communist members kept putting the question to their Party: 'the young people don't want to leave for Algeria, what must we do in those circumstances?' And the answer would come invariably that 'a communist does not desert but goes to war to fight the war'. Another question naturally sprang up: how to achieve this result, how to actually mobilise against the war while in uniform and on Algerian soil? La Voie Communiste reported this conversation among Party members:

'Au dernier comité fédéral élargi de la Fédération Seine Sud ..., un représentant d'Antony a dit:
"Les jeunes ne veulent pas aller en Algérie: il y a des permissionnaires qui ne veulent pas retourner. Qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire?" ... Et un responsable nous a dit qu'il fallait partir et faire quelque chose sur place en Algérie. Mais comme le dit, un copain qui revenait d'Algérie:
"Là-bas on ne peut rien faire, on se fait mettre en cabane tout de suite".

Quand les jeunes partent l'UJCF ne fait rien pour eux. Quand ils sont là-bas, elle ne fait pas beaucoup plus⁸².

Indeed, the task was not so simple; according to witnesses, there was no Party apparatus able to direct and advise conscripts after they reached Algeria; they were left once more to depend on their individual initiatives. 'Work against the war' on Algerian soil was rendered extremely difficult as conscript units were overseen by tough professionals. Others voiced their disappointment at the lack of publicity offered by the Party in support of their action.

'Mais ces positions de principe, le Parti ne les a jamais appliquées. Nous avons été abandonnés, livrés à nos seules actions individuelles ..., actions d'éclat parfois, telle celle du débrayage à Alger de cent quarante trois garçons qui m'a valu la punition du tombeau. Notre presse n'a pas su en tirer parti. Parvenue à Paris, l'information a été réduite à quelques lignes de communiqué. Curieuse conception du travail dans les masses⁸³.

What was the alternative action proposed by the oppositionnels? Unir in its Dossier Algérien and l'Etincelle recall the campaigns and actions organised during the Rif war as a model of what was to be done.

'Comment se fait-il qu'avec à peine plus d'un million d'électeurs, le comité d'action contre la guerre du Rif, présidé par Maurice Thorez parvenait à entraîner 900 000 travailleurs dans la grève du 9 octobre 1925 et qu'aujourd'hui avec cinq fois plus d'électeurs on ne parvient pas à susciter le plus petit débrayage généralisé⁸⁴.

The oppositionnels obviously envisaged a large scale action encompassing strikes in France itself as well as action in the army. If it had been possible for the Rif with a small Party when only the professional army was concerned, how much more momentous the action against the Algerian war could have been with a strong communist party, and the discontent aroused by the use of conscripts.

C) The Union des Etudiants communistes

The Union des Etudiants communistes, UEC, was founded towards the end of 1956 as part of a restructuration of communist youth organisations. It became sensitised to the Algerian war and the need for concrete action, which contributed to the later rift between PCF and UEC leadership.

From the time of the UEC second congress (February 1958), Le Communiste noted a very definite move in favour of an increased action to end the war in Algeria. The struggle against the war was pushed to the forefront by a 'strong minority'.

'Un certain nombre de délégués, de Paris surtout, ont dénoncé la carence de la direction de l'UEC dans la lutte contre la guerre en Algérie et a réclamé la priorité absolue de l'action en faveur du peuple algérien luttant pour son indépendance... Certains délégués soulignèrent, selon eux, l'importance de la lutte⁸⁵ contre les rampes de lancement', et la tendance prévalut selon laquelle une double action devait être menée, et contre la guerre d'Algérie et contre les rampes de lancement, une forte minorité réclamant la priorité pour la lutte contre le conflit algérien⁸⁶.

In 1957, Clarté reported students' demonstrations for peace in Algeria and published a number of articles publicising the actions of Liechti, Magnien and co. It also denounced the tortures inflicted on Maurice Audin and Djamilla Bouhired.

In March 1960, Clarté recorded a new government offensive against the 'sursis',⁸⁷ [students benefitted from a remission and were allowed not to serve in Algeria until the end of their studies]. The hostility of students to the war was growing consistently.

In September 1960, the Union des Etudiants Communistes pronounced itself firmly against the sending of the contingent to Algeria.

'Pas d'appel à 18 ans.
Pas d'envoi des soldats du
contingent en Algérie.
Négociation immédiate avec le G.P.R.A.
Paix en Algérie'⁸⁸.

An interview between Le Communiste (an oppositionnel review) and an official of the UEC explained how the communist students' youth organisation was led to take that step. The lack of PCF militant initiatives against the war, combined with the appeal of active groups, entailed the loss of interest from UEC members and stagnation. The new motto on the contrary attracted new recruits to the UEC.

'Avant le 26 septembre [1960], la J.C.
ne faisait presque rien pour la paix
en Algérie...
D'autre part, l'action des communistes
dans l'armée était quasiment nulle.
Le manque de directives et de
combativité du parti et de la J.C.

avait amené certains camarades, même responsables de Cercle, à se laisser tenter par les mots d'ordre de désertion et d'insoumission. La direction des J.C. était soumise à ce problème quand le Manifeste des 121 fut publié. Ce fut pour nous un véritable coup de fouet. La J.C. se trouva alors devant la nécessité impérieuse de lancer des nouveaux mots d'ordre précis et mobilisateurs afin de resserrer ses rangs et de commencer à influencer la jeunesse dans un sens vraiment communiste...

Ces mots d'ordre justes nous ont amené beaucoup d'adhésions^{'89}.

The PCF leadership cautiously echoed the slogans of the UEC through an article written by Jean-Pierre Vigier who stated 'no conscripts in Algeria, but no desertion'. His warning against desertion may be construed as an indication that communists were tempted to desert.

A fresh cause for disagreements arose with the 27 October demonstration, organised by the UNEF⁹⁰, the CFDF⁹¹ and the FEN⁹² for peace in Algeria. The planned demonstration was banned but was replaced by a massive meeting at the Mutualité, a meeting hall in the Latin quarter. The Party and the CGT dissociated themselves from it and proposed alternative small gatherings in front of townhalls on a district basis. Apparently, an internal debate confronted Party and UEC leaderships. The latter wished to organise a demonstration, marching along the Avenue des Gobelins, to join the central meeting organised in the Mutualité.

'La direction de l'U.E.C. fut accusée de tomber dans "une provocation destinée à faire interdire le Parti". Quelques mois plus tard, Philippe Robrieux alors

Secrétaire Général de l'U.E.C. sera accusé par Jeannette Vermeersch d'avoir voulu "faire du spectaculaire" sur l'avenue des Gobelins'93.

The UEC complied with the Party's decision. Notwithstanding, the Mutualité meeting surpassed all expectations: 20,000 strong, it had to spill over into the adjacent square. Despite the UEC instructions, a good number of UEC members attended the meeting.

'Le sabotage fut encore plus net lors de l'après-midi du 27. Alors que la cour de la Sorbonne était pleine des étudiants qui attendaient de se rendre à la manifestation, un dirigeant de l'U.E.C. prit la parole, enjoignant aux assistants de ne pas aller à la Mutualité, mais de faire une "manifestation locale". Il fut absolument hué, et nombre des communistes ne cachaient pas leur opposition à ce mot d'ordre. Naturellement, la manifestation locale n'eut même pas lieu, faute de participants. Beaucoup de communistes partirent à la Mutualité ...

Plus de trente militants ont menacé de démissionner de l'U.E.C. si on leur interdisait formellement d'aller à la Mutualité'94.

This was confirmed by interviews of communists [who were students at the time]. The Party mainly explained its absence from the meeting by the fact that it had not been duly consulted in its preparation.

'Prêt aux alliances les plus larges, notre Parti ne consentira jamais à n'être qu'une force d'appoint'95.

The UEC, faced with blatant acts of disobedience among its own members, thereafter felt confident to take more consistent

measures in favour of action. In December 1960, Clarté published an interview with Pierre Gaudez, the President of the UNEF⁹⁶. Opening its columns to the UNEF, the UEC manifested its readiness to engage in unitary actions against the war. This constitutes a noticeable change of attitude and a break from the Party's position. This could not be done without considerable internal conflict. In his Histoire intérieure du Parti Communiste, Philippe Robrieux gives a detailed account of a confrontation between the UEC representative [himself as General Secretary of the UEC] on the one hand, and Maurice Thorez's followers on the other hand during a heated session of the Central Committee on 15 December 1960⁹⁷. Thorez and Vermeersch attacked the UEC delegate for his partial attitude to the UNEF, calling Gaudez and other leaders of the UNEF

'un petit groupement gauchiste à la solde de De Gaulle, et sans influence sur la grande masse des étudiants'⁹⁸.

Robrieux violently refuted this claim, quoting the massive electoral success of the UNEF to demonstrate its wide-ranging influence among the students. Moreover, he argued that the UNEF's alliance with the UGEMA [the Algerian students' organisation which supported the FLN], as a central theme of its electoral campaign, was proof of the students' readiness to involve themselves in actions against the Algerian war⁹⁹.

The UEC pursued this line of policy despite the disapproval from the Party, and took up an increasingly more definite and active position against the war.

At a later date the UEC monitored a full plan of actions against the war.

'Agir dans quatre directions:

1. Activer la circulation des pétitions dans le plus grand nombre d'établissements scolaires, pétitions lancées à l'occasion de la rencontre nationale des normaliens et lycéens.
2. Engager de février à juin une grande campagne de réunions et de manifestations, à l'occasion des conseils de révision.
3. Poursuivre et développer dès les prochains jours les manifestations de rues.
4. Aidons les jeunes soldats à intensifier leur lutte contre la guerre'¹⁰⁰.

At last the Communist Youth Movement took into its hands the long awaited task of preparing young recruits for 'travail de masse' against the war, organising preparatory meetings before their conscription.

'Enfin, il faut améliorer notre travail d'éducation en direction des jeunes communistes avant leur départ à l'armée. A cet effet doivent être organisés des stages, des réunions où sera développée notre conception de l'action de masse, de la nécessité de s'organiser et de l'attitude en général de nos camarades une fois sous l'uniforme'¹⁰¹.

The evolution of the UEC resulted from a combination of factors. The most obvious element to be taken into account was the real radicalisation of the students' movement and its organisation, the UNEF, to which communist students could not remain indifferent.

It was made possible for the UEC to hold diverging views from the PCF by general developments in the International Communist Movement and their repercussions within the Party. Many UEC

members and leaders were ardent promoters of the 'destalinisation' process opened up by the 'Krushchev report' in 1956 and furthered by the Italian Communist Party. According to Richard Johnson, Maurice Thorez feared that his own hegemony within the PCF might be challenged by followers of the Italian theses¹⁰². There were many of them in the UEC; there were also some among Thorez's closest collaborators. Laurent Casanova, the most prominent one, proposed a new analysis of the Gaullist phenomenon, identifying De Gaulle as the representative of a 'national bourgeoisie', as opposed to the Party's official analysis which treated all bourgeois as traitors to the nation. He also encouraged more activities against the Algerian war in liaison with other progressive forces, for instance he would have liked to see the UEC and the CGT participate in the Mutualité meeting. Philippe Robrieux sees in Maurice Thorez's hostility towards Casanova a major reason for his refusal to accept unitary actions with organisations other than PCF sponsored ones against the Algerian war. Laurent Casanova was bold enough to meet Francis Jeanson, who acted as a mediator for the FLN, to discuss a possible agreement between the PCF and the FLN. Waldeck-Rochet, who was to replace Casanova as PCF representative, cancelled further meetings¹⁰³.

D) Working in committees

The urge to engage in some sort of action against the Algerian war was so pressing that young communists became involved in various types of committees and organisations

relating to the Algerian problem. The first committees were formed under the impetus of the Mouvement des rappelés but subsided rapidly.

Others were mostly composed of intellectuals and could be classed into five main categories.

1 General committees for peace in Algeria organised on a professional or area basis.

- Comité National d'information et d'action pour la solution pacifique des problèmes d'Afrique du Nord.

[Jean Dresch, Charles-André Julien ...] which was instrumental in organising the Journée nationale pour la fin de la guerre d'Algérie in Montreuil, 5 February 1956.

- Comité de liaison de l'enseignement secondaire pour la paix en Algérie.

[Madeleine Rébérioux, Bianca Lamblin] which gathered a wide spectrum of lycées delegates from diverse tendencies of the left.

- Comité des intellectuels français contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord.

R Barrat, D Mascolo, J Amrouche, D Guérin, A Stibbe, J Dresch, A Mandouze, A Césaire, J-P Sartre [end of 1955].

- Comité Universitaire pour la paix en Algérie.

[active at the beginning of 1956].

- Comité ouvrier contre la guerre d'Algérie

which represented 120 enterprises [factories] in Montreuil.

It was very active in organising agitation against the war [Simon Blumenthal]¹⁰⁴.

2 Committees against torture, the most famous one being the Comité Maurice Audin.

Maurice Audin, a young communist, was arrested and assassinated under torture by the parachutists who faked his evasion in order to cover up their crime [11 June 1957]; the committee was formed to expose torture in Algeria and in France. Many well-known intellectuals steered it, among whom were Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Laurent Schwartz, Jean Dresch, Henri Marrou, etc.

The Centre de coordination pour la défense des Libertés et de la Paix [Clichy] which published Témoignage et Documents, mainly based among christians [Mission de France].

3 Anti-fascist committees which included in their slogans the demand for peace in Algeria.

FUA [beginning of 1961]

FACUIRA

Comité National Universitaire de Défense de la République

Mme C Vermeil, J Bruhat, L Schwartz.

Ligue d'action pour le Rassemblement anti-fasciste

R Barrat, J M Domenach, J Dresch, V Leduc, J P Vigier.

4 Committees organising insoumission, helping deserters to cross the border to Switzerland or to another country, such as Jeune Résistance.

5 The 'réseaux' or networks coordinating help for the FLN - hiding FLN members, transporting money and documents - which

gained fame when one of them was tried [some of its members were arrested]: the Réseau Jeanson [named after its leader Francis Jeanson].

The scandal reached a climax with the 'déclaration des 121', approving insoumission, signed by 121 French personalities. Members of the Communist Party could be found among all five categories of committees, either openly or more discreetly.

Names of communists [such as Jean Dresch, Madeleine Rébérioux] appeared recurrently in steering committees or as signatories of important declarations.

The PCF did not encourage or instruct its members to join those committees, but tolerated their doing so, with respect to the first three types. It occasionally disparaged the committees, arguing that a committee against torture was diversionary¹⁰⁵ - the main issue being the war or De Gaulle - and even looking down at the anti-fascist ligue.

'Or, le mardi 12 décembre 1961, l'Humanité, après une semaine de silence, dénonçait très vivement l'initiative [4 décembre appel pour la création d'une Ligue d'action pour le rassemblement anti-fasciste] comme émanant d'"un groupe d'intellectuels ... sans mandat aucun", qui prétendait "régenter" l'activité des comités anti-fascistes. La Ligue était également accusée de vouloir écarter de la lutte contre l'O.A.S. les démocrates "d'accord pour y participer, mais en désaccord sur d'autres questions", c'est à dire, en fait, sur l'indépendance de l'Algérie... La dénonciation était sévère et traduisait une certaine inquiétude et une réelle méconnaissance de la combativité et du militantisme du milieu étudiant et universitaire'¹⁰⁶.

The Party vigorously promoted the centralising of all actions on Algeria around the Mouvement de la Paix, which was born under the aegis of communist parties. Some communists and non-communists - participating in other organisations than the PC sponsored Mouvement de la Paix - retorted that the Mouvement de la Paix was not suited to the purpose of fighting for peace in Algeria.

Born in 1949, from the Stockholm conference, the Mouvement de la Paix worked for the defence of the USSR against US threats of war, for disarmament, international détente (after 1956) and against nuclear armament. Its members and activists were not necessarily sensitised to the question of the Algerian war and it failed to attract, or mobilise support on that issue.

As for the peace movement itself, it was sometimes hampered by the Party's concern that it shouldn't detract from the Party policy. Laurent Casanova was penalised by the Party because, among other 'mistakes', he allowed the broadening of the Mouvement de la Paix on a more unitary, independent basis¹⁰⁷.

As regards organisations 4 and 5, militating for insoumission or collaborating with the FLN, the PCF never condoned its members joining them. They were expelled from the PCF at once. Oppositionnels' reviews quoted a number of such cases.

'Sans considérer comme satisfaisantes les formes de lutte adoptées par un bon nombre d'intellectuels de gauche, parmi lesquels on trouve des communistes, des militants du PCF se joignent aux réseaux clandestins, aident des jeunes qui refusent d'aller combattre le peuple algérien. A la suite d'une affaire de ce genre, la direction

de la Fédération du Var vint interroger et menacer jusqu'à une heure avancée de la nuit les membres d'un Comité de section qui, selon elle, "n'avaient pas réfléchi aux risques qu'ils faisaient courir au Parti d'être jeté dans l'illégalité" '108.

The PCF put forward two main reasons for its severe attitude:

- 1 The fear of being banned.

'A l'un de nos camarades qui se permettait de rappeler les devoirs léninistes du Parti révolutionnaire dans un pays colonisateur en guerre contre le peuple colonisé, le secrétaire fédéral répondait: "Nous venons d'acheter une maison, ce n'est pas le moment de nous faire jeter dans l'illégalité, et de tout nous faire confisquer. C'est ce qu'espère la réaction" '109.

Communist oppositionnels generally laid the blame at the feet of the PCF for individual actions and retorted that in any case the first step in illegality had been taken in 1958, by the right-wing.

- 2 The Leninist principle that a communist soldier does not desert but goes to war to fight the war instead of engaging in individual actions which would cut him off from the masses.

Many an argument blossomed in reply to the Party.

- 1 If the Party seriously meant its policy, it should have organised and coordinated the soldiers 'fight against the war', once they found themselves on the battlefield.

- 2 The PCF had quoted Lenin out of context, claimed Vérité Pour. At the time of the Great War, the prevailing chauvinism

made it impossible for individuals to refuse to go to war; they would have cut themselves off from the masses. During the Algerian war collective refusal could have been mustered. the war being popular neither with conscripts nor civilians.

'Dans le cas particulier de la guerre d'Algérie le refus des réservistes et des hommes du contingent de répondre à l'appel était en train de devenir en 1955 un mot d'ordre populaire capable d'entraîner les masses, les soldats et d'être soutenu par des manifestations ouvrières et paysannes'¹¹⁰.

3 In the eyes of the oppositionnels, the Algerian war was not comparable to the first world war. The Algerian National Liberation struggle was an ally of the French working class against its own bourgeoisie and imperialism. The correct course of action was, therefore, to help the 'enemy', the FLN, which was waging a 'just' war¹¹¹. A lot of discreet acts were effected in that direction by communist members believing that they were supporting the 'just' war of the FLN against French imperialism [it is on that basis that a prominent communist handed over the 'cartes d'état major' of Algeria to the FLN¹¹².

The Party's hostility to these actions softened as was testified by its reaction to the declaration of the 121, of which a few communist members were signatories.

'Les neuf communistes signataires sont:
Jean Baby, François Maspéro, Georges Mounin, Hélène Parmelin, Edouard Pignon, Marc'o, Saint-Saëns, Jean-Pierre Vernant, René Zazzo'¹¹³.

In his article Jean-Pierre Vigier gave a formal support to the 121 against government repression, at the same time as condemning insoumission¹¹⁴.

These few concrete examples of the PCF's attitude towards France's military involvement tally with the Party's general approach to the army and its theoretical analysis of the nation.

There are discrepancies but no profound inconsistency in its modified respective positions on work among the soldiers in 1956, 1958 and 1960. Its strategy remained the same, concentrating on the situation in France and working towards propitious conditions for the coming to power of progressive forces led by the PCF.

Strategically, the main force to be considered was the French working class and its allies in France - the spectrum of allies would vary according to the circumstances. The national liberation movements were considered as a reserve, i.e. a secondary force in the task of defeating the imperialist system. Consequently, it is not astonishing that the United Front should have taken precedence over the Special Powers in Algeria: hence the black out on Liechti and the like in the Party press in 1956.

The immense hopes that the PCF invested into the 1956 election which allowed its emergence from a decade long isolation supplied a powerful reason in favour of compromises with the Socialist Party. In the opinion of the PCF, the main ally of the working class was to be found in the Socialist Party. It saw in this episode a potential repeat of the Popular Front under new circumstances, and a sine qua non condition for any possibility of improvements.

After March 1956 the situation degenerated. Repression increased, democratic liberties were eroded further, France intervened in Suez; the Fourth Republic was soon vacillating. The PCF felt obliged to proclaim its patriotism and its fidelity to the Constitution of the Republic against the looming figure of De Gaulle. After hesitating to agitate against the war among the contingent for the sake of the United Front in 1956, it held back its action in the army for the sake of the Republic in 1958. This was in keeping with the Party's own profound democratic and patriotic convictions, and with its analysis of the French nation and proletariat. In 1958, if it supported the appelés, who mobilised against the war, it did not launch any action on a mass scale and it also carefully worded its propaganda - e.g. this leaflet printed in support of Michel de Ré who was sent to jail for refusing to fight in Algeria. The leaflet was entitled 'En prison pour CRIME DE PATRIOTISME'¹¹⁵.

The Party, after May 1958, tried to muster all the patriotic and democratic forces against a possible fascist threat (De Gaulle, the DAS...). The letters published by the Party from conscripts refusing to fight, consistently reasserted their allegiance to France, to the Constitution and the Republic. Moreover, throughout this period, the Party was careful not to give any indication that it might have been encouraging large scale protests in the army. It feared being accused of treason and thrown into illegality.

By the end of 1960, a more decisive leadership was exercised by the Union des Etudiants Communistes. But the

mass movement had gathered so much impetus that there was no longer any risk of isolation for communists if they adopted a more radical position. In addition, the link between the struggle against fascism and the Algerian war had become clearer.

Despite the UEC's initiative, the leadership of the Party continued to disapprove of unitary actions against the war. The rivalry between Maurice Thorez and Laurent Casanova, who gave his support to the UEC, sharpened internal contradictions. The affinities between the UEC leadership, Laurent Casanova and the Italian Communist Party, which entertained official relations with the FLN [the Feltrinelli Institute offered its facilities to FLN delegates] may have aggravated matters¹¹⁶. During encounters within the International Communist Movement at the time the PCF did not appear to see eye to eye with its Italian counterpart. As a consequence, the official PCF position did not allow an unrestrained effort from its members against the Algerian war.

The Party kept refusing to ratify insoumission. Launching a fully fledged action against the Algerian war among French soldiers might have entailed taking on the State, civil war and revolution. The PCF judged that it would be 'opportunistic' to subordinate the issue of 'revolution' in France for which it was not ready, to the Algerian question. Furthermore, its newly developed strategy of the 'peaceful road to socialism' rendered the Party more reluctant to adopt the idea of violent revolution and enhanced the importance of securing alliances: United Front, patriots, democrats and of preserving the

'democratic' system: the Republic and the National Assembly. Repeatedly the PCF stated its opposition to desertion under any circumstances. And it seemed to have found a justification for its slogan in the victory of 'mutinied' conscripts against their fascist officers staging a putsch.

'Les soldats du contingent, les fils d'ouvriers et de paysans sous l'uniforme ont joué également un grand rôle dans la lutte contre les généraux du coup d'Etat. Leur action résolue a été décisive ...

Qui ne voit que nous avons eu raison en juin 1959, à la Conférence fédérale de Paris, de rappeler la position léniniste dans cette question? Tout en rendant hommage à l'action de nos jeunes camarades emprisonnés pour avoir refusé de faire la guerre d'Algérie, nous avons rappelé que la tâche essentielle était à accomplir au sein des unités, dans la masse des soldats...

Plus tard, nous avons souligné, lors du manifeste des 121, que la désertion ne pouvait être un moyen efficace de lutte contre la guerre, que la lutte politique de masse se menait à l'armée. Notre mot d'ordre s'est vérifié dans la vie¹¹⁴.

In practice, the Party unreservedly joined in with other progressive forces against the Algerian war only when it took the shape of a demonstration against the OAS and fascism. Hence the tragedy of Charonnes [2 February 1962] where 8 communists were killed by the police forces.

A few questions could be asked of the Party. Was it necessary to limit the Party's role to such timid actions to suit the general strategy? Bourgeois democracy was saved, but there is no indication that any progress was made to bring about socialism in France, which is the stated aim of the PCF.

The difficulty is greater for a synopsis of the oppositionnels' analysis. Some of their criticisms were limited, or concerned specific issues rather than introduced an alternative comprehensive policy. Nonetheless, the elements of such alternative proposals are to be found.

Not only do the oppositionnels favour support for the Algerian National Liberation Movement as a question of principle, but their emphasis on a large scale action against the war sometimes followed from singling out the Algerian question as a first priority. Algeria was the determining factor for the situation in France, they said; the 'degeneration of democracy' in France, which took the concrete shape of the Gaullist power in 1958, was in their eyes prompted and accelerated by the Algerian war. They drew the conclusion that the Party's subordination of the Algerian problem to the United Front was a strategic mistake as well as a violation of principle: 1958 could have been averted by a different policy from the PCF and by decisive action against the war. Some took this line even further, arguing that the Algerian conflict and the state of 'moindre résistance' of the French government provided an opportunity for the revolutionisation of the situation in France which the PCF failed to take advantage of. In their eyes a mass movement against the war in France was possible and would have proved stronger than the bourgeoisie's urge to preserve its colonial interests. It might even have tilted the balance in favour of the proletariat, if a class confrontation had taken place. As a consequence, the oppositionnels deemed the Party to have betrayed the interests of its own proletariat as well as of colonial peoples.

France's military involvement in Algeria undoubtedly forced the PCF into a corner.

Its procrastination, its unwillingness to take a clear-cut position against the war in deeds as well as in words, led the Party to be outflanked by a mass anti-war movement which attracted young Party members. The Party had argued that it was careful not to alienate the profoundly patriotic French people. The opposite happened. It is probably the patriotism, not to say the nationalism, of the PCF which was eventually surprised and offended by the young people's opposition to the war in Algeria, in particular when this opposition was expressed in terms of active support to the FLN. Between internationalism and nationalism, the PCF seems to have opted for the latter.

CHAPTER VII

Synthesis on the opposition

The period 1954-62 witnessed a considerable upsurge of ideological conflict within the PCF. This was the biggest phenomenon of that kind since the mid-20s. Internal dissenters became significant enough to coin a name for themselves: the 'oppositionnels' or the 'opposition'.

The oppositionnels had become psychologically and politically capable of breaking out of the rigid Party mould in which they had been formed. One has to appreciate that for Party members to do this, the situation must have been one of great urgency. It must not be forgotten that almost all the oppositionnels accepted and respected democratic centralism as they had been taught to understand it. Moreover, for the duration of the cold war, the isolation of the Party and the attacks it had suffered did not permit internal breaches of discipline as Party members felt it was their duty to close ranks around their organisation. When the threat to the Party lessened, their self restraint diminished. In addition, the mid-fifties marked the beginning of a world shattering episode for the communist movement, which served as a major catalyst for the mounting opposition within the PCF: the 20th congress of the CPSU. The Krushchev report on Stalin and his sharp turn of policies opened the flood gates for criticisms from all sides. The immediate follow up to the 20th congress, the discord between different communist parties in the world, provided the oppositionnels with food for thought and well-documented arguments. After questioning Stalin and the CPSU, PCF members questioned their own Party and saw the need for a good cleaning up of Augias's stables.

In France itself, the historical conjoncture aggravated the malaise. The PCF, which was emerging from its cold war ghetto, was desperate for recognition and integration into the French political life. The Party felt that it should not allow these new opportunities to be jeopardized by its policy towards the Algerian war.

The policies of the PCF were judged by the oppositionnels as erroneous in many respects and the Algerian war exacerbated their discontent because of the Party's incapacity to meet such a serious situation.

I Oppositionnel reviews

It is impossible to find a well defined entity called the opposition with an organic unity and an alternative programme within the PCF during the Algerian war. The opposition remained dispersed and divided even though attempts at unity were made. In the first place, disagreements were expressed through the usual channels:

Discussion columns in Party publications prior to each congress, cell or section meetings, of which it is difficult to know the exact content. Numerous oppositionnels felt so strongly that there were inadequate means of expression within the PCF that they created bulletins and reviews in which they could air their opinions and stimulate an exchange of ideas. These publications multiplied during the Algerian war. As was noted above, it does not necessarily imply that they stemmed from a disagreement over the Party line on Algeria alone, but invariably, Algeria would be one of the main items debated in these reviews, either as a matter of priority or as a secondary issue. The reviews and bulletins that have been analysed in this research share several common features.

All of them claimed that they did not intend to dismantle the PCF or create an alternative organisation¹. They denied vehemently accusations of constituting a fraction or of being 'anti-parti'. On the contrary, their declared goal was to regenerate the Party, to bring it back to 'democratic and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist principles'. Their contributors are mostly members of the Party or close sympathisers;

this explains why the articles are generally not signed by their authors - they ran the risk of being expelled if they became known.

The publications with an exclusively Party readership were distributed via a mailing list; some were eventually sold openly in kiosks [such as la Voie Communiste]. On the whole, their distribution was mainly aimed at Party members. Some of these bulletins were ephemeral, only lasting a few months. But it appears that the same contributors, or at least some of them, would then collaborate with a newly-born publication after the disappearance of an old one. This reveals an active and lasting nucleus of Party members, who reached out to a network of readers. The number of issues sold regularly ranged from one thousand [the beginnings of Unir] to three thousand [claimed by l'Etincelle] or more [from five to six thousand for la Voie Communiste]. The number of readers can be multiplied by two or three since the reviews were passed around from hand to hand². On the whole, the readership of oppositionnel reviews can be estimated around 20,000. The Party claimed a total membership of 389,030 in 1955, 429,653 in 1956 and 407,000 in 1961³. The oppositionnel reviews would then have reached only 5% of the Party membership. In reality they were more influential than this figure shows, at least among one section of the Party, the intellectuals. and in particular regions where they were more concentrated - the Paris, Lyon and Marseille regions.

For a general understanding of the oppositionnel reviews, one has to refer to the differences which developed within the International Communist Movement after the 20th congress of the CPSU in 1956. Naturally, the main protagonists in the ICM - the CPSU, the Italian Communist Party, the Communist Party of China - found followers among the oppositionnels within the PCF. While all of them welcomed 'destalinisation', different trends can be identified.

1 A number of reviews displayed their interest and sympathies with the Italian Communist Party⁴. They were in favour of an accelerated destalinisation and opposed the prevailing influence of the CPSU over all the other communist parties⁵. They criticised the Soviet Union for its intervention in Hungary in 1956⁶. Unir, l'Etincelle and Voies Nouvelles come in this 'Italian' category, although the last two also showed some interest in Chinese texts and themes⁷.

2 The largest number of arguments which appear to echo the criticisms made by the Communist Party of China against the Soviet Union are to be found in La Voie Communiste: challenging the concept of peaceful coexistence and of the peaceful road to socialism, emphasising the importance of national liberation struggles in the colonies⁸.

3 Le Communiste is the only one to have shown absolute and consistent support for the Soviet Union, even during the Hungarian events⁹. This attitude was probably designed to prove that Le Communiste leaders had totally rejected their Trotskyite ancestry.

4 In addition, Trotskyist elements must be taken into account in an analysis of the oppositionnel reviews: these existed mainly in Le Communiste, Tribune de Discussion and La Voie Communiste¹⁰.

Despite the above description, one must not fall into the trap of believing that issues were so clear-cut at the time. On the one hand, similarities of opinion expressed in one review and by another communist party do not indicate that the former was subordinated to the latter and adopted all of its policies. It is likely that the differences of opinion which occurred within the ICM would equally have occurred within the PCF.

On the other hand, and more importantly, different trends generally were to be found in one review, in varying strengths, so that it would be erroneous and misleading to slot any of the reviews into a well-defined single category. The fact that divergent trends could coexist within the same journal is a sign of the times. After 1956, the general drive and desire for increased democracy - including the right to criticise - developed the readiness of the oppositionnels to tolerate other points of view, lest they fall into a 'stalinist' attitude. Moreover, each trend had not crystallised as yet and was not even well defined at an international level, and this allowed the journals to be flexible in their approach. The split in the ICM was not formalised before the end of the Algerian war, and the alignment of parties into 'camps' was not completed until then.

As far as Algeria was concerned, the respective positions of the Italian Communist Party and the Communist Party of China did not differ fundamentally: they both supported the FLN. The Italian Party had opened an office for the FLN in the Fetrinelli Institute; the CPC had declared its disagreement with the 20th congress of the CPSU, which in the CPC's view, underplayed the prevalent importance of National Liberation struggles in the colonies. As for the Trotskyites, all Trotskyist organisations [apart from one which collaborated with the MNA] supported the FLN.

The oppositionnel reviews all disapproved of the PCF response to the Algerian war and of its colonial policy. The PCF support for the Union Française caused a wave of protest from oppositionnel reviews which severely condemned the PCF's position on the grounds that it was tantamount to supporting French colonialism and encouraged French chauvinism.¹¹

The fundamental reason underlying the reviews' opposition to the Union Française can be found in the oppositionnels' acute awareness that nationalist ideology prevailed in France and influenced the PCF. All the reviews agreed on this point and the more theoretical ones dealt with this phenomenon at length. The creation of Unir itself, in 1952, was prompted by serious conflict over the line adopted at the Central Committee session of 2 and 3 September 1952 on the 'Front National uni', which intended to unite all the 'bons Français' for national independence and peace¹². L'Etincelle and Voies Nouvelles devoted a large part of their publication to critical analyses

of the French nation and nationalism in an effort to show up the Party's theoretical mistakes in that field: its confusion between nation and proletariat, its glossing over class contradictions¹³.

Le Communiste adopted a more extreme position, rejecting the possibility of any progressive aspect in national issues in France¹⁴ and considering the nation as a reactionary entity.

The oppositionnel reviews did not fail to establish a link between the Party's attitude to the French nation and its policy towards Algeria. They demanded that the Party take up the slogan of independence for Algeria¹⁵. They stated the need for the PCF, the Party of the proletariat in the imperialist métropole, to support the liberation struggle in a French colony, in Algeria¹⁶, thus following a 'classic' Leninist approach. Le Communiste arrived at the same conclusion: independence for Algeria, but from a different standpoint: its analysis emphasised 'la révolution prolétarienne qui se développe maintenant en Algérie'¹⁷, rather than the national liberation aspect. This is consistent with its general distrust of the nation as outlined above. This also explains why Le Communiste did not produce any analysis of the Algerian nation.

All the other reviews attacked Maurice Thorez's concept of the Algerian nation in formation including the colons¹⁸ and exposed it as erroneous and dangerous, serving the adversaries of Algerian independence¹⁹. L'Etincelle and Voies Nouvelles in particular proposed elements for an alternative

analysis of the Algerian nation as an Arab nation, excluding the colons²⁰.

As regards France's military involvement in Algeria, the reviews unanimously and severely criticised the Party's vote in favour of the Special Powers²¹. They castigated the PCF for its opportunism and accused it of subordinating everything to the United Front with the Socialist Party. This compromise was considered by all the reviews as totally unacceptable as they saw in it a betrayal of principles. They also agreed that the Party's propaganda and agitation against the war was far from satisfactory, bordering on inertia and limiting itself to timid petitions²². They felt that more ideological work was needed among the French soldiers, especially among appelés²³. Action against the war interested the oppositionnels in various ways.

Voies Nouvelles, which comprised prestigious intellectuals, laid the emphasis on the denunciation of torture at the hands of the army and the police²⁴ - those intellectuals participated in the Comité Maurice Audin.

La Voie Communiste, which concerned itself less with theoretical questions, concentrated on actions against the war; it publicised and promoted various forms of action: 'comités pour la paix en Algérie', demonstrations, protests within the contingent. It organised the active support of Algerian prisoners held in camps in France [monitoring the sending of parcels]²⁵. Some of its leading members engaged in agitation for insoumission and participated in a network

to organise young conscripts who refused to depart for Algeria²⁶; others took part in clandestine networks helping the FLN²⁷.

Unir distinguished itself by its declared disapproval of the networks: it dissociated itself clearly from the 'porteurs de valises', calling Jeanson a 'petty bourgeois pacifist'²⁸; and it criticised the FLN for acts of 'terrorism' against French soldiers on French soil²⁹.

Despite their differences all the reviews reached the same conclusion: that the Algerian war deserved far more attention than it had been accorded by the Party; and they all stated at some point that the Algerian war determined the rest of French politics.

Unir argued that the Algerian war was the priority area for the Party, noting disapprovingly that it only figured in fourth position in the Central Committee's resolution of Gennevilliers [19-20 March 1959]³⁰.

As early as March 1956, Tribune de Discussion established and stressed the relationship between supporting the Algerian struggle and combatting the threat of fascism which, they argued, originated from Algeria and extended to France³¹.

L'Etincelle and La Voie Communiste singled out the liberation struggles in the colonies as the weak link of imperialism in the post second world war era³²; this stood in contrast with the PCF practice which, they pointed out, had constantly laid stress on the contradiction between France and American

imperialism. Moreover, La Voie Communiste quoted Chinese texts to show that the contradiction between imperialism and national liberation struggles had become the main contradiction in the world [the CPC criticised the CPSU and accused it of underplaying that contradiction].

La Voie Communiste pledged unconditional support to the Algerian struggle which, it argued

'pose le problème de l'épreuve de force entre la classe ouvrière et le régime en France. De ce fait, la lutte contre la guerre d'Algérie est le front principal, absolument prioritaire',³³.

For Le Communiste, the Algerian war crystallised a revolutionary situation, whereby both in France and in Algeria

'la destruction du pouvoir de la bourgeoisie impérialiste commence à se poser en termes concrets aussi bien en Afrique du Nord qu'en France'³⁴

This line remained consistent with Le Communiste's analysis of the Algerian struggle as a proletarian revolution, but took little account of hard facts. Little evidence can be found to support this interpretation.

After this general survey, one must turn to a brief study of each individual review, for a better understanding of their role.

UNIR - Union Nationale des Indépendants Républicains pour le socialisme - published its first issue on 10 October 1952 with 4 pages. It stated clearly that both its writers and readers were members of the PCF and took on the task of

correcting the Party's organisational principles 'pour le retour du PCF aux principes marxistes-léninistes',³⁵. Unir then developed into a substantial monthly review (more than 20 pages after 1956). Unir published a short brochure 'Le dossier algérien du PCF' but generally did not devote most of its attention to Algeria. The greater part of the review was concerned with 'democracy' in the Party and the developments in the International Communist Movement. It demonstrated a particular affinity with the Italian Communist Party.

Le Communiste stemmed from a different origin. It distinguished itself from other reviews insofar as its initial nucleus was composed of militants who had split or been expelled from the Fourth International - a Trotskyist organisation - a few years before launching the journal³⁶. Its first issue appeared in August 1954 and stated as its purpose the revolutionary transformation of the PCF. Le Communiste had between 15 and 20 pages. In 1959, it proposed a programme of unity between opposition groups, for the preparation of ideologically-sound cadres within the Party, who could prepare the ground and be ready to assume responsibilities, when the Party apparatus collapsed³⁷. This sounds very much like a plan for a take-over; it did not take place and Le Communiste pursued its activities.

Other reviews and bulletins were more closely interlinked. Tribune de Discussion and L'Etincelle, created separately, soon merged. It appears that their members later founded Voies Nouvelles and La Voie Communiste.

Tribune Marxiste welcomed articles from all the other reviews and was more of a general theoretical tribune 'un lieu de confrontation théorique'³⁸.

Tribune de Discussion brought out its first issue in March 1956 and claimed to be written by and for Party members only. Striving to obtain 'a real debate' within the Party, it worked to 'élaborer collectivement une ligne politique conforme au marxisme-léninisme'³⁹.

It concerned itself primarily with the consequences of two important events: the 20th congress of the CPSU and the Algerian war. Tribune de Discussion was only a short bulletin which started from 150 addresses to which it was posted. It soon reached 2,000 subscribers. According to private information, Tribune de Discussion was created by two different groups which came together: Trotskyists who were using an 'entrisme' tactic and PCF members from the 4^e, 9^e, 11^e and 18^e arrondissements in Paris who genuinely tried to 'redress' the PCF⁴⁰.

L'Etincelle appeared in December 1956 to promote the 'redressement démocratique et révolutionnaire du PCF'⁴¹. It was at pains to assert that its members had no intention of organising a 'sect' or a 'party within the Party'. Although it was only a short bulletin [4 to 6 pages], L'Etincelle is said to have been very successful, reaching 8,000 Party members from its second issue⁴². I was told that two trends combined within L'Etincelle, a 'rightist' wing specially concerned with 'destalinisation' and a 'left' trend which emphasised the Algerian question. Apparently some of its members had direct contact with the FLN⁴³.

In view of an impending merger with Tribune de Discussion, l'Etincelle published a special issue on 10 May 1957, stating their main common objectives:

- the liquidation of Stalinism in the PCF,
- the restoration of Leninist principles of internal democracy,
- support to the anti-imperialist struggles of colonial peoples,
- an authentic unity of action in the struggle for socialism⁴⁴.

L'Etincelle can be described as more theoretical and Tribune de Discussion as more agitational, giving details of the activities of the PCF and Party members. Their merger led to a combination of both aspects; the same themes were pursued until the break up of their cooperation which took place after only a few months. In October 1957, l'Etincelle suspended its publication on account of the elimination of the Malenkov-Kaganovitch-Molotov group in the USSR; it assumed that the 'destalinisation' would therefore follow its course. It also believed that the 'triomphe de la tendance léniniste' in the USSR would be reflected in the French party. The real reason for the interruption of l'Etincelle lies elsewhere according to interviews I carried out; it is alleged that the members of l'Etincelle refused to have anything to do with Trotskyism, having discovered the presence of Trotskyist elements among the Tribune de Discussion⁴⁵. This is plausible enough, as it has been confirmed that a group of 'Fran kist'

Trotskyists had joined the Party and launched Tribune de Discussion⁴⁶.

Voies Nouvelles appeared in April 1958 and lasted about a year, ceasing publication because of a lack of funds. Neither a 'political tribune' nor a 'simple information review', it mainly offered its public the findings of what it called 'collective research' into 'social life and action for socialism'⁴⁷. Prominent intellectuals took part in the review, such as members of the notorious Sorbonne Lettres cell. Voies Nouvelles was a real journal of over 20 pages, comprising lengthy articles of a high theoretical level based on serious research. It claimed to have 500 subscribers and to sell between 2,000 and 2,500 copies in newsagents by the time it reached its third issue⁴⁸. On the whole, Voies Nouvelles can be said to have an 'Italian' sympathy.

La Voie Communiste in January 1958 claimed to continue l'Etincelle and Tribune de Discussion. It adopted as a principal objective

'à travers la lutte pour le redressement démocratique et révolutionnaire du parti, trouver la voie communiste pour notre pays'⁴⁹.

Its guidelines sound very similar to the other reviews:

- for the liquidation of Stalinism within the Party,
- for a return to Marxist-Leninist principles of internal democracy,
- for revolutionary support of the colonised peoples'

anti-imperialist struggle⁵⁰.

However, La Voie Communiste was the most committed of all the opposition journals to campaign for Algerian independence and support for the FLN. For La Voie Communiste, Algeria was definitely the main front and the greater part of the journal was devoted to articles on that issue. La Voie Communiste ceased to appear shortly after the termination of the war which had probably acted as a uniting factor between different trends within the journal. Its members split between two groups, those who wished to support the CPC [they represented a substantial section] and the others who opposed that line.

The oppositionnels' reviews rapidly acquired wide circulation and gained in influence. The Party could not ignore them any longer.

'L'opposition organisée à l'intérieur du Parti communiste est maintenant une force politique reconnue. Elle est mentionnée comme telle dans les rapports du Parti'⁵¹.

The PCF leadership launched an open political struggle against this opposition and engaged in a serialised attack through several reports in France Nouvelle against each of the oppositionnels' journals⁵².

This opposition remained dispersed despite the exchange of letters between different reviews and the proposals for a common approach. They tried to coordinate the preparation for the Party's XVth congress, but failed to attain organic unity. The fact is that some reviews, not content with criticising

the Party, also spent a fair amount of time criticising other oppositionnel groups⁵³. La Voie Communiste deplored the division of the opposition and its harmful consequences on confused Party members. It argued that the division itself was partly due to the general confusion prevalent in the PCF and the lack of maturity of the opposition. The grounds for opposing the Party line were so numerous and so varied that Party members did not succeed in presenting a coherent organic critique. According to La Voie Communiste, 'ces points de vue ne sont pas opposés, mais complémentaires'⁵⁴. In reality, it was not sufficient to be oppositionnels to attain unity of thought and actions. The international contradictions in the communist movement merely made matters worse. La Voie Communiste stated what many others no doubt felt.

'Etant donné la faiblesse des groupes existants et le retard de la pensée marxiste contemporaine, personne n'est en mesure d'élaborer une plateforme théorique, ni même un programme capable de s'imposer avec évidence à des révolutionnaires conscients'⁵⁵.

But even if one group had proposed such a programme, it is doubtful that other oppositionnels would have adopted it. The differences among them were too great and eclectic.

II Whence the opposition

It is clear from this study of the oppositionnel reviews that a general feeling of malaise manifested itself in the PCF in varying degrees on the question of Algeria.

How did it happen that individual Party members became aware of the need to devote more attention to Algeria?

A few examples may help to partially answer this question.

A number of individuals may have been more receptive to the Algerian problem from their background or training: some had lived in North Africa, others studied or taught subjects relative to that region in history or geography. Others had joined the Party during the anti-Viet-Nam war campaign and remained steeped in anti-colonialism. Some were shaken by the revelations leaking out of Algeria about the mass torture practised by the army. From the generation that had lived through the second world war a few compared their experience of anti-semitism and Nazism with the anti-Arab racialism of the fifties in France. One ex-Party member I interviewed described to me how the reality of the Algerian war struck him when he witnessed Algerians surrounded and assaulted by police dogs in Marseille. He immediately established a parallel with his own experience during the second world war when he, a résistant, found himself surrounded by the dogs of German soldiers in the forest of Mijoux [Haut-Jura]⁵⁶.

The specific experience which motivated each individual to expect or demand from the Party a greater commitment against the Algerian war is not so significant. What is more relevant

is to identify the groups of Party members from whom the opposition arose on Algeria, and what motivated them. This study reveals that particular categories of Party members were mobilised by particular categories of issues. Is it possible to say that their protests obtained any result on any of those issues?

The organised opposition was mainly composed of what are traditionally referred to as intellectuals, who focused their criticisms of the Party on theoretical issues [the Union Française, the Party's approach to the French and Algerian nation ...]. This can be explained easily. The nature of the PCF, claiming to follow Marxism-Leninism, led to the publication of laborious documents endeavouring to justify its policies theoretically. It is safe to assume that intellectuals would be tempted more than others to probe into any possible inconsistencies; they are more likely to be familiar with Marxist classics and could measure the Party's analyses against them. They had access to more documents and were more accustomed to argue over ideas and concepts. This assumption is strengthened by interviews and by Jacques Sylvain in Le Communiste, 'C'est un fait que la majorité des intellectuels communistes se trouve dans l'opposition'⁵⁷.

The oppositionnels believed that their objections influenced the policy of the PCF. When the Union Française was withdrawn from the PCF theses in 1956, Tribune de Discussion claimed that this resulted from pressure from the rank and file. 'Contraint par la base, le 14^e congrès dut abandonner l'expression d'Union Française'⁵⁸.

Unir also attributed to the 'pression de la base',⁵⁹ the Party's proclamation of Algerian right to independence [early 1957] and l'Etincelle supported that view⁶⁰.

Of course, in the first place, there is no way that the Party leadership would admit that it had been influenced by the opposition. And although the oppositionnels may have been instrumental in a change of policy, one has to recognise that what really mattered were historical situations. For instance, it was rather incongruous for the Party to support the Union Française in 1956, whilst it stood in blatant contradiction with circumstances: Algeria was on fire, waging an armed struggle for independence and the French government did not have the slightest intention of pursuing the Union Française [the term had been abandoned altogether].

However, it is undeniable that the Party was worried about the oppositionnels' criticisms. It could have ignored them altogether, but instead it acknowledged them in several attempts to answer, explain, justify the Party policies⁶¹. For instance, the cell Sorbonne-Lettres was honoured with a special reply to its overall criticism in France Nouvelle [22 January 1959]. In addition, France Nouvelle ran a series of articles attacking each oppositionnel review, one by one. Occasionally, the Party took more drastic action against its intellectuals. For instance, Le Communiste reported a rapid turnover in the editorial board of Nouvelle Critique - 40% of the board was demoted or resigned in 1957⁶². Neither of these measures seem to have been successful in silencing these oppositionnels.

The vast majority of Party members did not participate in the oppositionnels' reviews, but it would be a mistake to conclude from it that they did not feel concerned by the war or that they all agreed with the Party policy on Algeria. The entire Party was affected by France's military involvement. All the young people, including Party members, could understand immediately the concrete consequences of the Special Powers and the Party vote caused a widespread and growing discontent. Their disapproval was not expressed through long exposés but was made evident through the Mouvement des Rappelés in which Party members took part, and their refusal to fight in Algeria later on. These actions were performed by less 'intellectual' Party members [who did not benefit from a 'sursis' like the students]. This is evidenced by a leaflet brought out by the Party: out of thirty young communists who refused to serve in Algeria [but did not desert], twenty eight were workers, peasants or employees. The following list gives an indication of their social origin:

'Fernand Marin	: tôlier-chaudronnier
Léandre Letocquart	: monteur-électricien
Jacques Alexandre	: ajusteur
Francis Renda	: ouvrier en produits chimiques
J.M. Samson	: mécanicien
Claude Voisin	: métallo
Michel Ré	: cultivateur ⁶³ .

Disagreement over the Special Powers arose throughout the Party. The oppositionnel reviews reported discussions and conflicts within the Party before and after the vote. Unir mentioned the numerous letters addressed to the Party leadership on this matter⁶⁴. Tribune de Discussion noted protests in four Parisian federations in the Somme. the North. the

Allier and the Gironde federations⁶⁵. Le Communiste affirmed that the opposition as such started from the Special Powers, 'surtout dans les milieux ouvriers'⁶⁶. Tribune de Discussion described a few examples of Party members' reactions: two members who were rappelés tore up their Party card in a factory cell of the southern suburbs of Paris; in the Seine department, workers protested against the lack of solidarity with the Algerians in a large metallurgy company⁶⁷. Although no precise account of all these actions was provided, their existence alone proves that the Party leadership had not succeeded in fully convincing its membership that its position was correct. The Party seems to have devoted a lot of effort to explaining its vote in favour of the Special Powers, and to persuading Party members to accept it. Unir quoted three articles in l'Humanité to support the vote on the Special Powers. Expulsions took place to strengthen it⁶⁹. The thesis 42 of the 1956 congress blamed the 'dogmatists' and 'sectarians' who refused to agree to it⁷⁰. The Party was adamant: it would not go back on its decision, but it failed to suppress criticisms.

The most active single body within the Party to campaign against the Algerian war was the UEC - Union des Etudiants Communistes - which combined both 'intellectuals' and young people. In this instance, students acted not so much because of theoretical disagreements with the Party leadership, but as they saw their immediate future threatened, once the 'sursis' had been cancelled. The students' organisation, the UNEF, was itself mobilised against the war and influenced the UEC from 1960, when the students' movement gathered momentum.

One reason for discontent started in 1956 and continued to grow: the lack of 'actions' against the war on the part of the PCF. Consequently, many a young communist student took upon him/herself to undertake the actions which they believed the Party should have coordinated: this was done in defiance of the Party policy which rejected such acts as insoumission, or providing help to the FLN.

The development of events, the mounting wave of protest against the war and the actions of its members combined to induce the PCF to make minor adjustments in its position. After condemning all these types of action, it gradually came to tolerate some of them - like Alban Liechti and Serge Magnien's refusal to fight in Algeria. Much later on, the PCF used Liechti's name to prove that it did combat the Algerian war⁷¹. The Party was much more severe against the insoumis or the 'porteurs de valise'⁷², who were automatically expelled as soon as it became known to the PCF. La Voie Communiste quoted a few names of Party members who were expelled or forced to resign because they had participated in networks. In the Bouches du Rhône, a philosophy teacher (Jacques Deprun), in Marseille. Annette Roger, who was also publicly slandered, and others⁷³. On another occasion, the Party forbade a communist barrister from defending an arrested Party member who had worked with the networks⁷⁴.

And yet even clandestine activities eventually benefitted from a slightly greater tolerance on the part of the PCF. At a very advanced stage of the war, Jean-Pierre Vigier was allowed to write an article paying its respects to all the people who

fought against the Algerian war in 'their own way', on the occasion of the Déclaration des 121. The Party members who had signed the Déclaration - contravening the Party line - were not expelled. One of them described how he was summoned by the higher instances of the Party (120 Rue Lafayette) and asked to withdraw his signature; when he refused they promised that they 'would not lift a finger to help him' if he was in trouble as a result⁷⁵. This appears as a rather mild retribution in comparison with earlier intransigent measures on the part of the PCF.

In conclusion, it is important to notice that the internal opposition to the PCF continued to grow throughout the Algerian war. Overall, the Party leadership simultaneously used a stick and carrot policy vis à vis its opposition. On the one hand, the more respectable opposition - that of prominent intellectuals - was half-tolerated, on the other hand, severe measures were taken by the Party. An escalating number of expulsions took place. They were often motivated by the members' participation in oppositionnel reviews or simply by their criticisms of the Party line. Expulsions reached such a scale - Unir reported 67 of them in two months in 1958 - that 327 Party members launched an appeal against anti-statutory expulsions.

'327 camarades "anciens du Parti", ayant plus de vingt trois années de militantisme ininterrompu, et parmi lesquels quelques vieux communistes adhérents du Parti depuis sa fondation, lançaient le mois dernier un appel solennel à toutes les cellules.

Faisant état de 67 exclusions prononcées en deux mois sur intervention directe et

anti-statutaire des "enquêteurs" de la direction du Parti, cet appel demandait à tous les militants de s'opposer aux exclusions anti-statutaires et d'exiger le respect des droits de tous les militants accusés⁷⁶.

La Voie Communiste quoted more expulsions in Antony - Cité Universitaire - instigated by Georges Marchais. These members were accused of being Trotskyists, revisionists and 'flics'. Their comrades were forbidden to speak to them⁷⁷. The whole philosophy circle of the UEC was expelled after it circulated a leaflet against the Algerian war and fascism, in collaboration with socialist students in 1958⁷⁸.

None of the PCF tactics to suppress its opposition seem to have succeeded; the opposition continued unabated.

CONCLUSION

The Algerian war proved to be a revealing test for the French Communist Party. Jean Baby summed up best the impact of the war on French politics and the issues with which it confronted the Party. The Algerian war

'remettait tout en question, y compris les institutions de la France comme les événements l'ont prouvé. L'affaire d'Algérie posait et pose toujours tous les problèmes de l'impérialisme français, du rôle politique de l'armée, du danger fasciste, du pouvoir personnel, du niveau des salaires, de l'avenir de la jeunesse etc. Elle ne saurait non plus être séparée des problèmes du marxisme-léninisme'¹.

The period 1954-1962 did not witness an 'ideological turning point' insofar as the PCF did not undergo a sudden fundamental change in its approach and policies. Yet it confirmed and consolidated trends that had manifested themselves earlier on. The Party's view of the French nation, of the relationship between France and Algeria, of the Algerian nation, of the army, all this betrays a loyalty to the Party's Jauressian, pre-Tours ancestry and in addition expresses a newly enhanced deep-seated jacobinism on which 'nationalism which is the oldest and strongest tradition of the French left'² was built. The Algerian war demonstrated the increased integration of the PCF into the French nation, not only through its participation in the republican institutions, as has been shown by Irwin Wall³, but also in its ideological identification with the 'grandeur' of France. This character of the PCF was clearly shown as it translated its theory into political position and action, in answer to the urgent questions posed

by the war. The refusal of the Party to commit itself against France was made evident.

The second main aspect to be underlined in a study of the PCF and the Algerian war is the 'crystallisation' of the opposition, as was noted by E.J. Hobsbawm⁴. Oppositionnels who had until then voiced their opinions as individuals came together and founded a variety of reviews; they eventually took over the communist students' movement. The grounds for opposing the Party line were many; Algeria was not the only one and events taking place in the International Communist Movement certainly played an important role. Nonetheless, the opposition taking shape during the Algerian war laid the foundations for later developments.

A significant feature of that period was the low recruitment of young people to the Party, which Marcel Servin noted in the 1959 congress. In 1954, 10.2 % of the Party was composed of members less than twenty five years old, 54.3% more than forty years old. In 1959, the less than 25 age group had decreased to 5.6% and the more than 40 age group had increased to 56.2%⁵.

These figures do not come as a surprise given the trend that has been identified through this study. The young people had found alternative spheres of action. If no other party as such could compete with the PCF on the left, there were at least many organisations available in which they could become active, particularly over an issue they felt strongly about: the Algerian war. There were all sorts of committees against

the war, for peace in Algeria, against torture, against fascism. Later on the UNEF proposed to students a positive 'action de masse'.

The embryo of an alternative left was focused around magazines like France-Observateur which consistently denounced the Algerian war, Les Temps Modernes (in which Francis Jeanson, leader of an FLN support network, participated), Esprit under the editorship of Jean-Marie Domenach, which attracted left-wing christians (many of them took up radical activities and positions against the war); the Parti Socialiste Autonome merged with disaffected communists and socialists to form the PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifié), which concerned itself with the Algerian war, attracting many intellectuals. Members from all those circles at the same time participated in broad organisations against the war or even in FLN support networks.

But what became of communist oppositionnels in the aftermath of the Algerian war? The fate of the Union des Etudiants Communistes provides us with a good illustration of the main streams that arose and developed.

- The UEC leadership was sympathetic to the Italian Communist Party and the 'Italians' were in a majority in the UEC. This is stated by Serge Dupaquit himself, a former UEC leader.

'La direction de l'UEC était pour sa part très influencée par le débat qui se déroulait à l'intérieur du P.C. italien qui, outre son immense intérêt idéologique (voies révolutionnaires nouvelles pour les pays industrialisés)

présentait l'avantage tactique de pouvoir s'abriter derrière certaines positions du plus puissant des partis occidentaux⁶.

The UEC bureau national soon came into conflict with the PCF leadership. At the UEC 6th congress [21 February 1963], the Party failed to impose its views and the participants gave a standing ovation to the delegate from the PCI⁷. The Party could not tolerate this organised opposition which gained in influence; a campaign was launched against the UEC leadership and all 'Italian' followers. The UEC eventually fell apart and its 8th congress [4-7 March 1965] resulted in the purging or the departure of former 'majoritaires'. Some of them went to swell the ranks of the PSU.

The oppositionnel reviews had also contributed to the dissemination of Italian theses. These crystallised a more social democratic trend within the PCF.

- A Trotskyist pole of attraction also existed within the UEC, influential in the Sorbonne Lettres sector. Trotskyist elements were present in oppositionnel reviews such as Tribune de Discussion and La Voie Communiste.

The Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, the J.C.R. [Alain Krivine and Weber], was born in April 1966 out of the disintegration of the UEC⁸. They did not have any lasting impact on the PCF itself.

- The third trend in the UEC and among oppositionnels was the pro-Chinese. Strongly based in the Rue d'Ulm [the Ecole Normale Supérieure where Althusser taught] and in other cells

of Grandes Ecoles or Universities, the pro-Chinese remained in the UEC for a while after the Bureau National was disbanded in 1965; they set themselves the task of leading an ideological struggle from within. They eventually founded a 'Maoist' organisation, the Union des Jeunesses Communistes Marxistes-Léninistes [UJCML] at the end of 1966⁹.

La Voie Communiste, which comprised a strong pro-Chinese element, broke up in 1965, split between Trotskyist and Maoist tendencies. Its members were channeled towards one or the other respective organisations. Pro-Chinese elements were to be found among a variety of oppositionnels. Jacques Jurquet, who opposed the Party's Algerian policy, became General Secretary of the Parti Communiste Marxiste-Léniniste de France [PCMLF].

The Algerian war played a significant role in the crystallisation of these trends and led the PCF to lose its influence among the students: the Party expelled one thousand UEC members after the UEC 8th congress, and lost many more who resigned.

Serge Depaquit, former UEC leader, remarks on how the evolution of the communist students' movement prepared the ground for May 1968.

'Mai 68 s'était aussi préparé dans la bataille de l'U.E.C.'¹⁰.

For Jean Ferniot, the disintegration of the UEC fertilised the students' 'groupuscules'.

'ce fut l'explosion de l'U.E.C. qui ne se releva pas de ce drame. Les jeunes militants, qui secouèrent sur le trottoir du carrefour Kossuth la poussière de leurs souliers, ensemencèrent les 'groupuscules'. Ceux-ci eurent désormais le terrain libre devant une U.E.C. réduite à des effectifs squelettiques, pour proliférer sur le terrain du marxisme',¹¹.

During the Algerian war, for the first time, a large movement developed on the left beyond the control of the PCF - mainly among young people. This may be considered as a precursor of May 1968.

The opposition and oppositionnel reviews provided an arena where future Trotskyists or 'Maoists' could sharpen their ideological weapons. The opposition matured during the Algerian war; its initial aim, expressed in most of the reviews, which was the revolutionary transformation of the PCF, was not fulfilled. Instead it nurtured other groups and trends on the left.

And the Party which continually feared that it might alienate the French masses if it adopted too radical an approach towards the Algerian war, found itself outflanked and overtaken by the mass movement itself. The final sequel to this period was 'le gauchisme', on a wide scale in 1968.

EPILOGUE

Henri Alleg's La Guerre d'Algérie appeared twenty seven years after the beginning of the Algerian armed struggle for independence. It was published under the auspices of the PCF and under the direction of Henri Alleg who became famous during the Algerian war. Henri Alleg was the director of Alger Républicain, the Algerian communist Party organ and underwent terrible tortures at the hands of the French army, which he related in a notorious book The question.

The PCF and the authors of 'La Guerre d'Algérie' invested extensive and meticulous efforts in the gathering of information towards presenting an account of the war. The work is well documented and enriched by a great many interviews with numerous people involved in the war.

It begins with a useful historical survey of French colonisation in Algeria and the developments of the national movement leading up to the 1 November 1954.

The authors appear to have adopted an 'Algerian' approach to the war, not only because they frankly express a point of view favourable to the Algerian struggle, but also because they dwell on the Algerian situation and the FLN activities, which are related in great detail. This is the case for most of the first two volumes [until 1958]. The third volume, covering the last four years of the war, devotes greater attention to the situation in France and from a French point of view: De Gaulle's coming to power, the barricades in Algiers, the army putsch, the OAS and their impact on French opinion.

On the whole, the PCF itself keeps a low profile throughout the book, except for specific passages which deserve attention.

The Party generally claims the greatest share but not the monopoly of anti-colonialist opinions and activities. Contrary to historical evidence, the PCF insists that it supported the Algerian struggle for independence, wholeheartedly and from the start.

'Il n'est pas douteux qu'il [le parti] a jeté dans la lutte toutes les forces possibles; il n'est pas douteux non plus que toute son action a tendu à soutenir la lutte des Algériens pour leur indépendance'¹.

However, the PCF remains aware that objections could be advanced to counter its statement and offers an additional explanation: it claims that the word 'independence' was not always pronounced because of censorship or for other reasons, but that it was the spirit of all PCF statements.

'Quels que soient les euphémismes utilisés pour tourner la censure ou éviter de cabrer une opinion publique dûment conditionnée, personne ne s'y trompe. Certains feignent de s'y tromper ce qui n'est pas la même chose'².

It is not the first time these arguments - censorship and public opinion - have been used. We have already met them in Elie Mignot's 'La guerre coloniale d'Algérie'³. And they recur more than once in the present book. The Party obviously feels uncomfortable about its delay in taking up the slogan of independence until 1957. In the third volume the author indicates that until 1961, the PCF and a few individuals were the only ones campaigning for Algerian independence⁴, as though it had always done so.

Little reference is made to the main themes of PCF propaganda during the war itself, except for events concerning the army.

The importance of maintaining links between Algeria and France is only explicitly cited once. The 'grandeur' of France has been left out.

The one aspect of the PCF line which is expanded relates to its analysis of the Algerian nation. The PCF here actually acknowledges that Maurice Thorez's theory of 'Algérie, nation en formation' was erroneous.

'Il faut observer que le tableau de l'histoire algérienne décrite par le secrétaire du PCF, suite d'invasions ou d'émigrations successives, qui, chacune, paraissent apporter leur égale contribution à la "formation de la nation", ne correspond pas à la réalité'⁵.

It was correct to say that Algeria was not French but not so much so as to declare that it was not Arab . The author, Henri Alleg, appears to present in fact the analysis and self-criticism made by the PCA in 1958:

- Algeria 'se "sent" arabe, liée à tout l'Orient arabe'.
- the Algerian national consciousness matured without the 'Europeans' ['en dehors des Européens'],
- any 'fusion' between the two groups was blocked by the colonial regime⁶.

Yet the PCF remains on the defensive in these few pages. Presenting a kind of apology for Maurice Thorez's theory.

It justifies it by Thorez's attempt to counter fascist propaganda [Spanish and Italian expansionist designs in North Africa], to unite 'Europeans and Algerians around France'⁷. It tries to show that the hope of detaching the small colons from the 'colonial block' was not absurd and utopian, but was realised in some other territories, i.e. Brazil, or Ouzbekistan - inferring that Thorez had in mind a socialist France allied with an independent Algeria. Moreover, throughout this exposé Algerian communists bear the greatest part of the blame for the practical consequences of Maurice Thorez's theory.

- Many 'European' communists [in Algeria] concluded that Algeria's independence could only happen after the formation of the nation, which resulted in postponing independence to the 'calendes grecques'⁸, i.e. never.

- They underestimated the Algerian national movement and even sometimes made no distinction between Messali Hadj's PPA and the PPF, a fascist organisation⁹. An explanation for the mistakes of the PCA on these issues is to be found in the second volume, which blames the weight of PCA members of European origin who 'altered its lucidity'¹⁰, as they themselves were heavily influenced by colonialist ideology. It is understandable and honourable that Henri Alleg, himself a member of the PCA, lays the blame on its own party for the mistakes committed. But one can read through these lines the PCF's important share of responsibility and for the first time an acknowledgement that it was wrong in its approach to the Algerian nation.

Two more elements confirm this opinion:

- the constant use of the word 'Algerian' to designate the Arab-Berber population¹¹, whereas the PCF had previously insisted that all the groups were 'Algerian', including the inhabitants of European origin. Those are called here 'Europeans'. The Algerian nation therefore did not encompass them.

- Volume III presents the FLN views on the Algerian nation in Belkacem Krim's words

'Le peuple algérien est constitué par les indigènes qui ont résisté longtemps à la conquête française. Ils sont unis par la langue, la religion, les mœurs, une histoire commune ... Un peuplement européen s'est créé hétérogène par les origines mais soudé par son intégration à la nation française'¹².

After independence, adds Belkacem Krim, a rapprochement can be envisaged bringing those Europeans who wish to remain Algerian into the fold of the Algerian people.

The PCF's involvement in military affairs during the war is quoted often in La Guerre d'Algérie.

The PCF attitude towards the army has somewhat changed when it deals with cadres; during the war the Party had declared that the majority of officers were republicans and patriots. Its present book on the contrary states that the general staffs did not clearly oppose the military rebellion in 1961¹³ and that many cadres in the army considered themselves as guardians 'de l'empire et de l'ordre'¹⁴. However, the jacobin outlook of the Party still underlies its position as it quotes l'Humanité, calling for a 'levée en masse' on 24 April 1961.

The second volume briefly alludes to the PCF vote on the Special Powers. It explains the vote in a few lines in habitual terms: the aim was to develop 'l'unité d'action'¹⁵ and to upset the manoeuvres of the 'reaction'. Quoting Etienne Fajon, who in his personal capacity has since voiced doubts about the success of this vote and mentioning the many discussions it gave rise to within the Party, Pierre Haudiquet implicitly indicates that the PCF is not certain that it took the right decision regarding the Special Powers.

On the other hand, the Party congratulates itself for its action in the army: it claims the paternity and the leadership of the Mouvement des appelés et rappelés. It is stated that the communist youth movement had decided to intensify its work in the army as early as 1955, and that the 'opposition' to the war had been 'essentiellement animée par le PCF'¹⁶. The author also notes that such an opposition was 'populaire'

because it was supported by the 'couches profondes de la nation'¹⁷. The Party denies having hampered those actions, preempting [or answering] criticisms about some aspects of its actions, the Party accepts that it dissociated itself from the demonstration in Grenoble without explanation, but signals that this episode was followed by multiple demonstrations¹⁸. The Party also claims the glory of Alban Liechti's act - a PCF member who refused to serve in Algeria - as its own. In 1956, the Party had neglected to support Liechti and waited for a year before taking an interest in his case. In La Guerre d'Algérie this changing position is described as a simple 'adjustment of tactics' after the second half of 1957.

The fundamental policies of the PCF are reiterated, quoting Etienne Fajon.

'je ne crois pas que l'ensemble des soldats puissent suivre l'exemple de Liechti ni que ce soit le meilleur chemin de la paix'¹⁹.

The 'correct' attitude is quoted again as usual: the communists must go to the army and militate where the soldiers are²⁰.

The Party above all took into account the supposedly 'état d'esprit "moyen" du pays'²¹, meaning that the French people were not favourable to Algerian independence and supported the war.

This statement comes as a surprise as it contradicts the widespread feeling of opposition to the war which the PCF pointed out a few pages earlier.

Another reason advanced by the Party for the limits of its campaign against the war in the army is the difficulty encountered by militants on account of the conditioning of soldiers and the repression against any 'agitator',²².

On the matter of insoumission and help to the FLN the Party sheds its once inflexible attitude. The second and third volumes give a good coverage of their actions, recognising that a number of communists worked with the 'réseaux'. A long footnote quotes Roland Leroy, saying

'je crois que nous avons eu des expressions trop sévères pour ceux qui, selon la formule d'alors "portaient les valises du FLN" ,²³.

And a photocopy of Aragon's letter in defence of the 121²⁴ implies a certain support for the 121 on the part of the Party. Yet it disapproves of the actions of the intellectuals who helped the FLN at the time, for two main reasons, says the Party:

- they were 'adventurist', far ahead of the mass movement;
- they gave an opportunity to jeopardize the Party's legality to the bourgeoisie. Acting as a 'responsible' Party, the PCF therefore claims that it had to take measures against communists who participated in those actions²⁵.

These two themes, the level of the masses' political consciousness and the fear of illegality appear to have shaped the Party's policies.

La Guerre d'Algérie confirms these points but does not fully expound, or even leaves out altogether, the other motives that dictated the PCF position, such as its conception of the relationship between Algeria and France, its concern for France's interests and the future of the Algerian colons. The colons occupy a limited amount of space throughout the book [except for part of the third volume]. They have been reduced to the right proportion they occupied in the Algerian Liberation struggle, whereas the PCF had earlier [during the war] given them an inflated importance.

La Guerre d'Algérie was written about the war itself and not about the PCF involvement during the war; nonetheless, a few elements of the Party's policies and activities are revealed. From the reading of this text, one would conclude that the 'bilan est globalement positif' for the Party. It admits to more inadequacies in its line than it has ever done before, notably on the theory of the 'nation en formation'. But the Party appears satisfied with itself, perhaps more so than it has reason to be. It fails to introduce any satisfactory justification for its line on the Union Française, the 'liens permanents' between Algeria and France, which it avoids altogether in the book. It does not convince the reader either that it was justified in shunning the slogan of Algerian independence for two years. However, the book generally gives a fair treatment to non-communist activities against the Algerian war, insofar as it

gives them recognition; it also admits to a small contribution [minimal it seems] made by members of the Party to those actions which were not approved by the PCF, without totally condemning them as traitors.

But it does not register any substantial internal opposition to its policies on Algeria. Altogether, La Guerre d'Algérie does not contradict the conclusions arrived at in this thesis and even confirms some of them.

Twenty years have now elapsed since the termination of the Algerian war and a number of books have been published on the question in the last few years, either memoirs of those who participated in the war or historical studies. The Algerian war has come into fashion, arousing the interest of all and sundry. This may explain why the PCF invested such effort into the production of such an expensive and comprehensive book as La Guerre d'Algérie.

The Party possibly felt the need to gild its image as the champion of anti-colonialism, at a time when memories had become blunted but were being reactivated. The book concentrates on the Algerian angle and it lays the emphasis on the Algerian struggle and the FLN activities. One could never suspect that the PCF had not always wholeheartedly supported the Algerian National Liberation Movement. The Party is mentioned infrequently throughout the three volumes, revealing itself modestly; it humbly admits to a number of mistakes [glossing over more important ones] whilst it also claims its small share of glory. The general impression

gathered from reading this account is definitively favourable to the PCF. It neutralises the criticisms that may be forthcoming on its attitude during the Algerian war, and might convince the new generation of communist members of the Party's anti-colonialist heritage.

It is all the more convincing as it constitutes a well-documented and interesting work. Although it does not produce any new historical interpretation of the period, the journalistic study based on a great number of interviews brushes a lively and unedited internal picture of the war on Algerian soil.

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'... Les mesures disciplinaires prises en vertu du code de l'indigénat permettent d'exclure du corps électoral tous ceux qui auront enfreint les réglementations administratives ou qui auront déplu à l'administrateur: celui-ci est d'autant plus à même de contrôler l'élargissement du corps électoral indigène que le demandeur doit joindre à son dossier une attestation de l'autorité administrative locale'.

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- 62 Nouschi, p.55.
- 63 Nouschi, pp.55-56.
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- 65 Lacheraf, p.194.

66 Nouschi, p.89. The text is slightly different in Claude Collot et Jean-Robert Henry, Le Mouvement National Algérien: textes 1912-1954, Préface de Ahmed Mahiou, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1978, p.65.

'Si j'avais découvert la "nation algérienne". je serais nationaliste et je n'en rougirais pas comme d'un crime ... Et cependant je ne ferai pas ce sacrifice. L'Algérie en tant que patrie est un mythe. Je ne l'ai pas découverte. J'ai interrogé l'histoire; j'ai interrogé les morts et les vivants; j'ai visité les cimetières: personne ne m'en a parlé ...

On ne bâtit pas sur du vent'.

67 Nouschi, p.68.

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Casanova, Les intellectuels et la nation, p.114.

The dots are Casanova's, who chopped out an essential part; the exact quotation reads:

'Comme le prolétariat de chaque pays doit en premier lieu conquérir le pouvoir politique, s'ériger en classe nationale, devenir lui-même la nation. il est encore par là national, quoique nullement au sens bourgeois du mot'. Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels, Manifeste du Parti communiste, Pékin, Edition en langues étrangères, 1966. p.56.

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Chapter V

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Au mois d'octobre de cette année, le II^e congrès des Soviets a confirmé de façon plus nette et catégorique, ce droit inaliénable des peuples de Russie ...
1) Egalité et souveraineté des peuples de Russie.
2) Droits des peuples de Russie à disposer librement d'eux-mêmes, y compris le droit de sécession et de formation d'un Etat Indépendant'.

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'L'administration renforça les mesures tendant à réserver exclusivement le monopole du prêché dans les mosquées à ses agents imams et muphtis désignés et payés par elle'.
Saadia-et-Lakhdar, L'aliénation colonialiste et la résistance de la famille algérienne, Lausanne, La Cité, 1961, p.38.
- 99 Jeanson et Jeanson, p.171.
- 100 'Inspecteurs départementaux de l'enseignement du 1^{er} degré, [qui précisèrent] le 5 mars 1954
"Considérant que si le Statut de l'Algérie a prévu l'organisation de l'enseignement de l'arabe, il n'a préjugé ni de la forme, ni de l'étendue de cette organisation; pensant que ni l'arabe dialectal, qui n'a que la valeur du patois, [ni l'arabe littéral qui est une langue morte], ni l'arabe moderne qui est une langue étrangère, ne peuvent constituer une matière obligatoire d'enseignement primaire'.
Saadia-et-Lakhdar, p.43.'
- 101 Jean Dresch, 'Le fait national algérien', p.6.
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- 105 'L'entrée dans la nationalité française aurait pour conséquence à notre égard la suppression complète de notre loi et de notre code, tant au point de vue des questions matérielles (mobilière et propriété) qu'au point de vue du statut personnel'...
'Notre plus cher désir, ajoutent-ils encore, la chose à laquelle nous tenons le plus, c'est de conserver notre loi ... En nous soumettant en bloc et sans restriction à la naturalisation française, on nous entraînerait en outre à l'abandon de nos coutumes et l'on apporterait une perturbation dans nos moeurs'.
Pétition à MM. les Membres du Parlement par les Indigènes musulmans d'Algérie contre la naturalisation en masse des Musulmans (proposition de loi de Michelin et Gaulier 1887), Lacheraf, p.186.
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Chapter VI

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Synthesis

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1954	506 250 members
1955	389 030
1956	429 653
1959	425 150
1961	407 000
1964	420 000

According to other sources between 280 000 to 300 000
members in 1958
300 000 to 330 000
members in 1962

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Janine Cahen [including the original French copy of Una Resistenza Incompiuta]

Jacques Debouzy

Jacques Jurquet

Jacques Panigel

André Prenant

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and from the archives of

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ANNEX

La Constitution de la IV^e République

La Constitution du 27 octobre 1946¹

Préambule²

Au lendemain de la victoire remportée par les peuples libres sur les régimes qui ont tenté d'asservir et de dégrader la personne humaine, le peuple français proclame à nouveau que tout être humain, sans distinction de race, de religion ni de croyance, possède des droits inaliénables et sacrés. Il réaffirme solennellement les droits et les libertés de l'homme et du citoyen consacrés par la Déclaration des droits de 1789 et les principes fondamentaux reconnus par les lois de la République.

Il proclame, en outre, comme particulièrement nécessaires à notre temps, les principes politiques, économiques et sociaux ci-après:

La loi garantit à la femme, dans tous les domaines, des droits égaux à ceux de l'homme.

Tout homme persécuté en raison de son action en faveur de la liberté a droit d'asile sur les territoires de la République.

Chacun a le devoir de travailler et le droit d'obtenir un emploi. Nul ne peut être lésé, dans son travail ou son emploi, en raison de ses origines, de ses opinions ou de ses croyances.

¹ Les modifications apportées par la loi constitutionnelle du 7 décembre 1954 ont été incorporées dans le texte: elles y sont imprimées en italiques. Les dispositions primitives sont indiquées en note.

² Les dispositions du Préambule de la Constitution du 27 octobre 1946 sont toujours en vigueur, en vertu du préambule de la Constitution du 4 octobre 1958.

Tout homme peut défendre ses droits et ses intérêts par l'action syndicale et adhérer au syndicat de son choix.

Le droit de grève s'exerce dans le cadre des lois qui le réglementent.

Tout travailleur participe, par l'intermédiaire de ses délégués, à la détermination collective des conditions de travail ainsi qu'à la gestion des entreprises.

Tout bien, toute entreprise, dont l'exploitation a ou acquiert les caractères d'un service public national ou d'un monopole de fait, doit devenir la propriété de la collectivité.

La Nation assure à l'individu et à la famille les conditions nécessaires à leur développement.

Elle garantit à tous, notamment à l'enfant, à la mère et aux vieux travailleurs, la protection de la santé, la sécurité matérielle, le repos et les loisirs. Tout être humain qui, en raison de son âge, de son état physique ou mental, de la situation économique, se trouve dans l'incapacité de travailler a le droit d'obtenir de la collectivité des moyens convenables d'existence.

La Nation proclame la solidarité et l'égalité de tous les Français devant les charges qui résultent des calamités nationales.

La Nation garantit l'égal accès de l'enfant et de l'adulte à l'instruction, à la formation professionnelle et à la culture. L'organisation de l'enseignement public gratuit et laïque à tous les degrés est un devoir de l'Etat.

La République française, fidèle à ses traditions, se conforme aux règles du droit public international. Elle

n'entreprendra aucune guerre dans des vues de conquête et n'emploiera jamais ses forces contre la liberté d'aucun peuple.

Sous réserve de réciprocité, la France consent aux limitations de souveraineté nécessaires à l'organisation et à la défense de la paix.

La France forme avec les peuples d'outre-mer une Union fondée sur l'égalité des droits et des devoirs, sans distinction de race ni de religion.

L'Union française est composée de nations et de peuples qui mettent en commun ou coordonnent leurs ressources et leurs efforts pour développer leurs civilisations respectives, accroître leur bien-être et assurer leur sécurité.

Fidèle à sa mission traditionnelle, la France entend conduire les peuples dont elle a pris la charge à la liberté de s'administrer eux-mêmes et de gérer démocratiquement leurs propres affaires; écartant tout système de colonisation fondé sur l'arbitraire, elle garantit à tous l'égal accès aux fonctions publiques et l'exercice individuel ou collectif des droits et libertés proclamés ou confirmés ci-dessus.

TITRE VIII

De l'Union française

Section 1. - Principes.

ART. 60. - L'Union française est formée, d'une part, de la République française qui comprend la France métropolitaine, les départements et territoires d'outre-mer, d'autre part, des territoires et Etats associés.

ART. 61. - La situation des Etats associés dans l'Union française résulte pour chacun d'eux de l'acte qui définit ses rapports avec la France.

ART. 62. - Les membres de l'Union française mettent en commun la totalité de leurs moyens pour garantir la défense de l'ensemble de l'Union. Le gouvernement de la République assume la coordination de ces moyens et la direction de la politique propre à préparer et à assurer cette défense.

Section II. - Organisation.

ART. 63. - Les organes centraux de l'Union française sont la présidence, le Haut Conseil et l'Assemblée.

ART. 64. - Le président de la République française est président de l'Union française, dont il représente les intérêts permanents.

ART. 65. - Le Haut Conseil de l'Union française est composé , sous la présidence du président de l'Union, d'une délégation du gouvernement français et de la représentation que chacun des Etats associés a la faculté de désigner auprès du président de l'Union.

Il a pour fonction d'assister le gouvernement dans la conduite générale de l'Union.

ART. 66. - L'Assemblée de l'Union française est composée, par moitié, de membres représentant la France métropolitaine et, par moitié, de membres représentant les départements et territoires d'outre-mer et les Etats associés.

Une loi organique déterminera dans quelles conditions pourront être représentées les diverses parties de la population.

ART. 67. - Les membres de l'Assemblée de l'Union sont élus par les assemblées territoriales en ce qui concerne les départements et les territoires d'outre-mer; ils sont élus, en ce qui concerne la France métropolitaine, à raison des deux tiers par les membres de l'Assemblée nationale représentant la métropole et d'un tiers par les membres du Conseil de la République représentant la métropole.

ART. 68. - Les Etats associés peuvent désigner les délégués à l'Assemblée de l'Union dans des limites et des conditions fixées par une loi et un acte intérieur de chaque Etat.

ART. 69. - Le président de l'Union française convoque l'Assemblée de l'Union française et en clôt les sessions. Il doit la convoquer à la demande de la moitié de ses membres.

L'Assemblée de l'Union française ne peut siéger pendant les interruptions de session du Parlement.

ART. 70. - Les règles des articles 8, 10, 21, 22 et 23 sont applicables à l'Assemblée de l'Union française dans les mêmes conditions qu'au Conseil de la République.

ART. 71. - L'Assemblée de l'Union française connaît des projets ou propositions qui lui sont soumis pour avis par l'Assemblée nationale ou le gouvernement de la République française ou les gouvernements des Etats associés.

L'Assemblée a qualité pour se prononcer sur les propositions de résolution qui lui sont présentées par l'un

de ses membres et, si elle les prend en considération, pour charger son bureau de les transmettre à l'Assemblée nationale. Elle peut faire des propositions au gouvernement français et au Conseil de l'Union française.

Pour être recevables, les propositions de résolution visées à l'alinéa précédent doivent avoir trait à la législation relative aux territoires d'outre-mer.

ART.72. - Dans les territoires d'outre-mer, le pouvoir législatif appartient au Parlement en ce qui concerne la législation criminelle, le régime des libertés publiques et l'organisation politique et administrative.

En toutes autres matières, la loi française n'est applicable dans les territoires d'outre-mer que par disposition expresse ou si elle a été étendue par décret aux territoires d'outre-mer après avis de l'Assemblée de l'Union.

En outre, par dérogation à l'article 13, des dispositions particulières à chaque territoire pourront être édictées par le président de la République en Conseil des ministres sur avis préalable de l'Assemblée de l'Union.

Section III. - Des départements et des territoires d'outre-mer.

ART.73. - Le régime législatif des départements d'outre-mer est le même que celui des départements métropolitains, sauf exceptions déterminées par la loi.

ART. 74. - Les territoires d'outre-mer sont dotés d'un statut particulier tenant compte de leurs intérêts propres dans l'ensemble des intérêts de la République.

Ce statut et l'organisation intérieure de chaque territoire d'outre-mer ou de chaque groupe de territoires sont fixés par la loi, après avis de l'Assemblée de l'Union française et consultation des assemblées territoriales.

ART. 75. - Les statuts respectifs des membres de la République et de l'Union française sont susceptibles d'évolution.

Les modifications de statut et les passages d'une catégorie à l'autre, dans le cadre fixé par l'article 60, ne peuvent résulter que d'une loi votée par le Parlement, après consultation des assemblées territoriales et de l'Assemblée de l'Union.

ART. 76. - Le représentant du gouvernement dans chaque territoire ou groupe de territoires est le dépositaire des pouvoirs de la République. Il est chef de l'administration du territoire.

Il est responsable de ses actes devant le gouvernement.

ART. 77. - Dans chaque territoire est instituée une assemblée élue. Le régime électoral, la composition et la compétence de cette assemblée sont déterminés par la loi.

ART. 78. - Dans les groupes de territoires, la gestion des intérêts communs est confiée à une assemblée composée de membres élus par les assemblées territoriales.

Sa composition et ses pouvoirs sont fixés par la loi.

ART. 79. - Les territoires d'outre-mer élisent des représentants à l'Assemblée nationale et au Conseil de la République dans les conditions prévues par la loi.

ART. 80. - Tous les ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer ont la qualité de citoyen, au même titre que les nationaux français de la métropole ou des territoires d'outre-mer. Des lois particulières établiront les conditions dans lesquelles, ils exercent leurs droits de citoyens.

ART. 81. - Tous les nationaux français et les ressortissants de l'Union française ont la qualité de citoyen de l'Union française qui leur assure la jouissance des droits et libertés garantis par le préambule de la présente Constitution.

ART. 82. - Les citoyens qui n'ont pas le statut civil français conservent leur statut personnel tant qu'ils n'y ont pas renoncé.

Ce statut ne peut en aucun cas constituer un motif pour refuser ou limiter les droits et libertés attachés à la qualité de citoyen français.

Les constitutions de la France depuis 1789. Présentation par Jacques Godechot, Paris, Garnier, Flammarion, 1970.