

## Data for Analysis of the Intelligentsia in Algeria\*

### Methodological Questions

The sociology of intellectuals in the Arab world, particularly that originating in the West, has often defined its field of analysis on the basis of two principal axes. The first has rediscovered the now classic dichotomy between traditional intellectuals and modern intellectuals, the second, the relationship of both of these to power.

In the former case, which often characterized the French approach, one sought to analyze the relations between two subgroups of a whole named "Intellectuals" or "Intelligentsia"; in the latter, characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon approach, one confronted the entire whole with the political system. In the first, one sought above all to determine the socio-cultural profiles of each of the two entities and the nature of the links (conflicting or not) they maintained with each other; in the second, one tried to measure the degree of integration of these "elites" with the political authority. In either case it was above all a question of designing a sort of *topology* of the socio-cultural field (French case) or the cultural-political field (Anglo-Saxon case) based on analytical principles of the *proximity relationships* among entities belonging to the same aggregate or among distinct aggregates. One could thus define these entities themselves, their mutual relationships and/or their relations with the power structures; in the best cases typologies were constructed whose variation rule rested on the proximity function.

But what about these entities themselves: this intelligentsia, these traditional or modern intellectuals? Very few analyses addressed the ontological question of these groups' social being and their place in the civil society. Here positivism reigned supreme and research plunged naively into the rich empiricism of a verbose field, manipulating genealogy and history, statistics and history, constructing detailed methodologies to encompass an object without first asking the basic question concerning these possibilities and

conditions. The *sociological proofs* of their existence were there, numerous and diverse: statistical data, writings, etc; there was no need to ask about their ontological existence. This was how the Vatican scientists who laboriously observed the movement of the heavenly bodies *around* the earth replied to Galileo, who insisted upon regarding those movements as a merely apparent order, simply the product of eyesight masking the real order.

This rejection of sociology, here simply the specific form of positivism in sociology, has led us to reformulate the question of the intelligentsia by first asking ourselves about the conditions of its existence, its *a priori* potentialities, before studying in the concrete the empirical forms of its deployment in social space and historical time.

In this order of ideas it is within the civil society that we must seek the ontological proof of the intelligentsia's existence. In fact, we consider that the relation of the latter to the former is primordial in all meanings of the term in that it creates the intelligentsia as such: as a social category, that is, producing and/or reproducing meaning (as workmen produce economic goods), meaning that is social and socially necessary, perceived and received as such by the other categories. From this point of view, intellectuals who live in a closed system do not constitute an intelligentsia regardless of how rich their creative works may be, any more than a multitude of University graduates constitutes intellectuals and even less an intelligentsia if the accumulated knowledge has no effect upon the society's symbolic order.

Here the practical aspect is more important than the theoretical aspect since the significant forms depend less upon their coherence and internal logic than upon their *social activism*: that is, their ability to be shared by a larger number of individuals and guide their social conduct. From this point of view, a marabout who still believes that the earth rests on the horns of a bull but whose conviction is shared with conviction by broad masses participates in the intelligentsia more than a brilliant sociologist whose research is read only by his circle of colleagues.

One may call *gravity* or *organicity* the ability of any group of intellectuals—an intelligentsia—to produce and/or reproduce social meaning: that is, a body of socially significant ideas that make it possible to form and inform the conduct of all or part of the civil

society in which the group is situated, and thus to form and inform social praxis.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning with this fundamental question, in as much as it constitutes our subject—the intelligentsia, one may formulate other enquiries such as the sort of meaning systems produced (ideologies) and their social distribution (class or inter-class logics, etc.), the relations linking the different systems (alliance, parallelism, antagonism, etc.), their relative proximity to political decision-making centers, how they are reproduced (universities, mosques, clandestine groups, etc.), and how they are socialized (official media, cinema, TV, cassettes, books, etc.). Beginning with this question thus makes possible a sociology of intellectuals: an empirical, but not empiricist, analysis of the formation and structure of the networks of meaning that constitute the society's symbolic order and give it its own identity.

In analyzing the intelligentsia we must distinguish two levels corresponding to its two basic dimensions. As an intellectual entity the intelligentsia produces and/or reproduces a system of ideas and claims owing to a content analysis whose aim will be to determine its genealogy, its internal consistency, its rationality, its relations with other systems, its overall theoretical profile, its *look*, whether modernist or traditionalist, religious or laic, etc.

As a social entity, the intelligentsia must be able to produce not only ideas but implications: ideas, that is, with a social meaning. Here the task of analysis is to measure the signifying effect of these ideas, their gravity.

One must note that there are no mechanical relationships between the theoretical effect of a system of ideas and its practical effect, between its logical coherence and its social gravity. A true idea does not necessarily take hold of the masses, whereas an incoherent system of ideas can have higher efficacy than one might have anticipated. Nazism, an unlikely aberration from the logical and scientific point of view, set on the march millions of individuals considered rational but who were deeply convinced by the irrationality of that ideology. An idea's power to convince in society is not measured by its intrinsic truth, and the organicity of an intelligentsia is not the effect of the greater or lesser rationality of the system of ideas it produces.

Analysis of any given intelligentsia must thus distinguish between these two levels and operate simultaneously on these two

planes: the plane of ideas and the plane of significance, the theoretical plane and the organic.

This is the approach we have tried to adopt for the Algerian case.

### Data for an Analysis of the Present Situation

As indicated above in our theoretical remarks, we have separated the analysis of the production and/or reproduction of idea systems from their socialization into significance—the theoretical dimension from the practical dimension, it being understood that if the former type of analysis can give us a picture of the intellectual field in contemporary Algeria, only the latter will permit us to evaluate its organicity: the extent, that is, of its penetration of the civil society, thereby giving us the ontological proof of the intelligentsia's social existence. What in fact, is an intelligentsia if not a transformation group situated at the interface between two collectivities—here the intellectuals and the civil society—transforming ideas produced in the former into active meanings in the latter: knowledge in action?

### The Role and Place of the University

The university in modern times and in many countries has been a decisive breeding ground of the intelligentsia. In colonial Algeria, despite the ambiguous nature of the Algerian University of the time, Algerian students nevertheless played an important role in the formation of a nationalist culture necessary for the development of the national liberation movement. More than two decades after independence things have evidently greatly changed. We are far from the circumstances of the colonial situation; the figures at this level are significant.

In 1954, just before the war of liberation was launched, there were in Algeria about a thousand University graduates of whom 354 were lawyers; 165 doctors, pharmacists and dentists; 350 public servants (including 185 secondary school teachers); a hundred or so officers in the French Army; and fewer than 30 engi-

neers. Less than 14 percent of the Algerian population was literate, one-fourth of them in Arabic.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years later the cultural landscape has been turned upside down. With nearly six million children in school: 200,000 students, some ten thousand teaching in the University, 200,000 teachers at other levels, and 15,000 engineers; the cultural backwardness wrought by French colonialism is being rapidly corrected even though the overall illiteracy rate is nearly 50 percent.<sup>3</sup>

A sign of the times: there are today holders of the *licence* University degree, particularly in the social sciences, who cannot find work, or find it only with difficulty, whereas in colonial Algeria a Muslim with a bachelor's degree was considered a high-level intellectual.

This extremely rapid growth of personnel in schools, the University, and other training systems has, certainly, had an immediate effect on the spread of knowledge and on raising the overall intellectual level of the society, but, paradoxically, it has also contributed to the transformation in an unexpected direction of the role the University once played in the country's intellectual area.

In fact, current graduates of the Algerian University, simply because they are so numerous, no longer have the privileged rank enjoyed by their elders of the 1950s and 1960s due to their relative scarcity. The enormous quantitative progress by the training and education system has brought about a surplus and cheapening of its products: the degrees granted, and the graduates receiving them; the latter's claim to intellectuality has diminished along with the demands made upon them. Today, a University graduate is no longer equated with an intellectual, this label being applied with increasing selectivity to restricted categories of individuals. The titles accorded by the University have thus lost some of their prestige, and even if they still confer the right to a certain social status they no longer give automatic access to the class of intellectuals. The Algerian University is no longer the quasi-exclusive provider of Algerian intellectuals.

But this sociological banalization of the University graduate, among other results, has also closed the doors of political decision-making centers to University personnel. Before independence and during the ensuing few years the holder of a University *licence*, simply because he was relatively rare, was sought out by those holding local or central power and led inevitably to play the role of

"prince's counselor," whether in a regional or local party office, a central administration or any other decision-making center. In close touch with politics, the academics became politicized and considered this dimension as natural to their function. The prestige of the University label was such that politicians of indisputable historical legitimacy sometimes felt obliged to study at the University to acquire a University legitimacy deemed necessary for the political function. Thus we saw thousands of ALN and FLN militants emerging from the maquis and the underground and crowded into the classrooms of the various faculties.

Rendered banal by their numbers, the University graduates today can at best aspire to a role of scribe vis-à-vis those wielding power, when indeed they do not assume the task of executing orders, possessing a given coefficient of competence. In so doing, they depoliticize themselves, and the dimension that characterized their elders no longer appears here except in the defense of their categorical interests. They were the cadres of the revolution, then of the nation; now they are merely white-collar workers in a more complex society.

Thus, the first result of the rapid cultural development of independent Algeria (both schools and University) is revealed in a transformation of the University's role and the loss of its position in the society's cultural field. The central locus of intellectual activity before independence and the ensuing years, the University now tends to become an advanced training apparatus seeking rather an economic and social function than any ambition to gather the country's intelligentsia around itself. By socializing and democratizing itself, the Algerian University, paradoxically, seems to have lost the intellectual hegemony it was once able to wield over the society's cultural field.

This loss of hegemony, in our view, was also, here again, unexpectedly and paradoxically, the effect of the policy of Arabization applied after the 1970s, which has produced a total change in the society's cultural field. Here again we are far from the colonial era when the Arabic language taught, or badly taught, as a foreign language was written by less than four percent of Algerians.<sup>4</sup> This led one observer, and he was a colonial, to exclaim "this country's language no longer has any significant place in official education, to the point where many native students cannot speak their mother tongue correctly, or write it." It is in the parochial schools estab-

lished by the Ulama Association<sup>5</sup>, funded by private organizations and subjected to many vexations by the French administration, that the teaching of Arabic as a modern language managed to survive. At independence the task of reviving the national language was immense. It was undertaken with great fanfare and produced impressive quantitative results.<sup>6</sup>

But these results were not all positive. It certainly broke the monopoly that the French paradigm exercised over its colonial creation by uprooting its means of distribution, but it was unable to produce an alternative model. Its promoters, indeed, drew their strengths from materials and examples from other Arab countries, themselves still dependent upon their erstwhile colonizers. The University's resumption of the national language thus meant a lowering of the intellectual level of its pedagogic offerings without avoiding the dependence upon foreigners imported along with the experience of other Arab countries. Neither eliminated nor even attenuated were the conflicts that, during the colonial period, had set the *traditional elites* trained in the parochial schools and Arab universities (particularly al-Zaituna at Tunis, al-Qarawiyyin at Fez and al-Azhar at Cairo) against the *modern elites* produced by the French school and university system. Moreover, these conflicts were amplified and spread through other centers of activity in the country that were Arabized more slowly. Thus, the economic spheres of activity, still mostly administered in the French language, found it difficult to admit Arabic-speaking graduates, and remained virtually impermeable to University influence. Gradually, thus, a cleavage occurred that may have become irrevocable within the intellectual field covered by the University. Two sub-divisions were created: the first corresponds generally to the humanities and is expected to be totally covered by instruction in the national language; the second, corresponding to the natural sciences, is destined to escape even partial Arabization. *Positive* sciences thus in a foreign language, *normative* sciences in the Arabic language or, to put it briefly, French-speaking engineers and Arabic-speaking ideologues.

The linguistic dynamic of reinstating the national language, thus, by its induced effects went beyond its proper limits and produced a scission in the University system.

The conflict logic that moves it to action, carried along by the linguistic distinguishing feature, distributes along opposing axes not

only distinct professional bodies but also different norms and values. As an intellectual breeding ground and privileged source of an eventual intelligentsia the Algerian University has split into two sub-systems which no alternative synthesis appears able to unify in the near future. Furthermore, the breadth of the space separating the two sub-systems, exacerbated by categorical conflicts (the different economic and social evaluations of the two groups of professions) but also political and ideological (technical legitimacy for the engineer, social legitimacy for the physician, moral for the historian), increases by the contact with active life which closes each of them off into parallel sectors (culture, teaching and media for some, industry, agriculture and infrastructure for others). This parallelism prevents or at least makes improbable any exchange dialectic, leading each to deploy itself according to its specific logic and the principle of mutual exclusion: the habitual normativism of the former standing side by side with the pragmatism of the latter without meeting unless in confrontation.

But this process of segmentation of the University system eventually ends in *self-destruction* of the University as the privileged source of the intellectuals necessary for the formation of an intelligentsia. The former sub-system has certainly produced *indicators of meaning*, individuals possessing a system of significance, but they work in a vacuum because their ties with the society's concrete experience, the empirical richness of its activities, are weak. They are signifiers without a signified object, values that turn into sermons, a "you must be" no longer enlightened by a *real-life being*, unless by way of an aleatory and indistinct picture that cannot be transformed into knowledge.

As for the second sub-system, it continues to produce doctors and engineers, agronomists and business managers, but it now does so only through the narrow peep-hole of a technology taken as is, without legitimacy beyond its *social utility*, silent as to anything else.

Individuals, thus, certainly possessing effective technique but unable to translate it into a system of meanings in the *social sense*. Signified objects without signifiers, to compare them with those above, a *real-life being* but no longer informed by a *you must be*, save by way of the juxtaposition of heterogeneous values of various origins in the form of *syncretism*.

In both cases, thus, we are dealing with semi-intellectuals, each cut off from the other's dimension, led by the conflict logic of the University system<sup>7</sup> to deploy itself according to a division of labor—simple technicians on one side, pure ideologues on the other—that forbids them any possibility of *organic synthesis* and therefore of being transformed into intellectuals.

The evolution of the Algerian University has ended up structurally limiting its ability to produce intellectuals able to form the kernel of a national intelligentsia. The evolution of social movements piloted by the Algerian University or supported by it is in this way indicative of the shift of its position in the country's cultural field and of the transformation of its role.

In general terms, we may distinguish four great historical *moments* in the brief period since independence in 1962.

—The political moment, characterized by an extremely active role by the University in the political battles that accompanied the country's independence and continued until the beginning of the 1970s. Possessing a dynamic union maintaining close ties with the student base but also with labor and peasant unions, the Algerian University participated at the latter's side in their struggle for self-management and free trade unions; it took the lead in its own struggles for liberties in general, academic freedom, etc.<sup>8</sup>

—The economic moment, also characterized by extremely active involvement of the University but this time oriented toward economic and social problems arising from the agrarian revolution, and toward socialist management of businesses. It did, it is true, lose its union, UNEA, for whose autonomy it had fought bitterly, but the new organization, UNJA,<sup>9</sup> allowed it to make its presence felt in the cities and in the countryside, as well as in its own domain, by establishing pedagogical committees, holding national conferences, etc.<sup>10</sup>

—The cultural moment: it began at the first of the 1980s and was expressed in violent internal struggles among students, between laicists and Islamic integrationists, between Baathists and Berbers...and exhausted them all amid the general indifference of a civil society bogged down in the inescapable difficulties of daily life.<sup>11</sup>

—In the last moment, finally, which one may describe as that of pure negativism, the University renounced its role as active center of the intelligentsia in its political, economic or cultural form, to "return to the ranks" and, like all the other institutions, face up to

the economic, social, political and cultural problems of the society as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, this evolution of the Algerian University would not have been dramatic and would even have been entirely normal if the reduction of its privilege as the sole provider of intellectuals to the intelligentsia had been accompanied by the formation of other poles capable of playing an analogous role. We would thus have moved from the model inherited from France, characterized until the 1970s by a quasi-monopoly by the University over the national intellectual field, to a model more diversified, hence more balanced and less centralized.

But several conditions would have had to coincide to make such an alternative possible, some among the intellectuals themselves, others within the civil society, and finally some within the state and the political system. These were lacking in the Algerian case, and this brought about not only the end of the privileged University-intelligentsia relationship but also the improbability if not the impossibility of other spheres establishing themselves as intellectual poles.

Let us examine those three conditions one by one.

#### The Intellectual and National Acculturation

Dozens of works have been written on the cultural effects of the colonization of Algeria, notably on the destruction of the society's linguistic abilities.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of the century, after 70 years of colonial predation, very few Algerians could read or write either Arabic or French and those who did formed a very thin layer set apart from the population by writing. They were modern Algeria's first intellectuals. Some wrote French, others classical Arabic, but none of them either spoke or wrote the language of their society. This separation had dramatic effects on the evolution of Algerian society and tragic ones on its intelligentsia.

While spoken Arabic and local dialects were becoming impoverished in both content and syntax, and incapable of dealing with situations transcending the local space in which they were expressed, the Arabic of the Ulama was frozen in an outmoded, haughty *classicism* that despised the popular language and forbade any possibility of interchange with it.<sup>14</sup> On its side, the drawing power of the

French language separated those who spoke and wrote it from their origins to the extreme limit, reached by some, where they could no longer write nor even speak their own mother tongue.

The first Algerian intellectuals were thus from the first severed from their umbilical cord—language, which alone could keep them organically linked to their society. They followed their individual dynamic, some seeking in Middle Eastern heroes<sup>15</sup> and a *classical* language dating from the golden age values and materials which would make a place for them on the Algerian cultural scene but never integrate them in depth into the popular body of civil society. Others drew upon the cultural patrimony of France identified with human freedoms, which could at most help to combat French colonialism but rarely, if ever, penetrate the collective national consciousness. The ulama sought more to reform the society's morals than to understand it from within: another group conducting a dialogue with French colonialism in order to ease its oppression.<sup>16</sup> But for all, the national community as a cultural entity remained the blind spot in their outlook. All, of course, spoke in the society's name, but it was the ability to write that gave them this right rather than their organic inclusion in the symbolic order which constituted it as a society and culture.

It is, moreover, striking to note that during the entire period from the first of the century to the launching of the war of national liberation in 1954, Algeria did not experience a cultural revival comparable to those that accompanied the rise of nationalism in other countries.<sup>17</sup> Algeria knew no Pushkins nor Gogols who revolutionized the Russian language, nor the Petofis, nor the German romantics who gave their respective nations their titles of cultural nobility, nor the Lu Sins or the Akugatawas who revolutionized the act of writing and raised the language of their country not only to the rank of a modern national language but also to that of a universal one.

In our view, the difference between our Algerian intellectuals and these other intelligentsias stems from the different relationships they had with their respective community, its cultural dimension, its language, and its values.<sup>18</sup>

The former manipulated ideas based on models imported from East or West, and behaved like intellectuals producing ideologies based on "what should be." The latter produced meaning beginning with local cultural materials; they lived like intelligentsias, fashioning

out of the actually existing entity of the community a national culture, music, poetry, short story, novel, etc.

The feeble organicity of Algerian intellectuals of this period had effects on the cultural evolution both of Algerian society and of the intellectuals themselves.

Left more or less to itself, the civil society expressed its cultural dimension according to its own dynamic determined both by the socio-economic conditions of the moment but also by the feeble patrimony that French colonialism had not yet managed to destroy. It had its heroes and its values; it continued to produce its music and poetic genres and worship its own culture, which became the *popular culture*, as distinct from that of the intellectuals.

There were thus two cultures, evolving parallel to each other and separated one from the other by writing. But in this doubling up the popular culture shriveled up, limited its horizon to the province and the affairs of the tribe. The language petrified, transformed into a patois invaded by Italian, Spanish and French; unable to produce anything new it simply repeated the old, and clung to this repetitive logic as to a life buoy. It became a resistance culture, one of survival, and became conservative, the better to resist, to survive.

As for the Algerian intellectuals, they were to pay a heavy price for their weak organicity. With their ideas they swept a very broad field, but these ideas were seldom transformed into social meanings and had only a feeble praxeological effect. They were thus unable to transform their intellectual products into culture and themselves into an intelligentsia. The mediations necessary for such a metamorphosis did not exist certainly, and they would have to be created; but that would have required a complete reorientation of the axis around which their activity was directed, a revolution of their angle of view, a total change of perspective. They were incapable of such a revolution, for although they had an effective awareness of belonging to their community, all their writings<sup>19</sup> show that they looked upon it as a poor assemblage devoid of consistency, lacking vitality, unable to regenerate itself and thus in need of a massive importation of exogenous elements.

The Russian populists had raised the people to the rank of a transcendental category; the German romantics had made myths of their country's history; American friends of the Indians had glorified the accomplishments of the Aztecs or Incas; the Algerian in-

tellectuals, troubled at heart by an inferiority complex that a succession of colonial defeats had etched in their memory, drew the materials for their work from elsewhere than their community.

The society was perceived as a target to be reached, to be reshaped, occasionally to be operated like a launching pad from which action might be triggered. They were Arabophiles, Islamophiles, Francophiles or Europhiles, but only weakly Algerophile.

While Balzac combed the French provinces in search of his characters, while Gogol meticulously painted the peasant in *Dead Souls* or the bureaucrat in *The Cloak*, while the German romantics reconstituted in detail the genealogy of their legends, the Algerian intellectuals looked in Saudi Arabia or France for models to propose for a society they saw only with the reformer's eye.

Separated by writing from their society, they further broadened the distance by their way of looking upon it and by the kind of materials they used in producing their idea systems. In so doing, they made themselves vulnerable at two levels.

As a social stratum, the Algerian intellectuals lived on the fringes of the civil society, in the narrow space allowed them by the colonial administration but also without deep bonds with their community.<sup>20</sup> For the former, they were simply *agitators* to be kept under tight control; for the latter they remained *lettered* persons who did not live like the people and therefore could not feel like them. As intellectuals, on their own initiative they denied themselves the option of drawing upon the local culture and thereby rendered themselves sterile as producers of ideas. Above all they were overtaken by the evolution of a society in whose vitality they had not really believed and which they had never wished, nor known how, to observe with modesty and attention. They were still polemicizing over the status of Algeria in the French empire<sup>21</sup> when the first nationalist cells were discussing independence. As intellectuals they should have been in advance of events; instead they were one period behind their own present.

#### The Intellectuals and the National Question

The weak organicity of the Algerian intellectuals had thus led them step by step into a political myopia which was to prevent

them from foreseeing the rise of nationalism, but especially to appraise accurately its strength and intensity among the masses.

Here also dozens of works have been written on this question, and we refer the reader to them. If we exclude those of polemical import seeking to justify *a posteriori* the participation of various groups in the Algerian nationalist adventure, the more objective works do not fail to emphasize the inimical relations which from the first characterized the contacts between the intellectuals and the nationalist movement, the nationalists reproaching the intellectuals if not for their treason, at least for their feeble participation in the political struggle.

In broad terms we may distinguish four important moments in the evolution of these relations, each corresponding to a stage of the nationalist movement.<sup>22</sup> The moment of the North African Star, ENA, 1926-1936; the moment of the Algerian People's Party, PPA, 1937-1946; the moment of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, MTLD, 1946-1954; and the moment of the National Liberation Front, FLN, 1954-1962.

For the great moments and the historic decisions that marked them (demand for Algerian independence by the ENA, organization of a mass party, adoption of the principle of armed struggle as the means of liberation, creation of a clandestine army, etc.) we may note, as did the authors who have studied this period, the limited participation by Algerian intellectuals in their operations.<sup>23</sup>

This is borne out by their almost total absence from the leadership of the nationalist party, under the various names it adopted, but especially by the structurally peripheral character of their presence in the revolutionary organization.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the moment under consideration, they were never *fellow travelers* for the nationalist revolutionaries who in 1920 had begun to organize themselves within the emigrant Algerian proletariat in France: hence the negative, *anti-intellectual* perception these latter had of them.

This rapport between the Algerian intellectuals and the nationalist movement had several consequences of which two seem to me interesting to note in explaining the psychology of the actors confronting each other and the group dynamic it induced through this period.

Militant revolutionaries have indeed always looked upon intellectuals with envy (the prestige of the lettered man was always very great in a society with an illiterate majority) but also with distrust.

They were reproached at once for the tardiness of their participation in revolutionary action, and the *coldness* of their analyses, which was equated with lukewarmness in their convictions; they were accused of lacking courage, of impulses to retreat to reformism, etc.<sup>25</sup> They were kept virtually under surveillance and even later, when they joined the underground, they remained under suspicion to the point where they were physically liquidated, as in the atrocious incident of the *bleuite* in the Wilaya III underground.<sup>26</sup>

As for the intellectuals, they joined the revolution with the heavy feeling of guilt for not having preceded it by their action nor even foreseen it in their writings. They then internalized the attitude of their partners who were their elders in revolutionary activism and who thus became their god-fathers, guides and (more practically) their seniors in the organization's ranks. They quietly fitted themselves into the role of *servants* of the revolution, of *clerks*, in order to make others forget (and to forget themselves) the historic error they bore like a burden until independence and long after.

The revolutionary nationalist movement was born and developed virtually without them; they ended up joining it but without ever seriously influencing the course of its evolution. They were simply its instruments, and those who refused to play that role were severely brought back into step.

Their absence or at least their slight influence in the course of the nationalist revolution had, despite all, some very serious consequences for it.

I have shown elsewhere<sup>27</sup> that this situation is characteristic of the majority of Arab nationalist experiences, but in Algeria it reaches its ideal limit.<sup>28</sup>

Everywhere in these countries, in fact, the nationalist movement developed in a *cultural solitude*, relative for the other countries, nearly absolute for Algeria, which was to determine both its structure and its historical diachrony. The intellectual elites in fact were distributed according to great currents which met with nationalism only tangentially. These currents included the pan-Islamism of the ulama whose religious cosmopolitanism led them to ignore the nationalist idea, the Algerian patriotism of the assimilationists or other federalists who had accepted the fact of French imperialism and merely negotiated over the form of subjection, and

finally the Communists whose (Soviet) proletarian nationalism pushed them to subordinate national demands to a worldwide strategy defined by the Kremlin. All those major currents that dominated the Arab cultural field, particularly in Algeria, were led by the requirements of their ideological pre-suppositions to underestimate, if not to oppose, the fact of Algerian nationalism.<sup>29</sup>

The latter thus developed at the juncture of all these currents, opposing them according to the circumstances of the moment or allying with them when necessary, appropriating from each of them the elements of an ideology that today one may reduce, very schematically and roughly, to these two operative principles: syncretism and populism.

The first made possible, without a previous synthesis, the juxtaposition of various elements borrowed from different, even incompatible, ideological systems. Algerian nationalism, despite what circumstances might lead one to believe, was the very opposite of a doctrinaire ideology as Badism was for the ulama or Stalinism for the Communists of the PCA. In this way it was able to be at once Arabist, Islamist, socialist, laic, archaistic in many ways but also modernist in others, etc. The unifying principle of all these elements of such disparate origins and content lay not in an operating theoretical modality but in a political will entirely enclosed in the dyad *independence-people*.

This twin notion drew all its strength from its ideological activism among the masses: its ability, that is, to transform itself into a *system of meanings* able to inform collective conduct, to form a praxis. The currents of thought, the other parties, did not reach beyond the level of ideas and the space of those able to understand them: the intellectuals.

Its practical effectiveness within the masses was indubitable, and lent it an obvious political supremacy. But its relative theoretical poverty at the same time permitted it to draw upon the theoretical corpus of its partners and adversaries without risk of loss; it remained an ideological spring that never dried up.

Populism, this ideology of a plebian society that M. Harbi has well described, was thus the expression of a nationalist movement the simplicity of whose objectives enabled it to anchor itself deeply in the collective mass consciousness, but at the same time closed it off from other contributions save in the form of syncretism, its only appropriate way of reaching understanding of concepts.

All the ideologies of the various categories of intellectuals could be pasted onto the central principle of populism and that is what gradually happened, notably after the outbreak of armed struggle, but they did so only in this fashion, outside layers put in place around the central core with no pretension to hegemony.

The intellectuals' movement also took the form of their ideas. In droves, they obeyed the strike order and placed themselves at the service of the revolution, joining the internal underground and organizations abroad or foreign university establishments where the FLN leaders sent them.

Upon independence, they returned home and entered the public service just as they had previously placed themselves at the revolution's service. Some became brilliant diplomats, others constituted the core of the technocrats who directed the country's industrialization. But all kept the indelible label of a social layer that was merely an adjunct to a revolution it had ignored in its first generation and finally submitted to in its second.

It is this heavy heritage that the third generation is now paying for, oblivious of its historical depth.

### **Conclusion: Intelligentsia and State**

The relative absence of the intelligentsia in the Algerian national experience confined the latter's cultural dimension to the political field and led the power system, already suspicious because of its origin and evolution vis-à-vis the intellectuals, both to downplay their role and to control their activities.

They had been servants of the revolution, they were to remain those of the state.

This functionalist vision of the intelligentsia's role, that the revolutionary moment had made possible and even necessary, became untenable after independence. It was so for everyone.

Lacking an intelligentsia, the state had intellectual servants who became impoverished as intellectuals and ended by providing no service. They became simply bureaucrats, producing no ideas and even less meaning. The service of the older ones carried along by the revolutionary dynamic had some results; once the revolutionary moment passed, it was mere servility, and furthermore barren.

The most honest of the second-generation intellectuals took refuge in the silence of embassies or factories; they managed foreign relations and production techniques brilliantly, but were otherwise silent.

As for the new generation, analyzed in the first part of our presentation, it bogged down into a functionalism inherited from its elders, naively believing that it was the only condition of its existence. It functioned in this mold, which the bureaucratic system had meanwhile organized meticulously, but lost its identity as intelligentsia in becoming a mere *transmission belt*.

Paradoxically, the state lost any possibility of cultural hegemony over the masses by its success in enslaving the intelligentsia.<sup>30</sup>

The civil society had profoundly changed since the arrival of independence. The independence-people couplet had lost its ideological activism, and the nationalist party its hegemony over the masses. Relay by the intelligentsia, formerly of secondary importance, now became necessary. Instead of evolving in this direction, the political system repeated its past experience and lost both the intelligentsia and the civil society. The latter, meanwhile, worked upon by other currents with integrating principles (Berberism, Islamism, etc.), informed by other significance systems and formed according to a different praxis, stood apart, inaccessible to either one.

In the space of a little less than a century, the Algerian intelligentsia found itself for the third time moving against the current of its society's history.

## Endnotes

\* This text was the subject of a presentation to the colloquium on the intelligentsia in the Arab World organized by the Arab Sociological Association in Cairo in March 1987. It was published in Arabic in the periodical *al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi*, Beirut, September, 1987.

<sup>1</sup> For this definition, we are broadly inspired by the work of Gramsci on intellectuals. See *Cahiers de Prisons* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> G. Perville, *Les étudiants algériens de l'université française* (Paris: CNRS, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> S. Bedrani, *Les stratégies du développement social en Afrique du nord* (Algiers: CREAD, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> R. Balan, quoted by Perville, *op. cit.* p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> The number of schools operated by the Association has been estimated at 200, with 35,000 pupils. For the ulama's work see A. Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> All university systems tend to reproduce in their internal organization the division of society into two levels. Everywhere the "cultural tracks" corresponding today to the social sciences differ by a whole series of features from the "technical tracks"—the technicians. But this distinction does not lead, as in the Algerian case, to a nearly watertight barrier between the two sub-assemblies. We see philosophers inspired by the most recent research in physics or genetics to reflect, following Plato but with modern material, on *time* or *life*, just as sociologists take over the mathematic theory of aggregates to orchestrate their social analyses. The

pathological over-valuation of the "linguistic discriminant" in the Algerian case has played the role of an additional frontier added to the others to make communication between the two sub-assemblies less fluid.

7 At the time one read M. Lacheraf and F. Fanon, theoreticians of autogestion, whereas the dynamic center of the University was situated in the Faculty of Letters.

8 The UNEA was the heir of the UGEMA but it refused to approve the June 1965 coup d'état of Colonel Boumèdiène and resisted on the dual front of the liberation of prisoners (among them former president Ben Bella) and the freedom to organize.

9 The new organization, National Union of Algerian Youth, had permitted the authorities to amalgamate the students with youth as a whole, but thanks to the volunteer program instituted by the UNJA to help carry out the agrarian revolution, this organization became very dynamic and drew close to Boumèdiène.

10 The tone was set by economism and the faculty of Economic Sciences gave the University its overall dynamic. S. Amin, Bettelheim, G. Frank were read. It was the era of developmentalism.

11 The theme of going back to the sources mainly dominated this juncture. Writing history and research into origins concentrated all energies and people began to read M. Harbi, Ben Badi, and the Fathers of the Nahda ("rebirth"). At the University, Marxism gave way to functionalism, while cultural problems threw the old economic preoccupations into oblivion. Like the old Faculty of Letters, the Faculty of Economic Sciences became a subject of indifference.

12 This is the present moment, characterized by a general indifference corresponding to a sort of torpor that has seized the whole university system. The majority of social movements are developing outside the university system, around the mosques, in the sports stadiums.

13 See in particular, G. Pervill, op. cit., but also M. Kaddache, *Histoire du nationalisme algérien*, 2 vols., (Algiers: ENAL, 1980); M. Lacheraf, *Algérie, Nation et Société* (Paris: Maspéro, 1965); A. K. Saadallah, *La montée du nationalisme en Algérie* (Algiers: ENAL, 1983)

14 M. Lacheraf has well analyzed this decrepitude of the people's language and of the formation of an impoverished popular culture. See *Algérie, Nation et Société*.

15 The Algerian ulama drew abundantly upon the Nahda patrimony and Islamic civilization, but choosing elements that were not often the most modern. They admired the personality of Abd al-Aziz, the founder of the Saudi dynasty, and were more inspired by Wahabbism, a rigorous doctrine born in the Saudi desert, than by al-Afghani and his search for a new modernity. They thus brought from the East its conservative element, and *reactionary* in the sense of return to the sources, the *salaf*.

16 Among the ulama's *bêtes noires* were the marabout brotherhoods, popular forms of religious practice. The ulama fought as hard against their activity as they did to resist domination by French culture.

17 We say comparable in the sense of its structure, tightly overlapping the daily life of the community, and of its *carrying vector*, oriented toward restoring the cultural worth of its history and its present values.

18 In 1930 an Algerian pundit was to describe this situation, writing "How often have I heard people of the lower classes, and even of the bourgeoisie, complain bitterly of our intellectuals! Their quite numerous complaints might be summed up as follows: they desert us, they destroy our hopes, they think only of enriching themselves, becoming powerful, and living well; they see our misery: you would think they had neither our flesh nor our blood." Mohamed Ben Sai, in *La voix des Humbles*, quoted in Kaddache, op. cit., Book I, p. 209.

19 From Ben Badis to Ferhat Abbas, by way of C. Benhabyles and T. Ben Jelloun, the majority of intellectuals of the time were convinced of Algeria's social and cultural poverty. A. Memmi translated this under the theme of self-hatred, which reappears in an anguishing way in most writings by Algerian intellectuals, both Arabic- and French-speaking.

20 Of the fifty-odd listed by S. Ihaddaden in his study *Histoire de la presse indigène en Algérie* (Algiers: ENAL, 1983) the majority of them had a short life span, cut short by administrative seizures, jailing of editors, etc. One may furthermore note that the preference accorded by the Algerian intellectuals for this form of intervention in the national cultural field was bewildering, since it allowed the written word to reach the great mass of Algerians, then illiterate.

21 The notion of Algerian independence was the exclusive property of the nationalist party, the ENA and later the PPA. It long set the PPA (until after World War II), then led by Messali Hadj, apart from all the other Algerian organizations and intellectual currents.

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22 We say nationalist rather than national to distinguish this movement and its various organizations from other national associations which became pro-independence only very late.

23 One of the ENA's first leaders recently related in a lecture how he and his fellow party leaders, in Paris in 1928, were obliged to pay foreigners, among them a Dutch student, to write down their ideas.

24 See the composition of the first leadership of l'Etoile Nord Africaine (ENA), M. Kaddache, op. cit., p. 190, and that of the Wilaya (province) chiefs in 1956 (i.e., thirty years later) in M. Harbi, *Les archives de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Jeune-Afrique, 1981). For more details, refer to the works of M. Harbi which include, besides the just cited volume *La guerre commence en Algérie* (Paris: Complexe, 1985) and *Aux origines du FLN* (Paris: Ch. Bourgois, 1975).

25 "Intellectual" had become a sort of shameful epithet sometimes applied to someone to make fun of him. In the conflict between Messali Hadj and the members of his Party's Central Committee in 1952 and 1953 he called them intellectuals (among other things) in order to dissociate himself from them before the masses.

26 The *bleuite* was a plot engineered by the French intelligence services to poison the maquis. It consisted of spreading the allegation that some organized militants in the A.L. N. were playing a double game and were actually working for the French army. The Wilaya III leaders took the bait and liquidated several hundred persons, the majority of them intellectuals.

27 Ali El-Kenz, *La dimension culturelle du développement dans le Monde Arabe*. UNU, Third World Forum, Dakar, 1986.

28 Ideal type in M. Weber's meaning.

29 Revolutionary movements have often been preceded or accompanied by an intellectual effervescence that later enabled them to spread in depth. The 1789 French revolution is obviously the classic case, but it is also true of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Castroism in Latin America, and Vietnam. In all these cases intellectual figures actively participated in revolutionary action, sometimes at the leadership level. This was not the case in the Algerian revolution, which is atypical from this point of view. It would be an interesting comparison to study the FLN's sociology and that of the OLP, which from this point of view is its extreme opposite.

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30 Defining their actual role, a Minister of Culture asked them to transmit the revolution's message to the masses. He mistook his period: there was no longer any message and the revolution had changed.