

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE SWORD AND THE PEN: LIFE WRITINGS BY MILITANT-AUTHORS OF THE VIỆT MINH AND FRONT DE LIBÉRATION NATIONALE (FLN)

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This dissertation examines four life writings by militant-authors of the Việt Minh and Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN): Ngô Văn Chiêu's *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng Văn Việt's *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* (2000), Si Azzedine's *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Saadi Yacef's two-volume *La Bataille d'Alger* (2002). In describing the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions through the perspectives of combatants who participated in their respective countries' national liberation struggles, the texts reveal that four key factors motivated the militants and led them to believe that independence was historically inevitable: (1) a philosophical, political, and ideological framework, (2) the support of multiple segments of the local population, (3) the effective use of guerrilla and psychological warfare, and (4) military, moral, and political assistance provided by international allies. By fighting for the independence of their countries and documenting their revolutionary experiences, the four militant-authors leave their mark on the world using both the sword and the pen.

THE SWORD AND THE PEN: LIFE WRITINGS BY MILITANT-AUTHORS OF THE
VIỆT MINH AND FRONT DE LIBÉRATION NATIONALE (FLN)

by

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Introduction

As the granddaughter of a Vietnamese civilian killed by French troops in North Vietnam in the late 1940's, and the daughter of an officer of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam—more commonly known as South Vietnam—I have always had a vested personal interest in researching and understanding the nationalist insurgencies and revolutions¹ that took place in my country of birth. The French-Indochina² and French-Algerian Wars not only irrevocably redefined the nations involved, they also significantly impacted and continue to shape Western military and political engagement with the non-Western world, the geopolitics of Southeast Asia and North Africa, and global political dynamics. These two revolutionary movements have also had a significant effect on the cultural and literary productions in contemporary Algeria, France, and Vietnam.

Yet scholarly research on the two major insurgent groups in both conflicts—the Việt Minh and Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN)—has largely overlooked the French-language accounts by Vietnamese and Algerian combatants who participated in their respective national liberation struggles. Research from the disciplines of history, military studies, and political science has cited French-language autobiographical accounts by Vietnamese and Algerian militants, but does not offer an in-depth textual analysis of such writings. Meanwhile, research on the cultural productions of the Francophone world overwhelmingly focuses on novels and films from Africa and the Caribbean. Likewise, research in literary studies, cultural studies, and third world studies tend to emphasize cinema and fiction rather than the few French-language life writings by rebel fighters of the Việt Minh and FLN. In this dissertation, I will examine four of these lesser-studied autobiographical accounts by Việt Minh and FLN militants: Ngô Văn

Chiêu's *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng Văn Việt's *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* (2000)³, Si Azzedine's *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Saadi Yacef's two-volume *La Bataille d'Alger* (2002). My approach will involve a close reading of these four texts, focusing on Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of the politically engaged writer as well as Frantz Fanon's theory on violent decolonization.

Scholars researching the French-Indochina War—including Bernard B. Fall, William Duiker, Martin Windrow, David Marr, among others—have cited excerpts of Ngô's⁴ *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* to illustrate Việt Minh tactics.⁵ Yet none have conducted an in-depth analysis of the actual text. An excerpt of *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* is also featured in French political scientist Gérard Chaliand's 1979 anthology, *Stratégies de la guérilla: guerres révolutionnaires et contre-insurrections: anthologie historique de la Longue Marche à nos jours*. A specialist on irregular warfare, terrorism, and insurgencies, Chaliand compiled excerpts from selected writings by militants who had participated in guerrilla warfare. Yet he does not analyze any of the texts featured in the anthology, including Ngô's *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*.

Đặng Văn Việt's *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* has received even less scholarly attention. As of April 2016, it has only been cited in three publications: a bibliography on the French-Indochina war by Alain Ruscio and Michel Bodin, a book review by Michel Bodin in an issue of the journal *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, and a historical analysis of the French Foreign Legion at Điện Biên Phủ by Heinz Duthel.⁶ None of these publications feature an analysis of Đặng's text, which offers his personal testimony on the conflict.

Historians studying the Algerian War—notably Mohammed Harbi, Benjamin Stora, Alistair Horne, Martin Evans, Marnia Lazreg, among others—have cited Azzedine’s *On nous appelait fellaghas* as a primary source that offers an FLN militant’s perspective on the conflict.⁷ Like with Ngô’s work, none of these scholars have analyzed the actual text. In *Dictionnaire des auteurs maghrébins de langue française*, literary scholar Jean Déjeux provides a two-sentence summary of Azzedine’s works, describing *On nous appelait fellaghas* as an interesting account of the Algerian War, but does not analyze the text itself (39). Beatrice Braude and Brigitte Coste also include an excerpt of Azzedine’s memoir to portray the use of literature as a form of literary engagement in *Engagements: Prises de positions littéraires et culturelles*, but does not provide any original analysis of the text. As with *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*, important excerpts of Azzedine’s text appear in Gérard Chaliand’s 1979 anthology in order to illustrate various guerrilla and insurgency techniques used in Algeria. However, Chaliand does not analyze these excerpts.

Of the three authors, Saadi Yacef’s militant experience is the most well-known. His retelling of the FLN’s urban guerrilla warfare campaign against French military and civilian targets during the 1956-1957 Battle of Algiers was famously represented in Gillo Pontecorvo’s acclaimed 1965 film *The Battle of Algiers*. Pontecorvo’s cinematic adaptation has been the subject of numerous academic journal articles, book chapters, and books in the disciplines of postcolonial studies and film studies. The film was inspired by Yacef’s prison memoir, *Souvenirs de la Bataille d’Alger*, which he wrote during his detention at the Barberousse prison and later published in 1962. In fact, Yacef worked with Pontecorvo to develop the screenplay for the film (Harrison 406-407). Scholars

from film studies, political science, and history—including James Le Sueur, Marnia Lazreg, Martin Evans, Rebecca Pauly, among others—have cited *Souvenirs* to illustrate the FLN’s military and political tactics during the war.⁸ Like with *On nous appelleit fellaghas*, Jean Déjeux mentions *Souvenirs* in his overview of Maghrebian writings. However, these scholars do not provide a close analysis of either *Souvenirs* or *La Bataille d’Alger*, a two-volume expanded version published by Publisud in 2002.⁹ The majority of scholarly research on Saadi Yacef’s account of the Battle of Algiers focuses on Pontecorvo’s film or Yacef’s prison memoir, not the lengthier and more detailed *La Bataille d’Alger*.

I select these four lesser-studied accounts in order to contribute a detailed and original analysis of French-language life writings by Vietnamese and Algerian militants to the existing body of scholarly research on the French-Indochina and French-Algerian Wars. As part of their nationalist activism, the Việt Minh rejected the colonial French language and promoted the Vietnamese language as a symbol of Vietnamese identity and culture. As a result, the quantity of French-language writings by Vietnamese authors pales in comparison to that of their African and Caribbean counterparts. Most of the existing memoirs by Việt Minh combatants were written and published in Vietnamese, which severely limits my selection of French-language texts. The few French-language autobiographical accounts of the French-Indochina War—such as General Võ Nguyên Giáp’s *Mémoires, 1946-1954* (2003), Colonel Phạm Thanh Tâm’s *Carnet de guerre d’un jeune Viêt-minh à Diên Biên Phu* (2011), and even Ngô’s *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*—were originally written in Vietnamese and then adapted or translated into French. As indicated by its title, *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955) consists of Ngô’s

journal entries from 1941 until 1952, spanning the early nationalist rebellions to nearly the end of the French-Indochina War. According to the prologue, while Ngô spoke French, he wrote his original journal and notes in Vietnamese. These he gave to Jacques Despuech to translate during the 1954 Geneva Convention. Despuech—a French soldier who lived in Vietnam for years, married into a Vietnamese family, and possessed an excellent understanding of the Vietnamese language and culture—urged Ngô to publish his autobiographical writings. Suffering from a terminal lung ailment caused by napalm bombings during the war, Ngô charged Despuech with the task. Despuech then translated and adapted Ngô’s mass of entries notes into an organized and coherent book. The epilogue reveals that Despuech met with Ngô once again at the end of 1954 to clarify a few details in the writings prior to publishing the text. Despuech’s involvement in the publication of *Journal* leads to possible interpretative issues concerning the text. Despite his extensive knowledge of the Vietnamese language and culture, Despuech’s role in the completion of *Journal* could have resulted in the misrepresentation of certain events and expressions due to language and cultural misunderstandings. Given Despuech’s past as a French colonial officer in Vietnam, political and personal bias may have distorted Ngô’s original account of the war. Nonetheless, *Journal* remains the only published version of Ngô’s writings and merits a thorough analysis. Originally published in 1955 by a French publishing house, Éditions du Seuil, the text is out of publication today.

Aside from what is revealed in the text, not much is known about Ngô’s life. Born into a Vietnamese mandarin¹⁰ family of Catholic faith, Ngô, like many Vietnamese youths in the 1940s, became involved in the anticolonial Communist Việt Minh movement. After joining the Việt Minh, Ngô became a commanding officer who led and

actively participated in numerous attacks against the French Army. The journal details his personal experiences and reflections during the war while contextualizing events within the larger political and historical framework of the time.

In contrast to Ngô, who remains relatively unknown in Vietnam and on the international stage, the other three authors have attracted attention and recognition in their native countries and abroad. Đặng Văn Việt, the author of *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* (2000), is a retired colonel in the People's Army of Vietnam. Under the command of General Giáp, Đặng was in charge of a regiment during the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4—abbreviated in his memoir title as RC 4—when the Việt Minh inflicted its first major defeat on the French Army. Referred to as “la route sanglante” by the French Army, the RC 4 connected a series of French Army posts along the Sino-Vietnamese border—an area of extreme strategic importance during the war and targeted by Việt Minh ambushes from 1947 to 1949. These guerrilla attacks ultimately culminated in the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4 in 1950 (Shrader, *Indochina* 205). Đặng's political memoir focuses on his experiences during the early ambushes and resulting battle. Unlike Ngô's work, *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières*, exclusively focuses on the events surrounding one particular battle instead of reflecting on the entire war. Although a French publishing house, Éditions Le Capucin, published Đặng's memoir in 2000, it is no longer in publication today.

In 2006, Đặng has published a second French-language memoir, *Souvenirs d'un colonel Vietminh*, with the assistance of a French translator. I did not include this text in my analysis for two reasons. First, only the first half of *Souvenirs* pertains to the author's experiences during the French-Indochina War, none of which are as detailed as those

found in *De la RC 4 à la N 4*. Additionally, the second half of *Souvenirs* details Đặng's reflections on the arts, culture, and sports. His overview of 55 years of service to the Vietnamese Communist Party, and a host of other topics, while interesting, are not germane to the focus of my dissertation.

Đặng may have relied on both Vietnamese and French translators to write his French-language text. Although the publication credits for *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* do not list a translator, Đặng first published a Vietnamese-language memoir of his experiences on the Route Coloniale 4 in 1985, fifteen years before the publication of the French-language version. Moreover, *Souvenirs d'un colonel Vietminh* was originally written in Vietnamese, translated into French with the help of a Vietnamese translator, and adapted by a French editor. In spite of these potential interpretative issues, the texts by Đặng and Ngô are among the handful of existing French-language writings by Việt Minh militants and merits an in-depth analysis.

While there are numerous French-language narratives by FLN militants, I selected *On nous appelait fellaghas* and *La Bataille d'Alger* because both texts feature far more detailed descriptions of the authors' experiences during the Algerian War. In addition, I want to add to the existing scholarly research on *The Battle of Algiers*, which, as previously mentioned, overwhelmingly focuses on Pontecorvo's film and Yacef's prison memoir, overlooking the lengthier memoir published in 2002. As *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* covers the span of the French-Indochina War, I included *On nous appelait fellaghas* because it chronicles the entire duration of the French-Algerian War. Likewise, as *De la RC 4 à la N 4* focuses on one battle of the French-Indochina War, I selected *La Bataille d'Alger* because it highlights one specific episode of the French-

Algerian War. A French publishing house, Éditions Stock, published *On nous appelait fellaghas* in 1976, but the memoir is no longer in publication today. Azzedine's second memoir, *Et Alger ne brûla pas*, which he also published with Éditions Stock in 1980, focuses on his role in leading the FLN command in Algiers at end of the Algerian Revolution, ignoring the formation of the FLN and the beginnings of the revolution.¹¹ This second memoir is also out of publication as of April 2016.

On nous appelait fellaghas (1976) recounts Si Azzedine's life from the 1940s until Algerian independence in 1962. Commandant Azzedine—or Si Azzedine—is the battle name of Rabah Zerari, an Algerian Kabyle who joined the FLN and became an important military commander of Wilaya¹² IV during the war. Azzedine also led the autonomous zone in Algiers from January 1962 until independence. While the memoir contains sections on Azzedine's early childhood experiences in Algiers and ends with his political and military activities in post-independence Algiers, the vast majority of the accounts concentrate on his experiences in the rural Wilaya IV, particularly on the FLN's guerrilla strategies and population engagement in the region.

Finally, Yacef's *La Bataille d'Alger* (2002) details one particular battle in the war, including the events leading up to the FLN's 1956 to 1957 campaign in Algiers. Much of the first volume describes Yacef's life and the political situation of Algeria leading up to the launching of the Algerian Revolution in 1954. The second volume focuses on Yacef's command of the FLN cell in Algiers until its dismantlement by French forces in 1957. There is also a third volume, entitled *La Bataille d'Alger: La Guérilla Urbaine*, published two years later in 2004. This last volume is an abridged version of the lengthy memoir and focuses on the FLN's urban guerrilla warfare during the Algiers campaign.

Of the three volumes, only the third has been translated into English. *La Bataille d'Alger* is a far more detailed version of Yacef's original *Souvenirs*, and describes the social, military, and political situation in Algeria from World War II until the end of the Battle of Algiers in 1957. The text not only reveals Yacef's role in coordinating FLN attacks in Algiers, but also illustrates the FLN's political development and operational tactics. Published by Publisud—a French publishing house that specializes in the publication of books pertaining to the countries of the Global South—*La Bataille d'Alger* is the only memoir out of the four studied that is still in publication as of April 2016.

In describing the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions through the perspectives of insurgents fighting for the liberation of their countries, *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*, *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières*, *On nous appelait fellaghas*, and *La Bataille d'Alger* offer an in-depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences of nationalist militants from both conflicts. In doing so, these four texts serve to personalize and humanize two conflicts that are too often studied with a focus on the postcolonial nation-states of Vietnam and Algeria—or on the Việt Minh and FLN political-military organizations that helped create those states—instead of on individuals such as Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. These four life writings therefore enable scholars and readers to understand how these four individual militant-authors shaped the course of historical events, and, conversely, how historical events shaped the four individual militant-authors. In writing about their trials and tribulations during the French-Indochina and French-Algerian Wars, the four militant-authors not only describe their lived experiences, but also provide crucial insight into the motivators that strengthened their morale and convinced them to continue with their respective struggle.

A close reading of the political memoirs by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef reveals that four key factors motivated the militants of both revolutionary movements and led them to believe that independence was historically inevitable: (1) a philosophical, political, and ideological framework, (2) the support of multiple segments of the local population, (3) the effective use of guerrilla and psychological warfare, and (4) the political, moral, and military assistance provided by international allies.

In Chapter 1, “Memoir as a Historical and Socio-Political Text: A Theoretical Framework,” I discuss the theoretical perspectives surrounding the genre, objective, and language of the four texts. Using the theories that George Egerton and Philippe Lejeune developed on life writing genres such as journals, autobiographies, and memoirs, I argue that Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef decided to write about their lived experiences during the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions in order to offer an alternative militant viewpoint to the French-speaking reader. In doing so, they effectively use literature as a tool of political engagement, as explained by Sartre. As these authors made a calculated decision to publish in French—the colonial language—their writings are inherently political and directly address French-speaking readers around the world, as argued by Deleuze and Guattari, Fanon, and Memmi. The four life writings also reflect the intellectual and political landscape surrounding the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions during the 1950’s and 1960’s, particularly the critical theory developed by Sartre, Césaire, Memmi, and Fanon, among others, to illustrate the mechanisms behind armed popular revolt against colonization.

Chapter 2, “Enlightenment Values, Marxist Ideals, and World War II: Ideological and Historical Catalysts for Revolution,” will show that Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef

repeatedly make allusions to French Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals, World War II and its aftermath, and Marxist-socialist concepts in order to show the French-speaking reader that these three factors influenced their philosophical, political, and ideological approaches. First, the four militant-authors were inspired by the ideals of personal and political freedom that emanated from the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Second, France's capitulation and occupation by Nazi Germany during the Second World War shattered its image as an invincible colonial power. In the context of World War II, the four authors also saw parallels between their struggle and that of the French Resistance. Finally, the Việt Minh and FLN authors were influenced by the socio-economic and revolutionary ideals of Marxism-socialism, believing that their revolutions were situated within a global revolutionary framework. These factors all served as ideological motivations for the four authors, who were convinced that their struggles were not only righteous, but also historically inevitable.

In the third chapter, "*La Guerre Populaire* and the Support of the Population," I will discuss the role of popular support in furthering the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions and motivating Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. The four authors emphasize the role of women, children, and the elderly in assisting their respective revolutionary cause while underrepresenting bloody internal rivalries and coercive recruitment efforts. The life writings also paint an idealized image of national unity, illustrating that members of various ethnic and socio-economic groups contributed to the Việt Minh and FLN. As the texts reveal, civilian sympathizers and supporters provided the militant-authors with assistance, sustenance, and shelter, which consequently strengthened the morale of the militants, leading them to believe that they were waging a

war of the people and for the people. In including popular support as a main and constant theme throughout their writings, the militant-authors show the French-speaking reader that it was the national liberation movements, not the French colonial power, that enjoyed the support of the Vietnamese and Algerian people.

Chapter 4, “The Weapon of the Weak: The Psychology Behind Guerrilla Warfare,” examines the objectives, motivations, and perspectives of Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef as they participated in guerrilla warfare. The four militant-authors reveal that despite being under-armed, under-equipped, and under-trained as compared to the French forces, the Việt Minh and FLN employed guerrilla warfare to their advantage. In consistently emphasizing the asymmetrical nature of the war, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef attempt to persuade the French-speaking reader that both the Việt Minh and FLN had no choice but to resort to guerrilla tactics in their confrontations with the French military. In particular, the psychological component of guerrilla warfare—especially shock tactics—led to small-scale military victories that emboldened the four militant-authors, motivating them to continue with their struggle. In addition, Yacef’s memoir provides insight into the motivations, objectives, and justifications for the FLN’s campaign against French military and civilian targets in Algiers.

The fifth and final chapter, “Solidarity and Revolution: Cultivating International Support,” explores the military, political, and moral support that international sympathizers offered to the Việt Minh and FLN, as portrayed by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. As demonstrated by the four militant-authors, military assistance from foreign nations provided equipment and training to both revolutionary groups. Moreover, political and moral encouragement from foreign individuals and nations—to include

progressive French sympathizers—significantly uplifted the spirits of the revolutionaries, making the four militant-authors realize that they were not alone in their struggle.

Through depictions of interactions with international supporters, the authors show the French-speaking reader that support for the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions extended across national, ethnic, and geographical boundaries.

Yet there are limitations to analyzing and interpreting the four texts.

Autobiographical accounts are inherently partial and reflect the experiences, perspectives, and biases of their writers. However, these limitations do not necessarily detract from the value of the texts. While biased, the life writings present a much-needed alternative viewpoint to counterbalance the numerous French-language memoirs by French veterans of both conflicts. The texts also vividly portray the emotions, actions, reactions, contemplations, and other human experiences by these four nationalist militants during times of revolution and war. In addition to contributing to the independence of their respective countries, the four militant-authors recorded and disseminated their war experiences through these life writings, leaving their mark on the world using both the sword and the pen.

NOTES

1. The 1945-1954 Vietnamese uprising against French colonial rule is known as “Cách mạng tháng Tám [The August Revolution]” in Vietnamese. English-speaking scholars use either “The August Revolution” or “The Vietnamese Revolution” to refer to the revolutionary events of 1945-1954. I will use both terms in this dissertation.

2. The terms “Indochinese,” “Annamite/Annamese,” and “Vietnamese” will all appear in citations from the analyzed texts. Both the Vietnamese and French sometimes used the three adjectives interchangeably during the colonial era. However, there are differences between the three terms. “Indochinese” refers to the greater Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia.

In the context of French Indochina, it refers to all of France’s colonial possessions in Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. During French colonial rule, Vietnam was divided into three administrative regions: (1) Tonkin, the northern region; (2) Annam, the central region; and (3) Cochinchina, the southern region. Although Annam was the name of the central administrative region, “Annamite/Annamese” was used to describe Vietnamese people in general—not just Vietnamese people from the central region—because the imperial capital of the ruling Nguyễn dynasty was in Huế, the largest city of central Vietnam.

Finally, the origins of the words “Vietnam” and “Vietnamese” can be traced back to the second century BC, with “Viet” being the name of an ethnic group living in what is now southern China and northern Vietnam. The term “Vietnamese” was revived and adopted by twentieth-century nationalists. In fact, in *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*, Ngô refers to the revival of the word “Vietnam” when he recounts:

“*Viet-Nam*, le mot nouveau était maintenant sur toutes les lèvres. Nouveau? Pas tellement, pourtant. Viet-Nam, patrie du Sud, pays des Viets, pays des hommes qui résistèrent des millénaires à l’envahisseur, qui tuèrent et triomphèrent de tant d’hommes du Céleste Empire et qui maintenant, grâce à l’appui du Nippon, triomphaient de l’oppresseur colonialiste. J’étais éclatant d’orgueil et de ferveur patriotique” (22).

3. The RC 4 refers to the Route Coloniale 4, while the N 4 refers to route n° 4. Both were roads that connected French military bases in northern Vietnam.

4. In East Asia (particularly Vietnam, China, Japan, and Korea), a person’s name order is: last name—middle name—first name. I will use this order for Vietnamese names in this dissertation.

5. For works that mention or cite *Journal d’un combattant Vietminh*, see Denis Warner’s *The Last Confucian* (1963); Bernard B. Fall’s *Street Without Joy* (1964); Joseph Buttinger’s *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled* (1967); George Kilpatrick Tanham’s *Communist Revolutionary Warfare: From the Vietminh to the Viet Cong* (1967); Gérard Chaliand’s *Stratégies de guérilla: guerres révolutionnaires et contre-insurrections: anthologie historique de la Longue Marche à nos jours* (1979); William J. Duiker’s *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (1995); Pierre Labrousse’s *La méthode Vietminh: Indochine, 1945-1954* (1996); William J. Duiker’s *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (2000); *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National*

Mobilization Since the French Revolution (2003), edited by Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron; Martin Windrow's *The Last Valley: Dien Bien Phu and the French Defeat in Vietnam* (2009); Anthony James Joes' *Victorious Insurgencies: Four Rebellions that Shaped Our World* (2010); Stein Tonnesson's *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began* (2010); and David Marr's *Vietnam: State, War, and Revolution (1945-1946)* (2013).

6. See *La guerre "française" d'Indochine: 1945-1954: les sources de la connaissance: bibliographie, filmographie, documents divers* by Alain Ruscio and Michel Bodin (2002); Michel Bodin's 2001 book review in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*; and *La Legion et la bataille a Diên Biên Phú: La Legion est leur patrie* by Heinz Duthel (2015).

7. For works that mention or cite *On nous appelait fellaghas*, see Gérard Chaliand's *Stratégies de guérilla: guerres révolutionnaires et contre-insurrections: anthologie historique de la Longue Marche à nos jours* (1979); Mohammed Harbi's *Le F.L.N.: mirage et réalité* (1980); *Engagements: prises de positions littéraires et culturelles* (1981) by Beatrice Braude and Brigitte Coste; Elie Kedourie's *Islam in the modern world and other studies* (1981); Jean Déjeux's *Dictionnaire des auteurs maghrébins de langue française* (1984); Benjamin Stora's *Le dictionnaire des livres de la guerre d'Algérie* (1996); Samy Hadad's *Algérie: Autopsie d'une crise* (1998); *Militaires et guérilla dans la guerre d'Algérie* (2001), edited by Jean-Charles Jauffret; Matthew Connelly's *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Cold War* (2002); Alistair Horne's *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (2006); Phillip C. Naylor's *Historical Dictionary of Algeria* (2006); Jo McCormack's *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War* (2007); Marnia Lazreg's *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (2008); Philippe Gaillard's *L'Alliance: La guerre d'Algérie du général Bellounis (1957-1958)* (2009); *France and the Algerian War 1954-1962: Strategy, Operations, and Diplomacy* (2012), edited by Martin S. Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger; and Martin Evans's *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (2012).

8. For works that mention or cite Yacef's original 1962 journal, *Souvenirs de la Bataille d'Alger*, see David Ottaway and Marina Ottaway's *Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution* (1970); Jean Déjeux's *Dictionnaire des auteurs maghrébins de langue française* (1984); James Le Sueur's *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (2001); Harold V. Hall's *Terrorism: Strategies for Intervention* (2003); *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Databases, Theories, and Literature*, edited by Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman (2005); *Terrorism: The Second or Anti-colonial Wave* (2006), edited by David C. Rapoport; Marnia Lazreg's *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (2008); Abdulkader Sinno's *Organizations at war in Afghanistan and Beyond* (2008); *Rethinking Third Cinema: The Role of Anti-colonial Media and Aesthetics in Postmodernity* (2009), edited by Frieda Ekotto and Adeline Koh; Jacques Lezra's *Wild Materialism: The Ethic of Terror and the Modern Republic* (2010); Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton's *Doing History* (2011); Matthew Evangelista's *Gender, Nationalism, and War: Conflict on the Movie Screen* (2011); Martin Evans's *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (2012); Hugo Frey's *Nationalism and the Cinema in France: Political Mythologies and Film Events, 1945-1995; Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance* (2014), edited by Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Peter Hulme.

9. For works that cite Yacef's two-volume *La Bataille d'Alger* (2002), see Mohammed Harbi and Gilbert Meynier's *Le FLN, documents et histoire: 1954-1962* (2004); Phillip Naylor's *Historical dictionary of Algeria* (2006); Saïd Sadi's *Amirouche: une vie, deux morts, un testament: une histoire algérienne* (2010); Martin Evans' *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (2012); Hannah

Feldman's *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945-1962* (2014); Brigitte Weltman-Aron's *Algerian Imprints : Ethical Space in the Work of Assia Djebar and Hélène Cixous* (2015).

10. Under the Vietnamese imperial system, mandarins were appointed civil service officials.

11. While not included in my dissertation, *Et Alger ne brûla pas*—along with 1 other French-language memoirs by FLN militants—are included among the life writings that I will analyze in a later project.

12. During the Algerian war, the FLN divided the territory into six politico-military regions called *wilayas*: (1) Aurès, (2) Constantinois, (3) Kabylie, (4) Algérois, (5) Oranais, and (6) Sahara. The *wilayas* were autonomous, with each region entirely responsible for activities such as recruitment, training, engaging the local population, and other mobilization efforts. See Martin Windrow's *The Algerian War 1954-1962* (2013).

Memoir as a Historical and Socio-Political Text: A Theoretical Framework

On May 7, 1954, the Việt Minh army captured the remaining French positions at Điện Biên Phủ, ending not just the 57-day siege on the remote outpost, but also the nine-year French Indochina War and the century-long French colonization of Indochina. Also referred to as “*la sale guerre*,” or “the dirty war,” the French-Indochina War marked the beginning of the end of the French empire and sent shockwaves throughout the entire colonial world. As military historian Martin Windrow describes, the Việt Minh victory “was the first time that a non-European colonial independence movement had evolved through all the stages from guerilla bands to a conventionally organized and equipped army able to defeat a modern Western occupier in pitched battle” (42). Yet the end of the French-Indochina War did not mark the beginning of peace for Vietnam or France. The U.S. involvement brought about 20 more years of war in Vietnam, while France immediately faced another anti-colonial war in Algeria. Nearly six months after Điện Biên Phủ, the FLN was founded on November 1, 1954 with the explicit objective of liberating Algeria from French colonization. Eight years of war followed before Algeria gained independence in 1962.

The conflicts in Indochina and Algeria have had a lasting impact on contemporary Vietnam, Algeria, and France. In France, the two wars left a deep impression on the country’s political, intellectual, and cultural landscape. During the sixty years since the end of the French-Indochina War in 1954, French military veterans authored over 300 memoirs to recount their lived experiences during the conflict. The earliest account is

J'étais médecin à Dien-Bien-Phu, published by Paul-Henri Grauwin in 1954 immediately following the end of the war. Most of these memoirs were written by paratroopers to describe and reflect on their war experiences.¹ A number of French veterans also published accounts of their experiences as prisoners of war (POW) held captive by the Việt Minh. Over the course of the nine-year conflict, the Việt Minh captured 39,979 French POWs, only 10,754 of whom survived (Waite 48). At Điện Biên Phủ alone, the Việt Minh captured 9,000 French prisoners (Waite 48). Given that over 10,000 French soldiers survived the Việt Minh camps, it is not surprising that POW memoirs constitute a significant portion of memoirs by French veterans of the Indochina War.²

High-ranking French military officials have also written extensively on their involvement in the conflict, justifying their military decisions and giving insight into French tactical operations against the Việt Minh, particularly during the decisive Battle of Điện Biên Phủ. General Henri Navarre, who led the French Army to defeat at Điện Biên Phủ, published *Agonie de l'Indochine* in 1958. The infamous General Marcel Bigeard, one of the commanders at Điện Biên Phủ who later developed the counterinsurgency tactics—notably torture—used against the FLN in Algeria, published three memoirs about his experiences in Indochina: *Ma Guerre d'Indochine* (1998), the two-volume *Lettres d'Indochine* (1998-1999), and *Paroles d'Indochine* (2004).

Similarly, French veterans of the Algerian War have published at least 450 memoirs about their experiences, especially in light of renewed debate over the controversial methods—especially torture—used by the French Army during the conflict.³ The earliest memoir by a prominent veteran of the conflict is *Ô mon pays perdu: de Bou-Sfer à Tulle*, which OAS⁴ member Edmond Jouhaud published in 1969. In

addition to his memoirs on the French-Indochina War, Bigeard also published *Ma Guerre d'Algérie* in 1995. Jacques Massu—known for his role in using torture to identify FLN militants during the Battle of Algiers—published both *Le torrent et la digue: Alger, du 13 mai aux barricades* and *La vraie bataille d'Alger* in 1997, the latter being his response to Saadi Yacef's version of events as depicted in Pontecorvo's film. Perhaps the most controversial memoir by a top-level veteran is the 2001 *Services spéciaux: Algérie, 1955-1957* by General Paul Aussaresses, who details his torture of FLN militants and proudly defends his actions, which he says were carried out “pour la France” (15). In the text, Aussaresses reveals that the French Army's use of torture was both commonplace and systematic during the Algerian War.

In light of the proliferation of the political, military, and historical memoirs by French veterans of Vietnam and Algeria, the lesser-known personal narratives by Vietnamese and Algerian militants are especially valuable because they offer an alternative perspective to French-speaking readers. Through their political memoirs, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef present the Vietnamese and Algerian armed struggles from the point of view of the colonized and use their writings to challenge the Western-centric narratives written by the colonial powers and their representatives. Their choice to publish in French is also a conscious one, as it allows them to directly address both the French public and French-speaking peoples across the globe to whom they are connected via a common colonial history.

The question of genre

The four texts—*Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*, *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la*

campagne des frontières, *On nous appelait fellaghas*, and *La Bataille d'Alger*—fall under the broader category of life writings, or non-fiction works with autobiographical elements. The genre of life writings—specifically journals, autobiographies, and memoirs—has been the subject of great literary and philosophical debate. Critics have questioned not only the political intentions and historical accuracy of such writings, but also the literary value—or lack thereof—of personal narratives.

In *L'espace littéraire* (1955), Maurice Blanchot describes personal journals as a “puissance neutre, sans forme et sans destin” (19), arguing that, for journal writers, “la vérité du Journal ne soit pas dans les remarques intéressantes, littéraires, qui s’y trouvent, mais dans les détails insignifiants qui le rattachent à la réalité quotidienne” (19).

Blanchot believes that journals only portray the mundane and the ordinary, and therefore do not comprise a legitimate literary form because they lack artistic creativity. He later reiterates this perspective in a chapter entitled “Le journal intime et le récit,” in *Le Livre à venir* (1959), in which he makes the distinction between journals and literary works, maintaining that the former only reflects “l’homme que nous pouvons rencontrer chaque jour” (229), while the more prestigious latter is the production of “cet être que nous voyons se lever derrière chaque grande œuvre, de cette œuvre et pour l’écrire” (229).

Blanchot continues with “L’intérêt du journal est son insignifiance [...] Le journal apparaît bien ici comme un garde-fou contre le danger de l’écriture” (254-255), insisting that journal writing is the mere recording of “unimportant” daily routines and does not involve creative risk and emotional suffering, both of which an author must undergo in order to create a true literary work.

Roland Barthes, another fervent “antidiarist,” goes even further and associates

journal writing with the expulsion of organic waste. In *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975), he argues:

Le « journal » (autobiographique) est cependant, aujourd'hui, discrédité. Chassé-croisé : au XVIe siècle, où l'on commençait à en écrire, sans répugnance, on appelait ça un diaire : *diarrhée* et *glaise*. Production de mes fragments. Contemplation de mes fragments (correction, polissage, etc.) Contemplation de mes déchets (narcissisme) (91).

Like Blanchot, Barthes believes that recording the banalities of daily life does not constitute true literature. By equating it to diarrhea, Barthes suggests that journal writing is characterized by the mindless accumulation and expulsion of useless and unpleasant materials from the body, implying that journal writings have as much value as bodily waste. He returns to this criticism of journal writing in a 1979 essay entitled “Délibération”:

Dans un premier temps, lorsque j'écris la note (quotidienne), j'éprouve un certain plaisir : c'est simple, facile. Pas la peine de souffrir pour trouver quoi dire : le matériau est là, tout de suite ; c'est comme une mine à ciel ouvert; je n'ai qu'à me baisser ; je n'ai pas à le transformer : c'est du brut et il a son prix, etc. (*Œuvres complètes*, 3: 1004).

Both Blanchot and Barthes believe that true literary works require authors to “suffer” as they create their masterpieces, an experience that journal writers do not undergo as they simply record without contributing to the material by using their

creativity or intellect. Barthes also implies that literature requires originality, unlike journal writing in which “le matériau est là.” For Barthes, journal writing is “brut,” a raw and crude form of writing, whereas literature is refined and polished.

The opinions by Blanchot and Barthes show that their conception of journal writing and literature is rather restrictive. In fact, their literary preferences reflect Pierre Bourdieu’s argument that the dominant class—to which both Blanchot and Barthes belong—enjoys an abundance of economic capital that allows them to value aesthetic form over material function in cultural productions (*Distinction* 169-225). For Bourdieu, members of the dominant class impose their cultural preferences through “symbolic violence” in which they define cultural tastes and standards such as the characteristics of “real literature” (*Reproduction* 4-8). By dismissing all journal writing as the uncreative recording of “unimportant” daily routines, Blanchot and Barthes reveal that they only consider a written work as “true literature” if the author has invested significant time and energy into its creation. Their narrow definition reflects a “high culture” conception of literature in which an author has ample time, energy, and disposable income to be self-sufficient while writing—a privilege rarely enjoyed by those who do not belong to the dominant class.

In addition, Barthes and Blanchot also fail to acknowledge that a journal, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947), can in fact contain critical information about the author’s experiences and daily life while also possessing literary value, especially if the author lived during momentous political and historical events. The distaste that Blanchot and Barthes show for “fragments” and “brut” also reveal that their conception of literature emphasizes the aesthetics rather than the purpose of a literary work.

Consequently, Blanchot and Barthes disregard the possibility that writing can function as an effective mode of resistance in contrast to Sartre who believes that writing serves as a vehicle for political engagement and that “L’écrivain « engagé » sait que la parole est action” (*Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* 28). For politically engaged writers such as Sartre, Julien Benda, Frantz Fanon, and other postcolonial authors, writing functions as a tool to reflect upon, criticize, shape, and engage with the political realm.

Philippe Lejeune—a leading specialist on autobiography and journals—also offers a different perspective to that of Blanchot and Barthes. Like Sartre, Lejeune sees the literary, social, and political value in journal writing. In a 2006 study of journals, Lejeune and co-author Catherine Bogaert explain that journal writing serves eight purposes: (1) to preserve memories, (2) to live on, (3) to confide in oneself, (4) to get to know oneself, (5) to deliberate, (6) to resist, (7) to think, and (8) to write (*Le Journal intime: Histoire et anthologie* 25-34). Citing journals by Anne Frank and Alfred Dreyfus, Lejeune and Bogaert argue that writing enables a journal keeper to gain “courage et appui” (30) and persevere during traumatic life events. This was the case with Ngô, who wrote in his journal over the duration of the French-Indochina War when he experienced warfare, witnessed death and destruction, and was separated from his family. Lejeune and Bogaert also maintain that the solitude of incarceration encourages writing: “La prison, comme la maladie, vous sépare de tout et vous met en face de l’essentiel. L’écriture est votre bastion de résistance, que vous soyez militant, comme Boris Vildé, déviante, comme Albertine Sarrazin, ou victime d’une erreur judiciaire” (196). This was the case with Yacef, who wrote his first memoir, *Souvenirs de la Bataille d’Alger*, as he was imprisoned in the Barberousse prison. While detained by

French colonial authorities, Yacef turned to writing as an act of resistance against colonization by presenting his side of the Algerian Revolution and criticizing the French colonial regime. Like imprisonment, war is also a force that isolates soldiers and confronts them with death, as was the case with Ngô, who also used his journal as a means of resistance.

For both Ngô and Yacef, writing in isolation provides three forms of resistance. First, writing enables the two militant-authors to mentally resist death in the face of war and imprisonment by providing a creative and intellectual outlet through which they could record, reflect on, and process the trauma that they experience. Accordingly, the act of writing fulfils the “*délibérer*,” “*résister*,” and “*penser*” categories described by Lejeune and Bogaert (25-34). Second, writing allows the authors to resist erasure and functions as an “*appel à une lecture ultérieure : transmission à quelque « alter ego » perdu dans l’avenir, ou modeste contribution à la mémoire collective*” (28). For Ngô and Yacef, their experiences and perspectives would persevere through their writings, enabling them to “*survivre*” even after death.

Finally, journal writing also functions as a form of resistance against colonial oppression. As Lejeune and Bogaert state, “*Le journal n’est pas forcément du côté de la passivité, il est un des instruments de l’action*” (30). Aside from serving as a militant in the Vietnamese national liberation struggle, Ngô also challenges French colonization by using his journal to document the violence and injustices committed by the colonial regime in Vietnam, thereby resisting the dominant pro-colonialist narratives perpetuated by France at the time. In describing the ways in which Việt Minh militants sacrificed their lives and well-being in the hopes of achieving independence, Ngô performs an act

of resistance. Despite his terminal lung illness brought upon by napalm bombings, Ngô nonetheless survives in memory by contributing his narrative to what Lejeune describes as “la mémoire collective” concerning the French-Indochina War. In doing so, Ngô conveys his struggles to future generations.

Equally important is journal writing’s ability to offer Ngô the freedoms that he did not enjoy as a colonial subject. As his journal reveals, Ngô was constrained by the colonial structure and its manifestations: checkpoints, surveillance, censorship, imprisonment, persecution, violence, and even death. Despite the French ideal of “liberté,” Vietnamese nationalists could not freely criticize French colonization without repercussions. Therefore, journal writing serves a fundamental role to Ngô’s resistance by allowing him to freely criticize colonialism. As Lejeune and Bogaert state:

Vos déceptions, vos colères, vos mélancolies, vos doutes, mais aussi vos espoirs et vos joies, il vous permet de leur donner une première expression en toute liberté. Le journal est un espace où le moi échappe momentanément à la pression sociale, se réfugie à l’abri dans une bulle où il peut se déplier sans risque, avant de retourner allégé, dans le monde réel (29).

In addition to allowing authors to escape social and political pressure, journals permit authors to disregard the constraints of literary conventions according to Lejeune and Bogaert. The stylistic freedom offered to journal writers was also noted by Béatrice Didier in *Le Journal intime* (1976), in which she argues that the form of journal writing allows for “La liberté, elle serait finalement surtout ressentie par l’auteur: il est libre de tout dire, selon la forme et le rythme qui lui conviennent” (8). Therefore, journal writing

enables the author to enjoy multiple freedoms: the creative freedom to write in a style of the author's choosing, the social freedom to write freely without fear of social consequences, and the political freedom to criticize governmental institutions and political systems.

Autobiography and memoir

For some Western theorists, autobiography originated as a distinct Western literary style, with no equivalent forms found elsewhere in the world. First published in German in 1907, Georg Misch's *The History of Autobiography in Antiquity* is one of the earliest twentieth-century studies on autobiography. Misch argues that the genre of autobiography was produced by the Western philosophical tradition of self-examination, as exemplified by the written reflections of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius (417-435, 443-485). Echoing Misch, Roy Pascal—who wrote the seminal *Design and Truth in Autobiography* in 1960—believes that the personal accounts produced by Near and Far Eastern cultures are not autobiographies because they do not entail a “unique, personal story, in its private as well as public aspect” (21). In the Western tradition, Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, written in the fifth century, is considered to be the earliest autobiographical work. In addition to Saint Augustine's work, Montaigne's *Essais* (1580) and Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) are considered the triptych of monumental Western autobiographies. All three texts feature an author who recounts his life through a philosophical framework of self-examination.

Yet a number of postmodern and postcolonial theorists disagree with this Western-centric approach to understanding the autobiographic form. In *Postcolonial*

Theory and Autobiography (2008), David Huddard prefers the term “life writing” because the word “autobiography” “privileges one particular [Western] way of writing a life” (2). Linda Anderson shares Huddard’s criticism in *Autobiography*, arguing that “Insofar as autobiography has been seen as promoting a view of the subject as universal, it has also underpinned the centrality of masculine—and, we may add, Western and middle-class—modes of subjectivity” (3). Anderson’s critique of the mainstream academic and literary conception of the autobiographical author reflects my own disagreement with the view held by Blanchot and Barthes in which the autobiographer is destined to the margins of the literary realm. Furthermore, the term “autobiography” is problematic because it “is inadequate to describe the extensive historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life narratives and life narrators in the West and elsewhere around the globe” (Smith and Watson 4). While the Western-centric conception of autobiography may evoke the self-reflections of Montaigne and Rousseau, it excludes significant non-Western life writings such as the political *nikki* diaries written by aristocratic Japanese women during the eighth to twelfth centuries, the fourteenth century travel writings of Ibn Battuta, and the memoirs written by Mughal princes during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

Yet according to Philip Holden in *Autobiography and Decolonization* (2008), contemporary autobiography studies generally include the presence of philosophical self-examination as an autobiographical criterion, distinguishing “modern” Western autobiographies from non-Western and other earlier forms of life-writing (18). It is through this lens that contemporary scholars analyze autobiographies, which is why much of the theoretical and analytical work on autobiography has overwhelmingly focused on

works by Western authors. The few non-Western autobiographies that have been examined by scholars of autobiography are those that are heavily influenced by the Western autobiographical tradition, such as Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1925-1929) and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995). Indeed, many influential autobiography theorists maintain that an autobiography must contain the author's self-reflection on his individual life. For Roy Pascal, writing in the seminal *Design and Truth in Autobiography* 1960, the autobiographic form:

[...] establishes certain stages in an individual's life, makes links between them, and defines, implicitly or explicitly, a certain consistency of relationship between the self and the outside world
[...] This coherence implies that the writer takes a particular standpoint, the standpoint of the moment at which he reviews his life, and interprets his life from it (9).

Pascal's definition highlights the importance of not only the self, but also the author's "life interpretation" in autobiography. Likewise, Karl Weintraub characterizes autobiography as a retrospective examination of an "individuality" developed through the author's interaction with the world (838). For Georges Gusdorf, the autobiography embodies an "awareness of the singularity of each individual life" and is the unique product of post-Enlightenment Western civilization (29). Interestingly enough, Gusdorf's definition rejects the inclusion of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and Montaigne's *Essais* in the autobiographical genre because both works predate the Enlightenment. Lejeune's influential *Le Pacte autobiographique* (1975) also identifies self-examination as a crucial trait of autobiography, defining the genre as a "récit

rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (14). For Lejeune, the autobiographical "pact" consists of the reader's implicit belief that there is "*identité de nom* entre l'auteur (tel qu'il figure, par son nom, sur la couverture), le narrateur du récit et le personnage dont on parle" (24). That is, the author, narrator, and protagonist of the biography must be one and the same, as is the case with *De la RC 4 à la N 4: La campagne des frontières, La Bataille d'Alger*, and *On nous appelait fellaghas*. According to Lejeune, the *identité de nom* is even more crucial in defining an autobiography than the veracity of the autobiography itself. A reader may question "la ressemblance, mais jamais sur l'identité" of the author of a true autobiography (26). Lejeune then provides a breakdown of additional characteristics that define an autobiography:

1. *Forme du langage* :
 - a. récit
 - b. en prose.
2. *Sujet traité* : vie individuelle, histoire d'une personnalité
3. *Situation de l'auteur* : identité de l'auteur (dont le nom renvoie à une personne réelle) et du narrateur.
4. *Position du narrateur* :
 - a. identité du narrateur et du personnage principal,
 - b. perspective rétrospective du récit (14).

In order for a text to be an autobiography, it must meet all four of the above conditions. Lejeune's conception of autobiography differs from that of Misch, Clark, and

Pascal in its emphasis on the author's identity rather the philosophical framework through which the author examines his life. Yet Lejeune nevertheless argues that the life of the author—particularly the history of his personality—must be the main topic of an autobiography. According to Lejeune, memoirs are not autobiographies because they do not adequately address the personality or philosophical perspective of the author.

The memoir—from the French *mémoire*, meaning memory—has also been the subject of scholarly debate. While a memoir may recount an individual's life, it does not focus on that individual's personality. Rather, a memoir emphasizes an author's lived experience during a significant historical moment. For Misch, the memoir is a “subgenre” of the autobiography because memoirists are “merely observers of the events and activities of which they write” (2). Gusdorf also bemoans the memoir because it “is limited almost entirely to the public sector of existence” (36) and does not adequately address the author's internal contemplations. On the other hand, Pascal argues that autobiographies and memoirs overlap in that “both are based on personal experience, chronological, and reflective” (6). In his work on autobiography, Pascal explains:

But there is a general difference in the direction of the author's attention. In the autobiography proper, attention is focused on the self, in the memoir on reminiscence on others. It is natural, therefore, that the autobiographies of statesmen and politicians are almost always in essence memoirs. The usual pattern includes true autobiographical material about childhood and youth. But when the author enters into the complex world of politics, he appears as only a small element, fitting into a pattern, accomplishing a little

here or there, aware of a host of personalities and forces around him (6).

According to Pascal's view, a memoir focuses on the author's involvement in politics. Yet the texts by Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef show that memoirs can also be defined by an author's participation in warfare, particularly in a country's national liberation struggle, which is inherently political by nature. Later critics, such as James Goodwin and George Egerton, define the memoir in a broader sense and classify all life writings by authors who lived through historic events—not just political developments—as memoirs. In *Autobiography: The Self-Made Text* (1993), Goodwin argues:

The memoir can be defined as the recollections of a person involved in, or at least witness to, significant events. In the memoir form, there is typically an extensive concern with actions and experiences other than those of the writer [...] The memoir, then, is distinguished as the narrative mode in which the individual uses the incidents of an active public life as a guide to understanding the cultural or political tenor of the times. It is the mode often adopted by diplomats, politicians, and military leaders to leave a record of their policies and public lives. A leading assumption for the memoirist is that the public record of an individual life is likely to be interesting and useful to both contemporaries and succeeding generations (6).

These characteristics, inherent in memoirs according to Goodwin, are all present in *De la RC 4 à la N 4: La campagne des frontières, La Bataille d'Alger, and On nous*

appelait fellaghas, in which Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef recount their personal experiences during the French-Indochina and French-Algerian Wars. While the authors focus on their involvement in the respective conflicts, their overall objective is to present the militant perspective, which they believe to accurately reflect the socio-political conditions that drove the Vietnamese and Algerian decolonization efforts. Because the French-Indochina and French-Algerian Wars were so central to shaping modern Vietnam, Algeria, and France, these testimonies are “likely to be interesting and useful” to contemporaries and future generations in all three countries, according to Goodwin. All three also served as military leaders during the revolutions and later became heavily entrenched in the national politics of their respective countries after independence, making their writings even more pertinent to an understanding of contemporary Vietnamese and Algerian politics.

Conceptualizing political memoir as a genre

Whereas Pascal and Goodwin focus on the overall genre of the memoir, Egerton analyzes one particular sub-category: the political memoir. In *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (1994), Egerton describes the political memoir as a “polygenre” (xiii, 342) for three reasons. First, it has numerous forms and can comprise (1) “contemporary descriptive recording of political events and impressions in diaries or journals,” (2) “retrospective narration of political engagements together with explanatory and interpretive reflections” in any format, (3) autobiographical descriptions of personal involvement in politics, (4) “biographical depiction of political contemporaries from personal knowledge,” (5) disclosure of inner political maneuverings based on “personal

acquaintance,” and (6) portrayal of one’s political life within the greater historical context (xiii). Egerton’s conception of a political memoir is more extensive than that of Pascal and Goodwin because it also includes diaries and journals. Egerton’s definition thus encompasses all four texts, even Ngô’s *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*. In addition, the fourth and fifth forms of political memoir can include writings by authors such as Ngô who either have a personal relationship with political figures or first-hand observations of political maneuverings without necessarily being involved in politics themselves. Despite their inevitable focus on politics, political memoirs must nevertheless rely on the author’s personal experience. Since “the personal linkage between the author and the past in memoir transforms the description of events, behavior and circumstances into the narration of personal experience (346), Egerton still defines the political memoir as an inherently personal production. Yet like the autobiography and other forms of life writing, the political memoir depends entirely on the author’s memory. As Edward Said notes, “Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority” (*Invention* 176), which further adds to the political dimension of the political memoir. This is especially the case with political memoirs written by militants such as Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef, who—by way of participating in anti-colonial revolutions—inevitably discuss issues concerning nationalism, political power, and identity.

The political memoir is also a polygenre because it is interdisciplinary by nature. For Egerton, the political memoir has a tendency to “invade the neighbouring territories of autobiography, political science and historiography,” making the designation of “polygenre” appropriate because it “concedes the difficulty in classifying this literary

chameleon” (xiii). Due to its ability to provide personal insight on political and historical events, the political memoir blurs the distinctions between various disciplines and categories and “appropriates autobiography, biography, diary, history, political science, journalism and pamphleteering to name only its nearest literary neighbors” (xii). Because it encompasses numerous scholarly fields, the political memoir can have multiple and varying socio-political purposes, which is yet another reason to classify it as a polygenre. As a descriptive recording of significant events, the political memoir is a historiography and functions as “one of the most valuable forms of historical records” (342). In addition, the political memoir provides a “direct translation of political precepts” (345) during a given time period, making it a source of political information. In the case of our four authors, their memoirs allow readers to see the ways in which militants applied the political and military tenets, theories, and strategies espoused by the Việt Minh and FLN.

The political memoirist can also use his writing to “attempt to persuade contemporary or future readers” (343) of either the veracity of the information presented in his version of history, or of the legitimacy of his perspective. This is the case with Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef, who endeavor to convince readers that their actions—and by extension, the Vietnamese and Algerian revolutions—were not just legitimate forms of political resistance, but also justifiable and inevitable. In doing so, the memoirist creates a “stimulus” that provokes “reflection and public discourse” (345) on the memoir’s contents. This is not necessarily Ngô’s objective because, as Pascal explains, “The diarist notes down what, at that moment, seems of importance to him; its ultimate, long-range significance cannot be assessed” (3). When writing his journal, Ngô did not realize that it

would one day be published and available to French-speaking readers. Nonetheless, he did allow Despuech to translate, adapt, and publish his journal, the contents of which could still provoke public discourse on the French-Indochina War, especially because there are so few French-language political memoirs by Việt Minh militants as previously noted.

For Egerton, the political memoir's ability to stir widespread public interest makes it especially valuable:

The engagement of the reader with the memoirist in the political dramas of the past provides a potentially rich fund of experience and schooling for the willing student. Of course other forms of historiography and political science can put forward similar didactic claims and offer a more sophisticated schooling. But the memoirist has major advantages over the academic competition; these advantages relate to the readership targeted and engaged. Scholarly political analysis and historiography, with few exceptions, seldom reaches much beyond the confines of academia and the mandarinat. Political memoirs, by contrast, regularly reach both the political leadership and a popular readership in modern political cultures (345).

Because the public tends to be fascinated by famous individuals, especially those who have been glorified as heroic military leaders invaluable to national liberation movements—as is the case with *Đặng*, *Azzedine*, and *Yacef*—their memoirs have the ability to interest a broader audience. As a result, political memoirs can encourage more

people to engage in political, historical, and even literary discussions. In the former colonial power, France, where the Indochinese and especially Algerian conflicts are still controversial topics, political memoirs such as those by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef could foster much-needed discussions among academics, politicians, and the French public.

However, there are limitations to studying, analyzing, and interpreting political memoirs. As Egerton states, memoirists can inject bias—either unconsciously or intentionally—and outright deception into their life writings for political or personal purposes (344). In addition, life writings offer an unreliable account of past experiences because autobiographic memory deteriorates with age and is affected by personal bias and nostalgia, as well as other versions of the past (Thomson 164). The motivation behind an author’s decision to write about his life inevitably influences the written content as well as its historical authenticity (Lummis 84). Because writing a lengthy manuscript requires time and self-sufficiency, the authors of life writings tend to occupy elite positions that enable them to realize such an endeavor (Lummis 84). Therefore, a political memoir may only reflect the experience of a member of the elite—and not that of lesser-privileged individuals—during momentous historical moments. This is especially the case with Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef, all of whom were literate, proficient in French, and educated enough to become military leaders in their respective national liberation movements. Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef would later become high-ranking politicians in their native countries after independence. Consequently, the accounts offered by the four authors are not representative of the experience of most Việt Minh and FLN combatants.

In addition, the polymorphous and polygenre nature of the political memoir comes with caveats. As Egerton notes, “It is perhaps the very diversity of the elements constituting political memoir that has impeded the development of an effective criticism” (xii). This offers one possible explanation as to why scholars have yet to publish an analytical close reading of the texts by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. As I mention in the introduction,⁵ the scholarly attention devoted to these four memoirs overwhelmingly originates from the disciplines of history and political science. While there is extensive published research on the life writings of literary figures such as Montaigne and Rousseau, literary specialists tend to focus on fiction and theoretical writings, not memoirs. In addition, there are also disciplinary biases against autobiographies and memoirs. As previously discussed, Barthes and Blanchot—theorists central to French studies, critical theory, and literary studies—dismiss journal writing as a literary form. Meanwhile, Lejeune notes that critics have said that the autobiographic style is “esthétiquement inepte” and does not possess literary value (*Pour l’autobiographie* 11). Scholars may even classify memoirs by Việt Minh and FLN militants as belonging to the fields of history, military studies, or political science instead of Francophone studies, thereby overlooking the contributions that these texts could bring to the field.

Given the Western-centric definition of autobiography, I identify *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*, *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières*, *On nous appelait fellaghas*, and *La Bataille d’Alger* as political memoirs within the broader genre of life writings. The genre of political memoir, as defined by Egerton, encompasses all four texts, including Ngô’s diary. While the genre does emphasize a personal connection to momentous historical and political events, it does not require extensive philosophical

reflections on the self, which Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef do not include in their writings. Instead, their writings focus on their experiences, interactions, and observations of the political-military circumstances over the course of the French-Indochina and French-Algerian Wars in order to represent the perspectives and struggles of the authors as well as engage in discussion with the greater public.

Writing as a tool for political engagement

In addition to presenting his conception of the political memoir genre, its forms, and its functions, Egerton also delves into the circumstances that foster the writing of political memoirs. According to Egerton:

The production of memoir literature throughout history has regularly been stimulated when three conditions are present: the occurrence of dramatic events such as war or revolution; the desire of participants or witnesses to record their observations on these events; and the provision of necessary leisure time for the memoirist to write the narrative. It is the combination of these conditions which perhaps best explains the ubiquity and prolixity of naval and military memoirs, where intense bursts of dramatic engagement in international tensions, wars and their aftermath, are often followed by relative leisure and the provocations of public controversy (xv).

In the case of the four authors, the first and second conditions served as catalysts for their writings. For Đặng and Azzedine, the third condition—necessary leisure time—

was only possible after independence had been achieved. Azzedine published *On nous appelait fellaghas* 14 years after independence when he was 42 years old, while Đặng was 80 years old when he published *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières*. Ngô was an exception, as he periodically wrote in his journal over the course of the war. In Yacef's situation, imprisonment offered the free time needed to initially record his experiences, which he published as *Souvenirs de la Bataille d'Alger* immediately after independence when he was only 34. However, he did not publish his detailed and expanded memoir, *La Bataille d'Alger* until three decades later when he was 69 years of age. Regardless of whether they wrote during or after their experiences with war, all three authors share a common desire to use writing as a political tool to document their experiences and illustrate their perspectives as militant to the French-speaking reader.

Sartre's seminal *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, published in 1947, offers a detailed theoretical framework outlining the use of literature as a tool for political engagement. According to Sartre, the writer should only write if he has "quelque chose qui vaille la peine d'être communiqué" (27), as is the case with the four authors who want to share their experiences and perspectives with the French-speaking world. Sartre continues with "Il n'est donc pas vrai qu'on écrive pour soi-même : ce serait le pire échec" (49) because writing is an interactive effort between the author and the reader. Sartre believes that the act of reading is the dialectical correlative of the act of writing and that the two interconnected acts require two distinct agents: a reader and a writer (50). For Sartre, the author's role and responsibility is to use writing as a means of *dévoilement* to transmit his message to the reader, and that "l'écrivain « engagé » sait que la parole est action : il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer" (28).

Therefore, the politically engaged author uses his writing as a means to facilitate political action. The principle behind Sartre's argument can be seen in the theories developed by life writing scholars, notably Lejeune and Bogaert who argue that "Le journal n'est pas forcément du côté de la passivité, il est un des instruments de l'action" (30). Egerton's view that authors use political memoirs to persuade and engage the public also reflects Sartre's influential theory on the fundamental role of literature (343-345).

As a result, the dialectic relationship between the author and the reader is essential because the literary work does not end when the author completes it. Rather, the reader continues the author's work by reading the text, interpreting his message, and using that message to engage with the world. As such, Sartre argues that "l'écrivain en appelle à la liberté du lecteur pour qu'elle collabore à la production de son ouvrage" (53). For Sartre, *liberté* is the essential component behind literature because the writer assumes that the reader uses his freedom to read the work while the reader assumes that the writer uses his freedom to write the work. Consequently, a written work "est un acte de confiance dans la liberté des hommes" (69) and should be used to promote "la liberté" for all people. An author's freedom is indissolubly connected to the freedom of all people and is thus incomplete without the freedom of all human beings (70). Therefore, regardless of an author's preferred prosaic medium⁶ or method of dévoilement, his responsibility is to use his writing to advance the freedom of others:

Ainsi qu'il soit essayiste, pamphlétaire, satiriste ou romancier,
qu'il parle seulement des passions individuelles ou qu'il s'attaque
au régime de la société, l'écrivain, homme libre s'adressant à des
hommes libres, n'a qu'un seul sujet : la liberté (70).

In addition to addressing readers who enjoy the freedom to read, the writer must address readers who have the power to bring about the freedom of others. Sartre is careful to highlight this need, arguing that “il ne suffit pas d’accorder à l’écrivain la liberté de tout dire : il faut qu’il écrive pour un public qui ait la liberté de tout changer” (163). By using literature to advance freedom and liberation, a literary work is “*libérateur*” (114) and “naturellement révolutionnaire” (127). As a result of its role in transforming power dynamics and extending freedom to oppressed groups, the function of literature is essentially “*celle de faire l’Histoire*” (237). Because literature is an indispensable force in transforming history for the oppressed, Sartre argues that true literature is:

[...] lu à la fois par l’opprimé et par l’opresseur, témoignant pour l’opprimé contre l’opresseur, fournissant à l’opresseur son image, du dedans et du dehors, prenant, avec et pour l’opprimé, conscience de l’oppression, contribuant à former une idéologie constructrice et révolutionnaire (239).

This is precisely what Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef attempt to achieve with their political memoirs. In deciding to publish in French instead of Vietnamese and Arabic, all four authors direct their memoirs at French-speaking readers from the former colonial oppressor and across the globe. The authors’ descriptions of their war experiences and perspectives function as testimonies of the oppressed, offering the colonial oppressor insight on how the colonized view him. Through their depictions of the Vietnamese and Algerian struggles for freedom, the authors also reveal that *liberté*—a topic discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2—is central to both their writing and their

revolutionary cause.

Qu'est-ce que la littérature?, published in 1948, was a starting point for Sartre's advocacy of using politically engaged writing as a means of achieving freedom for the colonized. While he does write "C'est donc contre la race blanche et contre moi-même en tant que j'en fais partie que je réclame de toutes les libertés qu'elles revendiquent la libération des hommes de couleur" (70) in the text, it was not until the late 1950s when Sartre began to use his writing to actively promote decolonization. Through works such as "Le Colonialisme est un système" (1956), the preface to *Portrait du colonisé, Portrait du colonisateur* (1957), and the preface to *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961), Sartre accomplished the prescriptions detailed in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* by working as a politically engaged writer who used his work to advocate for freedom and political change.

Writing in the colonial language

Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been an intense debate over the role of the colonial language both during anti-colonial resistance movements and following decolonization. The colonial enterprise was not just about political subjugation and economic exploitation—achieved through cheap and oftentimes forced labor, natural resources, and tax revenue as Sartre outlines in "Le Colonialisme est un système"—it also involved cultural destruction. By imposing the cultural practices of the colonial power onto the colonized subjects, the colonial system attempted to erase the traditional culture and identity of the colonized. In the French colonies, the official policy of "*assimilation*" sought to mold colonial subjects into French citizens by

encouraging them to adopt the French language, culture, and customs (Wilder 25).

The push for cultural assimilation resulted in the rise of a cultural consciousness among colonized intellectuals who began to resist and reject the culture of the colonizers. In the 1930s, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas—who were all products of colonial assimilation—founded the Négritude movement to reject assimilation, identify with blackness, and celebrate African civilization (Wilder 156). From the onset of its revolutionary activities in the 1940s, the Việt Minh considered the Vietnamese language as an important symbol of Vietnamese culture, national identity, and independence (Vasavakul 226). In fact, the Việt Minh began its anti-French campaign by destroying French colonial symbols such as statues and effacing French-language signs (Gunn 216). As Amílcar Cabral notes in “National Liberation and Culture,” a speech delivered in 1970:

The study of the history of liberation struggles shows that in general, they are preceded by an increase in cultural phenomena which progressively crystallize into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the oppressed people in an act of rejection of that of the oppressor (13).

For Cabral, erasing indigenous culture was an essential tenet of colonialism because the culture of the colonized provides “an element of resistance to foreign rule” and reflects the “historical reality” that preceded colonial presence (13). For Edward Said, colonialism resulted in “an actively provocative and challenging culture of resistance” achieved through cultural efforts and productions (“Yeats and Decolonization” 73). In a key chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre* entitled “Sur la culture

nationale,” Frantz Fanon argues that because cultural assimilation is so pivotal to colonization, cultural liberation must accompany political liberation. Affirming that complete decolonization requires the development of a strong national culture, Fanon calls for the end of the “aliénation culturelle si caractéristique de l’ époque coloniale” (201).

As language is a primary vehicle by which culture spreads, critics such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o believe that writing in the language of the colonizer represents the ongoing cultural and linguistic colonization of the indigenous author. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), which Ngũgĩ describes as “my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings” (xiv), Ngũgĩ argues that the colonial system promoted the colonial language as a means of erasing the traditional culture and identity of the colonized. According to Ngũgĩ, “The Bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation” (9). Echoing Fanon, who states that “Parler [...] c’est surtout assumer une culture, supporter le poids d’une civilisation” (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 37), Ngũgĩ reiterates that “Language [...] is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture” (13). As Lacan argues, language is the fundamental force that shapes culture, identity, and the individual (496). Therefore, writing in the colonial language indicates that an author is not yet fully decolonized because he is still attached to the language—and, by extension, the culture and identity—of the colonizer. Given that decolonization must occur on both the political and cultural level, writing in the native language is a fundamental component of the anti-imperialist struggle for Ngũgĩ (28).

Ngũgĩ’s promotion of indigenous literature written in the indigenous languages is

certainly needed, and authors should be encouraged to contribute to their native literature using their native languages. However, an author could also use the colonial language to directly address and engage the former colonial power in a critical discussion on colonialism, as is the case with Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. As Sartre states, politically engaged literature must be read by both the oppressed and the oppressor in order to facilitate constructive change (239). Albert Memmi's position reflects that of Sartre, noting that when colonized writers use the language of the colonizer, "ils s'adressent au même public dont ils empruntent la langue" (*Portrait du colonisé* 127). To further demonstrate that writing in the colonial language is a calculated political decision on the part of the author, Memmi asks, "À ce public précisément, dès qu'ils osent parler, que vont-ils dire sinon leur malaise et leur révolte?" (127). For Fanon, the writer should use "un style heurté" in order to shock the colonizers into realizing that the colonized writer had reached a "phase de la conscience" (210). Hence, writing in the colonial language provides the author with a means to challenge the colonial system. Yet Memmi also believes that the colonized writer will eventually discover "*la libération et la restauration de sa langue*" (127), which inevitably leads to the death of colonized literature written in the colonial language, as is the case with Vietnam today. Like Ngũgĩ, Memmi also associates the politically charged term "liberation" with the end of writing in the colonial language.

The decision by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef to publish in the colonial French language attaches political significance to their memoirs and distinguishes their writings as "minor" literature. According to Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature does not necessarily denote literature produced by a numerically minority population. Rather,

their conception of minority applies to a politically marginalized group regardless of whether or not that group constitutes a demographic minority. Indigenous Vietnamese and Algerian authors belonged to the numerically majority population in their respective countries during the colonial era, but were nonetheless “minor” in that they were marginalized. For Deleuze and Guattari, three characteristics define minor literature. First, “la langue y est affectée d’un fort coefficient de déterritorialisation” (29). Minor literature is not written in the language of the minor colonized people—Vietnamese and Arabic—but in the major colonial language of French. Because a minority author adopts the major language to express a border position on the peripheries of the main group, the major language undergoes the process of deterritorialization. The second element of minor literature is that “tout y est politique” (30). The individual author is inextricable from the greater social and political context within which he writes, and his politically driven decision to write in the “major” language despite being a member of a minor alienated group highlights the structural, cultural, and socio-political hierarchies in his society. Finally, in minor literature, “tout prend une valeur collective” (31). Given that the individual author is inseparable from his socio-political environment, his literary productions reflect the minor group’s collective experiences. For Deleuze and Guattari, the political and the collective are intrinsically connected:

[...] ce que l’écrivain tout seul dit constitue déjà une action commune, et ce qu’il dit ou fait est nécessairement politique, même si les autres ne sont pas d’accord. Le champ politique a contaminé tout énoncé. Mais surtout, plus encore, parce que la conscience collective ou nationale est « souvent inactive dans la

vie extérieure et toujours en voie de désagrégation, » c'est la littérature qui se trouve chargée positivement de ce rôle et de cette fonction d'énonciation collective, et même révolutionnaire : c'est la littérature qui produit une solidarité active (31).

Drawing on Sartre, Deleuze and Guattari also maintain that literature has a political and even revolutionary role in society by serving as an engine that propels political action. Indeed, the four life writings exhibit all three elements of minor literature proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. In addition to being published in the major language, the memoirs are extremely political, collective, and revolutionary. Within the canon of the Western-centric study of autobiography, these political memoirs—published by non-Western authors to share non-Western perspectives and experiences—certainly constitute a “minor” form of literature. Likewise, among the numerous memoirs published by French veterans of Indochina and Algeria, the life writings by Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef also comprise a “minor” literary category.

As the collective and the political are interrelated, Deleuze and Guattari argue that “*la littérature est l'affaire du peuple*” (32). In contrast to the traditional conception of a privileged author—as espoused by Barthes and Blanchot—the stance adopted by Deleuze and Guattari is much more inclusive and envisions the participation of the masses, particularly marginalized “minor” groups, in literary production. In fact, the two theorists explain that minor authors experience an “*Impossibilité de ne pas écrire, parce que la conscience nationale, incertaine ou opprimée, passe nécessairement par la littérature*” (29-30). While Egerton argues that dramatic political events spur the authors to record and share their experiences and observations (xv), Deleuze and Guattari note

that minor authors are faced with an intense desire to write because writing presents a means of expressing their marginalized political and collective national identities and experiences to the world.

Regardless of their disagreements on the significance of writing in the colonial language, Sartre, Deleuze and Guattari, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Fanon, and Memmi all agree that the literature written by an indigenous author is inevitably political. In the chapter “Sur la culture nationale” of *Les Damnés de la terre*, Fanon identifies three stages of indigenous writing. In the first stage, the colonized intellectual “prouve qu’il a assimilé la culture de l’occupant” (211) by imitating the literary styles and conventions of the colonial power. In the second stage, the author attempts to remember pre-colonial indigenous traditions. Finally, in the third stage, the author “se transforme en réveilleur de peuple” (211) by producing a “littérature de combat, littérature révolutionnaire, littérature nationale” (211). Fanon’s conception of the third revolutionary phase is as follows:

Au cours de cette phase un grand nombre d’hommes et de femmes qui auparavant n’auraient jamais songé à faire œuvre littéraire, maintenant qu’ils se trouvent placés dans des situations exceptionnelles, en prison, au maquis ou à la veille de leur exécution ressentent la nécessité de dire leur nation, de composer la phrase qui exprime le peuple, de se faire le porte-parole d’une nouvelle réalité en actes (211-212).

This was the experience that Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef underwent while living and operating in the “maquis,”—and that propelled all four authors to write in

order to share their stories of resistance with the Francophone world. Fanon later goes into greater detail on the nature of “la littérature de combat”:

C’est la littérature de combat proprement dite, en ce sens qu’elle convoque tout un peuple à la lutte pour l’existence nationale. Littérature de combat, parce qu’elle informe la conscience nationale, lui donne forme et contours et lui ouvre de nouvelles et d’illimitées perspectives. Littérature de combat, parce qu’elle prend en charge, parce qu’elle est volonté temporalisée (228).

Accordingly, the militant-authors use their writing to engage in a cultural and literary combat in addition to participating in political and military combat. Despite writing in the language of the colonizer, their texts express the respective Vietnamese and Algerian struggles for independence, personalizing and humanizing the revolutions for the French-speaking public. This theoretical framework on literature as a vehicle for political engagement, developed by both Sartre and Fanon, is also reflected in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o *Writers in Politics*:

Literature results from conscious acts of men and women in society. Being a product of their intellectual and imaginative activity, it is thoroughly social. The very act of writing, even at the level of the individual, implies social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level literature embodies in word-images the tensions, conflicts and contradictions at the heart of a community’s being and becoming (4).

As Ngũgĩ explains, literature is inextricably connected to the cultural, political,

and socio-economic reality of the writer: “A writer after all comes from a particular class, gender, race and nation. [...] A writer tries to persuade his readers, to make them not only view a certain reality but also from a certain angle of vision” (4). This is the case of the four militant-authors who want the French-speaking public to view the Vietnamese and Algerian conflicts from their realities and perspectives. Ngũgĩ shares the view that writings by politically marginalized groups—whether they are Eastern Europeans writing in German as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, or colonized peoples writing to criticize colonialism as described by Fanon and Memmi—are “a reflection of that people’s collective reality and also an embodiment of that people’s way of looking at the world and their place in its making” (5). For these revolutionary thinkers, national liberation must be achieved through both a political and cultural revolution by the masses.

Revolutionary theories and revolutions

The revolutionary nature of these political memoirs reflects not only the nationalist revolutions experienced by the authors during the 1950s and 1960s, but also the revolutionary philosophies that arose during the period of decolonization. In addition to criticizing the cultural destruction carried out by colonization, anticolonial intellectuals are unanimous in their condemnation of colonial violence. In *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Aimé Césaire observes that colonization is characterized by violence and barbarity because the colonial regime offers impunity to colonizers who commit violence, enabling them to “tuer en Indochine, torturer à Madagascar, emprisonner en Afrique Noire, sévir aux Antilles” (8). In giving examples of violent acts that occur across the geographically dispersed French colonies, Césaire shows that violence is central to

colonization and exists wherever the colonial system is in place. According to Césaire, these barbaric acts are a product of the colonial system and results in the “*décivilisation*” and “*ensauvagement*” of the West (12).

Hồ Chí Minh also shares Césaire’s criticism of European hypocrisy and repeatedly argues that the Western narrative of “embodying civilization” is contrary to the realities of colonization. In a 1922 piece entitled “Những kẻ đi khai hóa [The Civilizers],” Hồ recounts an incident in which French colonial officials beat an indigenous woman to death in Africa, while in Asia, another “representative of French civilization” beats an elderly Vietnamese woman to the point where she bleeds profusely (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* 1: 83-84). The theme of colonial violence is reiterated in “Khai hóa giết người [Murderous Civilization],” in which Hồ Chí Minh describes the manner in which a French colonial official beat an old Vietnamese man to death (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* 1: 94-95). In yet another piece, “Thù ghét chủng tộc [Racial Hatred],” he names French colonial officials who have committed violent crimes—including murder—against Vietnamese people, and sarcastically identifies these Frenchmen as “người đi khai hóa,” or “those who civilize” (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* 1: 85-86). In these writings, Hồ uses irony to show that the daily violence committed by the colonizers is the complete antithesis of civilization, a theme further discussed in Chapter 2.

Critics of colonization also contend that colonial violence produces violent resistance in the colonized population. In *Critique de la raison dialectique* (1960), Sartre describes the phases and processes that transform a loose-knit group into a unified revolutionary front capable of violent resistance. The revolutionary movement begins with *la sérialité*, in which a common activity unites an unorganized gathering of a group

of people who do not share a collective goal. When this *sérialité* is threatened, the group then becomes a *groupe-en-fusion* that bonds together to counter the external threat to the group:

[...] l'autre facteur qui créera bientôt la *praxis* révolutionnaire du groupe, c'est que l'acte individuel de s'*armer*, en tant qu'il est en lui-même et dans son résultat en une double signification de liberté. [...] la *praxis* politique du gouvernement aliène les réactions passives de sérialité à sa liberté pratique : dans la perspective de cette *praxis*, en effet, l'activité passive du rassemblement lui est volée dans sa passivité, la sérialité inerte se retrouve de l'autre côté du processus d'altérité *comme un groupe uni qui a produit une action concertée*. [...] Et ce groupe s'est défini par une action révolutionnaire qui rend le processus irréversible. Future : les armes elles-mêmes, dans la mesure où elles ont été prises pour s'opposer à l'action concertée d'une troupe militaire, esquissent dans leur matérialité même la possibilité d'une résistance concertée (389).

In this passage, Sartre associates the action of arming oneself with individual liberty, and the arming of the group with the possibility of collaborative violent resistance. The external threat fuses all group members together in such a way that each member identifies with the entire group. Each group member feels a sense of reciprocity in regards to all the other members of the group, which in turn allots power to each individual by creating a strong sense of solidarity in which "Il n'est, par la méditation du

groupe, ni l'Autre ni l'identique (*mon* identique) : mais il vient au groupe comme j'y viens ; il est *le même* que moi" (406). Consequently, if one group member faces an attack, the entire group also feels that it is being attacked. This group unity and solidarity creates an environment in which each group member represents *l'espoir* for all other members of the group (405). The anticolonial revolutions are concrete manifestations of this process. As a result of its political, military, economic, and cultural domination, the colonial system threatened not only the traditional culture of the colonized people, but also their freedoms and livelihoods. Faced with the potential loss of their cultural and political identity, the colonized people united to violently oppose colonization.

While Sartre developed his theory on the mechanisms behind violent revolution by studying the French Revolution—notably the storming of the Bastille—he has also written extensively on revolution in the colonies. At a rally for peace in Algeria in 1956, Sartre delivered a speech that was published in the same year under the title, “Le Colonialisme est un système.” In the speech and subsequent essay, Sartre argues that the colonized Algerians primarily suffer from economic exploitation, but also experience social and psychological oppression imposed by the colonial system (25). In addition, the essay reflects the theory that Sartre espoused in the earlier *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*:

Car il n'est pas vrai qu'il y ait de bons colons et d'autres qui soient méchants : il y a des colons, c'est tout. Quand nous aurons compris cela, nous comprendrons pourquoi les Algériens ont raison de s'attaquer *politiquement d'abord* à ce système économique, social et politique et pourquoi leur libération et *celle*

de la France ne peut sortir que de l'éclatement de la colonisation
(27).

Sartre equates the liberation of the colonized Algerians to the liberation of France, which echoes the idea that one's "liberté" is intrinsically tied to the "liberté" of all others. Although France is the colonial power that controls its colonies, by virtue of enslaving its colonial subjects, France is not 'liberated' and will not be liberated until its colonial subjects are also free. For Sartre, the responsibility of the "Français de la Métropole" is to promote political reforms that can "délivrer à la fois les Algériens et les Français de la tyrannie coloniale" (48), once again showing that both Algerians and French are oppressed by the colonial system. However, Sartre acknowledges that it is ultimately Algerians who can claim their own freedom:

Il est vrai que la majorité des Algériens est dans une misère insupportable ; mais il est vrai aussi que les réformes nécessaires ne peuvent être opérées ni par les bons colons ni par la « Métropole » elle-même, tant qu'elle prétend garder sa souveraineté en Algérie. Ces réformes seront l'affaire du peuple algérien lui-même, quand il aura conquis sa liberté (26).

Sartre uses the words "conquérir" and "éclatement" to describe the process of decolonization, thereby indicating that the struggle for independence is inevitably violent. Because the colonial system was created and maintained through a series of violent stages—"D'abord vaincre les résistances, briser les cadres, soumettre, terroriser. Ensuite, seulement, on mettra le système économique en place" ("Le Colonialisme est un système" 29)—decolonization itself must be violent. Like Sartre, revolutionary theorists

such as Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and Hồ Chí Minh have all expounded on the violent processes behind anti-colonial revolutions. For Memmi, “le colonisateur dénie au colonisé le droit le plus précieux reconnu à la majorité des hommes : la liberté” (105). Yet the colonized’s attempts to negotiate his freedom with the colonizer are inevitably futile: “Ne pouvant quitter sa condition dans l’accord et la communion avec le colonisateur, il essaiera de se libérer contre lui : il va se révolter” (142). Memmi describes the revolt of the colonized as:

[...] la seule issue à la situation coloniale qui ne soit pas un trompe-l’œil, et le colonisé le découvre tôt ou tard. Sa condition est absolue et réclame une solution absolue, une rupture et non un compromis. [...] De plus, la solution est tous les jours plus urgente, tous les jours nécessairement plus radicale. Le mécanisme de néantisation du colonisé, mis en marche par le colonisateur, ne peut que s’aggraver tous les jours. Plus l’oppression augmente, plus le colonisateur a besoin de justification, plus il doit avilir le colonisé, plus il se sent coupable, plus il doit se justifier, etc. Comment en sortir sinon par la *rupture*, l’éclatement, tous les jours plus explosif, de ce *cercle infernal* ? La situation coloniale, par sa propre fatalité intérieure, appelle la révolte. Car la condition coloniale ne peut être *aménagée* ; tel un carcan, elle ne peut qu’être brisée (143).

Memmi does not explicitly say that decolonization will be violent, but implies it through the use of terms associated with violence. A “compromis” is not possible

because “révolte,” “rupture,” and “éclatement” are the only solutions to a colonial situation that is becoming more “explosif” and “radicale.” Fanon, on the other hand, makes it clear that violence is the only means through which decolonization is possible. He opens *Les Damnés de la terre*—which he published in 1961 as he lay dying in a hospital in Washington, D.C. after having participated in the Algerian revolution alongside the FLN—with:

Libération nationale, renaissance nationale, restitution de la nation au peuple, Commonwealth, quelles que soient les rubriques utilisées ou les formules nouvelles introduites, la décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent (39).

Throughout the first chapter, aptly entitled “Sur la violence,” Fanon continues to reiterate that violence is not only inevitable, but also essential in completing the decolonization process. As decolonization involves the complete upheaval of the social, political, cultural, and economic structures of a colony, it cannot occur peacefully because the colonizers will use their power to preserve the colonial system:

On ne désorganise pas une société, aussi primitive soit-elle, avec un tel programme si l’on n’est pas décidé dès le début, c’est-à-dire dès la formulation même de ce programme, à briser tous les obstacles qu’on rencontrera sur sa route. Le colonisé qui décide de réaliser ce programme, de s’en faire le moteur, est préparé de tout temps à la violence. Dès sa naissance il est clair pour lui que ce monde rétréci, semé d’interdictions, ne peut être remis en question que par la violence absolue (41).

Here, Fanon echoes Sartre and Memmi in illustrating that freedom is the principle objective of the colonized subject who is prepared to achieve it through all possible means. For Fanon, colonization is maintained through the repressive efforts committed by the gendarme and the soldier, both of whom are armed, trained, authorized, and oftentimes encouraged to kill. As their responsibility is to maintain the colonial order through violence, “par leur présence immédiate, leurs interventions directes et fréquentes, [le gendarme et le soldat] maintiennent le contact avec le colonisé et lui conseillent, à coups de crosse ou de napalm, de ne pas bouger” (42). As a result, the only viable solution to ending colonial violence is to eradicate the colonial system through violent means. Throughout the entire chapter on violence, Fanon repeatedly uses violent imagery to depict the rage of the colonized, who holds “des couteaux sanglants” (41), “fourb[e] ses armes” (46), “sort sa machette” (46), “sor[t] son couteau” (55), and has “sa mitrailleuse au point” (58) in order to achieve the “éradication de la superstructure” (49) of colonization.

While Fanon is arguably the most well known anticolonial intellectual to advocate for violence as a means to overthrow the colonial system, he is certainly not the only theorist or militant to do so. Amílcar Cabral, who led the national liberation movement of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, adopted many of Fanon’s ideas in his own struggle for independence from Portuguese colonization. In a speech entitled “The Weapon of Theory,” (1966) Cabral declares, “the essential instrument of imperialist domination is violence [...] there is not, and cannot be national liberation without the use of liberating violence by the nationalist forces, to answer the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism” (13), clearly reflecting Fanonian theory in his political outlook. Cabral also

shares Memmi's point that diplomacy with and concessions to the colonizer are futile efforts because "compromises with imperialism do not work [...] the normal way of national liberation, imposed on peoples by imperialist repression, is armed struggle" (14), as he himself experienced when he led the Guinea-Bissauan and Cape Verdean independence movements.

In the French colonies, Hồ Chí Minh provides another concrete example of how colonial violence begets violent resistance. In an appeal made on the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, he declares "Sự áp bức và bóc lột vô nhân đạo của đế quốc Pháp đã làm cho đồng bào ta hiểu rằng có cách mạng thì sống, không có cách mạng thì chết. [The barbaric oppression and ruthless exploitation of the French nation have made our compatriots realize that revolution is the only way for survival and that without it only death awaits.]" (155). Whereas Fanon and Cabral maintain that colonization, alienation, violence, and cultural destruction would continue in the colonial world unless the indigenous population achieves national liberation through an anticolonial revolution, Hồ goes even further and declares that death is the only alternative to an anticolonial revolution.

These theoretical perspectives offer insight on the genre, objectives, and language choice behind the writing of the four texts, as well as an understanding of the intellectual landscape that shaped the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions. As I will show in the following chapters, *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*, *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières*, *On nous appelait fellaghas*, and *La Bataille d'Alger* aim to persuade the French-speaking reader to see the conflicts through the viewpoint of Việt Minh and FLN militants. As a result, these memoirs have the potential to facilitate a

greater public discussion—as well as a more comprehensive understanding—of two wars that still remain controversial in France, but have defined contemporary Vietnam, Algeria, and the Francophone world.

NOTES

1. See Paul Jeandel's *Soutane noire et béret rouge* (1957) and Christian Ladouët's *Para en Indo* (1957).
2. Three notable examples of French POW memoirs include Pierre Richard's 1964 *Cinq ans prisonnier des Viets*, René Moreau's 1982 *8 ans otage chez les Viets, 1946-1954*, and Amédée Thévenet's 1997 *Goulags indochinois: carnets de guerre et de captivité, 1949-1952*.
3. Personal narratives by lesser-known veterans include Henry-Jean Loustau's 1985 memoir, *Guerre en Kabylie: 1956-1961*, and Jacques Goudrot's 1996 work, *La guerre d'Algérie d'un appelé*.
4. OAS is the acronym for Organisation de l'armée secrète, a paramilitary organization created by French Army members in January 1961 with the aim of using violent methods to destroy negotiations between the FLN and Charles de Gaulle's government in order to prevent Algerian independence. See Martin Evans's *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* and Alistaire Horne's *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*.
5. See notes 4-8 in the Introduction.
6. Sartre argues that prose is much more effective than poetry in engaging the reader and encouraging him to participate in political action. See pages 17-28 in *Qu'est ce que la littérature?*.

Enlightenment Values, Marxist Ideals, and World War II: Ideological and Historical Catalysts for Revolution

In a compelling scene in Régis Warnier's 1993 film, *Indochine*, Tanh refuses to kneel in front of the family altar, much to his mother's dismay. He justifies the defiant act by explaining that submission had turned the Vietnamese people into slaves and that "Người Pháp đã dạy cho con sự tự do, bình đẳng. Chính với cái đó con sẽ chống lại họ. [The French taught me liberty and equality. I will use those ideals to resist them.]" (1:19:06). Tanh's sentiment captures an integral part of the ideological foundation that drove the national liberation movements of the twentieth century. In the French colonies, Western philosophical thought—notably the ideas of liberty and equality that stemmed from the Enlightenment and French Revolution—heavily inspired political and military leaders such as Hồ Chí Minh and Ahmed Ben Bella, as well as the four authors considered in this dissertation. As Pamela Pears argues in *Remnants of Empire in Algeria and Vietnam*, both Vietnamese and Algerian nationalist parties claimed to have been influenced by the French *philosophes* and Enlightenment ideals of the eighteenth century, largely as a consequence of French imperial policy (55). The French Revolution—and subsequent end of *L'Ancien Régime* and instauration of *La République*—convinced France of its obligation to spread its revolutionary ideals outside of its borders (Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize* 17). During the height of overseas colonial conquest in the later half of the nineteenth century, Jules Ferry—an ardent supporter of the cultural assimilation policy regarding inhabitants of French colonies—declared in 1885:

[...] il faut autre chose à la France: qu'elle ne peut pas être seulement un pays libre; qu'elle doit aussi être un grand pays, exerçant sur les destinées de l'Europe toute l'influence qui lui appartient, qu'elle doit répandre cette influence sur le monde, et porter partout où elle le peut sa langue, ses mœurs, son drapeau, ses armes, son génie (5: 220).

During the colonial era, France used its educational system to implement the *mission civilisatrice*, with the aim of promoting (1) the French language and culture; (2) French Enlightenment ideals of justice, progress, and reason; and (3) French Republican values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. Ironically, these ideals would later provide the ideological basis for the revolutions that sought to end French colonialism in Vietnam and Algeria.

As with many decolonization movements, Marxist theory also heavily influenced both the Vietnamese and Algerian revolutions. Although *The Communist Manifesto* was first published in 1848, Marxist ideology did not reach a large number of Vietnamese until the early twentieth century (Sacks 107). During World War I, approximately 100,000 Vietnamese were drafted to fight for France. While in Europe, they met Marxist and socialist sympathizers who advocated for class struggle. Hồ Chí Minh himself began to accept the idea of Communism during his stay in France and even became a founding member of the Parti Communiste Français in 1920 (Gunn 54). Unlike the Việt Minh, the FLN never described itself as a Communist or Marxist party, nor did it form a political alliance with Communist states. However, as examined in Chapter 5, the FLN did seek military, political, and diplomatic support from Communist countries, notably China and the Soviet Union. In addition, the FLN's ideological program combined socialism with

Islam as early as the launching of the Algerian revolution in 1954 (Heristchi 114). Rather than adopt Marxism-socialism as its main ideology, the FLN was cognizant of the cultural, social, and political power offered by Islam and fully utilized religion in order to convince Algerians to revolt. FLN militants saw themselves as *mudjahideen*, or “the fighters of the faith” and viewed their rebellion against French rule as a form of *jihād* (Heristchi 114). Yet the FLN also adopted socialist ideology, which was inspired by Marxist doctrine espoused by the Việt Minh and Mao Tse-Tung. Furthermore, many influential intellectuals within the FLN were supporters of Marxism, including Mohamed Harbi and Amer Ouzegane,¹ both of whom blended Marxism and Islamic nationalism into the FLN’s political platform (Voll 226).

The events surrounding World War II also had an immense ideological and psychological effect on Vietnamese and Algerian nationalists and galvanized the independence movements in both countries. Nazi Germany’s humiliating conquest of France—as well as the establishment of the puppet Vichy Regime—revealed that France was weak and vulnerable, challenged French prestige, and tarnished France’s image as the ultimate authority in its colonies, especially for Vietnamese nationalists (Chapuis 8). As David Chandler explains in “Legacies of World War II in Indochina,” the 1945 Japanese defeat of France in Indochina was a “*coup de force*” that shattered French prestige and control in Vietnam and led to Hồ Chí Minh’s declaration of Vietnamese independence (24-25). Meanwhile, French-educated Algerians, as well as Algerians drafted into the French Army, “fully [anticipated] that with the liberation of France the democratic principles of 1789 would finally be extended to them” (Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky 238). On the day when Nazi Germany surrendered—May 8, 1945—around

5,000 Algerians held a parade in Sétif to celebrate the end of the war. Some of the parade participants held banners with slogans condemning colonial rule, which sparked a violent clash between the gendarmerie and the demonstrators. Many protesters were shot, which then provoked anti-French uprisings in both Sétif and Guelma. After the French Army quelled the rebellions, between 15,000 to 45,000 Algerians were killed in retribution (Klose 56-57).² The juxtaposition of peace in France with violence in Algeria on “Victory in Europe Day” can be seen in the opening scene of Rachid Bouchareb’s 2010 film *Hors-la-loi*, which emphasizes the tragic difference between metropolitan France and the *département* of Algeria at the end of the Second World War.

In *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* (2000), *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and *La Bataille d’Alger* (2002), Enlightenment and Revolutionary values, Marxist-socialist ideals, and the events of World War II are recurring themes that serve two purposes. First, they portray the ideological foundation that immensely affected militant leaders such as the four authors and encouraged them to believe that their revolution was not only inevitable, but also an integral part of the historical trajectory of the twentieth century. Second, these themes contribute to the intertextual nature of the memoirs, linking the life writings to the key political tracts of the Vietnamese and Algerian revolutions. This further cements the memoirists’ position as observers and chroniclers of momentous historical events according to Egerton’s conception of the political memoir (xiii).

The Influence of the French Enlightenment and French Revolution on Revolutionaries

Early Vietnamese nationalists were familiar with and inspired by the writings of the *philosophes*, especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The two pioneers of twentieth-century Vietnamese nationalism—Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926) and Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940)—both studied the ideas of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire and read translations of Rousseau’s writings (Tai 23; Goebel 232). Another early nationalist, Sorbonne law student Nguyễn An Ninh, was repeatedly arrested for his anticolonial activism. At his trial, the French prosecutor argued that Nguyễn had engaged in revolutionary activities and disseminated anticolonial propaganda by translating Rousseau’s *Du Contrat social* (1762) into Vietnamese (Tai 160). The influence of Rousseau appeared again during the Yên Bái mutiny of 1930, when Vietnamese soldiers in the French Army collaborated with civilian members of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnamese Nationalist Party) to attack their French officers (Gunn 61-62). The Vietnamese mutineers disseminated tracts containing multiple references to Rousseau (Goebel 234). A final example involves one of Hồ Chí Minh’s associates and fellow nationalist, Phan Văn Trường, who was harassed by the French police and accused of harboring revolutionary ideas because he had read Rousseau (Goebel 234).

It is not surprising that Vietnamese nationalists admired Rousseau, for “liberté” is one of the main themes in his writings. In *L’Émile ou de l’Éducation* (1762), Rousseau writes: “le premier de tous les biens n’est pas l’autorité, mais la liberté” (2: 433). The first chapter of his monumental *Du Contrat social* begins with the famous line “L’homme est né libre et partout il est dans les fers” (4). Later in *Du Contrat social*, Rousseau argues that “Renoncer à sa liberté, c’est renoncer à sa qualité d’homme, aux droits de

l'humanité, même à ses devoirs," showing that freedom is inextricably linked to human existence (13). In a section on the various systems of governance, he maintains:

Si l'on recherche en quoi consiste précisément le plus grand bien de tous, qui doit être la fin de tout système de législation, on trouvera qu'il se réduit à ces deux objets principaux, la *liberté* et l'*égalité*. La liberté, parce que toute indépendance particulière est autant de force ôtée au corps de l'état ; l'égalité, parce que la liberté ne peut subsister sans elle (*Du contrat social* 82).

Here, Rousseau affirms that the role of government is to ensure freedom and equality, two ideals that propelled the French Revolution and have been enshrined in the motto "liberté, égalité, fraternité" of the French Republic. The *Déclaration des droits des hommes et du citoyen* (1789), a fundamental political text from the French Revolution, not only illustrates the importance of freedom but also reflects Rousseau's idea that the responsibility of a government is to ensure basic rights for its citizens. Article I of the *Déclaration* states "Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits," while Article II declares "Le but de toute association politique est la conservation des droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l'Homme. Ces droits sont la liberté, la propriété, la sûreté, et la résistance à l'oppression." These first two articles—as well as the *Déclaration* in its entirety—highlight the importance of ensuring the citizen's right to freedom.

The ideals promoted by Enlightenment thinkers—such as Rousseau—and the *Déclaration* are evident in the writings of the most prominent twentieth-century Vietnamese nationalist, Hồ Chí Minh. In his early *Revendications du peuple annamite*³,

originally written in French in 1919 under the pseudonym Nguyễn Ái Quốc⁴, Hồ insists that the Vietnamese people desire basic personal and political freedoms, including:

3°—Liberté de Presse et d’Opinion;

4°—Liberté d’association et de réunion ;

5°—Liberté d’émigration et de voyage à l’étranger ;

6°—Liberté d’enseignement et création [...] (2).

Hồ’s repetition of the word “liberté” reveals the degree to which he and his peers were influenced by the idea of freedom that was exalted by Rousseau and French revolutionaries, and later adopted by France into its national character. The third and fourth points calling for freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly all reflect Articles I, II, IV, X, and XI of the *Déclaration des droits des hommes et du citoyen*. While *Revendications* is an early nationalist text, it nonetheless shows the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings that would motivate the Vietnamese independence movement two decades later.

The influence of the ideals of the French Enlightenment and Revolution is most evident in Hồ’s *Tuyên ngôn độc lập Việt Nam Dân chủ Cộng hòa* [*Proclamation of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam*], written and announced to the Vietnamese public in September 1945. The tract begins as follows:

“Tất cả mọi người đều sinh ra có quyền bình đẳng. Tạo hóa cho họ những quyền không ai có thể xâm phạm được; trong những quyền ấy, có quyền được sống, quyền tự do và quyền mưu cầu hạnh phúc.”

Lời bất hủ ấy ở trong bản Tuyên ngôn Độc lập năm 1776 của nước Mỹ. Suy rộng ra, câu ấy có ý nghĩa là: tất cả các dân tộc trên thế giới đều sinh ra bình đẳng, dân tộc nào cũng có quyền sống, quyền sung sướng và quyền tự do.

Bản Tuyên ngôn Nhân quyền và Dân quyền của Cách mạng Pháp năm 1791 cũng nói: Người ta sinh ra tự do và bình đẳng về quyền lợi; và phải luôn luôn được tự do và bình đẳng về quyền lợi.

Đó là những lẽ phải không ai chối cãi được.

Thế mà hơn 80 năm nay, bọn thực dân Pháp lợi dụng lá cờ tự do, bình đẳng, bác ái, đến cướp đất nước ta, áp bức đồng bào ta. Hành động của chúng trái hẳn với nhân đạo và chính nghĩa.

Về chính trị, chúng tuyệt đối không cho nhân dân ta một chút tự do dân chủ nào.

[“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: “All men are born free

and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.”

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.]

In *Proclamation*, Hồ cites the two most famous Enlightenment-influenced political declarations: the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. For Hồ, ideals such as “life,” “liberty,” “the pursuit of happiness,” “freedom,” “equal rights,” “equality,” and “fraternity” served as inspiration for his independence struggle. Furthermore, he highlights French hypocrisy—a recurring theme in his writings⁵—by arguing that France did not actually extend its Enlightenment and Revolutionary values to the colonized Vietnamese people as purported. Instead, through its colonial oppression, France actively denied Vietnamese people of the democratic liberties that it pretended to uphold and promote. Hồ’s jab at France’s abuse of its own Republican motto of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” was yet another thinly veiled reference to the French refusal of these rights to the Vietnamese. It is clear that he believed Vietnamese people could never benefit from these ideals under French rule, which he describes as “imperialist” and “oppressive.”

Like Hồ, the two Vietnamese militant-authors show that the desire for the French Enlightenment and Republican ideal of “liberté” was central to their cause. *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* not only reflects Hồ’s ideology, but also reminds readers of Ngô’s unique role as an observer of contemporary history, as it describes Ngô’s presence in the crowd when Hồ Chí Minh delivered his *Proclamation* on September 2, 1945 in Hanoi. In his journal, Ngô rewrote the sections of Hồ’s speech that he found the most inspiring and significant, such as those describing Vietnamese people as “un peuple qui a le droit d’être libre” and “le Vietnam a le droit d’être libre et indépendant” (40). In focusing on these particular segments of Hồ’s speech, Ngô reveals that his yearning for freedom was a key motivator behind his involvement in the Việt Minh’s struggle for independence. The direct quoting of *Proclamation* also illustrates the intertextuality of Ngô’s memoir, which not only reflects historical events, but also engages with historic political texts.

In the Việt Minh training grounds, the political indoctrination of new recruits highlighted the link between France and the ideal of freedom. In an entry from July 1946, an unnamed Việt Minh member in charge of politically educating new recruits explained, “J’ai vécu en France et c’est là-bas que j’ai appris la liberté” (Ngô 96). This statement could signify that he first learned of the concept of freedom while in France, or that he first learned what freedom was like while living in France. In any case, the association between “France” and “freedom” is an unmistakable nod to one of the core values of the French Enlightenment and Revolution. Because the Việt Minh indoctrinator did not discover freedom until he left Vietnam to go to France, he insinuates that freedom was offered in France, but not in French-controlled colonial Vietnam.

After officially joining the Việt Minh, Ngô and other members were responsible for disseminating the group's objectives to fellow Vietnamese people. In their recruitment activities, the members announced: “nous étions des adhérents du *Viet-Nam-Doc-Lap-Dong-Minh-Hoi*,⁶ fondé en 1941 pour libérer l'Indochine, suivant le principe de la « liberté des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes »” (Ngô 40). This strategy, adapted to improve recruitment, identified the Việt Minh as the only political group that was willing and able to liberate Vietnam from French rule and bring freedom to the Vietnamese people. Their carefully crafted announcement also reveals that freedom was the ultimate objective for Việt Minh militants such as Ngô. Likewise, in *De La RC4 à la N4*, Đặng recounts that Việt Minh soldiers all possessed a “dévouement total à la cause de la liberté” (49). In addition, Ngô shows that he was also motivated by the desire to secure the freedom of future Vietnamese generations. After learning that his wife was pregnant, Ngô says to her, “Donne-moi un enfant. Qu'il soit garçon ou fille qu'importe pourvu qu'il soit libre” (Ngô 67). Because male progeny is considered to be extremely valuable in Confucian Vietnamese society, it is extraordinary for Ngô to consider his child's freedom as a greater concern than its sex, thereby indicating the importance of freedom for him.

While Ngô highlights the notion of freedom, Đặng's memoir alludes to Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals by implying that colonial Vietnam shared similarities with pre-Revolutionary France. Prior to French colonization, Vietnam had a feudal socio-political system in which mandarins owned land and wealth and ruled over the peasantry while being subjected to the emperor's control (Brown 5). Despite claiming to advance French values such as political and democratic liberties, the French

colonial regime actively colluded with the mandarins, incorporated the mandarin class system into its colonial administration of Vietnam, and partly used the mandarins to govern the country (Dommen 11, 38, 58, 100, 184). In a description of social inequalities under the mandarin class system, Đặng describes mandarin landowners as “le roi absolu de son fief” (75) who “peut donc exploiter, opprimer les paysans à volonté” (75) and who even declares “que le soleil leur appartient” (75). Đặng’s description of these mandarins as “le roi absolu” who believe that the sun belongs to them is a direct allusion to Louis XIV, the “Sun King” who was the embodiment of the absolute monarchy. As Đặng published in French, a reader who is able to read the memoir in French would likely have sufficient knowledge of French history and culture to understand these references.

According to Nadeau and Barlow, only about 0.6 percent of Vietnamese people speak French today (314). Therefore, Đặng chose to publish a French-language version of his memoir not to “dévoile” his compatriots, but rather the French-speaking peoples in France and former French colonies. In drawing parallels between the French-supported Vietnamese mandarin system and the divinely ordained monarchy in pre-Revolutionary France, Đặng shows the French-speaking reader that France did not extend its revolutionary ideals to its colonies. In doing so, he suggests that the Vietnamese living under French colonialism—and its proxy ruling system of mandarins—were denied the same political and civil liberties that French people lacked under the feudal *ancien régime*. In this sense, Đặng equates the Vietnamese Revolution to the French Revolution, implying that both groups of revolutionaries resorted to political violence in order to overthrow an inherently unjust political and social system. In fact, Vietnamese revolutionaries used the word “Bastille” to refer to French colonial prisons, which were

notorious for detaining political dissidents and nationalists, revealing that they saw themselves as continuing the tradition of the French revolutionaries of 1789 (Zinoman 257).

Like their Vietnamese counterparts, Algerian nationalists were also inspired by the ideals of the French Enlightenment and Revolution. Messali Hadj, who co-founded three early Algerian nationalist parties—l'Étoile nord-africaine (1926), Parti du peuple algérien (1937), and Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques (1946)—particularly admired Rousseau (Rothermund 179). In his *Mémoires*, published in 1982, Hadj writes:

*L'œuvre de Jean-Jacques Rousseau m'a marqué [...] A l'époque, il m'avait éclairé sur les problèmes de la liberté, de la démocratie, de la justice. Ne peut-on pas dire, en exagérant à peine, que J.J. Rousseau a été le père de la Révolution française ? Ou du moins celui qui l'a annoncé ? A dire vrai, même si cela peut sembler étranger, j'en étais justement à me demander, en 1935, si je n'étais pas sur une voie révolutionnaire depuis plusieurs années (Stora, *L'Effet* 238).*

Similar to the Vietnamese revolutionaries, Hadj also draws a parallel between the French Revolution and the Algerian Revolution. In 1954, he founded the Mouvement National Algérien as a nationalist alternative to the FLN. The two rival nationalist parties engaged in a bloody fratricide struggle for power within the greater context of the Algerian Revolution, with the FLN eventually gaining prominence over the MNA (Evans 124-129). Nonetheless, Hadj—often called the father of Algerian nationalism—

illustrates that the French Enlightenment and Revolution significantly affected his political beliefs and activism for independence (Le Sueur 332).

Members of the FLN were also impacted by the French Enlightenment and Revolution. In an early life writing entitled *Le Jeune Algérien* (1931), Ferhat Abbas wrote “L’Algérien croit en la France, celle des philosophes du XVII^e siècle, celle des principes de 1789 [...]” (126). In *Autopsie d’une guerre*, a memoir published in 1981, Abbas criticized the French in Algeria for “faisant les droits de l’homme, glorifiés par la Révolution française de 1789, une application sélective qui excluait l’Algérien” (11). Like his Vietnamese counterparts, Abbas criticizes France for its hypocrisy as it pretended to embody the revolutionary values of liberté and égalité while denying those rights to Algerians. Mohamed Larbi Madi—who led the FLN’s Fédération de France—wrote the following commentary while in prison in 1956:

Bientôt vous célébrerez à Paris l’anniversaire du 14 juillet 1789. Nous sommes avec vous par la pensée car nous sommes de ceux qui se souviennent. Et de tels souvenirs entretiennent notre foi, et justifient notre espérance [...] Pour nous, militants nationalistes algériens, 1789 et bien d’autres leçons de l’histoire gardent leur valeur et leur prestige (Kessel and Pirelli 68-69).

Here, Madi shows that FLN revolutionaries saw themselves as akin to the French revolutionaries of 1789. This parallel reappears in 1957, when the Fédération de France du FLN proclaimed “Ce qu’il faut, c’est la Révolution à 1789... Notre combat est légitime. Il entre dans la pure tradition de la France révolutionnaire” (Stora, *L’effet* 238). In yet another condemnation of French colonial actions, an article from *El Moudjahid*

published on November 1, 1961 to coincide with the seventh anniversary of the Algerian Revolution, states: “Depuis sept ans, la sale guerre d’Algérie corrompt toutes les valeurs de liberté et d’humanisme que votre pays avait jadis proposées au monde” (Stora, *L’effet* 238).

Algerian political tracts also reflect a strong desire for the rights and values that stemmed from the French Enlightenment and Revolution. Similar to Hồ Chí Minh’s *Revendications*, Ferhat Abbas’s *Manifeste du peuple algérien*—published in February 1943—is an early political tract that predates the political formation of the FLN. Yet the document still reflects the beginnings of Algerian nationalist sentiment, as well as the influence of Enlightenment and Revolutionary values on Algerian nationalism. This list of demands from the Algerian people includes:

- La liberté et l’égalité absolue de tous ses habitants, sans distinctions de race ou de religion ;
- La suppression de la propriété féodale par une grande réforme agraire et le droit au bien-être de l’immense prolétariat agricole ; [...]
- La liberté de la presse et du droit d’association ; [...]
- La liberté du Culte pour tous les habitants et l’application à toutes les religions du principe de la séparation de l’Église et de l’État (38).

Like *Revendications*, the *Manifeste*’s repetition of “liberté”—in conjunction with its references to the ideals of equality, freedom of the press, and freedom of association—reflect values that originate from the French Enlightenment and Revolution, as well as

Articles I, II, IV, X, and XI of the *Déclaration des droits des hommes et du citoyen*. Abbas's first demand, "La liberté et l'égalité absolue de tous ses habitants, sans distinctions de race ou de religion," is a criticism of the Code de l'Indigénat, which differentiated between French citizens and French subjects, depriving the latter of their personal and political rights. In addition, the reference to feudal property is equally deliberate, as the rejection of feudalist ideas and practices was a key tenet of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. However, as Abbas suggests, the French appropriation of fertile agricultural land was indicative of ongoing feudalism in Algeria. In writing "colonisation n'est qu'une forme collective de l'esclavage individuel du Moyen Age" (38), Abbas reiterates the idea that colonization parallels "medieval" practices such as slavery, rather than reflecting Enlightenment-derived values that emphasize freedom. As with Hô's *Revendications* and *Proclamation, Manifeste* also reveals an immense desire for basic personal and political freedoms.

In 1954, the FLN's *Proclamation*, which was the first written FLN text distributed in Algeria, outlines the internal and external objectives necessary to achieve full independence. In describing its motivations, the FLN explains: "notre action est dirigée uniquement contre le colonialisme, seul ennemi obstiné et aveugle qui s'est toujours refusé à accorder la moindre liberté" (FLN 37). Like the writings by Hô and Abbas, the *Proclamation* identifies colonialism as contrary to the French value of "liberté," while expressing the group's desire to achieve freedom by overthrowing the French colonial regime. The FLN lists its main goal as:

But.—Indépendance nationale par :

1°—La restauration de l'État Algérien souverain, démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes islamiques ;

2°—Le respect de toutes les libertés fondamentales sans distinction de races et de confessions (37).

The second point is not only an allusion to the first demand listed in Abbas's earlier *Manifeste*, but also serves as a deliberate reference to the preamble of the French *Constitution du 27 octobre 1946*. Adopted after the end of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust, the French Constitution of 1946 begins with:

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.

In the sentence “Le respect de toutes les libertés fondamentales sans distinction de races et de confessions,” the *Proclamation's* word choice and syntax intentionally mirror those of the 1946 French Constitution, particularly the segment declaring that “tout être humain, sans distinction de race, de religion ni de croyance, possède des droits inaliénables et sacrés.” In referring to France's reaffirmation that “all human beings, regardless of race, religion, or beliefs, hold inalienable and sacred rights,” such as those promoted by the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* and by the French Republic itself,

the FLN's *Proclamation* highlights the discrepancy between France's official stance concerning basic human freedoms and its actual practices in Algeria. The text also indicates that the FLN's revolution stems from the desire to bring these freedoms and rights to the Algerian people.

The objectives detailed in these political tracts appear in the memoirs by Azzedine and Yacef, both of whom use repetition to emphasize that the values derived from the French Enlightenment and Revolution—especially freedom—motivated FLN militants in their independence struggle. While pondering over FLN operations, Azzedine writes, “L’adversaire nous avait dépersonnalisés au point de prétendre nous couler dans le moule de sa propre culture, et notre grande jouissance était de lui démontrer l’échec de son idéologie en appuyant notre contestation sur ses propres valeurs” (177). Here, Azzedine is not only referring to the civilizing mission's failed attempt to assimilate Algerians into French culture, but also to the FLN's use of French values in their struggle against France. To portray the influence of French values, Azzedine describes his compatriots as “ce grand peuple assoiffé de liberté” (195). His use of the word “assoiffé” is of particular importance. First, it indicates that Algerian people have been deprived of freedom to the point where they have an immense thirst for it. Second, thirst is a basic human need that must be fulfilled in order to survive. In associating “assoiffé” with “liberté,” Azzedine suggests that freedom is also an essential necessity for the Algerian people. Moreover, Azzedine portrays his fellow combatants as “ces hommes épris de justice, de dignité et de liberté” (198), which is similar to Yacef's description of Algerians as “un peuple profondément épris de liberté” (1: 175). In fact, Yacef's memoir repeatedly highlights

what he perceives to be the Algerian people's desire for "les libertés démocratiques" (2: 60, 62).

The theme of freedom also appears in poetic works produced by FLN militants during the revolution. While in prison, Azzedine's sister, Zehor, wrote a poem on the Algerian Revolution in which the verse "Appelle à la liberté" (227) is repeated twice. Azzedine's account also contains another poetic text that reflects the Algerian desire for freedom:

La France veut imposer

Sa dictature [...]

De notre Révolution

Nous obtiendrons

La Liberté (193-194).

These are lyrics from a motivational nationalist song that Azzedine and fellow militants repeatedly sang in order to boost their morale. Because "words are learned quickly when set to a familiar tune," songs serve as an effective and rapid method of communicating political messages to a large illiterate population (Mason 1-2). While Azzedine sang the tune in a rural area near Zbar-Bar, it is unclear when the song became popular, and whether it was widely sung among all FLN militants. Nonetheless, the song lyrics characterize France as a dictatorship, refuting France's claim of embodying the personal and political liberties expounded in its original *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*, as well as in its 1946 Constitution of the Fourth Republic. The lyrics also contrast colonial French rule to the political system espoused by the FLN as presented in the *Proclamation* of 1954, which declares that national independence would entail the

creation of a sovereign, democratic, and socialist Algerian state (37). The last three verses of the song parallel the sentiments of the French Revolution, during which French revolutionaries, like their Algerian counterparts, wanted to obtain freedom through their struggle. The song also indicates that *liberté* is the ultimate goal of the Algerian Revolution.

In addition, the frequent repetition of scenes and descriptions related to the central theme of *liberté* reflects Sartre's vision of using literature as an engine to promote freedom to and for all. For Sartre, an author, "qu'il soit essayiste, pamphlétaire, satiriste ou romancier, qu'il parle seulement des passions individuelles ou qu'il s'attaque au régime de la société, l'écrivain [...] n'a qu'un seul sujet : la liberté" (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* 70). As a literary device, repetition serves as "a *prima facie* simplest demonstration of reflexivity, that is, of text-awareness or self-awareness" in which an author consciously repeats specific themes or words in order to enable the reader to "focus on the message" of his text (Toolan 23). In both spoken discourse and written texts, "a repeated phrase or line, or a repeated initial consonant on a sequence of words, is extremely unlikely to be produced in 'entirely unmonitored speaking or writing'" (Toolan 23). Therefore, the Vietnamese and Algerian militant-authors use repetition to achieve Sartre's conception of "dévoilement" by guiding the reader's attention to the recurring theme of freedom. Because "dévoiler c'est changer" the situation addressed by the author (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* 28), the writers include multiple references to "liberté" in order to show the French-speaking reader that Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals not only had an immense philosophical and political impact on the authors, but also on the revolutionary movements in Vietnam and Algeria. In

highlighting the centrality of “liberté” to the revolutionary cause, the militant-authors use their writings to convince the French-speaking reader that the French colonial enterprise was hypocritical in its denial of “liberté” to its colonial subjects.

In addition to freedom, the memoirs reveal a desire for social equality that was inexistent under the French colonial regime despite France’s supposed commitment to the ideals expressed in its motto and *Déclaration des droits de l’homme*. Azzedine especially criticizes French colonial authorities who believe that “il faut que crève la vermine terroriste qui ose contester l’ordre ancien” (218). The latter part of this carefully constructed sentence is a reference to the authoritarian Ancien Régime that preceded the modern democratic French Republic and was characterized by extremely limited social mobility and personal and political rights, as well as nonexistent democratic liberties. In making this allusion, Azzedine suggests that colonial Algeria was also marred by the rampant social and political inequalities that existed in monarchist France. Like with the FLN’s song discussed above, this allusion shows that the FLN saw similarities between its revolution against French colonial authority and the French revolution against French royal authority.

The Algerian texts are far more critical of France than the Vietnamese ones due to several reasons rooted in the singular situation of Algeria. First, while Vietnam was a French colony, Algeria was considered to be an integral part of metropolitan France and was incorporated into France as three separate *départements* (McMillan 76). Second, Algeria was a French settler colony with 10.5 million people of European descent living on Algerian territory (McMillan 76). These two factors, combined with France’s humiliating 1954 defeat at Điện Biên Phủ, drove France to maintain Algeria by

suppressing the FLN uprisings with all available means (McMillan 76-78). Systematic torture, widespread rapes, and mass executions were commonly practiced by the French military in Algeria and vividly described by Si Azzedine and Saadi Yacef in their accounts (McMillan 76-78).

In particular, the authors concentrate on the discrepancies between French values and practices. This is especially the case with Yacef's *La Bataille d'Alger*, which features French atrocities as a recurring theme. While reflecting on European colonization, Yacef writes:

Durant les cinq derniers siècles de colonisation de la planète,
l'Occident avait fondé la « légitimité » de son expansionnisme
territorial sur deux facteurs raisonnablement inconciliables:
l'armée et la mission civilisatrice, l'une servant à masquer les
massacres que l'autre exécutait au nom de la « lumière » (1: 341).

For Yacef, the West's colonial expansion is inherently hypocritical because it uses military force in order to achieve its objectives while declaring itself to be the bearer of civilization. Yacef's commentary echoes elements of *Discours sur le colonialisme*, in which Aimé Césaire states that Western civilization “ruse avec ses principes” (7) by committing atrocities in the colonies while pretending to be civilized. Because of its barbaric actions in the colonies, Europe “se réfugie dans une hypocrisie d'autant plus odieuse” (7) and is therefore “moralement, spirituellement indéfendable” (8).

Furthermore, Césaire notes:

On peut tuer en Indochine, torturer à Madagascar, emprisonner en
Afrique Noire, sévir aux Antilles. Les colonisés savent désormais

qu'ils ont sur les colonialistes un avantage. Ils savent que leurs
« maîtres » provisoires mentent (8).

According to Césaire, because the colonized experience violence at the hands of the colonizers, they are aware that the colonizers are lying when they claim to represent civilization as defined by Western values. Yacef's above criticism of Western colonial hypocrisy is an example of the colonial subject's realization of the duplicity of colonial propaganda. His decision to encircle the words "légitimité" and "lumière" with quotation marks is also significant. In doing so, Yacef shows that he does not consider Western territorial acquisitions to be legitimate, thereby challenging France's claim to Algeria. In addition, while he criticizes the entire West for its colonial exploits, his mention of "la lumière" is especially directed at France. "La lumière" could refer to "Le Siècle des Lumières" or the mission civilisatrice through which France was to spread its civilization—bright and illustrious like light—to the rest of the world. Echoing Césaire, Yacef highlights France's ideological inconsistency by showing that France committed massacres in the colonies, but then concealed these atrocities under the pretense of civilizing its colonial subjects.

In the second volume of *La Bataille d'Alger*, Yacef makes yet another allusion to the hypocrisy of the civilizing mission. After describing the killing of a civilian FLN sympathizer, Yacef comments that these executions were to prevent the prisoners from "dévoiler ce que l'armée française était en train d'accomplir en Algérie en matière de civilisation et de droits de l'homme" (2: 378). Again, Yacef juxtaposes the French Army's killings with French Republican ideals of civilization and human rights, thereby portraying French actions in Algeria as contrary to the values that France professes to

uphold. The specific mention of the “droits de l’homme” serves as a reference to the *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, which promotes the freedoms that were violated in Algeria. In a similar fashion, Azzedine makes an allusion to the stark difference between French values and practices in Algeria in *On nous appelait fellaghas*. In one incident, his sister Zehor was arrested and taken to a school where French parachutists tortured suspected FLN members at night. While beaten and tortured in a classroom, “C’est la culture rimée avec torture, pense Zehor. Car la torture se pratique dans les classes de la civilisation française!” (215). As previously discussed, the civilizing mission was accomplished through the colonial educational system, which promoted French values and culture as being the epitome of civilization. By showing that France tortures civilians in a space designated to further the ideals of French civilization, Azzedine—like Yacef and Césaire—refutes the idea that France practiced its values in the colonies. Instead of transmitting civilization to the colonies, Azzedine and Yacef show that barbaric acts such as torture and massacres “travaill[ent] à *déciviliser* le colonisateur,” as argued by Césaire (12). This criticism also appears in *La Question*, a 1958 text by Henri Alleg—a French Communist journalist who was arrested and tortured for assisting the FLN—that details his ordeal in the French Army’s torture centers. For Alleg, the “« centre de tri » n’était pas seulement un lieu de tortures pour les Algériens, mais une école de perversion pour les jeunes Français” (65). In torturing Algerians, the colonial system actively decivilized the French officers charged with the task. Alleg’s observation echoes the arguments made by postcolonial theorists and Vietnamese and Algerian revolutionaries, all of whom decry the French colonial system for violating the

values of the French Enlightenment, French Revolution, and French civilization that France purported to uphold.

Marxist-Socialism: Ideological Effects on Revolutionaries

Marx and Engels's *On Colonialism* is an anthology featuring numerous essays centered on the premise that colonialism is simply a form of capitalism designed to exploit the indigenous populations in the colonies.⁷ In fact, in a 1857 essay on Algeria, Engels offers an early criticism of the violence of French colonial expansion: "From the first occupation of Algeria by the French to the present time, the unhappy country has been the arena of unceasing bloodshed, rapine, and violence. Each town, large and small, has been conquered in detail at an immense sacrifice of life" (158). The condemnation of capitalism and proletariat oppression that formed the cornerstone of Marxism appealed to Vietnamese and Algerian revolutionaries who viewed colonization as (1) an inevitable consequence of capitalism and (2) a systematic exploitation of the colonized. Hence, for Vietnamese and Algerian nationalists, their rebellions against the French consisted of two inseparable objectives. The first was political and cultural in nature and consisted of obtaining national independence by overthrowing the occupying colonial regime. The second objective was economic in nature and aimed to liberate the people from exploitation by overthrowing the capitalist regime established by the colonizer.

On the founding of the Communist Party of Indochina in 1930, Hồ Chí Minh's *Lời Kêu Gọi* [*Appeal*] to the Vietnamese people was addressed to "Hỡi công nhân, nông dân, binh lính, thanh niên, học sinh, anh chị bị áp bức, bóc lột! Anh chị em! Các đồng chí! / [Workers, peasants, soldiers, youth, and students! Oppressed and exploited

compatriots! Brothers and sisters! Comrades!]" (8). In addition to using terminology associated with Communist ideology—notably “workers, “peasants,” “compatriots,” and “comrades”—he argues that the “French imperialists” and “Vietnamese feudalists” have oppressed and exploited the people, who now realize that revolution was the only way forward. According to Hồ, the Communist Party:

... là Đảng của giai cấp vô sản. Đảng sẽ dìu dắt giai cấp vô sản lãnh đạo cách mạng An Nam đấu tranh nhằm giải phóng cho toàn thể anh chị em bị áp bức, bóc lột chúng ta. Từ này anh chị em chúng ta cần phải gia nhập Đảng, ủng hộ Đảng và đi theo Đảng để:

1) Đánh đổ đế quốc Pháp, phong kiến An Nam và giai cấp tư sản phản cách mạng.

2) Làm cho nước An Nam được độc lập.

3) Thành lập Chính phủ công nông binh.

4) Tịch thu tất cả các nhà băng và cơ sở sản xuất của đế quốc trao cho Chính phủ công nông binh.

5) Quốc hữu hóa toàn bộ đồn điền và đất đai của bọn đế quốc và địa chủ phản cách mạng An Nam chia cho nông dân nghèo. [...]

8) Đem lại mọi quyền tự do cho nhân dân.

9) Thực hành giáo dục toàn dân.

10) Thực hiện nam nữ bình quyền (8-10).

[...is the party of the working class. It will help the proletariat lead the revolution in order to struggle for all the oppressed and

exploited people. From now on, we must all join the Party, support the Party, and follow the Party in order to:

1) Overthrow French imperialism, Vietnamese feudalism, and the reactionary capitalist class.

2) Make Indochina completely independent.

3) Establish a government of workers, peasants, and soldiers.

4) Confiscate the banks and other enterprises belonging to the imperialists and place them under the control of the worker-peasant-soldier government.

5) Confiscate the whole of the plantations and property belonging to the imperialists and the Vietnamese reactionary capitalist class and distribute them to poor peasants. [...]

8) Reinstate all freedoms to the people.

9) Offer universal education.

10) Implement equality between men and women.]

For Hồ, the Vietnamese Revolution occurs within the context of an international Communist movement aimed at liberating all of the oppressed peoples of the world. Consequently, unseating “French imperialism” and “Vietnamese feudalism” are two aspects of the same universal struggle to free exploited workers, peasants, and soldiers. Hồ also advocates for the redistribution of land, property, and wealth to historically marginalized groups such as peasants. Not only do Hồ’s ideas and objectives mirror the goals outlined in *The Communist Manifesto*, but his vocabulary choice—particularly words such as “proletariat” and “workers and peasants”—is indicative of the profound

ideological influence of Marxism on the philosophical underpinnings of the revolution that he pioneered.

Marxist ideals are evident in the Vietnamese political memoirs and served to convince the two Việt Minh militant-authors of the righteousness of their revolution. The memoirs reveal that the military formation of Việt Minh soldiers consisted of political indoctrination, which “porte sur les méfaits du colonialisme et du capitalisme” (Ngô 94), as detailed by Marx and Engels. Ngô continues to explain that “Nous avons également des cours de marxisme-léninisme : nous devons lire et rendre compte des brochures qui nous sont distribuées : *L’Etat et la Révolution* de Lénine, des extraits de la *Dictature du Proletariat*” (94), all of which served to provide an ideological foundation that resonated with the Vietnamese people’s desire for basic freedoms, social justice, and national independence. Explicitly including the titles of these political brochures also adds to the intertextual dimension of his memoir.

Another segment of Ngô’s political education entails the following:

Le Cadre qui nous fait les cours de politique nous répète tous les jours des maximes simples et faciles à assimiler. Il nous explique que notre mission est double ; nous devons libérer notre patrie du joug des colonialistes français et, en instituant la paix dans le pays, préparer les voies du socialisme constructif [...] Les paysans forment chez nous 90% de la population totale. Sous le règne des colonialistes et des mandarins féodaux cette masse paysanne a été et est encore, dans le sud, inhumainement exploitée (Ngô 95).

As most Việt Minh recruits were uneducated, their political training consisted of the repetition of basic ideas and sentences that were easy to understand. The Việt Minh's calculated political indoctrination offered ideological support to the anger felt by less educated recruits while showing all members that they were not alone in their resentment of French colonialism and Vietnamese feudalism. In fact, it encouraged these recruits to see that their fellow compatriots, as well as fellow oppressed peoples worldwide, also shared their struggles and attitudes. In *Journal*, a Việt Minh member, referring to the Confucian system of respecting and valuing one's family, asks, "Il est juste et bon d'aimer et de respecter sa famille, mais qu'est-ce que les petites familles de bourgeois qui furent la tienne et la mienne, à côté de l'immense famille du peuple vietnamien, des ouvriers et des paysans, des prolétaires du monde entier?" (Ngô 30). Here, the Việt Minh recruit expresses her sentiment of national and international solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world, which she views as more important than the traditional family ties that were central to Vietnamese culture. On a similar note, Đặng says that participants of Marxist revolutions were all "liés les uns aux autres par l'internationalisme prolétarien et unis dans la lutte contre l'ennemi commun, à savoir l'impérialisme et les classes exploitantes" (71). The national and international solidarity offered by Marxism was a powerful tool used by the Việt Minh to mobilize the masses into participating in the revolution, as it allowed the recruits to sense that they belonged to a movement that was greater than themselves.

Unlike the Việt Minh, the FLN was not explicitly Marxist. Nonetheless, the FLN's political ideology and platform had socialist underpinnings. During the 1956 Plateforme de la Soummam, leading FLN members offered a coherent political and

military strategy for an independent Algerian state and adopted a socialist political program (Stone 39; Evans 177-181). The FLN's Soummam proceedings declares:

Le F.L.N. affirmait au début de la Révolution que « **la libération de l'Algérie sera l'œuvre de TOUS les Algériens et non pas celle d'une fraction du peuple algérien, quelque soit son importance** »⁸ [...]

Le sens politique du F.L.N. s'est vérifié d'une façon éclatante par l'adhésion massive des paysans pour lesquels la conquête de l'indépendance nationale signifie en même temps la réforme agraire qui leur assurera la possession des terres qu'ils fécondent de leur labeur [...]

C'est une lutte nationale pour détruire le régime anarchique de la colonisation et non une guerre religieuse. C'est une marche en avant dans le sens historique de l'humanité et non un retour vers le féodalisme.

C'est enfin la lutte pour la renaissance d'un État Algérien sous la forme d'une **république démocratique et sociale et non la restauration d'une monarchie ou d'une théocratie révolues** (247-249).

The proceedings are indicative of the FLN's socialist leanings in several ways. First, the *Plateforme* reveals that the FLN's goal is to liberate Algeria by mobilizing all segments of Algerian society and not just the elite. Second, the FLN's political strength was reaffirmed by the support of the peasantry, which evokes Hồ's *Lời Kêu Gọi*

[*Appeal*]. Third, the *Plateforme* hints at redistributing land back to the peasantry, once again echoing the goals of Marxism. Fourth, the FLN clarifies that it is not waging a “religious war,” nor does it want to establish a “theocracy” in an independent Algerian state. While the FLN did use Islam to mobilize the people, it adopted the secular values of socialist-Marxist ideology and did not envision injecting religion into the political structure of a future Algerian nation. Finally, the FLN’s platform calls for the creation of a “social democratic republic,” yet another indication of its adoption of socialist political beliefs.

The Marxist-socialist narrative also had a profound impact on the FLN and its members, encouraging the organization to reach out to all elements of Algerian society—particularly the peasantry—which proved to be crucial to FLN military operations, as discussed in Chapter 3. Si Azzedine describes the FLN as “socialiste dans son essence, sa révolution est partie du désir profond des masses” (184) and frequently reiterates the FLN’s commitment to socialism throughout his memoir. According to Azzedine, “les classes sociales se confondraient dans la lutte” (209), which not only advocated for independence, but also “parl[ai]ent souvent de réforme agraire, de distribution des terres, d’une Algérie socialiste” (249), as recommended by the Soummam Conference proceedings. Similar to the Việt Minh, which heavily depended on the support of the peasantry, “La lutte du peuple algérien est menée à quatre-vingt-dix pour cent par la paysannerie” (Azzedine 183). In addition, Azzedine reveals that one aspect of the FLN’s revolutionary efforts included the organization and administration of social services for the Algerian people “Selon les principes d’égalité et de solidarité inspirés des grandes

traditions socialistes” (332). Like with the Việt Minh, socialism provided a unifying ideology that promoted national solidarity and social equality.

Whereas Azzedine highlights the socialist underpinnings of the Algerian Revolution, Saadi Yacef implies that Marxism was also influential. While referring to Ferhat Abbas’ *Manifeste du peuple algérien*, Yacef explains “Pourquoi l’avoir baptisé ainsi? C’est très simple. Parce que, pour rompre avec l’ordre ancien, Marx et Engels avaient eux aussi—en terme beaucoup plus enflammés—choisi ce titre percutant” (1: 42). This intertextual reference to *The Communist Manifesto* indicates that Abbas and Yacef—and countless other FLN members—were familiar with the political tract that first expressed the ideas of Communism. Yacef’s allusion to *The Communist Manifesto* further shows that he engages his writing with the major political tracts that inspired the Algerian Revolution. He also notes that certain FLN members “s’inspirait, dit-on, de la dialectique marxiste” (1: 212) in their political outlook on the Algerian Revolution as well as an independent Algeria. Finally, while commenting on the significant role of Algerian peasants in the Revolution, Yacef explains that the FLN mobilized rural populations in an “application de la théorie maoïste. Une théorie tout à fait unique selon laquelle la campagne doit diriger la ville” (2: 41), which, once again, illustrates the influence of Marxist ideology and practices on the FLN.

Despite not identifying as Marxist, both Azzedine and Yacef believed that the Algerian Revolution was situated within the framework of a worldwide revolutionary movement. When discussing the global implications of the Algerian Revolution, Azzedine asserts: “Notre guerre révolutionnaire n’y était pas représentée comme l’espoir du seul peuple algérien, mais comme le symbole des luttes du tiers monde. Sur nous

étaient fixés les regards du continent africain, dans l'attente de sa libération" (177). He later repeats the significance of the Algerian Revolution for the Third World: "L'Algérie était à l'avant-garde des combats de l'avenir et annonçait, avec la participation non pas d'une élite en mal de privilèges, mais des masses populaires les plus défavorisées, l'émergence des peuples du tiers monde" (179). Azzedine's references to the "popular masses" and the "struggles of the people of the Third World" all evoke the principle elements of Marxist ideology (Thomas 122-123).

On a diplomatic mission to Beijing, Azzedine recounts that the FLN conveyed its support for an international struggle against imperialism to Chinese leaders. According to Azzedine, the FLN's official statement to Chinese diplomats and politicians was:

Derrière la lutte du peuple algérien, toute l'Afrique est en marche.
Le triomphe de nos révolutions peut secouer les bases de
l'impérialisme mondial. Une meilleure coordination des
mouvements de libération nationale en Asie, en Afrique, en
Amérique latine, jointe au mouvement ouvrier international,
facilitera la décolonisation et, par voie de conséquence, renforcera
la montée du socialisme dans les pays capitalistes (312).

In their discussion with the Chinese delegation, the FLN members did not identify as Communist, but indicated that the FLN supported certain elements of Marxist ideology, particularly national liberation movements aimed at decolonization, as well as an international worker's movement. As China was a key global Communist state, the FLN could have issued this statement to win over a powerful ally in their revolution against France. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the official statement uses the

term “socialism” instead of “Communism” or “Marxism,” which is representative of the FLN’s ideological leanings. The FLN’s desire to see their revolution reverberate around the world is also echoed by Yacef:

A cette époque, nous souhaitons vivement voir éclore des
soulèvements populaires partout dans le monde pour forcer
l’impérialisme en général et le français en particulier à reculer.
Une manière pour nous de nous consolider avec les autres peuples
(1: 325).

Unlike Azzedine, who wanted the Algerian Revolution to affect the entire colonized world, Yacef was interested in dismantling French imperialism in particular. Yet the sentiments expressed by both Azzedine and Yacef—as well as the FLN delegation to China—parallel the Việt Minh’s desire to see their revolution situated within a greater global context to further the process of global decolonization.

World War II: A Catalyst for the French Colonies

According to historian Douglas Fermer, the Nazi defeat and occupation of France shattered “France’s prestige as a major power [...] from which it never wholly recovered, whetting the appetite of those with designs on her empire” (222). An opinion piece that Hồ Chí Minh penned in the newspaper *Đông Minh* is especially indicative of how French capitulation to Nazi Germany damaged France’s reputation as a colonial power:

Pháp đã đầu hàng Hitler một cách rất vẻ vang, hơn 500 tướng và
hai triệu lính của quý quốc đương bị Đức cầm tù một cách rất oanh
liệt, ba phần tư non sông quý quốc đương bị người chiếm lĩnh [...]

Xin Ngài lo cứu nước và dân tộc của Ngài đã, rồi sẽ nói đến việc khác; còn Việt Nam chúng tôi, 40 năm này nhờ "công đức" quý quốc đã nhiều rồi. Lần này, chúng tôi quyết dùng súng, đạn, guom, dao để đập đổ ơn huệ ấy và giành lấy độc lập tự do cho Việt Nam. Chúng tôi xin Ngài chớ lo! Và chúc Ngài hai chữ Thất Bại!
(*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* 3: 450)

[France has surrendered to Hitler in such an honorable way, with more than 500 French generals and two million French soldiers currently imprisoned by the Germans in such a glorious manner, and three fourths of French territory controlled [...]. We ask that you first save your own people and country, and then worry about other issues; concerning our Vietnam, over the past 40 years, we have received your "help" too many times. This time, we are determined to use guns, bullets, swords, and knives to return the favor and reclaim independence and freedom for Vietnam. We ask you not to worry! And we wish you just one word: failure!]

It is evident that Hồ uses irony to mock the "honorable" and "glorious" manner in which France surrendered, had its soldiers captured, and had its territory occupied by the Germans. In the eyes of the French, "honor" and "glory" characterize France and the French Army (Davidson 185). By ridiculing France's defeat and occupation by Nazi Germany, Hồ insinuates that France has lost its honor and glory as a result of its inability to defend itself. Furthermore, in mentioning the capture of 500 French generals and two million French soldiers, Hồ reveals that France was militarily incapacitated, which he

further reiterates when he notes that the majority of French territory was under Nazi control. Immediately after emphasizing French military weakness, he asserts that, “this time,” Vietnamese people were resolute in challenging French colonial rule with force. Consequently, Hồ links French vulnerability to a new Vietnamese resolve to seek independence.

In *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*, Ngô recounts that upon hearing news of French capitulation to Nazi Germany, Vietnamese nationalists believed that “les Français étaient morts, morts en tant que nation, morts en tant que Puissance” (21-112). During a Việt Minh meeting a few days later, one of the organizers refers to France’s defeat as an indicator of its weakness and as a motivator for Vietnamese nationalists: “En fait, la France est trop faible maintenant [...] Jamais les Français ne remettront les pieds au pays Viet. Nous sommes sur le chemin de la victoire. Pour l’Indépendance et la Liberté de la Patrie, mort aux colonialistes et aux occupants!” (28). Reflecting Hồ Chí Minh’s mocking editorial, these comments by Việt Minh militants show that the French surrender to German invasion drastically strengthened the Việt Minh’s morale and encouraged Vietnamese nationalists to believe that independence was inevitable.

Similarly, in *La Bataille d’Alger*, Yacef describes the French defeat as definitive proof of its “faiblesse” (1: 38). Furthermore, he explains that the Nazi occupation of France led Ferhat Abbas to be “convaincu que la France n’était plus cette puissance crainte et adulée qui s’était, par la force des canonniers, taillé un immense empire à travers le monde” (1: 38). Despite having established a vast empire with its military might, France was no longer feared in the colonies as a result of its embarrassing defeat and domination, thereby encouraging nationalist Algerians to strive for independence.

The French defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany led colonized nationalists and postcolonial theorists to draw parallels between the Nazi occupation of France and the French occupation of its colonies. After first referring to Hitler and Nazi Germany in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Césaire uses the terms “l’occupation européenne” (27) and “l’occupation française” (49) to describe French control of its colonies. Césaire deliberately italicized the first appearance of the word “occupation” so that the French-speaking reader could understand the reference to Nazi occupation. He also intended for the second mention of “occupation” to be controversial. Memories of *les années d’occupation* were still painful for the metropolitan French population when *Discours* was published in 1955, only a decade after the end of World War II. Thus, Césaire’s reference to French colonialism as “l’occupation française” served as a direct criticism of French hypocrisy by hinting that France opposed German occupation yet continued to occupy its overseas colonies. Likewise, Fanon juxtaposes “l’occupation allemande” (240) with a description of French colonial presence in Algeria in order to reiterate the similarities between the two occupations.

The four militant-authors also use repetition to make numerous references to link French colonization to Nazi occupation. Đặng insists that Việt Minh insurgencies were waged against “l’occupation française” (69) and later repeats the term “l’occupation” (89) when mentioning French military presence in Vietnam. Similarly, both Algerian authors also use the term to refer to French colonization. When describing the FLN’s objectives, Si Azzedine explains that “Le but à atteindre, c’est vider notre territoire de l’occupation étrangère” (182). Saadi Yacef also describes the French Army as “l’armée d’occupation” (1: 197), asserting that “Transformer la Casbah en territoire libre, c’était

notre espoir” (1: 151) during the Battle of Algiers. Not only do the militant-authors believe that French military occupation of their respective country was akin to the Nazi occupation of France, they accordingly saw parallels between their own struggles against French occupation and the French Resistance movement. On six separate occasions, D ang characterizes the Vietnamese war against France as a “guerre de r sistance” (69, 73, 87, 90, 95, 131) and uses repetition to unveil a clear message to the reader. He is particularly proud of “la guerre de r sistance de notre peuple contre les colonialistes franais” (87). For Yacef, disappeared FLN militant Mohamed Boudiaf became “le symbole de r sistance” (1: 309) for his courageous acts against the French Army. Yacef also asserts that the FLN’s organized operations against the French Army should evoke “des souvenirs de la R sistance” (2: 386). In comparing their campaigns to the French Resistance, the authors not only highlight French hypocrisy vis- -vis its continued occupation of foreign territories, but also identify their revolution with a struggle that was perceived as positive throughout the Western world. In doing so, the four militant-authors try to convince the French-speaking reader to view their respective armed resistance against French occupation as justified and righteous.

Postcolonial theorists and critics of colonialism have pointed out that Europe was only concerned with atrocities committed against Europeans while deliberately disregarding its own crimes against non-Europeans. Aim  C saire famously expounded on this criticism in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, in which he highlights European—and particularly French—hypocrisy regarding Nazi atrocities and colonial crimes:

Oui, il vaudrait la peine d’ tudier, cliniquement, dans le d tail, les d marches d’Hitler et de l’hitl risme et de r v ler au tr s distingu ,

très humaniste, très chrétien bourgeois du XX^e siècle qu’il porte en lui un Hitler qui s’ignore, qu’Hitler l’*habite*, qu’Hitler est son *démon*, que s’il le vitupère, c’est par manque de logique, et qu’au fond, ce qu’il ne pardonne pas à Hitler, ce n’est pas *le crime* en soi, *le crime contre l’homme*, c’est le crime contre l’homme blanc, c’est l’humiliation de l’homme blanc, et d’avoir appliqué à l’Europe des procédés colonialistes dont ne relevaient jusqu’ici que les Arabes d’Algérie, les coolies de l’Inde et les nègres d’Afrique (13-14).

Césaire argues that colonialism is Nazism, thereby accusing Europe and Western civilization of practicing Nazi acts in the colonies. Furthermore, he highlights a double standard concerning Western perceptions of crimes against humanity. For the West, atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazis were considered to be “la barbarie suprême” because they were directed against Europeans in Europe. Yet when similar atrocities occurred in the faraway colonies against non-Europeans, Europeans willfully ignored their existence and were even complicit in and responsible for their occurrence. Echoing Césaire’s criticism, Si Azzedine asks, “Le reproche fait à Hitler par des penseurs libéraux n’était-il pas, justement, sous couvert de crimes contre l’humanité, d’avoir utilisé contre des Européens des formes de répression réservées aux peuples du tiers monde?” (177). A strong criticism of European hypocrisy is also present in Hồ Chí Minh’s essay, “Bản Án Chế Độ Thực Dân Pháp [Judgment of the Realities of French Colonization],” which first appeared in Vietnam in 1946. In addition to emphasizing French hypocrisy regarding

atrocities perpetrated against the colonized, Hồ specifically establishes a parallel between German crimes in France and the French crimes in Vietnam and Algeria.

Phải rồi, An Nam và Angiêri đều là những xứ bị chiếm - cũng như Rôngcơ đã có lúc bị chiếm - nhưng vì những người Pháp ở các thuộc địa ấy không phải là lũ "bôso," cho nên cũng cùng một hành động, nếu là của lũ "bôso" thì là tội ác, nhưng nếu là của người Pháp thì lại là văn minh! Mà Annamít va Angiêriêng đâu phải là người! Đó là bọn "nhà quê" bản thiu, bầy "bicôt" bản thiu. Cần quái gì phải có công lý đối với những giống ấy (*Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* 3: 90).

[It is true that Annam and Algeria are conquered countries—like Roncq was conquered—but the French living in the colonies are not “Boches.” The same acts, when committed by the “Boches,” are considered crimes, but when committed by the French are considered acts of civilization! But Annamese and Algerians are not really human! They’re dirty “nhà quê [peasants],” dirty “bicots.”⁹ What does it matter if justice is not given to them?]

Like Césaire, Hồ argues that crimes committed by the Germans were condemned as barbaric, yet the same crimes committed by the French in the colonies were not renounced or even acknowledged. By scornfully explaining that the French view French crimes as “acts of civilization,” Hồ jabs at the civilizing mission and insinuates that France perpetrates atrocities instead of bringing civilization to the colonies. Henri Martin, a French marine and Communist Party member who was arrested for distributing

pamphlets condemning the war in Indochina, also echoes Hò's criticism. In a letter to his parents on May 18, 1946, Martin describes witnessing legionnaires who burned villages and killed civilians, commenting:

C'est ça la civilisation ! [...] En Indochine, l'armée française se conduit comme les Boches le faisaient chez nous. Je suis complètement dégoûté de voir ça. Pourquoi nos avions mitraillent-ils (tous les jours) des pêcheurs sans défense ? Pourquoi nos soldats pillent, brûlent et tuent ? Pour civiliser ?" (41).

Here, Martin's reflections parallel Hò's criticism of French hypocrisy regarding its civilizing mission. In his above criticism, Hò implies that French colonialists do not view Vietnamese and Algerians as human, which evokes the Nazi belief that Jewish people were sub-human and deserved to be treated as such. The references to the two epithets used against Vietnamese and Algerians—"dirty 'nhà quê [peasants],' dirty bicots"—serve to show the level of disrespect and revulsion that French colonialists felt towards their colonized subjects. Hò thus shows that French colonialists dehumanized the colonized indigenous peoples and regarded the Vietnamese and Algerians with the same level of disdain and hatred that the Nazis held for Jews. In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon also addresses the racialized dehumanization created by colonialism as he explains: "j'étais haï, détesté, méprisé, non pas par le voisin d'en face ou le cousin maternel, mais par toute une race" because of the color of his skin (95). For Césaire, the colonial system dehumanizes both the colonizer and the colonized, as "la conquête coloniale, fondée sur le mépris de l'homme indigène et justifiée par ce mépris, tend inévitablement à modifier celui qui l'entreprend" (21). Sartre also touches on the

dehumanization of the colonized in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, in which he asserts that colonial racism and exploitation in Algeria “fait du musulman *l’autre que l’homme*” (672). The dehumanization of the indigenous makes it easier for the colonizers to commit atrocities against the colonized, who are viewed as sub-human.

The Algerian memoirs provide vivid descriptions of the violent French suppression of Algerian protests on Victory Day, reminding the reader that Azzedine and Yacef were witness to significant political events. Like in the opening scenes of the film *Hors-la-loi*, which depict historical footage showing celebrations in Europe on Victory Day followed by a cinematic representation of a protest for independence in Algeria that led to the shootings of Algerian civilians, Azzedine and Yacef juxtapose the exuberance in France with widespread massacres in Algeria. In *La Bataille d’Alger*, Yacef describes the scene in Algiers on the day when Allied forces captured the Reichstag:

Le 1^{er} mai Berlin tombait. Dans le monde ce fut l’effervescence. Partout des cortèges se formèrent pour célébrer l’événement. Des millions d’hommes et de femmes se précipitèrent dans les rues des grandes capitales pour exploser de joie.

Ce jour-là à Alger une grandiose manifestation pacifique fut organisée. Des quatre coins de la ville démarrèrent des cortèges en direction du centre. C’était silencieux et digne. L’une des processions empruntant la rue d’Isly fut prise à partie par la police qui se mit à tirer sans sommations.

Un jeune porte-drapeau s'écroula à côté de moi, tué sur le coup. On dénombra plusieurs morts et blessés. Beaucoup furent arrêtés (2: 51).

The contrast between celebration in Europe where men and women “exploded from joy” and the “silent” and somber description of the Algiers protest highlights the disparity between Europe and the colonies. In European capitals, men and women were free to express their emotions in the streets. On the other hand, in the Algerian capital, men and women quietly participated in a demonstration and controlled themselves from fully displaying their sentiments out of fear of persecution. Even though the protestors contained their speech, the police fired upon the crowd, killing and injuring several participants, and arresting others on Victory Day in Algiers. Yacef's deliberate juxtaposition of the two episodes serves to illustrate that the freedom that existed in Europe was denied to the colonized subjects. Furthermore, in Europe, Europeans were expected to be joyous at the defeat of an invading and occupying power, whereas in the colonies, the colonized were to accept the invasion and occupation of their land.

In his political memoir, Azzedine mentions another repressive episode that occurred on Victory Day: the violence in Sétif and Guelma:

Si les événements de Sétif, les vagues de violence parvenaient assourdis au gouvernement français, si les rapports de plus en plus alarmants sommeillaient dans les tiroirs et nos rêves de liberté s'enlisaient dans l'indifférence d'une France à peine libérée, il n'en était pas de même en Algérie. Ce 8 mai 1945 cimentait le nationalisme algérien (32).

With this passage, Azzedine once again criticizes French hypocrisy by stating that “barely liberated” France was indifferent to the Algerian desire for liberation and even used violence to suppress Algerians seeking independence. Yet he also indicates that the Sétif massacre intensified Algerian nationalism and led to the formation of the Comité Révolutionnaire pour l’Unité et l’Action, the precursor to the FLN (Foran 99). For Algerian nationalists such as Azzedine, French refusal of Algerian liberation—despite having been liberated from Nazi occupation—only motivated them to pursue their struggle. Violent repression, including imprisonment, was not only contrary to French values, but also fortified the Algerian desire for independence. Famed Algerian author Kateb Yacine, who was present during the Sétif massacre, has also written on the significance of Sétif on the Algerian Revolution:

My humanitarian feelings were first outraged by the ghastly sights at Setif in 1945. I was sixteen years old and I have never forgotten the shock of that merciless butchery which took thousands of Muslim lives. There at Sétif the iron of nationalism entered my soul. There have been, it is true, other factors: the economic and political alienation of my people in their own country, for instance. But it was particularly this betrayal of the values which the French had given us which opened my eyes (Humbaraci 45).

Sétif continued to haunt Yacine, who incorporated the event in his 1956 novel, *Nedjma*. In the chapter “The Haunted House of the Nation: Kateb Yacine’s *Nedjma*,” Jarrod Hayes argues that the Sétif rebellion “was a moment of awakening for the national movement whose consciousness *Nedjma* is often read as articulating” (149). For Yacine

and Azzedine, Sétif presented the *rupture* and *éclatement* that are inevitable consequences of colonization according to Memmi (143). For Azzedine, Sétif was the catalyst that sparked the Algerian Revolution:

Oublieuse des leçons de sa propre Résistance, la France enfermait dans ses prisons la fine fleur d'une terre si aimable qu'elle se résolvait mal à ne pas la croire sienne ; l'emprisonnement exacerbait encore plus dans nos cœurs notre soif d'une Algérie indépendante (221).

Again, Azzedine connects the Algerian struggle with the French Resistance, arguing that imprisonment cannot eliminate the Algerian desire for independence, much like it could not stop the French resistance movements against Nazi occupation. Furthermore, both Algerian authors note the participation of Algerians in the liberation of France. Azzedine describes how “Des Algériens ayant servi dans l'armée française, s'étant bravement battus contre les nazis, trouvèrent, de retour chez eux, la haine et la répression” (32), illustrating that Algerians had helped France fight against Nazi hatred and repression only to be thanked with a similar level of hatred and repression upon returning home. Algerian soldiers had fought for the freedom of France, yet were denied that same freedom by France. Likewise, Yacef mentions that “Les espoirs nés de la participation de soldats algériens à la libération de l'Europe” (1: 29) were shattered after the soldiers returned to Algeria, but nonetheless inspired Algerian veterans to seek independence.

As previously mentioned, France added the following preamble to the French Constitution of 1946 as a result of the Holocaust:

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.

Despite the Constitution's critical reference to the "enslavement" and "degradation" of humans by Nazi Germany, France continued to practice these policies in its colonies, as highlighted by Azzedine and Yacef. In fact, due to its intense desire to retain Algeria, France practiced some of the methods used by Nazi Germany against Jewish populations in Europe and detained Algerian political prisoners in internment camps akin to Nazi concentration camps throughout the course of the Algerian War (Thénault 245-299). Unlike the Việt Minh memoirs, the accounts by both FLN militants repeatedly mention the similarities between Nazi atrocities against Jews and French atrocities against Algerians. This is especially the case with Saadi Yacef, who makes numerous allusions to French use of Nazi tactics. The French Army's use of torture was especially prolific during the Battle of Algiers in 1957 when General Jacques Massu used counter-insurgency torture techniques pioneered by the Nazis (McMillan 77-78).

Both Azzedine and Yacef repeatedly mention internment camps established by the French colonial regime in Algeria and underline their resemblance to Nazi concentration camps. According to Azzedine, the French "déportèrent dans des camps de regroupement deux millions de personnes" (185), an unmistakable reference to the Nazi deportation of millions of Jews into camps throughout Europe. The two million figure is corroborated by recent research by Martin Evans (250) and Martin Stone (41), whereas

Abdelkader Aoudjit argues that the actual number of Algerians deported to internment camps was closer to three million (175). Azzedine explains that “La vie du camp était extrêmement dure” (239) and frequently describes the camps as “des camps de concentration” (241), “les camps de la mort” (242), “les camps d’internement” (341) throughout his entire political memoir. In a similar fashion, Yacef describes French colonial prisons as “les camps de concentration” (1: 176). Like Azzedine, Yacef makes a direct reference to the Nazi deportations of Jews—first into ghettos and later into concentration camps—when he mentions “le transfert des populations dans des ghettos de subsistance, les milliers d’assignations dans des camps de concentration” in Algeria (1: 226). Yacef continues to repeat “les camps de concentration” (1: 236; 2: 247) and highlights their sheer number in Algeria by noting the existence of “les dizaines de camps de concentration” (2: 57, 159, 497) throughout his account.

Yet only Yacef asserts that France committed large-scale massacres that should be considered as attempts at genocide against Algerian people. He describes the French colonial regime’s policies as “les actes d’extermination” (1: 173), the French Army’s violent tactics as “les techniques d’extermination” (2: 173), French killings of FLN members as “la folie exterminatrice” (2: 10), and French desire to maintain control of Algeria as “le fascisme et la reconquête de l’Algérie quitte à en exterminer le peuple” (2: 386). His repetition of the various forms of “exterminate” and “extermination” illustrates his belief that France wanted to at least exterminate the FLN and murder a large portion of the Algerian people. In addition to using the term “exterminate,” Yacef also uses the phrase “la solution finale” in five instances (1: 258; 2: 166, 172, 173, 246) to describe the French Army’s desire to completely liquidate the FLN—and, by extension, Algerian

resistance to French rule. It is evident that Yacef is referring to Nazi Germany's "Final Solution," which culminated in the systematic killing of Europe's Jewish populations during the Holocaust. In fact, Yacef does mention the Holocaust when he says that French actions in Algeria symbolized "la répression et d'une certaine manière l'holocauste" of the Algerian people (2: 287). He uses the word "génocide" twice (2: 7, 8) to refer to French violence in Algeria and decries the killings of suspected FLN members in "les fours crématoires" (2: 167), yet another clear reference to the crematory ovens used by the Nazis to burn Jews during the Holocaust. While Yacef's accusation is certainly controversial, scholars in the field of genocide studies have argued that colonial atrocities—such as the targeted and systematic massacres of a specific group, the mass resettlement of members of that group, and the appropriation of their land—meet the criteria of genocide (Gallois 145-157). Raphael Lemkin—who coined the term "genocide" in the 1940s to describe Ottoman attacks on Armenians—believed that elements of genocide did occur in French Algeria (Smith 40). On a similar note, Fanon refers to "le génocide en Algérie" in his analysis of the Algerian Revolution in *Sociologie d'une révolution* (13). However, William Gallois maintains that, despite perpetrating mass violence, France's objective was never to exterminate the Algerian people and its colonial actions cannot constitute genocide (155). Regardless, Yacef's numerous references to genocide reflect FLN accusations that France was conducting a war of genocide in Algeria (Smith 40). According to historian Matthew Connelly, the FLN's diplomatic campaign defined French violence as genocide during the war (90). James Le Sueur also notes that in 1957, the FLN even appealed to the pope to end the genocide committed by France in Algeria (196).

In addition to these frequent allusions to Nazi crimes, Yacef makes other overt references to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, always ensuring that the allusions compare the French colonial regime to Nazi rule. He notes that Massu's troops "ressemblât tant aux sections d'assaut (SA) de Röhm" (2: 17), a reference to Ernst Röhm, an early Nazi leader. While describing the colonial prison Haouch Perrin, Yacef reveals that it "rappelait, toute proportion gardée, la devanture « enchanteresse » de l'entrée du camp de Buchenwald en Allemagne. Noyé de chlorophylle comme le camp nazi" (2: 162). When reflecting on the French Army's systematic use of torture, he says "Le même système était en vigueur à Buchenwald" (2: 167), a large and well-known Nazi death camp. Yacef's attacks on his archenemy Massu are relentless and culminate in the assertion that "Dans son élan d'insatiable pourvoyeur de cadavres, [Massu] eût sûrement semble-t-il, appliqué en Algérie les mêmes « recettes » que celles en vigueur jadis dans les camps d'extermination allemands comme à Dachau et à Auschwitz" (2: 173). This last accusation is corroborated by James McMillan's research findings indicating that Massu adopted torture methods perfected by the Nazis (78-79).

Yacef's numerous references to Nazism function as a method of "dévoilement" for the French-speaking reader. In providing readers with frequent examples of the similarities between Nazi crimes in Europe and French crimes in Algeria, Yacef hopes to convince his readers that French actions in Algeria were as violent and atrocious as those committed by the Nazi regime. In addition, as Yacef used his writing to refute parts of Massu's memoir, *La Vraie Bataille d'Alger* (1971), it is likely that Yacef intended to direct these Nazi references to Massu. As Massu fought in the French Army during

World War II, Yacef uses these Nazi allusions to accuse Massu of hypocrisy and liken Massu and his actions to the Nazi regime.

The consistent efforts by Si Azzedine and Saadi Yacef to compare Nazi and French atrocities reflect the theories proposed by Aimé Césaire and Hồ Chí Minh, who argue that France and the West willfully ignored and even participated in mass violence against colonial subjects despite condemning Nazi crimes. The repeated allusions to the Nazis also reveal that systematic crimes against humanity did not end with the termination of World War II. Rather, they continued in the colonies, thereby violating the French Constitution of 1946. Azzedine and Yacef also identify their struggle with the idolized French Résistance while associating colonial France with Nazi Germany in order to legitimize their rebellion to the Western world. Finally, the Algerian memoirists reveal that FLN members and sympathizers were willing to experience torture, internment camps, and systematic executions in order to liberate Algeria from French occupation, thus illustrating the sacrifices made by FLN militants and Algerian civilians in their struggle for freedom.

As Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef describe in their memoirs, the historic time period of World War II—fused with French Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals disseminated to the French colonies, as well as Marxist-socialist ideals popular in the 1950s—all influenced the independence movements in Vietnam and Algeria. Not only did the desire for Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals—especially freedom—motivate the authors, the appeal of Marxist-socialist movements led the authors to believe that their revolution was situated in the greater context of global decolonization. France's humiliation and hypocrisy concerning Nazi occupation and crimes also encouraged the

militant-authors to liberate their respective countries from French colonization. Yet it is important to remember that these four life writings illustrate the experiences and perspectives of their authors and are not representative of the viewpoint of all those who lived through, participated in, and were affected by the wars of decolonization in Vietnam and Algeria. Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef were all literate, proficient in French and their native language, and educated enough to become military leaders of their respective movements. Therefore, while the four militant-authors were certainly influenced by the ideals of the French Enlightenment and Revolution, the circumstances surrounding World War II, and the political vision offered by Marxism-socialism, their lesser-educated counterparts may not have been impacted by these historic periods and political ideologies. Nonetheless, the four authors show the French-speaking readers that they themselves were motivated by these three factors, which caused them to believe that their struggle was inexorable in the course of history.

NOTES

1. Amar Ouzegane was the first secretary of the Algerian Communist Party, but was expelled in 1948 for supporting Algerian nationalism instead of a worldwide revolution. Ouzegane joined the FLN and later became the Minister of Agriculture under Ben Bella. See David and Maria Ottaway's *Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution* (1970) and Kay Adamson's *Algeria: A Study in Competing Ideologies* (1998).

2. The number of Algerians killed at Sétif and Guelma is highly debated. Official French Army statistics listed 3,000 victims. However, contemporary estimates range between 15,000 and 45,000. See p. 57 of Fabian Klose's *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria* (2014).

3. The terms “Indochinese,” “Annamite/Annamese,” and “Vietnamese” will all appear in citations from several of the analyzed texts. Both the Vietnamese and French sometimes used the three adjectives interchangeably during the colonial era. However, there are differences between the three terms. “Indochinese” refers to the greater Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia.

In the context of French Indochina, it refers to all of France's colonial possessions in Southeast Asia—including Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. During French colonial rule, Vietnam was divided into three administrative regions: (1) Tonkin, the northern region; (2) Annam, the central region; and (3) Cochinchina, the southern region. “Annamite/Annamese” was used to describe Vietnamese people in general—not just Vietnamese people from the central region—because the imperial capital of the ruling Nguyễn dynasty was in Huế, the largest city in central Vietnam.

Finally, the origins of the words “Vietnam” and “Vietnamese” can be traced back to the second century BC, with “Viet” being the name of an ethnic group living in what is now southern China and northern Vietnam. The term “Vietnamese” was revived and adopted by twentieth-century nationalists. In fact, in *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh*, Ngô refers to the revival of the word “Vietnam” when he recounts:

“*Viet-Nam*, le mot nouveau était maintenant sur toutes les lèvres. Nouveau? Pas tellement, pourtant. Viet-Nam, patrie du Sud, pays des Viets, pays des hommes qui résistèrent des millénaires à l'envahisseur, qui tuèrent et triomphèrent de tant d'hommes du Céleste Empire et qui maintenant, grâce à l'appui du Nippon, triomphaient de l'opresseur colonialiste. J'étais éclatant d'orgueil et de ferveur patriotique” (22).

4. “Nguyễn Ái Quốc” signifies “Nguyễn Who Loves His Country” or “Nguyễn The Patriot.” Hồ Chí Minh was born as Nguyễn Sinh Cung and used many pseudonyms throughout his life, partly to thwart French colonial authorities. Interestingly enough, the

pseudonym that he is most famous for—Hồ Chí Minh—means “The Enlightened One” or “The Bringer of Light and Reason.”

5. See *Hồ Chí Minh toàn tập* [*The Complete Works of Ho Chi Minh*], particularly the first seven volumes spanning 1919 to 1955. This Vietnamese-language anthology has yet to be translated into English in its entirety. Bernard B. Fall’s *On Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66* offers English translations of Hồ’s most important writings from this period.

6. Việt Minh is the abbreviation of Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh Hội [League for the Independence of Vietnam].

7. See, for example, “Revolution in China and In Europe,” “The British Rule in India,” “The British Quarrel with China,” “The British Government and the Slave Trade.”

8. The *Plateforme de la Soummam* found on on the Algerian government’s website (<http://www.el-mouradia.dz/arabe/symbole/textes/soummam.htm>) has selected phrases in bold.

9. “Nhà quê” is a derogatory Vietnamese term that translates to “peasant,” “villager,” or “country bumpkin,” and implies backwardness and simplemindedness. While the term has classist connotations in Vietnamese, the French adopted and racialized the term, abbreviating it to “nhac” or “niac,” and using it as a racial epithet toward the Việt Minh and Vietnamese people in general. It was made popular by the “*casser du nhac / casser les nhacs*” policy of the French Army, in which French soldiers targeted civilian villages as retaliation for Việt Minh attacks. In *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*, Ngô refers to this practice on p. 77. See also p. 233 of Duong Van Mai Elliott’s autobiography, *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family*. In France today, the term is still used as an epithet toward people of East Asian descent.

“Bicot” is a French word that originally meant “goat,” but later became a racial epithet used against people of North African origin. Like with “nhac/niac,” it is still a French slur today.

La Guerre Populaire and the Support of the Population

“Revolutionaries consider mass support the primary condition for their success; winning and maintaining popular support remain their central objective throughout the struggle,” writes Eqbal Ahmad in “Revolutionary Warfare: How to Tell When the Rebels Have Won” (14). Indeed, all four life writings—Ngô’s *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng’s *De la RC 4 à la N4* (2000), Azzedine’s *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Yacef’s *La Bataille d’Alger* (2002)—contain a major and recurrent theme: the support of the Vietnamese and Algerian populations for their respective revolution. In particular, the authors show that the Việt Minh and FLN enjoyed popular support from nearly all segments of society—including women, children, and the elderly, as well as a variety of ethnic and socio-economic groups.

Yet historical analyses reveal that neither the Việt Minh nor the FLN initially enjoyed the immediate support of their respective national populations. When the Việt Minh was formed in 1941, multiple competing Vietnamese nationalist groups were advocating for independence (DeFronzo 144). The Việt Minh and its rival groups engaged in a bloody struggle for power, assassinating and murdering their opponents well before Hồ Chí Minh launched the August Revolution in 1945 (Joes, *Modern Guerrilla Insurgency* 94). By the summer of 1945, the Việt Minh became the most powerful nationalist group and enjoyed more popular support than any of its rivals (DeFronzo 145). The Việt Minh was not only successful in overtaking rival nationalist factions, but also had a charismatic leader in Hồ Chí Minh. Furthermore, the Việt Minh’s rival groups

largely consisted of members of the wealthy and French-educated Vietnamese elite, many of whom were hesitant to advocate for full independence and unwilling to address the deplorable socio-economic conditions of the Vietnamese masses. On the other hand, the Việt Minh's political objective of complete independence—in conjunction with a socio-economic platform that called the redistribution of resources to improve the lives of all Vietnamese—appealed to the Vietnamese public and garnered significant popular support for the group (DeFronzo 145). Yet the Việt Minh's policies and activities also divided the Vietnamese population, especially when the group resorted to labeling its supporters as “patriots” while dismissing its critics as “Việt gian [Vietnamese traitors]” (Chen 160). The Việt Minh was also brutal toward Vietnamese civilians who were reluctant to join the group, killing and threatening those who did not support or contribute to the movement (Elliot 52). In his political memoir, Ngô briefly touches on Việt Minh violence against Vietnamese people, as well as its feuds with other nationalist parties. In a scene from 1945, a mob of armed Việt Minh militants beat an elderly Vietnamese woman to death, calling her “Viet Gian” because she had attacked a Việt Minh supporter for manhandling the French family for whom she worked (35). Throughout his journal, Ngô sporadically mentions the Việt Minh's rivalry with the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (VNQDD) [Vietnamese Nationalist Party], an alternate nationalist faction that also promoted Vietnamese independence from France.

The FLN also did not enjoy the support of the majority of Algerians at the launching of its revolution in 1954. Like the Việt Minh, the FLN denounced its opponents as “reformists” and “traitors,” accusing them of collaborating with the French against their own people (Evans 117). As Martin Evan explains, “There was no third

way. People could only be for or against the FLN” (117). While there was widespread support for independence, Algerian Muslims were hesitant to support the FLN out of fear of French reprisals, especially given the Sétif and Guelma repressions in May 1945 (Evans 117). At the beginning of the revolution, most Algerians were also unfamiliar with the FLN’s political platform and objectives (Evans 117). Like the Việt Minh, the FLN also faced competition from alternate nationalist groups. From 1955 to 1956, the FLN liquidated its main rival—the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) led by Messali Hadj—by killing thousands of MNA political activists and civilian supporters in both Algeria and France (Evans 181). As a result, the FLN became the dominant Algerian nationalist faction by the end of 1957 (Boserup 250).

The life writings by Azzedine and Yacef briefly mention the elimination of MNA members and other Algerians considered as traitors to the revolution. In *On nous appelait fellaghas*, Azzedine freely admits that in Zbar-Bar:

[...] j’avais droit de vie et de mort sur l’ensemble de la population. En période de révolution, on ne peut se payer le luxe de laisser en liberté des gens douteux. L’une de mes tâches de responsable politique était d’arrêter, d’interroger et, éventuellement, d’exécuter les traîtres (67-68).

According to Azzedine, the FLN depended on the local population to denounce traitors, who were then sentenced to death for working as informants for the French (69). False denunciations were also subject to the death penalty so that “la population prenait garde à bien nous indiquer de véritables suspects” (Azzedine 69). Likewise, Yacef discusses FLN executions of Algerian civilians in *La Bataille d’Alger*, particularly in a chapter aptly entitled “L’Assainissement.” Referring to Algerians who collaborated with

the French Army, Yacef says, “On devait les acculer à choisir [...] Notre première initiative consista à lancer une opération d’intimidation contre le milieu” (1: 152). If the collaborators did not want to join the FLN, they were obliged to adopt a politically neutral position; otherwise, they would risk being executed by an FLN militant. Yacef then proceeds to describe the FLN’s execution of three traitors and comments that “La liste des collaborateurs s’allongeait,” thereby implying that the FLN executed a considerable number of informants (1: 157).

These brief glimpses into the underlying fratricidal struggle in Vietnam and Algeria are eclipsed by the four authors’ constant depictions of popular support for their respective revolutionary cause. As discussed in Chapter 1, authors introduce bias in their life writings either deliberately or unintentionally (Egerton 344). As Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef served as military leaders in their countries’ national liberation movements, they may not want to delve into the more unpleasant aspects of the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions. Rather than discuss internal rivalries between various nationalist factions or coercive methods used to force civilians into supporting the Việt Minh and FLN, the militant-authors may want to portray a more idealized national narrative in which both revolutionary groups enjoyed the overwhelming support of the civilian population.

For all four militants, French colonial repression drives the local population to either join or support the revolutionary movement. In an entry from November 1946, Ngô mentions a Việt Minh commander in Hai Phong “dont la famille a eu à souffrir des colonialistes, et lui-même garde une haineuse rancune contre les Français” (102). Later in 1950, Ngô meets a wounded combatant who resolves to continue fighting because

“Les Français ont brûlé mon village, et ma mère était paralysée. Elle a été brûlée dans sa pailote, brûlée vive” (134). Despite his injuries, the combatant vows to remain in combat in order to avenge his mother’s death. During a military campaign, Đặng and his men encounter a group of over a dozen villagers who wanted to join the Việt Minh because the French “nous ont fort maltraités” (44). The Algerian militant-authors offer similar accounts, with Azzedine remembering that French reprisals against villagers in Oum-Zoubia were “si dures que des dizaines de jeunes paysans entrèrent dans l’A.L.N.” (100). In another episode, French soldiers arrived in a village and “fouillent les maisons, rudoient les habitants, en fusillent, en torturent quelques-uns” (Azzedine 191). As a result, “Les plus jeunes rejoignent l’A.L.N.” (Azzedine 191). Inhabitants of the Casbah also had the same reaction after being harassed, beaten, and tortured by the French Army. A young Algerian, Lyès, had a face “boursoufflé d’ecchymoses” as a result of the beatings he endured. Lyès then tells Yacef, “Je voudrais une arme pour tuer Marco” (2: 194), referring to the lieutenant who ordered the systematic search of Casbah homes and beatings of Casbah residents in 1956. The French Army’s arrest and execution of Casbah residents also fueled a desire for vengeance. As Yacef notes, “A l’évidence, après chaque exécution la haine s’exacerbat. Parents et proches des victimes pleuraient les leurs en ruminant leur vengeance” (2: 412). While Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef do not delve into the coercive methods employed by the Việt Minh and FLN in order to persuade civilians to join their cause, they do use their writing to show the French-speaking reader that indiscriminate repressions committed by French colonial authorities only fueled the people’s desire for revenge, and, as a result, led to greater popular support for the revolutionary movements.

In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Jean-Paul Sartre analyzes one of the iconic events of the French Revolution—the storming of Bastille on July 14, 1789—in order to illustrate the mechanisms that transform a loosely knit group into a revolutionary movement. For Sartre, the storming of the Bastille was especially significant because it was the first instance in which the masses partook in an act of collective violent resistance during the French Revolution, which eventually led to the toppling of the ancien régime. As Sartre explains, each member’s participation in violent collective action further cements the unity of the revolutionary group:

[...] cette *situation* fonde ce qu’on appelle improprement la contagion ou l’imitation, etc. : dans ces conduites, en effet, chacun voit en l’Autre son propre avenir et découvre à partir de là son acte présent dans l’acte de l’Autre : *imiter* dans ces mouvements encore inertes, c’est *se découvrir* en même temps, en train de faire là-bas son action propre en l’Autre et ici, en soi-même, l’action de l’Autre, fuyant la fuite de l’Autre et sa propre fuite (*Critique* 388).

In taking part in an action as a cohesive group, the people move from *la sérialité* to a *groupe-en-fusion*, further reinforcing the solidarity between each member of the group with one another and with the group as a whole. At this point, each group member not only identifies with, but also shares a common struggle, with the other members of the group. Although Sartre’s theory centers on the French proletariat masses and their rebellion against the feudal monarchy, the same phenomenon can be observed in other collective violent resistance movements against an established authority, such as the anticolonial revolutions in Vietnam and Algeria. According to Sartre, the initial violent

collective act carried out by the group catalyzes the revolution:

L'unité est ici encore *ailleurs*, c'est-à-dire passée et future. Passée: *le groupe a fait un acte* et le collectif le constate avec surprise comme un moment de son activité passive: *il a été groupe*. Et ce groupe s'est défini par une action révolutionnaire qui rend le processus irréversible. Future : les armes elles-mêmes, dans la mesure où elles ont été prises pour s'opposer à l'action concertée d'une troupe militaire, esquissent dans leur matérialité même la possibilité d'une résistance concertée (*Critique* 389).

As Sartre shows, unity and solidarity are fundamental to revolutionary movements, an idea that Albert Memmi reiterates in the context of anti-colonial revolts. In *Portrait du colonisé*, Memmi argues that the colonized only has two possible options in regards to colonialism: either accept the colonial system or revolt. Memmi himself believes that revolt is inevitable. Yet in order for the process of decolonization to occur, the colonized must first discover “le principe moteur de son action, qui ordonne et valorise tout le reste : il s'agit d'affirmer son peuple et de s'affirmer solidaire avec lui” (148).

This sense of solidarity not only exists between revolutionary militants as they partake in collective action against colonialism, but also between militants and the supportive population that actively assists them to gain independence. For postcolonial theorists such as Sartre and Fanon, as well as political leaders and military strategists who led revolutionary movements from the 1950s to 1970s—notably Hồ Chí Minh, General Giáp, and Mao Tse-Tung—the cohesion between armed militants and the greater civilian

population was the decisive factor that led to victory. In a 1958 article, “Une Victoire,” Sartre criticizes French tactics during the Algerian War, noting that “nous avons le nombre, l’argent, les armes; les insurgés n’ont rien, sauf la confiance et le soutien d’une grande partie de la population” (82). For Sartre, the asymmetrical nature of the Algerian conflict was twofold: while the French possessed military and material superiority, the Algerians enjoyed the moral and operational support of the people. In his 1968 essay, “On Genocide”,¹ Sartre expounds upon the crucial relationship between the insurgents and the population:

[...] the short supply and poor quality of their arms—at least in the beginning—kept the number of fighting units low. These objective conditions dictated their strategy, too: terrorism, ambushes, harassing the enemy, extreme mobility of the combat groups which had to strike unexpectedly and disappear at once. This was made possible only by the support of the entire population. Hence, the famous symbiosis between the liberation forces and the masses of people: the former everywhere organizing agrarian reforms, political organs and education; the latter supporting, feeding and hiding the soldiers of the army of liberation, and replenishing its ranks with their sons [...] Against partisans supported by the entire population, the colonial armies were helpless [...] the colonial soldiers soon learned that their most redoubtable foes were the silent, stubborn peasants who, just one kilometer from the scene of the ambush which had wiped out a regiment, knew nothing, had

seen nothing. And since it was the unity of an entire people which held the conventional army at bay, the only anti-guerrilla strategy which could work was the destruction of this people, in other words, of civilians, of women and children (39).

In describing the complicit people as the “most redoubtable foes” of the colonial soldiers, Sartre shows that it was the people—not the militants—who were the real force behind anticolonial revolutions because the participation and assistance of the people made it possible for insurgents to attack the colonial army. This explanation of the intertwined relationship that exists between revolutionary militants and the people echoes the military theories presented by Mao Tse-Tung. As the first systematic documented study of guerrilla warfare, Mao’s *On Guerrilla Warfare* (1937) states that “Arousing and organizing the people” is the first step in revolutionary guerrilla warfare (43). Mao then delves into the importance of popular support:

What is the relationship of guerrilla warfare to the people?

Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation and assistance cannot be gained. The essence of guerrilla warfare is thus revolutionary in character [...] Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation (43-44).

Both the Việt Minh and FLN studied and adopted Mao’s military strategy of engaging and collaborating with the civilian population (Thody 227). Maoist guerrilla

theory is particularly evident in the writings of Việt Minh general Võ Nguyên Giáp, who explains in *People's War, People's Army*: “Our people’s revolutionary armed forces were born in the revolutionary struggle of the entire people, first of all the broad worker-peasant masses” (113). Giáp’s populist title reflects his military vision for the Vietnamese Revolution, and he repeatedly attributes popular support to the Việt Minh’s ultimate success. For Giáp, “our Resistance War must be the work of the entire people. Therein lies the key to victory” (43). Because “The people as a whole took part in the armed struggle, fighting according to the principles of guerilla warfare” (Giáp 48-49), the Việt Minh was able to defeat French forces. Yet in order to garner popular support, the Việt Minh first needed to promote national solidarity. As Giáp recounts, “From the political point of view, the question of unity among the people and the mobilization of all energies in the war of resistance were of paramount importance” (32), which reflects the first step of revolutionary guerrilla warfare described by Mao Zedong. As the Vietnamese People’s Army fights for national independence, “The people, in return, give it unsparing affection and support. Therein lies the inexhaustible source of its power” (Giáp 54). After uniting and galvanizing the population, the Việt Minh further cemented the relationship between its militants and the people by encouraging the two groups to work closely together:

Side by side with the people, our army made sacrifices and fought in the Resistance War to defeat the enemy of the nation [...] As a result, the solidarity between the army and the people grew stronger and the people trusted, loved and supported the army, taking care of them as of their own children (Giáp 125).

The solidarity between Việt Minh soldiers and the Vietnamese people reflects Sartre's theory of the evolution of *la sérialité* into a *groupe-en-fusion*. In supporting the Việt Minh's revolution, the people "voit en l'Autre son propre avenir" (*Critique* 388) and considers their struggle to be one and the same as that of the Việt Minh. As Frantz Fanon describes in *Les Damnés de la terre*, during a war of liberation, the people:

[...] se réorganise et enfante dans le sang et les larmes des confrontations très réelles et très immédiates. Donner à manger aux moudjahidines, poster des sentinelles, venir en aide aux familles privées du nécessaire, se substituer au mari abattu ou emprisonné : telles sont les tâches concrètes auxquelles le peuple est convié dans la lutte de libération (57).

While Fanon's revolutionary theories partly derive from his observations of the Algerian War, his impression of the people's assistance to revolutionary movements reflects the depictions offered by the four authors. As the Vietnamese and Algerian militant-authors reveal, the population provides Việt Minh and FLN militants with subsistence, shelter, and support, significantly contributing to the revolution. For the memoirists, not only did the people's efforts directly result in national liberation, but they also motivated Việt Minh and FLN militants, enabling them to believe that victory was inevitable.

A War of the People, for the People

Throughout their memoirs, all four Francophone authors reiterate that a significant portion of the Vietnamese and Algerian population supported their revolution.

Recognizing the immense potential of the population in the national liberation struggle, the leaders of both revolutions recruited the entire population into the war effort. In his 1946 appeal to the Vietnamese people, Hồ Chí Minh declared: “Bất kỳ đàn ông, đàn bà, bất kỳ người già, người trẻ, không chia tôn giáo, đảng phái, dân tộc. Hễ là người Việt Nam thì phải đứng lên đánh thực dân Pháp để cứu Tổ quốc / [Men and women, old and young, regardless of religion, political party, or ethnicity. If you are Vietnamese, you must stand up to fight the French colonialists to save the Fatherland]” (4: 1018). The people’s reaction to Hồ Chí Minh’s rallying call can be observed in one of the initial scenes in Ngô’s *Journal*, which depicts “le foule” that exuded an immense “ferveur populaire” (22) in Hanoi in 1941. On one of the many days characterized by “de ferveur populaire” (22), Ngô met Nhan, who would introduce him to the Việt Minh’s movement and ideology. The image of the large exuberant crowd reappears again in Ngô’s memoir during a public speech by Hồ Chí Minh and General Giáp in March 1946. As Ngô recounts, “Je la regarde, et je regarde cette foule. Je sens mon cœur gonflé d'orgueil et d'un immense espoir” (69), clearly indicating that the support of the population was a strong motivator for him.

The passion and mobilization of the Vietnamese people, as represented in this opening scene, frequently reappears throughout Ngô’s journal. Notably, after his battalion arrived in a small village outside of Hanoi in November 1950, Ngô observes: “La population nous a fêtés. Toutes les maisons sont décorées de banderoles et de petits drapeaux, et dans la rue centrale, nous nous sommes mis sur un rang de chaque côté de la rue. Toutes les femmes, vieilles et jeunes, ont défilé pour nous apporter des présents” (140). Toward the end of the memoir, Ngô recounts that the arrival of his troops in the

city of Nghia Lo in 1952 “se fait au milieu des acclamations de la population” (213-214). By including images of popular support from as early as 1941—four years before Hồ Chí Minh launched the August Revolution—until 1952, Ngô shows the reader that the Việt Minh enjoyed popular support over the duration of the revolution.

In addition, these depictions also reveal that witnessing the people’s enthusiasm further motivated Việt Minh militants. As Ngô argues, “nous pouvons nous considérer comme les fers de lance du peuple en guerre. C’est un grand honneur et une immense confiance que nous fait le peuple vietnamien et il sait que chaque combattant fera tout ce qu’il pourra pour être digne de cette confiance” (128-129). It is important to note that Ngô does not state that the Việt Minh is at war. Rather, he argues that the entire people is at war, with the Việt Minh carrying out the people’s wishes, which reflects Mao’s guerrilla warfare theory and Giáp’s “people’s war” strategy. Both Ngô and Đặng describe the Vietnamese war effort as “la guerre populaire,” with Ngô referring to the Việt Minh army as “l’armée populaire” (95), while Đặng refers to armed Việt Minh forces as “milices populaires” (52, 115). In fact, Ngô stresses that “Il ne faut jamais perdre de vue que notre guerre est une guerre populaire” (178), reiterating that popular support is key to their efforts. Likewise, in *De la RC 4 à la NC 4*, Đặng shows that the support of the population was crucial to the Vietnamese revolution, praising the “vaste réseau de la guerre populaire” (40). For Đặng, victory is dependent upon appropriate weather, favorable terrain, and “le soutien de la population” (32). In 1947, he and his troops benefited from all three factors as they ambushed French convoys along the Route Coloniale 4. Despite conducting their operations in a zone where the French maintained a large military presence, Đặng explains that the Việt Minh had a critical advantage: “la

population bien disposée à notre égard” (51). In fact, popular support allowed Việt Minh militants to overcome their military and logistic disadvantages. In an entry from November 1946, Ngô writes that his militants were poorly armed and organized, but nonetheless “peuvent compter sur toute la population des villages” (101). This reflects Sartre’s argument in the essay “On Genocide,” in which he illustrates that anticolonial insurgents lack sufficient weapons, but benefit from the support of the local population.

The Algerian life writings by Azzedine and Yacef also emphasize the importance of popular support. Like Hồ Chí Minh, leaders of the FLN recognized that the support of the population was crucial to the revolution and recruited the Algerian people accordingly. The FLN’s *Proclamation du premier novembre*, which launched the Algerian Revolution, begins by addressing “le peuple algérien” and concludes with: “Algérien ! nous t’invitons à méditer notre charte ci-dessus. Ton devoir est de t’y associer pour sauver notre pays et lui rendre sa liberté ; le Front de libération nationale est ton front, sa victoire est la tienne.” This penultimate sentence serves to persuade the Algerian people that the FLN represented their best interest—liberation from French colonization—and that they themselves were pivotal to the FLN’s success.

In the preface to *La Bataille d’Alger*, Saadi Yacef reveals that his inspiration for writing the lengthy memoir “prend appui sur la marche du peuple algérien vers son émancipation en se fondant sur le principe selon lequel les masses populaires « font l’Histoire ». Ni prince, ni général, encore moins de « génie » militaire, ne peuvent se substituer à elles” (1: 12). He continues with: “Ce livre tentera, donc, de relater, en premier, le processus de prise de conscience populaire” (1: 13). Inspired by the successful Vietnamese Revolution, the FLN studied the Việt Minh’s “people’s war”

tactics (Porch 234). In 1955, the FLN declared that it was waging a nationwide “people’s war” against French rule (Thomas 212), which Yacef and Azzedine depict in their memoirs. In *On nous appelait fellaghas*, Azzedine remarks that the population living near modern day Lakhdaria² “nous aimait [...] Pratiquement, toute la population de la région nous soutenait” in 1955 (65). He then adds, “Nous connaissions tout le monde. Nous étions dans le peuple comme le poisson dans l’eau” (Azzedine 65). Yacef uses the same simile in *La Bataille d’Alger* when he explains: “nous évoluions dans la masse de la population comme des poissons dans l’eau” (2: 60). In fact, Việt Minh militant-author Đặng also notes that “À Lang Son, nous étions comme les poissons dans l’eau” (49). The fish-in-water simile that appears in three out of the four life writings is either a reference to General Giáp—who was referring to Mao Tse-Tung—or a direct reference to Mao himself. The famous comparison of the relationship between militants and the local population to that of a fish in water first appeared in 1937 in Mao’s *On Guerrilla Warfare*:

Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy’s rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element, cannot live (93).

Giáp later included the comparison in *People’s War, People’s Army*, maintaining

that “The people are to the army what water is to fish, as the saying goes” (56). It is important to note that both Azzedine and Yacef include the fish-in-water simile in their political memoirs, which shows the extent to which the FLN were inspired by the “people’s war” strategy developed by Mao and Giáp. After incorporating this simile in his writing, Azzedine continues to give examples of the population-militant symbiosis throughout his memoir, describing how “Les djounouds du commando étaient les enfants chéris de la population. Les dechras nous accueillait toujours avec des poules, des œufs, des friandises... (159). The Algerian population’s moral and material support parallel the acclamations and reception that the Việt Minh received during visits to local villages, as described by Ngô and Đặng. Whereas Ngô illustrates the Vietnamese people’s nationalist exuberance and fervor, Azzedine depicts the Algerian population’s anger and passion. When French colonial authorities execute FLN militants, “Le peuple entier crie sa rage” by hurling and crying, according to Azzedine (224). During one of the more volatile periods of the war in which a high level of violence was directed at both French and Algerian civilians, Azzedine explains that the “La population est à bout. Elle menace de descendre dans la rue, de se ruer sur les quartiers européens” (334) and take the war into their own hands.

Yacef shows that early Algerian nationalists recognized the importance of popular support nearly a decade before the start of the Algerian Revolution. As he recounts, after the Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA) was reconstituted as the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD) in 1946, its armed wing, Organisation Secrète (OS)³ had already realized that “pour faire la guerre il fallait avant tout préparer le peuple à la soutenir” (1: 68). Likewise, Azzedine explains that “la politisation des

masses paysannes garantirait sur le terrain la sécurité de l'A. L. N. à laquelle elles offriraient des réserves inépuisables de moudjahidines et de moussebilines" (56). As the Revolution continued, Yacef argues that the Algerian people was the "unique et seul soutien" (1: 184) of the FLN combatant, which he repeatedly emphasizes throughout the text. In 1956, the FLN was a movement "dont la population était le principal soutien. Les renier c'était se renier soi-même" (1: 321). For Yacef, the Algerian population was inseparable from the Algerian Revolution.

During the eight-day strike of 1957, the FLN called on all Algerians to refrain from economic and military activity in order to show their support of the FLN's liberation struggle (Rosenbraugh 155). The strike was to coincide with a United Nations discussion on Algeria, which the FLN hoped would enable the group to gain international recognition and diplomatic support. As Azzedine reveals, the most important objective of the strike was to prove that the Algerian revolutionary movement was "au cœur des masses populaires algériennes" (208). The strike was a political success for the FLN, with Yacef describing that "Le silence était total" in the Casbah over the course of the eight-day period (2: 119). General Jacques Massu failed to prevent Algerians from participating in the strike, and, as a result, the Algerian population showed that they were willing to endure French repressions and economic losses in order to support the FLN. Not only did the vast majority of Algerians living in Algiers participate in the strike, but Algerians in larger cities and towns across the country also supported the strike (Evans 207).

Civilian Assistance: Providing Food and Shelter to the Militants

In addition to simply providing moral support to the revolution, the texts reveal

that civilians sympathetic to the revolutionary cause provided food, shelter, and vital information to Việt Minh and FLN militants. Of the two Vietnamese texts, *De la RC 4 à la N 4* especially underlines the ways in which the civilian population voluntarily offered sustenance to hungry combatants. As the Việt Minh Army was not a well-fed, well-equipped, and well-trained military during the first half of the revolution, the food provided by the local civilian population enabled the militants to succeed in their operations. After arriving at a village, Đặng and his regiment “mangeons avec appétit notre boule de riz avec du sésame et des arachides grillés et pilés, que nous ont donnée les habitants de Ban Bon” (34). In describing that he and his troops ate “with appetite,” Đặng illustrates the hunger of the militants while depicting the population’s vital role in providing the militants with food. He reiterates this theme throughout the entire memoir and uses repetition to highlight the significance of the “boule de riz.” As a symbol of the labor of Vietnamese peasants, a ball of rice represents the backbone of the traditional agrarian-based Vietnamese society. In the text, each mention of a “boule de riz” is either accompanied by or embedded in a description of the solidarity between the population and Việt Minh militants. During a campaign, “En une nuit, les galettes et les boules de riz avec des arachides salées étaient prêtes et apportées aux différentes unités de notre régiment. A notre retour, nous étions accueillis dans la joie par la population” (Đặng 50). The transfer of the “boule de riz” between the people and the militants also symbolizes the peasants offering their livelihoods to sustain the revolution:

Nous avons la chance d’être soutenus par la population. Les habitants nous fournissent des hommes et des vivres tout en évacuant leur village. Souvent, en pleine forêt, nous rencontrons

des colonnes de transport civil et chacun de nous reçoit alors une boule de riz et un paquet de victuailles. Il arrive même qu'on nous donne de vieux vêtements, des chaussures de toile, marquant ainsi la solidarité entre l'armée et le peuple (Đặng 84).

For Đặng, the Việt Minh's victory was the direct result of the population's support, which he underlines once again when he notes that, "victoire ou défaite, ce sera le bol de riz qui décidera et non le talent du commandant" (57). He also recognizes the immense sacrifice of the largely impoverished population, which deprived themselves of sustenance in order to assist the Việt Minh. Observing that the local population resorted to eating wild roots so that they could make "des boulettes de riz" from grains reserved for the next season's seeding, Đặng was "profondément touché et m'empresse de faire partager ces sentiments à mes hommes, qui promettent en retour de bien combattre et de tout sacrifier pour la victoire" (61). In this passage, Đặng reveals that the population's sacrifice motivated Việt Minh combatants to persist with their war efforts to win independence for the population. In a similar manner, Azzedine shows that the Algerian population provided the FLN with much-needed food during their military campaigns. In fact, he begins his memoir with a description of villagers welcoming his men with exuberance. As they recount their guerrilla exploits to the villagers, "Une femme nous distribue des galettes d'orge, des cruchons de lait" (12-13). This initial description sets the framework for the remainder of the memoir, throughout which FLN militants who come across a village while fleeing French troops always receive a warm reception—which often includes the provision of food—from local residents. As Azzedine remarks, "Notre subsistance ne pouvait être assurée que par les paysans" (185), which parallels the

Việt Minh's experience. In a later scene, after Azzedine and his men had been traveling on foot for an entire night, they arrived at a village at dawn: "Les habitants nous offrent du miel, du lait caillé, de la semoule, des galettes. Nos pieds endoloris baignent dans des bassines d'eau chaude. Nous reprenons des forces..." (168). Once again, Azzedine shows that the villagers not only welcomed the FLN, but also offered them food and care so that they could rest and regain their energy for combat the following day.

Like Đặng's text, Azzedine's memoir contains several descriptions of impoverished populations who offer what little they have to FLN combatants. When Azzedine and Hassan flee from paratroopers, they encounter a goat shepherd who offers them his daily ration of bread and rancid milk (141-142). It is evident that the shepherd does not have unspoiled food for even himself, yet he gives all that he has to the militants. Azzedine emphasizes the destitution of this particular locale when he notes that "Les habitants de cette misérable dechra se mettent en quatre pour nous reconforter" (142). Although their living conditions are "miserable," the villagers nonetheless take great pains to welcome Azzedine and Hassan. In another campaign, Azzedine travels through the impoverished Cherchell region, where "Pendant quatre jours, les pêcheurs de Cherchell nourrissent les djounouds du produit de leur pêche, rougets, merlans, crevettes" (188). From the shepherd's rancid milk to the fishermen's catch, Azzedine uses his writing to convince the French-speaking reader that the Algerian Revolution would not have succeeded without the active and continued support of the Algerian people.

In addition to food, the population also provided the militants with shelter, effectively saving them from being captured, and possibly tortured and killed, by French

troops. The Vietnamese texts do not include many descriptions of the population offering shelter to Việt Minh militants, mostly because the Việt Minh operated in mountainous and jungle terrain, where they were able to establish countless hideouts in the impenetrable foliage. Nonetheless, the Việt Minh did benefit from the population's generosity during operations in populated areas such as cities and larger villages. After Ngô's first successful attack on a French military post in November 1945, there was a lull in fighting during which "Les villageois sont dans la rue, et déjà se précipitent pour nous accueillir" (66). The villagers know that a successful Việt Minh attack will undoubtedly result in French repressions in the area, so they hastily offer the combatants shelter before French reinforcements arrive. The Việt Minh even established a program in which civilian families could volunteer to host militants and pass them off as family members to French colonial authorities. As Ngô describes, "cette famille recueillera le combattant, l'hébergera en cas de besoin, l'habillera en civil, le présentera comme un proche parent, répondra de lui vis-à-vis des autorités ennemies, et l'aidera à rejoindre les forces populaires" (142). During one of Ngô's campaigns near Hanoi, he was hosted by an elderly lady and her daughter.

In the winter of 1950-1951, a napalm bomb severely injures Ngô, who is rendered unconscious from the explosion. To save him, fellow Việt Minh militants carried him to an elderly Vietnamese Catholic lady's residence in the city. When he regains consciousness, she says to him "Ne dis rien, petit frère, les Français sont dans le village" (157). She then repeats, "Ne dis rien, petit frère, tu es sous ma maison, et les Français ne viendront pas ici. Personne, que mon fils, ne sait que tu es ici. Et mon fils ne te dénoncera pas. Il est prêtre catholique" (157). The Việt Minh were generally hostile to

the Vietnamese Catholic population for two reasons: (1) its Marxist doctrine fundamentally opposed religion, and (2) it associated Catholicism with France and French colonization (Elliott 49). In a religious and political discussion with Ngô, the elderly lady's son—who is a Catholic priest—reveals that he distrusted the Việt Minh for these precise reasons. Yet despite not being Việt Minh supporters, the elderly lady and her son hide and attend to Ngô in a hidden granary in their home. The priest also advises Ngô to refrain from making noises because French officers and soldiers often visited the house, indicating that he and his mother could face serious repercussions if they were discovered to harbor an injured Việt Minh militant. Notwithstanding the potential danger, they take great pains to care for Ngô and even removed a piece of bamboo shrapnel that had been lodged in his shoulder and cleansed his wound with rice alcohol (159). The elderly lady also stole disinfectant medication from a French priest so that Ngô could tend to his wound (160). This particular experience reveals that even Vietnamese people who were not Việt Minh supporters nonetheless offered shelter—and undertook tremendous risks in order to do so—to militants in need.

In a similar fashion, the Algerian memoirists highlight the role of the population in providing shelter for FLN militants. In the countryside, villagers “hébergeaient des maquisards dans leurs mechtas” (Azzedine 173-174). In Algiers, as Yacef carefully shows, local families constantly harbored combatants on the run. FLN operatives targeting Europeans in Algiers “ont à chaque fois pu trouver refuge, rapidement et sans difficulté, dans les ruelles du quartier arabe” (1: 274). Even after French authorities realized that the FLN operated from the Casbah and conducted surprise raids to capture them, the militants continued to find shelter thanks to the continued support of the

population (1: 276). As Yacef flees from paratroopers after another FLN operation, he arrives at rue du Lion to find the “même chaleur humaine, même désir de sacrifice chez les locataires de la maison où je venais d’arriver” (2: 281). Throughout his memoir, Yacef reiterates the population’s willingness to harbor or help FLN members escape French troops. In another scene, as Yacef was preparing to jump from one rooftop terrace onto another to evade paratroopers, “une brave mère de famille s’interposa avec douceur entre l’escalier y conduisant et moi en m’indiquant un moyen plus efficace pour notre sécurité immédiate : le puits” (2: 283). Yet families that harbor FLN militants experience threats and even violence from French paratroopers who attempt to coerce the locals into revealing the FLN hideouts. While in hiding, Yacef believes “Nous étions sûrs d’une chose : les habitants ne nous trahiraient pas” (2: 284), which shows the extent to which he trusts the population. In a particularly memorable scene, as Yacef, Si Mourad, and Alilou finally came out from their hiding place after the departure of French troops:

La réaction qui s’ensuivit était prévisible. Nous l’avions pressentie. En effet, à peine hors de la cachette femmes, enfants et hommes, les mieux portants d’entre eux évidemment, se jetèrent littéralement sur nous, nous entourèrent pour nous prodiguer leur affection. Tout le monde pleurait de joie comme si nous étions, nous, les héros du drame, alors que c’était eux le vrai héros du jour. Quelle leçon d’humilité ! Car le mérite dans de semblables épreuves ne revient ni au mythe ni à la légende mais bien à ceux

qui, dans leur chair, ont subi ces inqualifiables lésions afin de nous épargner probablement le pire (2: 192).

As Yacef recounts, the people who eagerly awaited the emergence of the militants had been subjected to torture the previous night. Yet they endured the paratroopers' repression in order to save the lives of Yacef and his men. These actions not only revealed the people's commitment to the revolution—and willingness to risk their lives to do so—but also their extreme courage. For Yacef, these civilian supporters are the heroes of the Algerian Revolution. In fact, all four authors highlight the role of multiple segments of civilian society, including traditionally less represented groups—women, children, and the elderly—in addition to diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups, in their respective revolutionary efforts.

Women and the Revolutions

As Fanon notes in *Sociologie d'une révolution*, engaging women in revolution is integral to mobilizing the entire population. Yet “décider d'incorporer la femme comme maillon capital, de faire dépendre la Révolution de sa présence et de son action dans tel ou tel secteur, c'était évidemment une attitude totalement révolutionnaire” (31). For Fanon, a revolution is only truly revolutionary when it includes and depends on the participation of women. During both the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions, women participated as supporters and combatants. In the early 1950s, there were roughly 840,000 female Việt Minh guerrillas in northern Vietnam, and an additional 140,000 in southern Vietnam (Tétreault 115). In Algeria, the Ministry of War notes that approximately 11,000 women are registered as veterans of the Franco-Algerian war

(Lazreg, *Eloquence* 119). However, this estimate is likely an underrepresentation of the actual number of Algerian women who participated in the war effort, as illiterate women would have had difficulties completing the necessary forms to become certified as war veterans (Eager 108).

Both Vietnamese and Algerian women have had lengthy histories of resisting foreign invasions. In Vietnam, the Trung sisters and Lady Triệu are venerated for leading armed resistances against Chinese rule during the first and third centuries AD. Prior to the development of more cohesive and organized resistance movements during the early twentieth century, Vietnamese women actively participated in early insurrections against French colonial rule, notably during the Phan Đình Phùng uprising in 1886 and the Yên Thế rebellion of 1892 (Lessard *Suffrage* 201). Today, streets in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City bear the names of Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai, a female revolutionary and high-ranking member of the Indochinese Communist Party, and Võ Thị Sáu, a schoolgirl guerrilla fighter. Both were imprisoned and executed by French colonial authorities and are now considered as national martyrs who sacrificed their lives to help create an independent Vietnam.

Algerian history also contains examples of female militants, such as the legendary Dihya—also known as al-Kahina—a Berber queen who led an armed resistance against invading Arab forces during the seventh century and who is still revered in Algeria today, especially by Kabyle-Berbers (Lazreg *Eloquence* 20). Berber epic poems also celebrate a lesser-known woman, Djazya, who played a key role during an eleventh-century battle between the indigenous Berbers and invading Beni Hilal tribe. Perhaps the most famous pre-twentieth century Algerian female warrior is Lalla Fatma N'Soumer, who fought the

French in Kabylia in 1854 and still remains an integral figure of Algerian resistance to this day (Naylor 455).

The Vietnamese and Algerian independence movements enjoyed support from a large number of women, and the Việt Minh and FLN actively recruited women to participate in their liberation struggles. Upon founding the Communist Party of Indochina in 1930, Hồ Chí Minh addressed a number of groups within the Vietnamese population, including “Anh chị em! / [Brothers and sisters!]” (3: 8) to encourage them to join the revolution. In fact, the tenth objective of the Indochinese Communist Party was to “Thực hiện nam nữ bình quyền / [Implement equality between men and women]” (3: 8-10). The Việt Minh’s 1946 constitution declared that “Đàn bà ngang quyền với đàn ông về mọi phương diện / [Women are equal to men in all aspects]” (Vietnam). While the FLN did not advocate for gender equality to the same extent as Hồ Chí Minh and the Việt Minh, the *Plateforme de la Soummam* includes a section on the women’s movement, which states “Nous saluons avec émotion, avec admiration, l’exaltant courage révolutionnaire des jeunes filles et des jeunes femmes, des épouses et des mères ; de toutes nos sœurs « moudjahidates » qui participent activement, et parfois les armes à la main, à la lutte sacrée pour la libération de la Patrie.” The *Plateforme* then highlights three areas in which Algerian women could continue to contribute to the revolution: “a) Soutien moral des combattants et des résistants ; b) Renseignements, liaisons, ravitaillement, refuges ; c) Aide aux familles et enfants de maquisards, de prisonniers ou d’internés.”

The four Vietnamese and Algerian life writings, particularly *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* and *La Bataille d'Alger*, depict women in significant roles in both

revolutions. Vietnamese and Algerian women provided crucial material, logistical, and moral support to the combatants. In *Journal*, Ngô reveals that the Việt Minh created the Organisation Féminine de Salut Public [Women's Organization of Public Safety] to facilitate women's involvement in the war by assigning:

[...] les tâches à la portée des femmes, pour les faire participer directement à la guerre; elle leur assigne des tâches militaires à leur portée: sabotage de routes, tranchées, portages de ravitaillement et de munitions, suivant un barème établi: 15 kilos au-dessus de 18 ans [...] surveillance et garde de nuit, renseignements dans les zones occupées par l'ennemi" (142-143).

The women's organization described by Ngô is likely one of the groups administered by the Vietnamese Women's Union, which the Indochinese Communist Party established in 1930 to mobilize, educate, and represent Vietnamese women in the Party's political activities (Tétreault 114). When the Vietnamese Revolution began in 1945, the Women's Union also oversaw women's military activity (Marr *Tradition* 247). In his journal, Ngô especially highlights the role of Vietnamese women in carrying ammunition to and alongside Việt Minh soldiers on the battlefield:

Les travailleurs des services de guerre sont des femmes, des jeunes filles, quelquefois des hommes inaptes au combat qui se sont enrôlés volontairement dans ces unités ou formations supplétives de l'armée. Venant des pays libérés, ou même des pays occupés par l'ennemi, ils se meuvent le long des pistes de la jungle, parcourant des distances énormes, passant les montagnes,

franchissant les rivières, malgré le vent, la pluie, la mousson, les attaques et les bombardements ennemis, afin d'amener au front (chèrement parfois) le ravitaillement et les munitions nécessaires à la bataille (189).

In describing their efforts as “nécessaires à la bataille,” Ngô shows that the Việt Minh’s successes depended on the work of these women. As Tétrault notes in her historical analysis of women in the Vietnamese Revolution, “women carried the bulk of the supplies destined for the secret bases of the revolutionaries” (114). Although these women did not actively participate in combat, they still directly experienced warfare and were affected by enemy bombings and attacks as a result of their presence on the battlefield. They also traveled many of the same dangerous routes and lived in the same hazardous conditions as active combatants. According to Ngô, even pregnant women carried ammunition as long as they were not over five months pregnant (142).

During the climactic Battle of Hòa Bình in January 1952, Ngô recounts that the ammunition transporters “sont des femmes des montagnes, turbans de chiffons enserrant leurs cheveux, et tremblant de tous leurs membres” (198). Comprising two thirds of the Dan Cong labor battalions that transported supplies to the battlefield, women were also pivotal to the decisive battle of Điện Biên Phủ, during which they carried supplies either on their backs or on bicycles through the monsoon rains that impeded the usage of motor vehicles (Tétrault 115). Transporting weapons and equipment had a physical and mental toll on these women, as was the case with Ngô's adoptive sister, Chi Ba, who worked as a “porteuse de munitions” and became sick after carrying heavy equipment across long distances in the rain (143). Acknowledging that her physical health had

always been frail and that she probably should not have transported supplies at all, Chi Ba nonetheless explains her decision with: “j’ai voulu servir le pays” (144).

Women who worked as nurses also played a prominent and essential role to both revolutions. To attend to injured militants, both Vietnamese and Algerian nurses accompanied soldiers onto the battlefield. Ngô mentions that “Des auxiliaires féminines suivent notre colonne, infirmières, etc...” (212) to care for injured fighters. In fact, he refers to female Việt Minh nurses as “femmes-soldats infirmières” (145), indicating that he considers female nurses who worked on the front lines as equal to active-duty combatants. Likewise, Đặng depicts the fundamental role of female nurses: “Nos blessés sont rapidement évacués vers les postes de secours à l’arrière du front, où des volontaires, jeunes filles et jeunes femmes, prennent soin d’eux” (112). In describing these nurses as “des volontaires,” Đặng shows that they participated in the revolution out of their own volition, indicating the appeal of the independence struggle to civilian women.

In *On nous appelait fellaghas*, Azzedine recounts the awe and inspiration that he experienced upon seeing female participants for the first time while on a mission in wilaya IV. As he realized that “des infirmières sont des filles de la ville. Jeunes, intelligentes et belles” (78), Azzedine remarks, “« Si de telles femmes participent au combat, la guerre est gagnée ! »” (78). His amazement reveals that the participation of these women convinced him that victory was inevitable, and further motivated and validated his own role as a militant in the revolution. In another segment of his memoir, Azzedine tells the story of Myriam Ben Mohamed—known as Mimi—a nurse who not only treated injured FLN fighters in the maquis, but also hid FLN members, FLN militants, and even Communists at her house in Algiers (Azzedine 148-151). In doing so,

Mimi fulfills two out of the three recommendations by the *Plateforme de la Soummam*: providing moral support, intelligence, supplies, and refuge to FLN combatants.

Women who were not trained as nurses nonetheless provided moral support to FLN militants by showing their solidarity to militants of the revolution, as revealed in *La Bataille d'Alger*. After French paratroopers concluded a surprise operation in the Casbah in attempt to capture FLN militants, Si Mourad, and Abdelghani Masali emerged from their refuge to find that “les femmes nous entourèrent fraternellement. Oubliant momentanément leurs fils et leurs maris capturés, elles se mirent à remercier la providence de nous avoir épargnés” (Yacef 2: 134). Although their sons and husbands were beaten and arrested by French paratroopers minutes earlier, these women were happy that Yacef and his two accomplices were safe. This scene not only shows the solidarity between the women and militants, but also proved to Yacef, Si Mourad, and Masali that they—and, by extension, the FLN and the Algerian Revolution—enjoyed the support of these women who considered them as family. During another raid by Lieutenant Marco, French paratroopers stormed a building in the Casbah where Yacef, Si Mourad, and Alilou were hiding. As the paratroopers beat, tortured, and killed some male habitants of the building while terrorizing the female habitants into revealing the FLN’s hideout, Yacef recognized that “Nos vies dépendaient d’eux et de leur faculté de résister à leur bourreaux” (2: 188), referring to the women and children in the house. Once again, the women show their support to the revolution by enduring the paratroopers’ tactics in order to protect the militants in hiding.

In addition to support roles, the memoirs show that women actively participated in combat missions during both revolutions. This is reflected in Ngô’s memoir,

particularly through Chien, the passionate and ideologically driven female militant who “organise les milices féminines” that participated in direct combat (67). Chien’s status as an active combatant is evident when she wears the “uniforme de l’armée populaire” (Ngô 39). Jacques Despuech, who adapted Ngô’s original journal, also notes that as of 1947, “*Le peuple entier est dans la guerre [...] Les femmes prennent au combat une part aussi active que les hommes. Des unités féminines de l’armée populaire sont créées*” (122). Echoing the tenth objective of the Indochinese Communist Party and the Việt Minh’s 1946 Constitution, Ngô recounts:

D’ailleurs les femmes luttent au même titre que les hommes dans notre armée. La condition de la femme qui, sous les mandarins et les colonialistes était restée aussi arriérée que dans la Chine de Tchang Kai-chek, a changé du tout au tout. Maintenant elle n’est plus subordonnée à son mari comme autrefois, mais au contraire elle participe désormais à la vie politique, vote pour les comités de villages, où elle peut être élue, et aura bientôt peut-être accès définitivement aux emplois administratifs importants (142).

Through their service in the army and participation in the revolution, women challenged and changed the traditional gender roles in Confucian Vietnamese society. Likewise, Si Azzedine’s memoir shows that women confronted both French colonization and traditional gender norms in Algeria by participating in the revolution. While detailing the revolutionary activities of his niece, Zehor, Azzedine reveals that she “prit une partie active à la lutte du F.L.N. : elle participa très vite à l’action terroriste directe” (212). He then adds: “Comme des milliers de femmes algériennes, en même temps

qu'elle bouleversait la tradition, Zehor apportait à la lutte, avec le cœur des femmes, les prémices de leur émancipation" (Azzedine 207). In an analysis of the sociology behind revolutions, Fanon argues that in a truly revolutionary war, "la femme doit répondre avec autant d'esprit de sacrifice que les hommes. Il faut donc avoir en elle la même confiance que l'on exige quand il s'agit de militants chevronnés et plusieurs fois emprisonnés" (*Sociologie* 30-31). In proving their ability to make the same sacrifices as men, the women who engaged in armed combat advanced the liberation of both their nation and gender. Yet Zehor is only one example of the many Algerian women who took up arms. As the war progressed, Yacef notes that "La place des femmes devenait de plus en plus indispensable dans notre combat" (2: 149). Indeed, the broad support and direct participation of half of the population, many of whom were willing to risk their lives and defy traditions to further the revolution, served to motivate Việt Minh and FLN combatants.

Le Petit Omar and his Friends: Children's Involvement in the Algerian Revolution

Of the four autobiographies, only *La Bataille d'Alger* describes the revolutionary activities of children in great detail. In Hồ Chí Minh's appeal during the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party, he addressed all segments of Vietnamese society, including "thanh niên, học sinh / [adolescents, students]" (3: 8). In 1950, the Việt Minh established Youth Shock Brigades—which would continue during the U.S.-Vietnam War—consisting of recruits ranging from fifteen to twenty years of age, and possibly younger children who lied about their age in order to participate (Huyen et al. 152). The famed Võ Thị Sáu, now a national martyr in Vietnam, was only twelve years old when

she joined the Việt Minh. At the age of fourteen, she threw a grenade at a group of French soldiers, killing one of them (Huyen et al. 155). In *Printemps inachevé*, a Francophone Vietnamese novel by Lý Thu Hồ, young children assist the Việt Minh by “transportant des armes, cachant des pistoles et des grenades dans leurs paniers de fruits ou d’œufs, et les introduisent ainsi en ville” (130). However, the life writings by Ngô and Đặng do not mention any children who participated in the Vietnamese Revolution.

The FLN’s *Plateforme de la Soummam* contains a section on “Le mouvement des jeunes,” which describes Algerian youth as having “la maturité précoce” because “En raison de la misère, de l’oppression coloniale, elle a passé rapidement de l’enfance à l’âge adulte; la période de l’adolescence est singulièrement réduite.” While Si Azzedine’s memoir does not feature the involvement of children, Saadi Yacef devoted an entire chapter to the role of children in the Casbah in the second volume of *La Bataille d’Alger*. In his memoir, Yacef particularly highlights the efforts of his twelve-year-old nephew, Petit Omar, who actively supported the FLN movement by working as a messenger for FLN militants, as depicted in Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers*. Petit Omar was only ten years old when he asked Yacef to be included in the FLN’s operations. As Yacef recounts, “il nous suppliait, en rageant, de l’admettre dans le cercle très fermé des adultes [...] si « Petit Omar » avait de quoi ressembler aux adultes engagés dans la guerre, c’était la discrétion. En plus, il était persévérant” (2: 146). Here, Petit Omar shows a precocious maturity by possessing adult traits such as discretion and perseverance, reflecting the *Plateforme*’s section on the youth movement. As Petit Omar represents the future generations of Algeria, his active participation in the revolution is symbolic of an emerging nascent country.

At first, Petit Omar served as the messenger between Yacef and Ali-la-Pointe (1: 306). As the revolution progressed, Petit Omar's responsibilities became more complex and included updating Ali la Point on the status of ongoing FLN operations and transmitting envelopes containing military orders to armed groups (2: 31). After barricades and checkpoints were implemented to restrict the movement of FLN members between the Casbah and the European quarter, Yacef capitalized on Petit Omar's innocuous appearance and resulting ability to travel freely throughout Algiers without raising the suspicion of French colonial authorities. It was during the general strike that Petit Omar, described by his uncle as "l'enfant-adulte" (2: 145), proved to be immensely useful to the FLN. Because he had played and wandered through all the meandering alleys and side streets of the Casbah, Petit Omar knew all of the shortcuts throughout the quarter. As a result, his mission was to "aller ameuter tous les « scusia »⁴ de la cité, les chapitrer d'abord avant de les lancer au secours d'une population que la torpeur et la résignation guettaient à tout moment" (Yacef 2: 147-148). Knowing that poor Algerian children running through the streets—a common sight in the Casbah at the time—would not stir the suspicion of French colonial authorities, Yacef decided to send Petit Omar on a two-fold mission. The young boy was to convey FLN messages and directives to the children of the Casbah, who would then spread the information to the entire population of the Casbah, as well as and collect intelligence for the FLN (Yacef 2: 148).

For the mission, Yacef recounts that Petit Omar "s'habillait en gavroche" (2: 148). This reference to one of the main character of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) is significant, as Gavroche Thénardier is a street urchin who participates in the Paris Uprising of 1832 with a pistol in his hand (Rosen 105-107). In addition,

Gavroche's participation in the rebellion "is part of the rights and duties of all citizens, men, women, and children, to resist oppression" (Rosen 106). For Yacef, Petit Omar is the Gavroche of the Algerian Revolution. Like Gavroche, Petit Omar participates in an armed uprising in order to resist oppression. In making a cultural reference to one of the seminal works of French literature, Yacef shows that he is addressing the French-speaking reader in order to unveil the message that the Algerian Revolution resembles historic resistance movements in France, notably the Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Uprising of 1832. In addition, Petit Omar's choice of clothing reveals how adept the young boy is to guerrilla tactics, as he explains that his *gavroche habit* serves as "une précaution supplémentaire qui le protégeait des coups en cas d'arrestation" (2: 148). Although Petit Omar showed his ability to plan and evade authorities, Yacef's nonetheless advises the boy to: "Arrange-toi seulement pour ne pas provoquer d'attroupements quand tu leur passeras les consignes car tu risques d'être repéré" (2: 149). Despite his young age and seemingly innocuous mission, Petit Omar's task is actually quite precarious and could have immense repercussions for not only himself, but also for the entire population of the Casbah if its objectives were discovered.

Through Petit Omar and the children of the Casbah, the FLN's messages and orders spread through the « téléphone arabe », an effective word-of-mouth system that eluded colonial authorities. Although Algiers' streets were empty as a result of the general strike, the children were able to diffuse the messages throughout the population, a phenomenon that Yacef describes as "comme quelque chose de « surnaturel »" (2: 151). The messages communicated by the Casbah children "n'épargnèrent aucun lieu de rassemblement. Les rues en furent envahies, les ruelles, les impasses, les placettes, les

mosquées” (2:151). Yacef also admires the children’s courage, noting that “L’effronterie de nos gosses ne connaissait pas de limite. Il en fallait sûrement de la témérité pour se lancer dans une entreprise aussi hasardeuse de prime abord” (2: 153). As a result of the children’s efforts, the population of the Casbah did not feel isolated from the FLN during the strike. Consequently, “on sentait partout le moral se redresser” (2: 155), largely due to the help of the Casbah street children. This episode also shows FLN militants and leaders such as Yacef that they enjoyed the support of the next generation of Algerians, which would be the first generation to reach adulthood in an independent Algeria. Therefore, while Petit Omar’s exploits were crucial to maintaining the population’s morale during the strike, it also showed Yacef that independence was inevitable because even children supported the revolutionary cause.

Yet Petit Omar and the participants of the sciussia were not the only children to assist the FLN. During a surprise raid by French paratroopers, Yacef hid in a hiding place at a home in the Casbah. After the raid, Zineb, “une enfant de 13 ans [...] nous annonçait le départ des paras” (2: 133). Zineb then reported details of the French operation to Yacef, providing the FLN with valuable intelligence on the nature of the raid (2: 134). In another raid led by Lieutenant Marco, twelve-year-old Mohamed Chibane hid bomb-making materials in a well. The French paratroopers did not find the hidden militants, weapons, or equipment in the residence, and after their departure, Chibane “confirmait que le reste de la verrerie et des bouteilles d’acide qui avait servi à la fabrication de la première génération de bombes artisanales [...] était encore enfoui dans le puits” (Yacef 2: 181). Yacef also shows that children admired adult FLN militants, glorified their exploits, and wanted to imitate them. After each of Ali la Pointe’s

missions, “les gavroches du coin coururent à sa rencontre et, l’entourant, ne tarirent d’éloges et d’admiration à son endroit qu’après qu’il eut disparu dans une impasse. C’est vrai qu’il représentait le symbole de la bravoure, l’exemple à suivre, à imiter” (2: 280).

Through his descriptions of children’s involvement in the Algerian Revolution, Yacef shows the French-speaking reader that the FLN had the support of the youngest members of Algerian society. Indeed, a composition exercise given to grade school Algerian children in Algiers in 1957 revealed a general hatred of paratroopers and sympathy for the FLN. When asked what they would do if they had the power of invisibility, the children responded by stating that they would “kill all French soldiers,” “place a bomb at the Milk Bar,” “encourage our brothers, the glorious Moudjahidine,” among other bellicose answers (Larzeg, *Torture* 187). One student even responded with “If I had a rifle, I would be a *fellagha*,” showing that they admired and glorified FLN militants. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there is a dearth of historical analyses on the role of children during the Algerian Revolution, and particularly on the “scuscia” executed by the Casbah children during the Battle of Algiers.

The Elderly: Limited but Important Roles

The four autobiographies also depict the involvement of the elderly population, albeit to a lesser extent than that of women and children. The number of Việt Minh and FLN elderly combatants remains unclear, as data on the demographics of Vietnamese and Algerian combatants concentrate on military age recruits. Ngô’s memoir features the most in-depth representation of the role of the elderly in the national liberation struggle. While all four texts provide names and detailed autobiographical information of female

and child participants, there are few descriptions of specific elderly individuals. Interestingly enough, only the Vietnamese memoirs mention elderly militants by name, whereas the Algerian life writings are less precise concerning older supporters of the FLN. It is possible that the elderly have greater representation in the Vietnamese texts because the Việt Minh's strategy explicitly included older populations. In his 1946 appeal to the Vietnamese people, Hồ Chí Minh addressed “đàn ông, đàn bà, [...] người già, người trẻ [...] / men and women, [...] old and young [...]” (4: 1018). In fact, less than three weeks after declaring Vietnamese independence in 1945, Hồ Chí Minh penned a letter to the elderly to encourage their participation:

Xưa nay, những người yêu nước không vì tuổi già mà chịu ngồi không. Nước ta có những người như Lý Thường Kiệt, càng già càng quắc thước, càng già càng anh hùng.

Hiện nay, nước ta mới tranh lại quyền độc lập tự do, nhưng còn phải qua nhiều bước khó khăn để cũng có quyền tự do độc lập đó. Vậy nên quốc dân ta, bất kỳ già trẻ, đều phải ra sức gánh một vai.

[Patriots never live idly by reason of their old age. Our country has people like Lý Thường Kiệt. The older they grow, the more energetic and heroic they become.

At present, we have won back our independence and freedom, but many difficulties remain before we can enjoy them. As a result, our people, old and young alike, must all shoulder a part of this responsibility] (4: 32).

In addition to persuading the elderly to support the revolutionary cause, Hồ Chí

Minh's careful reference to Lý Thường Kiệt is an attempt to rally the elderly by appealing to their Vietnamese national identity. Glorified as a national hero, Lý Thường Kiệt was a Vietnamese general who became famous for writing the first Vietnamese declaration of independence before defeating a Chinese invasion during the eleventh century (Taylor 82-85). He commanded troops until his death at the remarkable age of 86 and serves as a prime example of elderly involvement in a nationalist struggle against a foreign occupier.

Of all four memoirs, "le vieux Chu" in *Journal* is the only active-duty elderly combatant whose name is revealed. His age remains unknown—even Ngô may not have known his actual age—but "vieux Chu" fascinates Ngô because "d'illettré [il] est devenu, à l'école du combat, commandant du peloton de mitrailleuses" (209). The second named elder, a noncombatant called "vieux Sam," appears in *De la RC 4 à la N 4*. An ardent supporter of the revolution, "vieux Sam" admires Đặng and looks for him each time a group of Việt Minh soldiers visits the village. As Đặng describes, "À chaque instant, il me harcèle, voulant savoir quand auront lieu les prochains combats," offering tea and honey and continues to do so each time Đặng visits the village (36). Although he did not participate in battle, possibly due to his old age, Sam's excitement and continued support encourages Đặng and provides evidence that multiple segments of the Vietnamese population—even the elderly—supported the revolution.

Ngô's memoir reveals that the elderly, particularly elderly women, were directly incorporated into the Việt Minh's war efforts. In 1950, as Ngô returns to Hanoi with his regiment, he learns that a local family has offered to host him for a few days. The family consisted of two women, a mother in her sixties and a daughter in her forties. With two sons who were also militants, the elderly mother volunteers to take in militants traveling

through the region. She and her daughter belonged to a group known as “Les Mamans des combattants”:

[...] une institution qui existe depuis le début de la guerre, et a été l'un des facteurs décisifs de la lutte à outrance qu'ont menée victorieusement nos unités régulières, régionales, et même parfois nos guérillas. Ces mamans des combattants sont la plupart du temps des femmes âgées, qui tiennent à honneur d'adopter pendant la durée de la guerre un combattant de l'armée populaire. La famille tout entière de la maman du combattant sert de famille d'adoption au jeune soldat ou au Cadre cantonné dans le secteur. Au cas où des combats ont lieu, et au cas où, pour une raison ou une autre, l'unité du « fils adoptif » doit se disperser devant une attaque ennemie, cette famille recueillera le combattant, l'hébergera en cas de besoin, l'habillera en civil, le présentera comme un proche parent, répondra de lui vis-à-vis les autorités ennemies, et l'aidera à rejoindre les forces populaires lorsque ce sera possible (142).

The elderly women who participate as “mamans de combattants” directly support the revolution by providing shelter and support to armed combatants such as Ngô. The Việt Minh called these host mothers as “Maman de combat” (141) or “maman de guerre” (143), titles that highlight their role in the war effort. Ngô reveals that the creation of the “maman de combattant” effort was intended to maintain “le lien d'affection et la solidarité de classe entre l'armée et la masse du peuple ; elle facilite également les

infiltrations dans les lignes ennemies, et fait participer toute la nation à la guerre” (142), as promoted by Giáp. In nurturing relationships between local families and militants, the Việt Minh ensures that all segments of the Vietnamese population were invested in the war. In addition, for widowed elderly women with sons in combat—like Ngô’s host mother—providing refuge for militants offers them social interaction and a social network to which they could belong in the absence of their families.

In *Journal*, descriptions that mention older Việt Minh sympathizers do not focus on the elderly as a particular sub-group, but rather as one of many groups that supported the revolutionary efforts. Jacques Despuech observes that guerrilla groups consisted of “*de paysans, de femmes, de jeunes gens, ou d’hommes trop âgés*” (119). While he mentions the participation of older men, he does not elaborate upon their specific roles or missions. Rather, they are featured as one of the numerous groups that were engaged in guerrilla warfare. Described as “*des civils armés, qui poursuivent parallèlement à la lutte leurs activités normales*” (120), these guerrillas had four missions: (1) alert Việt Minh authorities of enemy raids and attacks, (2) contain attacking enemy troops if possible, (3) conduct sabotage missions to shock and terrorize the enemy, and (4) collect intelligence. Despuech’s descriptions are consistent with historical analyses of the composition of the Popular Troops—also known as Local Forces, Militia, or Self-Defense Forces—that were the foundation of the Việt Minh’s armed guerrilla forces (Shrader, *Indochina* 46). The Popular Troops consisted of two groups: the Dân Quân, which included men and women of all ages who fulfilled auxiliary military duties, and the Dân Quân du Kích, composed of military-aged males who carried out guerrilla activities (Tanham 22). While *Journal* does not detail the armed efforts of any elderly

combatant aside from “le vieux Chu”, the descriptions of the Dân Quân’s responsibilities reveal that the elderly were engaged in guerrilla warfare alongside women and children.

In a similar manner, *On nous appelait fellaghas* depicts the elderly population as one of the many civilian groups that supported the FLN. Azzedine begins his memoir by describing a scene in which he and five FLN militants, two of whom are wounded, return to their hideout in the Kabyle mountains. When they reach a dechra, “Des gosses jaillissent des jardins. Les hommes, dignement drapés dans leur cachabia, viennent à nous sans crainte, nous embrassent, palpent nos armes [...] les femmes nous admirent [...]” (12). By beginning his memoir with a description of men, women, and children reacting with joy and admiration to the arrival of FLN fighters, Azzedine shows that the FLN had the support of all segments of the Algerian population. He then includes the elderly by pointing out that “un vieux”—the first person to speak in the text—had asked the militants to describe their attack for the entire dechra to hear. Like Ngô, Azzedine depicts the elderly as providing either auxiliary or moral support to the combatants and the revolution. He reiterates the role of the elderly later in the memoir:

Qui peut veiller, sinon le moissonneur occupée à la faucille, la femme du village courbée sous son fagot, l’enfant poussant son âne ou le vieux dormant d’un œil sous un caroubier ? Même la nuit : les colonnes ont beau progresser à la lumière des veilleuses, on voit de loin l’étroit rectangle des phares. De chouf en chouf, de dechra en dechra, le message est transmis à l’unité de l’A.L.N. stationnée dans la région et l’état-major prend ses dispositions (Azzedine 184).

In this description, Azzedine once again emphasizes the supporting role of multiple segments of society, including women, children, and the elderly, and clearly showing their contribution to the Algerian revolution. Whereas “le vieux” at the beginning of the text provides moral support and expresses solidarity with the militants, this particular passage reveals that the elderly, while “dormant d’un œil sous un caroubier,” observes the movements of French troops and relays the vital information to the FLN. These descriptions of a child, a woman, and an old man together in one scene evoke the image of the family. As Valerie Orlando asserts, “For the FLN, the family would serve as a model to illustrate not only the ideal Marxist society (thought to be the supreme ideology on which to found a modern nation), but also assure the continuation of the Algerian people, fostering a strong sense of unity among them” (42). As a high-ranking commandant in the FLN, Azzedine includes these multiple references to a family-like structure supporting the Algerian Revolution in order to reveal that the FLN considered the family to be the backbone of the postcolonial Algerian state.

National Solidarity: Revolutionary Participation by Diverse Ethnic Groups

While both Francophone Vietnamese and Algerian memoirists depict the inclusion of multiple ethnic groups in their respective revolutions, the Vietnamese texts especially highlight the role of ethnic minorities who were historically crucial to the Việt Minh’s efforts. Vietnam has 54 different ethnic groups, with the Kinh being the majority, but the Việt Minh recruited all ethnicities into the revolution (Ito 1-2). In one of his many appeals, Hồ Chí Minh calls on all Vietnamese people, “không chia [...] dân tộc / [regardless of [...] ethnicity]” (4: 1018) to wage a war of resistance against French

colonialism. The integration of minority ethnic groups in revolutionary efforts also fulfills the Marxist-inspired narrative calling for a national identity based on solidarity and equality between all peoples. In *Journal*, Ngô mentions ethnic minorities only once in a discussion on his travels through the mountains and jungles before “Nous allons certainement arriver dans un village Thaï où l’on nous prépare une réception de bienvenue” (211). He then mentions a nearby battalion in which “il y a plusieurs combattants et cadres originaires des minorités montagnardes” (211). As most of Ngô’s revolutionary efforts took place around Hanoi and areas largely inhabited by the majority Kinh Vietnamese population, he had limited contact with ethnic minorities who tended to support the revolution in more rural and remote areas where they allowed the Việt Minh to infiltrate.

On the other hand, Đặng’s entire memoir focuses on the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4, which occurred in the Cao Bang and Lang Son provinces populated by the Tay and Nung ethnic groups. Minority ethnic groups tend to inhabit the remote mountainous and jungle regions that were of strategic importance during the war (Marr *Traditions* 321). As a result, the Việt Minh incorporated ethnic minorities into their Party and depended on minorities to build a revolutionary base in Cao Bang, where minority groups comprise the majority of the population (Huynh 275). Đặng expresses admiration for the Tay and Nung for having “pris part aux activités révolutionnaires dès avant la révolution d’août 1945 et ont soutenu la résistance” (15). In addition to welcoming the Việt Minh into their territories and ensuring the secrecy of their presence, the habitants of Cao Bang and Lang Son were also active on the battlefield. As Đặng recalls, “La plupart des camarades du 11^e régiment appartiennent aux minorités ethniques *tay, nung*”

(22). Aside from participating in armed combat, members of different minority groups also volunteered to transport ammunition and supplies to combat zones (Đặng 107). The solidarity between the various ethnic groups is evident in the description “Tous les habitants des trois provinces sont au front : les combattants pourchassent l’ennemi et les transporteurs civils se lancent à leur suite pour les ravitailler en vivres et en munitions” (107), which shows the Cao Bang and Lang Son populations working together to contribute to the Việt Minh’s campaigns.

The involvement of these minority groups reveal a national consciousness and solidarity that transcended ethnic boundaries in Vietnam, which motivated combatants like Đặng who belong to the majority Kinh ethnic group. Throughout his memoir, Đặng reiterates his appreciation of the minority groups in Cao Bang and Lang Son, noting that “Notre victoire à Dong Khê exalte la combativité de nos troupes et l’ardeur des populations” (107). In fact, the Việt Minh’s victory against both the French and Americans heavily depended on the support of local ethnic groups (Michaud 69-70). In reminiscing on the role of the local population during the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4, Đặng notes:

Le long du chemin, nous sommes très impressionnés et émus de l’aide apportée à nos troupes par les populations de Cao Bang et de Lang Son. Aux lisières, des forêts, au bord des ruisseaux, sur les pistes de la jungle, nous rencontrons de longues caravanes de transporteurs civils chargés de corbeilles, de hottes, de paniers pleins de riz, de munitions, d’obus et de brancards aussi, avec des blessés dessus. Tous ces cortèges d’hommes et de femmes

cheminent, innombrables, pleins d'ardeur et de détermination. Même fatigués, leurs visages, leurs regards rayonnent de joie chaque fois qu'ils rencontrent nos troupes. Les jeunes filles chantent et envoient des vœux à nos combattants (111-112).

The population's enthusiasm, resolve, and overall cheerful nature inspired *Đặng* and his troops, motivating them to continue the fight. At the end of his memoir, *Đặng* fondly remembers the inhabitants of Cao Bang and Lang Son who were willing to risk their lives in order to provide food, shelter, and moral and logistical support to the Việt Minh. He ultimately shows his appreciation and admiration for the local population by concluding the memoir with: "La terre de Cao Bang et de Lang Son, avec ses paysages grandioses, ses habitants au cœur d'or, cordiaux et vaillants, sera pour toujours le solide bouclier, merveilleusement ferme et fidèle, de notre Patrie" (134).

The Algerian memoirs also show the involvement of multiple ethnic groups in the revolution. While there are clear cultural and linguistic distinctions between the various ethnic groups in Vietnam, the Arab migration across North Africa in the eighth century—and subsequent intermixing with the indigenous Berber population—makes it difficult to separate Arabs and Berbers as distinct ethnic groups in modern Algeria (Collyer 48). Yet linguistic distinctions do exist, as approximately 20 percent of Algerians speak Berber languages. The Berberophones consist of four groups—Kabyle, Chaoui, Mozabite, and Toureg—and were especially active during the revolutionary movement (Silverstein 69-70).

Among the militants in the wilaya IV, "il y avait des Oranais, des Kabyles, des

Mozabites, des Constantinois, des Algérois. Ce brassage exceptionnel constituait l'application concrète, et non théorique comme souvent ailleurs, de l'idéal révolutionnaire et des principes établis lors de la plate-forme de la Soummam" (Azzedine 128-129). Not only does Azzedine highlight the participation of numerous ethno-linguistic and geographic groups in one wilaya, his observation refers to the *Plateforme's* declaration that "l'union psycho-politique du peuple algérien forgée et consolidée dans la lutte armée est aujourd'hui une réalité historique," which implies a sense of national solidarity across all ethnic and linguistic divisions. In addition, the Soummam conference is symbolic of the participation of Kabyles in the Algerian Revolution, as it took place in the Soummam Valley in Kabylia and was presided by Kabyle leader Abane Ramdane (Silverstein 69). In underlining the contribution of Kabyle FLN members and the importance of the Soummam, Azzedine undermines the 'Kabyle Myth' that French colonial ideology developed in order to divide and conquer the Algerian population by assigning racial and social superiority to Kabyles to the detriment of Arabs (Lorcin 2). Azzedine refers to this divisive colonial policy when he explained that the FLN needed to unite the people because "L'administration française [...] entretenait soigneusement ces rivalités familiales ou tribales au lieu de les atténuer, pour mieux contrôler les zones rurales [...] divisant pour mieux régner, selon le fameux principe" (71). Colonial proponents of the 'Kabyle Myth' posited that Kabyles, by virtue of their superiority, were better candidates for assimilation into French culture. Interestingly enough, Yacef hints at the Kabyle Myth when he relates the story of Marcel le Kabyle. Despite being extremely assimilated—as shown by his adopted French name—Marcel le Kabyle "n'avait jamais perdu de vue sa condition d'indigène" and collaborated with the FLN to

identify Justin Daudet as one of the torturers of Algerian prisoners (2: 291). In highlighting Marcel's role, Yacef also shatters the Kabyle Myth through his description of a Kabyle who collaborates with the FLN despite being assimilated into French culture.

Azzedine also highlights the participation of the Mozabites, who operated the majority of the spice markets and who, by nature of their occupation, "connaiss[ent] et surveill[ent] tout le monde derrière sa caisse ou son comptoir" (16). Recognizing their potential, Rebbah Lakhdar, the lieutenant of the FLN chief in Algiers, encouraged the Mozabites to join the FLN. Yet Lakhdar realized that his invitation was not enough to unite the various ethnic groups in Algeria and firmly believed that in order for the revolution to be successful, "Tous les Algériens devaient se sentir fraternellement unis au sein d'une même nation" (16). Abane Ramdane then suggests the creation of a national anthem "dont le seul héros serait le peuple algérien" (Azzedine 16). Consequently, Ramdane and Lakhdar enlist a Mozabite poet, Mufdi Zakharia, to write the lyrics to the Kassaman, which later became the Algerian national anthem (Azzedine 16-17). This historical event documented in Azzedine's memoir is especially significant, as it depicts the combined efforts of a Kabyle, a Mozabite, and an Arabo-Berber to create a lasting symbol of the Algerian Revolution. Here, Azzedine uses his writing to convince the French-speaking reader that the FLN united the Algerian people and included ethnic minorities into the revolution. While the Kabyles did play a significant role in the Algerian resistance, the FLN nonetheless constructed and imposed a monolithic post-independent Algerian national identity based exclusively on Arab-Islamic identity, effectively marginalizing ethnic minorities such as Berbers (Benrabah 64-66).

The Participation of Multiple Socio-Economic Groups

While the Vietnamese and Algerian life writings show that all socio-economic groups participated in their respective revolution, the texts also reflect two different ideological approaches to socio-economic class. Hồ Chí Minh appeals to “công nhân, nông dân, binh lính / [workers, peasants, soldiers]” (3: 8) in accordance with Marxist-Communist ideals, while the Việt Minh’s stated goal was to “Unite all the social classes [...] in order to expel the Japanese and French, render Vietnam entirely independent” (Huynh 264). Any Vietnamese person, regardless of social class, who accepts the principles and objectives of the Việt Minh could join the movement (Huynh 264). Nonetheless, the opposition between the proletariat and bourgeois classes—which forms the basis of Marxist ideology—is particularly evident in *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh*, in which Ngô always makes a point to mention the socio-economic class of memorable people who he encounters during the revolution. In fact, *Journal* begins with the sentence, “D’origine bourgeoise, mon père étant *Vien-Chuc* [mandarin] dans la province de Vinh, je naquis dans cette dernière ville en l’année 1921” (15). The first two words of his life writing emphasize the social class of his family and highlight Ngô’s awareness of his elite background, a theme that appears often throughout the text. When describing his mother’s upbringing, Ngô notes that she had the ability to “parler et écrire couramment le vietnamien, le français et le chinois” (17). Mass illiteracy was rampant between the 1930s and 1950s in Vietnam, therefore his mother’s ability to read and write in three different languages illustrates her elite social class (Marr, *Tradition* 178-179). In a similar fashion, Đặng opens his memoir by noting his privileged socio-economic class: “Avant la révolution d’août 1945 j’étais étudiant en deuxième année de la faculté de

médecine” (11). However, Đặng does not raise the issue of class to the same extent as Ngô.

Throughout his political memoir, Ngô shows that he is not the only bourgeois Việt Minh recruit. Chien, a staunch Việt Minh activist and advocate of Marxist ideology, also comes from a privileged background. She is very educated, spoke at least three languages fluently, and studied in France and China (Ngô 29). During a conversation with Ngô, Chien confirms her bourgeois origins when she argues that Việt Minh recruits from upperclass backgrounds needed to forget “les petites familles de bourgeois qui furent la tienne et la mienne” in order to be true revolutionaries (30). Other upper class Việt Minh recruits include a battalion leader, Pham, who comes from a mandarin family and studied in a French officer’s school (126). As education was indicative of membership in the upper class, two additional recruits—the “jeune lycéen de dix-sept ans” (62) and the Political Commissioner, “un ancien instituteur” (196)—were also likely former members of the bourgeoisie.

In addition to these privileged recruits, Ngô interacted and served with many Việt Minh members who came from the proletariat. His Commandant is a self-described “fils de coolie” (54). A fellow militant, Sang, is a peasant and farmer who was illiterate before joining the Việt Minh (127-128). Finally, the most remarkable combatant from an economically disadvantaged background is Bay, “le fils d’un paysan” (Ngô 72) who has a voracious appetite for learning. In this passage, Ngô reflects on the differences between his upbringing and that of Bay:

J’ai été au lycée français, et de cela il m’envie. Il voudrait
assimiler immédiatement tout ce que j’ai pu apprendre durant mes

pauvres études, et j'ai honte d'avoir si mal profité de la chance qui m'a été donnée. Il me parle souvent français, surtout depuis que nous savons que les troupes françaises vont arriver à Hanoi. Il en possède des rudiments appris à l'école de son village, et avec les soldats, car il a fait tous les métiers; à onze ans il cirait les chaussures, et vendait des journaux (73).

This description juxtaposes Ngô's privileged life with Bay's poverty and illustrates the social inequality criticized by Marxist ideology. As a result of his background, Ngô had access to an excellent education, which he wasted. On the other hand, Bay had the desire to learn but was unable to pursue an education because he had to work in order to survive. Yet because of his intellectual curiosity, the Việt Minh eventually accepts Bay into "une école spécialisée dans la formation des Cadres militaires importants, et dirigée par un Cadre vietnamien qui appartenait à l'armée française et qui a fait Saint-Cyr ou Polytechnique" (93). The divergent life circumstances between Ngô and Bay reveals the rigid class structure in pre-revolutionary Vietnamese society. In fact, it is important to note that Ngô identifies people's socio-economic class based on their parentage. His own father was a mandarin, the Commandant is "un fils de coolie" (54), and Bay is "le fils d'un paysan" (72). In describing people by the socio-economic class of their parents, Ngô shows that social class was an inherited privilege that not only defined and constrained one's life, but also that of their children.

Despite their different socio-economic backgrounds, both the Vietnamese bourgeoisie and proletariat were represented among Việt Minh militants in Ngô's memoir. Throughout the revolution, combatants from both privileged and impoverished

backgrounds served together in the Việt Minh Army. As Ngô describes, “D’une poignée d’hommes armés et sans expérience, d’une poignée d’ouvriers et de paysans, de petits bourgeois et de pâles fonctionnaires, il a fallu forger une armée et des cadres capables de se mesurer à une armée européenne forte [...]” (187). From Ngô’s perspective, the presence of distinct socio-economic groups in the Việt Minh demonstrated that the Vietnamese Revolution appealed to multiple segments of Vietnamese society.

The FLN also recruited members from all socio-economic classes into their revolutionary efforts. Its founding document, the *Proclamation du premier novembre*, calls on “tous les patriotes algériens de toutes les couches sociales” to join the revolution (37). The *Plateforme de la Soummam* also appealed to multiple socio-economic and professional segments of Algerian society and contains sections on “Le mouvement paysan,” “Le mouvement ouvrier,” “Les intellectuels et les professions libérales,” and “Les commerçants et les artisans.” This particular FLN objective is evident in Si Azzedine’s recruitment speech to a dechra:

Frères, rien n’est plus important que l’unité du peuple algérien [...]
Le Front accueille dans ses rangs toutes les couches de la société.
Les paysans, les ouvriers, les étudiants, les commerçants... [...]
Frères, tant que nous resterons unis, la victoire est certaine.
L’union, et la foi en notre cause, sont les conditions essentielles
qui nous permettront de faire plier les genoux à un ennemi plus
puissant en matériel et en nombre (182).

The incorporation of various social classes into the revolution reappears frequently in both *On nous appelait fellaghas* and *La Bataille d’Alger*. Azzedine

especially shows that the participation of multiple social classes in the revolution is in itself revolutionary, as it blurs traditional class distinctions and unifies the Algerian people. In another passage, he explains that the revolution played a role in weakening traditional class divisions in Algerian society:

Dans la foule des djounouds qui m'entourent, les intellectuels, les ouvriers, les paysans sont mêlés. Les mois vécus ensemble, la vie commune, ont modifié les traits, les allures et les pensées : c'est un peuple nouveau qui me fait face. Les clivages sociaux ne pourront plus être les mêmes [...] La guerre a bouleversé les valeurs établies. Notre révolution réunit tout le monde. Quatre-vingt-dix pour cent de notre population étaient analphabètes, et certains parmi eux sont devenus nos plus grands chefs. A leur côté travaillent des universitaires. Au contact les uns des autres, tous se trouvent enrichis (190).

Yet the representation of social class in the Algerian memoirs differs from that of the Vietnamese life writings. Although Yacef and Azzedine were familiar with and even partly inspired by Marxist ideology, Marxism—and its proposed diametrical opposition between the bourgeoisie and proletariat—was not the principle political ideology that motivated FLN militants. While Ngô's descriptions of class indicate a clear distinction between two socio-economic binaries, Yacef and Azzedine are more nuanced in their portrayal of social class. Azzedine reveals that “Les moudjahidines viennent de toutes les régions de notre pays. Ils sont paysan, ouvrier, artisan, étudiant, fonctionnaire, pêcheur, bûcherons, berger... Tous frères unis dans le même combat contre l'oppression

coloniale” (124). Unlike Ngô, Azzedine portrays a wide representation of various occupations. In fact, Azzedine and especially Yacef show that the FLN enjoyed support from Algerians of various occupations who used their specialized skills to contribute to the revolution. In a description of civilian involvement in the war, Azzedine reveals that members of multiple occupations collaborated in order to assist the FLN:

Peu à peu, à travers la wilaya, tous les corps de métier participèrent à l’effort de guerre. Des cordonniers fabriquaient des souliers ; des soldats blessés ou malades, refusant d’être évacués sur l’extérieur, devinrent les bergers de l’A.L.N. surveillant nos troupeaux ; il y eut encore des forgerons, des armuriers... Ces obscurs artisans firent plus pour l’idée de la révolution, par leur engagement simple et leur exemple, que bon nombre d’exposés théoriques (188-189).

In addition to having tradesmen who produce necessary supplies, the FLN also benefited from the professional connections of their members, which proved to be crucial to recruitment. An example is Bouzrina Arezki, who had a long career as an athlete and worked closely with trade unions. As a result, “il s’était forgé une renommée en organisant des grèves et des campagnes de contestation. Il connaissait pratiquement tous les milieux hostiles au conformisme. Ses nouvelles prérogatives lui permirent, en quelques jours, d’entraîner dans son sillage de nombreux militants” (Yacef 1: 97-98). Taleb Ammar, a teacher and FLN sympathizer, publicized the FLN’s program and objectives throughout the Algerian national education system. Consequently, “Des instituteurs et des directeurs d’école—rars encore dans cette branche—se mobilisèrent qui par de modestes contributions d’argent, qui en accueillant des militants en activité ou

en fuite” (1: 203). Another example is Mohamed Hattab, also known as Habib Rhéda, who “connaissait toutes les couches sociales d’Alger” (1: 257) and recruited among the city’s artistic circle so that “En peu de temps il mit à notre disposition la majorité des acteurs musulmans de l’Opéra d’Alger, le corps de ballet ainsi que le personnel artistique et administratif de la Radio,” all of whom participated in the eight-day strike of 1957 (1: 257).

Throughout both volumes of *La Bataille d’Alger*, Saadi Yacef continues to expound on the contributions of Algerians from numerous professions. Actresses who supported the FLN used their theatrical skills to communicate the FLN’s message to the population. Their responsibilities were to “Expliquer, orienter, soutenir moralement les impotents comme les grabataires, fournir des explications que le petit peuple ne possédait pas” (2: 65). Vegetable vendors, as well as fishermen who operate in the Mediterranean, also “au risque de leur vie, nous approvisionnaient en usant de ruses et de camouflages ingénieux” (2: 325) to smuggle weapons, goods, and other supplies to the FLN. For Yacef, the collaboration of multiple segments of society embodies the national unity declared in the principles of the 1956 Soummam Conference, leads him to believe that victory was possible, and thereby motivated him to continue with the revolution.

Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef all use their writing to show that both Việt Minh and FLN militants enjoyed the support of the Vietnamese and Algerian populations, including three groups that are traditionally less represented in warfare: women, children, and the elderly. In addition, the four militant-authors demonstrate that members of diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups also contributed to the revolutionary movements in their own capacity. Yet while the life writings detail the experiences and

perspectives of these four Việt Minh and FLN combatants, they are also flawed. Journals and political memoirs offer a one-sided and biased—either consciously or unintentionally—account of past experiences because they are inevitably influenced by the author’s motivations, political inclinations, and even memory deterioration. This is especially evident as the four militant-authors constantly depict scenes showing popular support for the Việt Minh and FLN. While these two groups were certainly the dominant nationalist movements that eventually overthrew French colonization, the accounts by the four militant-authors largely overlook the existence of rival groups and non-supporting civilians as these detract from the nationalist narrative of solidarity and unity crafted by the Việt Minh and FLN. Nonetheless, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef all use their writings to show the French-speaking reader that popular support personally moved and motivated the militant-authors, and convinced them that victory was inevitable.

NOTES

1. Sartre published “On Genocide” after presiding over the Russell Tribunal—also known as the International War Crimes Tribunal—established in 1966 by British philosopher Bertrand Russell. The tribunal was comprised of intellectuals who morally opposed the U.S.-Vietnam War and considered American policy in Vietnam as genocide. See Payam Akhavan’s *Reducing Genocide to Law: Definition, Meaning, and the Ultimate Crime*.
2. In his memoir, Yacef refers to the city by its former name of Palestro. The city is now renamed Lakhdaria in memory of Si Lakhdar, a native of the city and close friend of Azzedine who died in 1957 during the Algerian Revolution (Bacha 19-20).
3. Not to be confused with the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS), the dissident paramilitary group composed of French Army soldiers who opposed Algerian independence.
4. Yacef explains “scuscia” as “Petits enfants débrouillards révélés par le Néo-réalisme italien dans le film « Scuscia »” (Yacef Tome II, 147).

The Weapon of the Weak: The Psychology Behind Guerrilla Warfare

In a memorable cinematic scene in *The Battle of Algiers*, FLN leader Larbi Ben M'hidi addresses a room of journalists at a press conference after being captured by French paratroopers in 1957. A French journalist asks, "Isn't it cowardly to use your women's baskets to carry bombs, which have taken so many innocent lives?" Ben M'hidi retorts with: "Isn't it more cowardly to attack defenseless villages with napalm bombs that kill many thousand times more?" He then adds, "Obviously, planes would make things easier for us. Give us your bombers, sir, and you can have our baskets."

With his response, Ben M'hidi juxtaposes Algerian women's baskets and French air bombers, highlighting the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of the Algerian War. Both the Algerian and Vietnamese independence movements pitted under-equipped, under-armed and under-trained revolutionaries against an occupying power with an army of well-trained soldiers and an arsenal of modern equipment at its disposal. As Eqbal Ahmad argues in the chapter "Revolutionary Warfare and Counterinsurgency":

Occupied nations and oppressed peoples have resorted to guerrilla warfare throughout recorded history. But only in modern times has it become the acknowledged weapon of the weak [...]

The unprecedented popularity of guerrilla warfare [...] indicates the increasingly perceptible gap [...] between the coercive military capabilities of the rulers and the determined resistance of the ruled. It also constituted man's supreme

challenge to the awesome power of modern machines. Vietnam and Algeria are cases in point: small, underdeveloped nations, they engaged two of the most advanced war machines of our time and defeated the presumption of technology (241).

The four life writings—Ngô’s *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng’s *De la RC 4 à la N4* (2000), Azzedine’s *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Yacef’s *La Bataille d’Alger* (2002)—all reveal that the militants employed guerrilla warfare in order to mitigate their severe material and logistical disadvantages vis-à-vis the French Army. As the militant-authors consistently show, guerrilla tactics—particularly the use of surprise and shock as psychological weapons—resulted in successful small-scale military attacks that served to boost the morale of the militants and motivate them to continue with the revolution. For the Việt Minh, initial small-scale guerrilla successes gradually developed into larger military successes, eventually culminating in a decisive victory at the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ. For the FLN, repeated guerrilla ambushes and terrorist attacks demoralized the European military and civilian populations in Algeria and mainland France and contributed to their political victory of achieving independence.

The Art of War, written by Sun Tzu in the 6th century B.C, is the oldest known strategic military manuscript that discusses guerrilla tactics. In 1937, Mao Tse-Tung published his influential *On Guerrilla Warfare*, a military strategy manual that draws heavily on Tzu’s theory while detailing guerrilla tactics that the Chinese successfully applied against occupying Japanese forces during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Noting the parallels between the Vietnamese resistance against French rule and the Chinese struggle against a modern Japanese Army, the leaders of the Việt Minh—notably Hồ Chí

Minh and General Giáp—believed that adopting Mao’s military strategy would lead to Vietnamese victory (Tanham 1). In *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Mao writes:

In a war of revolutionary character, guerrilla operations are a necessary part [...] These guerrilla operations must not be considered as an independent form of warfare. They are but one step in the total war, one aspect of the revolutionary struggle. They are the inevitable result of the clash between oppressor and oppressed when the latter reach the limits of their endurance [...] It is a weapon that a nation inferior in arms and military equipment may employ against a more powerful aggressor nation (41-42).

In addition to *On Guerrilla Warfare*, a series of related speeches delivered by Mao in 1938—which would later be published under the title *On Protracted War*—expound upon a three-phase program of revolutionary warfare. In the first phase, the guerrillas are at a significant military disadvantage vis-à-vis their adversary and must develop their military, intelligence, and infrastructure capabilities (Shrader, *Algeria* 146). The second phase entails launching guerrilla attacks to weaken the enemy’s morale while simultaneously developing conventional revolutionary forces (Tanham 2). In the third and final phase, the conventional resistance army—no longer a rebel force—launches a full-scale military offensive and decisively defeats the adversary. Mao’s concept of guerrilla warfare formed the theoretical basis of the Việt Minh’s armed revolutionary action. General Giáp then adopted and reformulated Maoist theory into his own military strategy tailored to the French-Indochina War. In *People’s War, People’s Army*, Giáp states that, “From the point of view of directing operations, our *strategy and tactics had*

to be those of a people's war and of a long-term resistance" (29). Throughout the text, Giáp often uses italics to emphasize important points of his theory and strategy. He praises the efficiency and versatility of guerrilla warfare, noting that "this method carried off great victories: it could be used in the mountains as well as in the delta, it could be waged with good or mediocre material and even without arms, and was to enable us eventually to equip ourselves at the cost of the enemy" (29). As he led the Vietnamese People's Army to victory against both France and the United States, Giáp uses his writing to highlight the key factors of his guerrilla strategy to the reader:

From the military point of view, *the Vietnamese people's war of liberation proved that an insufficiently equipped people's army, but an army fighting for a just cause, can, with appropriate strategy and tactics, combine the conditions needed to conquer a modern army of aggressive imperialism* (30).

Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, the success of the Vietnamese Revolution inspired national liberation struggles across the colonial world. As Fanon notes, "À partir de juillet 1954, le problème que se sont posé les peuples coloniaux a été le suivant : « Que faut-il faire pour réaliser un Dien-Bien-Phu ? Comment s'y prendre ? »" (*Damnés* 69). Kateb Yacine, an Algerian author who lived in Vietnam during the 1960s before writing the play *L'homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* as an homage to Vietnam and Hồ Chí Minh, once said "Les bâtons et les couteaux ont été utilisés contre les avions et les obus : mais le peuple vietnamien a remporté la victoire. Il a capturé, retourné contre l'ennemi ses propres armes, il a bouleversé ses plans" (Stora 23). Like M'hidi, Yacine uses juxtaposition—in addition to a bit of exaggeration—to contrast the Việt Minh's

rudimentary weapons to the modern armaments employed by the French, which made the Vietnamese victory even more impressive. Noting the Việt Minh's successful application of Mao's revolutionary warfare theory, the FLN also based its political and military strategies on those prescribed by Mao (Shrader, *Algeria* 146). In his observations of the FLN's strategy, Jean-Paul Sartre writes:

[...] les attentats dans les villes, embuscades dans la campagne : le F.L.N. n'a pas choisi ces activités ; il fait ce qu'il peut faire, c'est tout ; le rapport de ses forces aux nôtres l'oblige à nous attaquer par surprise : invisible, insaisissable, inattendu, il faut qu'il frappe et disparaisse, sous peine d'être exterminé ("Une Victoire" 82-83).

When he wrote "Une Victoire" in 1958, Sartre—along with Frantz Fanon and Francis and Colette Jeanson—was among the few intellectuals to condone the violence employed by the FLN. Therefore, essays like these were particularly influential at the time, as they were written to convince the French left that the FLN could only achieve independence through violence. In arguing that the FLN employed guerrilla tactics because it had no other option, Sartre applied the military theory advocated by Mao and Giáp to the Algerian conflict. According to Sartre, attacks and ambushes were the only possible means of resistance for the FLN due to its lack of weapons and military capability. In a later essay on genocide, Sartre reiterates the theme of the unequipped FLN militant resorting to unconventional tactics by explaining: "[...] the short supply and poor quality of their arms [...] dictated their strategy, too: terrorism, ambushes, harassing the enemy, extreme mobility of the combat groups which had to strike unexpectedly and disappear at once" ("Genocide" 39). Yet Sartre goes even further than Mao and Giáp in

his criticism of foreign occupation. In “Une Victoire,” he asserts that FLN members and supports would have been “exterminé” had the group not employ guerrilla tactics. In a similar vein, Sartre implies that the FLN’s guerrilla warfare was a defensive method against colonial genocide in “On Genocide.” When Sartre published these essays in the 1950s and 1960s, two decades had barely passed since the end of World War II, the collapse of the Nazi regime, and the horrors of the Holocaust. Consequently, these references to extermination and genocide still brought about painful memories in Europe. Thus, Sartre deliberately chose the terms “exterminé” and “genocide” in order to draw parallels between French colonial repression in Algeria and Nazi atrocities, a theme discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In doing so, he provides a concrete example of using writing—or literature—as a vehicle of political engagement as he had previously advocated in *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?*

In 1956, FLN leaders published the *Plateforme de la Soummam* in order to describe the state of the Algerian Revolution, and in doing so, acknowledged the vital role of guerrilla warfare in their revolutionary struggle. Under a section entitled, “La Résistance armée,” the tract discusses the activities of the FLN’s armed wing, the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN):

Malgré la pénurie provisoire d’armement, elle a développé les opérations de guérillas, de harcèlement, de sabotage, s’étendant aujourd’hui à l’ensemble du territoire national [...]

Les groupes armés dans les villes et villages se sont notamment signalés par des attentats contre les commissariats de police, les postes de gendarmerie, les sabotages de bâtiments publics, les

incendies, la suppression de gradés de la police, de mouchards, de traîtres.

Ce qui affaiblit d'une façon considérable l'armature militaire et policière de l'ennemi colonialiste, augmente la dispersion de ses forces sur l'ensemble du sol national, mais aussi accentue la détérioration du moral des troupes, maintenus dans un état d'énervement et de fatigue par la nécessité de rester sur un qui-vive angoissant.

The tract explains that the FLN employed guerrilla attacks in order to weaken and demoralize French security forces, the exact same strategy advocated by Mao and applied by the Việt Minh. In addition, this particular segment of *Plateforme* shows that the FLN emphasized the psychological effects of guerrilla warfare. Instead of focusing on tactical military objectives such as the elimination of French battalions, the FLN intended to affect the mental state of French soldiers—as evidenced by its goal of creating a permanent state of “énervement” and “fatigue” caused by “un qui-vive angoissant”—which would eventually undermine the morale of the troops. As discussed later in this chapter, Saadi Yacef particularly highlights the importance of psychological warfare in his memoir *La Bataille d'Alger*, a theme also depicted in Pontecorvo's 1966 film of the same name.

As educated military leaders of their respective resistance movements, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef all acknowledge that guerrilla warfare was the only possible path to victory in a military confrontation with France. In an entry from July 1946—nearly a year after the launching of the Vietnamese Revolution—Ngô writes that “nous

ne pourrons jamais lutter et tenir contre eux dans une guerre moderne, et classique. Nous le savons et c'est pourquoi nous suivons depuis quelques jours un entraînement spécial destiné à former des cadres de guérillas [...] nous ne pourrions pas lutter autrement" (93).

Si Azzedine shares these exact sentiments when he states:

Il ne faut pas oublier que nous menions une guerre révolutionnaire, et qu'en l'occurrence, il ne convient pas de dissocier des actions étroitement liées les unes aux autres. L'embuscade était pour nous l'unique moyen d'affaiblir l'ennemi, de renouveler notre équipement, notre stock d'armes et de munitions. Si nous n'y avions pas recouru, nous n'aurions pu entreprendre des combats d'un style plus classique (116).

Both Ngô and Azzedine justify the use of guerrilla warfare by showing the French-speaking reader that a classic, conventional war would be disastrous for their revolutionary movement. For Đặng, the Việt Minh could only win in spite of their military deficiencies if they possessed "de l'intelligence et de l'audace. Malgré notre infériorité en armes et en munitions, nous pourrions toujours vaincre si nous réussissons à créer la surprise et frapper au moment et à l'endroit inattendus pour l'ennemi" (35-36).

While Đặng believes that intellect and courage were key to successful guerrilla tactics, Saadi Yacef stresses the importance of a long-term strategy, much like the protracted warfare method envisioned by Mao and applied by Giáp. According to Yacef, "une lutte de libération ne pouvait se limiter à une effervescence de quelques jours. Or pour atteindre notre but il était impérieux de s'armer, de posséder une stratégie de combat capable de se renouveler en fonction d'une guerre d'usure contre une puissance

redoutable” (1: 97). Yacef’s war of attrition strategy reflects the *Plateforme de la Soummam*’s objective of weakening French forces using both psychological and military means.

Throughout all four life writings, the militant-authors emphasize the asymmetrical nature of their respective revolutions by highlighting the lack of weapons and training. Using juxtaposition as a literary device, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef often contrast French military superiority with the outdated and insufficient arms of the militants. Yet the texts show that, despite severe material and logistical disadvantages, Việt Minh and FLN militants benefited from high morale, which was further cemented by successful guerilla attacks on French targets.

A dearth of weapons

When the Việt Minh launched the August Revolution in 1945, their inventory consisted of a hodgepodge of secondhand French, Japanese, and American weaponry that were not only inadequate, but also unreliable (Shrader, *Indochina* 97-98). At this initial stage of the revolution, the Việt Minh could only provide weapons for approximately 75 percent of its regular troops, and the percentage of irregular guerilla troops that possessed weapons remains unknown (Shrader, *Indochina* 97). In a journal entry dating from October 1945—two months after the launching of the Vietnamese Revolution—Ngô reveals the extent to which his men lacked weapons: “je suis responsable pour la discipline de trente hommes, armés de dix-huit fusils et de trois revolvers” (47). He adds:

Dans ma compagnie nous avons quelques fusils français et un vieux fusil-mitrailleur pris à la citadelle. Les munitions sont rares

et malgré les efforts des Cadres nous n'en touchons presque pas.
Les exercices des futurs combattants se font avec des bambous ou
des fusils de bois, car les véritables armes nous les gardons pour
les choses sérieuses qui ne manqueront pas de se présenter un jour
ou l'autre (47).

The dearth of weapons posed a significant logistical problem for the Việt Minh and precluded adequate military training for its troops. Moreover, Đặng shows that the weapons in its stockpile were largely outdated and ineffective, reflecting Shrader's historical analysis. In 1947, Đặng's battalion chief, Bac Quan, and commander Quyen both expressed a need "pour équiper leurs unités. Ils veulent tous se débarrasser au plus vite des vieux fusils délabrés et hétéroclites : mousquetons français, « sept-neuf » des Kouo-min-tang chinois ou fusils russes du temps des tsars" (33). With the usage of the adjective "hétéroclites" to refer to the French, Chinese, and Russian guns, Đặng reveals that the damaged and ancient weapons—with the Russian rifles being at least 30 years old at the time—were so different in design that it was impossible to have uniform weapons training, maintenance, and ammunition resupply.

In addition to the incongruent, inefficient, and inadequate weapons, the Việt Minh also lacked necessary supplies. In a description of a group of Việt Minh militants, also dating from his November 1945 entry, Ngô writes:

Ils étaient cinq, en haillons. L'un, coiffé d'un casque de guerre japonais, tenait, appuyé sur son épaule, crosse par terre, un fusil français. Deux autres, coiffés d'un béret, s'appuyaient sur des sabres de brousse. Quant aux deux derniers, ils jouaient avec une

arbalète. Uniformément vêtus du *cai quan* et du *cai ao* que portent nos paysans, pieds nus, ils semblaient morts de fatigue (59).

“Cai quan” and “cai ao” respectively translate to “a pair of pants” and “a shirt,” tattered forms of which constitute the entirety of the clothing worn by all five combatants. The use of Vietnamese terms to refer to these articles of clothing highlights the fundamental difference between Việt Minh combatants and French soldiers. Whereas the latter belonged to a conventional army and wore Western-style military uniforms, the former were unconventional in both their military action and clothing. Instead of formal military uniforms, the men wear the habits of the Vietnamese peasantry, demonstrating that the Vietnamese masses form the backbone of the revolution. Out of the five militants described in this passage, only one possesses modern weaponry—a French rifle—while the remaining four are equipped with technologically archaic weapons. Yet resorting to any means necessary—including improvised and rudimentary weapons—to confront the colonial system is characteristic of violent decolonization, according to Fanon. In several instances in the chapter “De la violence” of *Les Damnés de la terre*, Fanon uses imagery of the colonized using basic weapons to violently resist the colonizer. In addition to the usage of “couteaux sanglants” (40-41) in national liberation struggles, Fanon also mentions the colonized who “sort sa machette” (46) at the colonizer, joins “les groupes armés de coutelas ou de haches” (76), and, upon discovering his humanity, “commence à fourbir ses armes pour la faire triompher” (46). Yacine later echoes this theme when he notes that the Việt Minh used “Les bâtons et les couteaux” to resist French forces (Stora 23). Yet for Fanon, this type of uninhibited violence is an

inevitable part of the “substitution totale” (39)—or what Memmi refers to as “la *rupture*, l’*éclatement*” (143)—that marks the overthrow of the colonial system.

Likewise, during the early phases of the Algerian Revolution, the FLN was “lacking in everything—medicine, food, and above all weapons” (Evans 126). Saadi Yacef reveals that as early as April 1950, as the Comité Révolutionnaire d’Unité d’Action (CRUA)—which consisted of Ben M’hidi Larbi, Hadj Ben Alla, among other FLN leaders—were contemplating armed struggle against the French colonial forces, yet they:

[...] savaient aussi que la guerre était une chose sérieuse. La déclencher avec pour seuls bagages la foi, le courage et les mains nues serait un suicide. Des armes, de l’argent, des partisans décidés, c’est ce qu’il leur restait à trouver [...] Leur premier acte consista à exhumer les armes héritées de la période anglo-américaine dont le lot principal était complètement rongé par l’oxydation. Une issue restait possible : l’explosif et le fusil de chasse. Bien que soumise à une sévère réglementation cette dernière catégorie était disponible. Quant à l’explosif il fallait l’inventer... (1: 75).

Even when the Algerian Revolution began four years later, the ALN “souffrait d’un sérieux manque d’équipement” (Yacef 1: 99). Azzedine reveals that in the spring of 1955, “Entre Chréa, Hamam, Regha et Palestro, Ouamrane disposait, en tout et pour tout, d’une centaine d’hommes et d’une trentaine d’armes de guerre” (50), meaning that a staggering 70 percent of FLN militants across these five regions were unarmed at the

time. Like the Việt Minh during the early stages of the August Revolution, the weapons that the FLN did possess were not only outdated and ineffective, but in certain cases, simply unusable. Azzedine recounts that in early 1955, “Lakhdar m’avait donné un pistolet d’un siècle d’âge, à double canon, et six cartouches humides. Je n’aurais pas tué un merle avec cette pétoire” (50). Although each Algerian family in the maquis had at least one hunting rifle, Azzedine reveals that the total number of available rifles was “néanmoins insuffisant” to fully arm the ALN and wage war against the French Army (55). Yacef also echoes this logistical challenge, noting that “des armes il nous en fallait et beaucoup” (1: 142). In 1956, the Zone Autonome d’Alger (ZAA)’s entire arsenal only consisted of two submachine guns and a few pistols, some of which were rusty (Yacef 1: 144). As a result, the FLN needed to “se procurer des armes et des vêtements chauds pour les maquisards qui luttèrent déjà sur deux fronts : l’ennemi et le froid” (1: 97). Like with Ngô’s description of the barefooted five-man Việt Minh militia in rags, Yacef shows that the FLN not only lacked weapons, but also could not provide basic clothing to protect its members from the elements. During the Plateforme de la Soummam in August 1956, it was estimated that the FLN only possessed 2,500 modern weapons (Evans 393). Even by 1957, the FLN did not possess sufficient weapons to arm all of its members (Crandall 178). In their life writings, the four militant-authors include frequent descriptions of the severe lack of weapons in order to highlight the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of the war to the French-speaking reader. Furthermore, an emphasis on the dearth of arms encourages the French-speaking reader to realize that the Việt Minh and FLN had to resort to guerrilla warfare out of necessity, as they were unable to defeat the French Army in a conventional confrontation.

“Take the material from the enemy to turn it against him”

As a result of their weapons deficiency, both the Việt Minh and FLN emphasized attacking French military targets in order to acquire weapons. During the first half of the French-Indochina war, one of the Việt Minh’s principle strategies was to capture the weapons, equipment, and supplies of French Union forces. In this regard, they were quite successful and obtained the bulk of their armaments through attacks on French military posts (Shrader *Indochina*, 160). In fact, General Giáp expounded upon this theme in “People’s War, People’s Army”:

The greatest difficulty to be solved was the equipment problem. Throughout Viet Nam there was no factory manufacturing war material [...] The sole source of supply could only be the battlefield: to take the material from the enemy to turn it against him. While carrying on the aggression against Viet Nam the French Expeditionary Corps fulfilled another task: it became, unwittingly, the supplier of the Viet Nam People’s Army with French, even U.S. arms. A great part of our military material came from war-booty (60-61).

Giáp’s strategy of seizing weapons from the French appears throughout both Vietnamese life writings. Both militant-authors reveal that Giáp’s policy of “[taking] the material from the enemy to turn it against him” was fully adopted in their units. In *Journal*, Ngô mentions that “La devise des unités de l’Armée Populaire nous est répétée chaque jour par le commandant de la colonne : « Tuez l’ennemi avec les armes que vous

lui prendrez »” (62), indicating that the seizure of French weapons was so crucial that it was deemed necessary to reiterate it to all of Ngô’s fellow combatants every day. While Đặng does not mention whether this strategy was repeated on a daily basis to his men, he does reveal that he and his men were aware of an order instructing them to “Battre l’ennemi avec des armes prises chez l’ennemi” (29). A concrete execution of Giáp’s strategy is shown when the political commissioner “donne l’ordre de ramasser les armes” after taking Che Cay from French forces in 1948 (Đặng 42).

Indeed, both Vietnamese authors show that their units persistently followed Giáp’s prescription. In an entry from December 1945, Ngô describes his first experience in warfare: a targeted attack on a French military post. Việt Minh intelligence indicated that the French forces at the unnamed post were “peu nombreux, bien armés, et faciles à surprendre” (62)—the perfect first target for a group of untrained and extremely under-armed militants. Noting that “Il y a des armes là où on peut les prendre” (62), Ngô’s group was entirely focused on acquiring weapons from the post. They divided the group of over 470 combatants into four groups, each of which was to attack a different target: a police station, a colonial administrator’s house, and a post office: “Le but est de s’emparer des armes et des munitions, de tuer les militaires si possible, et d’occuper la ville” (63). After attacking the French position for seven days, over the course of which many Việt Minh militants—including Ngô’s young friend—were killed, they achieved their objective:

Le butin est appréciable : une mitrailleuse sans son trépied, un fusil-mitrailleur anglais avec cinquante chargeurs dont la moitié sont pleins, trois caisses de grenades et quarante fusils japonais.

Je suis fier de moi, fier de l'action menée, fier de ne pas avoir eu peur, fier d'être vainqueur. Je ne sais pas encore qu'il est facile d'être fier dans de pareilles circonstances (66).

Despite incurring casualties, the Việt Minh's success left an impression on Ngô, who emerged from his first battle victorious. These initial triumphs galvanized the morale of Việt Minh militants, further motivating them to continue the fight. Đặng also experienced a similar sense of pride and optimism after witnessing two Việt Minh combatants return with war booty collected from defeated French troops at Bong Lau in 1947. As he recounts, "Le premier [...] porte un blouson américain et un Colt lourd à la ceinture ; le second est entièrement vêtu de butin de guerre" (21). Attacking French military targets proved to be an efficient method of not only acquiring weapons, but also much-needed clothing, as exemplified by Đặng's description of the returning militants in French and American attire. Awestruck at their victory and loot, Đặng wonders, "Qui ne serait heureux de travailler avec une unité solide qui se bat bien et vient de faire brillamment ses preuves ? Sur un convoi de trente-deux véhicules, ils en ont détruit vingt-sept et tué une centaine d'ennemis" (21). Similar to the newfound pride that Ngô experienced following his first successful battle, the victory of Đặng's unit convinced the troops that their eventual victory over French forces was inevitable. The two unit leaders—Battalion Chief Bac Quan and Commander Quyen—believed that "Après leurs succès respectifs, ils désirent tous les deux livrer d'autres combats pour s'emparer de plus d'armes ennemies pour équiper leurs unités" (Đặng 33), which unmistakably indicates that these victories boosted militant morale and motivated them to continue the war.

Throughout the remainder of his memoir, Đặng continues to highlight the weapons and supplies that Việt Minh militants acquired from battle. His Browning firearm was “un butin de guerre que j’ai récupéré sur un parachutiste français” (Đặng 19). Before his deployment to the border region in 1947, the political commissioner gave him “une paire de godillots de légionnaire” (Đặng 22). After a victorious battle at Lung Vai—a small village in the Lang Son border region—Đặng reveals that the militants were not only delighted at their military victory, but “nous sommes plus satisfaits encore de l’importance du butin de guerre” that consisted of enough mortars and machine guns to make their battalion feel “riche” (29). Eventually Đặng’s unit began using French weapons to attack French targets, as General Giáp intended. During an attack on a French convoy in the mountains of Khau Pia in 1949, Đặng’s men used “des mitrailleuses Brenn, des mitraillettes Thomson et Sten, récupérées lors des batailles” (Đặng 59). Yet the largest amount of weapons and war supplies recuperated by Đặng’s unit occurred during the famous Battle of Lang Son. On October 18, 1950, French forces withdrew from the post without first destroying their ammunition, leaving the Việt Minh with a large stockpile of 10,000 75mm shells; 4,000 new submachine guns; and hundreds of gallons of gasoline (Joes, *Victorious* 107). In his memoir, Đặng states the Việt Minh recuperated enough weapons and supplies to equip eight regiments: “Je pensais aux jours où, dans la brousse, nous nous étions partagés des cartouches de mousquetons, des fusils-mitrailleurs ; nous n’avions jamais vu une telle quantité d’armes, même en rêve” (131). Here, Đặng reveals to the French-speaking reader that successes like these motivated Việt Minh militants, leading them to believe that victory was possible despite being unarmed and untrained.

FLN operations were also aimed at seizing weapons from the French military (Shrader *Algeria*, 164). The ALN's second commandment parallels Giáp's strategy of attacking the French using weapons acquired from the French, as FLN militants were to "Poursuivre la destruction des forces de l'ennemi et la récupération au maximum du matériel" (Harbi and Meynier 52). The ALN continued this practice throughout the duration of the war and seized a considerable quantity of its arms, ammunition, and supplies from the French. Between November 1954 and August 1960, the FLN procured approximately 10,579 weapons through combat or from Muslim soldiers who deserted the French Army (Shrader, *Algeria* 167). Both FLN militant-authors show that their units implemented the ALN's second commandment, with Yacef noting that the ALN's solution to their weapon deficiency was "le harcèlement des arsenaux de l'armée coloniale" (1: 100). Likewise, Azzedine echoes this tactic when he recounts, "Nous nous sommes donc efforcés de prendre directement à l'ennemi les armes individuelles et collectives dont nous avons besoin pour équiper les nouveaux djounouds" (55). Similar to Đặng's life writing, the theme of weapons acquisition recurs frequently throughout Azzedine's memoir. After attacking a French convoy at Kef-el-Lakhdar, Azzedine notes that "Nous récupérâmes environ soixante-dix armes" (127). Following another ambush on French targets at Bousken and Zbar-Bar in 1955, Si Lakhdar "récupéra deux fusils mitrailleurs et environ quatre-vingts armes individuelles" (Azzedine 154) to equip his militants. In another scene, Azzedine recalls:

Chaque djoundi se précipite sur un cadavre, se couche sur lui ; il saisit d'abord l'arme puis déboucle ceinturon, cartouchières ou chargeurs. Il enlève les pataugas, noue les lacets et jette autour de

son cou la paire de souliers. Il dégrafe enfin la veste, le pantalon du mort. Un nœud. Hop ! Autour du cou, avec les pataugas !

(118).

Like the Viêt Minh combatants “entièrement vêtu[s] de butin de guerre” (Đặng 21), the FLN militants also acquired clothing and other materials from defeated French troops. The second ALN commandment calling for “la récupération au maximum du matériel” (Harbi and Meynier 52) does not exclusively refer to weapons, but rather all war materials. While the FLN certainly prioritized the retrieval of weapons—as exemplified by the djoundi who first removes arms and ammunition from the corpse of a French soldier before moving onto articles of clothing—the militants recuperated all items that could be of use.

Later in the memoir, Azzedine discusses the strategy of attacking French-supported Algerian contingents—like the harkis or Kobus’s ‘la force K’—who fought the FLN:

Ce type d’action nous fournissait la plupart des armes dont nous avons besoin pour poursuivre la lutte à l’intérieur. Au début de l’insurrection, nous n’étions, je le rappelle, que quelques petits groupes disséminés dans la nature. Grâce aux fusils de chasses remis par les montagnards, puis aux fusils de guerre, aux armes automatiques individuelles et collectives saisies sur l’ennemi lors des embuscades, nous avons pu constituer des groupes, des sections et des compagnies, fin 1956 [...] (268-269).

Here, Azzedine once again illustrates that the militants carried out the ALN's second commandment by recuperating and utilizing their adversary's arms, particularly automatic weapons. In addition, this passage traces the evolution of the FLN to the French-speaking reader and illustrates that the movement progressed from a collection of disjointed individuals and groups to a more unified and coordinated militant organization, thereby advancing from the state of "la sérialité" to "le groupe-en-fusion" as described by Sartre in *Critique de la raison dialectique*.

The inexperience of the militants

Another obstacle facing the militants—as depicted by the four militant-authors, particularly Ngô—is the lack of military training. As sons of mandarins, both Ngô and Đặng belonged to the Vietnamese upper class. Immersed in their studies since childhood, the Vietnamese militant-authors never received any combat training until they joined the Việt Minh. In a journal entry from November 1945, Ngô reveals his concerns over the new recruits' lack of military professionalism. Because "aucun d'entre nous, ou presque, n'a de formation militaire" (60), their organization was such that "A vrai dire nous ressemblons plus à une bande qu'à une armée organisée" (60). Đặng also attributes "notre inexpérience" (94) to a hasty Việt Minh withdrawal after successfully attacking Dong Khê. The lack of military formation is especially evident in an entry from July 1946, in which Ngô describes his recent observations of the Việt Minh in combat:

[...] nous avons eu énormément de pertes parce que nous n'avons pas su agir avec suffisamment de coordination. Les combats que nous avons menés ont ressemblé plus à une action d'émeute où

chacun se bat pour soi, qu'à une attaque d'armée régulière [...]

Nous sommes absolument sans tradition et sans expérience [...]

Les « officiers » ont en effet de formation très insuffisante (92).

Once again, he shows that all echelons of the Việt Minh were severely untrained and inexperienced, leading to mass disorganization and heavy casualties in their early battles. Even military commanders lacked sufficient training. Yet after this description, Ngô adds that the Việt Minh recognized the severity of the issue and created military training centers for its cadres. The development of robust training programs would allow the Việt Minh Army to eventually evolve into a conventionally organized and equipped army, as prescribed in Mao's second phase of guerrilla warfare (Windrow, *Last Valley* 42). While the FLN authors do not emphasize the lack of military training to the same extent as the Việt Minh authors, Azzedine begins his memoir by recounting a military defeat that left him and another militant injured, and a third dead. He attributes their loss to inexperience: “nous ne sommes pas des militaires de carrière, mais des volontaires originaires des villes et des campagnes. Certes, nous nous battons pour une juste cause, mais nous marchons à l'aveuglette” (14). Like their Việt Minh counterparts, the FLN recruits were also ill-prepared for combat and lacked coordination and training, which proved to be disastrous on the battlefield.

The lack of weapons also compounded the lack of military training for Việt Minh cadres. Because weapons and supplies were rare during the early stages of the revolution, the Việt Minh could not squander ammunition on target practice. As a result, only militants with previous military experience had weapons. As Ngô recounts, “L'armement est disparate, les munitions sont rares, et seul les Japonais [...] semblent

disciplinés” (Ngô 60). The “Japanese” to whom he refers were either Vietnamese militia members who defected from the Japanese Army, or Japanese officers stationed in Vietnam who joined the Việt Minh after Japan’s defeat in 1945. Those with military experience fighting for the Japanese Army were the “seuls à être convenablement armés [...] Ils ont tous des fusils ou des mousquetons, et je les regarde avec envie (Ngô 60). On the Algerian side, Azzedine mentions the absence of weapons training, explaining that “Dans les montagnes, il n’y avait pas d’exercices de tir. Nous apprenions à utiliser nos armes lors des opérations, au cours des embuscades” (156). Nonetheless, the Algerian militant-authors demonstrate that the scarcity of arms was a greater obstacle to the FLN’s military objectives than inadequate military training. As Martin Evans argues “Guns alone gave the FLN the right to speak for the nation. Violence was the essence of the revolution” (117). Therefore, Azzedine and Yacef emphasize the importance of arms acquisition because weapons conferred authority to the FLN as a revolutionary group.

Asymmetrical warfare

To further underscore the disparity between the technological capabilities of French colonial forces and those of the Vietnamese and Algerian national liberation movements, the four militant-authors frequently highlight the advanced nature of the weapons deployed by the French. In particular, the memoirists juxtapose descriptions of the archaic, inefficient, and inadequate arms used by the militants with modern French weaponry that was superior in quantity and quality. These juxtapositions echo Ben M’hidi’s comparison of the French bomber airplanes and Algerian women’s explosive-laden baskets in *The Battle of Algiers* film. Similarly, in a 1958 article entitled “Une

Victoire,” Sartre writes: “nous avons le nombre, l’argent, les armes; les insurgés n’ont rien, sauf la confiance et le soutien d’une grande partie de la population” (82), drawing a clear material and moral contrast between the French forces and Algerian rebels.

As an artistic, rhetorical, and literary device, juxtaposition places “strikingly different elements [...] side by side” in order to “jolt the reader” (Morrison 68). This is precisely the objective of the militant-authors, who intend to emphasize the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of their struggle—and thereby justify their unconventional methods—to the French-speaking reader. In *Journal d’un combattant Viet Minh*, Ngô recounts that guerrilla groups “tiennent toujours les quartiers populaires d’Hanoï. Chars, lance-flammes, grenades, artillerie, mortiers, rien ne parvient à les déloger ; ils se battent pratiquement les mains nues contre une armée moderne pourvue d’armes et de munitions” (111). Here, Ngô juxtaposes the many lethal weapons at the French Army’s disposal with the bare hands of the Việt Minh militants who were able to maintain areas of Hanoi despite being extremely under-equipped.

The Algerian life writings heavily employs this type of juxtaposition. In a description of the French Expeditionary Corps in *La Bataille d’Alger*, Saadi Yacef first details French weapons before immediately portraying those of the ZAA:

A Alger, le corps expéditionnaire comptait des milliers d’hommes en permanence. Des milliers d’hommes dotés des armes les plus sophistiquées, d’avions, d’hélicoptères, de canons de 105, de mortiers de 60 et de 81. En face d’eux, nous disposions de quelques mitraillettes prélevées « gratuitement » dans la dotation du fourrier de la 10^{ème} Région militaire, quelques pistolets

provenant du même râtelier et un petit stock de gomme explosives
(plastic) en voie d'épuisement. D'armes lourdes point... (2: 69).

Like Ngô, Yacef contrasts the various advanced lethal weapons in the French arsenal with the FLN's small stock machine guns, pistols, and explosive materials. Azzedine's account of the Battle of Algiers—and the Algerian Revolution in general—also reflects the asymmetry between the FLN and French forces. In one passage toward the end of his memoir, Azzedine reflects on the nature of the war—particularly the FLN's logistical and material disadvantage—and notes that the French waged a ruthless war against the FLN:

Ils n'hésitaient pas à mobiliser deux mille hommes, l'artillerie, l'aviation, les blindés, pour traquer onze djounouds grelottant de froid et de faim, armés de pétoires, cachées dans un refuge du djebel [...] Il fut facile à un Massu, assisté par le capital, la presse, la radio, la police, de gagner avec ses parachutistes la « bataille d'Alger ». N'en déplaise au général, il fallait une foi indestructible en l'issue du combat et un courage sans commune mesure avec celui de ses léopards pour qu'un fidaï de la Casbah osât brandir son pistolet modèle 1920, avec quelques cartouches mouillées, sous le nez des half-tracks ; il fallait un sacré courage aux militants pour affronter la torture... (269).

Azzedine's use of juxtaposition is particularly powerful, and possibly even slightly exaggerated, as it shows that the French have not only weaponry—artillery, airpower, and armored vehicles—but also the political, security, and media apparatus at

their disposal. Essentially, the French colonial authorities had the entire political, economic, and military institutions in their control, or as Sartre describes “nous avons le nombre, l’argent, les armes; les insurgés n’ont rien” (“Une Victoire” 82). The passage also reveals the disproportionate use of force by the French, who were more than willing to deploy 2,000 men and a variety of advanced arms to find a dozen malnourished rebels armed with outdated and ineffective weapons. The description of FLN rebels as shivering from cold and hunger also amplifies the contrast between the French and Algerian forces, showing that the militants not only lacked weapons, but also basic items such as food and clothing that were necessary for survival.

The theme of excessive French force and weaponry reappears throughout both Algerian memoirs. In *On nous appelait fellaghas*, Azzedine recalls that while in French custody, he pretended to accept le Paix des Braves (peace of the braves) in which De Gaulle offered amnesty to all FLN militants in exchange for an end to hostilities and full Algerian inclusion in the democratic process—which the FLN rejected (Evans 242-243). In order to be released, Azzedine purported to agree to the proposal. Upon his return to the maquis, he ended all contact with the French officer assigned to his case. As a result, “Le 6 janvier 1959 au matin, nous nous réveillons au milieu d’une vaste opération [...] Le cirque habituel. En cinémascope. Les blindés, l’artillerie, l’aviation, le napalm, les troupes d’élite” (303). Although Azzedine describes the deployment of these armaments as “habitual,” it is nonetheless remarkable that French forces sent airpower and armored vehicles to search for only one militant: Azzedine himself. Through these juxtapositions, the militant-authors—particularly Azzedine and Yacef—intend to show the French-speaking reader that France used disproportionate force to deny its colonial subjects the

right to self-determination. In addition, the two Algerian militant-authors show the reader that the FLN's guerrilla tactics were justified in the face of excessive French military force.

Yet despite these severe material disadvantages, Azzedine highlights the “foi indestructible,” “courage sans commune,” and “sacré courage” (269) that drive the combatants to confront a much more powerful army. Likewise, Ngô illustrates that the Việt Minh did not allow their logistical and material disadvantage to dissuade them from armed revolution. In an entry from July 1946, he writes:

Je sais aussi que nous sommes faibles [...] Notre armement est disparate, nous manquons de munitions, nous n'avons pas d'usines d'armement, pas de canons, pas de chars, pas d'aviation, pas de marine. Tant pis ! Nous avons la volonté et l'amour de notre liberté et de notre indépendance. Et quoi qu'il puisse arriver je sais que nous serons un jour vainqueurs (99).

Similar to Azzedine, Ngô makes a point of insisting on the “faith,” “volition,” and “love of freedom and independence” that motivate Việt Minh combatants to pursue their struggle despite being significantly weaker than French forces. More importantly, this passage reveals an extraordinarily high morale among Việt Minh militants. Although he wrote his entry one year after the launch of the Vietnamese Revolution—when the Việt Minh were still unorganized, untrained, and unarmed—he firmly believed that they would eventually win.

Guerrilla warfare as a psychological weapon

Despite numerous material and logistical disadvantages, the four life writings show that the Việt Minh and FLN were able to achieve their military-political objectives through the use of guerrilla warfare tactics. As explained in Chapter 3, the fluid relationship between militants and civilians—in which militants operate with and among civilians like fish in water, according to the famous simile by Mao Tse-Tung—was one component of the Việt Minh and FLN guerrilla strategy. A second aspect of guerrilla strategy, which both the Việt Minh and FLN practiced, consisted of ambush attacks intended to surprise and stun the adversary. As Mao recommended: “In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision” (*On Guerrilla Warfare* 46). This prescription clearly echoes the strategy of Sun Tzu, who wrote “If my force is five times that of the enemy I alarm him to the front, surprise him to the rear, create an uproar in the east and strike in the west” (79-80) in *The Art of War* nearly 2,500 years earlier. This particularly strategy espoused by Sun Tzu and Mao was also advocated by Giáp, who explained that Việt Minh ambushes needed to consist of “initiative, flexibility, surprise, suddenness in attack and retreat” (56). As the militant-authors show, the greatest psychological effect occurred during ambushes that maximized the use of surprise and shock. The psychological result was twofold: stunning and weakening the enemy while simultaneously boosting the morale of the attacking militants. Yet while Ngô, Đặng, and Azzedine solely focused on eliciting this psychological reaction from the French military, Yacef notes that the ZAA’s objective consists of targeting both the French security services and the European civilian population of Algiers.

The Việt Minh relied so heavily on shock and awe attacks that they even established “shock troops” whose objective was to overwhelm enemy posts during ambushes (Tanham 46). Ngô refers to these specialized troops as “unité[s] de choc” (106) while Đặng calls them “les bataillons de choc” (55). As Ngô and Đặng consistently reveal throughout their memoirs, regular and guerrilla units also exploited the surprise factor in their attacks. In an entry from January 1951, Ngô recounts one ambush in which nervous and impatient militants had spotted the arrival of French forces and wanted to shoot immediately. However, Ngô and the prudent political commissioner gave the following order: “Ne tirez que pour tuer, et pas à plus de trois cents mètres” (Ngô 153). For Ngô, delaying the attack until the French were in close proximity was “notre seule chance de tenir. Il faut les surprendre” (153). The strategic importance of provoking surprise in the French camp is affirmed after the Việt Minh contingent obeyed, and as a result, “Les Français refluent en désordre, et les deux autres chars font marche arrière” (Ngô 154). The ensuing disarray and shock disrupted the French forces and rendered the Việt Minh victorious.

Given Đặng’s direct participation in the Route Coloniale 4 campaigns from 1947 to 1950—during which consistent guerrilla shock tactics enabled Việt Minh takeover of French positions along the northern border—it is not surprising that his political memoir contains the most descriptions of the psychological and tactical impact of surprise attacks on French troops. Early successful ambushes served to strengthen the morale of new recruits such as Đặng, who admits that prior to his first experience with combat in 1947, “J’ai hâte d’y participer. Cette impatience est normale, car la situation générale évolue rapidement, les nouvelles des victoires remportées par nos troupes affluent de toutes

parts” (22). In his first ambush, Đặng noticed that the legionnaires experienced “un court moment de stupeur” (29) after surprise attacks. He therefore realized that “Pour l’attaquer et assurer la victoire, il va falloir employer de plus grands moyens et exploiter à fond l’effet de surprise” (31). Like Ngô, Đặng agrees that provoking a surprised reaction was critical to successful ambushes. To achieve maximum effect, he explains: “Le succès d’une embuscade est à plus de 50% dans l’effet de surprise. Il faut donc attaquer l’ennemi au moment où il s’y attend le moins : quand il baisse sa garde, mange, se relâche, abandonne toute précaution” (32).

These episodes appear in the first section of Đặng’s memoir and occurred from 1947 to 1949. Early Việt Minh ambushes along the Route Coloniale 4 began after October 1947 and targeted military convoys transporting equipment to the various French positions along the road (Windrow 104-107). In 1948 alone, there were 48 major Việt Minh ambushes of French convoys on the Route Coloniale 4 (Windrow 105). In describing the preparation phase of one of these early ambushes, Đặng recounts that his men needed to “persévérer dans l’attente, de franchir rapidement l’espace à découvert pour se battre au corps à corps avec l’ennemi. La victoire sera certainement nôtre” (35). This plan reflects the disciplined and well-timed attack strategy—also prescribed to Ngô’s battalion—in which the onset of the attack must be delayed in order to achieve the maximum amount of damage to the French contingent. Although the Việt Minh were only in the planning stages of the attack at this point, Đặng’s certainty in their eventual victory is indicative of an extremely high morale. After Đặng and his men executed the attack according to plan, “L’ennemi est défait et anéanti, exactement comme prévu. Il paie très cher sa morgue impudente. Notre propre confiance s’en trouve renforcée” (35-

36), which strengthened the militants' already high morale and further motivated them to continue to orchestrate more ambushes. Subsequent attacks occurred along the Route Coloniale 4 in 1949 and were also successful due to the use of surprise. During an ambush at Ban Nam, the Việt Minh defeated a French convoy due to "l'effet de surprise" (Đặng 64). At a later ambush along the Route Coloniale 4, Đặng recalls: "D'une position passive, nous créons l'effet de surprise," which allowed them to recuperate a number of weapons and equipment from the defeated convoy (66). As Đặng shows the French-speaking reader, the Việt Minh were successful in attaining two objectives in regard to their Route Coloniale 4 ambushes. The first objective was of a military nature and was achieved with the elimination of French convoys traveling along the road and the seizure of the convoys' weapons and equipment. The second was of a two-pronged psychological nature. The Việt Minh first shocked and paralyzed French troops in order to win. This victory would in turn boost Việt Minh morale while at the same time deflating that of the French.

These early ambushes evolved into more prolonged confrontations between Việt Minh and French forces. Accordingly, the Vietnamese political memoirs reveal a progression in which small-scale attacks developed into increasingly larger battles, reflecting the evolution of the Việt Minh Army according to the three-phase guerrilla strategy proposed by Mao and executed by Giáp. As the Việt Minh's strength and capabilities grew, the French Army increasingly suffered greater casualties and lowered morale (Clayton 53). In entries from 1950, Ngô reveals that the Việt Minh had "pris au piège trois régiments d'élite français" (138) and that "Les Français se retirent de toutes leurs garnisons devant nos troupes" (147). Đặng also mentions these successive guerrilla

victories when he praises “Toutes des victoires, la suivante toujours plus grande, plus importante que la précédente” (40). According to Đặng, French forces were required to be “toujours sur le qui-vive, dans un état de tension et d’alerte permanentes” (40). This observation is strikingly similar to one of the stated objectives of the *Plateforme de la Soummam*, which called on the FLN to keep the French Army “dans un état d’énervement et de fatigue par la nécessité de rester sur un qui-vive angoissant.” After Đặng and his men first successfully attacked the French position at Dong Khê, he met with General Giáp and Hoàng Văn Thái, the first chief of staff of the People’s Army of Vietnam. Thái told Đặng that “Notre guerre de résistance fait des progrès chaque jour. Nous grandissons et l’ennemi faiblit. Les Français perdront la guerre” (Đặng 95). Here, Thái’s advice reflects the strategy that Giáp and the Việt Minh had adopted from Mao concerning the second phrase of guerrilla warfare, in which the rebel troops become stronger as the occupying army weakens from repeated successful guerrilla attacks. During this meeting, Đặng was deeply moved by the morale of his commanders: “La confiance et la joie des deux camarades, Giap et Thai, m’ont insufflé une force extraordinaire, je rentre plein d’enthousiasme” (95). Once more, he shows the French-speaking reader that guerrilla tactics led to Việt Minh military successes, which in turn motivates militants such as Ngô and Đặng to continue the fight.

The Việt Minh repeated these successful surprise attacks during the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4 in 1950, which Đặng illustrates when he describes their capture of Dong Khê from September 16 to September 18. While planning the attack, Đặng insists that “Une embuscade contre un ennemi hors de ses abris et en mouvement est beaucoup plus facile et plus commode pour nous. Une fois les renforts hors de combat, la garnison

de la place connaîtra la panique et nous remporterons sûrement une grande victoire” (101). Once again, Đặng attributes surprise attacks to resounding victories and suggests the following to fellow Việt Minh military strategists: “qu’on nous laisse attaquer, en tant que colonne d’assaut principale, du côté sud ; ainsi l’ennemi sera surpris puisqu’il porte toute son attention au nord” (102). This particular strategy of attacking the enemy from the direction where he least expects—in this case, from the south while the French are focused on the north—directly reflects Mao Tse-Tung’s idea of “seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west” (46), which originated in Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*.

After the Việt Minh attack forced the French to abandon their position at Dong Khê, “Nos combattants font feu et nos adversaires, attaqués à l’improviste, se sauvent dans la panique générale. La plupart jettent leurs armes et se rendent,” and the Việt Minh emerged victorious (Đặng 113). At Dong Khê alone, the French lost seven battalions and left enough artillery, rocket launchers, and machine guns, among other sophisticated weapons, to equip a Việt Minh division of 15,000 men (Shrader, *Indochina* 211).

Although Ngô did not participate in the famous Battle of the Route Coloniale 4, an entry from December 1950 reveals that “Lang Son, Lao Cay, Hoa Binh, Hong Hua, tous les postes jalonnant la R.C. 4 ont été pris par nos troupes, qui ont capturé un nombre très élevé de prisonniers de guerre et un matériel considérable” (149). Historical analyses of the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4 support this claim, with Martin Windrow noting that the battle was France’s worst defeat aside from Điện Biên Phủ (110). The loss of these frontier posts severely depressed French morale while simultaneously enhancing that of the Việt Minh.

The FLN's rural campaigns

As depicted in Pontecorvo's film, the FLN also used guerrilla tactics in order to psychologically shock and momentarily paralyze French troops. In 1955, ambushes on French troops became more prevalent as armed FLN guerrillas frequently surprised French outposts, seized French equipment, and inflicted severe casualties on French patrols (Alexander & Keiger 8). One of such ambushes is featured in *On nous appelleit fellaghas* when Si Azzedine recounts his first ambush, which occurred at Oum-Zoubia in October 1956. In preparation for the attack, the militants camouflaged themselves among the hilly terrain along a road. As a French convoy with "des officiers frais émoulus de Saint-Cyr" (99) arrived, Si Lakhdar shot at the jeep's tires. Given that Saint-Cyr is the most well-known and well-regarded military academy in France—and where many French military leaders and officers trained prior to deploying to Algeria—Azzedine's reference is intended to highlight the disparity in military training between the French forces and the FLN. As soon as the ambush began:

La colline n'est plus qu'une détonation monstrueuse où
s'enchevêtrent l'abolement rauque des mitrailleuses, les
hurlements déments des hommes touchés, le claquement des
fusils... Les Français répliquent, mais trop tard. Sept, huit
minutes de combat. Pas plus. [...] Le convoi a été anéanti. Les
corps des militaires, dépouillés de leurs armes, jonchent la route
autour des camions (Azzedine 100).

The resulting scene depicts total chaos among the French camp, with the sounds of screams and gunfire permeating the hill. As Azzedine shows, the surprise attack was a

complete success for the FLN and strengthened the militants' morale for a subsequent attack. To prepare for this second ambush, Azzedine and four militants hid along a trail for over a day in order to surprise a French convoy that travels along the trail once a week. At six in the morning, as the convoy is passing by, "Tous les fusils tirent en même temps. Une minute. Pas plus. Nous ramassons deux F.M., vingt-six armes, des munitions, des gilets pare-balles, des uniformes [...]" (Azzedine 102). He attributes the success of these attacks to:

Simple question d'organisation, de foi, d'audace, de confiance en soi. J'ai acquis tout cela en un jour. Totalemment. Les militaires de carrière hausseront-ils les épaules ? Une embuscade n'est sans doute pour eux qu'un acte douteux, plus proche du banditisme que des lois enseignées dans les écoles de guerre. En tout cas, à Beni-Khalfoun, j'ai vaincu le dragon et récité ma première leçon de guérilla (Azzedine 102).

In mentioning that he acquired the necessary skills to wage a successful attack over the course of the ambush, Azzedine contrasts his quick and improvised military training to that of the Saint-Cyr officers. Although the career military officers may disparage ambushes and dismiss them as unsophisticated, Azzedine's first encounter with guerrilla warfare served to reinforce his morale. His "slaying the dragon" metaphor once again emphasizes the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, juxtaposing the mortal Azzedine with an infinitely larger, more powerful, and almost supernatural adversary. The metaphor also reveals that Azzedine saw mythical elements in the Algerian struggle

against French rule. In particular, he creates a mythical narrative in which he and other FLN militants are heroes who successfully vanquish an evil and destructive enemy.

After participating in multiple surprise attacks, Azzedine even developed his own ambush techniques that echo strategies by Mao Tse-Tung and General Giáp and yet were adapted to the FLN's environment in Algeria. Azzedine preferred to conduct ambushes on flat terrain instead of the rocky cliffs, wooded mountains, and sinuous routes that were the preferred terrain of the Việt Minh. In treacherous areas, "les Français se tenaient sur leurs gardes, prêts à réagir à la seconde," yet on even terrain, "En revanche, ils se détendaient, relâchaient leur vigilance sur les reliefs n'offrant à leurs yeux aucun danger. C'est justement là que nous attendions" (Azzedine 116-117). On the other hand, ambush attacks in mountainous areas allowed FLN militants to sneak up on and shoot French forces and at close range before quickly disappearing into the surroundings (118-119). Regardless of the terrain where the attack was to be executed, the elements that lead to successful attacks include:

Une embuscade ne doit en aucun cas dépasser cinq minutes. Au-delà, c'est l'accrochage avec toutes les conséquences catastrophiques qui en découlent : corps à corps, arrivée de renforts, casse... Surpris dans une embuscade, le soldat le plus confirmé est obligé de se jeter à terre et de chercher un repli d'où il tentera de repérer l'assaillant avant de tirer. Ce qui est difficile sur un terrain plat, n'offrant aucun abri [...] Il ne faut laisser au gibier aucun répit. Je compte avant tout sur la contagion de la terreur (117).

Similar to the Việt Minh's guerrilla tactics, a surprise FLN attack has the crucial ability to momentarily destabilize French forces and delay their reaction, much to the advantage of the under-armed, under-trained, and under-equipped militants. The FLN wanted unwary French troops to first react with surprise, followed by fear and terror, which would then spread from the ensuing chaos. Speed is another vital component to a successful ambush because it prevents the French forces from reacting in time, as exemplified by Azzedine's initial experience with guerrilla warfare. This passage shows that his first ambush only lasted seven to eight minutes and his second ambush was even shorter at less than a minute, after which the militants plundered weapons and equipment from French convoys and disappeared in order to avoid repercussions from arriving reinforcements (100-102).

The above passage contains a striking metaphor in which Azzedine compares FLN assaults on French convoys to a hunter targeting his prey, a direct contrast from the earlier metaphor in which he saw himself as a mythical hero who slayed a dragon. This hunter-prey metaphor echoes *Les Damnés de la terre*, in which Fanon argues that the colonized is "toujours prêt à abandonner son rôle de gibier pour prendre celui de chasseur" (54). The metaphor also highlights the concepts of guerrilla strategy in which the militants gather intelligence, formulate a strategy, and ambush their target. Surprise ambushes allow the revolutionaries to select the time and location of combat that are most favorable to their objectives. As Đặng explains, "Quant à nous, nous gardons l'initiative et toute liberté de choisir le temps, le lieu pour engager le combat et de mettre au point le plan optimal pour arracher la victoire" (39). For Saadi Yacef, the unique ability of the FLN to initiate attacks on its own terms was an important psychological

weapon. One such example occurred in 1956 when French security forces believed that the FLN would strike on the second anniversary of the Algerian Revolution, and consequently prepared for renewed attacks by deploying significant troops throughout Algiers. However, as Yacef gleefully writes:

Appréhendé sous l'angle strictement tactique le déploiement de tant de forces à la fois, pour un rendez-vous imaginaire et à une date qui ne ressortait pas de la volonté de l'adversaire, avait de quoi nous réjouir. Qui pouvait se permettre de dédaigner le spectacle de le voir réagir comme nous le désirions, à l'heure fixée par nous, dans un mouvement d'ensemble aussi synchronisé et sur la scène de notre choix ? Comme disait souvent Ben M'hidi, pour qui savait s'en servir l'arme psychologique offrait des capacités de manœuvres aussi efficaces que des collections de brigades de chars ou de batteries de canon (1: 319-320).

The massive deployment of French troops to counter a potential threat significantly increased the morale of leaders Yacef and M'hidi, who realized that their guerrilla actions had forced the French to react according to the FLN's wishes. Yacef's account also emphasizes the importance of the psychological factor in warfare, as Ben M'hidi believed that psychological weapons—such as fear—could wreak as much damage on an adversary as a large arsenal of sophisticated weapons. In mentioning that Ben M'hidi often repeated this psychological strategy, Yacef illustrates that the FLN maximized its use, which he would reiterate throughout all three volumes of *La Bataille d'Alger*.

Sustained guerrilla attacks on French targets demonstrated the FLN's capacity to endure, which constituted a major political and psychological victory for the FLN as the French were unable to fully vanquish the rebel group (Evans 126). The FLN's surprise ambushes also resulted in some decisive and impressive military wins, such as during the Battle of Bouzegza in the Kabylia region in 1957. Prior to the battle, Azzedine and his men spotted the arrival of the 3rd Foreign Parachute Regiment of the French Foreign Legion. He recounts:

Je n'avais pas peur. Ils ne venaient que d'un côté et nous
bénéficiions du facteur surprise et de la meilleure position
stratégique : ils étaient en terrain découvert ; le commando était en
embuscade sur une crête boisée. Quand ils furent à une trentaine
de mètres, je hurlai : *Ham Harbou !*, et mes djounouds bondirent à
l'assaut [...] Ce qui m'obligeait—c'est la moindre des choses
quand on mène une troupe aussi valeureuse—à courir toujours en
tête, le courage étant aussi contagieux que la peur. *Ham Harbou !*
Les légionnaires accusèrent le choc [...] Craignant une nouvelle
embuscade, les paras avaient appelé l'aviation, mais quand les T 6
avaient bombardé à la roquette la crête, nous étions loin (162).

Azzedine did not perceive the legionnaires to be a threat because he knew that they would be paralyzed by the surprise attack, which once again shows the psychological impact and resulting effectiveness of such ambushes. As expected, the shock experienced by the legionnaires allowed Azzedine and his men to neutralize them and capture their weapons. As previously discussed, the attack was extremely short in

duration and only lasted two minutes. This particular description also reveals that superior airpower does not necessarily result in a military victory, as Azzedine's troops were able to complete their mission and flee prior to the arrival of bombers. According to Azzedine, General Massu "surnomma par la suite le « djebel pourri », car il perdit dans ce mouchoir de poche d'à peine trente kilomètres carrés près de six cents hommes, ce 3 août 1957" (163). Through these descriptions of calculated surprise attacks, the militant-authors show the French-speaking reader that they depended on psychological warfare as a means of overcoming the superior weaponry of the French forces, as argued by Sartre in "Une Victoire."

Guerrilla moral(e)s and *La Bataille d'Alger*

As discussed in Chapter 3, both the Việt Minh and FLN targeted, persecuted, and killed indigenous civilians who either opposed the revolution or collaborated with the French. The Việt Minh also targeted French civilians, particularly during the early stages of the revolution. Nine days after Hồ Chí Minh proclaimed independence, a Việt Minh affiliated group attacked the Cité Hérault suburb in Saigon and killed 150 French civilians (Donaldson 75). On December 19, 1946, the Việt Minh launched a campaign consisting of attacks on French civilians throughout the country (Joes, *Victorious* 93). Việt Minh militants placed or hurled improvised explosive devices at bars, restaurants, cafes, theaters and brothels frequented by French troops and civilians (Weinberg 114). *Le Domaine maudit*, a 1961 Francophone Vietnamese novel by Cung Giũ Nguyễn, reflects the Việt Minh's terror campaign through descriptions of grenades thrown in restaurants (188) and "attaques de postes, massacres de militaires et de civils" (240).

These indiscriminate attacks were intended to create a permanent state of insecurity for French military and civilian personnel in Vietnam. On a tactical level, the attacks eliminated French military personnel that happened to be at the targeted locations. On a psychological level, the attacks instilled fear in the French civilian population so as to pressure France to withdraw from Indochina.

Yet Ngô's text contains few episodes of Việt Minh violence against civilians. In 1945, Ngô witnesses an armed mob chanting Việt Minh slogans and yelling: "il faut tuer tous les colonialistes..." (34). A mob member then specifies: "Les colonialistes, ce sont les Français, les blancs, les « tây ». A mort !" (Ngô 34). The mob burned down houses owned by French people, while another group stormed a villa belonging to a French cotton plant owner. Ngô noticed that French civilians in the vicinity had "la figure marquée de coups, enchaînés" (34-35). In another area of Hanoi "Quelques Français apparaissent parfois, entraînés et enchaînés" (Ngô 38). On the other hand, Đặng's memoir does not mention any Việt Minh violence against French civilians. Attacks on French noncombatants were mostly concentrated during the early stages of the Vietnamese Revolution and occurred on a lower scale than during the Algerian Revolution, so it is entirely possible that Ngô and Đặng may not have witnessed or participated in many attacks. However, as political memoir theory suggests, memoirists can inject bias—either unconsciously or intentionally—and outright deception into their life writings for political or personal purposes (Egerton 344). This is a possibility with Đặng's writings. In his other French-language memoir, *Souvenirs d'un colonel Viet Minh*, Đặng reveals that he was "un membre exemplaire" (219) of the Vietnamese Communist Party from 1948 until 2002 and thanked the Party for enabling him to

“reconquérir l’indépendance et la liberté de mon peuple” (222). In *Souvenirs*, Đặng does offer some criticisms of contemporary Vietnamese politics and society, notably corruption, which he views as anathema to the founding principles of the Vietnamese Communist Party and its revolution. Nonetheless, his lengthy service in the Vietnam People’s Army and the Vietnamese Communist Party may preclude him from including any details in his memoir that portray these postcolonial institutions in a negative light. As only 0.5 percent of the Vietnamese population currently speaks French, the Vietnamese militant-authors are obviously addressing a French-speaking audience. As such, they may not want to depict controversial events involving the deliberate targeting of civilians, preferring instead of focus on Việt Minh attacks on French military targets.

Regardless, only the Algerian political memoirs portray targeted guerrilla attacks on French civilians. In *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, Matthew Connelly argues that the FLN did not begin attacking French civilians until May 1955, unlike French forces who targeted Algerian civilians during early uprisings such as those at Sétif and Guelma (78). By August 1955, approximately 20 Europeans in remote farms had been killed (Evans 127). French appropriation of fertile farmland had long enraged and impoverished rural indigenous communities, and the FLN began its revolution by targeting the symbols of French colonial rule: military posts, administrative institutions, and farms. As Fanon mentions in *Les Damnés de la terre*, “Pour le peuple colonisé la valeur la plus essentielle, parce que la plus concrète, c’est d’abord la terre : la terre qui doit assurer le pain et, bien sûr, la dignité” (47), hence the indigenous Algerians’ rancor over French-owned farmland. In June 1955, Si Azzedine assembled over 1,000 militants to vandalize

European-owned farms (73). While Azzedine insists that he never killed women and children during these farm attacks, he does mention that one militant, Mustapha Lek'Hal, was “un homme très brutal, abattit toutes les personnes occupant la ferme qu’il était chargé d’incendier, ainsi qu’un couple de colons qui survint à l’improviste dans une voiture” (75-76). Afterwards, the FLN council of the wilaya IV condemned Mustapha Lek'Hal, explaining:

[...] une opération militaire qui n’était pas rentable sur le plan politique et psychologique devenait néfaste. On lui avait ordonné de détruire une infrastructure économique, pas de tuer des civils ! Son carnage allait fournir à l’ennemi les arguments de propagande dont il avait besoin : les « rebelles » répandaient la terreur par les moyens les plus vils (Azzedine 76).

Azzedine shows the French-speaking reader that the FLN was clearly conscious of the political ramifications of attacks on civilians, fearing that such actions would undermine their independence efforts. Following Lek'Hal's actions, the FLN council instructed the wilaya's military commanders that “il était formellement interdit de toucher aux femmes et aux enfants” (Azzedine 76). Lek'Hal was subsequently transferred outside of the maquis and died a few months later.

Aside from the Mustapha Lek'Hal episode, all other instances in which the Algerian militant-authors depict FLN attacks on civilians occurred in Algiers, particularly during the Battle of Algiers from 1955 to 1956. Of the four life writings analyzed, Saadi Yacef's lengthy *La Bataille d'Alger* is the only text to provide explicit and detailed insight into the motivations, justifications, and operations behind the FLN's attacks on

French civilians. The Algiers campaign against French civilians is also the most internationally known due to Pontecorvo's cinematic representation. Prior to the Battle of Algiers, Abane Ramdane and Benyoucef Ben Khedda emphasized the need to spare the lives of European civilians (Harbi 197). Yet both changed their mind as they noticed widespread support for military repressions against the FLN among European civilians, which in turn, caused Abane and Ben Khedda to view European civilians as legitimate targets (Evans 202).

After the French colonial administration guillotined two FLN operatives—Ahmed Zabana and Ferradj Abdelkader—on June 19, 1956, Abane ordered immediate retaliation. In *A Savage War of Peace*, Alistair Horne states that Abane had announced that 100 French citizens would be killed indiscriminately for every executed member of the FLN (183). Yacef provides a much lower estimate in his memoir, recounting: “Le tract publié par le FLN disait notamment « Toute exécution de combattants capturés entraînerait la mort de dizaines de civils français »” (1: 235). The first FLN reprisal occurred in the Bab-El-Oued quarter, where “Les armes mugirent tout le long des grandes artères, fauchant au hasard des Européens. Le bilan fut moins grave qu'on eût pu l'imaginer. Quelques morts et une dizaine de blessés. C'est peu comparé aux tueries commises quotidiennement par l'armée et la police” (Yacef 1: 235). Not only does Yacef mitigate the attack by noting the small number of European casualties and injuries as compared to French operations against Algerians, he also characterizes the operation as a “ronde justicière” (1: 235), showing the French-speaking reader that it was a justified response to French violence. French security forces reacted to the attack by arresting two thousand suspects and transporting them to concentration camps. The following day, the FLN

continued their offensive because, according to Yacef, “Objectifs et consignes ne changèrent pas. Exécuter tout Européen qui pointera le nez dehors. Epargner les vieillards, les femmes et les enfants” (1: 236). This corroborates Horne’s historical analysis, which found that Saadi Yacef was ordered to “kill any European between the ages of eighteen and fifty-four. But no women, no children, no old people...” (184). At this initial stage of the Battle of Algiers, Yacef asserts that the French security apparatus, not European civilians, were the principle targets of the FLN:

Les civils européens, dans notre optique, n’avaient jamais constitué un objectif primordial [...] Fidèles à notre programme initial nos actions continueront de viser l’armée, la police, ses suppléants et supplétifs, ses auxiliaires de tous bords, en un mot tout l’appareil répressif de la « Reconquista » (1: 236-237).

However, the strategy of sparing European civilians was short-lived. After an explosion hit the Casbah on July 14—less than a month after the execution of Zabana and Ferradj—the FLN conducted an investigation to identify the perpetrators. According to Yacef, they were surprised to discover that “les chefs se recrutaient sans difficulté dans les milieux aisés de la bourgeoisie tertiaire. Quant à la piétaille elle provenait des quartiers à forte concentration ouvrière tels que Bab-El-Oued et Belcourt” (1: 260). Yacef saw the participation of French civilian operatives from varying socio-economic backgrounds as evidence of the complicity of the majority of the European population, whom he describes as model employees during the day but who operated “les explosifs et les instruments de torture” at night (1: 260). He does not reveal the identities of the

suspects, nor does he explain how the FLN obtained this information, but he does describe it as a turning point in the FLN's policy on attacking French civilians:

Il était déroutant de voir la couche la plus démunie du peuplement européen baigner dans le mercenariat en croyant défendre la bonne cause. L'anathème selon lequel le FLN n'attaquait que des innocents était battue en brèche [...] Quoi qu'il en soit il était établi que les forces armées, la police et le peuplement étranger formaient un bloc homogène. A quelques insignifiantes exceptions près ils étaient décidés à se maintenir en Algérie au prix de n'importe quel acte. La latinité de la collusion renaissait, plus agressive (1: 261).

In believing that all Europeans in Algeria—with the exception of an extremely small minority—colluded with the French security forces to maintain the colonial system, Yacef exhibits what Albert Memmi refers to as “la xénophobie, et même un certain racisme du colonisé” (145). For Memmi, this phenomenon is the natural consequence of the rigidly divided colonial system:

Considéré en bloc comme *eux, ils* ou *les autres*, à tous les points de vue différent, homogénéisé dans une radicale hétérogénéité, le colonisé réagit en refusant en bloc tous les colonisateurs [...] *Pour le colonisé, tous les Européens des colonies sont des colonisateurs de fait.* Et qu'ils le veuillent ou non, ils le sont par quelque côté : par leur situation économique de privilégiés, par leur appartenance

au système politique de l'oppression, par leur participation à un complexe affectif négateur du colonisé (145).

Frantz Fanon also refers to the two divergent worlds of colonialism, which he describes as a “monde compartimenté, ce monde coupé en deux est habité par des espèces différentes” (*Damnés* 43). Moreover, Fanon highlights race as the primary characteristic that separates the two worlds, explaining that “ce qui morcelle le monde c’est d’abord le fait d’appartenir ou non à telle espèce, à telle race” (*Damnés* 43). The racial component is especially salient in Yacef’s life writing. When describing the ethnic origins of the colonizers, he does not refer to them as “French,” but “European.” This is partly because most settlers in Algeria were from Southern Europe, with a considerable portion having Italian or Spanish origins (Evans 26). Despite their various Southern European origins, the settlers were above all European in French Algeria, as opposed to the Muslim Arab-Berber indigenous population relegated to third class status.

Immediately after revealing the results of the FLN’s investigation into the July 14 bombing, Yacef refers to the perpetrators as “les terroristes européens” (1: 262), the first instance in which he associates terrorism with European ethnicity. From this point onward, Yacef reiterates the theme of European terrorism throughout all three volumes of his memoir as he describes “les activités du terrorisme européen” (1: 268). He characterizes FLN assassinations of ultras—ultra-conservative Europeans who were vehemently opposed to any changes in the colonial system in Algeria—who had participated in violent attacks against Algerians as “la lutte contre le terrorisme européen” (Yacef 1: 268). In the second volume of his work, Yacef once again highlights “les Européens et leurs multiples réseaux terroristes” (2: 21) as one of the many mechanisms

employed by the settlers to repress Algerians. He also makes a point to mention “les terroristes européens qui avaient démoli à la bombe une partie de la rue de Thèbes [sic],” an event memorialized in Pontecorvo’s film (Yacef 2: 47). In describing European colonists in Algeria as terrorists with multiple terrorist networks, Yacef inverts the colonial narrative that exclusively identified terrorism with the FLN while turning a blind eye to atrocities committed by the colonial regime. In doing so, Yacef reminds the French-speaking reader that European violence against Algerians also constituted terrorism.

Throughout his memoir, Yacef argues that the colonial regime and many of its European benefactors were equally guilty of indiscriminate terrorist attacks on Algerian civilians. French troops executed Algerian civilians in villages near FLN attack locations, committed torture against both militants and civilians, and forcefully removed Algerian civilians from their homes into camps (Travis 137). At one point, Yacef provides a litany of European crimes against Algerian civilians:

Des Algériens mouraient tous les jours [...] Par balle, par strangulation, par égorgement, etc. Mais c’était surtout dans les laboratoires de torture et les corvées de bois que le nombre de victimes augmentait de façon effrayante. Par la torture, en effet, il en succombait tous les jours et ce dans un silence effroyable couvert par la raison d’Etat [...] Le terrorisme d’Etat faisait le plein partout [...] Des hommes, des femmes et même des enfants ; des braves et des malchanceux. Le motif importait peu du moment que la victime n’était pas européenne (2: 172-173).

Yacef later asks, “pourquoi nous priverions-nous d’une activité pour laquelle l’ennemi n’avait jamais éprouvé de scrupule : ne fût-ce que pour remettre les pendules à l’heure...” (2: 212). For Yacef, if the French—with their material and logistical superiority—attacked Algerian civilians, the FLN with its fewer resources and resources was even more justified in doing so. Yacef also claims that the personnel in charge of the surveillance and interrogation of Algerians detained in torture chambers was composed of “des paras, ceux de la Légion étrangère, mais la plupart des servants étaient originaires d’Algérie,” meaning the pieds-noirs (2: 168). In one instance, an Algerian detainee noticed that “l’un des supposés parachutistes était en fait un « pied noir », qui plus est habitant son quartier. Un civil en l’occurrence qui, par sa seule présence dans cette caserne avait de quoi susciter la surprise” (2: 169). Once again, Yacef uses his writing to persuade the French-speaking reader that the complicity of the pieds noirs justifies the FLN’s targeting of pied noir civilians.

Nonetheless, in the first volume of his memoir, Saadi Yacef acknowledges that indiscriminate attacks on civilians are indisputably atrocious. As he was establishing his bomb network in the early stages of the Battle of Algiers, Yacef pondered the consequences of such attacks:

J’imaginai avec appréhension ce qu’une bombe peut causer
comme dégâts matériels et humains. Mais avions-nous le choix ?
[...] La différence, en Algérie, c’est que pour la première fois
l’intéressé relevait la tête et essayait de rendre les coups qu’on lui
assénait. Notre ambition ne fut pas la guerre ni la course au
tableau d’avancement mais la recherche d’une dignité, du respect

qu'on doit à tout être humain. Je sais que tout cela n'excuse en rien le recours à des méthodes aussi barbares (1: 278-279).

This passage is one of the rare instances in which Yacef reveals some sympathy for European civilians in Algiers who would become potential victims of his “barbaric methods.” Nonetheless, he justifies his actions by pointing out that attacking civilians was the only option for the FLN—and the colonized Algerian people—to gain human dignity and respect. Here, Yacef echoes Fanon, who argues that the colonized resort to violence in order to rediscover their pride and dignity (*Damnés* 40). Yacef’s justification also parallels that of Sartre, who argued that “le F.L.N. n’a pas choisi ces activités ; il fait ce qu’il peut faire, c’est tout” because it had no other means of resisting colonialism (“Une Victoire” 82-83).

Shock and fear: psychological warfare during the Battle of Algiers

As established, Ngô, Đặng, and Azzedine show that surprise attacks were effective psychological weapons because of their ability to neutralize French forces. Nonetheless, the two Vietnamese life writings, as well as Azzedine’s political memoir, exclusively focus on surprise attacks on military targets. On the other hand, Saadi Yacef’s campaign in Algiers equally targeted military personnel and civilians. Consequently, the psychological effect sought by the FLN during the Battle of Algiers was different, as the ZAA’s strategy was to wage indiscriminate attacks in order to instill fear among the French civilian population. Following the 1956 Plateforme de la Soummam, the FLN leadership’s objectives consisted of internationalizing the war and launching a campaign in Algiers so that European civilians, officials, and soldiers in the

capital would fear for their lives (Alexander and Keiger 8). One FLN directive even claimed that “Une bombe causant la mort de dix personnes et en blessant cinquante autres équivaut sur le plan psychologique à la perte d’un bataillon français” while costing far less in material resources and human efforts than what the FLN would have needed in a traditional military confrontation with the French Army (Meynier 325).

Echoing Memmi’s theory that “le colonisé réagit en refusant en bloc tous les colonisateurs” (145), French political scientist Gérard Chaliand argues that these attacks were intended to demoralize the Europeans of Algeria and send a message that the FLN considered all *pieds-noirs* as the enemy (216). Yacef himself notes that the initial attacks conducted at the beginning of the Algerian Revolution resulted in “Un poison mortel [qui] s’était insinué entre les Algériens et les Européens” (1: 85), which led to further mutual distrust and hatred between the two groups. The “monde compartimenté” described by Fanon (53) would be even more divided along racial and socio-economic lines. Yet one of the FLN’s goals was also to expose Europeans in Algiers to the violence that the Algerian population experienced under colonization. One of Saadi Yacef’s female bomb transporters, Zohra Drif, was reportedly angered by how the European population lived peacefully in their neighborhoods and participated in leisurely activities, as opposed to the daily misery and repression experienced by the Algerian population (Horne 185). As Yacef explains, “La meilleure façon d’étendre le poids du siège à la population européenne, était de lui rendre la vie aussi maussade que celle que nous étions contraints de supporter” (1: 327). In this sense, the Algiers campaign would force the European population to live with the same level of fear and insecurity as the Algerian community.

Like Ngô, Đặng, and Azzedine, Yacef deliberately includes numerous descriptions of the psychological effects of surprise attacks on his targets. On June 19, 1956, the FLN attacked the Bab-El-Oued quarter, shooting at Europeans on thoroughfares as retribution for the execution of Ferradj and Zabana. The attack left a few Europeans dead and a dozen injured, and as a result, “Le soir venu les rues s’étaient vidées. Le sentiment de panique collective envahissait les demeures. La gouaille volubile des habitants n’avait pas résisté à la spécificité de notre réplique” (Yacef 1: 235). Emboldened by the pieds-noirs’ fearful reaction, the FLN continued its campaign. Over the following ten days, Yacef continued the spate of attacks on public areas in the European quarter. Consequently, “La psychose de la peur s’amplifia si rapidement que les Européens étaient convaincus de vivre les dernières heures de leur existence” (Yacef 1: 236), which shows that the FLN had succeeded in creating an environment characterized by chaos and fear among the European population of Algiers.

Another important objective of the FLN’s psychological war was to use terrorist attacks to make the European population doubt the French Army’s ability to protect them, further heightening their fears. As Yacef directed his operatives to continue their offensive, he explains that “Le but était de déployer un voile de « psychose » sur la ville” (1: 241). He later shows that the FLN attained their objective because “La psychose gagnait le corps social [...] La peur était là” (1: 288). For Yacef, the best way to instill shock, fear, and doubt in the European population was through the use of explosives because “la bombe c’est avant tout le choc inattendu qui ébranle. Le recours à l’usage de la bombe nous était donc vital” (2: 310). As a result of this strategy, the FLN planted bombs in the Milk Bar and Cafeteria—as depicted in Pontecorvo’s film—killing four

Europeans and wounding 52 (Evans 182). Due to these repeated indiscriminate bombings and attacks, “La peur et la hantise de mourir brutalement avaient métamorphosé les Européens jusqu’à les rendre fragiles, prêts à se livrer corps et âmes au premier venu pourvu qu’il promette de les protéger” (2: 18). For Yacef, the European population did not simply want the French Army to guarantee their safety, they also wanted the French Army to preserve the colonial system to their advantage: “Dans l’esprit du « pied noir » qui s’accrochait à ce moment-là n’importe quelle bouée de sauvetage pour sauvegarder à la fois ses privilèges et l’apartheid en vigueur en Algérie” (2: 304). Like FLN leaders Abane and Ben Khedda, Yacef justifies the FLN’s use of terrorism by highlighting European civilian support for military repression. Yet Yacef and other FLN leaders knew that these indiscriminate attacks would provoke the European population to retaliate by lynching and attacking Algerian civilians. These reprisals—carried out by soldiers and civilians alike—were advantageous to the FLN. In his descriptions of these violent episodes, Yacef shows the French-speaking reader that acts of vengeance solidified the mutual distrust between the Muslim and European communities, drove Algerians to join the FLN, and created an overall atmosphere of insecurity for the European community in the capital.

To further maximize public fears, Yacef sought ways to amplify the effects of the attacks. While reading the sports section of *l’Echo d’Alger*, he learned that two events were scheduled to occur simultaneously at the most prominent stadiums in Algiers—located in Ruisseau and El-Biar—and decided to launch attacks at these high-profile locations. On Sunday, February 10, 1957, at 3:45pm at the El-Biar stadium, “la première charge explosa, jetant l’effroi dans le stade [...] Quelques secondes après, une deuxième

déflagration secoua la tribune. A partir de cet instant, ce fut la panique. Les gens fuyaient dans toutes les directions à la recherche d'une issue salvatrice" (2: 213). Two of the few Algerians in attendance were lynched to death by a vigilante mob, continuing the vicious cycle of terrorism and reprisals. Meanwhile, the explosion at the Ruisseau stadium resulted in 11 deaths and 56 wounded, many of whom suffered severe injuries. Yacef notes that "Les Européens qui avaient beaucoup misé sur la 10ème D.P. et ses « héros de légende » étaient brutalement plongés dans le doute" (2: 215). The "10ème D.P." refers to the 10th Parachute Division commanded by General Massu, whose objective was to eliminate the FLN network during the Battle of Algiers (Evans 190). Once again, Yacef uses his writing to show the French-speaking reader that the FLN was able to provoke the European population into doubting the ability of the French Army to protect them.

In addition to indiscriminate attacks, the FLN coordinated public assassinations of specific European civilians who were deemed complicit in French Army repressions. Executing an Algerian traitor, informant, French gendarme officer, or European colonialist was the standard initiation rite for new recruits into the FLN (Horne 134). As Yacef reveals, conducting these targeted killings in public significantly contributes to the overall climate of fear and insecurity. In one example, militants Berrekia and Tabache shot interrogator Justin Daudet to death outside his apartment, and "Puis ce fut la panique" in the immediate vicinity (Yacef 2: 294). In mid-August 1956, the FLN determined that Gérard Etienne, owner of the Rex cinema and bar, had placed bombs in Muslim quarters and kidnapped Algerian civilians. As soon as two FLN militants opened fire on Etienne outside the Rex, "Sur l'avenue ce fut la panique. Les gens fuyaient dans

tous les sens” (Yacef 1: 271). To add to the chaos, soldiers at the Rex reacted by shooting at the nearby balconies of European-inhabited apartments where they mistakenly believed that militants had opened fire. In the descriptions of the Daudet and Etienne assassinations, as well as the El-Biar stadium attack, Yacef repeats “ce fut la panique.” Because “a repeated phrase or line, or a repeated initial consonant on a sequence of words, is extremely unlikely to be produced in ‘entirely unmonitored speaking or writing’” (Toolan 23), Yacef consciously uses repetition to emphasize the pieds-noirs’ panicked reaction. In doing so, he not only emphasizes the psychological weight that sudden public attacks inflicted on the psyche of the European population in Algiers, but also shows the French-speaking reader that psychological warfare was a key component of the FLN’s strategy during the Battle of Algiers.

The Vietnamese and Algerian militant-authors show that guerrilla warfare tactics and its psychological components allowed the Việt Minh and FLN to achieve their political and military objectives, whether these were successful ambushes on the battlefield or instilling fear in urban civilian populations. Nonetheless, both the Việt Minh and FLN incurred significant casualties over the course of these campaigns. During the Battle of Dong Khê, which the Việt Minh decisively won, Đặng realizes that “Même en cas de réussite, nos pertes seraient importantes” (101). Ngô himself incurred a terminal lung injury when his company was bombarded with napalm. During this battle, he reveals that “Notre régiment a beaucoup souffert. Ma compagnie est à moitié détruite” (Ngô 138). Likewise, the Algerian militant-authors witnessed the deaths and injuries of innumerable militants. In addition to having his best friend Si Lakhdar die in his arms on the battlefield, Si Azzedine writes that “En moins de deux ans, j’ai mené au

combat, à la tête du commando Ali Khodja, plus de 1 200 djounouds. Il ne reste qu'une dizaine de survivants" (198). On a single day in 1958, the FLN "perdit plus de cent cinquante djounouds, dont une douzaine du commando Ali Khodja" (Azzedine 245). During the Battle of Algiers, Massu's invasion of the Casbah on January 14, 1957 essentially destroyed Yacef's Algiers cell, as "Dix-sept éléments de la Z.A.A. étaient tombés, les armes à la main" (2: 51). Toward the end of the Algiers battle, Massu successfully employed torture to identify the pyramidal construction of the FLN's organization and "dans nos rangs, il y eut beaucoup de disparus mais également des morts, happés par les arrestations massives" (Yacef 2: 253). The Battle of Algiers resulted in a clear military victory for the French Army, although its consequences would contribute to French political defeat and Algerian independence in 1962.

However, these losses did not detract from the morale of the militant-authors, who saw significant casualties as inevitable when facing a far superior military power. Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef show that despite being under-armed, under-equipped, and under-trained compared to the French forces, the Việt Minh was able to accomplish its political and military objectives while the FLN ultimately realized its political objective of national independence. Through the use of repeated imagery to emphasize the stark discrepancy between French military power and the weak military capabilities of the revolutionary movements, the four militant-authors attempt to convince the French-speaking reader that efficient guerrilla tactics motivated the four Việt Minh and FLN militant-authors. Yacef's meticulous descriptions of the psychological components behind the targeted attacks on French civilians in Algiers—as well as his lengthy justifications for doing so—present the French-reader with in-depth insight on the

motivations and calculations driving his actions. Ultimately, the four militant-authors use their writings to illustrate that guerrilla warfare, particularly its ability to shock the adversary, led to military and political successes that boosted militant morale and led them to believe that independence was inevitable, thereby motivating them to continue the revolution.

Solidarity and Revolution: Cultivating International Support

The previous chapters have shown that the militant-writers highlight three major motivators that strengthened their morale and encouraged them to continue with the war: (1) a desire for political and civil rights inspired by the ideals of the French Enlightenment and French Revolution within the post World War II world, (2) moral, material, and logistical support provided by the indigenous population, and (3) effective guerrilla campaigns that damaged the morale of French forces and civilians alike. The four life writings—Ngô's *Journal d'un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng's *De la RC 4 à la N4* (2000), Azzedine's *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Yacef's *La Bataille d'Alger* (2002)—also show the French-speaking reader that support from international allies reinforced the morale and motivation of the revolutionaries. This is a theme that Frantz Fanon discusses in *Les Damnés de la terre* when he argues that “le colonisé n'est pas seul face à l'opresseur. Il y a, bien sûr, l'aide politique et diplomatique des pays et des peuples progressistes” (65). Fanon later reiterates his idea of an inherent solidarity between the colonized peoples of the world when he notes that “Le peuple colonisé n'est pas seul. En dépit des efforts du colonialisme, ses frontières demeurent perméables aux nouvelles, aux échos. Il découvre que la violence est atmosphérique, qu'elle éclate çà et là, et çà et là emporte le régime colonial” (69). In addition to being influenced by various anti-colonial struggles across the globe, “Forts du soutien inconditionnel des pays socialistes, les colonisés se lancent avec les armes qu'ils ont contre la citadelle inexpugnable du colonialisme” (76-77). In addition to material assistance from socialist

countries, each decolonization struggle receives moral and political support from both past and present-day decolonization struggles around the world. As a result, the colonized people are not alone when they revolt.

As George Egerton points out, political memoirists write to convey their perspective and lived experience regarding a momentous historical or political event in order to persuade and engage contemporary and future readers (343). Likewise, Jean-Paul Sartre argues that politically engaged authors use their writing as a means to transmit political messages (*Littérature* 50). In choosing to publish in the colonial language, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef “s’adressent au même public dont ils empruntent la langue,” according to Albert Memmi (127). Therefore, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef use their writings as a mechanism to explain to the French-speaking public that the Việt Minh and FLN were not politically isolated during their respective national liberation struggles. Ngô, on the other hand, did not initially intend to publish his original Vietnamese-language journal in French but told Jacques Despuech to do so, which nonetheless indicates a desire to share his experiences and perspectives with the French-speaking world. Through their life writings, the four militant-authors show that obtaining material and moral support from international allies lifted their morale and convinced them that victory was inevitable. Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef also reveal a hope that their revolutions would inspire future decolonization efforts across the world.

Military support

While both the Việt Minh and FLN received substantial military support from their international allies, the Vietnamese militant-authors particularly highlight the

importance of Chinese military assistance to their struggle. Following Mao's victory over the Kuomintang in 1949, China became a major supplier of arms, ammunition, equipment, and other military supplies to the Việt Minh (Shrader, *Indochina* 165).

Military historian Michael W. Clodfelter offers a conservative estimate of the amount of weapons that China gave to the Việt Minh during the last three years of the war: 10 to 20 tons per month in 1951; 50 tons per month in 1952; 600 tons per month in 1953; and 1,500 to 4,000 tons per month in 1954 (18-19). A more generous estimate appears in Martin Windrow's *The Last Valley*, which cites Pierre Recolle's figures of 250 tons per month during the first half of 1952; 450 tons in December 1952; 900 tons per month in early 1953; 2,000 tons per month by June 1953; and 4,000 tons per month in 1954 (152).

Accordingly, the life writings by Ngô and Đặng primarily highlight Chinese military support to the Việt Minh. As Jacques Despuech notes in his comments to Ngô's journal, "*Les armes petit à petit se firent plus nombreuses, arrivant de Chine et de Birmanie par flots de plus en plus puissants*" during the late 1940s (122). The historical and political impact of the Chinese Communist victory of 1949 on the Việt Minh is especially evident in Đặng's memoir. Đặng reveals that immediately following Mao's triumph, China sent an ambassador to meet with Hồ Chí Minh:

[...] le régiment 174 et moi-mêmes avons l'honneur d'escorter le camarade Luo Guibo, premier ambassadeur de la Chine au Việt Nam, et d'assurer la garde et l'escorte de la délégation conduite par l'Oncle Hồ, qui passe la frontière pour aller signer avec les pays frères d'importants accords d'aide et de coopération (71).

Following this meeting, Mao sent “des renforts en armements, provisions, vivres et des conseillers militaires et politiques” to Vietnam, which enabled “notre peuple à vaincre l’ennemi, à libérer la zone frontalière (1950) et à opérer un tournant stratégique dans la guerre de libération nationale,” according to Đặng (71-72). In the winter of 1950, as Đặng and his men staged successively larger ambushes on French convoys and positions along the Route Coloniale 4, they received “ravitaillement en matériel de guerre par les communistes chinois” (87-88). Despuech’s comments in Ngô’s journal also illustrates the extent to which Chinese weapons and equipment contributed to the Việt Minh’s success: “*Enfin il y eut l’arrivée à la frontière tonkinoise des troupes de Mao Tsé TOUNG. Ce jour-là tout était consommé*” (124). Indeed, the post-1949 entries in Ngô’s journal reveal a new influx of Chinese supplies, much to the delight of Ngô and his men. An entry from September 1950 states that, “Les armes sont abondantes” (125), unlike the period prior to 1949 when the Việt Minh suffered from a severe lack of equipment, as mentioned in Chapter 4. In addition, these newly arrived weapons consisted of “Camions et canons qui n’avaient pas été pris à l’ennemi, mais nous étaient fournis par nos alliés” (Ngô 125). Although Ngô does not specify which allies provided these arms, their arrival shortly after Mao’s 1949 victory suggests that they were supplied by China. In the same entry, he also describes a fellow militant and “sa mitrailleuse chinoise” (Ngô 126). One month later, an entry from November 1950 reveals that Ngô’s host sister Chi Ba “[a] même été en Chine chercher des armes, des caisses lourdes que l’on portait à deux, ou même à quatre, à travers les pistes de montagne” (146) back to militants in northern Vietnam.

In addition to war materials, China also provided military training and advice to the Vietnamese rebels. As early as 1947, the Việt Minh sent a small number of soldiers to China for specialized technical and weapons training (Shrader, *Indochina* 174). However, large-scale Việt Minh training in China did not begin until after Mao's 1949 victory. An entry from the autumn of 1951 indicates that the militant who was training Ngô and his men to operate mortars, cannons, and machine guns “a étudié en Chine dans une école militaire” (186). China also sent military advisors to Việt Minh divisions (Shrader, *Indochina* 173), which Đặng notes in his memoir:

Une fois le continent chinois entièrement libéré, le Parti et le gouvernement révolutionnaire de la Chine reconnaissent la République démocratique du Việt Nam et désignent Luo Guibo comme ambassadeur. Dans le même temps, ils envoient au Việt Nam un groupe de conseillers militaires et les équipements nécessaires (100).

Prior to the Battles of Cao Bang and Dong Khe in 1950, Hồ Chí Minh presided over a meeting with key military leaders to discuss the preparation plans. According to Đặng, “Le camarade Giap et le conseiller chinois, Chengeng, sont présents” (100). General Chen Geng was assigned as the Chinese senior military advisor and representative to the Việt Minh Army in 1950 (Shrader, *Indochina* 174). As discussed in Chapter 4, the Việt Minh achieved a resounding victory over French forces during the Battles of Cao Bang and Dong Khe, which, for Đặng, was partly due to Chinese help. Although Đặng primarily attributes the successful battles to the bravery of Việt Minh troops and the support of the local Vietnamese population, his numerous references to Chinese assistance serve to show the French-speaking readers that the Việt Minh had the

support of a powerful ally in their struggle for independence. However, Đặng stresses that Chinese soldiers did not participate in the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4. In the memoir, Đặng states that he had recently met with three reporters who were working for French media outlets to collect witness testimonies on the French-Indochina war. One reporter asked if Chinese Communist soldiers fought alongside Việt Minh soldiers during the border campaign of 1950. Đặng's response was follows:

Je leur affirmai qu'il n'y avait eu aucun soldat étranger à nos côtés, mais seulement des soldats de « Cu Hô ». Je leur confiai aussi qu'en plus des armes et des équipements que nous avait fournis pendant trois ans, de 1947 à 1950 [...] nous avons reçu des compléments de la part de nos camarades chinois (72).

“Cu Hô” translates to “Elderly Hô” and conveys respect and endearment regarding Hồ Chí Minh while asserting that only Việt Minh soldiers fought during the Battle of the Route Coloniale 4. His response to the reporters also reaffirms the military and material support that the Việt Minh received from their Chinese counterparts. More importantly, this passage reveals that Đặng has been in communication with members of the French press in regard to his war experiences. In mentioning that the French media specifically sought his version of events, Đặng shows the French-speaking reader that there is public interest in his war experiences. Moreover, he has also diffused his version and perspective of the war through both the French media and literary scene, effectively contributing to the French-language discussion on the French Indochina war.

Whereas Đặng stresses the lack of Chinese combatants during the Route Coloniale Battle, Ngô's journal reveals the presence of foreign fighters and sympathizers

alongside the Việt Minh. In an entry from November 1945, he marvels at a Việt Minh division composed of “volontaires japonais commandés par un ancien officier de l’armée nipponne qui a pris du service chez nous à la capitulation japonaise” (58). After the Japanese defeat in 1945, approximately 2,000 Japanese deserters opted to join the ranks of the Việt Minh in order to continue a nationalist struggle rather than face the possibility of being captured by Allied forces, condemned and executed, or repatriated to an economically and militarily devastated Japan (Goscha 46). Another entry from December 1945 refers to the “soutien que nous apporte l’U.R.S.S.” (Ngô 63). This is the only mention of Soviet support by either Vietnamese militant-author throughout the entirety of their life writings, possibly because the Soviet Union never provided the Việt Minh with significant military or diplomatic assistance despite having recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in 1950 (Shrader, *Indochina* 166). However, the Eastern bloc did provide the Việt Minh with medical supplies and technical guidance (Shrader, *Indochina* 165). Ngô’s journal reflects this, particularly the May-June 1951 entry that mentions a Việt Minh doctor who treats his wound “avec une pâte qu’il a reçue par des colis d’entraide aux combattants qui viennent de Roumanie” (179). Toward the end of the journal, an entry from October 1952 reveals that “nous devons faire la jonction avec les troupes du Pathet Lao, armée populaire laotienne” (211). The Pathet Lao was closely allied with the Việt Minh during both the First and Second Indochina Wars and allowed Vietnamese militants to expand their battleground into Laos (Askew, Logan, and Long 116). Unlike Đặng, Ngô did not intend for his journal to be published in French and therefore did not include these references to convince the French-speaking public of

the breadth of support provided by multiple allied states. Yet his journal nonetheless offers insight into the significance of military support offered by various Việt Minh allies.

Algerian militants also received significant military support from various allies. After gaining independence from France in 1956, Tunisia and Morocco provided the most substantial material and financial support to the FLN (Shrader, *Algeria* 169). The FLN also received support from the Eastern bloc, with Yugoslavia being one of the earliest and most loyal supporters of the FLN as well as being a principle source of arms and ammunition during the war (Shrader, *Algeria* 169). Interestingly enough, the Algerian militant-authors do not mention external military support to the same extent as their Vietnamese counterparts. Only Azzedine mentions foreign arms once in a description of FLN leaders' endeavors to cultivate international support. According to Azzedine, the FLN's political and diplomatic wing "informait le monde que le peuple algérien, refusant d'abdiquer devant l'une des plus grandes puissances, aspirait à la liberté et à la dignité. Et cette lutte fut bien sûr indispensable" (269-270). Immediately after noting the "indispensable" role of the political-diplomatic mission, Azzedine states that "Tunis ne nous envoya son premier convoi d'armes qu'en 1957" (270), one year after Tunisian independence and three years after the launching of the Algerian Revolution. The Tunisian-supplied weapons included machine guns, German Mauser rifles, handguns, submachine guns, English World War II bazookas, grenades, among other items, all of which were desperately needed at the time. As Azzedine reveals: "Si Lakhdar et moi avions équipé deux katibas avec cette manne venue de l'Est" (269-270). In establishing a link between the weapons delivery and the FLN's diplomatic efforts,

Azzedine shows the French-speaking reader that cultivating political support was crucial to the FLN's struggle.

While Yacef does not mention any weapons or supplies provided by foreign states, he does reveal that Moroccan and Tunisian civilians participated in the smuggling of bomb-making plastic material into Algeria. In June 1957, French forces constructed the Morice Line—a barrier of electric and barbed wire fences, mines, watchtowers, and searchlights—between Algeria and Tunisia in order to prevent cross-border smuggling of arms and equipment (Evans 230-232). As a result, Yacef was unable to replenish his dwindling supply of explosive-making materials. However, maritime routes in the Mediterranean remained largely uninterrupted. Tunisian and Moroccan fishermen who “avaient sympathisé avec le F.L.N.” hid the necessary materials in the abdomens of fish delivered to FLN agents in Algeria (Yacef 2: 326). With this particular episode, Yacef reveals that the later part of the FLN's campaign in Algiers would not have been possible without the efforts and support of Tunisians and Moroccans.

Unlike the Vietnamese militant-authors, the Algerians also do not mention the presence of foreign military advisors in Algeria, probably because these were inexistent. Nonetheless, Azzedine's political memoir does reveal that the FLN received military advice from both China and North Vietnam. In 1958, Ben Khedda and Mahmoud Chérif led an FLN delegation to China to establish a framework for future negotiations on material and financial support (Shrader, *Algeria* 169). In 1959, China agreed to train FLN officers and provide aid to the FLN, eventually supplying up to several million dollars' worth of weapons and equipment (Shrader, *Algeria* 170). Azzedine participated in one diplomatic mission to China, where “nous avons trouvé une aide matérielle et

militaire efficace. Les Chinois nous ont beaucoup appris” (308). He further reiterates the financial and material support offered by China:

Notre mission fut une réussite inespérée. La Chine nous a apporté une aide financière, matérielle et morale. Bon nombre de jeunes militants ont par la suite séjourné à Pékin et y ont reçu une formation solide, sans que jamais on n’essayât de les endoctriner ou d’influer sur leur choix politique (Azzedine 313).

Shrader’s historical analysis corroborates Azzedine’s account of FLN militants receiving military training from the Chinese (169-170). After leaving China, the FLN delegation went to North Vietnam, where they also received military advice:

[...] les Vietnamiens se montrèrent de précieux conseillers sur le plan militaire. Certes, les terrains sur lesquels nous combattions étaient différents par leurs climats, leurs reliefs, la nature de leurs sols. Mais l’expérience vietnamienne ne fut pas négligeable. Les Vietnamiens ne comprenaient pas qu’on ne pût venir à bout des lignes Morice et Challe. Ils auraient creusé des souterrains, posé des mines... Nous leur expliquâmes qu’on ne fait pas des trous dans le djebel ou le sable du Sahara comme dans le sol meuble du Vietnam [...] (Azzedine 313-314).

Although there were significant terrain differences between Vietnam and Algeria, Azzedine shows that the FLN nonetheless received crucial military advice from their Vietnamese counterparts who were at war with the U.S. during the visit. As discussed in the next section, the primary purpose of the FLN delegation to China and North Vietnam was not to obtain military support or advice, but rather to develop ties with sympathetic

countries in order to apply international political pressure on France. Despite having received military assistance from Arab countries, the Eastern bloc, and China, Azzedine and Yacef do not delve into the international military aid offered to the FLN. Instead, the two Algerian militant-authors use their writings to focus on the political and moral support provided by their allies because the FLN's victory was not achieved through military might, but rather political and diplomatic means.

Political and moral support

In addition to military support, the militant-authors—especially *Đặng* and Azzedine—show that acquiring political and moral support from international allies significantly strengthened their morale and motivated them to continue with their respective revolution. After training and fighting with Chinese Communist troops in China, *Đặng* explains that a feeling of solidarity had developed between the two Communist revolutionary forces:

Aujourd'hui, nos sentiments sont beaucoup plus forts qu'une simple fraternité parce que nous sommes des camarades, liés les uns aux autres par l'internationalisme prolétarien et unis dans la lutte contre l'ennemi commun, à savoir l'impérialisme et les classes exploitantes [...] Les Vietnamiens se sont réjouis de voir fusionner en un bloc monolithe la révolution vietnamienne et la révolution chinoise. L'arrière vietnamien s'étendait désormais à la Chine et à l'Union soviétique pour atteindre les contrées de l'Europe orientale" (71).

It is important to note that *Đặng* chooses to use the terms “liés,” “unis,” and “fusionner en un bloc monolithe”—all of which emphasize solidarity and unity—to describe the *Việt Minh*’s relationship with the Chinese Communist Party. The solidarity was rooted in Communist rhetoric, as evidenced by the reference to “l’internationalisme prolétarien” as a common cause linking the various struggles worldwide. With this passage, *Đặng* reveals that Vietnamese militants were ecstatic to have the support of two significant players on the world stage—China and the Soviet Union—and consequently saw themselves as part of a collective movement spanning two continents. In a discussion on his experiences working with the Chinese ambassador to the DRV, Luo Guibo, *Đặng* further emphasizes the emotional significance of receiving political and moral support from China and Communist countries:

Je suis très ému par les premiers contacts avec la délégation du camarade Luo Guibo [...] Les images du général d’armée Chengeng, de Wei Guoping et du camarade Chang envoyés auprès de notre régiment, sont encore profondément gravées dans mon cœur. Le peuple et l’armée vietnamiens ne sont plus seuls. À nos côtés, nous avons la République populaire chinoise, l’Union soviétique et les pays socialistes. Avec leur aide, l’armée vietnamienne grandit à vue d’œil pour préparer la Campagne des frontières de l’automne-hiver 1950 (100).

In using “ému” and “profondément gravées dans mon cœur” to describe his reaction, *Đặng* conveys the emotional and psychological impact of Chinese support on *Việt Minh* militants such as himself to the French-speaking reader. As a result of Chinese and international support, *Đặng*, his fellow *Việt Minh* militants, and *Việt Minh*

sympathizers no longer felt alone or isolated in the world. Although they were fighting against France—a major world power—they also had the backing of two other major world powers, which strengthened their morale. Đặng also partly attributes the Việt Minh's victory during the Battle of the Route Coloniale in 1950 to the support of international allies.

Although Đặng describes the manner in which political and moral support from allied nations fortified the morale of Việt Minh militants, he and Ngô primarily focus on military support when discussing contributions from international allies. Their emphasis on military assistance reflects the eventual outcome of the French-Indochina War in which the Việt Minh defeated France through military means. Conversely, the FLN militant-authors devote more of their memoirs to the political and moral support provided by partner nations, which accordingly reflects the political nature of the FLN's victory. Whereas Đặng and Ngô highlight the presence of foreign weapons and military advisors, Azzedine and Yacef delve into the encouragements offered by their sympathizers, as well as political and diplomatic backing provided by their allies.

Like the texts by Ngô and Đặng, Azzedine's life writing stresses the significance of political and moral support from socialist countries. Although the French government prohibited the dissemination of international media outlets that voiced sympathy or outright support for the FLN's cause, FLN militants nonetheless managed to procure international press reports through clandestine means. Reading the international press and listening to international radio—particularly Nasser's Voice of the Arabs and Moroccan and Tunisian radio stations—allowed FLN militants and Algerian villagers sympathetic to the cause to realize:

Les pays occidentaux ne nous aimaient pas. De toute façon, nous ne comptions que sur nos propres forces. Mais il était pourtant très réconfortant d'apprendre que la Chine, le Vietnam, certains pays socialistes et tous les pays arabes épousaient notre cause ; que des alliés nous appuyaient, nous défendaient dans les grands organismes internationaux... (Azzedine 174).

Like Đặng, Azzedine illustrates that moral and political support from international states boosted the morale of the revolutionaries, and convinced them that independence was inevitable. In addition to learning of international support from clandestine media outlines, Azzedine experienced it first-hand on a trip to China and North Vietnam. In 1959, he and thirteen other high-ranking ALN officers were part of a military delegation to China. They stopped at Moscow on the way, but the visit to the Soviet Union proved to be “Aseptisée : les autorités nous font visiter les musées et semblent se soucier de notre révolution comme d'une partie de billes. Dommage !” (Azzedine 308). This was the extent of Azzedine's description of their time in the Soviet Union, which reflects the lukewarm Soviet policy toward the FLN at the time (Connelly 226-230). While Khrushchev eventually offered de facto recognition of and military aid to the FLN in 1960, Soviet ministers only met unofficially with FLN members and withheld military and political support when the FLN delegation visited Moscow in 1959 (Connelly 226).

However, the Beijing visit was an immense political and military success for the FLN. As soon as the FLN delegation arrived, Azzedine was extremely moved by the Chinese welcome:

A Pékin, autre ambiance. Un millier d’officiers chinois et d’attachés militaires nous attendent. Nous sommes reçus comme des ministres. A notre descente d’avion, un peloton rend les honneurs. Le drapeau algérien, notre drapeau, flotte librement dans le ciel de Pékin, à côté du drapeau chinois. Exécuté à la perfection, notre hymne national nous revient, familier, amplifié, insolite à mon oreille, car je l’ai surtout entendu chanté par les hommes du maquis (308).

Not only does the Chinese reception exude respect and support for the FLN, it also conveys political legitimacy. In treating the delegates as official representatives of Algeria, displaying the Algerian flag, and playing the Kassaman, China bestows the FLN with the same level of recognition as it would for any other official delegation from an independent nation. In selecting the adverb “librement” to describe the fluttering of the Algerian flag, Azzedine hints to the reader that the FLN delegates had greater political agency in Communist China than in their French-occupied ancestral homeland. This was also the first time in which Azzedine heard the Kassaman in an official setting, which slightly unsettles him as he had been accustomed to a rough version sung by fellow militants. Nonetheless, hearing the Kassaman—albeit in an unfamiliar setting and style—adds to Azzedine’s realization that the FLN finally achieved political recognition.

Azzedine then delves into the moral and political significance of the trip, noting that “Notre voyage constitue un nouveau pas pour le F.L.N.” because “ Pour la première fois, nous avons exprimé les axes fondamentaux de notre politique étrangère” (308). For Azzedine:

Mais limiter l'intérêt de notre mission au strict plan matériel, politique et militaire serait en faire une caricature. Comment traduire notre émotion devant l'accueil qui nous était réservé, pour la première fois, dans un pays étranger, hors du monde arabe ? Nous étions reconnus. Cette réception était un hommage rendu à notre peuple en lutte. Devant l'immense défilé du 1^{er} mai 1959, perdus parmi les innombrables délégations des tribunes officielles, nous avons senti la fin de notre isolement. Nous pensions à nos maquis lointains, à nos combattants solitaires, et voici que par-dessus les mers et l'espace, un pont s'établissait (308-309).

Similar to *Đặng*, who said that “Le peuple et l’armée vietnamiens ne sont plus seuls” (100) thanks to Chinese support and recognition, Azzedine attributes Chinese recognition to the end of the FLN’s political isolation. Here, Azzedine shows the reader that China’s recognition was especially significant because China—unlike countries in the Arab world—does not share a cultural, ethnic, or religious affinity with the FLN and yet nonetheless pays tribute to the FLN’s struggle. For Azzedine, Chinese support transcends the boundaries of culture, ethnicity, religion, and geography, thereby fortifying the morale of the visiting Algerian delegation. In fact, Azzedine consistently emphasizes the FLN delegation’s emotional reaction to the Chinese reception. Azzedine notes “Nous attendîmes dans l’émotion et la ferveur” to see Mao, and subsequently describes the two-hour meeting as “Inoubliable” (309). In referring to Mao as “ce grand homme de l’histoire” (309), Azzedine reiterates to the reader the magnitude of the FLN visit to China, which signified that the FLN was no longer a minor and unknown rebel group. On the contrary, the FLN had become noteworthy enough to meet with the leader

of one of the major world powers and who also led a successful revolution against a foreign occupier.

After speaking with Mao, the delegation met with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who further encouraged the group. As Azzedine recounts, “Toute notre mission en Chine nous conforta dans la voie de l’indépendance. Chou En-Lai avait évoqué les difficultés du peuple chinois avant la prise du pouvoir” (310), once again showing that the visit strengthened the morale of the FLN delegation. The Chinese promised to give the FLN their “appui total et sans faille,” and, according to Azzedine “Leur amitié ne se démentit jamais” (313). Immediately following the visit, China provided the FLN with military and financial aid.

The delegation then arrived in North Vietnam, where they met with General Giáp, Hồ Chí Minh, and Việt Minh combatants who had fought at Điện Biên Phủ. According to Azzedine, Hồ Chí Minh “nous accorda plusieurs heures d’entretien et nous prodigua conseils et encouragements : « Vous conquerez tôt ou tard votre indépendance, nous dit-il, ne perdez pas espoir, c’est le cours de l’histoire »” (314). While the Vietnamese forces did not offer the same level of financial or military assistance as the Chinese—primarily because North Vietnam was embroiled in its own war at the time—Azzedine nonetheless shows that Hồ Chí Minh offered the FLN moral support. Hồ Chí Minh’s encouragements are especially significant because his forces had recently achieved what the FLN was seeking at the time: the overthrow of French colonization. His statement also reveals that he believed Algerian independence to be inevitable, once again boosting the morale and motivation of the visiting Algerian delegates.

Solidarity, decolonization, and inspiration

In addition to providing the FLN delegation with moral support, the trip to North Vietnam illustrates a strong sense of solidarity between the Vietnamese and Algerian militants. Azzedine describes the extremely warm welcome as follows:

Au Vietnam-Nord, nous redécouvâmes l'enthousiasme et l'exubérance. Notre délégation fut accueillie dans un fougueux désordre. Le général Giap était présent et, levant les bras dans un geste d'affection, s'esclaffa : « Ah ! bonjour les camarades algériens !... » Des Algériens au Vietnam-Nord, en mai 1959, c'était la rencontre de deux peuples en lutte ! La fraternité naturelle remplaçait le protocole. La garnison d'honneur d'Hanoi nous hissa sur ses épaules. L'hommage nous alla droit au cœur : la garnison était composée d'anciens combattants de Dien Bien Phu... (Azzedine 313-314).

Here, Azzedine shows the reader that Algerian and Vietnamese militants were “natural brothers” united by a common goal of national independence. As Kateb Yacine writes in his essays on Vietnam, “le peuple vietnamien est un peuple frère” (*Minuit* 301) because “les Vietnamiens avaient mené la lutte contre l'ennemi commun” (*Minuit* 313). *L'oued en crue*, a 1979 novel by female Algerian writer Badiya Bachir also highlights the anti-colonial solidarity that united the Algerian and Vietnamese nationalists. One of the main characters, Mouloud, works at a factory in Paris and often discusses politics with other Algerian workers. As news of the French-Indochina war reached Paris, “Tous les ouvriers algériens souhaitent la victoire de l'armée du Viet-Minh. Parfois l'un d'eux allait-il jusqu'à évoquer la nécessité absolue pour eux de suivre l'exemple des

Vietnamiens et de libérer un jour futur l'Algérie" (87), showing that Vietnam served as an example for Algerian independence.

In mentioning that General Giáp referred to the FLN delegates as his "Algerian comrades," Azzedine shows that the feeling of fraternity was mutual. Indeed, Azzedine's description of the welcome reception exudes both ebullience and brotherhood, both through the use of terms such as "enthousiasme," "exubérance," "fougueux," "affection," and "cœur," as well as the imagery of the Điện Biên Phủ veterans hoisting their Algerian counterparts on their shoulders. Azzedine includes this gesture of brotherliness in his account because it serves as an appropriate metaphor of the Algerian struggle, which was partly inspired, built upon, and uplifted by the Vietnamese victory against the French during the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ. He then briefly details the common history between the Vietnamese and Algerian peoples:

Ces gestes, ces rires, cette joie, manifestaient des liens anciens et profonds qui existaient entre nos deux peuples. Déjà, en 1920, *l'Etoile nord-africaine* collaborait étroitement au *Paria*, journal du mouvement anticolonialiste dont le directeur était Hô Chi Minh (Azzedine 314).

Once again, Azzedine emphasizes the solidarity and linkage between the two revolutionary movements. As Robert Mortimer argues in his article "Algeria, Vietnam, and Afro-Asian Solidarity," "In a meaningful sense, the Indochinese and Algerian wars were part of a single historical process" that connected the Vietnamese and Algerian peoples (61). As part of the FLN visit, Azzedine recounts that the Vietnamese garrison "nous emmenèrent dans la cuvette de Dien Bien Phu et nous expliquèrent les détails de la bataille. Nous rencontrâmes les déserteurs nord-africains de l'Armée française qui

étaient restés au Vietnam après la guerre de libération” (314). Here, Azzedine alludes to a theme that occurs sporadically throughout his political memoir: the FLN militant who served in Indochina, sympathized with the Việt Minh’s cause, and deserted the French Army. In fact, the opening scene of *On nous appelait fellaghas* mentions “Aïssa Chaoui, un gars qui s’est battu en Indochine et a déserté” (11). In mentioning Indochina on the first page of his political memoir, Azzedine places the Algerian struggle within the context of the global decolonization movements of the time while alluding to the impact of Indochina on the Algerian Revolution. Later in the text, he meets Sirbah, a munition specialist who had served in the French Army and “s’était déjà distingué en Indochine en fournissant aux patriotes vietnamiens des grenades, des munitions, et, à l’occasion, des renseignements” (104). This recurring theme reflects the historical reality of desertions by French Army soldiers of North African background. During the French-Indochina War, the Việt Minh distributed French- and Arabic-language leaflets targeting French Army soldiers of North African descent, appealing to their nationalist and anti-colonialist sentiments and encouraging them to desert (Gilbert 134). One Algerian defector, Ouach Ouach Ibrahim, encouraged fellow Algerians serving in Indochina to join the Việt Minh and later served under General Giáp as the Việt Minh liaison to African and French prisoners of war (Gilbert 134). Algerian author Kateb Yacine also refers to Algerian desertions in *L’homme aux sandales de caoutchouc*, in which a North African conscript in Indochina named Mohamed says: “Moi, les Viets, / Je ne peux pas tirer sur eux, / C’est plus fort que moi. / Et quand je les vois / Monter à l’assaut, / Je suis fier, comme si c’étaient / Des gens de mon village” (121). The theme of Algerian deserters has also

been represented in film, particularly the 1998 joint cinematic production entitled *Fleur de lotus* (*Bong Sen*) by Algerian director Amar Laskri and Vietnamese director Trần Dac.

The reception that Azzedine and his fellow delegates received in Vietnam also highlights the importance of the French defeat in Vietnam to Algerian militants. As Azzedine describes, “L’hommage nous alla droit au cœur : la garnison était composée d’anciens combattants de Dien Bien Phu...” (314). Here, Azzedine shows the French-speaking reader that meeting Việt Minh veterans inspired and motivated the Algerian delegates, as Điện Biên Phủ served as a concrete example of a successful overthrow of French colonization. Indeed, numerous anticolonial intellectuals and scholars of colonial history have commented on the magnitude of the Vietnamese victory at Điện Biên Phủ. In *Imaginaires de guerre*, Benjamin Stora notes that Điện Biên Phủ was the “première grande crise militaire de l’« homme blanc » depuis fort longtemps” (13). In an essay entitled “La route de Diên Biên Phu,” Kateb Yacine writes, “Combien d’Algériens, qui étaient allés au Viêt Nam en mercenaires, sont devenus des patriotes au contact du Việt-minh... Ils furent par la suite parmi les combattants les plus éprouvés dans la guerre de libération” (*Minuit* 312). In the same essay, Yacine explains:

Pour le peuple algérien, pour tous les peuples opprimés, Diên Biên Phu éclata comme un coup de foudre dans un ciel orageux. Un peuple colonisé venait de vaincre sur le champ de bataille la grande puissance coloniale réputée invincible. Pour tous les peuples qui subissaient ou subissent encore l’esclavage et l’humiliation, Diên Biên Phu, c’était à la fois Octobre et Stalingrad : une révolution à l’échelle du monde et un appel irrésistible aux damnés de la Terre (*Minuits* 312).

As he illustrates the significance of the battle, Yacine inserts a noticeable reference to Frantz Fanon's text on violent decolonization. In fact, Yacine draws on Fanon's idea that Điện Biên Phủ would inspire all the colonized peoples of the world. Fanon's title, *Les Damnés de la terre*, is an obvious allusion to the opening line of the socialist anthem *L'Internationale*—"Debout, les damnés de la terre"—which calls for a global revolt against oppression. For Fanon, Điện Biên Phủ serves as the model for worldwide anti-colonialist uprisings:

La grande victoire du peuple vietnamien à Dien-Bien-Phu n'est plus, à strictement parler, une victoire vietnamienne. À partir de juillet 1954, le problème que se sont posé les peuples coloniaux a été le suivant : 'Que faut-il faire pour réaliser un Dien-Bien-Phu ? Comment s'y prendre ?' De la possibilité de ce Dien-Bien-Phu, aucun colonisé ne pouvait plus douter (69).

Aimé Césaire echoes the inspirational nature of the Vietnamese revolution in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, in which he praises "l'admirable résistance des peuples coloniaux, que symbolisent actuellement le Viêt-Nam de façon éclatante" (74). This sentiment is also reflected in *L'opium et le bâton*, a novel by Algerian author Mouloud Mammeri. As the main protagonist, Bachir, reflects on the Algerian War, he notes "C'était les Viets qui leur ont tourné la tête avec leur guerre d'artisans, leurs officiers illettrés [...] Ce que les *nha qué* immergés dans les rizières ont fait, ils rêvent de le recommencer dans les djebels" (38). As Bachir becomes gradually involved with the independence movement, he thinks to himself, "Điện Biên Phủ... Rappelle-toi Điện Biên

Phu...” (41) in order to improve his morale and convince himself to fully adopt the FLN’s cause.

In emphasizing the political significance and psychological inspiration of Điện Biên Phủ on the FLN delegation, Azzedine contributes his firsthand account to the above discourse by postcolonial intellectuals and scholars. Through his political memoir, Azzedine shows that, as an FLN militant, he was personally motivated after meeting with Điện Biên Phủ veterans, exploring the battlegrounds, and learning of the details of the battle. Whereas the Vietnamese victory inspired the Algerian Revolution, the FLN hoped that its own revolution would inspire further decolonization movements across the world, particularly on its native continent of Africa. In an essay entitled “Décolonisation et indépendance,” published in *El Moudjahid* on April 16, 1958, Frantz Fanon argues that “Le peuple algérien sait que les peuples d’Afrique noire suivent avec sympathie et enthousiasme sa lutte contre le colonialisme français. Le peuple algérien n’ignore pas que chaque coup porté contre l’oppression française en Algérie démantèle la puissance colonialiste” (*Révolution africaine* 121-122). While the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa, still subjugated by colonialism during the Algerian Revolution, were not able to provide the FLN with the same level of material and financial support as an independent ally like China, Algerian revolutionaries nonetheless believed that they enjoyed the moral support—via the “sympathie et enthousiasme”—of fellow colonized peoples across Africa. In fact, Fanon devotes several essays in *El Moudjahid* to the impact of the Algerian Revolution on Sub-Saharan Africa. In an essay aptly entitled, “La guerre d’Algérie et la libération des hommes,” published on November 1, 1958, he writes:

Il n'y a pas un territoire occupé en Afrique qui n'ait été remanié dans ses perspectives d'avenir par la guerre d'Algérie. Le peuple algérien est conscient de l'importance du combat dans lequel il est engagé. Depuis 1954 il a posé comme mot d'ordre la libération nationale de l'Algérie et la libération du continent africain (*Révolution africaine* 166-167).

For Fanon, the Algerian struggle was significant to the future of not only French colonies in Africa, but also their British counterparts. "L'Algérie à Accra," published on December 24, 1958, affirms that the Algerian Revolution impacted all Sub-Saharan Africans, regardless of whether they were "des Sénégalais, des Camerounais ou des Sud-Africains" (*Révolution africaine* 168). The essay's own title illustrates that the revolution extends from Algeria to the capital of Ghana, a British colony. Another essay published nearly two years later on January 5, 1960 further emphasizes the solidarity between Africans colonized by the French and British: "nous, Algériens, ne dissocions pas le combat que nous menons de celui des Rhodésiens ou des Kényans" (*Révolution africaine* 191-192). In writing, "nous, Algériens," Fanon identifies as Algerian despite his Afro-Martiniquais origins and thereby exemplifies the pan-African nationalism that he espouses.

Both life writings reveal that the Algerian militant-authors were cognizant of the impact of the Algerian Revolution on the entire African continent. For Saadi Yacef, the French government understood that the Algerian struggle "comportait le risque inévitable de modifier le contenu de l'ensemble des « possessions » africaines de la France" (1: 346). Furthermore, Yacef posits that a liberated Algeria would even prompt independent African nations to resist the burgeoning neocolonialist networks that were forming across

the continent. In a similar manner, Azzedine's political memoir closely echoes Fanon's essays in *El Moudjahid* in associating the liberation of Algeria with that of Africa.

According to Azzedine, the FLN published a French- and Arabic-language journal in which:

Notre guerre révolutionnaire n'y était pas représentée comme l'espoir du seul peuple algérien, mais comme le symbole des luttes du tiers monde. Sur nous étaient fixés les regards du continent africain, dans l'attente de sa libération [...] Nous ne manquions jamais de rappeler notre solidarité avec nos prédécesseurs africains (177).

According to Azzedine, the Algerian Revolution was not just about Algerian nationalism, but was also intended to be a turning point in the decolonization of Africa. During the FLN visit to China, Azzedine explains this concept to the Chinese Communist Party, arguing that "Derrière la lutte du peuple algérien, toute l'Afrique est en marche" (312). His memoir provides a concrete example of pan-African solidarity and support with the mention of Ali, an FLN recruit of Senegalese origin who had deserted the French Army during the Suez Crisis in 1956. Azzedine says that, "Pour nous, l'amitié d'Ali le Sénégalais, ce fut un peu, comme si toute l'Afrique s'était trouvée à nos côtés" (113), thereby strengthening the morale of Azzedine and his fellow militants.

Yet Azzedine and Yacef also view their revolution as having an international impact beyond the African continent. For Azzedine:

Notre lutte n'était pas seulement nationaliste, c'était celle de tous les hommes qui se battaient dans le monde pour une libération. L'Algérie était à l'avant-garde des combats de l'avenir et annonçait, avec la

participation, non pas d'une élite en mal de privilèges, mais des masses populaires les plus défavorisées, l'émergence des peuples du tiers monde (179).

Here, Azzedine promotes a global solidarity between the oppressed peoples of the world and saw the Algerian Revolution as a symbol of resistance against colonial oppression, similar to how he and postcolonial writers like Fanon and Kateb conceived of the Vietnamese victory over France in 1954. During his trip to China, Azzedine and the rest of the FLN delegation advocated for a global decolonization movement that involved all the oppressed peoples of the world, arguing that “Une meilleure coordination des mouvements de libération nationale en Asie, en Afrique, en Amérique latine, jointe au mouvement ouvrier international, facilitera la décolonisation” (312). Yacef also echoes the desire to inspire additional decolonization movements across the colonial world, explaining that “nous souhaitons vivement voir éclore des soulèvements populaires partout dans le monde pour forcer l'impérialisme en général et le français en particulier à reculer. Une manière pour nous de nous consolider avec les autres peuples” (1: 325). As Vietnam's August Revolution inspired Algerian revolutionaries, FLN militants such as Azzedine and Yacef hoped that their struggle would extend beyond Algeria's borders to galvanize independence struggles around the world.

Support from French sympathizers

In addition to cultivating support and solidarity with like-minded allies, the life writings reveal that both the Việt Minh and FLN received support from left-leaning French sympathizers in metropolitan France and the colonies. Aside from intellectuals

and writers, some French soldiers and even *colons* were sympathetic to the nationalist cause in Vietnam and Algeria. As Jacques Doyon illustrates in *Les Soldats blancs de Hô Chi Minh*, some French soldiers with anti-fascist or Communist leaning ideologies either deserted or defected to the Việt Minh. This is exemplified in an entry from January 1951, in which Ngô remarks “En France il y a des patriotes français qui mènent le même combat que nous. Regardez Henri Martin... C’est un officier français qui a été mis en prison parce qu’il a refusé de se battre contre le peuple du Vietnam” (162). Here, Ngô refers to the most famous Việt Minh sympathizer, Henri Martin, who was a French Communist militant deployed to Vietnam in 1945. Martin initially believed that the French Army was in Vietnam in order to liberate the Vietnamese from Japanese occupation, but quickly realized that he and his fellow soldiers were sent to reconquer Vietnam for France after the departure of the defeated Japanese Army following World War II (Rice-Maximin 124).

Martin’s letters to his parents, now incorporated into the text *L’Affaire Henri Martin* with commentaries by Jean-Paul Sartre, illustrate his strong opposition to the war. In a letter dating from April 21, 1946, Martin writes that the French Army was in Vietnam to fight “*contre des hommes qui veulent être libres*” (39). He underlined these words in the original letter in order to emphasize the morally abject reason behind the war. Another letter from May 18, 1946 touches on the themes discussed in Chapter 2, notably France’s hypocritical condemnation of Nazi occupation during the Vichy era while condoning its own occupation of the colonies after World War II. In the letter, Martin describes witnessing legionnaires who gleefully burned villages, stole from villagers, and killed civilians, remarking: “C’est ça la civilisation ! [...] En Indochine,

l'armée française se conduit comme les Boches le faisaient chez nous. Je suis complètement dégoûté de voir ça. Pourquoi nos avions mitraillent-ils (tous les jours) des pêcheurs sans défense ? Pourquoi nos soldats pillent, brûlent et tuent ? Pour civiliser ?” (*L’Affaire* 41). As examined in Chapter 2, Hồ Chí Minh’s early writings—in addition to texts by Fanon and Césaire—consistently emphasize the theme of colonization as a barbaric act that contradicts the colonial regime’s narrative of bringing civilization to the colonies. Not only did Martin oppose the French-Indochina War on moral grounds, he also concluded that France would not be able to win over the Vietnamese population. A letter from March 20-21, 1947 describes French troops injuring a Vietnamese woman and killing her child. Referring to the father of the dead child and husband of the wounded woman, Martin writes, “Maintenant que nous lui avons tué son enfant et blessé sa femme, cet Annamite, s’il n’était pas encore viet-minh, le deviendra. Voilà comment nous pacifions” (58). Three days later, on March 24, 1947, Martin notes that “Toute la population est viet-minh, on ne peut tout de même pas tuer toute une population” (59), reflecting the Việt Minh’s popular support as discussed in Chapter 3.

After distributing anti-war materials in 1949, Martin was arrested in 1950 (Rice-Maximin 124). He was ultimately convicted of demoralizing the French Army and sentenced to five years of solitary confinement, which Ngô refers to in his 1951 entry (Rice-Maximin 127). The French Communist Party and progressive intellectuals such as Sartre protested the sentence. The events surrounding Martin’s arrest, trial, sentence, and protests became known as the Henri Martin Affair, and Martin subsequently became a symbol of French resistance to the Indochina War in France and Vietnam, hence his appearance in Ngô’s journal. As Roy Pascal asserts, “The diarist notes down what, at

that moment, seems of importance to him; its ultimate, long-range significance cannot be assessed” (3). Therefore, the reference to Henri Martin and “des patriotes français qui mènent le même combat que nous” (162) shows that Ngô believed that Henri Martin’s case was significant enough to include in his journal. In acknowledging that some French citizens like Henri Martin were persecuted for their anti-colonialist activities, Ngô reveals that he was aware that the Việt Minh had supporters in France who were willing to risk their livelihoods in order to protest the French-Indochina War.

While Ngô only mentions Henri Martin—Đặng does not refer to any French sympathizers—the two Algerian militant-authors allude to far more metropolitan collaborators in their political memoirs. Azzedine recounts the story of Dr. Pierre Chaulet, described as “un jeune médecin progressiste qui, avec sa femme Claudine, s’est engagé à fond dans la révolution, aux côtés des Algériens” (19). According to Azzedine, Pierre Chaulet and his wife transported weapons, medicine, and even FLN militants between Algiers and Palestro, escaping suspicion because of their European origins. Furthermore, Chaulet turned his apartment into a clandestine medical school where he “apprend aux étudiants s’apprêtant à gagner le djebel à faire des piqûres” (19). A close friend of Frantz Fanon, Chaulet renounced his French citizenship and acquired Algerian citizenship after independence, and subsequently lived in Algiers until his death in 2011 (Zeilig 18, 74). In addition to the Chaulets, Azzedine reveals that the FLN received logistical assistance from French sympathizers in Europe. Azzedine particularly praises the efforts of Philippe Bernier, the director of a left-leaning media outlet “qui diffuse les informations provenant du F.L.N. et soutient l’idée de la décolonisation en Algérie et en Afrique noire” (326). Bernier used his contacts to procure false identity cards for FLN

militants so that they could travel to France and Switzerland. One of the cars transporting FLN militants through Europe “est conduite par l’épouse de Jacques Derogy, le journaliste de *L’Express*” (Azzedine 328). Bernier’s secretary, Claude, also assisted the FLN by pretending to be Azzedine’s fiancée as not to raise suspicions.

In addition to left-leaning supporters such as the Chaulets and members of the French press, Azzedine makes a point to show the French-speaking reader that he also received support from unlikely sources. A pied noir—whom Azzedine refuses to name—owned a farm near Aïn-Bessem and provided intelligence and financial assistance to the FLN. The landowner “resta en Algérie jusqu’à l’Indépendance, nous rendant quelques services sans jamais être inquiété. Il a vendu sa ferme au juste prix et il vit maintenant en France. C’est pourquoi je tais son nom...” (Azzedine 75). In addition to showing his appreciation for the sympathizer’s support, Azzedine declines to name the landowner out of respect for his privacy and life. Here, Azzedine shows the reader that the Algerian War was still controversial when he published his memoir 17 years after independence in 1979, and he feared retaliation against the landowner. In another episode, while imprisoned in Tablat, Azzedine engages in conversation with the French soldier in charge of bringing food to prisoners. Despite serving in Algeria, the soldier said to Azzedine: “j’en ai rien à foutre des conneries de l’armée. Et puis, je suis du côté de certaines causes. Aie du courage, mon pote. Regarde les Vietnamiens comme ils en ont...” (83). Not only does the soldier reveal his dislike for the French Army’s actions, he essentially supports the FLN’s cause, actively encourages Azzedine to persevere with the struggle, and uses the Vietnamese victory to motivate Azzedine. Moreover, the soldier considers Azzedine to be his “pote,” or buddy, suggesting a sense of brotherhood and solidarity that

starkly contrasts with his position as Azzedine's prison guard. In including this episode in his political memoir, Azzedine shows the reader that he received moral support from an unlikely source: a French Army prison guard.

As seen in Chapter 4, Saadi Yacef categorically labels all *pieds-noirs* as colonialists, arguing that “les forces armées, la police et le peuplement étranger formaient un bloc homogène” (1: 261). In doing so, he echoes Memmi, who posits that “*Pour le colonisé, tous les Européens des colonies sont des colonisateurs de fait*” (145). Yet Yacef does not consider all French people to be colonialists. He does caveat his statement by acknowledging the presence of a small number of *pieds-noirs* who either supported or actively contributed to the FLN's cause. Yacef praises Fernand Yveton, a *pied-noir* Communist Party member who was arrested and guillotined for planting a bomb for the FLN in a gas factory (Evans 184). As Yacef recounts, Fernand Yveton “n'était pas comme les autres « petits blancs »” and had “en toute conscience, franchi les derniers degrés de l'hésitation afin d'épouser une cause pour laquelle des milliers de personnes avaient déjà payé de leur vie” (1: 333). Yveton is the only *pied-noir* FLN sympathizer that Yacef mentions throughout his two-volume memoir. While Yacef tends to consider the *pieds-noirs*—with Yveton being one of the few exceptions—as a bloc determined to maintain their power in Algeria, he acknowledges that a portion of the intelligentsia in metropolitan France were either sympathetic to the FLN or critical of the Algerian War. As indiscriminate violence and torture continued during the Battle of Algiers, Yacef noticed:

Une forme d'indignation naîtra d'abord au sein de l'élite française. Des écrivains comme Jean Paul Sartre, Pierre Henri Simon, d'autres hommes

de lettres ainsi que des artistes, des journalistes, des hommes du culte s'indignent de la torture qu'on inflige aux Algériens indifféremment. Des réseaux clandestins naissent, comme ceux de Henri Curiel et Francis Jeanson. Un regain de conscience s'affiche partout en France, sauf évidemment chez les conservateurs. L'approche est d'abord imprécise, timide même. Puis, de plus en plus nette, elle envahit les cercles de réflexion, réveille les humanistes ; des chaînes de solidarité se constituent (2: 248).

Here, Yacef uses his political memoir to show his appreciation for French activists who supported the FLN's cause. Sartre wrote numerous essays to criticize French actions in Algeria and voice support for the FLN. In fact, most of the essays in *Situations, V: colonialisme et néo-colonialisme*—notably “Le Colonialisme est un système” and “Une Victoire”—concern the French-Algerian War. Henri Curiel, Francis Jeanson, Félix Guattari, and other French sympathizers known as *les porteurs de valise* assisted the FLN by transporting cash and documents throughout France and Europe (Ross 51). In praising the role of these particular French individuals, Yacef shows the French-speaking reader that he and the FLN were cognizant that influential writers, intellectuals, and journalists supported the Algerian cause and did their best to advance Algerian independence.

The assistance provided by these members of the French intelligentsia not only motivated Yacef and his fellow FLN militants to continue their struggle, but also led to the creation of “Opération Séduction,” an FLN endeavor aimed at influencing prominent French individuals. If the FLN determined that the individual was sympathetic to the

Algerian cause, the FLN agent would discuss “les horreurs commises par les troupes de Massu durant la grève de 8 jours. A l’appui de ses dires, l’agent remet alors un dossier aussi complet que possible sur la question de la torture pratiquée massivement en Algérie” (Yacef 2: 382). As a result, numerous renowned French individuals such as Maurice Garçon, Claude Bourdet, and other high-ranking officials became aware of the use of torture in Algeria (2: 383). The most famous recruit of “Opération Séduction” was Germaine Tillion, who secretly met with Yacef in Algiers in 1957. In his memoir, Yacef recounts in great detail his multiple conversations with Tillion regarding the FLN’s terrorist campaign and the French Army’s use of torture and executions (2: 383-425). During one of their exchanges, Tillion says “nos deux pays” to refer to France and Algeria. For Yacef, these three words were significant because they implied that Tillion—and perhaps others—were beginning to view Algeria as a separate and independent nation instead of a department of France. His reaction was: “Nos deux pays ! Mais c’était un progrès considérable qui confirmait que l’opinion publique en France à l’égard de la « question coloniale », avait évolué. Le « nos deux pays » de mon interlocutrice était un signe évident de progrès certes, mais il restait tellement à faire” (Yacef 2: 421-422). Once more, Yacef shows that cultivating the support of influential French individuals such as Tillion had a notable impact on the French public’s attitudes toward the war, thereby contributing to the FLN’s ultimate political victory.

Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef all reveal that military, political, and moral support from international allies strengthened their morale and motivated them to continue with their struggle. Even prior to both revolutions, Việt Minh and FLN leaders developed a concerted campaign to acquire international support, as they realized that

military and particularly political-diplomatic assistance from key allies was crucial to the success of their respective causes. The four militant-authors also use their writing to show the French-speaking reader that their respective revolutionary movements were at the forefront of the various decolonization efforts occurring on a global scale during the 1950s and 1960s. Directly witnessing and experiencing the support offered by sympathizers across the world—whether they were a major world power like China or a supporter like Jean-Paul Sartre from metropolitan France—convinced the four authors that victory was inevitable.

Conclusion

The Vietnamese and Algerian struggles for independence exacted a heavy toll on all countries involved. It is estimated that 500,000 Việt Minh militants lost their lives in the French-Indochina War. The French Forces incurred approximately 92,000 dead while 250,000 civilians, most of whom were Vietnamese, perished (Cook 397).

Although the Algerian Ministry of War Veterans lists 152,863 fallen FLN combatants, post-independence Algeria developed a narrative of “one million martyrs,” a figure that includes militants and civilians who died as a result of the war (Alexander and Keiger 6). According to official French Army records, French military losses in Algeria stand at 24,614 (Evans 337). The French military estimates that 19,000 French and Algerian civilians were killed by FLN terrorism, whereas 55,000 to 65,000 Algerian civilians died as a result of French military operations (Evans 337). Like so many aspects of both conflicts, death toll figures are disputed and remain controversial today.

Of the Vietnamese and Algerian survivors, few have published French-language accounts of their revolutionary experiences. Ngô Văn Chiêu’s *Journal d’un combattant Viet-Minh* (1955), Đặng Văn Việt’s *De la RC 4 à la N 4: la campagne des frontières* (2000), Si Azzedine’s *On nous appelait fellaghas* (1976), and Saadi Yacef’s two-volume *La Bataille d’Alger* (2002) all portray their respective author’s revolutionary experiences and reflections. Given the proliferation of memoirs by French veterans of both wars, these four life writings are especially valuable because they present an alternative perspective—one of the revolutionary militant—to the French-speaking reader.

The decision of Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef to publish in French is a calculated political move with the specific intention of addressing the French-speaking

reader from the former colonial power. In addition, the authors' texts—by virtue of their language of publication—also reach French-speakers across the Francophone world to whom the Vietnamese and Algerians are connected through a common colonial legacy. With these life writings, the four militant-authors show the French-speaking reader that four factors motivated them over the course of their revolutionary struggles. First, French Enlightenment and Revolutionary ideals, World War II and its aftermath, and Marxist-socialist principles all provided an ideological and philosophical framework that inspired Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef. Second, the support of the Vietnamese and Algerian populations was instrumental to the respective political-military objectives of the Việt Minh and FLN while simultaneously motivating the four militants to continue with their struggle. Third, despite the asymmetrical nature of the war, guerrilla tactics—notably the shock factor in psychological warfare—enabled the revolutionaries to attain their political-military objectives and strengthened their morale. Finally, military, political, and moral support from international allies lifted the spirits of the four combatants, making them realize that they were not alone in their struggle. In detailing these four motivating factors, the militant-authors show the French-speaking reader that they saw victory as inevitable.

In revealing the motivations, emotions, actions, reactions, and reflections of the authors, these four life writings humanize and personalize the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions through the eyes of Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef, enabling the four authors to transmit their unique experiences and perspectives to posterity. In doing so, the four texts not only reveal the way in which their respective authors influenced the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions, but also how the authors were themselves

influenced by the historical events through which they lived. As these four political memoirs have been consulted and cited in scholarly research from the disciplines of history and political science, Ngô, Đặng, Azzedine, and Yacef have been successful in using their writing as a form of political engagement through which they address the French-speaking reader while contributing to the body of knowledge on the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions. However, the four texts remain relatively unknown within the disciplines of literary studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies despite their relevance to those fields. With this dissertation, I hope to contribute an original and in-depth analysis of these four life writings to the existing research on the Vietnamese and Algerian Revolutions and show that the four authors' revolutionary struggles and writings enabled them to leave their mark on the world using both the sword and the pen.

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