THE ORIGIN OF THE ALGERIAN PROLETARIAT

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During the period of primitive accumulation of capital, the rising French bourgeoisie had relied primarily on the exploitation of the precapitalist (peasant and feudal) sectors of French society. However, once these internal precapitalist sectors were fully subordinated to the market, the French bourgeois-capitalist nation-state intensified its colonial expansion. Thus in 1830 Algeria, a semi-feudal archaic state, was invaded. Between 1830 and 1954 France organized one of the most thoroughly colonized countries of its empire, and as a result of this colonization an Algerian working class emerged and grew rapidly. Here I shall reconstruct the character of the Algerian precolonial social formation and then analyze the political, military, and economic factors underlying the emergence of the Algerian proletariat.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE ALGERIAN PRECOLONIAL SOCIAL FORMATION

Geographically, Algeria has been characterized since antiquity by four broad ecological zones: (1) mountain valleys surrounded by Mediterranean forests, (2) agricultural plains and high plateaus situated in the humid terrain of the north, separated from (3) the arid Saharan zone by (4) an intermediate steppe region. Within these distinct geographical zones there are numerous microecological systems. These ecological environments both conditioned and were conditioned by the social formations that emerged in relation to them. As is the case with all other such social formations, the Algerian precolonial socioeconomic system was created by the specific historical experiences of the people; the system was gradually enriched by additional concepts derived from the *Kuran*, the *Hadith* (the prophetic commentaries) and the corpus of customary (*urf*) and Islamic Law. Thus a certain ideologico-legal system emerged as the superstructure of Algerian society.

Islam, as an all-embracing religious-secular doctrine, constituted, *a posteriori*, the frame of reference of this ideologico-legal "apparatus" which rationalized the legitimacy of the power relationships institutionalized by the predominant classes. But the social norms and rules that emerged to channel the political and economic activities of precolonial Algeria were geared to production for use rather than for commodity exchange. This was most evident in the rural communities, while in the urban centers artisans and merchants were involved to a certain extent in the production of commodities for exchange. Thus, Maxime Rodinson concluded appropriately that, "No Moslem country had ever experienced a capitalist economic regime before the contemporary period," although a "mercantile sector had been undeniably developed under diverse aspects, the most noticeable of which was the commercial one" [1].

However, in Algeria the volume of trade and manufacturing never exceeded the production of the agricultural sector, which was based on microfundia. The nature of the political regime was not conducive to large-scale manu-

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facturing activities oriented toward the accumulation of capital. In fact, four years before the invasion of Algiers (the capital city) by the colonial army, the French Consul reported that the "commerce of this country has been ruined by the governors and military commanders" [2]. Another official document (in the 1830s) confirmed this consular report.

> By imposing its monopoly system, and by prohibiting the export of indigenous products, the government had ruined the networks of commerce and almost annihilated agriculture in the kingdom. The monopoly over the fishing of coral in the eastern coast and the export of wool, animal skins, wax, and wheat out of the country through the port of Bône was granted to France (Compagnie d'Afrique) for the amount of 30,000 [Spanish] dollars per year. The Bey of Oran received also 30,000 [Spanish] dollars from a firm for the right of export monopoly from this entire province. Animal skins, wax, and wool were included in these public monopolies that the government sold every year to the highest bidder. . . . Export of olive oil and finished leathers was strictly forbidden except when these products were destined for the provinces of the Ottoman Empire [3].

As a direct consequence of the monopoly system that favored the European trading companies at the expense of the national bourgeoisie, Algerian merchants were eliminated from international trade [4]. Colonial Algeria is therefore a typical example of the way in which relations between the international capitalist merchants and the precapitalist oligarchs are patterned. Under such circumstances, the development of local trade, which is a prerequisite for the initiation of primitive capitalist accumulation, becomes impossible.

THE SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE ALGERIAN PRECOLONIAL STATE

The socioeconomic and political organization of precolonial Algeria was articulated by inexpugnable segmentary structures. This state organization was founded upon a multiplicity of rural tribal or lineage systems. The country was divided into four provinces. The province of Algiers was considered as *Dar Sultan*, the House of the Sultan, because it was administered directly by the head of the state or *Dey*. The remaining three provinces were ruled by regional governors appointed by the Dey, who was always seconded by a lieutenant or *Khālifā*. The Dey was elected by the *Divan* (a council of notables). Upon assuming power, the Dey designated five ministers as his cabinet, each of whom assumed the direction of a department; the *Khaznaji* was in charge of the treasury; the *Agha* of the *Sipāhis* was the head of the land forces; the *Wakil al-Kharj* directed the navy and foreign affairs; the *Bāyt al-Mal* was the steward of the Dey's household; and the *Khujat al-Khayl* supervised the administrative channels between the capital and the provinces. The last received the provincial taxes and tributes raised for the state by the *beys* (heads of provinces). Each province was further divided into local districts administered by *qāids* appointed by the beys, or by *shaykhs* in the Arab regions and *amins* in Kabylia, the latter two types of officials being chosen by the people. These *qāids* could not exercise their authority without the explicit consent of the tribal *shaykhs* and *amins* [5]. In the case of the *awatān*, or principalities, a relative autonomy was maintained. These rural principalities were loosely linked to the political and economic organizations of the country through marketing networks, but as a whole they "were characterized by a great local variation in administrative usage, and by a semi-autonomy for the professional, religious, or ethnic groups" [6].

At the state level, the power structure was hierarchical; that is, political authority, both *de jure* and *de facto*, radiated from the center. At the provincial level, where the central administrative apparatus was replicated, the exercise of political power in the more rural areas nevertheless depended on the consensual allegiance expressed by the interconnected segmentary units, without any permanent acknowledgment of the right to enforce or impose such allegiance. This is in contradistinc-

tion to the political practice which prevailed in both the national and provincial administrative centers and their immediate hinterlands. Thus, at the regional and local levels, all really effective political authority was the result of the balance, opposition, and allocation of power generated through the interlinking units and subunits which defined this unusual segmentary state system of government.

To be more explicit, the basic unit of this sociopolitical system of rural Algeria was the tribe, in Arabic *qabyla* and in Berber *taqbilt* [7]. The concept of tribe was deliberately confused and ossified, first by the French colonial officials for the purpose of assigning themselves a "civilizing mission" in a tribal-stateless society, and then by anthropologists, who, accepting the theoretical premises of the colonial administrators, analyzed "tribal systems as final political units, more or less islands unto themselves" [8]. In the case under study, which does not exhaust other historical definitions of the tribe, each segment was socially and economically linked to other neighboring tribes, towns, and cities. They were all loosely tied to some organic governmental regional structures. All these "disparate" units shared a common culture. As Moslims, they maintained a continual contact with other Islamic states, both in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Orient, where caravans of pilgrims and traders maintained a steady flow of ideas and goods.

The *qabyla*, the basic sociopolitical unit, was subdivided into several agnatic lineages, composed of numerous interrelated nuclear or extended corporate families. A patriarch was the undisputed head of every household. The size of a tribe varied from a small cluster of hamlets dotting one or two mountain slopes to an immense unit occupying a wide region [9]. The patriarchal, extended corporate family was the group within which basic social interaction took place: sexual intercourse, child-rearing, socialization, and economic production and consumption. This corporate family consisted of households that were either organized into separate hearths or which lived together around a single hearth. The patterns of residence of these domestic corporate groupings varied. They either cohabited in a large house erected around a courtyard and containing several rooms, or they lived in widely separated dwellings, or, in the south, inhabited a *douar*, an encampment of nomads. In the north all the houses were surrounded by gardens and orchards.

All of these elemental family units were integrated into multi-crosscutting patrilineal descent groups that defined the social organization of each *machta*, or village. The various lineages that made up the *machta* community were incorporated into a *qabyla* that governed the various segments. Although all segmentary patrilineal societies contain inherent sources of friction that generate internal conflicts, their multiple crosscutting kinship networks, through a dynamic ideology of descent, act as a unifying force when the society is faced with a threat from without. As demonstrated by the stiff resistance put up against the invading French army, the apparent "weaknesses" that initially encouraged the aggressors to encroach upon the segmentary groups were transformed into highly cohesive, ramifying, voluntaristic, and yet resistant structures. In other words, in the face of a common enemy, the segmentary units act centripetally: the various social levels coalesce, while status and territorial distinctions fade. Conversely, when such pressures cease, the innumerable societal levels and social segments are redistributed as regional nuclei, and these are reintegrated into the more or less centralized system.

The *qabyla* was based on isomorphic substructures. In fact, every *douar* and every *machta* among the sedentary population possessed a local patriarchal council, called a *jemaā*, which made the major socioeconomic and political decisions in the community. The members of this assembly chose the most influential man to become their *shaykh* or

amin [10]. Rural Algerian social organization could then be described as having "leaders emanating from the collectivity; freely debated decisions between the heads of different families; a cohesive solidarity of the members of the tribe" [11]. Even the tax obligations imposed by the state were divided by these local leaders among families. Practically all conflicts were resolved within this tribal social unit without any outside intervention; the supreme authority of the state was resorted to only under exceptional circumstances. If the economic interests of the collectivity were threatened, force might be used against the encroaching party, *even if it was the state itself.*

RURAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The land was the basic factor of production, the "foster mother" of the Algerian precolonial rural population. Economic production consisted of four predominant subsistence activities: agriculture; animal husbandry; fruit tree plantations; and horticulture, carried out on fertilized, terraced, and irrigated plots. Ecological conditions fostered a broad regional specialization of production. For instance, the agriculturalists of the north produced a surplus of grains and fruits that were exchanged for animal products raised by the pastoralists or for certain luxury items manufactured by urban artisans. The pastoralists and the urban producers and merchants needed these agricultural products to complement their food supplies.

The socioeconomic life of the village was regulated by the producers' self-interests, as expressed in the belief systems, values, and norms of behavior that were more or less shared by certain predominant segments. These segments, superstructures of the rural communities, were, of course, molded by the historical experiences of every village and its underlying material base, which made rural living possible in the first place. The rhythm and intensity of work, the variety of crops and domestic animals followed a seasonal cycle, the core of the peasant universe.

The precolonial Algerian rural population was not, however, made up of socially homogeneous small producers who owned their means of production. It was divided into three classes: big landowners, peasant producers, and impoverished and landless cultivators. A landowning class existed

> whose holdings constituted large latifundia. Most of them were absentee estate owners who lived in towns and cities; their estates were cultivated by *khammassats* or sharecroppers. These tenants contracted land freely and were provided with the necessary tools, seeds, and draft animals for cultivation. In return for their labor, the *khammassats* received one-fifth of the yield [13].

The second category included a large number of peasant producers who owned their means of production (land, ploughs, draft animals) and with the assistance of their families produced primarily for their own consumption and for the fulfillment of the obligations owed the ruling class, in the form of taxes in kind or cash. Finally, landless families had to furnish their labor to the landlords in order to eke out a livelihood as sharecroppers. According to the French colonial authorities' land census of the territory of 402 tribes in 1873, 77 percent of the heads of households owned less than ten hectares each, while 21 percent owned from 10 to 40 hectares of the arable land [14]. The remaining 2 percent appeared to be landless, although pasture land was held in common. Although some of these families may have been impoverished by the systematic policy of land expropriation practiced by the colonial power, nonetheless these figures indicate the nature of social differentiation in rural, precolonial Algeria. Clearly, both the economic structure and the legal system regulating property relations were capable of generating differential access to property prior to the French conquest.

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF PROPERTY RELATIONS

Ibn Khaldun noted that: "People as a rule covet the possessions of other people. Without the restraining influence of the laws, nobody's property would be safe. This applied especially to traders and the low-class mobs" [15]. According to Algerian precolonial law defining property relations, one could become a rightful owner of property as follows: by the long and continuous occupation of a plot of land; by clearing uncultivated woodland; by purchase; by inheritance; and by the medium of the *maghrāsā*, or plantation contract, which granted the producer half of land planted with fruit trees. An individual could also become the owner of an estate or plot of land by means of a juridical mechanism called *rahnia*, the mortgage of revenues from property in payment of debt in kind or in cash. However, Algerian property law provided a legal arrangement known as *shāfā'ā*, whereby the co-owner of an undivided property had the right to retain possession of the part sold by providing the buyer with the exact sum that he had paid for it [16]. This mechanism proved useful in preventing the dismemberment of familial landholdings.

The system of land tenure in precolonial peasant Algeria reflected the legal foundations of the political economy. Landholdings were juridically divided into six different categories: *melk*, *arsh* or *sabega*, *habus*, *bevlik* or *azel*, *mokhzen*, and *muwat* land. The *melk* land was simply private property and as such could be bought and sold. As early as 1837, the French colonial authority recognized it in the following terms: "Private property existed and was perpetuated in Algeria on the same bases as among us: it is acquired, transmitted, and held and is recognized by long possession, Moslem testimonials, and regular titles; the laws protect it and the courts assist it" [17].

Arsh or *sabega* was owned corporately by a *kabyla*, a lineage or *machta*. The arable fields were temporarily divided among the heads of households, who cultivated them at their own expense, but the pastureland was always held in common. Concerning this type of collective landholding, the same document stated:

> Most often, particularly with regard to the Arabs who live under the tent, the soil is owned in common. . . . A small community knew the border between itself and the next small community; that was enough. Within the territory of the particular tribe, each individual enjoyed an equal right to the common lands, either for cultivation or pasture. This state of property, uncommon near the cities of any size, is the normal one in the most distant communities [18].

The *abus* lands were constituted by donations in favor of religious corporations or institutions. They were intended to provide certain social services performed by various mosques [19]. Once established, they became inalienable estates that could not be sold or confiscated.

Beylik or *azel* lands were public prebends devised to provide payment to high officials. They were administered under the authority of *qāids* appointed by the Dey or the beys. The *azel* lands existed only in the province of Constantine. They were divided for cultivation into three categories. One portion was farmed out to sharecroppers or *khammas*, recruited in rural areas from among landless or impoverished peasants who were given seeds, draft animals, and food. At the end of the harvest, these people received one-fifth of the total yield. A second portion was distributed to former officers of the government. The third was rented to individual tenants in exchange for two kinds of taxes, called in Arabic *okor* and *ashur*, and in certain regions the Bey of Constantine reserved some pastureland for grazing the government's livestock [20]. (*Beylik* land should not be confused with the beys' individual property, in the manner of French colonial usage.) *Mokhzen* was land that was distributed to tribesmen, who cultivated it in exchange for public service. *Muwat* land was unproductive territory; anyone clearing and cultivating it gained title. The respective rural groups had

uncontested usufruct in all forests in their vicinity.

The clarity and comprehensiveness of this legal arrangement of property relations led the Baron de Berthezene, who studied it in 1831, to conclude that

> judging everything by our prejudices, we thought in taking possession of Algiers that under so despotic a government, the right of property was unknown, and that consequently all property belonged to the state. We were very surprised when we learned that among these barbarians, confiscation of property is not the inevitable consequence of political condemnation, and that no more than among us, does might make right [21].

This system guaranteed, on the one hand, access by the peasantry to soil to cultivate for their subsistence, and on the other hand, it insured the ruling class a continuing flow of surplus products, as well as income from taxation and rents.

It is obvious that the legal status of these property relations was anything but "precarious". As a matter of fact, French colonial officials understood clearly not only the external structure, but the articulation and inner logic of this precolonial social formation. The motives that led them to expropriate the landholdings of the small and medium-size peasant producers and the latifundia estates of big landlords were revealed in the conclusions of the Commission d'Afrique of 1833:

> The economic calculations had belittled the value of colonies. The old nations must have outlets in order to alleviate the demographic pressures exerted on big cities and the use of the capital that has been concentrated there. To open for work new sources of production is, in effect, the surest means for neutralizing this concentration without upsetting the social order. . . It is the surest way for preventing the seeds of hostility that are being sown among the working classes, not only against the governments but also against societies, and against property [22].

THE SOCIOECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE ALGERIAN PRECOLONIAL URBAN CENTERS

It has been observed that the origin of a North African city has always been a marketplace, and not a *comitia* [23]. Nevertheless, the basic features of the Algerian precolonial urban centers were typical of precapitalist cities and towns in general. Due to the ecological conditions outlined above, the urban ruling classes encountered obstacles in extracting surpluses from the autonomous agricultural communities lócated in the Atlas mountains, and from the reluctant nomadic chieftains on the Saharan steppes. As a result, northern African cities since the Roman period "could not have survived and prospered if they had not found in large-scale long-distance trade the resources that were denied them by the difficulty of extracting surplus from the cultivators" [24].

This fact rendered the urban "civilization" of the Maghreb a "fragile affair". In the absence of a permanent "solid peasant base," the material foundation of Algerian precolonial urban centers consisted of mercantile activities of diverse kinds. This is why "it was enough for trade to fall off for the states to perish, along with the cities on which they were based" [25]. However, even with the shifting of the trans-Saharan trade routes to the east, the prosperity of the Algerian precolonial cities was maintained, and during most of the eighteenth century they experienced relative economic prosperity. However, during the last decade of that century and after, a major coastal decline occurred as a result of the complete loss of control over long-distance trade. Indeed, due to the increasing commercial aggressiveness of the European capitalists, encouraged by the governmental policy of granting import–export monopolies to the trading companies, the economic activities that had previously sustained the Algerian urban population living in the coastal cities were drastically diminished. As a direct result, certain coastal cities lost about half of their inhabitants: Algiers had a population of 100,000 [26] during the eighteenth century; by 1830 it had fallen to 60,000 [27].

In 1830 the population only made up about

10 percent of the whole. The total population of the country was estimated over three million. The major cities, in order of magnitude, were [28]:

Algiers	60,000
Constantine	35,000
Tlemcen	20,000
Mascara	12,000
Oran	10,000
Miliana	10,000
Medea	10,000
Cherchell	3,000

Numerous other cities and towns existed, but demographic data are not available. Most of these cities were prosperous and well built; some were even fortified. In them lived a socially, economically, and ethnically heterogeneous population, composed of the ruling elements, merchants, artisans, and apprentices [29]. All of these classes and intraclass statuses depended for their supplies of food and primary raw materials (used in handicraft manufacturing and commercial activities) on the countryside. The peasants provided raw materials and agricultural products, and the nomads escorted the trans-Saharan caravans of goods. The urban centers assumed two broadly interwoven political and economic functions. As marketing and manufacturing centers they become significant loci of political power. In fact, in the Algerian precolonial segmentary system of government, the cities were the points from which the administrative channels radiated to the hinterlands and beyond, where bureaucratic power faded away. However, since most of the rural population on the peripheries of these urban centers was commercially involved to various degrees in the national, regional, and local urban marketing networks, which were controlled in turn by the ruling elements and their auxiliaries, the so-called political, economic, religious, educational, and manufacturing functions of these urban centers could be considered as merely interconnected nodes of a single precapitalist state apparatus manipulated by the predominant urban class.

Hence the qualitative differences in the lifestyles of the urban and rural populations came to be expressed by two opposing and value-laden terms: *rusticity* and *urbanity*. In essence, the rustic producers existed only in relation to the profligate and luxury-loving urban ruling classes who lived barricaded in their mansions. As for the urban petty traders, handicraftsmen, and apprentices, a large number of them owned small orchards and cultivated gardens for home consumption on the outskirts of the cities and towns.

In the urban centers the elementary units of social organization were "discreetly" cemented together through kinship ties, complemented by patron–client and neighborhood relations. The urban houses contained several apartments sheltering an extended family. Various interrelated families made up a residential quarter, a juxtaposition of similar housing structures inhabited by interrelated individual families. Each residential quarter was spatially separated from the business section of the city, and was isolated from its focal points. The residential quarters possessed a few basic public facilities, such as bakery ovens, a bath, and a mosque or synagogue, but no stores or workshops were tolerated [30]. These latter activities were relegated to special streets: the core of the city was usually distinguished by two focal, and equal, institutions: the bazaar and the principal mosque. Every trade appeared to be the specialty of a given ethnic group. The Jews in Constantine and Algiers, for example, monopolized the manufacturing of precious metals; the Mozabites held a monopoly over public mills and bakeries, and the Biskris were porters and attendants in some public baths. The urban handicraft manufacturing activities were oriented toward the production of leisure items, but these items were expensive and designed mostly for the gratification of the predominant classes, who could afford them, or, like the silk costumes produced in Algiers, they were exported to Morocco, Tunisia, and the Orient. The production of "consumer goods" was the exception.

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The organization of work relied on harnassing human energies. Work was performed inside small-scale workshops where master craftsmen, the *muāllim*, assisted by apprentices and auxiliaries, labored. Each vocation was represented by a syndic who supervised the quality of the products and mediated conflicts that emerged between the workers and their masters or between the heads of various workshops. At a higher level a *mohtāssib*, or commissioner, maintained "law and order" in the markets and controlled the prices of goods. These intricate traditional work structures crumbled after 1830 under the onslaught of French capitalist colonialism.

COLONIZATION OF THE URBAN CENTERS

From the outset, the military conquest of the Algerian cities was characterized by a degree of violence rare in the history of modern colonialism. Algiers fell to French troops on July 5, 1830. A French traveler, Rozet, deplored the fact that in the suburbs of Algiers "all the houses that were not occupied by the officers were almost demolished; the doors and beams were taken to be used for fire" [31]. By 1831, 30,000 inhabitants of Algiers had been either killed or exiled. Aristide Gilbert observed in the same year that "of a total of 5000 buildings, 3000 came under control of the state" [32]. As a result of this systematic confiscation of urban property, "the owners, the majority of which were expropriated without any compensation, were reduced to begging" [33]. Those who were spared were eventually ruined by inflation, which was aggravated by the introduction of French currency: "We imported into Algeria a considerable volume of money. It soon chased away the local currency, which was declared not convertible" [34]. This harsh measure ushered in the process of proletarianization of the indigenous producers and traders. The increasing

> inflow of European settlers further undermined local commerce . . . the removal of a large number of rich Moslems singularly diminished sales and profits; demolition for the purpose of straightening and widening the streets and the increase of rents, dealt a hard blow to the indigenous merchants [35].

The worsening economic situation was described in 1846 by a military doctor in these terms:

> Everything that one sees here upon arrival saddens the heart: an indigenous population reduced to the last degree of misery; an endless crowd of starving proletarians . . . the mauresque houses, so constructed as to be well ventilated with pure fresh air are disappearing every day. The fever of construction has gotten hold of the speculators [36].

Thus the socioeconomic consequence of military conquest was the rise of the Algerian proletariat. Many dispossessed and impoverished people had no other alternative but to hire out on a day-to-day basis. A large number became dockworkers in the port of Algiers, "whose lot does not appear to have been miserable before the occupation . . . , many must have lost their resources as a result of the economic upheavals that followed the conquest of the city" [37].

After Algiers, French colonization of the urban centers expanded to such other cities as Blida and Medea. When General Clauzel attempted to occupy the former, its inhabitants resisted. The General ordered his men to loot it and massacre its defenders. He noted that when he arrived he found the city "jammed with corpses, among which were those of the elderly, women, children, and Jews. All had been defenseless" [38]. In 1832 the Duc de Rovigo imposed a 200,000 piastre war tribute on Blida and Kolea. When the former refused to meet this demand, he let his soldiers loot it. When the troops arrived, they found the city deserted.

The next city to be conquered, Medea, the capital city of the province of Tittri, was not only depopulated but eradicated. It was attacked and looted in 1830 and 1831 and

finally occupied in 1836. General Ducrot, who participated in the earlier attack as a captain, wrote:

> Medea was abandoned and the inhabitants have carried away everything. There must have been strong motives to force an entire population to emigrate in this fashion, because they are not nomads, but urbanites accustomed to leading a peaceful and easy life; people who abandoned their roofs, their paternal houses, left their property, their industry, in order to go wandering on the plains and maybe die of hunger [39].

In 1841 Medea was found by Captain de Smidt in total ruin. He exclaimed:

> . . . it is a good thing that in France they ignore how this poor city has been treated; nothing remains of it but a mass of ruins, a quantity of debris . . . the houses have been demolished to use the wood for fire. The city was not badly built at all. A few traces of art and marble are still visible [40].

In the eastern province the same pattern of conquest was followed. Bijaya, one of the most prestigious medieval Algerian cities, was conquered in 1833 after a fierce battle in which the invaders had to conquer it street by street in order to occupy the resultant ruins. "This war of the street was prolonged for three days and as usual it exalted the ferocity of the soldiers. The entire population either perished or was exiled forever" [41]. In 1846, when Poujoulat visited Bijaya, he said that the city "numbered thousands of inhabitants before our occupation. I have found there only three Arab families, about one hundred European settlers, and a battalion in garrison" [42].

The inhabitants of Constantine, the ancient city of Cirta, decisively repulsed the invading French troops who tried to seize it in 1836. This first "expedition cost about one thousand men, that is, one-eighth of the troops engaged" [43]. However, in 1837 Constantine was attacked again, and at the cost of thousands of men and women who defended it valiantly, it fell to the French. While besieged, a large number of the inhabitants were forced to flee over the gorges of the Rhummel, but many fell into the abyss and crashed to the bottom.

> In placing myself on the edge of the terrifying ravines, I stared at the sloping peaks over which thousands of men and women, more confident in the abyss than in the mercy of the French victors, sought to escape. Their means of salvation were ropes attached to the upper walls of the rocks. When these ropes broke, human masses could be seen rolling down this immense wall of rock; it was a veritable cascade of corpses [44].

By 1846 Constantine had lost ten thousand of its Algerian inhabitants; the survivors were completely impoverished. A French colonial official described their economic conditions in 1845 as follows:

> Constantine is horrible to see; all buildings are falling to ruin, half of the houses that were there five years ago have been demolished. The indigenous population is in a terrifying state of misery and deprivation . . . by expelling the traders, by taking all sorts of violent measures, we have spread misery everywhere [45].

The urban centers of the western province were colonized, pillaged, and depopulated in the same manner. In 1835 Mascara, the capital of Abdel-Kaker, was completely eradicated by French troops, who thus avenged the crushing defeat inflicted upon them in the battle of Macta. When the Duc d'Orléans entered the city, he exclaimed:

> What I saw then was the most hideous spectacle I have ever witnessed. I would never have had an idea of a sacked city, where numerous inhabitants have been massacred. The street that leads to the square was full of all kinds of debris; wooden beams covered with flecks of blood were still burning; everything was in disorder; not a single object remained untouched: the houses were in flame and a thousand Jews threw themselves at our feet begging for mercy, all that was left of a population which until yesterday numbered ten thousand souls [46].

In 1833 Tlemcen was occupied, its population forced into exile, and war tribute arbitrarily extracted by General Clauzel, who was impressed with the prosperity of the city. Those who could not pay in cash were forced to bring their wives' jewelry [4]. The most typical and

striking example, however, is that of Oran: as a result of French occupation, the population fell from ten thousand in 1830 to a mere one thousand in 1832.

The subsequent increase in the Algerian urban population was due to the migration of the rural population to the cities, rather than to natural population growth. Indeed, according to a study made by J. Boudin in 1853, the vital statistics for Algerian urban inhabitants were: in 1850, 1128 births and 4192 deaths, and in 1851, 2439 births and 5738 deaths [48]. These figures give us some indication of the rate of depopulation of the cities as a direct result of colonization by "pacification." According to official records, between 1866 and 1872 the country lost 646,159 people [49].

THE FRENCH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC PENETRATION INTO THE RURAL COMMUNITIES

French colonization of Algeria developed in four successive stages. The first, between 1830 and 1839, was marked by the occupation of the urban centers and their immediate hinterlands. The second took place between 1840 and 1847, when the colonial army managed to extend its conquest to the fertile agricultural plains of the Tell, or northern Algeria. This period was characterized by the seventeen-year war in which the partisans of al-Amir Abdelkader opposed the French. The third and fourth stages were from 1848 to 1872 and from 1873 to 1954. All the energies of the colonial power were devoted to the "subjugation" of the mountainous sedentary communities in the Tell and to the southern oasis-sedentary communities and pastoral nomads of the Sahara. The rural masses fought the encroachment of the colonial army until 1884, but the core of Algerian rural resistance to colonialism was smashed in 1871.

Confronted with stiff peasant resistance, the French army adopted from the outset a "scorched-earth strategy" in order to subjugate the peasantry and expropriate its land. Many accounts of the application of this strategy have been related by French officers. They speak for themselves: "More than fifty-five villages built of stone and roofed with tiles were destroyed. Our soldiers made very considerable pickings there." Marshall Bugeaud added, in another passage, "I began to chop down the fine orchards and to set fire to the magnificent villages under the enemy's eyes." General Saint Arnaud described, in 1846, similar colonial practices:

> I left in my wake a vast conflagration. All the villages, some two hundred in number, were burnt down, all the gardens destroyed, all the olive trees cut down. In a paragraph of a letter you asked me what happens to the Algerian women we capture; some we keep as hostages and the rest are auctioned to the troops like animals. . . . In the operations we have carried out during the last four months I have witnessed scenes that would melt the hardest heart if one had time to let them! I witnessed it all with a frightening indifference. Kill all men above the age of fifteen. Take all women and children and put them on a ship for the Marquesas Islands or some other destination. . . . The country of Beni Menseur is superb. . . . we have burnt everything, destroyed everything there. Oh war! How many women and children who took refuge in the snow in the Atlas are found dead there from cold and misery!

Colonel Montaignac wrote:

> Women and children, snared in thick bushes that they were obliged to cross, surrendered to us. We kill, we slaughter, the screaming or the terror-striken, the dying, blend with the noise of the beasts which roar, groan from all sides: it is hell, where instead of fire that roasts us, snow floods us [50].

These war crimes were not committed because the (abstract and selective) ethical standards of the nineteenth-century French had degenerated; they were motivated by the firm conviction that by colonizing Algeria, the French capitalists would realize a considerable accumulation of capital.

> Little does it matter that France in its political conduct goes beyond the limits of common morality at times. The essential thing is that it established a lasting colony and that as a consequence it will bring European civilization to these barbaric countries. When a project which is to

> the advantage of all humanity is to be carried out, the shortest path is the best. Now, it is certain that the shortest path is terror; without violating the laws of morality, or international jurisprudence, we can fight our African enemies with powder and fire joined by famine, internal division, war between Arabs and Kabyles, between the tribes of the Tell and those of the Sahara, by brandy, corruption, and disorganization. That is the easiest thing in the world to do [51].

In fact, this is exactly what the French troops did, with the full support of their government. In 1841, Tocqueville observed with sarcasm that he had to report from Africa "the afflicting notion that at this moment we are making the war in a manner more barbaric than the Arabs themselves" [52]. Charles Julien tried to use Marshall Bugeaud as a scapegoat by attributing to him the responsibility for the devastation of the Algerian peasant communities. During this period "when he was unable to vanquish the Algerians militarily, Bugeaud wanted to compel them to submit themselves by destruction and famine" [53]. Actually, he went beyond mere "destruction" and "famine" to the point of committing a collective genocide with the full support of his government.

In fact, in 1845 Colonel Pelissier burned a thousand people in the grottos of Dahra. Sergeant Moret, who executed the Colonel's order, wrote, "The soldiers who set the faggots on fire hurried in rage to carry the wood," and said that he himself, "furious like the others, gave a hand to the execution of the work. . . . The next day . . . one thousand heaped up corpses were found" [54]. When the news of this event reached Paris, only the Prince of Moskowa dared to denounce it as "a murder consumated with premeditation against a defenseless enemy" [55]. Governor General Bugeaud replied that he would take the entire responsibility for this deed because he had "prescribed the use of and resort to such action in the last extremity."

This was neither the first nor the last occurrence of this kind. The previous year General Cavaignac had proceeded in the same manner among the Sbeah. As Canrobert, an officer who participated in this burning, wrote:

> We blew up with dynamite the entrance of the cave and piled up faggots of brush. In the evening the fire was set. The next day some Sbeah survivors presented themselves at the entrance of the cave requesting protection from our advanced posts. Their companions, women and children, were dead [56].

Colonel Saint Arnaud followed the example of his comrades at arms, Pilissier and Cavaignac, when he walled in other peasants from the Sbeah area, two months after the exploits of Colonel Pilissier:

> I hermetically closed all exits and made a vast cemetery. The earth will cover forever the corpses of these fanatics. No one went down to the caverns; no one but me knows that there are under here five hundred brigands who will not cut the throats of the French anymore. A confidential report related everything to the Marshall simply, without terrible poetry and without images [57].

These military acts were neither isolated nor accidental; they reflect the continuation of French colonial policy by other means, judged at the time more opportune than any other course of action.

In order to expropriate 364,341 hectares of land from the rural cultivators [58], the French government, between 1830 and 1851, had to sacrifice to French capitalism tens of thousands of soldiers who were themselves victims of the colonial onslaught. Indeed, Boudin, a statistician who studied the casualties of the French colonial wars of conquest in Algeria, reckoned the death toll as in Table I.

The extent of the casualties indicates the organized yet flexible resistance put up by the peasantry. The consolidation and use of their segmentary system, in the face of the colonial onslaught, is a chapter of military history that remains to be written from the perspective of the unlettered, designated victims.

The colonial agents and their surveyors, "armed with extraordinary powers" [60], followed in the tracks of the colonial army.

TABLE I

Death Toll in the French Colonial Wars in Algeria

Year	Active	Died in hospital	Killed in battle [59]
1831	71,190	1005	55
1832	21,511	1998	48
1833	26,681	2512	–
1834	29,858	1991	24
1835	29,485	2335	310
1836	29,897	2139	606
1837	40,147	4502	121
1838	48,167	2413	150
1839	50,367	3600	163
1840	61,204	9567	227
1841	72,000	7802	349
1842	70,853	5588	225
1843	75,034	4809	84
1844	82,037	4664	167
1845	95,000	4664	601
1846	99,700	6862	116
1847	87,704	4437	77
1848	75,017	4406	13
1849	70,774	9744	–
1850	71,496	4098	–
1851	65,598	3193	–
Total		92,329	3336

Using innumerable arbitrary measures – sequestration, confiscation, expropriation, cantonment, and the application of various property bills devised to establish "incommutable individual property" (thus transforming the soil into a commodity) – an increasing number of hectares were accumulated for the purposes of colonization. The ceaseless transfer of land from the "indigenous" peasantry to the settlers was disguised under juridical trappings. The subsequent distribution of booty among the *colons* was as in Table II [61]. By 1954, these 3,028,000 expropriated hectares consisted of 2,818,000 hectares of plowland and 210,000 hectares of forest, all owned privately by the French *colons*. The colonial state still possessed 7,200,000 hectares, including forest, unproductive land, and pastureland.

TABLE II

Distribution of Booty among *Colons*

Dates	Number of hectares under the control of the settlers
1830 to 1850	115,000
1851 to 1870	765,000
1871 to 1880	1,245,000
1881 to 1890	1,635,000
1891 to 1900	1,912,000
1901 to 1920	2,581,000
1921 to 1940	3,445,000
1941 to 1954	3,028,000

The Algerian Tell consisted of only about 20 million hectares. The 24,000 settlers privately owned 3,028,000, or 23 percent. The state owned 7,200,000, and the "natives", numbering over 7 million, remained in control of 7,133,000 [62]. But two-thirds of the land assigned to the peasants was minimal pasture and unproductive plots. The average returns were as follows: one

TABLE III

The Size of Landholdings as an Indicator of Social Differentiation in Rural Algeria [64]

Size of estate in hectares	Algerians		French	
	Number of landowners	Area in hectares	Number of landowners	Area in hectares
Less than 10	391,000	1,850,000	8000	40,000
10 to 50	118,000	3,013,000	7000	209,000
50 to 100	17,400	1,226,400	4000	306,000
100 to 500	5,000	1,108,000	5000	1,202,000
More than 500	600	414,700	900	963,000
Total	532,000	7,612,100	24,900	2,720,000

hectare of land in the colonized areas yielded 9.74 quintals, while in the "native" sector one hectare yielded between 2 and 4.65 quintals [63]. Each settler owned an average of 109 hectares, while each Algerian owned only about 14 hectares. Seventy-three percent of Algerian peasant households owned less than ten hectares; the threshold of malnutrition was estimated at twelve hectares by Governor Chataigneau in 1946:

> A *fellah* cannot live a life of a peasant deriving all his income from the land unless he possesses at least 25 hectares of arable land. The minimal familial unit of cultivation would need to comprise 20 hectares of ploughland and 5 hectares of pasture. In the peasant state, the *fellahs* are not true peasants but half proletarians [65].

The 550,000 Algerian landowners situated in the marginal semi-arid zones, characterized by denuded slopes and the total absence of irrigation or mechanized means of cultivation, formed atomized agricultural microfundia. The average size of their plots was estimated at about four hectares per family. Their techniques of cultivation remained rudimentary. According to the 1950–1951 agricultural census, 543,310 peasant cultivators were using only 283,256 *jabda*, wooden ploughs harnassed to two oxen, two mules, or one mule and one ox [66].

> The *fellah* is the Moslem proprietor of the so-called traditional sector, where the relations of production inherited from feudal Algeria, before the conquest, are essentially maintained; the underlying cause is the maintenance of anachronistic means of production after more than a century of colonization. Pushed back from the more fertile regions to the insufficient and infertile land, compressed on small plots whose subsequent partition between the generations was frequently parcelled to the extreme, the Algerian peasants could not have perfected their instrument of production [67].

THE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPONENT OF COLONIZATION

The outright seizure of buildings and businesses along with land expropriation in the countryside, undermined the foundation of the Algerian precolonial mode of production. The economic life of numerous petty commodity producers – peasants, craftsmen, and artisans – who, with the exception of the *khammas*, controlled their own means of production, was shattered. Only the urban specialists emerged as generalized commodity producers while production for use remained prevalent in the countryside. These rural small producers were also involved to a limited degree in commodity exchange because in order to survive they had to transform a certain amount of what was produced for use into commodities for exchange to be sold in the local market. This mode of production was torn asunder by the forcible superimposition of an elaborate social system based on large-scale commodity production. The primary resources – land, livestock, crops, timber – were confiscated from the "native" producers and reallocated to the accelerating number of European immigrants.

The colonial enterprise itself had a demographic trajectory. While France was resolving its demographic pressures by diverting its surplus population and "troublesome" working-class elements to Algeria, the dispossessed Algerian masses were "fated" to shoulder the socioeconomic consequences of this policy. For instance, after the revolution of 1848 the French Government decided to rid Paris of 20,500 workers who had dared to erect barricades. It requested the national assembly to vote 55 million francs for their transport to and installation in Algeria. From the end of 1848 to 1850 these 20,500 proletarians were forcibly transformed into "reluctant pioneers." Upon their arrival in Algeria they were assigned to fifty-six *centres de colonisation* that had been established to receive them. The colonial army provided them with houses, arable land, instruments of cultivation, livestock, food, and pocket money [68]. On June 21, 1871, the French Government granted 100,000 hectares of land in Algeria to 8,000 refugees of the Franco-Prussian war from Alsace-Lorraine. They were installed in eighty *centres de coloni-*

TABLE IV

Colonial Population Inflow into Algeria and Its Subsequent Growth [70]

Year	Total population	Natural growth	Due to immigration	Estimated rural	Estimated urban
1833	7,812				
1836	14,561	− 335	+ 7,104		
1841	37,374	− 1,711	+ 24,524		
1846	95,321	− 3,688	+ 61,635		
1851	131,283	−10,790	+ 46,752		
1856	159,292	− 3,873	+ 31,882		
1861	192,746	+ 3,416	+ 30,038		
1866	217,990	+12,282	+ 12,962		
1872*	245,117	− 3,923	+ 31,050		
1876	310,175	+ 7,547	+ 57,511		
1881	377,861	+ 9,274	+ 58,412		
1886	430,248	+14,398	+ 37,989	167,517	297,305
1891	496,352	+14,902	+ 51,202		
1896	543,908	+18,909	+ 28,647		
1901	399,278	+26,922	+ 28,448		
1906	654,114	+27,418	+ 27,418	233,421	441,499
1911	725,894	+38,082	+ 33,698		
1916	753,505	+38,415	− 10,804		
1921	765,222	−11,725	+ 23,442		
1926	807,247	+38,041	+ 3,984	236,672	591,908
1931	855,472	+34,865	+ 13,360	234,345	641,291
1936	918,901	+40,323	+ 23,106	230,311	709,220
1948	895,160	+80,359	−104,100	201,009	708,670
1954	956,919	+63,940	− 2,181	223,629	760,402

*See ref. 71.

sation [69]. The economic resources at the disposal of the Algerian producers were gradually drained by the magnitude of the immigration (see Table IV).

Up to 1906 the annual inflow of settlers far exceeded the natural growth of the European population in Algeria. A comparison between the Algerian and European populations will illustrate this point. Although the exact population of Algeria before 1830 is still controversial, a large number of scholars tend to agree with the general census completed by the French army's intelligence service under the supervision of the Bureaux Arabes, which in 1845 advanced a figure of three million inhabitants [72]. However, in terms of the number of inhabitants in the unoccupied territories, the figures are necessarily approximate and could be greater than indicated. Nevertheless, in 1856, when the first extensive census was taken by the colonial authorities, the population was registered as only 2,487,373, including settlers. Henceforth, regular censuses were taken.

Between 1830 and 1876, then, the Algerian population declined, but after 1881 it began to grow again. The publication of this latter

TABLE V

The Growth of the Algerian Population [73]

Year	Total	Estimated rural	Estimated urban
1856	2,487,373	–	–
1866	2,921,246	–	–
1876	2,867,626	–	–
1886	3,817,306	3,061,091	226,126
1896	4,429,421	–	–
1906	5,231,850	3,704,453	341,691
1911	5,563,828	–	–
1921	5,804,275	–	–
1931	6,553,451	4,419,943	606,440
1936	7,234,684	4,847,814	722,293
1948	8,681,785	5,747,930	1,129,482
1954	9,529,726	7,051,796	1,397,536

census shook some in colonial circles in Algeria. It surprised the racial supremacists, who asserted that "history is here to prove that the inferior races have always been either absorbed or destroyed by the superior races" [74]. And two professors at the University of Algiers School of Medicine, Battandier and Trabut, affirmed that the native's "traditional laziness will condemn him sooner or later to disappear before the more active races" [75]. When reality turned out to be different, and when subsequent censuses indicated a steady population increase,

> the colonial press was often astonished by this growth in the number of Moslem Algerians, seeking to explain it by the improvement in census procedures. This is due to the old prejudice which was still alive that assumed the slow extinction of the native by the sole fact of his contact with "civilization" [76].

Indeed, the French theorists who predicted the doom of the native "race" had based their assumptions on the actual decline of the Algerian population between 1830 and 1881 [77]. However, by 1903 the native birth rate had overtaken that of the European population, 32.1 percent against 30.9 percent. This fact alarmed some settlers. In 1889 one of their representatives declared before a parliamentary inquiry commission that the "natives have almost quadrupled since 1866. If they continue, in ten years they will reach ten million, and in thirty, sixteen."

THE CAUSES OF POPULATION GROWTH

There is no doubt that the increase in the population resulted in the immiseration of successive generations of the peasantry. However, the bearing of large numbers of children was certainly considered by the adult population as a potential economic asset for the future. On the one hand, joint households could not keep themselves together unless they diversified their economic base by sending their surplus members out as wage laborers, and on the other, the traditional Middle Eastern and North African peasantries that owned their lands tended to favor the growth of their families because when the sons reached maturity the household might be able to expand its landholdings. Moreover, as a British demographer noted,

> . . . let us look at the question from the point of view of the extended family, presuming, as is usually the case, that it is engaged in peasant agriculture. Such a family will see a child, subject to a short period of waiting, as an economic asset. By the time it has reached the age of seven, the work which it will do on the farm or in the household will exceed the cost of its keep [78].

An additional child would make possible, and also require, an increase of production both in livestock and agriculture. Thus the wealth controlled by the head of the peasant household will be augmented, the surplus produced by each member pooled in his hands, and the whole family, as the basic productive and demographic unit, will benefit.

In the precolonial period this situation could go on as long as the birth rate was paralleled by a high death rate. Under precolonial conditions, the growth of the total population was either accompanied or followed by an increase in economic production because the extraction of taxes from the countryside was relatively small and the agricultural frontiers expandable. However, with the delimitation and confiscation of tribal territories and the imposition of new taxes not only were the frontiers permanently closed but the amount of cultivated land was drastically decreased by the expansion of colonial holdings and by soil depletion. Thenceforth, peasant communities lived under conditions of chronic land shortage. When the remaining arable plots were filled up, the burden of sustaining a growing family on a fixed land base became insupportable. In this respect, the dilemma of the Algerian peasantry corresponded perfectly to that described by Paul Stirling in Turkey:

> In the new situation, sons are still as much desired as ever. They are still a source of prestige, religious as well as secular; they form an armed guard for the defense of the household, and they enable a father to take his ease. . . . Sons who could not be absorbed as extra labor on the household lands could increase household income as laborers, servants, shepherds, or migrants. But when the household land does not expand in proportion to the male labor force, fission leaves each son with less land than he is capable of working [79].

We must now turn to the causes of this rapid demographic growth. Most scholars of the so-called underdeveloped countries have accounted for population growth in terms of the removal of the standard Malthusian checks: famine control through improved communication, the introduction of scientific public health services, the establishment of peace, the amelioration of the standard of living, increasing per capita productivity in agriculture, etc.. None of these explanations works in rural Algeria. According to S.H. Coontz,

> it is generally held that the increase in population in colonial areas is due entirely to mortality decline resulting from the introduction of Western techniques, e.g., an improved transportation system which eliminates local famines, better sanitation, vaccines, etc.. Certainly these operate to reduce mortality. However, unless in the long run there are concomitant changes in demand for labour, a continued increase in population is inconceivable. The demand-for-labour analysis suggests that more attention must be paid to factors which increase the demand for labour and reduce the average value of labour-power in colonial areas [80].

Thus Malthusian explanations have to be rejected on both theoretical and empirical grounds, and the only plausible explanation in this case lies in the demand-for-labor analysis. The growth of the population of Algeria can in this sense be considered a demographic response to a colonial situation that produced a high demand for labor both within the peasant household subsistence economy and in the colonial sector [81]. As a whole, the Algerian colonial condition corresponded to one Coontz considered favorable to population growth: "In demand-for-labour analysis, the situation favorable to population growth is one in which an increased demand for labour is accompanied by a reduction in the average quality (cost) of the labour-power demanded" [82].

DEMAND FOR LABOR AND COLONIZATION IN ALGERIA

From the outset the *colons* and their public officials realized the potential advantage of the surplus labor of the pauperized population. As early as March 5, 1849, the Higher Council of the French government in Algeria, in order to induce the impoverished peasants to till the farms of the settlers either as sharecroppers or agricultural laborers, decreed that "all natives are subject to special taxes (*impôts Arabes*), except those employed as sharecroppers on the European estates, inhabiting a house, and working under the supervision of a European landowner or his manager" [83]. In another official report sent to the Ministry of War in Paris, it was emphatically stated that the "advantages that colonization could extract from the Arab workers had already been appreciated by the European landowners, who, without any exception, are already employing sharecroppers on their holdings" [84].

In urging the colonial authorities in Algeria to facilitate the utilization of "indigenous man-power" on the newly established agricultural plantations and industrial enterprises, the Minister of War wrote on October 15, 1851:

> To attract the Arab laborer to work for the French owners . . . is the best and most proper thing to do so that the French domination will be asserted definitively . . . . We find in the Arab worker several essential qualities. He is sober and does not have too many needs; no matter how hard the tasks he is given to perform, he is less discontented than the European worker. He is robust and acclimatized and this permits us to count on him for all seasons. He is intelligent and docile [85].

It must be noted that throughout the early period of colonization the Algerian population was forced to provide labor for the construction of roads, the building of *centres de*

colonisation, and to perform various other services without any compensation. From 1830 to 1871, forced labor was a standard phenomenon in Algeria; the "requisition of native manpower for public utility work" was used by army officers in their attempt to oppose the introduction of the Arab workers into the centers of colonization, since they feared they would lose their free laborers to the *colons* who offered some sort of wages. But on October 15, 1851, the Minister of War, who was in charge of Algeria, rejected the objection of the army in the following terms:

> The introduction, on a large scale, of the Arab or Kabyle manpower into agricultural work is a goal toward which the administration has to concentrate all its efforts and has to pursue by all means in its power. It is obvious, in effect, that without this powerful auxiliary, cultivation would be for a long time shackled by the high wages and scarcity of European workers [86].

The Algerians not only worked for the settlers as sharecroppers, but as wage laborers on a daily or monthly basis. In 1851 they were paid between two and two and one half francs a day. Those who worked on a monthly basis were offered between twenty and thirty francs per month. After studying the differences in wages between Arab and the French laborers, a colonial official reported that:

> I have indicated what is more important and it is easy to judge the enormous difference in the sum to be paid for the employment of an Arab laborer in contradistinction to that offered to a French laborer. . . . It is sufficient to ensure that the price paid to the indigenous worker will not ordinarily exceed the fourth of that which we are obliged to give to the European worker [87].

It was officially recognized in 1851 that "for a long time almost all the big concessionaries of land . . . in the civil territory have been using indigenous laborers for cultivation of their estates. They recruited them from everywhere" [88].

The gradual widening of the perimeter of colonization, compared by Bugeaud to a "spot of oil," resulted in the dispossession of the peasants and in the increasing demand for native manpower, which played a determining role in the development of the colony. The introduction of vineyards in the 1860s accelerated the process of proletarianization for a large number of peasants who were concentrated in rural slums during the *cantonment*. For these destitute masses the only salvation from famine, epidemics, and collective despair lay in wage labor in the colonial sector. The acceptance of work, either as sharecroppers or wage laborers on the confiscated plots of land and newly consolidated fields of the *colons*, was the only course under the circumstances. It was a matter of survival. As noted above, both the settlers and their high officials were in full agreement about the vital importance of restricting the role of the native people to that of subservient colonized manpower, to be used under careful surveillance, not to sap but to contribute to the development of colonization. As General Bedeau stated:

> Colonization with its requirements will be the touchstone of real submission; it will place at last in their true respective positions the conquering people and the conquered. . . . Only by its mass can the colony reduce them to the point where agitation is impossible. . . . There must be no empty space between us and the Arab population which, under careful surveillance, should supply the tribute of its labor and resources to the colony surrounding it in its growth, like the hedge around a cleared field, which is built up with the thorns that have been pulled out of it [89].

In the long run, the exorbitant requirements of colonization multiplied the ranks of the Algerian proletariat. In fact, after the defeat of the peasant rebellion of 1871, which was triggered by a series of spoliative measures directed against the peasantry during the 1860s, the core of rural society was literally smashed and the peasants ruined. The failure of this insurrection inaugurated a new period in the history of colonialism in Algeria. After the rebellion 665,591 hectares were "sequestered," that is, grabbed from the defeated peasantry and redistributed to the settlers. A levy of 68 million gold francs was imposed on the

peasants and paid to the colonial government [90]. Thenceforth the peasants resigned themselves to various piecemeal adjustments to the triumphant colonial presence.

Apart from the outright seizure of their land, the introduction and spread of the capitalist market thrust the peasant household into a vicious circle. The international "invisible hand" generated a

> cycle which starts when the peasant is forced to sell his produce immediately after the harvest in order to pay off his debts – to sell, that is to say, at the bottom price. It continues when five or six months later he is compelled to buy the same produce back at the top price, which means at least double the figure he was given for it. It is easy to see that at this rate the unhappy man gets deeper and deeper into hopeless difficulties [91].

It should be added that in a desperate effort to break this cycle the peasants typically borrowed money, thus entangling themselves further in the web of colonial obligations.

Colonization, then, involved the expropriation, in one form or another, of the basic factor of production, land, from the indigenous peasantry and its redistribution to the settlers. The transfer of land was followed by the rapid development of the colonial sector and by an increase in the native Algerian population precisely because of the subsequent deterioration of the peasant subsistence economy. These interrelated phenomena generated a tremendous demand for labor by the peasant households and by the colonial sector. Indeed, the removal of land and labor, coupled with the extraction of taxes in cash from the traditional sector, made it imperative for the peasants to increase their labor input. This in turn led to an intensive expansion of agriculture, involving the clearing of wooded areas. The intensification of gardening and arboricultural activities on the remaining plots also required labor-intensive techniques. Finally, as the economic development of the colonial sector proceeded, it attracted an increasing number of paupers as wage laborers. In fact, it was the native labor force that constructed the communication networks, dug trenches, extracted minerals from the ground, dried up swamps, cleared fields, and planted and harvested crops for the settlers, and that performed countless other tasks required for the development of the modern economic sector.

To paraphrase Benjamin White, the modern colonial system tended to substitute native labor for settlers' capital. Such intensive colonization, without modernization of the means of production, injected labor into a colonial economy controlled to a large extent by metropolitan entrepreneurs. Under such colonial conditions "the easiest way for the people to maintain their standards of living and leisure while meeting the levy of the colonial government was to have more children, to occupy more land, and to devote a larger proportion of the land to . . . agriculture" [92].

Thus the pauperization of the majority of Algerians was caused by two interconnected factors, one extrinsic, the other intrinsic. The extrinsic factor was the French colonial policy of implanting its surplus population in Algeria, confiscating property from the indigenous population and distributing it to the immigrants. The intrinsic factor was the natural process of demographic growth within a hard-pressed population, which further accelerated the deterioration of its social conditions. Once the existing property relations were forcibly dissolved and restructured in favor of the settlers, the dispossessed Algerian producers had no other feasible economic alternative but to enter into the newly superimposed capitalist relations; that is, to sell their labor power to the *colons* in order to eke out their livelihood. The proletarianization process through which the artisans and peasants were forced to march was the only practical adjustment to the colonial situation. It is pertinant that the colonial authorities had severely hampered the urban artisanal "corporations" by restrictive administrative measures, specifically those of 1838 and 1851, and in 1868 abolished them alto-

gether [93]. The Algerian handicraft industries gradually and for all practical purposes disappeared [94]. "The number of Algerian artisans declined from one hundred thousand in the mid-nineteenth century to 3500 in 1951" [95]. The opening of the Algerian market to French speculators and the thrusting of the entire economy, without any tariff protection, first into the "metropolitan" and then into the international market, had by 1920 undermined the market for local handicrafts:

> All the utensils for domestic use that were manufactured by the potters, tinkers, smelters, coppersmiths, and tinsmiths had been replaced by European hardware. Only a few indigenous carpenters are still found, hidden in the old quarters, manufacturing painted chests and etageres; . . . some turners, some ironmongers assembling and decorating fancy beds [96].

In this manner all indigenous precolonial artisanal manufacturers were outcompeted by French industrial products, and the integration of the Algerian economy into the French capitalist market led to the disintegration of the precolonial urban culture. With the collapse of urban social and economic structures, the traditional centers of education, the *zaoqiyas*, *madrassas*, and the *kuttabs* attached to the latter, which were subsidized by revenues derived from the religious prebends, the *habus*, disappeared [97]. Moreover, the price of consumer goods rose by about 300 percent between 1830 and 1870.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ALGERIAN PROLETARIAT

I have demonstrated that the genesis of the Algerian working class occurred in the devastated urban centers during the first period of conquest. I have also pointed out that the French colonization of Algeria had aimed, from beginning to end, at continually constricting the economic base of the native population. By expropriating the indigenous producers, they were transformed into a modern colonized proletariat. This fact further substantiates the conclusion that the "expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production" [98]. Indeed, shortly after the introduction of the French capitalist system, with its characteristic colonial forms, into Algeria, the native socioeconomic formation based on small commodity production was intentionally dismantled and restructured in line with superimposed capitalist production relations. For the bulk of the dispossessed masses there was no alternative but to resign themselves to the hiring out of their labor power.

As I have explained, the birth of the Algerian working class was determined by colonial expropriation, but pauperization through taxation was a related process. From 1830 to 1919 the Algerians were forced to pay exorbitant special taxes called *impôts arabes*. By 1882 some "enlightened" colonial newspapers started warning French officials that "if the natives continue to crawl in ignorance, to pay ruinous taxes from which they receive no benefit, if they are obliged to abandon their lands, a pauperism similar to that which is afflicting Ireland will forcibly result" [99]. In 1900 a number of colonial administrators realized that many formerly well-off Arab families were joining the ranks of the proletariat [100]. In 1903 a colonial administrator was alarmed by the fact that "this fall of native people into the proletariat constitutes a grave danger for the future. It will remove our most powerful means of action over the vanquished race, the fear of sequestration" [101].

The rapid development of colonization pulled a large number of pauperized people from the steppes and from the sedentary northern mountain communities onto the European colonial plantations as wage laborers. The causes of this internal migratory movement were multiple: soil depletion from the overuse of land and demographic pressure magnified by restrictive measures that denied

the peasants' grazing rights in the forest meadows and pasturelands of the steppes. In fact, during the 1860s the rights of usage enjoyed traditionally by the rural communities over the forests were abolished. Thenceforth, if the peasants' livestock were found grazing there, the owners would be fined exorbitant (to them) sums of money. In addition, whenever fires broke out in the forests, the nearby communities were routinely accused of starting them. They were also fined collectively, and occasionally, when they could not pay, had their holdings sequestered. Another hardly known factor that played a decisive role in the continuous deterioration of the economic conditions of rural communities was the rechanneling of streams, springs, and water holes to the centers of colonization. As a consequence, the semi-arid zones where the *fellahs* were contained underwent a further process of dessication and devegetation. By 1926, population density in certain regions such as Kabylia, Northern Constantine, and Eastern Oran reached 2,255 per hectare [102].

The *centres de colonisation* at Oran attracted a large number of impoverished pastoralists and peasants from Ain-Temouchent and Tlencen. The *colons* of the Mitidja, Chelif plains, Annaba, and Skikda sought and received large contingents of permanent and seasonal workers from Kabylia, Djidjelli, El Milia, Guelma, Dahra, and Ouarsenis [103]. Besides this, there was periodic emigration that led thousands of pauperized pastoralists from Djalfa, Boussada, and Laghouat, located in the steppes, to the Tellian centers of colonization where they worked on the colonial estates both temporarily and permanently. By 1930 the number of agricultural workers reached 462,467 and that of sharecroppers reached 713,387 [104], while 1.5 million peasants were considered completely indigent [105].

Despite the fact that most official statistics on the rural population have not been adequately established or interpreted with accuracy, the available figures are telling. By the 1950s rural Algerian society was about 12 percent pastoralist, while permanent agricultural laborers represented 22 percent of the total population. About one million were unemployed and only 19.5 percent of the peasants remained landowners, but their holdings were very fragmented.

The colonized regions of the world have uniformly experienced urbanization without genuine industrialization, and French colonialism has been no exception. By 1901, only 11,887 industrial workshops were counted in Algeria, employing 51,502 workers. The number of Algerian industrial proletarians increased from 20,535 in 1902 to 33,009 in 1903 [106]; it fell to 29,984 in 1904, but went up to 33,556 in 1905. More than half were unskilled. However, the census of 1911 indicated a rapid growth of the Algerian industrial proletariat, 58,543 male workers and 21,397 female workers, totalling 79,940.

In 1900 the first important strikes in the history of the modern Algerian proletariat were organized in the port of Algiers by 1600 dockworkers. These thirteen strikes led to the arrest of twenty-eight strikers, eight of whom were sentenced to from eight days to one month imprisonment. Again in 1907, one thousand unionized dockers struck in order to defend their rights. These strikes provoked panic among the colonial population of Algiers. The city council, which represented the settlers only, denounced the strike and brought to the attention of the French government "the dangers that are presented by the public demonstrations of the natives" [107], and thus justified the prohibition of strikes by non-citizens [108].

Moreover, due to the stagnation of industrial development in the colony, an increasing number of impoverished people were driven by hunger and want across the Mediterranean and into Europe. The emigration of Algerian workers into Western Europe, in small and isolated groups, first appears in the historical records of France and Belgium after 1871 [109]. In 1906 several thousand laborers were reported

in the coal mines, and in 1911 the French authorities revealed that 3,000 North Africans were working in France. The next year an official inquiry showed the existence of 5,000 migrant workers, among them 1,500 miners [110]. The reason for the slow development of this early migration was the administrative restrictions imposed. At the express demand of the *colons*, a decree was promulgated in 1876 by the Governor General in Algeria requiring a special travel permit for Algerians going to France. When this decree was abolished in 1913 the movement of Algerian workers to France increased rapidly. On the eve of World War I, 30,000 North Africans were working in the metropole [111].

World War I aggravated France's need for manpower. Mobilization, which particularly affected the active working population, led to a drastic decline in French productive capacity and a solution had to be found to keep the war industries running. Hence the "colonial reserve army" of pauperized masses was deployed and the forced recruitment of Algerians was transformed into a "veritable mobilization, a civil requisition that was made possible by the sovereignty of France over the territory of the colony" [112]. Once in France, these colonial workers came under the direct jurisdiction of the Conseil de Guerre which was empowered to try them before military tribunals if they refused to work. They were housed in special compounds where they were obliged to take their meals. This collective recruitment resulted in the introduction into France of 120,000 Algerians, 35,000 Moroccans, and 18,000 Tunisians [113]. Algeria also provided 173,000 men for the armed services. In fact, according to Ageron,between 1914 and April 1, 1917, a total of 168,678 men were either drafted or enlisted and sent to France. By April 1917, 2.7 percent of the Algerian population had been in the French army in France [114].

After the armistice a large number of the mobilized men were sent back home, but many remained as laborers to rebuild the war-torn areas. Since France found itself depopulated and economically paralyzed, the French government again resorted to North African colonial manpower to reconstruct its economy. Between 1920 and 1924, 120,000 North African workers were called to France; in 1924 alone, 71,028 Algerian and 10,000 Moroccan migrant workers were *imported*. This massive out-migration from the Maghreb frightened the colonial entrepreneurs, who up to then had been able to pay starvation wages to workers by maintaining a vast reserve army of lumpen-proletarianized peasants. Their pressure, as always, elicited a positive response from the colonial authorities. Thenceforth a work permit was required before emigrating. But although this brought a decrease in emigration, 71,000 Algerian workers arrived in France in 1929 alone [115].

CONCLUSION

Thus as early as 1833 the Commission d'Agrique suggested to the French government that "to bring these peoples under the subjection of our social order, to force them to labor the soil, to make of them industrial machines, and at last taxable, would be a very fine result" [116]. In fact, in retrospect the French state has succeeded not only in tying a large number of agricultural workers to the plantations of the settlers (600,000 seasonal and permanent workers in the 1950s), but also in attracting many migrant workers to metropolitan France itself, where they were transformed into "industrial machines" (over 800,000 Algerians were in France in 1974; all of them migrated in search of employment). One conclusion is inescapable: capitalism, in the colonized world as in its country of birth, has resulted in the brutal expropriation of the means of production of the petty commodity producers and peasants. As Maurice Dobb observed:

> The process which created both capital and labor as joint products, the so-called "primitive accumulation," appeared from one aspect as the concentration of property through the instrument of economic pressure and monopoly, usury or actual expropriation, and from the other aspect as the consequential dispossession of previous owners. One kind of property was born from the ashes of an older kind of property; large property grew to adult stature by digesting the small; and a capitalist class arose as the creation, not of thrift and abstinence as economists have traditionally depicted it, but of the dispossession of others by dint of economic or political advantage [117].

In fact, the colonization of Algeria has brought about the division of the society into two antagonistic classes: a colonial bourgeoisie monopolizing the means of production, and a resourceless, disinherited proletariat. More than that, a large lumpenproletariat, which served the function of a colonial "reserve army," has been catapulted into existence. This feature, contrary to Fanon's thesis, appears to hamper the development of class consciousness and put a brake on the militancy of the comparatively small and rising working class. Such social conditions are conducive to the emergence of nationalist and populist, rather than revolutionary, working-class parties, because the working class is reduced to a daily struggle for bare subsistence.

NOTES

All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

1 Maxime Rodinson, *Islam et Capitalism* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), p. 45. (All translations are my own unless
2 Quoted by Ernest Picard, *La Monnaie et le crédit en Algérie depuis 1830* (Alger, 1930), p. 32.
3 Archives Nationales de France (hereafter A.N.), F[80] 1983.
4 Even so, the French companies often complained of Algerian merchants who managed to deal directly with Marseilles. See Charles Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1880–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 34.
5 Abdellah Laroui, *L'Histoire du Maghreb* (Paris: Maspero, 1970), p. 240.
6 André Raymond, "North Africa in the Pre-Colonial Period," in *Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 282.
7 According to Marshall Sahlins, "a tribe is divided into concentric circles of kith and kin; the household in central position, a circle of lineage kinsmen surrounding it, a wider circle of village relations, on out to the tribal and inter-tribal spheres. Each sphere, otherwise a level of organization, becomes in this perspective a sector of social relations, relations increasingly broad and dilute as one moves outward from the familial navel." *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 15.
8 David M. Hart, *The Tribe in Modern Morocco: Two Case Studies in Arabs and Berbers*, Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud, eds., (Lexington Books, 1972), p. 25.
9 Ibid.
10 What Evans-Pritchard said in *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), may be true of the Algerian precolonial tribes:

> Each section of a tribe, from the smallest to the largest, has its *shaikh* or *shaikhs*. The tribal system, typical of segmentary structures everywhere, is a system of balanced opposition between tribes and tribal sections from the largest to the smallest divisions, and there cannot therefore be any single authority in a tribe. Authority is distributed at every point of the tribal structure and political leadership is limited to situations in which a tribe or a segment of it acts corporately. . . . There cannot, obviously, be any absolute authority vested in a single *shaikh* of a tribe when the fundamental principle of tribal structure is opposition between its segments.
>
> Consequently, the exact status of a *shaikh* can only be defined in terms of a complicated network of kinship ties and structural relations. . . . Bedouin respect their *shaikhs*, but they do not regard them as superiors. Rather, their influence and wealth are considered as capital to be drawn on for the benefit of whoever is in need of them. So long as a *shaikhly* family can keep their prestige derived from the strength of their section, their wealth, their traditional place in Bedouin society and the character of their leading members, so long only are they regarded as *shaikhs* of whatever the grade may be (pp. 59–60).

11 Lucette Valensi, *Le Maghreb avant la prise d'Alger, 1770-1830* (Paris, Flammarion, 1969), p. 34.
12 Ibn Khaldun wrote in the fourteenth century that:

> It should be known that differences of condition among people are the result of the different ways in which they make their living. Social organization enables them to cooperate toward that end and to start with the simple necessities of life, before they get to conveniences and luxuries.
>
> Some people live by agriculture, the cultivation of vegetables and grains; others by animal husbandry, the use of sheep, cattle, goats, bees, and silkworms, for breeding and for their products.

The Muqaddimah, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, edited and abridged by N.J. Dawood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 91.
13 Mahfoud Bennoune, "Socio-Economic Changes in Rural Algeria: 1830–1954," *Peasant Studies Newsletter* (April 1973), p. 12.
14 Valensi, *Le Maghreb*, p. 45.
15 *The Maqaddimah*, p. 313.
16 Louis Vignon, *La France dans l'Algérie* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), p. 27.

17 Ministère de la Guerre, *Tableau de la situation des etablissements Français dans l'Algérie* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1838), p. 256.
18 Ibid., p. 257.
19 A.N., F^{80} 1805.
20 A.N., F^{80} 522.
21 Baron de Berthezene, *Dix huit mois à Alger* (Montpellier: Auguste Ricard, 1933), p. 200.
22 A.N., F^{80} 10. The Commission d'Afrique was formed and sent to Algeria by the French government to study the advantages and disadvantages of colonization. Its report, contrary to what most French historians tried to make us believe, concluded that the occupation of Algeria would be profitable economically, politically, and militarily to France.
23 Louis Massignon, "Enquête sur les corporations Musulmanes et de commercants au Maroc," *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 58 (1924), p. 70.
24 Ahmad el Kodsy, "Nationalism and Class Struggles in the Arab World," *Monthly Review* (July–August 1970), p. 11.
25 Ibid., p. 17.
26 Mostefa Lacheraf, *L'Algérie: Nation et Société* (Paris: Maspero, 1965).
27 Charles A. Julien, *L'Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine* (Paris: P.U.F., 1964).
28 All of these figures are taken from Lacheraf, Julien, and Valensi. Lacheraf estimated the population of Oran to be 40,000 but Valensi gave only 9,000 and Julien 10,000.
29 Augustin Berque, "La bourgeoisie algérienne," *Hispéris*, vol. XXXV (1948), p. 5.
30 Valensi, *Le Maghreb*, pp. 50–58.
31 Rozet, *Voyage dans le Régence d'Alger* (Paris: Arthur Bertrand, 1833), vol. 1, pp. 223–224.
32 Lacheraf, l'Algérie, p. 57.
33 Ibid.
34 Berque, "La bourgeoisie Algérienne," p. 14.
35 Quoted in Lacheraf, *L'Algérie*, p. 158.
36 Ibid., p. 159.
37 Julien, *L'Histoire*, pp. 72–73.
38 Quoted in ibid., p. 67.
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40 Quoted in Lacheraf, *L'Algérie*, p. 166.
41 Général Daumas et Fabar, *La Grande Kabylie, Etudes historiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1847), p. 115.
42 M. Poujoulat, *Etudes Africaines* (Paris: Hivert, 1847), pp. 219–20.
43 Maurice Wahl, *L'Algérie* (Paris: Alcan, 1903), p. 135.
44 Poujoulat, *Etudes*, p. 43.
45 Quoted in Lacheraf, *L'Algérie*, pp. 170–71.
46 Duc d'Orléans, *Récits de Campagne* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1892), pp. 139–40.
47 Camille Rousset, *L'Algérie de 1830 à 1840* (Paris: Plon, 1900), vol. 2, pp. 53–54.
48 J.Ch.M. Boudin, *Histoire statistique de la colonisation en Algérie* (Paris: Bailliers, 1853), p. 53.
49 *Resultats statistiques du denombrement de la population* (Alger, 1954), p. xix.
50 All quotes cited in Bennoune, "Socio-Economic Changes," pp. 14–15.
51 Quoted by Charles H. Favord, *Le FLN et l'Algérie* (Paris: Plon, 1962), p. 31.
52 Quoted in Julien, *L'Histoire*, p. 316.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., p. 320.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Saint Arnaud, quoted in Julien, ibid.
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59 Boudin, *Histoire statistique*, p. 53.
60 Ruedy, *Land Policy in Colonial Algeria*, p. 35.
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