CHAPTER 3

Une aventure sociale et humaine: The Service des Centres Sociaux in Algeria, 1955–1962

Brooke Durham

At ten o'clock in the morning on 15 March 1962, six *Services des centres sociaux* (Social Service Centers) directors met at Château-Royal on the outskirts of Algiers. Within minutes, armed commandos belonging to the Secret Army Organization (*Organisation de l'armée secrète*, OAS) suddenly interrupted the meeting, escorted the six directors outside, and murdered them in cold blood. These murders took place mere days before the signing of the Evian Accords, which ended the seven-year war between the French Army and the Algerian nationalist *Front de libération nationale* (National Liberation Front, FLN), and initiated the negotiation process for Algerian independence.¹ The OAS attack on the six

¹Jean-Philippe Ould-Aoudia, *L'Assassinat de Château-Royal* (Paris: Éditions Tirésias, 1992); Association Les Amis de Max Marchand, de Mouloud Feraoun et de leurs

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B. Durham (✉)

Department of History, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA

e-mail: bdurham@stanford.edu

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directors in March 1962 effectively decapitated the *Service des Centres Sociaux* and cut short its potential recovery before official recognition of Algerian independence. This bloody bookend distorts what the *centres sociaux* represented and what they were able to accomplish during the tumultuous period between 1955 and 1962. These *centres* were much more than hapless victims of the military conflict in Algeria and represented more than a system of remedial schools and medical dispensaries. Bringing together the history of education, development, and decolonization in Algeria is crucial to this more complete understanding of the *centres sociaux* and the potential for integrating Algeria's Muslim and European communities after the Second World War.² The *centres sociaux*'s local and international dimensions make it an ideal institution for studying late colonial and early postcolonial development efforts, from mid-1950s integration to the 1958 Constantine Plan for Algerian development announced by President Charles de Gaulle.

On the local level, the *Service des centres sociaux* represented an official attempt sponsored by the Governor-General of Algeria, Jacques Soustelle, to modernize the Algerian masses through increasing literacy rates, improving hygiene practices, and increasing Muslim Algerians' access to medical and social services. Soustelle's vision for integration in Algeria emphasized social progress, modernity and political equality for disenfranchised Muslim Algerians, and the *centres sociaux* can be considered one of his most ambitious projects.³ For Soustelle, integration would respect the "originality" or "personality" of Algeria and "all Algerians and French citizens would be considered part of the same greater Franco-Algerian nation" with the same rights and responsibilities.⁴

Compangons, "Le 15 mars 1962," <http://max-marchand-mouloud-feraoun.fr/15-mars-1962/>. On the OAS, see, Raphaëlle Branche, "FLN et OAS: Deux terrorismes en guerre d'Algérie," *European Review of History* 14, no. 3 (2007): 325–342; Arnaud Déroulède, "L'OAS étude d'une organisation clandestine," PhD diss., Paris 4, 1993.

²On education during the colonial period, see Alf Andrew Heggoy and Paul J. Zingg, "French Education in Revolutionary North Africa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 4 (1976): 571–578; Hubert Desvages, "La scolarisation des musulmans en Algérie (1882–1962) dans l'enseignement primaire public français. Étude statistique," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 4, no. 1 (1972): 55–72; Ahmed Djebbar, "Éducation et société: Le cas de l'Algérie," *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres* 24 (1999): 45–54.

³Stephen Tyre, "From Algérie Française to France Musulmane: Jacques Soustelle and the Myths and Realities of 'Integration,' 1955–1962," *French History* 20, no. 3 (September 2006): 283.

⁴*Ibid.*, 278.

Of equal importance are the *Service des centres sociaux*'s international links to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Fundamental Education Program, which was designed to promote world peace by helping poor and illiterate peoples survive in the modern world (on this issue, see Chapter 1 by Damiano Matasci in this book). The *centres sociaux* absorbed fundamental education's paternalist and nebulous approach to human development, but also its optimism. They manifested their commitment to integration by hiring a diverse staff of Muslims and Europeans and by producing pedagogical tools especially tailored to their Algerian situation.⁵

The *centres sociaux* and fundamental education efforts in Algeria provide insight into rapidly evolving late colonial reforms as France and other European Empires sought to reconfigure their relationship to their disintegrating empires after the Second World War (see Chapter 9 by Miguel Bandeira Jeronimo/Hugo Gonçalves Dore and Chapter 10 by Hélène Charton in this book).⁶ The old colonial paradigms of the "civilizing mission," "the dual mandate," "*mise en valeur*," assimilation and association no longer passed muster in African colonial territories.⁷ Simply ignoring and brutally repressing the rapidly increasing Muslim population in Algeria—as during the May 1945 protests against French rule and the outbreak of the Algerian War in 1954—proved equally insufficient. Founded at the start of the Algerian War and outlasting Soustelle's tenure as governor-general, the *centres* were restructured and renamed the *Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs* in 1959 to adhere to the modernization objectives of the Constantine Plan and eventual negotiations for Algerian independence. The *centres*' commitment to the integration of Algeria's Muslim and European communities remained apparent even after 1959 in the composition of their staff and in the

⁵ Lists of *centres sociaux* employees demonstrate the diversity of the staff, see, for instance, the folders on *centres sociaux* personnel in Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer (ANOM) ALG Alger 3F/119; 3F/110.

⁶ See Muriam Haleh Davis, "Restaging *Mise en valeur*: 'Postwar Imperialism' and the Plan de Constantine," *Review of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 176–186.

⁷ "Introduction," in *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth Century Colonialism*, ed. by Martina Kopf, Gerald Hödel, and Joseph Morgan Hodge (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2014), 11–15. On Algerian postwar development, France and Europe, see, Davis, "Restaging *Mise en valeur*," 176–186; Mahfoud Bennoun, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830–1987: Colonial Upheavals and Post-independence Development* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

content and delivery of their pedagogical materials. Pairing the history of education with international development in Algeria offers fruitful terrain for studying local and international approaches to human development in the decade leading up to Algerian independence in 1962.⁸

FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION AT UNESCO AND THE *SERVICE DES CENTRES SOCIAUX*

The concept of “fundamental education” was highly influential in the early days of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and these ideas came to life in Algeria in the form of the *centres sociaux*. UNESCO’s 1947 treatise on fundamental education defines it as “basic education,” the education of the “masses,” and as “an essential instrument for establishing democratic life.”⁹ For the UNESCO committee tasked with creating the program, fundamental education was deeply connected to social and economic development and lasting global peace. Fundamental education was intended to equip underprivileged peoples with literacy, good health, and state-of-the-art resource management to facilitate their participation in the United Nations’ objective of global cooperation. Aimed at both adults and children, this program extended beyond basic reading, writing and arithmetic to include social improvements, like better hygiene, housing, and agricultural practices.¹⁰ Economic development projects, such as improving the water supply, conserving forests, and exploiting mineral wealth, would accompany the implementation of this broad educational endeavor.¹¹ Fundamental education was supposed to facilitate and improve the interactions between underprivileged peoples and the modern world. This introduction to the wider world paired with technical knowledge to develop local resources was to help the underprivileged grasp the interdependent relationship between their own productive work and the global economy.¹²

⁸ Amy Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006); Corinna Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

⁹ UNESCO, *Fundamental Education: Common Ground for All Peoples* (London: The Frederick Printing Co., 1947), 128.

¹⁰ Joseph Watras, “UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946–1959,” *History of Education* 39, no. 2 (March 2010): 219.

¹¹ UNESCO, *Fundamental Education*, 167.

¹² *Ibid.*, 170–171.

Fundamental education was presented as a comprehensive approach to promote social progress while avoiding the scourge of war. In order for fundamental education to impart the ideals of human solidarity, dignity, and freedom, this type of education had to be made available to “the bright areas” and “among the most advanced peoples” in addition to the “dark areas” and “among backwards and illiterate people.”¹³ Fundamental education was not supposed to be inspired by charity, humanitarian zeal, or the desire to dominate or exploit; rather, the people themselves were to be the primary motivating force behind fundamental education programs.¹⁴ The pilot Fundamental Education program took place in the Marbial valley in Haiti, and other projects took place in Senegal, Guinée, Cameroun, and Oubangui-Chari.¹⁵ 1950s fundamental education programs eschewed elite-focused colonial assimilation and sought instead to integrate the masses on the “fringes of civilization”—i.e., the peasants, the illiterate, and the poor.¹⁶ Colonial paternalism and condescension pervaded the idea that underprivileged people had to be *taught* to live better and adopt the “few common tools without which humanity is still practically at the level of the beast.”¹⁷ Fundamental Education unabashedly advocated changing people’s behaviors to improve their standard of living on the most basic levels.

Throughout the 1950s, UNESCO drew attention to the shortcomings of colonial states by gathering statistics on social, economic, and educational inequalities that pointed to colonial possessions as the most

¹³Ibid., 178.

¹⁴Ibid., 260.

¹⁵In addition to Haiti, pilot fundamental education projects were proposed in China and in East Africa. See Chantalle F. Verna, “Haiti, the Rockefeller Foundation, and UNESCO’s Pilot Project in Fundamental Education, 1948–1953,” *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 2 (2016): 269–295; Gouverneur Deschamps, “L’Éducation de base,” *La Nouvelle Revue Française d’Outre Mer*, no. 5 (May 1955, Nouvelle série): 213–217. In West Africa, the French colonial government sponsored their own basic education programs, see, Pauline Kusiak, “Instrumentalized Rationality, Cross-Cultural Mediators, and Civil Epistemologies of Late Colonialism,” *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 6 (2010): 871–902.

¹⁶Damiano Matasci, “Assessing Needs, Fostering Development: UNESCO, Illiteracy and the Global Politics of Education (1945–1960),” *Comparative Education* 53, no. 1 (2017): 42; UNESCO, “Experiments in Fundamental Education in French African Territories,” *Educational Studies and Documents*, no. 9 (January 1955): 55.

¹⁷UNESCO, “Experiments in Fundamental Education in French African Territories,” 55.

disproportionally underdeveloped.¹⁸ The average living conditions of mid-twentieth-century Muslim Algerian families were equally dire. After a century of French colonial rule, an estimated 80% of urban Algerians lived in makeshift housing (*bidonvilles*).¹⁹ Seven million out of eight and a half million Algerians lived well below the poverty line, in unsanitary conditions, without sewage and garbage collection systems, without running water and electricity, and without public services including schools, post offices, and medical dispensaries.²⁰ Algerian children were severely underserved by the colonial school system, and many had never received any kind of education. The 1944 reform of the Algerian public-school system projected the enrollment of one million Muslim students over the next two decades.²¹ Yet by 1954, public schools in Algeria had room for only 300,000 pupils or a mere 15% of more than 2 million Algerian children of primary school age.²² Pressure on colonial states to remedy the human consequences of these bleak statistics also came from below. In Algeria, public intellectuals including Albert Camus and Germaine Tillion expressed alarm over the rampant illiteracy and appalling living conditions Muslim Algerians faced; both included greater access to schooling as a solution to these pressing issues.²³ A small yet diverse committee of Muslim Algerian and French men and women, social workers and teachers formed the Algerian Committee for Fundamental Education (*Comité Algérien pour l'éducation de base*) and took up UNESCO's arguments for fundamental education as a development strategy to address the poor living conditions in Algeria.²⁴ This committee published tracts and appealed to educational and social organizations

¹⁸Matasci, "Assessing Needs, Fostering Development," 45.

¹⁹Nelly Forget, "Le Service des Centres Sociaux en Algérie," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de nos temps* 26 (1992): 37.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Heggoy and Zingg, "French Education in Revolutionary North Africa," 576.

²²Ibid. The same year, Qur'anic schools enrolled approximately 40,000 pupils in 181 schools.

²³Albert Camus, *Actuelles III: Chroniques Algériennes, 1939-1958* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1958). Germaine Tillion used the term "pauperization" (*clochardisation*) to describe the poor living conditions of the Algerian Muslim population. Germaine Tillion, *Algeria, the Realities* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958).

²⁴Le Comité Algérien pour l'éducation de base, "Appel," Janvier 1951: 1. ANOM ALG Alger 4I/230. James Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 64.

interested in improving Algerians' standard of living and combatting "all forms of ignorance," including illiteracy, lack of hygiene, infant mortality, women's inferior social status, and inefficient agricultural practices.²⁵ The committee highlighted the success of other fundamental education programs, and they hoped for the creation of combined social, medical, and educative services that could reach Algerian men, women, and children in both urban and rural areas.²⁶ These desires would come to fruition on October 27, 1955, when the Governor-General of Algeria, Jacques Soustelle, signed into law the creation of the *Service des centres sociaux*.²⁷ The new service's action plan mirrored UNESCO's (and the Algerian Committee for Fundamental Education's) prescription for multi-purpose fundamental education. The first and primary goal of the *centres sociaux* was to provide "fundamental education (*éducation de base*) for the male and female population" and to provide technical as well as agricultural education; the *centres sociaux* would also provide medical and social assistance and generally facilitate and support any initiatives that would ensure "the economic, social and cultural progress" of its constituent populations.²⁸ The *centres sociaux* both relied on UNESCO expertise and elaborated their own fundamental education pedagogy during their existence.²⁹

Fundamental Education's idealistic hope for a modern world in which all people would be equal participants mirrored Governor-General Jacques Soustelle's push for integrating Algeria's Muslim and Europeans populations during early years of the Algerian War. The *Service des centres sociaux* merits study for its links to contemporary international development initiatives put forth by UNESCO and to local advocacy

²⁵Le Comité Algérien pour l'éducation de base, "Appel"; Service des Liaisons Nord-Africaines, Préfecture d'Alger, "Notice: Comité Algérien pour l'éducation de base," 21 Mai 1952, ANOM ALG Alger 41/230.

²⁶Le Comité algérien pour l'éducation de base, "Appel."

²⁷"Arrêté du 27 octobre 1955 Portant création du Service des Centres Sociaux et nomination du chef de service," *Journal Officiel de l'Algérie*, 4 Novembre 1955, p. 2118, ANOM ALG GGA 12 CAB/192.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹André Lestage, an adult education and literacy specialist in UNESCO's Education Department, presented at the *centres sociaux*'s first staff training session in 1955. See "Algérie: Création d'un service des centres sociaux," *Bulletin de liaison d'informations sur l'éducation de base et l'éducation des adultes* 9 (1er trimestre 1956): 19; Isabelle Deblé, "Une exception éducative: Les centres sociaux en Algérie," *Esprit* (Octobre 2004): 5.

for improving Muslim Algerians' living conditions. The Algerian context of the 1950s and 1960s produced both innovative pedagogical tools to foster integration and spotlighted local solidarity between Muslims and Europeans as France grappled with its changing relationship to its empire.

THE STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE *SERVICE DES CENTRES SOCIAUX*

The *Service des centres sociaux* sought to improve literacy rates and to ensure that the newly literate profited from their education as productive workers and as members of healthy families. Established in urban and rural areas where there were no other local government institutions, the *centres sociaux* bridged the gap between "the illiterate masses" and existing socioeconomic institutions such as public and trade schools, as well as the health, agriculture, and labor administrations.³⁰ Typically, the *centres sociaux* were established in urban makeshift neighborhoods (*bidonvilles*), villages, and rural areas, where "unschooled children (*enfants non-scolarisés*), illiterate and untrained (*inadaptés*) adolescents, and adult men and women," had no other resources at their disposal.³¹ In urban areas, the *centres sociaux* helped their constituents adapt to urban life and facilitated access to employment, while the rural *centres sociaux* focused on improving resource management and updating local practices without a "brutal break with tradition."³² Both urban and rural *centres sociaux* taught the basics: simple arithmetic, "(some) reading, (some) writing," first aid skills, financial management, how to sign official documents, how to dress, how to eat a balanced diet, and how to "defend oneself" or get by in everyday life.³³ The *centres sociaux* ultimately aspired to set

³⁰"Le Centre Social," n.d., p. 3 ANOM ALG GGA 14 CAB 192. According to director Ould Aoudia, "The centre social éducatif is established where no other official institution exists and as close as possible to the poorest communities," "Exposé de Monsieur Ould Aoudia: L'Éducation de Base et les Centres Sociaux Éducatifs," n.d. [1959?] Bibliothèque du Centre diocésain les Glycines, Algiers, Algeria, p. 12.

³¹"Le Centre Social," n.d., p. 3 ANOM ALG GGA 14 CAB 192.

³²Ibid.

³³Direction Générale de l'Éducation Nationale en Algérie, *Le Service des Centres Sociaux en Algérie* (Alger, n.d.), 19.

up (and be a part of) the infrastructure that would assist those ready to help themselves.³⁴

The typical *centre social* would serve 6000 people with a seven-person staff of educators, activists, and artists.³⁵ In addition to the director and his assistant(s), there were six critical roles to be filled at every *centre social*: a nurse; a social worker; a domestic arts instructor; a pre-professional training instructor or, in the rural *centres*, an agricultural instructor; general education instructors in charge of literacy acquisition, and civic and social education.³⁶ In accordance with a 1956 government decree requiring parity among employees hired by public institutions, the *centres* staff was composed of equal numbers of Muslim and European Algerians.³⁷ Charles Aguesse, as one of his first initiatives as the founding director of the *centres sociaux*, instituted bilingual publications of all *centres* materials, in both French and Arabic.³⁸ Arabic courses were provided during staff training for all employees without sufficient prior knowledge of the language.³⁹

The *centres* were not affiliated with any religious orders, and they claimed political neutrality. Every *centre social* was to “situate its action on the human level, without connections to political preoccupations.”⁴⁰ The second article in a series on the *centres sociaux* in the *Journal d’Alger* in July 1959 described the *centres*’ political neutrality as an advantage, since it allowed the organization to focus instead on more enduring and “permanent” problems.⁴¹ The “social” in the *centres*’ name harkens back to the original intent of social assistance programs instituted in

³⁴Ibid., 17–19.

³⁵Ibid., 23.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Andrée Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d’Algérie dans la guerre de libération: Des oubliées de l’histoire* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995), 62; Georges Garillon, *De la Lorraine à l’Algérie. Une aventure sociale et humaine au tournant des années soixante: Les Centres Sociaux Éducatifs* (Saint-Just-la-Pendue: La Bartavelle, 2008), 58–59.

³⁸Nelly Forget, “Le Service des Centres Sociaux dans le parcours algérien de Germaine Tillion,” in *La guerre d’Algérie: Ethnologues de l’ombre et de la lumière*, ed. by Michel Cornaton, Nelly Forget, and François Marquis (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2015), 45.

³⁹Garillon, *De la Lorraine à l’Algérie*, 65.

⁴⁰Direction Générale de l’Éducation Nationale en Algérie, *Le Service des Centres Sociaux en Algérie*, 17.

⁴¹Hossein Djebrane, “Les Centres Sociaux Contre L’Ignorance et la Misère,” *Journal d’Alger*, 18 July 1959.

France in the nineteenth century: “the social question,” forced recently industrialized French society to grapple with how to reconcile the most disenfranchised workers to themselves and to the rest of society in this new industrialized, capitalist economy.⁴² Nineteenth-century social workers (*travailleurs sociaux*) sought to equip all citizens to face the exigencies of modern life and to contribute to their well-being and societal progress at large.⁴³ As *centres sociaux* sprung up in France throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not until the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 that the French colonial administration decided to ensure that similar social services be made available to all “indigenous” populations in Francophone Africa with specially trained staff.⁴⁴

The first Algerian *centres sociaux* were expansions of existing operations in the suburbs of Algiers. Before 1950, Algerians seeking social services had to venture into the European neighborhoods since the *bidonvilles* were considered illegal settlements and thus not outfitted with the much-needed social services available in European neighborhoods.⁴⁵ Father Jean Scotto recruited French social worker, Marie-Renée Chéné, to come to Algeria and provide medical and social services in the Bérardi neighborhood (known as “Boubsila” to its Muslim inhabitants) in Hussein-Dey in 1950.⁴⁶ Two French Algerian social workers Emma Serra-Sanchez and Simone Gallice worked with Chéné and the Hussein-Dey municipality to fund two medical and social service centers in 1953.⁴⁷ These Hussein-Dey *centres sociaux* would be the first

⁴²Robert Durand, *Histoire des Centres Sociaux: Du voisinage à la citoyenneté* (Paris: Éditions la découverte, 2006), 16.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁴Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie dans la guerre de libération*, 44. On the history of the centres sociaux in France, see Durand, *Histoire des Centres Sociaux: Du voisinage à la citoyenneté*; Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79 and 131–132.

⁴⁵Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie dans la guerre de libération*, 44–45.

⁴⁶Pierre Couette, *Marie-Renée Chéné (1911–2000) pionnière de l'action sociale* (Pierre Couette, 2012), 53–56; Marie-Rénée Chéné, “Treize ans d'histoire d'un bidonville algérien ‘Bubs’ila’ 1950–1963,” *Mémoire École Pratique des Hautes Études*, 1963, 174–180; Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie dans la guerre de libération*, 45.

⁴⁷Serra, Chéné, and Gallice created a medical dispensary, a social secretariat, and the Social Workers Association of Hussein-Dey (*L'association des travailleurs sociaux d'Hussein-Dey*) which included Christian activists, secularists (*laïques*), and Muslims who grasped the tough conditions and needs of the neighborhood. The *centre social* at Hussein-Dey

incorporated under Governor-General Jacques Soutelle's 1955 promulgation of the *Service des centres sociaux*.

In mid-nineteenth-century France, significant political upheavals in 1848 and 1870 accompanied the establishment of social service centers to resolve the "social question." In Algeria, social services were established following the political failure of 1947: Algeria's status relative to France was unresolved and faith in domestic electoral politics crumbled in the face of rigged election results in 1948, resulting in the FLN fighting for Algerian independence in order to address Muslim Algerians' political, social, and economic disenfranchisement. For Governor-General Jacques Soustelle and the *centres sociaux*, Algeria's future remained French, albeit following significant structural reforms to facilitate Muslim Algerians cohabitation with their European counterparts. The *Service des centres sociaux* and its predecessors underscore that the impetus for finding solutions to Muslim Algerians' disenfranchisement—through a combination of basic literacy with social and medical services—came from a mixed community of male and female, Muslim and European Algerians and individuals from France who were interested in working across ethnic and cultural barriers. The *Service des centres sociaux* adopted UNESCO's fundamental education program to help Muslim adults and children adapt to modern Algerian life. Fundamental education and integration, unlike the colonial policy of assimilation, did not set out to "substitute a mode of civilization with another, but, according to a declaration from UNESCO itself, [fundamental education] is at the service of all regional and national cultures."⁴⁸ According to a *centre sociaux* director, "We can try and help people with the best of intentions, but if we consider them inferior, we are wasting our time."⁴⁹ Fundamental education as practiced by the *centres sociaux* was above all practical in terms of the goal of integration during Jacques Soustelle's tenure as governor-general, as demonstrated by the content

included a literacy center, housekeeping courses (*cours ménager*), job training for adolescents and women. According to Father Scotto, it was the popularity of these poorly funded, grassroots medical-social centers in the *bidonvilles* around Algiers that encouraged Germaine Tillion to create her *centres sociaux*. Dore-Audibert, *Des Françaises d'Algérie dans la guerre de libération*, 46–47 and 56–61.

⁴⁸ "Exposé de Monsieur Ould Aoudia: L'Éducation de Base et les Centres Sociaux Éducatifs," 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

and dissemination of *centres sociaux* pedagogical materials. The *centres sociaux*'s efforts to integrate Algeria's European and Muslim communities through fundamental education would be put to the test during the Algerian War, starting in 1955 until the brutal conclusion of the *centres*' existence and the assassination of its six directors.

THE *CENTRES SOCIAUX* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ALGERIAN WAR

In order to be effective in Muslim Algerian communities, the *centres sociaux* had to cultivate close and trusting relationships with their constituents without appearing too sympathetic to Algerian nationalism or to other so-called progressive ideologies. Yet close interactions between Muslims and Europeans of this nature were unprecedented in French Algeria. Although European and Muslim Algerians frequently came into contact with each other as intellectuals and professionals in schools and universities, in cafés and markets, and at particular moments such as the fervent mobilizations around the Popular Front in 1936, Muslim Algerians were mostly invisible to their European neighbors.⁵⁰ Between 1941 and 1943, there were lukewarm attempts at inter-communal meetings among secular (*laïc*), Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim scout and guide troops, but these meetings were increasingly rare after 1945.⁵¹ In 1952, some Muslim and Catholic scouts along and university students formed a new organization, the Association of Algerian Youth for Social Action (*Association de la Jeunesse Algérienne pour l'Action Sociale*, AJAAS), to openly discuss the economic and social problems plaguing Algeria in a politically neutral environment.⁵² Around the same time, the *Mission de France* Catholic missionary team, under the leadership of Father Scotto, sought to convince the Christian population in Algeria to create more just and fraternal relationships with their Muslim neighbors.⁵³ It was the

⁵⁰James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 133–134.

⁵¹Pierre et Claudine Chaulet, *Le Choix de l'Algérie: Deux Voix, Une Mémoire* (Algiers: Éditions barzakh, 2012), 86.

⁵²Ibid., 87–89; Darcie Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity: Religion and the End of Empire in France and in Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 47, Note 91.

⁵³Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity*, 43–45. The *Mission De France*'s emphasis on pursuing relationships with the Muslim community attracted suspicion from Europeans, the military, and the colonial government.

university students, teachers, social workers, and nurses involved in the early social service efforts in the *bidonvilles*, the adherents of the Algerian Committee for Fundamental Education and AJAAS who came to work in the *centres sociaux* created by Jacques Soustelle and Germaine Tillion in 1955. Studying the *centres sociaux* brings this diverse community into focus during a time of mounting animosity between Europeans and Muslims in Algeria as the war for Algerian independence escalated.

The *centres sociaux* walked a fine line between adhering to their mission to help the most impoverished and illiterate Algerians, and fending off the French military's suspicions of being *too* close to Muslims and inevitably helping the FLN. For some, this neutrality was real and provided a way for them to take action in the face of incredible violence and to help the victims of the war without choosing a side.⁵⁴ Working for the *centres sociaux* was a commitment in itself: The mixed Muslim and European Algerian staff and the *centres sociaux*'s presence in the thick of Muslim-majority urban and rural areas provided proof that cohabitation and cooperation was possible in Algeria. Mohamed Sahnoun, a former employee of a *centre* near Algiers, believed that the *centres sociaux* initiated "processes of dialogue and inter-communal cooperation, that everyone believed to be urgent and vital."⁵⁵ According to Isabelle Deblé, the *centres sociaux* and brought together men and women, "*pièdes-noirs*, Algerian activists and lay people, people from France, people from *l'Éducation nationale*, or from social work backgrounds, artists, cinematographers who attached themselves to this common cause."⁵⁶ Fettouma Medjoub and Simone Gallice fondly remembered their "*chez nous*," the *centre social* Bel-Air outside of Algiers, as an "isle of fraternity" where "each of us could be herself without fear and get her work done."⁵⁷

In the climate of the Algerian War, however, the *centres sociaux*'s insistence on integration and neutrality rendered them suspicious in the eyes of the French Army. Governor-General Jacques Soustelle was replaced in 1956 by Robert Lacoste; as governor-general, Lacoste was granted the right to rule by decree and transferred police powers in

⁵⁴Dore-Audibert, *Les Françaises dans la guerre d'Algérie*, 64.

⁵⁵Mohamed Sahnoun, *Mémoire blessée: Algérie, 1957* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 2007), 91.

⁵⁶Dore-Audibert, *Les Françaises dans la guerre d'Algérie*, 65.

⁵⁷Forget, "Le Service des centres sociaux dans le parcours algérien de Germaine Tillion," 76.

Algiers to the military, giving the army the right to arrest, detain, and interrogate suspects, thus increasing the civil authority of the French military.⁵⁸ French Army General Jacques Massu took on civilian authority in Algiers in 1957 and became convinced that the *centres sociaux* were rife with individuals harboring “separatist” and Algerian nationalist sympathies.⁵⁹ General Massu deeply distrusted the Ministry of Education and public school teachers.⁶⁰ It did not help that several *centres sociaux* employees had participated in the general strike called by the FLN in January 1957, and that *centres sociaux* social workers had refused to participate in a military search of family homes in the Casbah.⁶¹ Since 1955, the French Army had been tracking individuals who belonged to the banned Algerian Communist Party, the FLN, as well as other liberals, progressive Christians, and *Service des Centres Sociaux* employees.⁶² In May 1957, sixteen *centres sociaux* employees were arrested on charges of undermining state security and stood trial that July following detention and torture.⁶³ The Trial of Progressive Christians in July 1957 has been interpreted as indicative of the impossibility of cooperation between Europeans and Muslims during the Algerian War.⁶⁴ But *centres sociaux* employees were ready to prove that the goal of integrating European and Muslim communities in Algeria was an achievable and worthwhile endeavor. Integration did not fail because of a lack of individuals willing to break down social, economic, and cultural barriers; integration pursued by the *centres sociaux* failed because of the military’s

⁵⁸Evans, *Algeria*, 143 and 167–169.

⁵⁹Letter from General Massu to Monsieur Delouvrier, Le Délégué Général du Gouvernement en Algérie, 4 Avril 1959. ANOM ALG Alger 1K/1275.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹On the social workers in the Casbah, see ANOM ALG Alger 1K/1280, and, Pierre Couette, *Marie-Renée Chéné*, 72–76. On the centres sociaux and the grève scolaire, see Letter from Charles Aguesse, Le Chef du Service des centres sociaux to Monsieur le Recteur, Directeur Général de l’Éducation Nationale en Algérie, 8 Février 1957; and Charles Aguesse, “Etat Récapitulatif des absences pour grève,” 5 February 1957, ANOM ALG Alger 1K/1264.

⁶²Yves Goddard, *Les Paras dans la Ville*, Service Civil International (SCI) Archives, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, 31702.2.

⁶³Ibid. On ‘Christian progressivism,’ see, Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity*, 69–70, 83; LeSueur, *Uncivil War*, 71–72.

⁶⁴LeSueur, *Uncivil War*, 77. Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity*, 69–70 and 87.

expansive authority over civilian matters and the climate of distrust surrounding the Algerian Muslim community and those who associated with them.⁶⁵

New Years wishes from a group of officers from the FLN's military arm, the National Liberation Army (*Armée de Libération Nationale*, ALN) criticized the French Army's use of fear tactics in their efforts to rally Muslims to the French cause. The ALN officers praised the heartfelt actions of *centres sociaux* employee Nelly Forget, progressive catholic priest Father Barthez, and anticolonial intellectual André Mandouze as individuals who earned the friendship and trust of Muslim people through their generosity.⁶⁶ For them and many others, this Franco-Muslim community was "more than just a publicity slogan, an empty promise or a righteous wish," but an endeavor worth risking their lives to achieve.⁶⁷

Following the drama of the Trial of Progressive Christians, the French Algerian Government decided to reform the *Service des Centres Sociaux*. Charles De Gaulle's return to power in 1958 was accompanied by the unveiling of the five-year Constantine Plan for Algerian development and the expansion of the education system to reach millions of unschooled and illiterate children.⁶⁸ The *centres sociaux* had a vital role to play in this expanded educational effort as a pathway to traditional schooling for all school-aged children. Re-branded as the *Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs*, the *centres* were placed under the authority of the *Rectorat* in Algiers to provide greater oversight over the *centres'* activities.⁶⁹ But another scandal erupted in 1959, when ten *centres sociaux* employees were arrested for alleged connections to FLN cells, collecting money

⁶⁵See previous Note 63; Letter from General Massu to Monsieur Delouvrier Le Délégué Général du Gouvernement en Algérie, 4 Avril 1959; Goddard, *Les Paras dans la Ville*.

⁶⁶"Janvier 1958: Les 'vœux' de nouvel an d'un groupe d'officiers de l'ALN," ANOM 114/APOM.

⁶⁷Jean Gonnet, "Libres Opinions: L'Affaire des Libéraux d'Alger," *Le Monde*, 18 Juin 1957, ANOM 4I/230.

⁶⁸Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Académie d'Alger, "Ordonnance du 20 août 1958 sur la scolarisation accélérée de l'Algérie pendant 8 ans," ANOM ALG GGA 14 CAB/135.

⁶⁹L'Inspecteur d'Académie, Chef du Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs, "Une Institution d'Éducation de base en Algérie: Les Centres Sociaux Éducatifs," 11 March 1961, p. 2, ANOM ALG GGA 15 CAB/12.

or delivering medicine to nationalist fighters.⁷⁰ An article published in July 1959 in the conservative newspaper *L'Echo d'Alger* sought to turn public opinion against the *centres sociaux* and falsely reported that the French Army had arrested over 800 employees guilty of conspiring with the FLN and implicated in a bomb-making workshop.⁷¹ With many staff members expelled from Algeria or fired, the *centres sociaux* struggled to fill leadership positions. The increased bureaucratic oversight also made the hiring of new staff excruciatingly slow.⁷² Longtime *centres sociaux* employee and assistant director Isabelle Deblé blamed the press for painting the *centres* in a bad light. Deblé conceded that there was likely some FLN infiltration into the *centres sociaux* but never to the point that it would compromise the *centres*' central mission: "We did not make bombs, not in my house, not in the centres sociaux, we made sure fraternity prevailed between members of this traumatized society."⁷³

In August 1961, Kabyle author, schoolteacher, and *centres sociaux* director Mouloud Feraoun expressed his frustration with the poor timing of the *centres*' mission in a letter to a friend: "Three times alas! This had to be done in [1950] and now no one believes in it... No one wants to do anything good anymore."⁷⁴ Working at the *centre social* in Relizane, fellow schoolteacher Georges "Pierre" Garillon witnessed a similar disenchantment: The *centre*'s appearance was in disarray—trees and flowers died or were overgrown and the walls were defaced with graffiti—and the dynamism and *esprit de corps* of the staff had regressed as well.⁷⁵ The Franco-Muslim community that had supported the implantation of the *centres sociaux*, and its predecessors either sat in jail, left for France, or lived with

⁷⁰Letter from Commissaire Divisionnaire chef du service départemental des renseignements Généraux d'Alger à Monsieur de Directeur de la Sûreté nationale en Algérie, 10 juin 1959 ANOM ALG Alger 3F/110. Letter from the Direction Générale de l'Éducation Nationale en Algérie Service des Centres Sociaux to Monsieur le Préfet d'Alger, 28 May 1959 ANOM ALG Alger 3F/110.

⁷¹Association Les Amis de Max Marchand, de Mouloud Feraoun et de leurs Compagnons, *L'École en Algérie*, 110.

⁷²Letter from Max Marchand, Directeur du Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs to Monsieur le Délégué Général copied Monsieur le Recteur de l'Académie d'Alger, 21 November 1961, ANOM ALG GGA 15CAB/3.

⁷³Deblé, "Une exception éducative," 21.

⁷⁴Mouloud Feraoun, *Lettres à ses amis* (Alger: ENAG Éditions, 1998), 202 and 225.

⁷⁵Garillon, *De la Lorraine à l'Algérie*, 179.

the perpetual threat of arrests and jail time hindering their activities. Yet the *centres sociaux* continued to innovate and expand their activities: In 1961, several directors and instructors formed the Association for the Development of Fundamental Education Cooperatives in Algeria with the conviction that co-ops would help teach democratic citizenship, responsibility, solidarity, camaraderie, and integrity.⁷⁶ These co-ops would take the form of workshops, agricultural schemes, and livestock farming.⁷⁷ In one of the last *centres sociaux* newsletters, director Max Marchand emphasized that the *centres sociaux*'s success could only be attributed to the employees' steadfast dedication to their task: "We have no room for the pessimists, the hesitant, and the skeptics. I know that all those who remain are sincerely convinced of the importance of the Centres Sociaux and are doing their very best to ensure their operation."⁷⁸

The tense context of the Algerian War and De Gaulle's return to power shifted the meaning of integration and French conception of difference between Europeans and Muslims. Gaullists went from seeing Muslims in general and Muslim Algerians in particular as "presenting an opportunity for an inclusive project" toward a perception of Islam and Muslim Algerians as fundamentally different and threatening to France's postwar ambitions.⁷⁹ The Constantine Plan represented a significant financial investment in Algerian economic development closely aligned with the European common market.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Centres Sociaux Éducatifs, *Bulletin de liaison d'information et de documentation*, no. 19 (1961): 25.

⁷⁷Ibid., 30.

⁷⁸Centres Sociaux Éducatifs, *Bulletin de liaison d'information et de documentation*, no. 20 (1961): 1.

⁷⁹Tyre attributes this shift in perception to the escalation of the war in Algeria and to the Suez crisis. Tyre, "From Algérie Française to France Musulmane," 291. See also, Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State During Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁰Davis, "Restaging *Mise en Valeur*," 177.

THE SERVICE DES CENTRES SOCIAUX'S INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

The *centres sociaux*'s pedagogical materials further solidify the organization's local and international connections and its place within a European and Algerian community willing to work together in solidarity toward integration. *Centres sociaux* materials needed to be easy to use for a rapidly trained employee and for someone who had just acquired basic literacy skills. The materials had to be efficient, and impart as much knowledge as possible as quickly as possible, since illiteracy and "ignorance of modern science, ignorance of the most basic hygiene practices, ignorance of laws and rules that regulate society" constituted a "dangerous plague for the illiterate themselves and for the world in general."⁸¹ One of the *centres sociaux*'s pedagogical tools was small handbooks which reinforced newly acquired basic French proficiency; provided step-by-step instructions on how to navigate the colonial social and medical administrations; and served as aide-mémoire for employees.⁸² "These simple texts referencing economic and real adult problems" would help acquaint the reader—or auditor, since these handbooks were likely used during classes—with what he or she would "be asked to read or perform in every life."⁸³ The handbook, *Day to Day in the City: Initiation Manual for Real Life* (*Au jour le jour à la ville; Manuel d'initiation à la vie pratique*), features large illustrations and copies of administrative forms, and questions in footnotes invite the reader to engage with the information presented. Themes covered in *Day to Day in the City* include taking the train, getting a paycheck, going to the doctor, and finding employment. In terms of facilitating the rapid integration of a recent Muslim émigré from the Algerian countryside, this handbook provided a simple, but instructive, introduction to modern Algerian life in a diverse city.

In addition to the handbooks, the *centres sociaux* produced a monthly newspaper, entitled *Our First Paper* (*Notre Premier Journal*) with the goal of encouraging newly literate adults and adolescents to reinforce

⁸¹ "Lutte contre l'analphabétisme: Exposé de M. Ould Aoudia," Mars 1956, Bibliothèque du Centre d'études diocésain Les Glycines, Algiers, Algeria, p. 1.

⁸² Titles include, *Petit guide d'hygiène, Vos yeux, Le bain du bébé, Entretien du linge et des vêtements, Au jour le jour dans le Bled*.

⁸³ Éducation Nationale en Algérie, Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs, *Au jour le jour à la ville, Manuel d'initiation à la vie pratique* (Alger: Ancienne Imprimerie V. Heintz, 1961). Archives privées Nelly Forget.

their budding literacy through didactic and leisure texts.⁸⁴ Short articles accompanied by simple illustrations covered topics such as the history of writing and printing, the history of home heating—from cave fires to central electric radiators and gas stoves—as well as Algeria’s booming oil and gas industry in the Sahara.⁸⁵ Following the article on the history of writing and printing is a short section that deploys Muslim devotion to the Qur’an to encourage learning to read other written materials:

In addition to the BOOK, you see all around you a multitude of printed papers. You see them every day there where you are: at home, in the street, at the factory, at the office. They accompany you everywhere. They are there to guide you. You, whose faith is directed by GOD’S BOOK, learn also to read men’s words. They will help you in our modern world!⁸⁶

Other sections of the paper contained recipes for crepes, instructions for building a simple shelf and for using a pattern to sew a pair of pants, how to find employment at the local *Bureau de Main d’Oeuvre*, in addition to drawing contests for children, and parables with animals. The *centres sociaux* inserted themselves into the articles, for instance, the aforementioned instructions for sewing a pair of pants for a three-year-old child begins with a *centre social* instructor giving “Ali’s mom” the pattern pieces to make the pants.⁸⁷ In 1961, 200,000 copies of *Our First Paper* had been distributed to new literates.⁸⁸ Similar newspapers, such as the *Journal des Villages*, were also used in fundamental education projects in Nyong and Sanaga in Cameroun.⁸⁹

⁸⁴“Note sur le périodique ‘Notre Premier Journal’,” n.d. (1960?) ANOM ALG GGA 14 CAB/196. L’inspecteur de l’académie, Chef du service des centres sociaux, “Quelques données numériques,” 11 March 1961, ANOM ALG GGA 15CAB/12.

⁸⁵*Notre Premier Journal*, no. 2 in ANOM ALG GGA 14CAB/196; nos. 3, 8, 12 of *Notre Premier Journal* are in Archives Archevêché Algiers (AAA), Algeria, Casier 522. So far, I have only located these 4 issues of the paper.

⁸⁶“El Quran, Le Livre,” *Notre Premier Journal*, n.d., AAA Casier 522.

⁸⁷“Un pantalon pour Ali,” *Notre Premier Journal*, no. 3, 1 November 1960, AAA Casier 522.

⁸⁸L’Inspecteur de l’académie, Chef du service des centres sociaux, “Quelques données numériques,” 11 March 1961, ANOM ALG GGA 15CAB/12.

⁸⁹“Notes de Lecture. Une intéressante publication camerounaise: Le Journal des villages du Nyong et Sanaga,” *Bulletin de liaison du centre français d’information sur l’éducation de base et l’éducation des adultes* 5 (December 1954): 12–13.

Besides printed materials, the *centres sociaux* made use of the flannel-graph board and flat figures, as well as still films and moving pictures, audio recordings, and radio broadcasts. During the nine days of training for *centres sociaux* employees in February 1956, trainees spent a half an hour every morning learning how to use projectors, recording devices, and duplicating machines.⁹⁰ Audio-visual methods were integral to fundamental education pedagogy, since these methods relied on skills people already possessed: watching and listening. In the *centre sociaux*'s December 1956–January 1957 newsletter, an article on literacy acquisition pushed back against the notion that the ability to read was the only medium providing access to modern thoughts and ideas; why should the focus remain on written communication when new forms of communication would surely emerge with the spread of audio and visual technologies? The author of the article argued that audio and visual methods should not just be used to teach reading and writing—the old ways of imparting and accessing ideas—but should be embraced as a method of communication by themselves.⁹¹

French ethnologist Marceau Gast worked as a schoolteacher in the Sahara before joining the *centres sociaux* between 1956 and 1960 with the responsibility of overseeing the audio-visual division of the organization. With his team of twenty to thirty employees, Gast prepared several pedagogical materials, including still films on how to change and feed a baby, and how to build shacks (*gourbis*) in rural areas with readily available materials so that families would not be without a suitable home while waiting for the construction of housing developments.⁹² Gast estimated that he and his team put together about 300 radio shows that were broadcast over Radio Alger in Arabic.⁹³ Audio technology was

⁹⁰“Le Premier Stage de formation de moniteurs,” *Bulletin de liaison d’information et de documentation*, no. 2 (Mai 1956): 5–6.

⁹¹“Libres propos sur l’analphabétisme,” Le Service des Centres Sociaux, *Bulletin de Liaison d’information et de documentation*, no. 6 (Decembre 1956–Janvier 1957): 7–9. ANOM ALG GG 8X/272. Gouverneur Deschamps, “L’Éducation de base,” *La Nouvelle Revue Française d’Outre Mer*, no. 5 (May 1955, Nouvelle série): 213.

⁹²Marceau Gast, “Ethnologue, évoque l’expérience des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs d’Algérie (1955–1962) dans le contexte de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne,” interview by Hélène Claudot-Hawad, 20 January 1998, D3087, no. 3383, Archives sonores Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l’homme.

⁹³Gast, “Ethnologue, évoque l’expérience des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs d’Algérie.”

also frequently used in *centres sociaux* waiting rooms since the medical side of the *centres sociaux*'s mission was often their first point of contact with the families they served. In 1960 questionnaire, 32 (out of 45 *centres*) had used radio broadcasts as part of their pedagogy, reaching a total of 2666 auditors.⁹⁴ On the visual side, between 10 November 1960 and 23 March 1961 the *centres sociaux* produced 25 television episodes broadcasted on the *France 5* network.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, not all of the *centres sociaux* were equipped with televisions, and the organization's forays into audio-visual pedagogy were not well received by all.⁹⁶ Social work intern, Gaby Carlier spent the summer of 1960 at the Centre Social St. Maur near Oran, and in her report on her summer internship, she expressed her surprise at the use of tape recorders, record players, radios, and film projectors: "We do not want to dwell on the costliness of this equipment, but we wonder what purpose it might serve in such an establishment... Many villages and hamlets in France do not have such tools at their disposal."⁹⁷ While this young Frenchwoman saw the use of expensive audio-visual technology as wasteful, all of the *centres sociaux* pedagogical materials were based on the need to provide Muslim constituents with as much practical information as quickly and effectively as possible. In Algeria, these methods demonstrated the *centres*' commitment to integration even after De Gaulle's return to power and the difficulties inherent in maintaining close ties to Algeria's Muslim population.

As development strategies shifted in late colonial Algeria, the *centres sociaux* remained connected to other fundamental education projects around the world. In 1957 and 1958, several public and private organizations agreed to host a number of *centres sociaux* trainees, including the French UNESCO Commission and the French National Institute for

⁹⁴"Enquête auprès des responsables de Centre sur les émissions radiodiffusées des C.S.E.," n.d. (1960?) Archives Privés Nelly Forget.

⁹⁵C. Castagno, "Les émissions télévisées d'Éducation de base," Archives privées Nelly Forget. Of these broadcasts, eight were original productions, including titles such as, "L'Erosion," "La venue de l'enfant," "Soins et alimentation des bébés," "Les poules," "La maison," "Méfiez-vous du feu," "Un métier pour tous," "Reportage sur le Service des Centres Sociaux Éducatifs."

⁹⁶Idem.

⁹⁷Gaby Carlier, "Rapport de Stage," October 1960, ANOM ALG GGA 14 CAB 230.

Popular Education.⁹⁸ Trainees were introduced to UNESCO's fundamental education methods used in Algeria, in suburban Parisian neighborhoods, in Southeast Asia, India, Egypt, and South America.⁹⁹ A *centres sociaux* newsletter from 1958 featured the translation of a brochure by the Experimental Education Center in Patzcuaro, Mexico, in cooperation with the Latin American Popular Library on the topic of creating agricultural cooperatives.¹⁰⁰ Governor-General Jacques Soustelle had witnessed the "cultural missions," mobile, multi-function educational, and health services during his anthropology fieldwork in Mexico, and these inspired him to create the *centres sociaux* in Algeria with Tillion.¹⁰¹ *Centres sociaux* employees were aware of the specificities of working in Algeria but also took interest in fundamental education initiatives in other parts of the world.

In addition to participating in and contributing to the international development community's interest in fundamental education, the *centres sociaux* sustained a supportive Franco-Muslim community in the midst of a divisive war between the French Army and the FLN. The pedagogical tools mentioned above not only link the *centres sociaux* to other international fundamental education efforts, but were also designed to reach as many Algerians as quickly as possible with a rapidly trained staff and to facilitate the integration of Algeria's Muslim and European communities. However, this close relationship with the Muslim population was seen as threatening to the military's aims of "pacification" and to conservatives uninterested in, and unconvinced of, the possibility of integration with their Muslim neighbors.

⁹⁸Académie d'Alger, Service des Centres Sociaux d'Algérie, "Stage Pédagogique et social, 3 rue Marie-Jeanne Bassot, LEVALLOIS (Seine) (1957–1958), But et Organisation," 1 November 1957. Archives Privées Nelly Forget.

⁹⁹Idem. Germaine Tillion gave a presentation during this training session on "Contacts et Civilisation." Académie d'Alger, Service des centres sociaux, "Stage de Formation Pédagogique et Sociale, Session Spéciale de l'année 1957–1958, Formation des Moniteurs et Adjoints, Rapport Final," n.d. Private Archives Nelly Forget.

¹⁰⁰Service des Centres Sociaux, "Documentation. Brochures d'Éducation de base," *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 6 (1958). ANOM ALG Alger 3F/110.

¹⁰¹Nelly Forget, "Le Service des Centres Sociaux en Algérie," 40.

CONCLUSION: "AN EDUCATIONAL EXCEPTION"

French President Charles De Gaulle recognized Algerian independence on 3 July 1962. Persecuted by the French Army and the OAS, following the March 1962 assassination of the six directors, the *centres sociaux* never fully recovered before official recognition of Algerian independence. By the end of the war, 120 *centres sociaux* had been built. Assuming that each *centre* reached 2000–3000 adults and children annually, it can be estimated that the *centres sociaux* served between 200,000 and 300,000 individuals. This was no small feat given that by 1962, the oldest *centre* was only six years old, thirty-five were less than four years old, a third had only been open for two years and a final third were just opening their doors. The *centres sociaux* employed approximately 2000 staff members by 1962. At the end of the war, most of the European staff—representing 20% of the total staff, but 50% of managers—left Algeria; approximately 300 total staff members transferred into the French civil service, some left fleeing for their lives. Of the staff members who stayed in Algeria, most continued to work in similar capacities as social workers, pedagogy researchers, and educators.¹⁰² The Algerian Republic's Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Tourism took over most of the buildings and repurposed them to serve as Popular Education Centers (*Centres d'Éducation Populaire*) and as youth and community centers.¹⁰³ UNESCO abandoned fundamental education as a stand-alone project in 1958, and it was combined with the Division of Out-of-School Education. From the start, it was unclear how to determine the content, language, and style of reading materials for new literates and how to adapt visual and audio aids without leading people astray from the goal of global citizenship. Other scholars have cited

¹⁰²Tillion and Soustelle initially planned for 1000 *centres sociaux* to be built by 1965. Forget, "Le Service des centres sociaux dans le parcours algérien de Germaine Tillion," 73; Forget, "Le Service des centres sociaux en Algérie," 44–45; Association Les Amis de Max Marchand, de Mouloud Feraoun et de leurs Compagnons, *L'École en Algérie*, 180–183.

¹⁰³Association Les Amis de Max Marchand, de Mouloud Feraoun et de leurs Compagnons, *L'École en Algérie*, 180–183. After Algerian independence, the Director of Youth and Popular Education requested inventories of furniture available in former *centre sociaux* and other ventures operated by the French military. These assessments were important for budget predictions and for the "takeover of all the buildings disseminated throughout the country." H. Bourges, le Directeur de la Jeunesse et de l'Éducation Populaire, "Note," n.d. [1963?], AAA Casier 522.

the absence of a strong philosophical orientation, lack of funding, and failure to follow up on existing programs as hindering the effectiveness of Fundamental Education programs.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, the term “fundamental education” often led to confusion and the delegates at UNESCO’s General Conference in 1958 decided to discontinue the use of the term and to focus instead on advocating for universal, free, and compulsory education.¹⁰⁵ Yet the legacy of fundamental education persisted in the 1960s and 1970s as other national and international bodies expressed interest in the role of literacy in human development. The concept of education as an essential development tool became more widely accepted by the United Nations and its member states, and access to education has since been recognized as an essential human right.¹⁰⁶

The history of the *centres sociaux* in Algeria brings together the question of integration, international development ideas about fundamental education, and the existence of a unified Franco-Muslim community during a divisive war. Issues surrounding integration and Muslim difference in France are still pertinent today.¹⁰⁷ This particular fundamental education project arose out of local initiatives to break down barriers between communities and to meet the needs of the most disenfranchised in the midst of great violence and injustice. Studying the history of decolonization and education in Algeria together highlights this community of European and Muslim male and female teachers, social workers, artists, and university students, their tenacity and devotion to each other and their constituents, and the potential for social cohesion and integration in the midst of violent decolonization.

¹⁰⁴ UNESCO, *Fundamental education*, 256–261; Watras, “UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946–1959,” 236–237; Jens Boel, “UNESCO’s Fundamental Education Program, 1946–1958: Vision, Actions and Impact,” in *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*, ed. by Poul Duedahl (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 153–167.

¹⁰⁵ Watras, “UNESCO’s Programme of Fundamental Education, 1946–1959,” 237.

¹⁰⁶ The World Experimental Literacy Programme was adopted as a result of UN General Assembly resolutions in 1961, 1963, and 1965. Algeria participated in this experimental program along with 51 other member states. See UNESCO, “The Position as Regards Functional Literacy Pilot Projects. Summary,” 12 September 1968.

¹⁰⁷ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*; Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole*; Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

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