

# **Anarchism and Decolonization in Algeria**

**The North-African Libertarian Movement (1950–1956)**

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## Abstract

The North African Libertarian Movement (MLNA) was Algeria's only Anarchist movement that focused on the colonial question in the postwar years. A small group consisting of around ten men, most of whom were drawn from Algeria's European or Jewish families, its experience was symptomatic of the difficulties facing anarchist movements and other political ideologies and movements imported from Europe in penetrating colonial societies. But the experience of the MLNA also allows one to understand how the radicalization of the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria contributed to reformulating the ideas and strategies of Algerian organizations. For, between 1950 and 1956, the anarchists of the MLNA changed course, shifting their stance from radical rejection of Algerian nationalism to "critical support" for the insurgents.

## Introduction

The decade from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the Algerian war of independence (1954–1962) was marked by an unprecedented political proliferation within the Algerian anti-colonialist movement. These years of recomposition and opening up of possibilities contrasted sharply with the closure of the anti-colonialist field imposed at the beginning of the war of independence by French repression and by the hegemonic pretensions of the National Liberation Front (FLN). This decade has gained in visibility and intelligibility in recent years. On the one hand, studies devoted to the so-called reformist nationalist currents and to Algerian communism have made it possible to move away from a focus on the dominant radical nationalist current.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the contradictions between the nationalist currents and the Algerian communist currents have been examined. On the other hand, the internal contradictions of radical nationalism are becoming better known<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the work on the small minority of anti-colonialist Algerian Christians and Jews<sup>3</sup>, as well as on the socialists situated in an "in-between, neither anti-colonialist nor purely colonialist"<sup>4</sup>, allows us to understand the motivations behind the participation of French Algerian citizens in the contestation of the colonial order. Without obscuring ideological cleavages, this historiography highlights the importance of circulations, alliances and inter-individual and inter-organizational interactions within the Algerian anti-colonialist field. These interactions, which occur above all on Algerian soil, also put Algeria in relation with metropolitan France and other worlds (communist, colonial or Muslim).

As part of this movement, the anarchist currents in Algeria remain little known. If their structures and activities have been the subject of a census based on work on the press and police archives<sup>5</sup>, their singular place in the Algerian political field remains to be studied. The only anar-

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<sup>1</sup> Allison Drew, *We Are No Longer in France : Communists in Colonial Algeria*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014, 311 p.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Courreye, « L'Association des oulémas musulmans algériens et la construction de l'État algérien indépendant : fondation, héritages, appropriations et antagonismes (1931–1991) », thèse, Université Sorbonne Paris Cité et INALCO, 2016, 852 p.

<sup>3</sup> Malika Rahal, *L'UDMA et les Udmistes. Contribution à l'histoire du nationalisme algérien*, Alger, Barzakh, 2017, 520 p.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Ruscio, *Les communistes et l'Algérie. Des origines à la guerre d'indépendance, 1920–1962*, Paris, La Découverte, 2019, 661 p.

<sup>5</sup> Ali Guenoun, « Une conflictualité interne au nationalisme radical algérien : "la question berbère-kabyle" de la crise de 1949 à la lutte pour le pouvoir en 1962 », thèse, université Paris 1, 2015, 382 p.

chist current in Algeria focused on the colonial question is the North African Libertarian Movement (MLNA). The trajectory of this movement may seem marginal in more than one respect. Created in Algiers in January 1950 and dissolved by its members in the summer of 1956, the MLNA had a brief life. Above all, it can be described as an ultra-minority group. Composed of no more than a dozen men, its troops were even smaller from November 1954 onwards due to dissension in the face of the Algerian insurrection. And despite the movement's desire to recruit from among the colonized, its members were mostly French citizens from European or Jewish families in Algeria. Its experience is, in this sense, symptomatic of the difficulties of anarchists in all the colonial empires to "penetrate the colonized milieu" because of "seemingly insurmountable obstacles"<sup>6</sup>, according to the terms of a motion of the 1947 congress of the Fédération Anarchiste (FA), the organization in metropolitan France from which the MLNA emerged.

Within the Algerian anti-colonialist field, this question of anchoring in the colonized society is common to both anarchists and communists. The latter certainly have an incomparably greater social weight, since the Algerian Communist Party (PCA) had about 12,000 members in 1954, more than half of whom were colonized. But both communist and anarchist organizations were founded by Algerian Frenchmen and functioned primarily as local sections of French structures. Moreover, communists and anarchists have in common that they rely on an ideology, a language and political referents born in the industrialized societies of Europe and out of step with nationalism. From then on, anarchists and communists were similarly hesitant as to what attitude to adopt in the face of the dominant radical nationalist current. While they shared neither the ideology nor the political perspectives of the nationalists, they could not remain aloof from them insofar as they wished to exert an influence on Algerian society and contribute to the anti-colonialist struggle. Beyond anarchists and communists, this questioning can be extended to all organizations and individuals opposed to colonial domination when they are caught off guard by the minority of activists who launch the 1954 insurrection.

In this sense, the study of the MLNA makes it possible to grasp how the context of radicalization of the anti-colonialist struggle influences the reformulation of ideas and the reconfiguration of strategies of Algerian political organizations. A priori hostile to nationalist forms of organization, ideas and social projects, the MLNA has in fact elaborated during its short existence a specific political vision and strategies, which led it from the radical rejection of nationalism to the "critical support" of insurgents.

## **Between Metropolis and Algeria. From the <sup>th</sup> Region of the Anarchist Federation to the North African Libertarian Movement**

The information available on the membership and activities of the anarchist movement in Algeria after 1945 is limited. The most important groups were Spanish refugees, who represented perhaps 1,000 individuals out of the 7,000 anti-Francoists who reached Algeria in 1939. Focused on the Spanish situation and the hope of a return to the country, these groups remained on the

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<sup>6</sup> Nedjib Sidi Moussa, *Algérie, une autre histoire de l'indépendance. Trajectoires révolutionnaires des partisans de Messali Hadj*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2019, 336 p.

bangs of Algerian issues<sup>7</sup>. They differ in this sense from the 8<sup>th</sup> region of the Fédération Anarchiste (FA). Created in 1945 in France, the FA had 400 militants in metropolitan France in 1950, and its newspaper *Le Libertaire* had a circulation of between 20,000 and 30,000 copies<sup>9</sup>. Just like the socialists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the communists in 1920, the anarchists close to the FA and *Le Libertaire* first formed a local section of a metropolitan organization in Algeria. Within this 13<sup>th</sup> region of the FA, supposed to cover the three countries of the Maghreb, only the Algiers group seems to have a lasting existence from 1946–1947. Its activities — weekly meetings, monthly meetings, distribution of newspapers and tracts, outings and public conferences at the Université Populaire — were few in number, poorly relayed and/or poorly monitored, to the point that the 13<sup>th</sup> region regularly disappeared from the columns of *Le Libertaire* and from police archives.

An important change occurred in January 1950: the newly created Mouvement libertaire nord-africain (MLNA) replaced the 13<sup>th</sup> region of the FA. In this sense, the anarchists reproduced a process that the communist organization in Algeria had undergone in 1936: until then a local structure of the French Communist Party (PCF), it was then constituted as an Algerian Communist Party (PCA) with the obvious aim of better anchoring itself in local society and no longer being considered by the colonized as a French organization.<sup>10</sup> The birth of the MLNA thus proves the will to create a local organization that would be able to defend the interests of the Algerian people. Thus, the birth of the MLNA proves the will to create an organization detached from the AF because of the specificity of “North Africa”<sup>11</sup>. This creation may also have originated in the membership of Algerian militants in the clandestine group Organisation pensée bataille (OPB). Created within the FA in 1949–1950, the OPB wished to renew anarchist theories, practices and strategies. It gives birth at the end of 1953 to the libertarian communist Federation (FCL). Gathering 200 to 300 militants, the FCL elaborates a political line and aims to transform itself into a “party” which would mix anarchism and Leninism. This perspective is refused by a part of the anarchists of France, who constitute a new FA in 1954. Like the communists of the PCA, who never ceased to have close links with the “sister party” of the metropolis, the MLNA maintained constant relations with the OPB and then with the FCL. The two groups affiliated themselves to the Libertarian Communist International, and envisaged a tour of joint meetings in Algeria in October 1954<sup>12</sup>. Finally, if the MLNA had a room in Algiers and printed its own tracts, it did not have a press organ; it therefore expressed itself in *Le Libertaire* through about thirty articles signed by its members between June 1950 and June 1955. We lack information on the concrete interactions and mutual influences between anarchists in Algeria and France, but we can affirm that MLNA and FCL constitute two groups of the same movement.

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<sup>7</sup> Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani, *Les Juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale. Trajectoires dissidentes (1934–1965)*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015, 541 p.

<sup>8</sup> Sylvain Pattieu, *Les Camarades des frères. Trotskistes et libertaires dans la guerre d’Algérie*, Paris, Syllepse, 2002, p. 39–50.

<sup>9</sup> Darcie Fontaine, *Decolonizing Christianity : Religion and the End of Empire in France and Algeria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 251 p.

<sup>10</sup> Philippe Bouba, « L’anarchisme en situation coloniale : le cas de l’Algérie. Organisations, militants et presse (1887–1962) », thèse, universités de Perpignan Via Domitia et Oran-Es Senia, 2014, 366 p.

<sup>11</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 20 novembre 1947.

## A Small Group. MLNA Members and Audience

Although it is supposed to unite groups throughout the Maghreb, the MLNA seems to be active only in Algiers and, secondarily, in Constantine. Who are its militants? By cross-referencing information from the police, the press and witnesses, it is possible to identify twelve men who were members of the FA and then of the MLNA. Among them are only two individuals from families of Muslim colonists: Brahim Kouider (reported in Tlemcen in 1948) and Salah Derbal (active in Constantine in 1953–1955). We can add that Mohamed Saïd, an anarchist activist since the interwar period in the Paris suburbs and head of the anti-colonialist commission of the FA, is sometimes presented as the correspondent of the MLNA in France<sup>12</sup>. Born in 1894 in Kabylie and dying in Bobigny in 1953, this former anti-Franco insurgent within the Durutti column published numerous articles in *Le Libertaine* on Algeria and Algerian immigration<sup>13</sup>. If his analyses had a certain influence on the members of the MLNA, his membership in the movement remained theoretical. The same is true of two other colonized activists who immigrated to metropolitan France. The first is Idir Amazit. Born in 1925 in Kabylia, he joined the Free French Forces in 1942, and after the war became secretary of the French Federation of the Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA), an Algerian nationalist party created in 1946 by Ferhat Abbas<sup>14</sup>. Between 1951 and 1953, he published some twenty articles in his name in *Le Libertaine*. Although he was undoubtedly an anarchist sympathizer, it cannot be said, as several biographical notes do, that he was a member of the MLNA. The second person is a certain Akli, author of about ten articles in *Le Libertaine* in 1955–1956, whom the newspaper presents alternately as an “Algerian worker in France”<sup>15</sup> and as its correspondent in Algeria.

Born in 1933 into an Algerian Jewish family made citizens by the Crémieux decree of 1870, Jean-Pierre Saïd joined the MLNA in Algiers in 1950 through friends at the Auberges de jeunesse. This small courier, son of a midwife and a salesman, remembers meetings with about ten people, the vast majority of whom were “Spaniards”<sup>16</sup>. In fact, the Spanish war regularly appeared in the leaflets and meetings of the local FA until 1950. And among the militants of the FA and then of the MLNA there were both anti-Franco refugees and French Algerians of Spanish origin. Thus, in 1949, the police arrested a certain Miguel Ferre, a “naturalized French Spaniard”<sup>17</sup> who was pasting FA leaflets. In 1954–1955, Léandre Valero, a worker and son of a Spanish anarchist, was one of the main leaders of the MLNA in Algiers and then in Constantine. Born in Oran in 1923, a veteran of the Free French Forces, Léandre Valero worked and militated in France until 1954, and it is said that he provided clandestine material support to the Vietminh troops while he was a soldier in Indochina in 1946.<sup>18</sup>

The known members of the FA and the MLNA are mostly workers or small employees. But the most visible militants in the press were the teachers Guy Martin and Fernand Doukhan. They

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<sup>12</sup> Sylvain Pattieu, *Les Camarades des frères. Trotskistes et libertaires dans la guerre d'Algérie*, Paris, Syllepse, 2002, p. 39–50.

<sup>13</sup> *Le Libertaine* des 20 et 27 novembre 1947.

<sup>14</sup> Notice « Ydir Amazit », site Internet des Amis et passionnés du Père-Lachaise, 18 février 2016.

<sup>15</sup> *Le Libertaine* du 27 octobre 1955.

<sup>16</sup> Entretien de l'auteur avec Jean-Pierre Saïd, Domazan, 16 juin 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Aix en Provence (ANOM), Préfecture d'Alger, 91 3 F 60 : rapport de la police d'Alger, 2 août 1949.

<sup>18</sup> Entretien avec Léandre Valero en 1992, repris dans *1954–1962, l'insurrection algérienne et les communistes libertaires*, Paris, Alternative Libertaine, 2006, p. 10–11.

were leaders of the minority trend L'École émancipée within the Syndicat national des instituteurs (SNI) and published monthly articles in L'École républicaine, the newspaper of the Algiers section of the SNI. Guy Martin, born in 1921 but whose origins and career path are unknown, was a teacher in Marengo (Hadjout, 75 km from Algiers) in 1948–1949. He remained in Algeria at least until 1954–1955, then became a teacher in Morocco in 1957–1958, at which time he described himself as “a petit bourgeois intellectual but [...] also and above all a defector from [his] class. Born in 1913 into an Algerian Jewish family, the son of a painter and a religious teacher from the Alliance Israélite, Fernand Doukhan graduated from the École normale de la Bouzaréah in 1933. Mobilized in 1939, he was taken prisoner in France and then in Germany. A teacher in Algiers from 1945, he joined the 13<sup>th</sup> region of the FA in 1948 before becoming the main leader of the MLNA<sup>19</sup>. A member of the SNI office in Algiers between 1949 and 1955, he stated that teachers were among the best placed to “evaluate the misdeeds of colonialism”<sup>20</sup> because they “touch the misery of the people with their own hands”.<sup>21</sup>

What is the audience of the FA, the MLNA and the Libertaire in Algeria? According to the Constantine police, in 1954, 280 issues of the Libertaire were put on sale each month throughout Algeria, of which only half were generally sold.<sup>22</sup> As for the private or public meetings of the FA and the MLNA in Algiers, they seem to be attended by about ten individuals. As for the private or public meetings of the FA and the MLNA in Algiers, they seem to be attended by only a dozen individuals. According to police terminology, these were all “Europeans,” although one report notes that a conference at the Université populaire d'Alger attracted five “Muslims” out of sixteen listeners in January 1949.<sup>23</sup> However, it should be added that beyond the public meetings of the FA and the MLNA, there was a large number of “Muslims” in the audience. It should be added, however, that beyond this small core and the hundreds of Spanish anarchist refugees, libertarian ideas animate informal groups scattered throughout Algeria, notably within the Auberges de jeunesse. This is the case in Bougie (Bejaïa) where the teacher Arlette Bourgel, daughter of a bank employee born in 1928 in a Jewish family from the Maghreb, met four colleagues from France, with whom she moved into a guesthouse. Although they were not members of the MLNA, these five anarchist teachers reported to the Libertaire in 1952 on a quite exceptional initiative: a one-month stay in France for 17 young Muslim girls from Bougie.<sup>24</sup> She was approached by communists and convinced to join the MLNA. Approached by communists and convinced that a more solid organization was needed, Arlette Bourgel joined the PCA in Bône (Annaba) in 1953, where she made friends with nationalist militants<sup>25</sup>. Jean-Pierre Saïd, who also associated with nationalists, left the MLNA for the PCA the same year. Arrested on May 1, 1952 during a banned demonstration, he sympathized at the police station with communists employed by Alger Républicain, where he was hired as a journalist upon his release from prison. He decided to join the PCA, in which he saw the only possible place to militate in numbers on an anti-colonialist basis with “all the components of Algeria: Arabs, Berbers, Jews, Blackfoot, Spaniards. The Constantinian Salah Derbal took the opposite path at the same time. Born around 1930 into a Muslim

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<sup>19</sup> Nathalie Funès, *Mon oncle d'Algérie*, Paris, Stock, 2010, 158 p.

<sup>20</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 8 décembre 1950.

<sup>21</sup> *L'École républicaine* de mai 1952.

<sup>22</sup> P. Bouba, « L'anarchisme en situation coloniale... », *op. cit.*, p. 114–115.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98–99.

<sup>24</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 9 mai 1952.

<sup>25</sup> Entretien de l'auteur avec Arlette Beckouche (née Bourgel), Montreuil, 23 avril 2007.

family, he joined the Union of Algerian Democratic Youth (a communist organization) around 1950 and then joined the PCA, which in Constantine had about 330 members, the majority of whom were colonized.<sup>26</sup> He was a Marxist literature enthusiast and a member of the PCA. A lover of Marxist literature and eager for action, he was an activist in a committee of the unemployed initiated by the communists and participated in clashes with the police at the Constantine labor exchange in 1952.<sup>27</sup> That same year, he was sentenced to five days in prison for “abusive noise” following an auction. It seems that it was following a personal quarrel with a communist militant that he left the PCA in September 1953 for the MLNA, of which he seemed to be the only leader in Constantine.<sup>28</sup>

Three elements emerge from these few trajectories. On the one hand, the vagueness of the MLNA: its numerical weight is extremely low, a fortiori among the colonized. Second, the mobility of its militants and sympathizers between the colony and the metropolis, and between organizations in France and Algeria, which evokes that of militants of other anti-colonialist currents. Finally, the interpersonal links between these anarchists, communists and nationalists, as well as the movement of certain individuals from one Algerian organization to another. These links testify to the inclusion of MLNA anarchists, even in a marginal way, in the political game of Algerian anticolonialism.

## **Between Anticolonialism and Colonial Representations. Libertarian Views on Colonized Algeria**

In January 1949, during a public meeting, a member of the FA of Algiers regretted that “his Federation has not [yet] tackled the Algerian problem”<sup>29</sup>. It is true that at this date, the conferences of the 13<sup>th</sup> region of the FA had the objective of spreading an elementary anarchist culture: “Neither God nor Master”, “Libertarian Federalism”, “Reformism and revolutionary syndicalism”, “Marxism and anarchism”<sup>30</sup>. In 1949, however, two conferences dealt with the Algerian situation, including one devoted to the “agrarian question”<sup>31</sup>. The MLNA, which aims to take “a more and more North African character”, calls from 1950 to constitute a documentary base to define the “libertarian principles facing the specifically North African problems”<sup>32</sup>. Thus, the new movement presents itself as being in a research phase with regard to the colonial question in Algeria<sup>33</sup>. The publications of its members make it possible to follow their constancies, their inflections, but also their hesitations.

The anarchists of Algeria are constant in their denunciation of what they call “the colonial hell” or “the North African calvary”<sup>34</sup>: economic exploitation, land dispossession, racial discrim-

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<sup>26</sup> ANOM, Gouvernement général, 10 CAB 153 : liste de militants du PCA établie par les Renseignements généraux (RG) de Constantine, 17 octobre 1952.

<sup>27</sup> Entretien de l’auteur avec William Sportisse (ancien dirigeant du PCA à Constantine), Villejuif, 3 juin 2014.

<sup>28</sup> ANOM, Préfecture de Constantine, 93 3 F 18 : dossier sur le MLNA à Constantine ; P. Bouba, « L’anarchisme en situation coloniale... », *op. cit.*, p. 286–287.

<sup>29</sup> P. Bouba, « L’anarchisme en situation coloniale... », *op. cit.*, p. 98–99.

<sup>30</sup> *Le Libertaire* des 18 juin 1948, 20 janvier et 17 février 1950.

<sup>31</sup> P. Bouba, « L’anarchisme en situation coloniale... », *op. cit.*, p. 99–100.

<sup>32</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 14 juillet 1950.

<sup>33</sup> Élément réaffirmé dans *Le Libertaire* du 28 septembre 1951.

<sup>34</sup> Ces deux expressions apparaissent dans le titre de plusieurs articles du *Libertaire* à partir de 1951.



ination, under-education, electoral rigging, massacres, torture, repression. These denunciations are identical to those carried out in France by the FA and then by the FCL, which published articles devoted to the French colonies in each issue of *Le Libertaire* from 1949 onwards. The discourse of the anarchists, virulent, differs from that of the Algerian nationalists and communists in that it brandishes promises of violence. Thus, Fernand Doukhan called for “direct action” in order to make “the big over-exploiting colonists and their henchmen in the high administration go to the wall. For his part, Mohamed Saïl, who wrote that “violence calls for violence,”<sup>35</sup> urged “revenge”<sup>36</sup> against the administration and its colonized auxiliaries, whom he described as “collaborators”<sup>37</sup> and “traitors” deserving of hanging.<sup>38</sup> He even promised the “colonialists” that they would not be allowed to leave the country. He even promised the “colonialists of Algeria” “the suitcase or the coffin”<sup>38</sup>, and wrote to French people who were unhappy with the presence of Algerians in France that they only had to put pressure on their rulers “so that all the Europeans would move out of our country (and if necessary, after having destroyed their alleged achievements, but given back our lands)”<sup>39</sup>. Mohamed Saïl’s radicalism, perhaps linked to his distance from his native land, contrasts with the assertions of nationalist and communist leaders that the French of Algeria would have a place in a decolonized Algeria.<sup>40</sup> But it also differs from the words of the Frenchman, who was a member of the Algerian government. But it also differs from the statements of his comrades in Algiers from European or Jewish families. In 1949, one of them affirmed that “the independence of Algeria and North Africa must be achieved [...] for the benefit of all the people who populate North Africa without distinction of race or religion”<sup>41</sup>. As for Fernand Doukhan, he wrote that he wished for a “true solidarity of all the ethnic elements of Algerian trade unionism”<sup>42</sup>, even if Guy Martin denounced the “distressing spectacle” of the strength of “colonialism” and “racism” among the French of Algeria.<sup>43</sup>

The words are even more hesitant when these militants have to deal with the colonized society. In their assertion that they were against “capitalist, state and religious oppression,”<sup>44</sup> anarchists advocated a society without state, class or religion. They therefore sought out in colonized society what could hinder or, on the contrary, promote this project. In 1949, Mohamed Saïl thus exalts what he identifies as the libertarian practices and potentialities of Kabyle society. At that time, the main nationalist party, the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedoms (MTLD), entered a crisis when militants, especially of Kabyle origin, questioned the functioning, ideology and political perspectives of the party. Because these activists wanted the Berber component to be recognized as an integral part of the Algerian national identity, the MTLD leadership stigmatized them as “regionalists” and “Berberists” and excluded them from the party.<sup>45</sup> The anarchists, on the other hand, did not want the party’s ideology to be changed. For their part, the anarchists did not care at all about the question of the definition of the nation, a concept to which

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<sup>35</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 1er février 1952.

<sup>36</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 20 juillet 1951.

<sup>37</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 16 février 1951.

<sup>38</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 14 septembre 1951.

<sup>39</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 29 juin 1951.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre-Jean Le Foll-Luciani, *Les juifs algériens dans la lutte anticoloniale...*, *op. cit.*, p. 122–129.

<sup>41</sup> P. Bouba, « L’anarchisme en situation coloniale... », *op. cit.*, p. 98–99.

<sup>42</sup> *L’École républicaine* de mai 1949.

<sup>43</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 22 juillet 1949.

<sup>44</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 2 juin 1950.

<sup>45</sup> Ali Guenoun, « Une conflictualité interne au nationalisme radical algérien... », *op. cit.*, p. 123–193.

they were opposed: they evoked an “Algerian people” without any further precision and did not make a clear statement on the place of the different ethnolinguistic or religious groups in decolonized Algeria. Without fearing to stir up the conflicts that cross the MTLD, Mohamed Saïl welcomes what he calls the weak Arabization and the weak Islamization of the Kabyles. His words echo the colonial ethnological discourse known as the “Kabyle myth”, according to which the Kabyles would be more permeable than the Arabs to European cultural influence, to the acceptance of colonial domination and to Christianization<sup>46</sup>. But Mohamed Saïl proposes a sort of libertarian update of this myth. For him, Kabyle village society is marked by a non-authoritarian self-organization, the absence of social classes, a weak religious practice and a lesser male domination<sup>47</sup>. Describing “the instinctively and profoundly libertarian character that determines [their] social and economic relationships,”<sup>48</sup> he asserts that the Kabyles have never had any respect for state authority, whether Arab, Turkish or French. In 1951, writing that “Allah is in disarray” in Algerian immigration to France, he asserts that the Kabyles are “capable of leading the rest of the Algerian people in revolt against all forms of authoritarian centralism; He added that “the great mass of Kabyle workers know that a Muslim government, both religious and political, can only be feudal in character,” and welcomed the idea that decolonized Algeria would be “ungovernable in the religious, political and bourgeois sense of the word.

In the words of Guy Martin, these essentialist and optimistic ethnological assertions are counterbalanced by other equally essentialist but pessimistic assertions about the strength, among the colonized, of “Koranic fatalism, even worse than Christian resignation. The anarchists of the MLNA thus ventured into a terrain unthinkable for the great majority of nationalists, and which the communists of the PCA never borrowed despite the atheism of the majority of them. In 1949–1951, Guy Martin castigated “the Islamic Church”<sup>49</sup>, religious beliefs and practices, which he regretted constituted an unfavorable terrain for the development of anarchism. He denounces the inculcation by religions of “resignation” and “respect for the Chief<sup>50</sup>“. He attacks the agents of the Muslim religion chosen by the colonial administration as well as the association of the Oulémas, component of the Algerian national movement, which he presents as flirting with collaboration<sup>51</sup>. He extolled the “revolutionary spirit” that would have existed in Algeria in the “Christian era” and in the resistance of the Kahena to the Arab-Muslim conquest, and asserted that “ten centuries of Islamism whose tendency was centralist and feudal reality” had instilled a “spirit of submission to authority. Islamization has thus reduced the “revolutionary spirit”, which is said to exist only “in a latent state” within the urban proletariat<sup>52</sup>. This anti-religious discourse was accompanied by acts: when Mohamed Saïl died in April 1953, followed by his burial in the Muslim cemetery of Bobigny, his comrades in France came into conflict with his family, who wished to organize a religious ceremony.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Voir Yassine Tamlali, *La genèse de la Kabylie. Aux origines de l'affirmation berbère en Algérie*, Alger, Barzakh, 2015, 309 p.

<sup>47</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 27 mai 1949.

<sup>48</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 10 juin 1949.

<sup>49</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 11 août 1950.

<sup>50</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 22 juillet 1949.

<sup>51</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 11 août 1950.

<sup>52</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 30 mars 1951.

<sup>53</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 20 mai 1954.

Guy Martin also affirms that “the” Muslim woman is a “slave, a submissive, cloistered and uncultivated being”<sup>54</sup>. With a less outrageous vocabulary, the anarchist teachers of Bougie congratulate themselves on the fact that the young girls they accompanied to Savoy were able to discover a “free” feminine condition and, for two of them, “avoid” wearing the Islamic veil on their return<sup>55</sup>. If it is not totally absent from the nationalist ranks, this denunciation of the condition of Muslim women places the anarchists in a delicate position. The criticisms of the patriarchal structures of Muslim society were in fact denounced by nationalist leaders as objective support for colonial domination<sup>56</sup>. In fact, despite their anti-colonial radicalism, Guy Martin’s remarks sometimes verged on racial paternalism. He thus evokes the “sincere, evolved Muslims, open to new ideas, but also attached to old, unpleasant customs. Elsewhere, insisting on the “educational role” of French anarchists, he writes that it is above all through contact with metropolitan workers that the “Muslim” workers of Algeria will be able to become “revolutionaries. Under his pen, the libertarian militants become missionaries in charge of carrying out “a beautiful work of brainwashing” against the “conformism”, the “bigotry” and the “chauvinism”<sup>57</sup> of the colonized.

The discourse of these anarchists thus oscillated between three tones: the radical denunciation of colonization, essentialist ethnological remarks influenced by colonial representations, and attacks not devoid of condescension against the social structures and mentalities of the colonized. If the first tone prevents any dialogue with the mass of French people in Algeria, the other two contribute to make it unlikely that many colonized people will join the movement. It is significant, moreover, that the information notes on the MLNA are classified by the Constantine prefecture in a file on “European movements with progressive tendencies, [p67] even though its leader in the city is a colonized man, Salah Derbal. Anarchism, a minority movement in metropolitan France, could only be even more so in Algeria. The anti-colonialism of the MLNA could, however, lead to exchanges between anarchists and nationalists, and bring the former out of their isolation.

## **The MLNA and Algerian Nationalism. From Opposition to “Critical Support”**

Denouncing the idea of nation as an artifice aiming at ensuring the state and capitalist domination, the anarchists are virulent towards Algerian nationalism. In 1951, referring back to back “colonialist or nationalist exploitation”<sup>58</sup>, they considered the slogan of national independence of Algeria as a “rattle”<sup>59</sup>. Guy Martin, Mohamed Saïl, Fernand Doukhan and Salah Derbal attacked all the currents of the national movement, accusing them of being prisoners of political stakes and of preparing themselves to be the “future masters”<sup>60</sup>. In 1949, the MTLN, the dominant radical nationalist party with more than 20,000 members behind its leader Messali Hadj, was

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<sup>54</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 22 juillet 1949.

<sup>55</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 9 mai 1952.

<sup>56</sup> Neil MacMaster, *Burning the Veil : The Algerian War and the « Emancipation » of Muslim Women, 1954–1962*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009, p. 27–57.

<sup>57</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 3 août 1951.

<sup>58</sup> ANOM, Préfecture d’Alger, 91 3 F 60 : « Algériens ne votez pas. Voter c’est capituler », tract du MLNA joint à un rapport des RG d’Alger du 1er février 1951.

<sup>59</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 12 janvier 1951.

<sup>60</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 3 août 1951.

described as a “theocratic, racist and feudal party” that defended a “narrow nationalist Islamism” and neutralized the “sincere revolutionaries” who made up the party.<sup>61</sup> The Democratic Union of the Manifesto, which was founded in 1949, was the only party to have been created by the government. The Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto (UDMA), which had about 3,000 members behind the figure of Ferhat Abbas, was denounced as a reformist and bourgeois party that aimed only to ape the French Republic.<sup>62</sup> The UDMA was also denounced as a “bourgeois” party, which had no other aim than to ape the French Republic. While they defended, like the anarchists, the need to link anti-colonialism and socio-economic liberation, the “Stalinist” Algerian communists suffered the most violent attacks. Described as “totalitarian”<sup>63</sup>, the PCA was accused of serving Soviet “imperialism”, of domesticating the CGT and of depending on a PCF presented as “colonialist”. Mohamed Saïl went so far as to attribute responsibility to the PCF for the massacres in North Constantinois in May-June 1945<sup>64</sup>. He and Salah Derbal described the militants of the PCA as “traitors to the cause of the Algerian people”<sup>65</sup> and “servants of French colonialist and military interests”<sup>66</sup>.

This wholesale rejection of parties, classic of anarchist discourse, does not prohibit strategic reflections. Given their minimal weight in Algerian society, anarchists cannot hope to strike blows against colonial domination by cutting themselves off radically from other anti-colonial forces. These strategic reflections are not unique to colonial contexts. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Russian revolution of 1917, the AF affirmed that if anarchists are hostile to the direction of struggles by a party and to the objective of taking state power, they must participate in “the action of the masses [...] with the greatest energy”:

“We cannot set ourselves apart from the revolutionary masses, even if they do not follow our path or our calls, even if we foresee the failure of the movement.”<sup>67</sup>

This position was asserted with regard to anti-colonial struggles from 1951 onwards, but after 1953 it was defended only by the FCL and the MLNA, the members of the new FA refusing any support for nationalists in the colonies.

As early as 1949, Guy Martin wrote that “the struggle against nationalism will only be effective when colonialism and imperialism have been brought down”<sup>68</sup>. Armed with this assertion, anarchists can envisage alliances with nationalists according to what they consider to be the stages of the “revolutionary struggle. This strategy necessarily implies a change in attitude toward other anti-colonialist forces. In this sense, the position of the anarchists is not unlike that of the Algerian communists: after opposing nationalism in 1944–1945, they tried to create unity with the nationalist parties in order to participate in the anticolonial struggle, recruit from the colonized population and negotiate their place in the future state.<sup>69</sup> This question of alliances becomes central in the context of the Algerian state. This question of alliances became central

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<sup>61</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 22 juillet 1949.

<sup>62</sup> *Le Libertaire* des 14 juillet 1950, 14 octobre 1954 et 6 janvier 1955.

<sup>63</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 9 février 1951.

<sup>64</sup> *Le Libertaire* des 15 juin et 14 septembre 1951.

<sup>65</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 14 octobre 1954.

<sup>66</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 10 juin 1949.

<sup>67</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 6 novembre 1947.

<sup>68</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 22 juillet 1949.

<sup>69</sup> A. Drew, *We Are No Longer in France...*, *op. cit.*, p. 145–179.

in a repressive context. In 1950–1951, the MLNA affirmed its solidarity with the communists and nationalists who were prosecuted in court, and welcomed the attempts to unite the national movement. Of course, Guy Martin specified that “there can be no question of a sacred union of those opposed to colonialism,” because that would amount to “supporting a category of future exploiters against the present capitalist exploiters. It is however striking to note that from 1950–1951, *Le Libertainaire* took over the publications of the nationalists of the MTL<sup>70</sup> and opened its columns to Idir Amazit, an executive of the UDMA. The latter praised the leaders of his organization, while making it clear after a few issues that he did not speak on its behalf.<sup>71</sup> In May 1952, Fernand Doukhan affirmed the urgency of participating with the nationalist and communist parties in a front against repression<sup>72</sup>.

Since the end of 1951, the FA and then the FCL have defended the idea of “unwavering but critical<sup>73</sup> support for the nationalists of the colonized countries: taking note of the fact that “the masses” are nationalists, they accept the idea of “national emancipation” and state independence as a stage. From then on, they scorned the “armchair revolutionaries” who placed imperialism and nationalism back to back<sup>74</sup>, and sometimes gave a “revolutionary” content to the latter, by affirming that “the anti-colonial struggle is the class struggle.”<sup>75</sup> From then on, the FA and then the FCL affirmed that anarchists should “support” these movements “in the direction of the revolutionary or libertarian evolution of its basic elements,”<sup>76</sup> it being understood that they should not hide their objectives nor refrain from criticizing the “national bourgeoisies” and nationalist leaders.<sup>77</sup> However, in the Algerian case, the FA and then the FCL did not support the nationalist movements. However, in the Algerian case, it is clear that MLNA’s invective against the nationalists became much rarer after 1952, as did its attacks on Islam or the Algerian patriarchy. This change in discourse is obviously the result of strategic considerations. But it may also be the result of a more detailed knowledge of nationalist movements acquired through physical encounters during demonstrations against repression in the early 1950s.

It was in April 1953 that Fernand Doukhan clarified the MLNA’s position of “critical support” for the nationalists. Writing that “national liberation” was “part of the course of history” and that “the ‘lumpenproletariat’ in its almost totality has adopted the national ideology,” he asserted that the “revolutionary syndicalists,” although hostile to the idea of the nation, must “recognize that the aspirations for national liberation on the part of the Muslim workers have a revolutionary content. They must therefore “study on precise points the modalities of action with the nationalist parties, authentic representatives of the Muslim proletariat, in the phase of its anti-colonialist struggle. At that time, the MTL<sup>78</sup> was on the verge of splitting between the “messalist” (grouped behind Messali Hadj) and “centralist” (grouped behind the Central Committee of the party) tendencies. On the eve of the insurrection, an official of the FCL wrote an article in *Le Libertainaire* that was rather favorable to the Messalists,<sup>78</sup> while in Algiers it was *L’Algérie libre*, the newspaper of the Messalists, that published a communiqué of the MLNA. Signed by Fernand Doukhan,

<sup>70</sup> *Le Libertainaire* des 27 janvier 1950, 4 décembre 1952, 28 mai et 10 septembre 1953, et 25 juin 1954.

<sup>71</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 30 novembre 1951.

<sup>72</sup> *L’École républicaine* de mai 1952.

<sup>73</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 14 décembre 1951.

<sup>74</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 11 décembre 1952.

<sup>75</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 11 mars 1954.

<sup>76</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 2 mai 1952.

<sup>77</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 11 décembre 1952.

<sup>78</sup> *Le Libertainaire* du 9 septembre 1954.

this communiqué called for the release of Messali and all Algerian political prisoners. Wishing to affirm in all circumstances the “critical” dimension of its support, the MLNA emphasized “the transitory character of the [anti-colonialist] struggle, which must not involve any compromise with social neo-colonialism or enlightened colonialism, the permanent objective being the revolutionary awakening of the colonial masses against current exploitation and repression and against their future exploitation and repression. The outbreak of the Algerian insurrection will pose this question of “modalities of action with the nationalist parties” in a different way.

## The MLNA and the Algerian Insurrection (1954–1956)

In view of the articles published by the FCL and the MLNA in the months preceding November 1, 1954, the outbreak of the insurrection came as no surprise to the anarchists: after having exalted the victory of the Vietminh at Diên Biên Phu, the FCL affirmed as early as July 1954 that a war had begun in the Maghreb and that it would be won by the colonized.<sup>79</sup> In November, the MLNA immediately interpreted the first attacks as the beginning of a war of independence. In November, the MLNA immediately interpreted the first attacks as the beginning of a war of independence. Alongside an article entitled “Le massif de l’Aurès peut tenir” (The Aurès massif can hold), Fernand Doukhan published a text in *Le Libertaire* of November 11, 1954, exalting the insurrection. Partly taken up in a poster of the FCL entitled “Long live free Algeria”, this text is much more offensive than those published by the leaderships of the UDMA, the PCA, and the two tendencies of the MTLD. Somewhat disoriented by the outbreak of the insurrection, these parties confined themselves in their first public proclamations to a condemnation of the repression and the wish to satisfy the “aspirations” of the population.<sup>80</sup> For his part, Fernand Doukoulou, a member of the PCA, was a member of the MTLD. For his part, Fernand Doukhan fully legitimized the use of arms. He writes:

“Terrorism is the consequence, in Algeria, of 124 years of expropriation, overexploitation, repression, massacres, hecatombings in the service of the “motherland”, illiteracy, suffocation of the cultural and moral personality of Algeria, democratic and colonial hypocrisy. Terrorism is the only hope of the fellahs and agricultural workers at 250 francs a day, of the hundreds of thousands of unemployed, of emigrants, fleeing to the slums, engaging in a struggle to the death for independence.<sup>81</sup>”

Articles with a similar tone are repeated in each issue of *Le Libertaire*, leading to seizures and prosecutions of the Parisian militants of the FCL. In July 1956, the latter decided to put an end to the publication of the paper and, for some of them, to go underground. In the meantime, the FCL created a Committee for the Fight against Colonialist Repression, which in June 1955 gave birth to the Movement for Anti-Colonialist Struggle, whose propaganda was disseminated in Algeria.<sup>82</sup> The MLNA, for its part, did not have the resources to do so. For its part, the MLNA was never as active as between November 1954 and June 1955. However, the insurrection caused the defection of several militants: only Fernand Doukhan, Léandre Valero and the docker Jean Duteuil seem

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<sup>79</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 15 juillet 1954.

<sup>80</sup> Jacques Jurquet, *Années de feu. Algérie 1954–1956*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1997, p.

<sup>81</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 11 novembre 1954. La FCL remplacera « terrorisme » par « révolte ».

<sup>82</sup> ANOM, Préfecture de Constantine, 93 3 F 18 : rapport des RG de Constantine, 16 juillet 1955.

to have been active in Algiers, while leaflets were distributed in Constantine, probably by Salah Derbal.<sup>83</sup> The MLNA was not active in Algeria until June 1955.

The first pole of activity of the MLNA during the war of independence was information and propaganda. The articles in *Le Libertaire* that exalt the “Algerian resistance” each week by detailing armed actions are accompanied by the mention “Documentation provided by the MLNA”. In addition, *Le Libertaire* published five communiqués from the MLNA and seven articles by Fernand Doukhan, to which must be added two texts written by the same Fernand Doukhan and by Guy Martin in their union’s newspaper. These texts insist on the struggle against repression, affirming that Algeria will “soon be a huge concentration camp for the natives. They also explicitly supported the armed struggle, and in March 1955 quoted a leaflet of the Armée de libération nationale (ALN)<sup>84</sup>. Reaffirming their “critical support” for the radical nationalists, in early 1955 they castigated the Algerian communists and the nationalists of the UDMA as “legalists” “in whose face the Algerian people and workers spit out their supreme repulsion. The discourse of the MLNA then aligned itself in part with nationalist language, and contrasted sharply with certain pre-war leitmotifs. On the one hand, breaking with the denunciation of the idea of nation as an artifice, and no longer content to take note of the strength and “revolutionary content” of nationalism, Fernand Doukhan affirmed in November 1955 that the anarchists recognized “the reality of the Algerian nation. On the other hand, putting an end to the radical rejection of the electoral system and of “bourgeois parliamentarism”<sup>85</sup>, the teacher calls for the free election of an Algerian parliament that will negotiate the independence of Algeria – while affirming that this will have to be followed by a “class war against class”<sup>86</sup>.

The second pole of activity of the MLNA is clandestine action. For the police, Fernand Doukhan was isolated and limited himself to the dissemination of propaganda<sup>87</sup>. In reality, the active militants of the MLNA in Algiers put themselves at the service of the clandestine leadership of the Algerian National Movement (MNA). Created at the end of 1954 following the banning of the MTLD, the MNA brought together the supporters of Messali Hadj. While advocating insurrection, the latter refused to recognize the leadership of the FLN, which also came out of the MTLD and launched the armed struggle independently of the two tendencies of the MTLD (“messalists” and “centralists”). The MNA and FLN, competing for the leadership of the independence struggle, entered into an internecine war that resulted in thousands of deaths, mainly among immigrant activists.<sup>88</sup> In Algeria, the FLN took over the leadership of the MTLD and the MTLD. In Algeria, the FLN quickly gained the upper hand over the MNA, and obtained the support, even the adhesion, of the main anti-colonialist forces. In metropolitan France, where the MNA dominated before being progressively marginalized by the FLN, the Trotskyist

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<sup>83</sup> ANOM, Préfecture de Constantine, 93 4318 : rapport de la police de Constantine, 28 janvier 1955.

<sup>84</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 31 mars 1955.

<sup>85</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 14 juillet 1950.

<sup>86</sup> *L'École républicaine* de novembre 1955.

<sup>87</sup> ANOM, Préfecture d'Alger, 91 3 F 60 : rapports de la police et des RG d'Alger, 3 et 9 décembre 1954, et 9 juin 1955 ; 91 3 F 66 : rapport sur la FA, juillet 1955.

<sup>88</sup> Paul-Marie Atger, « Le Mouvement national algérien à Lyon. Vie, mort et renaissance pendant la guerre d'Algérie », *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 2009/4, n° 104, p. 107–122.

and anarchist currents that wished to place themselves at the service of the nationalists were divided between the two organizations.<sup>89</sup>

In 1955–1956, in France, the anarchists of the FCL, who visibly believed that Messali's supporters were at the head of the ALN maquis, chose to support the MNA publicly and clandestinely. They relayed the propaganda of the MNA in *Le Libertaire* and offered material support to its metropolitan organization. In Algeria, their comrades in the MLNA wrote that the "liberation army" was constituted "outside the parties,"<sup>90</sup> but they too decided to support the Messalists, whom they considered to represent the "great majority" of the "Algerian people. In Algiers, Léandre Valero and Fernand Doukhan provided logistical support to the MNA by pulling leaflets and providing safe houses, transport and a clandestine mailbox. However, the anarchists do not position themselves in the struggle between the FLN and the MNA, and in France, the FCL progressively brings its support to the FLN. In Algeria, it seems to be on his own initiative that Léandre Valero provides material aid to FLN maquisards in Constantinois in 1955–1956, but other MLNA militants visibly maintain links with FLN members. Salah Derbal is probably the brother of Omar Derbal, a young Marxist who fled Constantine to escape repression before taking part in armed FLN actions in Paris and dying in an ALN maquis in western Algeria in December 1960.<sup>108</sup> When he was interned in 1957, he was a member of the FLN. When he was interned in 1957–1958, Fernand Doukhan exchanged letters with Mohamed Farès, head teacher of the General Union of Algerian Workers, created in 1956 by the FLN<sup>91</sup>.

The reasons for collective and individual decisions to support the MNA and then the FLN remain unclear, and it is not known whether anarchists in France and Algeria consulted each other on the matter. Unlike some metropolitan currents involved with the MNA or the FLN, the FCL and the MLNA do not justify their choices in documents from the period, and do not seem to be based on ideological considerations. Their initial choice to support the MNA undoubtedly stems above all from more or less long-standing inter-individual links with the Messalists, while their switch to the FLN may simply be the result of a desire to place themselves at the service of the movement whose forces were the most important.

From June 1955, there is no longer any mention of the MLNA in *Le Libertaire* or in police reports. The movement was probably no longer active as such until the summer of 1956, when the militants decided to dissolve it. Léandre Valero, who had received an order to be mobilized in a French army reserve unit, fled Algeria<sup>92</sup>. He found his comrade Salah Derbal in Paris, who had probably left Constantine to escape the repression in 1955–1956, and who returned there around 1960<sup>93</sup>. Although he had signed several inflammatory articles since November 1954, Fernand Doukhan was not targeted by the first waves of repression against anti-colonialist activists. After the adoption of the laws on the state of emergency (April 1955) and special powers (March 1956), thousands of activists were arrested and subjected to administrative and judicial measures<sup>94</sup>. Fer-

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<sup>89</sup> Nedjib Sidi Moussa, « Face à la guerre d'Algérie : transactions anticoloniales et reconfigurations dans la gauche française », *Diacronie*, n° 9, 1/2012, mis en ligne le 29 janvier 2012 ; S. Pattieu, *Les camarades des frères...*, *op. cit.*, p. 53–67.

<sup>90</sup> *Le Libertaire* du 30 décembre 1954.

<sup>91</sup> ANOM, Préfecture d'Alger, 91 1 F 340.

<sup>92</sup> « Hommage : dernier témoin de l'anarchisme algérien, Léandre Valero s'en est allé », article de Guillaume Davranche mis en ligne sur le site d'*Alternative Libertaire* le 6 novembre 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Entretien de l'auteur avec William Sportisse, Villejuif, 3 juin 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Sylvie Thénault, *Une drôle de justice. Les magistrats dans la guerre d'Algérie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2001, p. 29–127.



nand Doukhan was finally arrested by the army during the “Battle of Algiers”, following his participation in the strike launched by the FLN and the MNA on 28 January 1957. Interrogated and locked up in the Ben Aknoun “sorting center” for ten days, he was not charged but interned for fourteen months in the Lodi internment camp, where the majority of detainees were communists from European or Jewish families<sup>95</sup>.

Isolated among these “Stalinists”, Fernand Doukhan is supported from a distance by anarchists from France and the Maghreb. In January 1958, he received from Morocco a long letter from his comrade Guy Martin, which proved that the question of alliances was far from being closed. The teacher, who justifies himself to his elder to be always anarchist, describes him the isolation of the anarchists in independent Morocco. Wishing to break with this isolation and considering that it is necessary “to go to the proletariat”, he envisages the entry in a Moroccan Communist Party (PCM) if a new one is constituted. He adds that in the same way as “the nationalist awareness”, communist regimes on the model of Gomulka’s Poland or Tito’s Yugoslavia can be supported “as a step”, “despite their authoritarianism”:

“Finally, consider that the PCA is a vulgar subsidiary of the PCF (and in this sense it was colonialist in its own way) but that it will not always be so. For the PCM, for example, the French cadres have been decimated and if it is still Moscow-based, it is much less Frenchized. [...] don’t forget that our non-conformism obliges us to weigh all ideas without rejecting them a priori. Don’t you also think that your position towards the PCA should be more flexible and that you are all on the same boat, and that you should also spare future possibilities? I leave it to you to think about this and develop it yourself.<sup>96</sup>”

We do not know the answer of Fernand Doukhan, who did not return to Algeria after his liberation from the Lodi camp and his expulsion to France in March 1958.<sup>97</sup>

The war of independence thus put an end to the existence of the MLNA, but also to the presence of its ex-militants in Algeria. After 1962, none of them will be able to evaluate the relevance of the idea that independence could be a first step towards anarchy. They will not be able to confront the evolution of their favorite issues, such as the social and political weight of Islam, the “ungovernability” of Kabylia, or the post-colonial role of the “nationalist bourgeoisie,” which were to become fundamental political issues in independent Algeria. In addition to the astonishment that can arise from the confrontation between the strategic reflections of the movement and the real number of its militants, these observations make the MLNA a “curiosity” in the history of colonized Algeria. Groupuscular because of a discourse that was difficult to hear in colonial society, the MLNA nonetheless made an original contribution to the Algerian anti-colonialist movement, adapting to the radicalization of the decolonization process and putting its words into action.

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<sup>95</sup> Nathalie Funès, *Mon oncle d’Algérie, op. cit.*, et *Le camp de Lodi. Algérie, 1954–1962*, Paris, Stock, 2012, 216 p.

<sup>96</sup> Lettre de Guy Martin à Fernand Doukhan, 21 janvier 1958, déjà citée.

<sup>97</sup> ANOM, Préfecture d’Alger, 91 1 F 340 : note sur Fernand Doukhan (sans date).

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