‘French like the others’

Colonial Migrants in Wartime France, 1939-1947

by

David J. Smith

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Department of History
University of Toronto

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This dissertation explores the largely unknown history of how migrants from across the colonial empire experienced the Second World War in France. By the 1930s France possessed the second-largest colonial empire in the world. Although people from across the French empire had resided in the métropole during the interwar period, the declaration of war against Nazi Germany in September 1939 necessitated the recruitment of thousands more French colonial subjects to serve as workers for the war effort. There were perhaps 100,000 from across the French empire living in France at the start of the war, and this number swelled to more than 140,000 by June 1940.

While historians have recently begun to uncover the history of migration between France and its colonies, this is the first study to comparatively examine the heterogeneous mix of Southeast Asians and North Africans living on metropolitan soil. Placing colonial migration in a comparative framework reveals the extent to which racial perceptions and hierarchies within French colonial thought impacted the existence of people of color in France. I have deliberately eschewed previous ways of examining how colonialism affected French society, which tend to favor representation or exoticism, and instead constructed a social history of race and immigration geared around daily life. Utilizing over twenty public and private archival collections, this dissertation is focused on quotidian interactions between
This dissertation argues that France should be viewed as a colonial and metropolitan space where migrants from across the empire met forms of colonial knowledge, power, and discipline. Focusing on the inherent tension between France and its empire, rather than constructing an intellectual framework that subsumes France and empire together, reveals the true impact of colonialism on metropolitan society. My focus on the 1930s and 1940s, which crosses the Third Republic, Vichy, and Liberation eras, demonstrates the treatment of colonial migrants was not just about specific political regimes but firmly rooted in the French imperial project and entrenched racial stereotypes that persist in France today.
Acknowledgements

As with many other dissertations, this one has a story. It began as an effort to investigate how colonial subjects living in France managed the Vichy period and has now become something much more complex than I anticipated. After spending many years thinking about the place of colonialism in twentieth-century French society, it is now my belief that the origins of current debates over multiculturalism and immigration cannot be understood without recognizing their origins in many of the pages that follow. I hope that this work helps to clarify the complicated nature of France’s relationship with its former empire.

This project would not have been possible without the financial and moral support of numerous people and organizations. Eric Jennings embraced this study from the outset and his advice, encouragement, kindness, unwavering support – and digital photography skills – have made it much richer as a result. Jennifer Jenkins has been a constant presence during my time at the University of Toronto and her thought-provoking comments throughout this process have always forced me re-evaluate my conclusions for the better. Many thanks to Rick Halpern for taking time out of his busy schedule, and Paul Cohen and Jack Veugelers for joining this project at the end. I would especially like to thank Prof. Mary D. Lewis of Harvard University for acting as the external examiner. Her own scholarship served as a model for this dissertation and has challenged me to think about new ways to write French history.
Research for this dissertation was carried out all over France – from national to departmental to business archives – and it is a testament to the hard work of archivists and librarians that this subject was even feasible. While I extend my sincere thanks to all who aided me during my travels, I would like to single out a few individuals who went above and beyond the call of duty. Mme. Patricia Gillet at the Archives Nationales in Paris helped orient my research from the beginning and pointed out several archival collections that provided enormously useful. M. Jacques Dion at the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer guided me through the extensive archival holdings in Aix-en-Provence and was always willing to help me find something. Mme. Marie-Claire Pontier of the archives départementales du Gard, and M. Frédéric Barthe of the archives départementales de la Loire, guided me through the initial stages of my local research and were patient with my numerous questions about the mining archives in Nîmes and Saint-Etienne. Mme. Emmanuelle Combet and M. Jean Luquet of the archives départementales de la Savoie kindly sent inventaires – free of charge! – allowing me to make the most of my short time in Chambéry. Staff at the archives départementales de Saône-et-Loire and archives départementales de la Dordogne located uncatalogued material that proved extremely useful for my project.

I would especially like to thank Mme. Antoinette Maux-Robert for allowing me to consult to the private papers of her father, and Mme. Jenny Piquet at the Intitut pour l’histoire de l’aluminium for facilitating access to the business archives of Alais, Froges et Camargue. Finally, Mme. Louisa Zanoun and her staff at Généries in Paris have contributed to my research perhaps more than anyone. It was only because of their efforts that I would have thought to visit Digne or Périgueux searching for material on Vietnamese and North Africans in wartime France.
The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Toronto, and the Centre des Études de la France et du Monde Francophone at the University provided funding for research. I would particularly like to thank M. Noël Coulet and the Fondation Paul Avril Février in Aix-en-Provence for subsidizing my trip to the region. This project has also benefitted enormously from my conversations with other scholars. Caroline Douki and Hervé Joly both provided great advice about finding archival information in Lyon. Clifford Rosenberg suggested I explore the archives in La Courneuve, which yielded several important documents. Joshua Cole, Norman Ingram, Sean Kennedy, Simon Kitson, Kenneth Mouré, and Alexis Spire provided sound advice and encouragement as well. Earlier versions of this research were presented at the French Colonial Historical Society in Toronto, the Society for the Study of French History in Cambridge, UK, and the Toronto Area French History Seminar; my sincere thanks to all of those that gave such valuable feedback and advice.

I am also grateful for those that have supported me along the way. Peter Kent and Sean Kennedy at the University of New Brunswick – Fredericton were instrumental in transforming me into a historian and I cannot thank them enough for all they have done. John Hellman at McGill University challenged me to think about French history in new ways. Thanks to Eric Jennings, Lori Loeb and Russ Kazal for acting as Graduate Coordinators during my time in Toronto, as well as the Department of History staff at the University of Toronto. Finally, I would like to thank my family: my parents, John and Gail Smith, and my brother Matthew Smith. They are not only a source of unfailing support, but also an important reminder that completing a PhD should not monopolize one’s life. And to Robyn Cauchy, who contributed more to this project than she knows.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii-iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv-vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Human Reservoirs to Human Capital:</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Recruitment in <em>la France d'outre-mer</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Peasants into Workers:</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Colonial Bodies in the Métropole, 1939-1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: France for the French:</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work, Welfare, and North African Belonging under Vichy, 1940-1942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: The Immoral Economy:</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, Rationing, and Vietnamese Workers during <em>les années noires</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Beyond the Color Line:</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North African Mobility, Vichy Sovereignty, and the Dynamics of Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: Colonial Citizens:</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africans and Vietnamese in postwar France, 1944-1947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: ‘The Illness of Immigration’</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bibliography* 350
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Archives départementales de l’Aude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Archives départementales de la Vaucluse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN</td>
<td>Archives Nationales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANMT</td>
<td>Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOM</td>
<td>Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APP</td>
<td>Archives de la Préfecture de Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Centre des Archives Contemporaines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRALAG</td>
<td>Agence Centrale de Transports Groupes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>DTI</td>
<td>Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHA</td>
<td>Institut pour l’Histoire de l’Aluminium – Archives Privées de Péchiney</td>
</tr>
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<td>MAE</td>
<td>Centre des Archives Diplomatiques – Ministère des Affaires Étrangères</td>
</tr>
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<td>MOI</td>
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</tr>
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<td>MONA</td>
<td>Service de la main-d’oeuvre nord-africaine</td>
</tr>
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<td>OPA</td>
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</tr>
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<td>SAA</td>
<td>Service des affaires algériennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAINA</td>
<td>Service des affaires indigènes nord-africains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO</td>
<td>Service du Travail Obligatoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGI</td>
<td>Société Générale d’Immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHD/CAA</td>
<td>Service Historique de la Défense – Centre des Archives de l’Armement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIAVB</td>
<td>Syndicat Intercommunal d’Assainissement des Vallées des Beunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLOTFOM</td>
<td>Service de liaison avec des originaires des territoires d’outre-mer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

“From the time they stepped foot on metropolitan soil, the indigènes affirmed that by wearing European clothes they became ‘French like the others.’ But when they arrived at the factory and became aware of the policies against them, many of them said that they no longer wanted to be French.”

Mazargues is a typical French quartier located about six kilometers from the center of Marseille. Filled with non-descript cafés, shops, and small parks, in the 1940s it was home to a varied mix of shopkeepers and laborers. Some of these would have been employed in agriculture, on the docks of Marseille, or maybe even as far away as the shipbuilding center of La Ciotat. Like most of the surrounding villages that made up the city it was mostly poor, a mix of practicing and non-practicing Catholics, and even some immigrants from Spain and Italy that had moved into the area over the preceding years in search of inexpensive housing. Throughout the 1940s, however, it was also home to thousands of French colonial subjects who arrived in France to act as workers on farms and factories at the beginning of the Second World War. They were situated in camps that held different names over the years, often changing with the various political regimes of the era. First known as the “Centre d’Accueil”, and then later, “Camp Lyautey,” “Camp Colgate,” “Camp Viet-Nam,” and “Grand Arénas,”

Mazargues became, much like France itself, an arena where the colonies met the métropole in a very literal sense.²

This dissertation examines the experience of colonial migrants living in France between 1939 and the late 1940s. Although people from across the French empire had resided in the métropole during the interwar period, the declaration of war against Nazi Germany in September 1939 necessitated the recruitment of thousands more French colonial subjects to serve as workers for the war effort. There were perhaps 100,000 from across the French empire—predominantly Algerians—living in France at the start of the war, and this number swelled to more than 140,000 by June 1940. The defeat of the French army and subsequent establishment of the Vichy regime led to the deportation of thousands of Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians back to North Africa between 1940 and 1941, while “Indochinese”³ subjects were relegated to work camps. Unemployment, material shortages, and the authoritarian nature of Philippe Pétain’s regime affected colonial migrants much like French citizens during this period. Liberation brought about calls for a renovation of French colonialism, and the experience of colonial migrants in postwar France is very much a parable for this process. While some reforms were undertaken, colonial migrants also became caught up in the era of decolonization and were witnesses to two of the major historical events in postwar France: conflict within the empire, and permanent emigration from France’s colonial possessions. This story, then, is not simply about Asians and Africans

³ Documents from this period use the term “Indochinese” or occasionally “Annamite” to refer to French colonial subjects from Indochina. As “Indochina” was a French creation, and all but a few hundred migrants in this study came from the three historic Vietnamese provinces (Cochin China, Annam and Tonkin), I employ the term Vietnamese throughout, except when documents explicitly refered to Cambodians.
living in France but how their place in French society was affected by war, occupation, social dislocation, and decolonization.

Typically presented as a “post-colonial” phenomenon resulting from decolonization and globalization, migration to the métropole first occurred during the colonial period. Scholars have increasingly turned to the movement of people within the Francophone world as a means to interrogate the relationship between France and its overseas empire. Thousands of African and Asian migrants made their way to France over the course of the twentieth century, becoming a visible sign of French colonialism in the métropole. Often, however, colonial migrants are presented in relation to other groups of European immigrants or as singular case studies on the experience of Algerians, Moroccans, Vietnamese, Antilleans, and sub-Saharan Africans. This study seeks to address this lacuna. It is the first comparative examination of the heterogeneous mix of Southeast Asians and North Africans living on metropolitan soil during the colonial period. Placing the history of colonial migration in a comparative framework allows for an understanding of how ethnic perceptions and hierarchies within French colonial thought impacted the existence of people of color in France. It also demonstrates the differing relationship of various colonial territories to the

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métropole, and how concerns over juridical status of these territories, and the people within them, could affect migration rights and their experience during this period.

Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler argued some years ago for a reorientation in the field of colonial history. They called for scholarship on European colonialism examining “the contingency of metropolitan-colonial connections and its consequences for patterns of imperial rule,” and more specifically, “how the colonies and metropoles shared in the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, and in what ways the colonial domain was distinct from a metropolitan one.”

Focusing on this dialectical relationship between Europe and the colonies demonstrates the extent to which abstract notions of community, identity, and belonging were shaped by colonialism. Apart from this, Cooper and Stoler push scholars to go beyond simply examining representation and the acquisition of knowledge by Europeans towards political economy and daily life, revealing how tension between government, business, the military, and indigenous populations helped shape colonial rule. Presenting a more dynamic relationship between the two approaches, they argue, allows for a more thorough interrogation of “the relationship of colonial state to metropolitan state and of the making of nation to the making of empire.”

While some historians of modern France have recently portrayed the French empire as an “imperial nation-state”, this argument works to erase the extreme complexity inherent to the colonial project. Rather than employ a framework that fuses nation and empire together, it is much more helpful to conceive of France and its colonial empire as an

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6 Ibid, 4.
analytical space in which concepts of citizen, subject, race, identity, gender, labor, and territory were constantly in flux, questioned and evolving. As the historian of British colonialism Kathleen Wilson has argued, thinking about “empire” as a entity comprised of various constituent parts “allows us to treat the metropole and colonies as interconnected analytical fields – which is emphatically not to say that the two are ‘the same’ but each provides a local translation of a wider imperial circuit that impacted forms of labor, consumption, servitude, freedom, and belonging in specific ways.”

Positioning the French empire as an entity comprised of various – but interlinked – constituent parts allows for an examination into how the inherent tension between the métropole and overseas colonies manifested itself once colonial subjects began to settle in large numbers on French soil.

Previous scholars who have investigated the extent to which racially driven ideas about non-western peoples permeated French society tend to focus on representation and “exoticism” as an expression of the colonial project. Elizabeth Ezra, Herman Lebovics, Patricia Norton, Panivong Norindr, and others, have examined French colonial exhibitions, museums, art, literature, and film as cultural artifacts that demonstrated European superiority but also ambivalence over the nature of colonial rule. “Representations of the colonial

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located cultural difference in explicitly political terms,” Ezra explains, “confirming France’s military prowess and status as a world power.” These works have been important in revealing the salience of colonial and racial thinking in France during the early twentieth century, and also how the distinction between “colonized” and “colonizer”, and “west” and “non-west”, were socially constructed categories rather than rigid formulations. It is less clear, however, the extent to which representation, exoticism, “savagery,” and imperial propaganda actually trickled into French society itself and their role in shaping the reception of colonial migrants. Scholars often draw a direct line between the production of stereotypes about colonial subjects in film and literature and the way that immigrants from Asia and Africa are perceived today. This is not to suggest that examining the production of colonial knowledge is irrelevant, but rather that historians need demonstrate how racial thought actually motivated the making of concrete policy.

Migration – and particularly the circulation of people between métropole and empire – presents a particularly interesting avenue for interrogating the effect of colonialism on French society. Rather than solely focus on how colonialism might have tangentially affected identity or citizenship, examining the experience of Vietnamese and North African migrants in France demonstrates the extent to which racial ideology and the accumulation of

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knowledge about colonial subjects was actually applied in practice. Metropolitan France was not only the seat of colonial rule and an enormous (though not the sole) base of power; it was also an arena where migrants met forms of colonial knowledge, power and discipline. In this sense, the métropole was a crucible where colonial thought was not only conceived and developed, but also used as a means to regulate non-white, non-European bodies. Examining France as a colonial space as well as metropolitan space – where Asian and African subjects, the State, employers, and French men and women could interact – thus reveals a great deal about the implications of colonial rule on the way issues like immigration and multiculturalism are perceived today.

This study covers the period from 1939 when France declared war on Nazi Germany, through the Vichy years, and into the immediate postwar period, ending just after the commencement of the French-Indochina War in 1946 and promulgation of the loi organique d’Algérie in 1947 that codified France’s relationship with its three Algerian départements, including the right of free migration. The French empire during the Second World War has become an object of focus in recent years, but less attention has been paid to the situation in France itself. Although Robert Paxton’s famous study of the Vichy regime is mostly remembered for his argument on collaboration between France and Nazi Germany, he devoted considerable attention to how the empire figured into the political situation during

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this period as well as the nature of racism under Vichy.\textsuperscript{14} Others have focused on representations of colonial subjects and the experience of colonial prisoners of war.\textsuperscript{15} The situation of migrants living in France is largely unknown, apart from the important work of journalist Pierre Daum and Joël Pham in forcing the French state to recognize the plight of Vietnamese workers brought to the métropole for the war effort.\textsuperscript{16}

Investigating the experience of colonial migrants in France during the Second World War period is not only an important subject by itself, but also because it lies at the intersection of histories of race, colonialism and immigration. Two interrelated topics appear throughout this study: first, the presence of colonial bodies in France, and second, the need for regulating their movement between métropole and empire. These issues often worked in tandem with each other. The undesirable nature of colonial migrants as full-fledged members of the national community necessitated controls on their entry to metropolitan soil, while the existential separation of France and its colonies – which was portrayed in starkly medical and environmental terms – worked to render colonial migrants as “un-French” when they arrived. On a few occasions my study moves back and forth between metropolitan France and the colonies, demonstrating how concerns emanating from different corners of the empire reduced, or sometimes enhanced, the position of Vietnamese and North Africans in France throughout this period.

\textsuperscript{14} Robert Paxton, \textit{Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944} (New York: Knopf, 1972)
Racial and ethnically-driven perceptions of Asian and African migrants were central to their experience during the 1940s, suggesting a great deal about the development of discriminatory behavior in metropolitan society, the linkages between the acquisition and application of knowledge about people of color, and the nature of French views on race and ethnicity. Although modern French historiography shied away from the topic for years it has now become a common theme in literature on immigration and colonialism, challenging the notion of a color-blind French society. Many of these studies, however, do not examine the relationship between the production of knowledge and the lived experience of colonials. French politicians and public figures may have decried the corrupting influence of Asians and Africans in the métropole, but did this extend beyond strident pronouncements? ‘French like the others’ compliments existing literature by investigating how views of colonial migrants actually influenced the creation of policy by the French state and their experience in the métropole. Ethnic perceptions were highly influential, informing how migrants were received as ideas about their cultural and physical inferiority compelled government authorities to design specific policies intended to manage their social behavior. Outwardly promoting the “equality” of French and colonial, many of these programs instead worked to delineate Vietnamese and North Africans as fundamentally different from their French counterparts. The changing nature of their position in French society – at times recruited and then deported; hired and fired; needed and yet unwanted – was often based on one underlying

principle: colonials were not really “French” and thus subject to the whims of the state. Racism, in other words, was not “developed” overseas and transported back to France.\(^\text{18}\) Ideas circulated between métropole and empire and were used to reinforce colonial rule wherever French subjects were located.

At the same time, however, there was also extreme hierarchy within French racial thought. The supposed “ethnic composition” of Asians and Africans precipitated multiple forms of racism that imbued colonial subjects with specific physical, environmental and “intellectual” attributes that had to be managed when they arrived on metropolitan soil. Vietnamese – presented as child-like, weak, effeminate, intelligent but devoid of creative instincts – were closely monitored throughout their stay. The position of North Africans, by contrast, was extremely varied during this period. They were necessary workers for the war effort, yet often viewed as a burden on metropolitan society, and a physical threat to the health and productivity of the nation. Even within these geographic categories, policies were based on differences between Algerians and Moroccans, “Arabs” and “Berbers”, lowland Vietnamese and montagnards, tailoring policies with their particular attributes in mind.\(^\text{19}\)

French politicians under the Third and Fourth Republics rejected (for the most part) the outwardly discriminatory attitude of the United States and South Africa, which they considered contradictory to the values of republican universalism. Indeed, despite the prominence of racial concerns and thousands of non-white colonial subjects living in the

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métropole, there were never any attempts to ban “inter-racial” marriage or officially segregate public spaces along racially codified lines. Rather than subscribing to the view of race being an immutable, unchanging characteristic, theorists, politicians and academics held that race was defined by a combination of biological and cultural attributes that could managed while living on metropolitan soil. This is not to suggest that the so-called policy of “assimilation” was the defining characteristic of racial thought, but rather that officials believed that they could ease the transition of Asians and Africans to life in France using a variety of different methods including the use of specially designed camps, specific employment, the use of “selection” procedures to govern migration, and welfare policies to “train” colonials. French national identity, in other words, was never “racialized,” although the tension between the official inability to recognize racial and cultural pluralism, and the private communications of French officials in which colonial migrants were always described in ethnographic terms, is one of the defining characteristics of how race and ethnicity were viewed during this period. Indeed, it is still very present in contemporary France.

Adding the French empire into these debates reveals the extent to which French immigration patterns were inherently shaped by colonialism and ethnography. After the United States imposed wide-ranging immigration quotas in 1924, France became the largest receiving nation for immigrants in the world. Historians have increasingly challenged the perception that its doors were open (or closed) to all. Regulations crafted by successive governments were not color-blind, as policymakers proclaimed, and were heavily influenced

by demography, ethnicity, and gender. While French immigration law makes no mention of national origin or ethnicity in determining whether immigrants were allowed to settle on French territory, scholars like Clifford Rosenberg, Mary Lewis, Elisa Camiscioli and Alexis Spire have demonstrated the extent to which race affected perceptions of “useful” or “productive” immigrants, and how these usually arrived from European nations whose populations were viewed as more “assimilable.”

Because concerns over population, demography, and labor productivity infused discussions about immigration, the migration patterns of “non-white” Asians and Africans became an object of focus in the interwar period. Due to fears over their presence and inability to adapt to a modern industrial economy, however, migration between France and its colonial empire was tightly controlled.

The Second World War-era is particularly well suited for examining the connection between immigration and the colonial empire. Colonial migrants became very important for the French economy during this period, first as workers for the war effort, then a pliable source of labor under Vichy, and finally, necessary for postwar reconstruction after 1945. Since the colonial body was typically presented as deficient in some way, controlling movement between metropolitan France and various colonial territories became an area of government intervention. If North Africans and Vietnamese were viewed as “undesirable” because of their physiological attributes, then managing their entry into France – whether

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through recruitment practices, medical testing, or by reference to their subject status – was of critical importance. On the other hand, the flow of peoples was not unidirectional, and controlling this neutral ground between métropole and empire could also be used to stop French women from crossing the Mediterranean or disallowing Vietnamese from returning to Indochina after the outbreak of war in 1946. As a result, I suggest that not only were colonial subjects themselves worthy of attention, but the space between the métropole and colonial empire itself was increasingly viewed as an area that required government intervention. Indeed, presenting the empire in its complex legal and social composition rather than subsuming metropolitan France and the empire together reveals how authorities used the disaggregation between France and its colonies as a means to preserve colonial rule and influence the treatment of Asians and Africans in France.

The backdrop for this story spans one of the darkest and most notorious periods in contemporary French history. Wartime France was an era rife with xenophobia, state-led discriminatory measures, authoritarianism, and political conflicts that often took on the appearance of a civil war. Embarking on a project set during the Vichy years brings its own unique challenges, and even though the Shoah and internment camps are regularly discussed in France today, what Henry Rousso described as the “Vichy Syndrome” is still very much alive. Historiography on the subject has occasionally been reflective of the guerre franco-française. In some cases, scholars have attempted to show the linkages between the Third


Republic and Vichy regime, focusing how Édouard Daladier’s “authoritarian republic” prepared the way for Pétain.\textsuperscript{25} Others, by contrast, argue that the Vichy years and Occupation period should be viewed as a “break” in French history – an abstraction that must be viewed as a product of its time – and that the Third and Fourth Republics were completely different.\textsuperscript{26} Finally, there are the questions of synergy between Vichy and the postwar era, specifically whether institutions, individuals and ideas that emerged during the war served as the foundation for the Fourth Republic.\textsuperscript{27}

Rather than wade into contentious exchanges over political institutions, or the ideological linkages between Vichy and French republicanism, I instead focus on what Philip Nord has called the “transwar” period to investigate how the position of colonial migrants and debates over their presence in France evolved during this period.\textsuperscript{28} As my work demonstrates, the ideological composition of the three regimes had significant differences with one another, and this was reflected in how they viewed colonial subjects in France.

Universalist rhetoric was frequently deployed in the Third Republic and Liberation eras that preached “equality” between colonial and French workers. The type of “equality” envisaged, however, was mostly portrayed as equality in the workplace rather than real political or social equality with metropolitan French citizens. Even this was never fully applied, and indeed the policies instituted by the Third Republic in particular were antithetical to its


\textsuperscript{26} This argument was particularly prominent in the period immediately after the war. It has, however, persisted in current historiography. See Weil, \textit{La France et ses étrangers} and Weil, \textit{How to Be French}.


pronouncements that workers arriving from overseas would be treated “exactly” like their French counterparts. Without valorizing French universalism, I show that certain officials under the Third Republic and Liberation governments attempted to reconcile their own thoughts about the undesirability of colonials with republican beliefs that were ostensibly designed to promote a “color-blind” national polity. That race and subject status often colored the end result does not negate the fact republican authorities thought long and hard about how to treat colonial subjects within a framework of official equality.

Vichy, as in so many other areas, often talked and thought about colonial migrants differently than its republican counterparts. Its version of French society was inherently organic, and inclusionary impulses were usually based on ethnic or racial criteria. Historians have only begun to examine how “foreignness” influenced identity and belonging under Vichy. Much like Jews, Romani peoples (“Gypsies”), and foreigners, Asians and Africans were often portrayed as the “anti-France.” This manifested itself in manifold ways: expelling North Africans across the Mediterranean to preserve employment and welfare benefits for metropolitan French; the promotion of indigenous festivals and culture, which were used to create a link between France and its empire, but also demonstrate the regime’s antipathy towards universalism; and the creation of a state-run migration regime between France and North Africa that transformed Algerians into guest-workers, thereby rejecting the right of free migration. In this sense, Vichy projected a conception of national belonging that was much more ethnically and culturally bounded than previous (or future) regimes in French

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31 Naomi Davidson has made a similar argument in her study of Islam, positing Vichy’s promotion of Muslim festivals was tied to its rejection of universalism and secularism. See Davidson, *Only Muslim, 87-88.*
history. Even though there are similarities between the Third Republic, Vichy and the Liberation eras, Pétain was willing to go much further in fusing race, population, and employment concerns into state policy that often circumscribed the rights of colonial migrants in the métropole.

At the same time, however, there is often a view of Vichy as a monolithic, ideologically driven, and immutable entity that was inherently repressive and obsessed with punishing certain elements of French society. And when the situation of Jews or “Gypsies” is used as an exemplar of the minority situation during les années noires this is very accurate. Jews living in France were almost immediately harassed, deprived of their social and civil rights, arrested, interned, and then sometimes deported to their deaths in Eastern Europe.32 “Gypsies” were also arrested and placed in various camps around France.33 The situation of foreign immigrants and refugees is less well known, but they too were often relegated to work camps and used by the French state as an inexpensive source of labor.34 Asian and African migrants, however, saw their position in French society change between 1940 and

1944, mostly because Vichy was forced to eschew its desire to isolate colonial migrants from French society in the face of increasing wartime labor shortages.

Although exclusion was a the heart of Vichy’s project to remake French society, colonial migrants’ increasing association with the concept of work – a key element in Pétain’s National Revolution – tempered their social undesirability in France. Following the defeat in June 1940 colonial workers who had been heavily recruited during the drôle de guerre were either deported from the country or removed from the labor market to cure chronic unemployment and material shortages. The situation changed dramatically in 1941. The Ministries of Labor and Industrial Production under Vichy were intensely concerned with renovating the economy in southern France and desperately needed workers for their plans. Lacking access to European immigrants, the government turned to colonial workers for French mines, factories, agriculture and public works projects. Collaboration between Vichy and Nazi Germany added another element into the equation as Hitler’s regime was also searching for labor during these years, especially on construction projects in northern France and coastal areas.

Although historians have typically shied away from discussing “rights” under Vichy, the changing economic, social and international situation meant that, just as in the interwar period, the rights which colonial migrants enjoyed typically expanded and contracted because

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of these competing interests. They could also conflict with one another, as the necessity of creating space in the labor market for colonials resulted in more draconian treatment – including a special policing apparatus – because of their economic importance. By discussing the evolving position of colonials under Vichy, I am not arguing that the regime was somehow “inclusionary.” Efforts to recruit more North African workers after 1942, for example, was governed by principles representative of Vichy’s concern with population and demography. Rather, the regime adapted to the labor shortage in southern France by deploying ideological justifications for using North African and Vietnamese migrants at a time when xenophobia was leading to repressive measures against “undesirable” elements in French society.\(^{37}\)

Vichy’s authoritarianism and the republicanism of the Third and Fourth Republics, then, dealt with colonial migrants differently. But there were significant continuities over this wartime period as well, and these were usually wrapped up in racially motivated fears driven by the corporeal presence of colonials in France. Although the rights which colonials enjoyed changed over this period, and their “inclusion” or “exclusion” into French society was highly mediated by economic, international and colonial events, these three regimes often viewed colonials as people who required supervision and management. This was due to ideas over the fragility of Asian and African bodies, their inability to adapt to life in France properly, and the social ills such as disease, criminality, and deficient labor productivity they were thought to have brought with them.

\(^{37}\) Previous historians have deployed similar evidence but have not arrived at the same conclusions regarding the complicated nature of belonging under Vichy. In his discussion of citizenship policy, Patrick Weil notes that Vichy consciously naturalized Italians and Armenians in southern France while simultaneously stripping Jews and other “undesirables” of their citizenship. This was motivated by concerns about Italians being deported, thus depriving French business of skilled labor, as well as Vichy’s apparent affinity for Armenian Catholics. See Weil, *How to Be French*, 103-107
Colonial subjects, in other words, were always viewed as a “problem” that needed a solution, and this typically involved some form of state intervention into their lives. The system of encadrement for Vietnamese workers was introduced by the Third Republic 1939, and then maintained by Vichy, the Liberation governments, and the Fourth Republic, only ending when they were repatriated in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although it served differing purposes throughout this period, its ability to control “Indochinese” workers was never questioned. Perceptions of North Africans as unhealthy, economically unproductive workers prone to criminality and indolence led to the creation of various policies designed to control their entry to metropolitan soil and provide “social assistance” once they arrived. While each of the three regimes portrayed migration and provisioning of social welfare differently, once again, the main purpose was limiting the meager social and labor rights North Africans enjoyed.

Rather than solely focus on the rhetoric of politicians and academic theorists, I have grounded my research in what scholars have typically referred to as the study of “everyday life.” Scholars have increasingly turned to “ordinary” men and women as a means to investigate how broader historical forces such as class, gender, and race affected the way that people lived their lives.38 Historians of the Second World War era in particular have used local studies to demonstrate how war and occupation affected the lives of men and women living in France.39 Utilizing police and labor reports, government correspondence, letters

39 Some of the more prominent examples using the framework of everyday life to examine Vichy and the Occupation include Robert Gildea, Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France during the German Occupation (New York: Picador, 2002); Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka and Annette Warring (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006); and Éric Alary,
from colonial workers, and business archives demonstrates the extent to which race and colonial ideology impacted where Vietnamese and North Africans worked, the application of social welfare, finding food and housing, the ability to socialize with French workers or marry French women, and even migrate to France itself. Reading the archives as cultural artifacts thus demonstrates whether pronouncements of “equality” between French and colonial were actually applied in practice, and also the extent to which colonial bodies and the descriptions that accompanied them – “Asian”, “Indochinese”, “Algerian”, “North African”, and “indigène” – were often coded with specific attributes that influenced their inclusion or exclusion from French society.

Examining the position of colonial migrants in this way necessitates a focus on civil, social, labor and political rights. What rights did colonial migrants enjoy? How did they change? What led to rights being enhanced or curtailed during this period? How involved were the colonial migrants themselves in pushing for great rights or the recognition that they were “French”? In some cases, there was a clear disaggregation between different types of rights afforded to colonials. Colonials might have had access to the labor market under Vichy, for example, but they had no option of changing their employment apart from deserting, which was punishable by arrest and imprisonment. Algerians who could prove they held stable employment often avoided deportation 1940 in 1941, but they also had no access to social welfare programs. Even in the postwar era when North Africans became

“French citizens” there were still debates over which rights they should enjoy while living in the métropole.  

Writing a history of colonial subjects in wartime France presented a series of challenges. Most of the central archives created by the Ministry of Labor had been destroyed during the liberation of Paris in 1944. The paucity of material at the National Archives in Paris and Overseas Archives in Aix-en-Provence forced me to reassess my approach to the subject. What if the history of colonial migrants during the Second World War involved not simply researching the generation of policy in Paris and Vichy, but at a more local level as well? Venturing into archives départementales offered numerous advantages. Not only was the material richer, but it also demonstrated the necessity of examining how local and national actors were often in dialogue with one another. Authorities in Paris and Vichy held different concerns with regards to colonials than mayors, prefects, sous-préfets, employers, and French men and women who interacted with Vietnamese and North Africans every day.

Interrogating the dynamic between local and national issues complicates the view of France as inherently Paris-centric, whereby policy emanates from the central government and then is assiduously applied in the provinces. As the following discussion demonstrates, local governments were incredibly important in informing the creation and application of policy directed at colonial workers during this period. As historians like Tal Bruttmann and

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40 Recent years have seen the question of “human rights” emerge as an object of inquiry in French historiography, particularly during the French Revolution. There has been considerably less attention on civil and social rights though. For two recent examples that correct this, see Miranda Spieler, Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012) and Lewis, The Boundaries of the Republic.

Mary Lewis have argued, anchoring French history away from the halls of power in Paris or Vichy demonstrates the difficulties in applying national policy at a local level, and how national priorities was often shaped by local considerations. When functionaries in Grenoble, Marseille, Lyon or Saint-Etienne received directives from Paris, they often applied policy – or sometimes created their own policy – by filtering them through a local lens. Because of this, I often allow for dialogue between local and national sources, showing how debates between various levels of the government affected colonials in France.

The importance of non-state actors – especially employers and the French population – is crucial to any social history of immigration. Government authorities were intensely concerned with public opinion and building popular support for their initiatives. Colonials sometimes presented an unwelcome presence for elements of the French population, and especially during the Vichy period, state-driven xenophobia, unemployment, material scarcities, and rationing exacerbated social problems; circumscribing the rights of colonials thus presented an opportunity to gain popular support. Similarly, the concerns of business were paramount during this period as well. Wartime production and attempts to renovate the national economy meant that the French state and employers often worked closely together on the question of colonial workers. Sometimes they were in synch with one another but occasionally friction did occur because of differing objectives. Allowing for dialogue between national and local elements partly shows how diffuse goals could actually work to complicate categories and expand or contract rights for colonial migrants.

At the same time, this study also discusses the agency of migrants themselves in helping to shape their reception. Vietnamese and North Africans were not simple bystanders; they were actively involved – through their words and actions – in how the French

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government created policies to deal with their presence in France. How the “subaltern” affected the colonial state had been present in postcolonial studies for some time, but historians that have focused on colonial migrants have too often put them at the whim of the French state rather than examining how they impacted the creation of policies. As my dissertation shows, colonial migrants were incredibly savvy during this period and developed a variety of measures to improve their position in French society. Strikes, work stoppages, theft, desertion, and protests challenged government authority and could work to expand or contract the position colonials enjoyed while living in France. Further, colonials often deployed the language of equality – and even went so far to call themselves “French” – when making claims on the French state, and this could range from simple demands for welfare services or employment, to more grandiose debates over Algerian citizenship or the right to protest the war in Indochina.43

Unlike previous local histories of the war that tend focus on a particular locale, this study attempts to investigate the history of colonial migrants in a variety of different geographic areas. It is, in essence, a national history written from a local level, with a focus on several areas in particular. The lack of archival material in Paris – as well as the fact that many colonials were expelled from northern France at the beginning of the German occupation – necessitated a focus on southern France. As a result, most attention has been given to cities like Marseille, Lyon, Saint-Etienne, Alès, the Rhône-Alps region, and Mediterranean coastal areas. I also restrict my discussion to Vietnamese and North African workers. There were sizable populations of French Antilleans, sub-Saharan Africans, and Malagasy living in France at this time, but very little archival material exists on their

experience during this time period. The question of colonial students is interesting, and in particular how they reacted to Vichy’s education policies that barred certain groups from entry to schools, but their presence is also extremely limited in the archives.\footnote{John Hellman mentions in his study of Vichy’s Uriage leadership school that several “colonial” students arrived over the course of the war, but there is no mention from which colonies they originated. John Hellman, \textit{The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage, 1940-1944} (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997; 1993): 80-81.}

Chapter One focuses on the recruitment regime devised in North Africa and Indochina to transport colonial workers to France. Chapter Two examines the arrival of Asians and Africans in France, as well as how the war affected the position of colonials already living in the métropole. Because their bodies were labeled “unhealthy” and unable to adapt properly without government supervision, the Third Republic inaugurated a variety of policies that demarcated colonial workers as unequal than their French counterparts despite official rhetoric stressing their equality. Chapter Three moves into the Vichy period and specifically the evolving place of North Africans between 1940 and 1942. Deported in massive numbers following the defeat, Vichy was forced to design a recruitment system in the face of labor shortages, suggesting that the regime was forced to balance its extreme xenophobia with the economic necessity of hiring North African workers. Chapter Four focuses on Vietnamese migrants under Vichy, and how their continued isolation from French society affected work and rationing. North African mobility and policing is the subject of Chapter Five, specifically Vichy’s attempts to stop Algerian and Moroccan workers from crossing into occupied France. Chapter Six examines the Liberation and establishment of the Fourth Republic. The desire to reform French colonialism is exemplified by the position of North Africans and Vietnamese in France during this period, as the stated objectives of
creating a more benevolent empire often came up against decolonization, migration and racially driven concerns that persisted into the postwar era.

Throughout this discussion, the salience of colonialism and racial ideology is apparent. The disjuncture between citizen and subject, French and colonial, was never monolithic, but clearly present in metropolitan society. Colonial migrants were not just rendered exotic and different in the film theatre or in literature, but on the streets of Paris, Marseille, Lyon and elsewhere. The acquisition of knowledge about French colonial subjects, and subsequent prejudice and stereotypes accompanying them, clearly impacted their ability to get a job, collect social welfare, board a ship for Algiers or Saigon, queue for food, and protest in the town square. To understand how colonial migrants came to be in wartime France, our story begins in the heart of the French empire: Algiers.

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Several months before France declared war on Nazi Germany in September 1939, Prime Minister Édouard Daladier was greeted in Algiers with a triumphal reception intended to reaffirm French colonial power. France was undergoing a rempli impérial (“return to the empire”) driven by the increasing likelihood of international conflict. Novels, films, music and popular literature all stressed the intimate connection between the métropole and its colonial possessions.\(^{45}\) That France was “returning to its empire,” however, is somewhat of a misnomer. French society was dramatically impacted by colonial expansion, and although the idea of la plus France d’outre-mer (Overseas France) was more rhetorical flourish than concrete reality, the linkages between France and its empire were very real indeed. Its complex assemblage of colonies, protectorates, territories, and overseas départements were

knit together and formed an imperial network that produced the circulation of people, goods, and ideas throughout the Francophone world. These constituent parts were not created equal. Colonial rule was constructed based upon the juridical, cultural, racial and environmental discontinuities between métropole and empire, and French citizen and colonial subject.

Gregory Mann has described the colonial realm as a space in which the tension between “law” and “non-law” was ever present.\(^\text{46}\) French rule was enforced through a variety of laws, decrees, ordinances, and circulars. Indeed, the empire itself was governed through the creation of a legal framework that apportioned specific rights to colonial subjects through a series of regulations known as the code de l’indigénat.\(^\text{47}\) Law also defined the relationship between colonial territories and metropolitan France, and indeed, the type of rule across Africa and Asia was extremely heterogeneous. Algeria, invaded in 1830 and annexed six years later, was divided into three départements in 1848. While Algerians Jews and non-French European immigrants were granted French citizenship by the late nineteenth century, Muslims became “French nationals” in 1865 and were expressly denied equal status because of wariness over Islam.\(^\text{48}\) Morocco and Tunisia were legally defined as protectorates and their indigenous inhabitants protégés français. When migration between the North African protectorates and France began in earnest after the First World War, Moroccans and Tunisians were eventually disallowed from entering French territory because they remained “foreigners” under international law.\(^\text{49}\) The various ethnic groups in Indochina became French subjects after the pacification of the region in the late nineteenth century. It became

\(^{46}\) Gregory Mann, “What was the indigénat? The ‘Empire of Law’ in French West Africa,” Journal of African Studies 50, no. 3 (2009): 333
\(^{48}\) Davidson, Only Muslim, 15-35
\(^{49}\) Atouf, L’immigration marocaine, 78-81.
one of the most populous overseas possessions but French colonial officials also used the legal disjuncture to regulate migration between France and Indochina.$^{50}$

Constructing a framework for imperial rule worked in tandem with the project of creating colonial subjects. Arguments that the colonial sphere was divided between “colonized” and “colonizers” have been complicated in recent years, and scholars have increasingly turned to the creation of legal systems as a means to interrogate how race, gender, and sexuality influenced colonial categories.$^{51}$ Colonial bodies themselves were inscribed with a variety of ethnic and environmental characteristics that positioned them outside European normative values, often facilitating European domination by rendering colonial subjects inferior, and thus requiring French tutelage.$^{52}$ The way in which knowledge about French colonial subjects was created and disseminated varied. It could take the form of academic studies focused on ethnology, physiology, anthropology, religion and the cultural precepts of Asians and Africans. Missionaries and the military were also involved, and historians have only begun to explicate how knowledge about colonial subjects was influenced by the use of medicine, science and technology within the empire itself.$^{53}$

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$^{52}$ Brocheux and Daniél Hemery, *Indochina*, 192.

These studies often reaffirmed the innate superiority of French culture and civilization. From this root stemmed a number of beliefs regarding the supposed inferiority of colonized peoples. French racial thought was extremely varied. It arose from the late eighteenth century evolutionary theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and largely eschewed the arguments of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel until the interwar period brought about an efflorescence of eugenics-inspired thinking. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth, race became a heated topic across the scientific and academic spectrum in metropolitan France. Inferiority was often expressed through descriptions of colonized bodies. Anthropometric testing of skulls, height, weight, and bone structure often served to differentiate Asians and Africans from “superior” French and Europeans. Descriptions based on the outward appearance of the body gave way to a focus on internal characteristics and even its biochemical composition. Using the work of Austrian scientist Karl Landsteiner as a basis for this work, Ludwig Hirzfeld used blood testing during the First World War as a means to interrogate Mandelian theories of genetics. His research—which showed that Europeans were predisposed to certain blood groups, while Asians and Africans more likely to have others—was perverted to argue for the biological differentiation of races, but also used across the French empire over the succeeding decades to better understand the colonized on a biological level. Whatever was being tested—blood type, lung capacity, malaria, yellow fever, even

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cholesterol levels and incidence of kidney stones – was usually presented in a way that positioned *indigènes* outside French normative values.57

Debates over the physical nature of colonial bodies were influenced in concrete ways by environmental and climatic conditions. Historians typically ascribe a “biological” or “cultural” nature to racism in the French colonial empire, but the environment played a major role in shaping perceptions of how ethnicity was influenced by tropical climates. Arguments that the climates of the non-western world posed danger to Europeans stretched back into the early modern period. Their inability to work and live effectively in hot, humid temperatures validated the transition from white indentured workers to African slaves on islands across the Caribbean and Indian oceans.58 Colonial expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was partly driven by a need to modernize and transform the physical environment, but there was also considerable apprehension about the effects of living in these areas on the European body. As Richard Keller explains, “missionaries, explorers, travelers, and physicians, frequently portrayed the voyage into colonial space as a regressive journey away from civilization into a foreign universe of misery, filth, and infectious disorder.”59 Because colonial spaces were typically portrayed as sites of madness and disease that had intense physio-psychological effects on an individual, the need for regulating tropical climates became an object for the state. Across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, hill stations, spas, and

resorts combined leisure, travel and racial hygiene as a means to preserve desirable ethnic characteristics for white Europeans.  

The way in which the relationship between France and its empire was envisaged promoted an existential link that bound la France d’outre-mer together while simultaneously presenting its colonial possessions as exotic, potentially harmful spaces filled with diseases and strange peoples. As France extended its reach throughout Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Indian and Pacific Oceans, people inevitably began to circulate within this imperial sphere. Although migration between France and the empire stretched back into the eighteenth century, and there was sizable a population of Algerians in Paris during the 1900s, it was the First World War that brought about the first large-scale introduction of colonials to France.

After the declaration of war in 1914 the French government turned to women and European immigrants as a source of labor. About 330,000 workers from Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece arrived in France at some point during the war. But these immigrants were unable to adequately fulfill wartime labor demands, and as a result, authorities began to examine the possibility of recruiting workers from the French empire. Recruiting patterns

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were heavily impacted by ethnographic perceptions of colonial subjects. Indochina, Madagascar and especially North African became targets for recruitment, while sub-Saharan Africans, perceived as warlike, unintelligent and unskilled were viewed only as potential soldiers rather than workers. Tens of thousands of Chinese arrived as well, taken by train through Canada to the Atlantic Ocean, and then transported by ship to metropolitan France. Allied recruiters purposely targeted northern China because its inhabitants were described as more physically robust than their compatriots in the south.

Colonials, against the wishes of many within the French government, were gradually recruited between 1915 and 1918. Several hundred Vietnamese and Algerian Kabyles arrived in 1915, directed towards munitions plants, aeronautics facilities and French farms. Recruitment intensified the next year and was guided by a series of underlying principles. Colonial administrators officially sought to use voluntary laborers. It was assumed that any kind of forced requisitioning would lead to anti-French disturbances and also a decline in agricultural productivity, most notably in Algeria, which served as an important source of grain during the war. Second, “managed migration” between France and its imperial possessions was favored over individual initiative, ostensibly to allow for a more rational allocation of labor. The third and perhaps most important guiding principle was that colonials should enjoy the same working conditions as their European counterparts. By the end of the war over 220,000 from China and the colonies had arrived: 78,556 Algerians,

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67 Ibid, 6.
68 Ibid, 7-8.
35,506 Moroccans, 18,249 Tunisians, 48,955 from Indochina, 4,546 Malagasy, and 36,941 Chinese.  

Many of these lofty ideals were never upheld in practice. Beginning in 1916 a special division within the Ministry of War took over supervision of colonial workers arriving in France. Unlike with foreign workers, the Colonial Labor Organization Service (SOTC) sought to place those from the colonies under strict military-like conditions. The resulting system of encadrement (regimentation) reflected paternalistic colonial ideology that Asian and African workers were too “unevolved” to reside in France without government assistance. Housing, meals, and employment were all supplied by the SOTC, using spatial separation to mark the workers distinct from Europeans. Although initially authorities had wanted to avoid forcible recruitment overseas, by the end of 1916, that idea was discarded as well. The French government promulgated a decree stating that colonials could be “requisitioned” and brought to the métropole as workers. In Algeria this took the form of conscription, while in Indochina the colonial administration used indigenous notables to find workers for the war effort, leading to a series of revolts in Cambodia, Cochin China and the Kabyle mountains. While official statements pronounced the equality of French and colonial in the workplace, metropolitan workers were able to gain wage concessions and cost of living allowances while colonials were not. By 1918 they were the lowest paid workers in France and typically relegated to the worst jobs in their respective factories.

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69 Ibid, 25.
71 Ibid
72 For a better understanding of the colonial worker experience during the war, see Philippe Rygiel, “Police, étrangers et travailleurs coloniaux dans le Cher de 1914 à 1918,” in Police et migrants: France 1667-1939, ed. Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, Caroline Douki, Nicole Dyonet et Vincent Milliot (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2001)
Presumptions about the innate physical characteristics of colonials also extended to how work assignments were developed. The presence of colonial workers in industrial facilities allowed some social scientists to test their theories, and the results often worked to reinforce popular stereotypes about people from overseas. For the most part, men from Africa and Asia were viewed as physically weaker than Europeans, less intelligent and prone to laziness and indolence. Indochinese were frequently described as agile, supple and sensitive to the cold; North Africans “robust” and “sober-minded.”\(^{73}\) Within this paradigm there was a gradation in thought reflecting newly emerging ideas about differing “races” within the colonies. Workers from Tonkin were portrayed as more physically robust, while those from southern Annam and Cochin China possessed more “skill.” “Arabs” were less desirable workers than those from the Kabyle region of Algeria.\(^{74}\) The productivity of colonials was nevertheless still viewed as questionable and not analogous to that of a European worker, even for the supposedly European-like Kabyle. To mitigate poor productivity, proper hygiene had to be observed and the workers’ health and diet monitored closely.\(^{75}\)

Despite efforts to create distance between colonial and French, socialization did occur and took on a variety of different forms. Officials noted meeting that took place in cafés after work, but Tyler Stovall argues that perceptions among the French working class


\(^{74}\) As the military and civilian administrations in Algeria slowly extended influence throughout the territory, ideas about divisions between “Arabs” and “Kabyles” began to emerge. Described as indolent, lazy, fanatical, superstitious, and unhealthy, the positioning of North Africans as inferior to the growing European population was intended to facilitate colonial control. While neither of the groups were regarded as equal to Europeans, a belief nevertheless began to emerge that “Kabyles” were more evolved – and indeed, slightly more “white” – than “Arabs”, thus giving birth to the notion than they might be more “assimilable.” See Patricia Lorcin, “Imperialism, Colonial Identity, and Race in Algeria, 1830-1870: The Role of the French Medical Corps,” *Isis* 90, no. 4 (1999): 653-679.

\(^{75}\) Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 63-70.
were mostly negative. Unions occasionally sent letters to French authorities denouncing the introduction of colonials, perceiving them as a way to lower wages, take French jobs, and potentially serve as a strikebreaking labor force.\textsuperscript{76} During the heated atmosphere of 1917, with strikes in factories over working conditions and mutinies in the French Army, violence between French citizens and colonial subjects occurred in the form of “race riots.” These were fueled not only by poor wages and economic competition, but also due to fears over white French women – who often worked closely with colonials – mingling with “non-white” men.\textsuperscript{77} Indeed, the subject of French women was a frequent topic of discussion among colonial workers writing letters home. The military eventually forbid the use of erotic and sometimes pornographic postcards because of the belief that these provocative images degraded the prestige of women in the colonies.\textsuperscript{78}

Demobilization caused French officials to grapple with the composition of the French workforce in the postwar period. Following the Armistice, France closed its borders to further immigration until a more focused policy could be created. Colonials had come to France on work contracts that stipulated the necessity of returning home. Should this be undertaken? The answer was an unreserved “yes.” Over the course of 1918 and 1919 most of the colonial workforce brought to the métropole was repatriated back to the colonies. While approximately 132,000 North Africans had been working in France during the war, by December 1919 just over 8,000 remained. Similarly, the number of Vietnamese had been

\textsuperscript{76} Stovall, “Color-blind France?” 49-50.
\textsuperscript{77} Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War,” \textit{American Historical Review} 103, no. 3 (June 1998): 737-769.
reduced to fewer than 24,000 from a high of 49,000 in 1918.\textsuperscript{79} The expulsion of colonial labor was due to concerns over a large “exotic” workforce establishing itself in France. Studies completed during the war that tracked the production and specific physiological characteristics of Asians and Africans privileged Europeans over those from the colonies.\textsuperscript{80} Indeed, Bertrand Nogaro, author of an infamous study of the colonial and foreign workforce during the war, suggested that “foreigners of the white race” were more preferable candidates for immigration.\textsuperscript{81}

The implications of colonial rule, however, meant that totally barring colonial subjects from metropolitan territory was not feasible. France might have turned to European immigrants as a measure of first resort, but circulation within the colonial empire led to a sizeable number of Asians, Africans and Antilleans in the métropole during the interwar period. The largest population of colonial migrants came from North Africa, specifically Algeria. The need for workers during the early 1920s and wariness over legally blocking Algerian migration (which had been made legal in 1914 and then reaffirmed in 1919) caused a surge in the North African population. Indeed, migration was a right in the immediate postwar period that officials were wary of tampering with and became emblematic of the relationship between France and Algeria over the next fifty years. Not viewed as a desirable source of immigration but unwilling to completely prohibit Algerian entries, departures for France climbed from 21,684 in 1920 to 71,028 by 1924. The North African population in Paris reached at least 60,000 by 1928 and some experts noted it was most likely closer to

\textsuperscript{79} Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM), Affaires Politiques, carton 1492, Report from Col. Julien, Agent Principale des Travailleurs Coloniaux, 1 December 1919.
\textsuperscript{81} Camiscioli, Reproducing the French Race, 68-69.
80,000. By 1929 there were over 150,000 in France, mostly Paris, and other industrial areas like the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Marseille, Lyon, Saint-Etienne.82

Rights afforded to North Africans typically ebbed and flowed over the interwar period. Migration was mostly tolerated in the early 1920s, but economic troubles and concerns over “criminality” led to restrictive measures against Moroccans in 1925, and a series of travel regulations for Algerians designed to hinder migration to metropolitan France. These actions certainly compromised the ability of North Africans to move across the Mediterranean for work, but the degree to which passport policies affected migration is unclear. New regulations had a significant impact on Algerian migrations in 1925 but rebounded one year later with over 48,000 departures. They fell once more in 1927 to 21,472 but then returned to around 40,000 per year until 1930.83 If Algerians could not be totally prevented from coming to France, how should they be dealt with? The almost uniform response within government circles involved the creation of separate social services. These paternalistic welfare policies involved subsidized rooming houses, soup kitchens, and even the construction of a Franco-Muslim Hospital outside of Paris in Bobigny.84 The emerging “Republican Colonial Consensus” typically portrayed these initiatives as a form on benevolent intervention to help North Africans “adapt” to life in France but they were obviously intended to facilitate surveillance and social segregation as well.85

Migration between France and Indochina was extremely limited compared to its North African possessions. As French subjects, “Indochinese” had no formal right to access

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82 Rosenberg, Policing Paris, 133.
metropolitan territory and thus needed express permission – officially at least – from authorities in Hanoi, Saigon, and Tourane before being allowed to disembark for France; the expense of the trip simply disqualified the possibility of travel for most regardless of this.\textsuperscript{86} The Vietnamese population never numbered more than a few thousand individuals during the 1920s and 1930s, but it was an incredibly diverse population with students, intellectuals, cooks, domestic workers, laborers, and sailors inhabiting cities across France. The majority arrived as students – typically the children of indigenous notables – to attend \textit{lycée}, the \textit{École coloniale}, and universities in Bordeaux, Grenoble, Marseille, Montpellier, Paris, or Toulouse.\textsuperscript{87} In some cases, however, Vietnamese might have signed up with a steamship in Indochina and ended up working on the docks in Marseille or as a cook in Paris.\textsuperscript{88} One individual in particular had taken this route to France just before the First World War. Born in Annam, he went by many names over the course of his early years – Nguyen Sinh Cung, Nguyen Tat Thanh, and Nguyen Ai Quoc – before finally settling on “Ho Chi Minh.”\textsuperscript{89}

Hundreds of colonial subjects and black French citizens from Africa and the Caribbean joined Ho Chin Minh in making their way to metropolitan France during the interwar period. The French government was extremely concerned about the possibility of Paris becoming a hub of anti-colonial politics; authorities had good reason to be. Colonials often became politically conscious during their stay, perhaps joining the French Communist Party (PCF) or even founding their own political and cultural organizations. Indeed, activities could from individuals picking up communist literature – Ho Chi Minh claimed to have slept with a copy of \textit{Das Kapital} that he bought in Paris under his pillow – to establishing groups

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} McConnell, \textit{Leftward Journey}, 58.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{88} Eric Peters has emphasized that Vietnamese often moved between students and worker during their stay in France. See Peters, “Resistance, Rivalries, and Restaurants,” and Hémery, “Du patriotisme au marxisme.”
\item \textsuperscript{89} William Duiker, \textit{Ho Chi Minh} (New York: Hyperion, 2000): 45-85
\end{itemize}
that espoused anti-racism, equal rights and even independence. Messali Hadj’s Etoile Nord-Africaine (ENA), formed in 1926 and then renamed the Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA) after the ENA was banned in 1937, was perhaps the most prominent of these groups. Initially founded to promote Algerian independence and liberate North Africa from French control, the ENA also appealed to North African living in France by calling for better social rights and working conditions and benefits for the unemployed; it criticized expulsions and actually denounced the newly-created Paris Mosque for being a symbol of colonial domination over Algeria.90

Similar to the Vietnamese population, the presence of Africans and French Antilleans was limited to a few thousand people. The black community in France nevertheless became involved with articulating anti-racist and “anti-imperial” politics typified by the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre (LDRN) and Union des Travailleurs Nègres (UTN).91 A mix of students and intellectuals hailing from various parts of Francophone Africa and the Caribbean including Aimé Césaire, Léon-Gontran Damas, René Maran, Jane and Paulette Nardal, and Leopold Sedar Senghor also settled in Paris at this time. They began to develop a form of black consciousness usually referred to as the négritude movement, and while their individual work remained extremely varied over the period, in general it was a rejection of cultural assimilation, identification with blackness, and a celebration of African civilization.92 Due to their position as “subject-citizens,” négritude was a way of reconciling the odd position of the Antilles and Four Communes within the

91 Boitin, Colonial Metropolis, chapter three.
French empire and developing a conception of identity rooted in race that argued African civilization was just as impressive as its European counterpart. Like their North African and Vietnamese compatriots, living in the métropole during the interwar period forced these individuals to reconcile pronouncements of equality emanating from the French government with the strident racism in French society and nature of colonial rule.

The emergence of this colonial expatriate community in metropolitan France necessitated the creation of specific organizations to monitor their activities. In 1923, the Ministry of Colonies created the Service de controle et assistance en France des indigènes des colonies (CAI), which was later renamed the Service de liaison avec des originaires des territoires d’outre-mer (SLOTFOM). Focusing specifically on migrants from the Antilles, sub-Saharan Africa, and Indochina, SLOTFOM hired dozens of spies and informants from within the colonial milieu to report on their compatriots.

North Africans had their own special police force and social welfare organizations. In 1925, following the massive influx of North Africans and concerns over rising “criminality” within the community, politicians in Paris created a special North African Brigade within the prefecture of police, as well as the first office of the Service des affaires indigènes nord-africains (SAINA). Other SAINA bureaus opened across France in the interwar period and were primarily used to monitor the political and social activity of North Africans, employing former officials from Algeria and Morocco who could speak Arabic. The Paris bureau of SAINA was well funded, but those outside the capital ran less smoothly.

Since the offices in Lyon, Marseille, Saint-Etienne and Bordeaux were funded locally, they

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were often subject to cost-cutting measures during the 1930s. This was less of a concern in Lyon, but SAINA in Marseille and Saint-Etienne did not even have proper chiefs of staff, instead relying on poorly paid low-level French functionaries and North African assistants to deal with thousands – often tens of thousands – of colonials under their jurisdiction. As the depression worsened over the 1930s, SAINA largely forgot its official mission of providing “assistance” for North Africans and instead resorted to deportations from metropolitan territory as a means to relieve unemployment and preserve assistance for more socially desirable groups.95

Historians have maligned attempted colonial reforms undertaken by the Popular Front after it was elected in 1936, but Leon Blum’s government did address the situation of North Africans living in France with varying degrees of effectiveness.96 It reaffirmed the right of free migration between Algeria and France in 1936, although this was countered by new restrictions from Governor General Georges Le Beau several months later.97 Statistics from this period should be used with caution but it is clear from the available numbers that repealing some of the travel restrictions had a huge impact. Between 1931 and 1935 departures numbered around 15,000 per year. The year 1936 saw an increase to 27,200 departures and this rose to 45,562 in 1937. The numbers declined slightly over the next few years but approximately 24,000 Algerians migrated to France per year until the war began.98

Prefects and local authorities reacted with alarm to the renewal of Algerian migration. The prefect of police in Paris denounced the arrivals, which apparently caused the

95 Archives Nationales (AN), F60 720, Minister of the Interior to Governor General of Algeria, 29 April 1939. See Lewis, Boundaries of the Republic, 188-215, and Rosenberg, Policing Paris, 129-198, for a discussion of SAINA in Lyon, Marseille and Paris during the 1920s and 1930s.
97 Stora, Algérie, 39-40.
98 Muracciole, L’Émigration Algérienne, 30.
Algerian population living in Paris to triple after the summer of 1936. Due to employment
discrimination, however, many of these new migrants found themselves unemployed as
French workers were usually given preference when hiring took place. In the Meurthe-et-
Moselle the prefect noted sixty Algerians had recently arrived in the department despite the
presence of 1500 unemployed French workers in the area. He attempted to “persuade” the
Algerians to leave but they refused, despite their “constant state of unemployment.”

The mayor of Longwy also reacted with alarm to the “sudden invasion” of over one thousand
Algerians in his town. As his letter noted:

> Of the thousand who are living here, less than one hundred work, the others drag their
> indolence around – the sickness symptomatic of their race – as well as the fact that
> they are often undesirable in Algeria, which has sent them here under an incredible
> abuse of their power. Moreover, they populate our hospitals due to their feeble
> resistance to the cold and humidity…Their growth in numbers has coincided with a
> recrudescence of exhibitionism, of conflicts with women – young and old – in allies
> and pathways, of burglaries, attacks and even nighttime rapes.

The mayor requested that every single Algerian be deported from the region while at the
same time requesting assistance for refugees from the Saar – “ex-protégés français” – who
had presumably come to France after the region was retuned to Germany in 1935. These
types of complaints occurred frequently: Algerians should not be allowed in France because
there were no jobs available and their presence constituted an undesirable social problem.
The only dissenting voice came from the Bouches-du-Rhône. Not because they disagreed

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99 AN, F60 720, Prefect of Police to Ministry of the Interior, 19 April 1937.
100 AN, F60 720, Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle to Ministry of the Interior, 1 April 1937.
101 AN, F60 720, Mayor of Longwy to Ministry of War, 27 January 1937.
102 Complaints emanating from the Moselle and Meurthe-et-Moselle appear to have been very prominent in this
regard. In mid-1938, for example, the Minister of Public Works suggested that the French government
“eliminate part” of the 8,000 North African workers in these two departments through deportations, especially
those in the iron mines. See AN, F60 720, “Main-d’oeuvre des mines de fer Lorraines,” Minister of Public
Works to Minister of Labour, 16 August 1938.
with these views but rather it was causing an undue strain on their budget when departments attempted to repatriate North Africans through Marseille.  

Dredging up racist stereotypes that depicted Algerian men as a threat to white women, disease prone, and a burden on the French state, forced Léon Blum’s government to examine the situation of North Africans in France. A 1937 meeting featuring Blum, Le Beau, the Resident General of French Morocco General Jacques Noguès, Secretary of State Maurice Violette, under-secretary of state for the protectorates in North Africa Pierre Viénot, and Minister of Colonies Maurius Moutet proposed changes to the migration regime in tandem with enhanced social rights. Violette (a Socialist Governor General of Algeria in the early 1920s ridiculed among colons as “Violette the Arab”) and Moutet were extremely critical of the way North Africans were treated in France, declaring that all social welfare programs should be extended to them without hesitation. Blum’s government also commissioned a comprehensive study on their living conditions. The subsequent Laroque-Ollive report suggested that the situation of North Africans be normalized when living in the métropole, while at the same time arguing for a more tightly regulated regime that involved “selecting” migrants and specifying a fixed number that could migrate per year.

Laroque and Ollive’s plan was never implemented but arguments that a properly constituted migration policy involved screening and selecting migrants for work in France, and that movement across the Mediterranean required state control, gained traction in certain circles. In both Algeria and Morocco administrators began to see managed migration as a permissible middle ground between two extremes and thus the most pragmatic – and indeed

103 AN, F60 720, Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône to Ministry of the Interior, 8 April 1937.
progressive – policy available. A presentation made in Algiers by the administrator of the 
commune-mixte of La Soummam in April 1938 sought to justify the necessity of selecting 
migrants. Made in front of the ethnologist Robert Montagne and the Governor General of 
Algeria, he argued that the “exodus” of people from the Kabyle was being driven by extreme 
population growth and lack of economic opportunity. This trend generated conflict 
between young male migrants and village elders. Inculcated with ideas of “modernity,” 
migrants often gained social status upon their return, and this was usurping prestige typically 
afforded to elders. Since these elders had forbade women and children from joining their 
husbands, the Kabyle family was being ripped apart because the lure of higher wages in 
France often proved irresistible. Moreover, migrants often did not send enough money back 
to their families, creating poverty and increased indebtedness. Like Laroque and Ollive, the 
solution for this functionary was regulating migration in tandem with economic and social 
development in Algeria.

Unlike the so-called Blum-Viollete reforms that failed because of activism by 
European settlers, the use of decree at a national and local level proved successful in 
extending welfare services to North Africans living on metropolitan soil in the late 1930s. 
The prefect of the Nord took the lead in this regard, issuing a decree in January 1938 
proclaiming that all North Africans living in the department should have access to the same 
social benefits as French citizens. Denouncing “the complete ignorance of the juridical 
situation of North Africans,” the prefect found it regrettable that they were “treated like 
foreigners when they had fought at our side and given their blood in defense of the

107 Ibid
country.”108 He proposed a program for helping North Africans find housing, medical care, establishing job placement services, and receiving unemployment benefits. While deportations for the habitually unemployed would still no doubt be necessary, the Nord pointed the way towards officials giving Algerians greater social rights when living in France. One month later, Camille Chautemps’s government issued a decree offering North Africans living in France access to all welfare services, with the exception of child bonuses and family allocations for those whose wives and children remained across the Mediterranean.109 In June 1938 it was also confirmed that Algerian miners were allowed to participate in union elections to elect delegates to workers’ councils.110 It is not clear how these decrees actually affected North Africans living in France. As Mary Lewis has shown, welfare policies were extremely arbitrary during this period. The city of Lyon, for example, denied unemployment benefits to North Africans while some nearby industrial suburbs and villages allowed Algerians and Moroccans to access welfare programs.111

The move towards regularizing the situation of North Africans living in France was obviously tied to broader international events. As appeasement proved unable to counteract Hitler’s territorial demands in Eastern Europe, policy makers in France increasingly turned to North Africa as a reliable source of labor. Debates raged in 1938 and 1939 over what to do in the event of another war between France and Nazi Germany. The shape-shifting writer and journalist Pierre Dominique – a close confident of Charles Maurras in the 1920s, then Radical-Socialist adherent, and finally, Vichy functionary during the war – argued that the solution lay in naturalizing foreigners living on French territory. In Algeria, by contrast,

108 AN, F60 720, Prefect of the Nord to sous-préfets and mayors of the department, 28 January 1938.
110 AN, F60 720, Minister of Labour to Prefect of the Nord, 18 July 1938.
111 Lewis, The Boundaries of the Republic, 206-207
journalists began to argue for the introduction of Algerians as an alternate source of labor.\footnote{112}{“Il faut remplacer toute la main-d’œuvre agricole étrangère par de la main-d’œuvre berbère: Et l’Algérie doit en avoir sa part,” \textit{Le Rappel}, 14 July 1939.}

Better to use people from the Kabyle who spoke French and were familiar with French laws and customs than turn to potentially hostile nations like Italy and Spain, or continue accepting foreign “merchants,” which perhaps referred to Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany.\footnote{113}{“Pour repeupler la France, ils faut recruter des paysans et non point des marchands ou des politiciens émigrés: Une solution possible au problème de l’émigration algérienne dans la métropole,” \textit{Le Rappel}, 16 June 1939.}

It remained impossible to design a guest-worker program for Algeria but authorities in Morocco did move towards this position before the war broke out. In early 1938 Rabat and Paris organized a pilot program for hiring Moroccan agricultural workers: introduced on short-term contracts, transported from the protectorate to the employer, supervised by colonial authorities once in France, and then returned to Morocco once the contract had ended. They were presented to potential employers as “excellent workers, disciplined, with a great spirit,” docile, willing to accomplish whatever work was demanded of them, and in no way “politically radical.” To assuage potential concerns about the climate, authorities pointed out that Moroccans “had seen snow before” and were well suited to working in cold weather. Because selection would target the most “vigorousof the race” in the best physical shape, there was no chance of them being chronically ill or carriers of disease.\footnote{114}{AN, F\textsuperscript{60} 720, “Utilisation des Travailleurs Saisonniers Marocains dans l’Agriculture française,” Fédération des Employeurs de Main-d’Oeuvre Agricole de France, undated [1938].} The hiring of Moroccans was also framed in nationalistic terms. It would encourage them to learn French agricultural practices for when they would return home, incubating a sense of solidarity among metropolitan and colonial workers.
Eventually the Fédération des Employeurs de Main-d’Oeuvre Agricole en France was charged with the hiring process. The first men were introduced in October 1938 and then returned that December.\textsuperscript{115} Many came from impoverished, primarily agricultural areas near Algeria like Oujda and Taourirt that had only recently been pacified by the Moroccan colonial administration. Although recruitment proceeded smoothly, the administrator of Oujda noted problems finding enough workers to meet his quota, as did several other officials in the protectorate.\textsuperscript{116} Once in France the men were sent to farms near Paris for work on the beetroot harvest. Primarily concerned with loading and unloading bins of beets, hanging them to dry and feeding the machines, apparently some demonstrated sufficient “aptitude” that they were allowed to hold the same jobs as Europeans inside the processing facilities and took up the work quite quickly.\textsuperscript{117} Only a few hundred workers were brought to the métropole in 1938 but the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labor envisioned a massive expansion of the project for the autumn of 1939, and is one of the reasons why Moroccan workers were mobilized so quickly in September 1939.

By the start of the Second World War, then, metropolitan France was home to a large and vibrant population hailing from across the Francophone world. There were almost 90,000 North Africans\textsuperscript{118} living in France (although the number could certainly have been higher), as well as hundreds of Africans, Antillean, Malagasy, “Indochinese,” and even

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[116] MAE, Série Afrique 1918-1940, Questions Générales, dossier 36-37, “Main-d’oeuvre saisonnière de la Métropole,” Contrôle Civil of Debdou to Head Contrôleur Civil of the circumscription of Taourirt, 14 December 1938 and “Travailleurs saisonniers en France,” Head Contrôleur Civil of the circumscription of Oujda to Head Contrôleur Civil for the region of Oudja,” 29 December 1938.
\item[117] AN, F60 720, “Utilisation des Travailleurs Saisonniers Marocains dans l’Agriculture française,” Fédération des Employeurs de Main-d ’Oeuvre Agricole de France, undated [1938].
\item[118] AN, F60 720, “Etat général des nord-africains à la date du 1er juillet 1938,” Summary from Ministry of Interior, undated [1938]. There were only five départements in France that recorded no North African presence: Cantal, Lot, Haute-Saône, Tarn-et-Garonne, and Vendée.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
people from the tiny Red Sea colony of French Somalia (Djibouti). Although they were mostly concentrated in Paris, port cities, and industrial areas, France was nevertheless a multi-cultural, multi-racial country by the 1940s. Although race and ethnicity clearly mattered when crafting migration and social welfare policies it would be incorrect to say that French identity was in some way “racialized” and the republican framework inherently exclusionary. In the case of North Africans it was usually determined by a confluence of domestic and foreign considerations combined with a healthy dose of patronage. If a mayor or prefect was particularly invested in the well-being of colonial subjects under his jurisdiction then their rights in France would often be more substantive than their counterparts living under functionaries determined to deport North Africans because of unemployment or racial animosity. On the other hand, policies were clearly shot through with racist language, motives, and practices, such as the desire to regulate migration patterns because of assumptions that colonial subjects represented undesirable “immigrants.”

The period after 1936 clearly marked a turning point as well. The Popular Front was concerned with enhancing the rights of North Africans in France and these efforts only were magnified after Hitler’s Germany became increasingly aggressive on the international stage. As nations that had typically provided workers to France in times of war – Italy, Spain and Eastern Europe most of all – moved closer towards the German orbit officials within the French government began to prepare for the necessity of finding supplemental labor in the colonial empire.
Chapter One

Human Reservoirs to Human Capital: Worker Recruitment in *la France d’Outre-Mer*

Workers from across the French empire began arriving in the métropole almost immediately after the declaration of war. First from Morocco, then Indochina, and finally Algeria, over 40,000 were transported to France between September 1939 and June 1940. During their voyage recruits were given a copy of the *Bulletin des Armées d’Outre-Mer*, which, despite its name, was disseminated to all soldiers and workers arriving from colonies. The January 1940 edition included a cartoon called “The exploits of the Four Musketeers” and relayed the story of Cloche, Meo, Amar and Bakari – a Frenchman, an “Indochinese”, an “Arab” and a black African – serving in France.¹ Featuring highly racist caricatures of French colonial subjects, the cartoon showed the “four brothers” working together to capture German parachutists that had descended into France. Using his “native skills” Bakari eventually caught the two Germans in a fishing net, receiving congratulations from his three compatriots and white European commanding officer. The newsletter also included a short memo from Edouard de Warren, editor of the *Bulletin des Armées d’Outre-Mer*, who amazingly declared the goals of

¹ “Mèo” – derived from the Chinese “Miao” – is an offensive Vietnamese term used to describe Hmong. Given that all the workers were recruited from lowland areas and Hmong names are non-existent among those sent to France, the use of Meo for one of the characters is curious. Perhaps it was intended to be an inside joke for those reading the newsletter, but chances are many of them would have been equally offended as well.
people from across the French empire one and the same: “to defend our liberties – liberties of free men on free soil.” He also noted the benefits of French colonialism in helping to restore peace and justice across the empire, abolish slavery, fighting sickness and disease, and introducing schools along with enlightened government.²

Although de Warren’s sentiments and the “Four Musketeers” cartoon appear both highly cynical and offensive – especially because the newsletter was specifically written for Asians and Africans arriving in France – it speaks to larger idea that has been historically overlooked about wartime France: the fight beginning in 1939 was conceived as a broader imperial project and people from the empire expected to contribute accordingly.³ Indeed, French politicians and colonial functionaries emphasized that indigenous subjects owed France for the introduction of enlightened colonial rule through an impôt de sang – a blood tax – which in this case translated into labor service for the metropolitan economy. One historian has stated that France was “reluctant” to turn to colonial labor after the declaration of war, but government bureaucrats had in fact long been planning the arrival of Asian and African workers under a wartime regime.⁴

This was a gigantic and impressive undertaking. It involved the creation of a vast recruitment apparatus that extended from Paris and Marseille to rural, often remote areas of Southeast Asia and North Africa. Utilizing indigenous intermediaries and the colonial state

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² Bulletin des Armées d’Outre-Mer, January 1940.
allowed French officials to find recruits in the empire, and then transport them to France as workers. At the same time, recruitment itself was often ineffective and riddled with a series of problems. Surveys commissioned in the 1930s identifying how many individuals could be provided were dated and incorrect in 1939 and 1940. Issues with transportation and disease crippled recruitment efforts, and in the case of Indochina, halted convoys for several months. While scholars have emphasized the degree to which colonial rule was predicated on violence and coercion, an examination of worker recruitment in the empire demonstrates that French officials on the ground were cautious when applying force or left the implementation of unpopular policies to their indigenous adjuncts. Recruitment efforts in both Asia and Africa were draconian, but France was also wary of emerging anti-colonial sentiment and the need to preserve at least some support (if not acquiescence) for the war effort.

At the same time, a comparison of Indochina and Algeria yields interesting insights into the nature of French colonial rule in these two areas. Recruitment in Indochina was facilitated by prewar policies that sought to harness population-rich areas in Tonkin and Annam for development projects all over the colony. The use of coolies for rubber plantations in southern Annam and Cochin China, the timber industry in Laos and mineral

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concessions in Tonkin helped French officials navigate what could be a tricky endeavor considering the emergence of anti-colonial Vietnamese nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, worker recruitment in 1939 was consciously grafted onto this prewar system of transforming human reservoirs into human capital. The situation in Algeria, by contrast, was markedly different. There was no history of large-scale worker recruitment in the interwar period, which was often left to French employers and the initiative of individual Algerians. When war broke out and the colonial administration was forced to organize worker recruitment, it often relied on antiquated surveys of labor power, and more importantly, expressed reticence in formally conscripting workers for use in the métropole until just before the collapse of the French army in June 1940. The three Algerian departments – viewed as integral for supplying workers in planning documents – lagged far behind Indochina and Morocco in the recruitment program despite the presence of a colonial bureaucracy the likes of which was unknown in other French overseas territories.

I

At the end of the First World War the French government deported tens of thousands of its colonial subjects back to the empire, declaring the experiment a “failure” driven by “poor productivity” – a phrase often used to mask the undesirable nature of non-white immigrants. Fears over demographic decline and the supposed inferiority of Asians and Africans, some argued, necessitated the arrival of European immigrants for postwar reconstruction instead. By the mid-1920s, however, the French government had once again left open the possibility of conscripting indigenous subjects into metropolitan labor service. In October 1926, the colonies were included in a lengthy decree that sought to organize the nation’s resources in the event of an international conflict. The Ministry of Labor was
declared responsible for evaluating the needs of French industry and resources of the colonial empire. More importantly, the task of receiving and monitoring colonials when brought to the métropole was placed under its jurisdiction. The Ministry wielded this new power by commissioning a study to establish the protocol for employing colonial workers in France shortly after Adolf Hitler ascended to power in Germany.

Released in 1934, it broadly conformed to the system of colonial worker management utilized in the First World War. Encadrement still remained a central tenet of any wartime system that saw Asians and Africans arrive on metropolitan territory. A new organization under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor would be created to deal with administrative issues and supervise the workers. Its goals were to receive, administer and evacuate colonials at their port of arrival; to observe and enforce employment regulations; and to put the colonial labor force at the disposal of public and private enterprise. Received in Marseille – or, in case it was under naval blockade, Bordeaux – put through medical and aptitude testing, and then taken to their place of employment, colonials also required constant supervision by French authorities during their stay. The new unnamed organization would work with the local prefect, sous-préfet, and commander of the military region where the colonials were stationed over employment, surveillance, and inspection. As a means to create a streamlined, well-structured system easily controlled from Paris and yet flexible enough that it could be adapt to local considerations, the plan envisaged grouping colonials into

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6 ANOM, Archives départementales d’Oran (ADO), 512, “Main-d’oeuvre indigène, nord-africaine et coloniale,” Ministry of Labor to Governor General of Algeria, 1 February 1937.
companies of fifty to two hundred men, administered by a central “Legion” responsible all companies within a given geographic area.⁷

Work companies were structured according to ethnic and geographic parameters. Vietnamese could only be placed in the same group together, and instructions also stated that “Arabs” and Kabyles should be separated in order to avoid conflicts over differing languages and customs. The workers were required to carry identity papers and the government would establish a central photographic fichier of every colonial who came to France. White Europeans were intended to serve as the main supervising force, especially former members of the colonial military and colons having no military obligations. At the same time, the report explicitly referred to the necessity of finding indigenous adjuncts and interpreters to staff low-level positions. There were also to be strict limits on freedom of mobility, ability to socialize with the French population, and ability to change employment.⁸

Efforts to design a framework to “welcoming” Africans and Asians to France were accompanied by attempts to gauge labor resources overseas. Assessing labor reserves within the colonial empire was extremely difficult and often imprecise. Most surveys referred in very broad terms to specific areas within a given colonial territory that could be tapped in the event recruitment was needed, and they were also dependent on the resources of the colonial administration. The three Algerian departments, by virtue of their place as territorially integral components of metropolitan France, had a much stronger bureaucracy than many parts of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, allowing for a more precise census – or so officials thought. Over the course of 1935 and 1936 the Governor General’s Office in Algeria

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⁸ Ibid
kept a tally on the number of indigenous military reservists that could serve as workers in France.\(^9\) Details about the survey are difficult to ascertain but the prefect of Constantine responded that 35,000 possible labor recruits could be found under his jurisdiction: 28,260 agricultural workers and 6,000 in other professions.\(^10\) Of the 16,545 identified by the prefect of Oran, 15,000 were in agriculture.\(^11\) The Governor General of Indochina commissioned a similar survey in 1938 and arrived at a figure of 60,000 individuals who could serve as workers: 30,000 from Tonkin, 20,000 from Annam, 7,000 from Cochin China and 3,000 from Cambodia. Moreover, several thousand of these men could be mobilized within the first month, although the Governor General did not clarify how this would be accomplished.\(^12\)

French officials were less enthusiastic about the possibility of recruiting sub-Saharan Africans and Malagasy, but the Ministry of Colonies received numbers from these locations as well. The Governor General of Madagascar identified 272,509 possible workers and suggested 50,000 could be sent to France.\(^13\) Cameroon also declared the possibility of finding over 200,000 workers when military obligations were not taken into account.\(^14\) Eventually all of these surveys were centralized and quotas for each overseas possession reached by the spring of 1939. Morocco could send 200,000; Tunisia 49,000; Algeria 50,000; Indochina 60,000; West Africa 50,000; Madagascar 50,000; and “other possessions” 23,000.\(^15\) In sum,

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\(^9\) ANOM, GGA, 2R 40, “Travailleurs indigènes à destination de la Métropole en temps de guerre,” Governor General of Algeria to prefects of Algiers, Constantine and Oran, 20 September 1935.

\(^10\) ANOM, GGA, 2R 40, “Travailleurs indigènes à destination de la Métropole en temps de guerre,” Prefect of Constantine to Governor General of Algeria, 14 February 1936.


\(^12\) ANOM, Direction des Affaires Economiques, Série 10, carton 117, Governor General of Indochina to Ministry of Colonies, 28 September 1938.


\(^14\) ANOM, Direction des Affaires Economiques, Série 10, carton 117, Commissaire de la République Française au Cameroun to Ministry of the Colonies, 16 January 1939.

\(^15\) Archives Nationales – Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 20000421, art. 5, “Note sur l’organisation du Service de la Main-d’Oeuvre indigène Nord-Africaine et Coloniale en temps de guerre et sur
official numbers suggested the empire could supply approximately 500,000 workers for the métropole, and Minister of Colonies Georges Mandel communicated this figure to the French public after the outbreak of war in September 1939.\footnote{Daum, \textit{Immigrés de force}, 31-32.}

Two important observations can be made about how the French government viewed colonial recruitment in the planning stages. First, the program was heavily inflected by gender, even if the question itself was never mentioned in the documents. Officials at the Ministry of Labor and members of the colonial bureaucracy made no effort to include female indigenous subjects as targets for recruitment. There was clearly a belief that women from Africa and Asia could not serve as a useful source of labor, evidently influenced by colonial ethnography presenting women (whether wives or daughters) as central to a well-ordered household and a source of social stability. Colonial theorists furthermore argued that, much like in metropolitan France, women belonged in the home inculcating a sense of imperial servitude into their children.\footnote{Micheline Lessard, “Civilizing Women: French Colonial Perceptions of Vietnamese Women and Motherhood,” in \textit{Women and the Colonial Gaze}, ed. Tamara Hunt and Micheline Lessard (New York: New York University Press, 2002): 148-161; Stephen R. Wooten, “Colonial Administration and the Ethnography of the Family in the French Soudan,” \textit{Cahiers d’études africaines} 33, no. 131 (1993): 419-446.} This stands in stark contrast to labor recruitment policies within the British Empire. On the Ceylon coffee plantations, for example, British companies recruited female migrant workers from the Indian subcontinent because they earned substantially less money, were considered more docile and reliable, and could help “sexually satisfy” their male colleagues.\footnote{James S. Duncan, \textit{In the Shadows of the Tropics: Climate, Race and Biopower in Nineteenth Century Ceylon} (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007): 78. Little research has been undertaken on gender and work in the French colonial empire, although it appears to be a very fruitful area for further study.}

Second, planning documents stated a clear preference for North Africans and Southeast Asians. Even though surveys mapped out available workers in West Africa,
Central Africa, Cameroon (which was technically illegal given its status as a League of Nations mandate), and Madagascar, no attempts were made after September 1939 to bring sub-Saharan Africans to France as workers.\textsuperscript{19} Stereotypes of black Africans and Malagasy as unintelligent and a threat to white women marked them as undesirable, even though they were considered more physically capable than Southeast Asians.\textsuperscript{20} The Ministry of Labor discussed possible scenarios where black African migrant laborers could be brought to North Africa to replace those that had left for the métropole, but talks did not progress beyond the planning stage.\textsuperscript{21} In this sense, constructing the recruitment system itself was influenced by racial and gender hierarchies within French colonial thought, rendering specific individuals undesirable candidates for life in metropolitan France based on their skin color and gender.

Following the declaration of war against Germany, the French government sought to put these plans into action. On 29 November 1939, Edouard Daladier’s government formally established the Service de la main-d’oeuvre indigène coloniale et nord-africaine (MOI), and tasked it with receiving, administering and monitoring colonial workers when they were on French soil.\textsuperscript{22} The MOI would remain the most important organization for colonials – especially Vietnamese – throughout their stay in France. In the colonies, however, worker recruitment initially proceeded without any input from the Ministry of Labor. Colonial

\textsuperscript{19} In his study of Vietnamese workers in France during the 1940s and 1950s, Pierre Daum notes that the French government did attempt to bring Malagasy workers to France, but this program was halted after an “epidemic” struck Tananarive. It is unclear why problems in the landlocked, highland Malagasy capital would prevent workers from being sent to France, and I found no mention of the recruitment program in the archives, although several thousand indigenous soldiers from the Red Island did serve in the métropole. Daum, \textit{Immigrés de force}, 21 fn.1.


\textsuperscript{21} MAE, Afrique 1918-1940, Questions Générales, dossier 36-37, Ministry of Labor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 February 1939.

\textsuperscript{22} ANOM, GGA, 2R 40, “Décret organisant le service de la main-d’oeuvre indigène,” 29 November 1939.
administrations had complete jurisdiction over the process, although the speed at which potential workers were targeted depended on each overseas territory. An April 1939 planning document had specified that Algeria and Morocco would send workers first, followed by Indochina and then other colonies. Moroccans arrived almost immediately but Algeria did not begin recruiting workers until January 1940. The paucity of archival evidence makes it difficult to determine why. Perhaps Georges Le Beau’s administration in Algiers was too preoccupied with military recruitment as over 30,000 Algerian conscripts were sent to France within two months of the general mobilization. 23 Rather than Algeria, the colony most involved in recruitment during initial stages of the war became Indochina.

II

Shortly after the declaration of war in September 1939 Minister of Colonies Georges Mandel met with Emperor Bảo Đai and formerly obtained permission to recruit workers in Tonkin and Annam. 24 His acquiescence was important because it gave a veneer of indigenous approval to the process. Indeed, the administration in Hanoi and Saigon consciously promoted the Emperor’s support as a means to stifle dissent within the northern Vietnamese provinces. The wheels of the recruitment regime, however, were already in motion. Governor General Georges Catroux almost instructed labor officials within his administration to set an initial goal of 50,000 recruits almost immediately after France declared war. This target was disseminated to officials in Annam, Cambodia, Cochin China and Tonkin, along with quotas for each area, including 25,000 from Tonkin, 17,000 from Annam, 5,000 from Cochin China

23 Belkacem Rachem notes that 84,000 North Africans were serving in the military before September 1939, and approximately 100,000 were called up from the reserves between 1939 and 1940. The majority of these were from Algeria, although sizable Moroccan and Tunisian contingents served as well. Belkacem Rachem, Les Musulmans algériens dans l’armée française (1919-1945) (Paris: Harmattan, 1996): 180-181.
and 2,500 from Cambodia. After receiving these figures, each commune was given a specific number to recruit. Four hundred were requested from Hà Giang in Tonkin, for example, while Hai Duong was expected to furnish four hundred, and two hundred were required from from Bắc Ninh. Eventually 19,500 from Indochina would make their way to France, with the majority coming from Annam and Tonkin: 6,900 from Tonkin; 4,900 from northern Annam; 3,450 from central Annam; 2,500 from southern Annam; and only 1,800 from Cochinchina. Virtually all of these recruits came from the peasant class and were given the acronym ONS – *ouvriers non-specialisés* – which reflected the belief that rural inhabitants were totally unskilled, and also pre-existing colonial hierarchies that divided workers using ethnic parameters.

The means by which French officials targeted young Vietnamese men for wartime labor service has become controversial in recent years. In his work on their experience in France, Pierre Daum claims they were recruited “against their will”, pointing to an official document which allowed for Vietnamese to be requisitioned. There is no doubt that many workers from Indochina that arrived in France did not volunteer. As the Labor Inspectorate in Tonkin reported, “no constraints were being exercised ” during the recruitment process. But it is also important to contextualize wartime labor recruitment within the history of colonial Indochina. Contract and forced labor was pervasive during the interwar period, and the

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27 French authorities had typically labeled Vietnamese *cu nau* (unskilled) while ethnic Chinese were *ao xanh* (skilled). These two groups were also given different clothes to differentiate them in the workplace, with Vietnamese wearing brown and Chinese given blue items. Interestingly, when Vietnamese arrived in France, they were initially given blue clothing, and indeed their blue berets remain one of the more omnipresent features in photographs from the period. See Brocheux and Hémery, *Indochina*, 208
colonial regime clearly tapped into Vietnamese social hierarchies as a means to obtain recruits for metropolitan industry.\textsuperscript{30}

As Martin J. Murray notes in his study of the Indochinese economy, expanded French investment in Southeast Asia following the First World War led to a rapid growth in the number of contract workers in the colony. Between 1920 and 1925, rubber plantations in southern Indochina expanded by almost 47,000 hectares and the workforce increased from 3,500 to over 18,000. By 1927 over 20,000 migrants were employed on plantations in Cochin China.\textsuperscript{31} Finding low-cost labor was thus of critical importance for economic development. Indeed, population rich areas where many workers originated were typically referred to as “human reservoirs” by the administration in Hanoi for their importance in supplying migrants. European companies very rarely found workers themselves, instead relying on local recruiting agents (\textit{cai}), who signed up potential migrants to three-year contracts that bound the individual to a specific employer. Even after the Popular Front instituted a series of labor reforms in the colony after 1936, there were still numerous complaints about recruiting practices and the treatment workers received.\textsuperscript{32} The International Labor Organization published a lengthy report on working conditions within the colony just before the war began. It noted that approximately ten percent of recruits deserted from their job, mostly because of poor living conditions and low wages. Indochina was the only French

\textsuperscript{30} Because differing laws existed for each associated member of the Indochinese Union, some Indochinese were required to work more than others. In the nineteenth-century people were required to give the colonial state 48 days of service per year, a small number of which could be used for “village” or communal work. Subsequent legislation reduced this to five days in Cochin China, while it ranged from eight to ten in Annam and Tonkin. Workers could commute their duties by paying tax to the government, or paying another person to serve for them. Some minority groups like the Hmong, however, were required to work more because they were not subject to taxation requirements. Nevertheless, requisitioned labor for use by the colonial government did exist in 1939 and was not formally abolished until 1945.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid
colony where worker desertion could be punished by local labor supervisors rather than the courts or arbitration panels, and usually involved fines or even imprisonment in egregious cases.\textsuperscript{33} Worker recruitment in 1939 clearly drew on this legacy. Many documents frequently referred to those being sent to France as “coolies,” suggesting that a great deal of similarities were drawn between interwar contract workers and wartime recruits.

Rather than recruiting men by force of arms, the colonial administration made use of cai and local indigenous political figures. This speaks to the nature of colonialism in Indochina as well. Unlike in Algeria where the Third Republic would have a sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus at its disposal, the French were light on the ground in Indochina outside of major urban areas. They instead relied on the co-operation of village intermediaries, the most important of which included the ly-truong (mayor) and Ban Ky Muc (Council of Elders).\textsuperscript{34} Villages in northern Vietnam were highly stratified and positions of power within the village community often based on land ownership. The ly-truong and members of Ban Ky Muk were often the wealthiest landowners in the village and thus possessed an incredible amount of power. Indeed, over half of the residents in a typical northern Vietnamese village owned no land by 1940, and either toiled on communal plots or as laborers for wealthy landlords.\textsuperscript{35} Relationships with local elites were purposely cultivated by the French administration. Colonial bureaucrats often held wrongheaded ideas about the “timeless” Vietnamese village but they were well aware of the usefulness of the ly-truong in enforcing unpopular policies.

\textsuperscript{33} International Labour Office, \textit{Labour Conditions in Indo-China} (London: P.S. King & Son, 1938): 78-83
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 57-60.
Officials in Hanoi clearly tapped into these social hierarchies for recruitment purposes. In some cases the ly-truong singled out non-family members and poor peasants for requisition. As one man awaiting the voyage to France in Haiphong wrote: “I am not a volunteer. Neither my parents nor my brothers consented to me leaving. But in the eighth month [of the Vietnamese calendar] the ly-truong of my village registered the number of my taxation card [carte d’impôt personnel] on the list of volunteers to be sent to the district capital. Once registered I had to leave.”36 There were also claims of dubious behavior from the ly-truong. A group of men from the small village of Gia-Thông near Nam Dinh claimed that recruiters had promised one and a half piastres per volunteer, to be paid out after the workers had departed for Haiphong; the ly-truong instead kept half of the bonus payments as a fee for his services.37

French authorities were intensely concerned about fulfilled recruitment quotas handed down from the Governor General but that did not stop them from attempting to select the most “physically capable” Vietnamese. Officials operating a camp in Thai Binh mentioned that recruitment proceeded according to the Pignet Index, developed by the military physician Maurice Charles-Joseph Pignet in 1900 as an anthropometric test for determining which potential conscripts made the best soldiers.38 Pignet argued that physical fitness could be quantified after taking into account height, weight and thoracic circumference and a value given to each person. A lowed Pignet coefficient, he argued, meant that the person being tested was of better physical fitness and thus able to work harder than someone with a high Pignet coefficient. His system quickly became a useful tool for

36 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Doi to Pham-Thi-Phan, 1 January 1940.
37 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Vu-Van Bau to Tong-doc of Hai Duong province, 9 May 1940.
38 ANOM, RSTNF 5459, “Camp des O.N.S. de Thai Binh,” Labor Inspector to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 10 January 1940.
anthropologists, ethnologists, colonial officials and private enterprise throughout Africa and Asia to identify which ethnic groups served as useful workers.\(^3^9\)

Theorists gradually began to posit, however, that the Pignet coefficient could be lowered with diet and exercise to create a “healthier”, more productive economic unit. Recruitment throughout Indochina in 1939 and 1940 clearly took these ideas into account. Although officials in Tonkin complained that too many of the recruits were of “poor physical quality” they were nevertheless accepted based on the idea that physical characteristics could be modified after the men had left their village under the supervision of French authorities.\(^4^0\) Because Vietnamese were viewed as under-nourished, lethargic, and indolent, their diet in particular was targeted once they had arrived in transit and disembarkation camps. French authorities noted the importance of giving workers more meat, vegetables and rice, although the constraints of the food situation in Indochina sometimes made this unrealistic. Calisthenics and other activities like soccer were also used to improve physical fitness and combat idleness when awaiting the trip to France.\(^4^1\)

While no serious confrontation between rural inhabitants and the colonial administration occurred, animosity was present and in some cases exploited by anti-colonial figures. The Sûreté in Cochin China – where very few volunteers came forward – reported that several incidents occurred near Gia Dinh and Cholon. In this case, the ly-trong was blamed for not fully explaining why the workers were being sent to France, as well as elements from the Indochinese Communist Party (PCI) encouraging men to resist


\(^4^0\) ANOM, RSTNF 5473, “Rapport de mois d’Octobre 1939,” General Labor Inspectorate in Tonkin, 18 November 1939.

\(^4^1\) ANOM, RSTNF 5459, “Camp de Thai-Binh.”
recruitment. In December 1939 six men were arrested and imprisoned for disseminating propaganda against workers being sent to France. Resistance also took on a more eccentric dimension in Chau Doc. A local cult leader named Trun Van Lam claimed that Buddha had chosen him to stop recruitment by rising up against local indigenous authorities. Trun declared his intention to “drink the blood and eat the liver” of one notable in particular, and eventually killed the man and his wife before being captured by police after exchanging gunfire.

Organized resistance in the provinces was not the only problem during recruitment. Colonial officials also identified the lack of qualified interpreters, European personnel able to accompany the workers to France, and tension with family members after the loss of their children. Because there were only five lycée in the colony, finding educated members of the indigenous elite willing to sign up for work in France posed challenges. Most of the “volunteers” appear to have come from this group. Some educated youth were clearly enthusiastic about their upcoming trip to the métropole while others were requisitioned for service with the MOI against their will. The Résident Supérieur for Tonkin received a letter in October 1939 from a man claiming that his son was currently in Haiphong awaiting disembarkation. The son – Luu Van Ri – held a French secondary school diploma and worked for a shipping company, but had never expressed interest in signing up with the MOI.

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44 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Sûreté of Cochinchina to Governor of Cochinchina, 17 February 1940.
45 One of the problems noted by officials in Tonkin was educated interpreters were often treated the same as standard workers. They earned slightly more money but there were demands for designated tables in eating areas and a special insignia denoting their rank as educated interpreters. With regards to this last request, Governor General Catroux wrote in the margin: “What could we do about this?” See ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Labor Inspector of Tonkin to General Labor Inspectorate in Hanoi, 16 December 1939 and Report from Service des Affaires Politiques et Indigènes, November 1939.
Due to the dearth of qualified interpreters, however, he was placed under requisition by French authorities. His father viewed this as problematic for a number of reasons. As the eldest son, Luu Van Ri was responsible for tending to the family’s economic interests, and more importantly, his two younger brothers were currently in France attending the University of Montpellier. The man apparently received no response because his son sent a letter to the Labor Inspectorate in Hanoi once again re-affirming his position that he had never volunteered for work, and due to the absence of his brothers, should not be sent to France. Colonial authorities actually granted his wish. Luu Van Ri was removed from MOI service because, as stated in the order, his discontent could prove problematic if expected to supervise workers. In fact, as the Labor Inspectorate noted: “we must, at all cost, eliminate from the contingents being sent to France indigènes liable to provoke discontent among the mass of the workers.”

The administration attempted to counteract tensions with Vietnamese families by introducing a system of bonus payments, in effect compensating them for the loss of their children. In October 1939 the Labor Inspectorate in Tonkin specified that each “coolie” was owed a sum of ten piastres upon enlistment. Authorities should only disperse the funds, however, after the recruit had left his village and was received by the regional transit camp. Further, if a worker failed to turn up on the day of departure, his family would be taxed twenty sous per day until the recruit had reemerged from hiding. The colonial state also sought “to guarantee the security and tranquility of the families of workers and military

46 ANOM, RSTNF 2949, Luu Van Diem to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 22 October 1939.
47 ANOM, RSTNF 2949, Luu Van Ri to General Labor Inspectorate in Hanoi, 5 December 1939.
48 ANOM, RSTNF 2924, General Labor Inspectorate and Social Welfare to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 5 December 1939.
members” through various forms of financial compensation, although local officials were left to create their own policies on the matter.\(^{50}\) Families in Phuc-Yên, for example, received three piastres per month if a son had left for work in France.\(^{51}\)

Housing the recruits became the single greatest challenge in Indochina after the program was in full swing. Two types of camps were created: regional camps and embarkation camps. Regional camps were designed to house and monitor workers from a specific area until permission was given to move them by road or rail to the nearest port city. The embarkation camps in Saigon, Tourane and Haiphong received recruits from the various regional camps and then organized the voyages to France. Examining the camp in Haiphong – where the majority of workers stayed before being sent to France – demonstrates some of the challenges of housing ONS recruits. In October 1939 the Resident General of Tonkin and mayor of Haiphong expropriated an abandoned porcelain factory in the Cua-Câm quarter for use as a transit camp. It was estimated that the factory site could house “2000 coolies” at one time without any difficulties.\(^{52}\) Barracks and eating areas were constructed, as well as office space and medical facilities for the testing of new arrivals. It was assumed that workers would only be staying at the central camp facility for several weeks before being placed on a ship for France. Efforts to create an efficient transportation system, however, quickly became hampered by disease and disorder.

In early December 1939 – several months after workers had been arriving from the provinces and then departing for France – the camp witnessed an outbreak of cerebrospinal

\(^{50}\) ANOM, RSTNF 6527, “Protection des familles de militaires et d’ouvriers,” Résident Supérieur au Tonkin to Chefs de province and mayors of Hanoi and Haiphong, 7 October 1939.

\(^{51}\) ANOM, RSTNF 5432, “Mesures prises pour la protection des familles militaires et d’O.N.S.” Résident à Phuc-Yên to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 16 October 1939.

\(^{52}\) ANOM, RSTNF 2949, “Hébergement des O.N.S.” Labor Inspector to General Labor Inspectorate in Hanoi, 21 October 1939.
meningitis. The first case occurred on 7 December and then two more over the next several days.\textsuperscript{53} Because there were over 3000 individuals in the camp awaiting their trip to France, officials deemed it impossible to identify the original carriers of the disease. Until this could be achieved, a local health inspector recommended that convoys to France be suspended and that all of those living in the camp sent back to their villages. The Résident Supérieur approved an alternate course of action. The Pasteur Institute in Hanoi was commissioned to identify infected individuals; those free of meningitis were moved to an alternate location in Haiphong while the camp was disinfected; and the remaining residents were vaccinated, although the Pasteur Institute quickly ran out of vaccine and had to wait for more from Paris. From this point onward, recruits were also required to stay at the camp for three weeks so their medical state could be evaluated. Officials also decided to increase policing and surveillance around the camp rather than let the men return home, as was initially suggested by a health inspector in Haiphong.\textsuperscript{54} By the end of December sixty-seven had been infected, seven had died from meningitis, and convoys to France from Haiphong were suspended until further notice. The evacuation of the workers and suspension of travel had effects on regional transit camps as well. Designed to hold no more than a few hundred recruits, camps in Nam Dinh, Thai Binh and Hadong had over six hundred waiting to leave for Haiphong by early January 1940.\textsuperscript{55}

Departures between Haiphong and Marseille were suspended for over two months before the Résident Supérieur became impatient and re-authorized convoys for France. The

\textsuperscript{53} ANOM, RSTNF 6527, “Maladie No. 17 au camp des O.N.S. à Haiphong,” Local Health Supervisor to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 9 December 1939.
\textsuperscript{54} ANOM, RSTNF 6527, “Réunion du 9 Décembre 1939,” Meeting at Résidence Supérieur au Tonkin, 9 December 1939.
\textsuperscript{55} ANOM, RSTNF 5473, “Rapport de mois de Décembre 1939,” General Labour Inspectorate in Tonkin, 20 January 1940.
General Inspector for Health in Indochina was disturbed by this decision, writing the Governor General that a major epidemic in France could result from the resumption of maritime traffic. He was urged him to place the ship under quarantine when it arrived in Saigon to take on supplies, decontaminated the vessel, and use healthy recruits from Cochin China as replacements. The Governor General was reminded that Vietnamese soldiers had recently spread meningitis in Fréjus and complaints had been registered in Bordeaux, Sorgues and Toulouse about the possibility of the disease arriving. Noting the prestige of Indochina itself was on the line – and, by implication, the reputation of Governor General Catroux – the Health Inspector warned that Tonkin was currently undergoing “an epidemic” of the disease and recruitment itself should be cancelled until further notice.\footnote{ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Inspector General of Health and Public Hygiene of Indochine to Governor General of Indochina, 23 January 1940.} While Catroux decided to suspend further voyages until the end of February, he refused to cancel the recruitment program or prevent convoys from departing Tourane and Saigon.\footnote{ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Governor General of Indochina to Résident Supérieur au Tonkin, 8 February 1940.}

Health problems in the camps received much attention over late 1939 and early 1940 but there were a variety of concerns over public order and policing. Conflict between recruits and French officials often revolved around personal freedoms, specifically the ability to occasionally leave a confined existence. One man was arrested after attempting to discuss the inability of Catholics to leave for Christmas celebrations with the General Inspector of Labor for Tonkin and mayor of Haiphong during an inspection of the camp.\footnote{ANOM, RSTNF 5462, Vu Cong Uan to Head of Sûreté for Tonkin, 27 December 1939.} The celebration of Têt (Vietnamese New Year) also provoked a fear of unauthorized departures. As some authorities noted, the recruits considered themselves “volunteers” and “free workers” and thus expected to participate in the festivities. When a dozen attempted to leave the camp in
Saigon, a fight broke out with the guards, and the ONS recruits eventually tried to force their way out using glass bottles and rocks as projectiles. The workers eventually retreated back into the camp at Stade Rénault with the guards in hot pursuit. It was clearly a trap. Camp personnel and police officers charged with arresting those responsible for the attack were quickly surrounded by several hundred angry Vietnamese and beaten mercilessly.\(^{59}\)

There were also incidents between recruits and camp personnel in Haiphong. In this situation, however, officials clearly preferred accommodation to brute force. The camp commandant noted his suspicions that several guards were permitting workers leave under threat of physical violence or bribery, leaving the Résident Supérieur to note that perhaps this was for the best. By the end of February some of the recruits had been living in Haiphong for over three months and allowing them to join in Têt celebrations could limit future disturbances.\(^{60}\) Some of the regional camps held celebrations for Têt as well. In Son Tay the camp commandant held a feast for the workers and arranged for a group of local comedians to entertain recruits.\(^{61}\)

 Strikes and other disturbances occasionally took place because of living conditions. Due to price increases in food camp officials in Haiphong were forced to scale back the amount consumed by the recruits. They tried to supplement this with vegetables and other items but workers noted the poor rations in correspondence. “The food given to us leaves much to be desired,” one man from Phu Tho wrote, noting that workers were only given two meals per day.\(^{62}\) Others complained that the rice was of poor quality and that cooks were

\(^{59}\) ANOM, GGI 65489/90, “Notice sur l’activité des intrigues politiques de tendances subversives dans les milieux indigènes de Cochinchine pendant le mois de Février 1940,” Sûreté de Cochinchine.
\(^{60}\) ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Labour Inspector for Tonkin to General Labour Inspectorate in Hanoi, 24 February 1940.
\(^{61}\) ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Cao Minh Phu to Bui Guy Dinh, 2 March 1940.
\(^{62}\) ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Lien to Hoang Manh Dia, 8 January 1940.
stashing some away for themselves or friends in the camp. These conditions occasionally extended to the ships departing for France. A specialized metalworker destined for an armaments facility in Toulouse wrote that he was treated like a “cooie” during the voyage, given poor quality red rice and pieces of day-old meat: “It was impossible for me to eat in these conditions. I had to buy milk for my own personal consumption. After thirty-six days on the boat I had lost five kilograms.”

Despite the poor rationing situation, many recruits, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, had good things to say about living in the camp itself. Letters often noted the sense of camaraderie that developed among the men, the ability to read, play soccer, and listen to records. Those stationed in the camp were required to work several hours a day – and some noted that their employment was not enjoyable – but recruits often noted that compared to living in the provinces it was “the life of a prince, but a prince in exile, kept from view.”

III

Recruiting workers in North Africa took on a different dimension, driven by the proximity to France and the history of migration within the region. Although historians tend to focus on Algeria given its historical and juridical links with the métropole, Morocco was actually viewed as a more important source of potential workers by 1939. In fact, interwar documents argued the protectorate could eventually supply four times more men than Algeria. Moroccans departed earlier than Algerians – initially used as agricultural workers in northern France – and eventually more than 15,000 arrived compared to 6,225 Algerians.

Much like in Indochina, recruitment in Morocco proceeded so rapidly (the first workers left

63 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, L.K. Loc to Pham Gia Can, 7 January 1940.
64 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Lam to Vu Can Thinh, 17 May 1940. It should be noted that northern Vietnam was in the midst of wretched economic conditions during this time period, with massive population increases, the unavailability of land, and almost famine-like conditions leaving many peasants in a precarious situation. See Brocheux and Hémery, *Indochina*, 274.
in October 1939) because of an interwar structure utilized after the declaration of war. The Fédération des Employeurs de la Main-d’Oeuvre Agricole had started a pilot program in 1938 that brought Moroccans to France over fears that sources of foreign labor could prove unreliable in the near future. After the declaration of war in September 1939 this program was expanded and grew to include the needs of wartime French industry. Unfortunately, little information remains about the nature of recruitment in Morocco. The program in Algeria, however, reveals a great deal about limits placed on the colonial state.

Unlike in Indochina and Morocco where the recruitment of workers began almost immediately after the declaration of war, the Governor General’s Office in Algiers made no effort to begin looking for workers straight away. This is somewhat surprising given that pre-war planning documents specified Algeria should begin sending supplemental labor to France just two months after the declaration of war. Instead, the most important concern for officials in Algiers during the autumn of 1939 was to stop migration between France and Algeria. On 29 August the Governor General’s Office issued a decree stating that no indigenous Algerian under the obligation of military conscription – that is, between the ages of twenty and thirty-six – could leave without the express permission of French authorities. At the same time, the declaration of war produced a massive departure of Algerians from French soil. This was driven by several factors. Under French law, individuals subject to military conscription had to register in their commune of origin, which meant that many Algerians were forced to return home. Second, some individuals assumed that more work and higher wages would be available in Algeria once conscription began. Last, officials in

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Paris noted there was apprehension among the North African population about the future. If the Germans invaded, would Algerians be able to return home? Would industrial complexes be attacked from the air? Rumors and fear about the future had a massive impact on the North African community in France. Over the course of September 1939, official statistics indicated that approximately 10,000 individuals arrived in Algeria against only eighty-nine departures for France.67

Employers reacted to the speed and unorganized nature of this event with alarm. One of the first decisions of Edouard Daladier’s government had been to roll back rights afforded to workers under the Popular Front. On 11 July 1938 the National Assembly passed a sweeping law that sought to prepare the nation’s resources in the event of war between France and Nazi Germany. The legislation explicitly stated that individuals in certain industries deemed central to the purposes of national defense could be placed under requisition by the French government, rendering it impossible to leave their employment without official authorization.68 This applied to workers under military conscription as well as those excluded from the duty. Because many North Africans were employed in important wartime economic sectors like mining, chemical production, and manufacturing, departures in September and October 1939 were interpreted as illegal under French law.

Given the scarcity of experienced workers following mobilization, employers sought to keep their Algerian workforce in place. Complaints circulated within France and Algeria about indigenous Algerian desertion and its effect on the metropolitan French economy. The

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68 Crémieux-Brilhac, Les Français de l’an 40 vol. 2, 100.
prefect of the Nord wrote the Ministry of Interior and his counterpart in Marseille about the
disastrous effects of North African departures on iron works and steel mills: “The majority of
these workers being specialists in metalworking, their departure has seriously compromised
the activity of these establishments and impacted their production [which is] absolutely
indispensable for national defense.”69 In the coal basin of Alès mining companies noted that
over two hundred Algerian workers had left in September 1939, and the courts later
prosecuted one North African café owner accused of promoting desertions.70 The
metallurgical industry in Rouen and the Alps region also lodged several complaints about
workers leaving without authorization and requested the gendarmerie as well as port
authorities in Marseille increase policing efforts to find those who had left.71

It is important to contrast this with the way North African employment was framed
during the interwar period. Many reports from the period simply refer to them as “manual
laborers,” noted they held few specialized jobs, and as a result, their economic position was
deemed “unimportant” compared to the numbers of European immigrants. Indeed, Laroque
and Ollive had used this argument as a justification for limiting Algerian access to
metropolitan France. In the span of a few short months the supposedly unskilled, superfluous
interwar North African workforce had been transformed into “essential” and “skilled”
workers because of mobilization and the need for increased production. The next chapter will
discuss efforts to limit Algerian mobility in France, but attempts to find workers once they
had left extended to Algeria as well.

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69 Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (ADBR), 4 M 2361, Prefect of the Nord to Minister of the Interior, 21 October 1939.
70 Archives départementales du Gard (ADG), 1 M 803, Sous-préfet of Alès to Prefect of the Gard, 21 September 1939.
71 ADBR, 4 M 2361, “Indigènes Algériens ayant abandonné les Hauts-Fourneaux de Rouen à Grand-Quevilly,”
Prefect of Seine-inférieure to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 1 November 1939.
Finding North Africans who had “abandoned” their jobs without authorization became a trans-Mediterranean endeavor and involved co-ordination between employers, the Ministry of the Interior, the Governor General’s Office and prefects in Algeria and metropolitan France. Utilizing census data and information gathered by French companies, lists of workers were sent from metropolitan France to various levels of the colonial government in Algeria. The Governor General of Algeria received a list of eighty men who had left the Hauts-Forneaux iron works outside of Rouen, was instructed to find the workers and then put them on a ship back to France. He then disseminated this list to the prefects of Algiers, Constantine and Oran, who also passed the names along to police and commune-mixte administrators. Several more lists followed between 1939 and 1940 from employers located around the métropole.

Co-ordination between various levels of the French state – often separated by thousands of kilometers – reveals that bureaucratic linkages between France and Algeria were strong during this period. Upon closer examination, despite the growing importance of gathering census and personal information, finding deserters once they had gone back to Algeria was easier said than done. The information gathered by employers and French prefects often proved difficult to translate when in the hands of Algerian commune-mixte administrators. French companies were largely unfamiliar with Algerian geography and the spelling of Muslim names. Employment records were fragmentary and incorrect because many Algerians were migrant workers, partially or totally illiterate, and often not fluent in French. The administrator of La Soummam pointed this out to the prefect of Constantine.

72 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, Prefect of Seine-inférieure to Ministry of the Interior, 4 October 1939.
73 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Main-d’œuvre algérienne,” Governor General of Algeria to Prefect of Constantine, 12 October 1939 and “Main-d’œuvre algérienne,” Prefect of Constantine to commune-mixte administrators of La Soummam, M’Sila, Tazmalt, Ain M’Lila, Oued Marsa, Akbou, Guergor and Biban, 19 October 1939.
Two of the names supposedly in his commune could not be identified on the état-civil, and the douar of “Tassoukit” did not exist at all in Algeria.

Colonial functionaries also questioned why Algerians should be sent back to France in the first place. Just like French employers, Algerian prefects, mayors and commune-mixte officials were concerned about a depletion of their local labor force due to conscription. Some rejected the necessity of looking for those who had left metropolitan France altogether.

As one administrator from Oued-Marsa wrote:

> It is – purely and simply – absurd and inopportune to treat Kabyle seasonal workers like metropolitan French workers targeted by decrees regarding civilian requisitioning. Kabyle workers have their homes and property more than 1000 kilometers from the factories where they continue to be employed. It is indispensable for them to have the power to come back – when necessity presents itself – to their homeland…We must remember that the Kabyles are simultaneously farmers and workers.  

Allegations of French businesses abusing their influence with the French government also began to emerge. Given fear over the paucity of labor in metropolitan France, some within the colonial state argued, employers were simply targeting former Algerian workers and hoping that they would be sent back. After questioning two men identified on a list of deserters sent to La Soummam, it was determined that the iron works in Rouen had denied them a leave of absence before hostilities began – which was impermissible under reforms enacted by the Popular Front – and so these two had left “without authorization” because it had been illegally denied by their employer.

Efforts to find “deserters” were also complicated by competing factions within the colonial government. The Governor General’s Office issued vague proclamations that often...

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74 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Main-d’oeuvre algérienne,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Oued-Marsa to Prefect of Constantine, 13 April 1940.
75 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Requis civil – Hauts-Forneaux de Rouen,” Administrator of commune-mixte of La Soummam to Prefect of Constantine, 27 October 1939.
contradicted its stated goals of sending workers back to France, and the Service Spécial de Recrutement Indigène (SSRI) was often unwilling to dispense travel permits. A group of five workers from a factory in Paris were stranded in La Soummam after September 1939. They requested special dispensation from the SSRI to return but received no response to their appeals. After communicating this problem to the *commune-mixte* administrator, the SSRI was urged to issue travel permits. The SSRI, however, falsely claimed that all Algerians were prohibited from travelling to the métropole under orders of the Governor General. While attempting to resolve the situation with the local prefect, it came to the administrator’s attention that the Governor General’s Office had issued a decree instructing port authorities not to issue travel permits to Algerians between the ages of twenty and thirty-six, and that police should instead expel them (*refouler*) back to their *douar* of origin. This, the administrator argued, simply gave the SSRI more ammunition to deny papers, and he urged authorities in Constantine to have leniency for those on leave of absence. Not doing this would cause “profound misery” in his commune, plunging families into poverty due to the lack of money arriving from France and Algerians’ “inability to understand the reasons why authorities have condemned them to forced unemployment.”

The Governor General finally addressed his contradictory orders in January 1940. From this point onward Algerians living in France before September 1939, or holding a work contract in an industry utilized for national defense purposes, could return to metropolitan

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76 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Travailleurs pour la Métropole,” Administrator of *commune-mixte* of La Soummam to Section Spéciale de Recrutement Indigène, 13 November 1939.

77 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, Section Spéciale de Recrutement Indigène to administrator of *commune-mixte* of La Soummam, 25 November 1939.

78 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Main-d’oeuvre indigène pour le Métropole – instructions contradictoires,” Administrator of *commune-mixte* of La Soummam to Prefect of Constantine and *sous-préfet* of Bougie, 2 December 1939.

79 ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Main-d’oeuvre indigène pour la Métropole,” Administrator of *commune-mixte* of La Soummam to Prefect of Constantine and *sous-préfet* of Bougie, 7 December 1939.
France. All of those who wished to do so needed permission from the SSRI, which would verify the workers’ documentation and check military status.\textsuperscript{80} These revised directives were still not enough to resolve issues between workers on leave and the SSRI. Amar Benani, an experienced draftsman with the Comptoir Industriel d’Étirage et Profilage de Métaux in Paris, wrote to his employer in October 1939 that he could not obtain the necessary permit to return. The company informed the prefect of Constantine as well as the Ministry of Labor that Benani was essential for its production efforts and thus needed to receive travel papers as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{81} Just like the workers from La Soummam, however, neither the company, the administrator of Guergour, or Benani himself received a response from the SSRI when asked why travel papers could not be issued.\textsuperscript{82} Even after the January 1940 order that Algerians holding a work contract be allowed to return, the situation with Benani remained unresolved. The company once again asserted his importance as a skilled draftsman and supervisor for North Africans, but Benani had received no response from the SSRI by March 1940, six months after he had first requested a travel permit.\textsuperscript{83}

\section*{IV}

Although patrolling the migration of Algerians across the Mediterranean was viewed as an important way of creating a stable French workforce, the vast majority of attention was given to finding new workers for the war effort. Following the creation of the MOI, the recruitment of Algerian workers finally began in early 1940. Prefects and other administrators probably had some indication through verbal communications that recruitment

\textsuperscript{80} ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Départ des Indigènes pour la Métropole,” Prefect of Constantine to sous-préfets, mayors and administrators et al., 19 January 1940.
\textsuperscript{81} ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, Comptoir Industriel d’Étirage et Profilage de Métaux to Ministry of Labour, 30 November 1939.
\textsuperscript{82} ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, “Ouvriers requisitionnés – Benani Amar,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Guergour to Prefect of Constantine and sous-préfet of Bougie, 6 December 1939.
\textsuperscript{83} ANOM, ADC, 93/5463, Comptoir Industriel d’Étirage et Profilage de Métaux to Prefect of Constantine, 4 March 1940.
would begin in late January. The prefect of Oran, for example, instructed all mayors, *sous-préfets*, and *commune-mixte* administrators under his jurisdiction to find the 1935 survey specifying the names of possible recruits in late January.\(^{84}\) On 27 January the Governor General finally issued orders regarding recruitment in the territory, specifying that the Algerian departments were required to supply three thousand men for work in France by the beginning of March. Officials were to focus on individuals from the military reserve born between 1924 and 1927 (which was the group surveyed in 1935), although they were to be regarded as “civilian workers” and no requisitioning applied at this time. Recruitment was to begin immediately and the Governor General’s Office informed in two weeks the number registered in each department, followed by an update each week.\(^{85}\) These orders were further defined on 7 February when it was specified that focusing on the military reserves should not be seen as restrictive, but the military status of each individual needed to be verified before registration.\(^{86}\)

After this set of general instructions were issued, local authorities around Algeria began the process of finding workers. Word of mouth recruiting strategies were usually employed. Colonial functionaries traveled to villages and communicated the intentions of the French administration to local indigenous notables. Some *commune-mixte* administrators, however, began to complain that recruiting responsibilities were requiring too much time of local labor or agricultural officials and distracting them from other duties. Eventually the Governor General created a specific organization within the Labor Office tasked with

\(^{84}\) ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, Prefect of Oran to mayors, administrators of *commune-mixte*, and *sous-préfets*, 26 January 1940.

\(^{85}\) ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, Governor General of Algeria to Prefects of Algiers, Constantine and Oran, 27 January 1940.

\(^{86}\) ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, Governor General of Algeria to Prefects of Algiers, Constantine and Oran, 7 February 1940.
organizing the recruitment program. It hired dozens of low-level functionaries stationed around Algeria that would work with officials on the ground to find workers for the war effort; Vichy and the Fourth Republic later used this infrastructure to facilitate recruitment in North Africa. Some also began recruiting during market days where large groups gathered to buy and sell produce or livestock. One speech took place in the town of Aumale (Sour el-Ghozlane) led by the commune-mixte administrator and several indigenous Algerian non-commissioned officers. “France, our Patrie, our mother, needs all of her children right now,” the speech began:

Some must fight for her and resist the barbarous hordes, others must work behind the lines producing for the Army and Nation arms, munitions, roads, railroads, and buildings which are necessary; others must, in the fields of our beautiful France, replace farmers, and laborers mobilized from the soil...France will remember your gesture...All must forget their political quarrels and their personal enmities. All must unite under the waving tricolor flag and respond ‘present’ for the safety of the Patrie.

Given the number of Algerians who crossed the Mediterranean looking for work in the interwar period, authorities in Algiers, Constantine and Oran believed that wartime recruitment in Algeria would proceed rapidly. Local functionaries, however, soon began to report widespread reticence among the indigenous population. In the commune-mixte of Sebdou 223 individuals had been identified on the 1935 survey as possible recruits but only thirty-four expressed a desire to volunteer. The sous-préfet of Sidi-bel-Abbès reported similar numbers: 744 were listed on his survey, but only twenty-seven registered. Further to the east in the departments of Algiers and Constantine very few indigènes volunteered as

87 ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, Ministry of Labour to Governor General of Algeria, 5 March 1940.
89 ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, “Travailleurs indigènes pour la Métropole,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Sebdou to sous-préfet of Tlemcen, 22 February 1940.
90 ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, “Recensement des travailleurs indigènes,” sous-préfet of Sidi-bel-Abbès to prefect of Oran, 23 February 1940.
well. Bouïra – a majority Kabyle area and a significant center of migration during the 1920s and 1930s – reported 233 able to work in France but only six volunteers. Even though local caïds and notables had apparently urged men that registering for work was much more desirable than military service, their advice was not taken into account. Given the wariness of people in rural Algeria to volunteer, attention was also placed on urban areas, which had grown dramatically during the interwar period because of poor agricultural productivity, lack of land and falling commodity prices. But even the unemployed of Bône showed little willingness to work in France at this time.

French authorities charged with finding workers reduced indigenous reticence to “native laziness” and a “natural apathy” towards hard labor. They also described Algerians as too “risk averse” – an odd comment given that interwar labor migration was a common phenomenon – or content with living in poverty in order to remain near family members. Although little information in the archives remains, there is some indication that colons – worried about the loss of labor and possibility of increased wages – also tried to dissuade their employees from leaving. Comments from indigenous Algerians themselves, however, reveal a variety of reasons why they decided against volunteering. Some complained about what would happen to their families when they were gone, the possibility of a lengthy absence, the high salaries and improved employed picture resulting from the mobilization of

91 ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Recrutment de travailleurs volontaires pour la France,” Centre d’Informations et d’Études (CIE) – Algiers, 7 February 1940.
92 ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, Governor General of Algeria to sous-préfet of Bône, 13 February 1940.
93 ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, Police from village of Mascara to sous-préfet of Mascara, 19 February 1940.
94 ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Recrutement des travailleurs à destination des la Métropole,” CIE – Oran, 12 February 1940
Algerian men. Most importantly, the previous harvest had been remarkably good and hopes were raised for 1940 as well.\footnote{ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, “Travailleurs indigènes pour la Métropole,” administrator of \textit{commune-mixte} of Saïda to \textit{sous-préfet} of Mascara, 19 February 1940.}

Along with these pragmatic objections driven by family and monetary considerations, rumors also began to spread about jobs given to recruits.\footnote{For a discussion of how rumors influenced daily life during the war, see Jean-Marie Guillon, “Talk which was not Idle: Rumours in Wartime France,” in \textit{Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New Perspectives in Wartime France}, ed. Hanna Diamond and Simon Kitson (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005): 73-86.} Some believed that they would be “military workers” digging ditches and building roads for the French army rather than working in factories, or that they could be sent to Finland.\footnote{The Soviets had invaded Finland in November 1939. France and Britain did indeed plan an invasion as a means to prevent Nazi Germany from gaining access to Swedish iron ore deposits, but Finland surrendered before a military force could be sent. William R. Trotter, \textit{A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finish Winter War of 1939-1940} (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1991): 238-239.} Others, by contrast, saw factory work as inherently more dangerous in 1940 than during the First World War. The advent of aerial warfare and its use during the Spanish Civil War and the Italian campaign in Ethiopia apparently led many Algerians to believe (quite rightly) that French industrial facilities would become targets of German bombardments.\footnote{Ibid} Memories from recruitment programs during the First World War also lingered. Older village members regaled younger men with tales of the previous \textit{convoyeurs} and some quite simply protested that living in France was unnatural or undesirable.\footnote{ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Engagements de travailleurs indigènes de la région d’Orleansville,” CIE – Algiers, 23 February 1940.} As one argued, “It is unjust to send workers to France because it is a land of snow. A country that cannot be self-sufficient is not a country. Algeria is a country. Syria is a county. \textit{La France, non.}”\footnote{ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, “Situation politique des indigènes,” Administrator of the \textit{commune-mixte} of Ain-Témouchent to prefect of Oran, 10 February 1940.}

On 27 February the Governor General finally attempted to put an end to these rumors circulating Algeria. He pleaded with his subordinated to mollify indigenous concerns.
by explaining recruitment in more detail, especially the fact that Algerians would be treated “exactly like metropolitan French” in the workplace. ¹⁰¹ Contrary to popular perception, they were “civilian workers” on farms and in factories, and not sent into military service. There might have been whispers about the use of guarded camps, but the system of encadrement simply meant that the French government would provide food, lodging and job placement. Algerians earned the same wages as French workers, and more importantly, received a bonus of one hundred francs upon registration in the program. As an aside, the Governor General also once again emphasized the importance of having indigenous Algerians volunteer for work in France. Forcible requisitioning was still impermissible, although forms of coercion – such as increasing taxes and threatening to cancel the meager social programs offered to rural Algerians – could be used as a means to coerce volunteers from the local population. ¹⁰²

There was clearly hope that by further explaining the benefits of working in France – higher wages, signing bonuses, and equality with French workers – that the colonial state could avoid forcible labor conscription. The Governor General was explicitly targeting commune-mixte administrators with these suggestions, many of whom had been complaining that more workers could be found – and indeed some Algerians even wanted – the imposition of a labor draft. As one document from the prefecture of Oran noted, “indigenous Algerians have declared that they do not intend to go to work in France voluntarily, but if the government imposed this obligation, they would be ready to conform.” ¹⁰³ The Centre d’Information et d’Etudes within the Governor General’s Office in Algiers also began moving towards this position in February 1940. It argued the First World War had tainted

¹⁰¹ ANOM, ADO, 9I 93, Governor General of Algeria to Prefects of Algiers, Constantine and Oran, 27 February 1940.
¹⁰² Ibid
¹⁰³ ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Recrutement des travailleurs à destination de la métropole,” CIE – Oran, 12 February 1940.
worker recruitment, and the only way to guarantee Algeria could fulfill its obligations was to impose labor conscription on the indigenous population. Designing a forcible recruitment program was fraught with inequities, however, because of the difficulty in determining which segments of society to target. If a conscription of workers was to be applied, it should take familial considerations as well as the health and professional capabilities of the individual into account.\textsuperscript{104} Although the Governor General initially resisted these calls, recruitment efforts stalled in March and April. Local officials were still reporting that very few volunteers were coming forward. Of the almost one thousand registered on the 1935 survey in several Kabyle communes, only 209 volunteered between January and March.\textsuperscript{105}

Despite the perfectly logical reasons given by indigenous Algerians for not wanting to volunteer, some within the colonial administration began to believe that nefarious anti-French propaganda was responsible for the slow pace of recruitment. One incident in particular caused apprehension because it suggested anti-colonialism might be driving apathy in rural areas. At the beginning of February over two hundred men from the commune of Rirha near Sétif expressed a desire to volunteer. But when they were asked to sign formally sign work contracts several days later, the vast majority now declared their sudden opposition to the program. Totally started by this turn of events, the French administrator launched an inquest in order to determine what has turned the men against volunteering. Rumors had apparently begun to circulate in the area that \textit{indigènes} would be used as military laborers close to the front lines, and yet their families would not receive financial compensation should they be killed. These allegations were untrue, and after consulting with local policing

\textsuperscript{104} ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Recrutement des travailleurs destinées aux unites paramilitaires,” CIE – Office of Governor General of Algeria, 23 February 1940.
\textsuperscript{105} ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Recrutement de travailleurs pour la France,” CIE – Algiers, 21 March 1940. The six communes listed were: Bou Saâda (57 recruits); Sidi-Aïssa (44 recruits); Aumale (20 recruits); Aïn-Bessem (20 recruits); Maillot (60 recruits); Palestro (8 recruits).
and intelligence services, four individuals were accused of being provocateurs: Messieurs Smati, Ben Sallem, Akrouf and a young pharmacist named Ferhat Abbas. Smati, Ben Sallem, Akrouf and Abbas were not only local indigenous notables but also the only Muslim élus (elected representatives) in the commune, either serving on the departmental Conseil Général or Délégations Financières. Given it was an election year, the commune administrator argued political tensions in the area were running high and covertly sabotaging recruitment could be a way of airing grievances against France.

Although the commune did not pursue criminal charges due to the lack of evidence, it did attempt to intimidate people that spoke out against dubious recruitment practices. Ferhat Abbas, for example, lodged an official complain with French authorities protesting that some laborers were being “coerced” and “forced” into signing contracts. He was invited to view the selection procedure where potential recruits underwent medical testing and formally signed up for work in France, but remained unconvinced the commune was not engaging in pressure tactics. Police also took an Algerian landowner into custody during this period after complaining that several of his workers had been threatened by recruiting agents. After declaring his supreme loyalty to France and desire to work with the French administration, the landowner simply noted that he had attempted to question the mayor of Colbert about possible improprieties with the recruitment program. Although he was released with no charges formally applied, he apparently became a social pariah to French authorities, with intelligence agents instructing the commune not to have any business with the

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106 A consultative body with limited authority.
108 ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, Inspector General of Administration in Algeria to Governor General of Algeria, 19 March 1940.
109 Ibid
landowner any longer.\textsuperscript{110} While they were spared prosecution and possible internment for “anti-national activities”, both Ferhat Abbas and the Algerian landowner were warned that, “spreading fake rumors” and “instigating cabals” could result in “severe judicial and penal sanctions” if they continued to complain about recruitment efforts. It was never proven of course that the program was impacted by nefarious propaganda – perhaps potential recruits were simply afraid for their lives and the type of work they would be tasked with – but the reticence Algerians demonstrated in volunteering at this point obviously worried people within the colonial administration. Threatening indigenous notables with internment was thus a way of exerting pressure on them to not interfere.

Even though the Governor General increased the work contract signing-bonus from one hundred to two hundred francs in March, the colonial administration continued to fall farther and farther behind its goals. Archival evidence detailing the exact number recruited is limited. But weekly telegrams from communal mayors and commune-mixte administrators reveal that volunteers were trickling in at this point. La Soummam could only furnish forty-one men between mid-March and mid-April. Bône – Algeria’s fourth-largest city where the population number over 80,000 in 1940 – produced a paltry sixty-two recruits over the same period.\textsuperscript{111} The entire department of Constantine was given a target of five hundred recruits per week but could only find 459 between mid-April and mid-May.\textsuperscript{112}

The dearth of Algerian volunteers for the war effort was not only turning into an embarrassment for Governor General Le Beau and his prefects; it quickly became a national

\textsuperscript{110} ANOM, GGA, 3CAB 3, “Zeghoudi Chellali ben Mohamed inculpé de menées contre le recrutement des travailleurs Nord-Africains,” Service des renseignements de Sétif to administrator of commune-mixte of Rirha, 6 March 1940.

\textsuperscript{111} ANOM, ADC, B3 189, dossier travailleurs. See telegrams from administrator of La Soummam and mayor of Bône to prefect of Constantine, as well as others from this period.

\textsuperscript{112} ANOM, ADC, B3 189, “Etat numérique,” Préfecture of Constantine, undated.
security concern for the French state. The German army invaded France on 10 May and was storming towards Paris. Le Beau, who had once been wary of engaging in a forced conscription program, now realized it may be necessary if France was to survive the invasion and possible occupation of French territory. On 17 May prefects informed their subordinates around Algeria that each individual commune was now required to fulfill a monthly recruitment quota. Military reservists that had not been called up to active duty were targeted first. Recruits needed to be assembled each week and then transported to Algiers by a member of the communal staff. Directions were quite explicit on to accomplish this: “you can proceed, following this necessity and if it is needed, by way of requisitions. But it is very important that these requisitions only be made by taking into account family situation, profession, age, etc…of the subject.”

Local authorities finally received their wish. Forcibly conscripting men into work service for the métropole was now codified through decree, but it quickly became apparent that this would not be panacea for recruitment efforts. The commune-mixte of Sedrata expressed a familiar complaint: the 1935 survey identifying 1924-1927 military reservists was outdated and almost unusable. Of the 140 registered under its jurisdiction, twenty-eight were dead, nine disappeared, twenty-four had two children, six had more than four children, two were mobilized, twenty-two incapable of work, eleven had already volunteered, and one was a mechanic and thus indispensible for the local economy. That left thirty-six as possible recruits and yet the administrator had been given a quota of fifty men per month.114 The commune-mixte of Souk-Ahras had also been given a quota of fifty men per month but

113 ANOM, ADC, B3 189, “Travailleurs Indigènes pour la Métropole,” Prefect of Constantine to mayors, administrators and sous-préfets, 17 May 1940. Emphasis is in the original.
114 ANOM, ADC, B3 189, “Travailleurs indigènes pour la Métropole,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Sedrata to prefect of Constantine, 20 May 1940.
informed the prefect all available workers were employed in mines, railways and roadwork around the commune.115 Like his counterparts, the administrator of Djidjelli also expressed consternation with recruitment quotas. Almost three hundred were listed under his jurisdiction but only 134 present in the area. The others were either dead, unavailable for work in France or absent. The absences in particular upset this official and he suggested the reintroduction of pre-1914 pass-laws – or, as he put it, the necessity of purchasing a twenty-seven franc identity card if an individual wanted to leave the commune – would be an acceptable course of action to reduce desertion.116 Despite these complaints, worker requisitioning clearly took place in the few weeks between Le Beau’s decree and Philippe Pétain’s decision to seek an armistice with the German military on 17 June 1940. No precise summation of forcible recruitment remains but an examination of telegrams addressed to the prefect of Constantine shows 366 individuals listed as “requisitioned” between the end of May and middle of June, most of whom were single, childless and thus acceptable conscripts for French officials in the department.117

IV

The German invasion of France and subsequent establishment of Pétain’s Vichy regime put an end to worker recruitment in the colonies. Nevertheless, la France d’Outre-Mer had contributed a significant number in a few short months. Over 40,000 individuals – sometimes voluntarily but often by coercion – eventually arrived in Marseille for service in metropolitan fields and factories. Almost twenty thousand of these came from the various

115 ANOM, ADC, B3 189, “Travailleurs à destination de la Métropole,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Souk-Ahras to prefect of Constantine, 21 May 1940.
116 ANOM, ADC, B3 189, “Travailleurs indigènes pour la Métropole,” Administrator of commune-mixte of Djidjelli to prefect of Constantine, 20 May 1940.
117 See telegrams in ANOM, ADC, B3 189, dossier travailleurs. The telegrams list three categories: volontaires, requis and tirailleurs.
territories within Indochina, 15,784 from Morocco and only 6,225 from the three Algerian
departments. The number for Algeria in particular was well short of the 50,000 expected to
arrive on metropolitan French soil. Based on evidence found in the archives regarding the
lack of available workers in the spring of 1940, officials in Algeria would have found it
extremely difficult to meet this quota without resorting to forced conscription or the use of a
labor draft. The fact that Algeria, typically regarded as having the most advanced colonial
government structure, had the most problems during recruitment is worthy of note. During
the postwar period, demographers and social scientists identified the rapid explosion of the
indigenous Algerian population as a key social issue that would have huge ramifications on
quality of life in the region. When it came down to harnessing this human reservoir in
1940, however, it fell far short of expectations, begging the question whether perceptions of
Algeria as home to a vast labor supply were more fantasy than reality.

In Indochina, by contrast, finding workers or transporting them to France was not the
problem. The Governor General and his subordinates clearly harnessed aspects of the
interwar recruitment system for their own benefit, but whether the colony could supply the
required 50,000 men is difficult to determine given the lack of archival information on the
subject. Instead, recruitment was mostly hindered by the spread of disease, though it was not
enough to halt the program. The impact on Haiphong was minimal; the real damage was
psychological and occurred in France itself. As the next chapter will show, perceptions that
colonials were inherently sick and prone to exotic illness were heightened by this incident
once they began to arrive in the métropole.

Above all, an examination of the recruitment efforts reveals a great deal about the
tension between violence and non-violence in the French colonial empire at this time.

118 MacMaster, Colonial Racism, 185-186.
Coercion was obviously viewed as a necessary tool for sending workers to France. In both Indochina and Algeria the colonial state utilized indigenous functionaries to find recruits and the question of whether they were “volunteers” or “forced migrants” is a difficult one to answer. The Vietnamese provinces in particular deserve special consideration because of the dynamic between land ownership and village life. If the ly-truong identified a young male as one that would be sent to France, it would have been very difficult for the family of this individual to refuse. French authorities, of course, would have known this and used it to their advantage. Certainly the program in Southeast Asia – where the ly-truong were given quotas to fill by the French – was more repressive than in North Africa where the requisitioning of workers was viewed as an option of last resort. And yet officials were often wary of using overt forms of violence as a recruitment tactic and attempted to placate families with monetary benefits for the loss of their children. The emergence of nationalist organizations in both Indochina and North Africa during the interwar period – and especially in Southeast Asia where several revolts took place against colonial rule – obviously had an impact on the methods used by French authorities to recruit workers.

When ships left ports in Algeria, Morocco and Indochina over the course of 1939 and 1940 the thousands of travailleurs coloniaux onboard were anxious about arriving in France. Inundated with promises that they would be treated like French citizens while in the métropole, the system created by the MOI would prove to be far removed from this lofty ideal. The war, as expressed in the pages of Bulletin des Armées d’Outre-Mer, was conceived as an imperial effort. Upon their arrival in Marseille, workers from across Asia and Africa would learn that racial hierarchies and colonial ideology already existed on metropolitan soil.
Chapter Two

Peasants into Workers: Managing Colonial Bodies in the Métropole, 1939-1940

“Today, in this dark hour that we are living, three hundred thousand Moroccans are engaged, fighting at our side, and several thousand others are here helping us in the ardent and primordial industrial battle which, thanks to you, Messieurs, will assure us a final and well-deserved victory”

- French officer addressing Moroccan workers in Montchanin, April 1940

“Since I arrived in France I have lightened skin and have gotten bigger”

- Letter from an Indochinese worker in Marseille to his wife, February 1940

On 29 October 1939, the first contingent of Moroccan workers disembarked in Marseille and would be followed by several thousand of their compatriots over the next few weeks. Almost one month later, on 21 November 1939, the Yang Tse arrived from Saigon, docking in the same section of the port and unloading 1200 tired workers from Indochina. Over the next seven months before the surrender of the French army in June 1940, the French government would bring over 40,000 men from across the empire to metropolitan France. They joined a heterogeneous mix of Africans and Asians that had already been living in the métropole before the outbreak of war. The story of how authorities managed the introduction of

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1 Archives départementales de Saône-et-Loire (ADSL), W 138178, Captain Bourée addressing Moroccan workers and French dignitaries in Montchanin-les-Mines, 21 April 1940.
2 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Unidentified to Loc N., 2 February 1940.
colonials into metropolitan society reveals a great deal about how racial perceptions and
tional ideology could impact the everyday life of people of color in France.

This chapter focuses in particular on how employers and the French state sought to
manage colonial bodies on metropolitan soil. Although official rhetoric pronounced equality
between Asian, African and French workers, the following and discussion will demonstrate
that colonials were not viewed as citizens of an “imperial nation-state”, but subjects and
economic units, whose physical and mental capacities were rendered less evolved than those
of white metropolitan inhabitants. Concerns over changes in climate, sex, and productivity in
the workplace led to the construction of a system known as *encadrement* (regimentation) that
involved a healthy dose of European intervention to govern the corporeal presence of
colonials in France. Not solely about social segregation and managing ethnic relations,
*encadrement* was an attempt to guarantee the health and productivity of Vietnamese and
North Africans for wartime production efforts. In this sense, it was an extreme version of the
Third Republic’s “Colonial Consensus” which prescribed welfare and government
intervention over the lives of French colonial subjects while residing in the métropole. Given
the scarcity of European immigrants during this time period, organizing a system that
promoted the efficient use colonial labor was of the utmost importance for French officials.

While the importance of Vietnamese and North Africans was often stressed in public
communications, the massive arrival of non-white bodies was often presented as a physical
threat to the French nation if not managed properly. This extended not only to health and
disease, but also to meeting French people in social settings or dating white women. I focus
on four issues in particular – employment, housing, socialization, and mobility – to show
how the experience of colonial migrants was inflected by race and ethnicity despite the
existence of republican legal framework. At the same time, however, I demonstrate that the division between “subject” and “citizen” was not simply dichotomous. North Africans and Vietnamese were often viewed differently than one another and so policies were often created with their particular ethnicity in mind. More rights could be afforded to one group in specific areas, less in others, and in both cases modified because of local considerations.

Although examining how ideology impacted the position of colonials in France during 1939 and 1940, I focus in particular on the language of rights and how it impacted colonials. What types of rights did they have in comparison to regular French workers? How did these policies serve to differentiate them from the local population? How did colonial workers contest the regulations and decrees and that sought to treat them as something other than French workers? This last question is of crucial importance. Colonials often contested their status as something less the French, but scholars too often place them at the mercy of the state. It is important for historians to recognize that ideology itself did not govern the lives of colonial workers during this time period. Rather, administrators at the local level often had enormous power in deciding how policy should be implemented. As we will see, alcohol may have been banned in one location and permitted in another; colonials in large urban areas were able to interact with French men and women far more easily than those in isolated industrial complexes. Local authorities were given significant leeway in determining whether the rights of colonials should be curtailed or maintained, and thus the extent to which legal equality was applied in practice. By centering this chapter on the colonial body as a site of contention, the following discussion reveals how managing Africans and Asians in the métropole, and thereby transforming them from “peasants” into “workers,” embodied the conflicts and contradictions inherent to the French imperial project.
Marseille was in many ways a door to the French empire. Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the city had built up linkages between overseas possession in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. It was only fitting, then, Marseille served as the hub for the administration of colonial workers when they arrived in France. They were received, identified, put through a rigorous health and physical screening process, housed in the city for several weeks, and then sent to their jobs around the métropole. Since the French government placed such importance on monitoring the letters of colonial workers stationed on metropolitan soil, historians have an incredible source of information to understand how they initially perceived Marseille.3

Impressed by the size of the city and the numerous vessels offloading cargo in the busiest commercial port in the Mediterranean, Trong N., a young worker from Tonkin, was less enthusiastic about the camp which housed colonial workers: “Arrived in Marseille 11 December. We were forced to stay in a building that I could not have imagined. A prison! A large prison which contains more than 4000 cells…More than 3000 of our comrades are there.”4 Baumettes – which served as the center for receiving colonial workers about eleven kilometers from the center of Marseille – was a prison, although it was still under construction after being requisitioned by the MOI. It was never directly called a prison – its official name varied between Base Principale de Marseille and Centre d’Accueil (literally, “Welcome Center”) – and yet it left a lasting effect on the memories of many workers. As one recalled some years later:

3 Because the letters used in this chapter were personal correspondance that often discussed sensitive information, I have decided to use acronyms to protect the identity of the authors.
4 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Letter from Trong N. to Cuong N., 25 December 1939.
[W]e were installed in small prison cells for six people, on beds stacked in three levels. The cells did not yet have a door, but all the windows were blocked by large bars...At the start we ate nothing, because they gave us nothing other than bread, and no rice! We were served coffee, but we didn’t like that. We were accustomed to green tea. All of that wasn’t arranged for us, but what can you do?\footnote{Cited in Daum, \textit{Immigrés de force}, 53.}

The camp at Baumettes was in many respects indicative of policies that would follow. Far from the city center, it promoted physical and spatial separation of colonials from the French population and allowed officials to survey how the workers acclimated to life in France. It was part prison camp, part laboratory and part sorting center. Doctors and other individuals concerned with colonial ethnography tested, prodded and poked colonial bodies to determine their ability to hold certain types of employment and how they reacted to the change in climate. Since the newly arrived colonials were considered civilians, however, it was deemed impossible to keep them indefinitely at the camp and they were often given leave during specially designated times to visit Marseille. One worker from Tonkin wrote home saying that they were “free” in Marseille (in the sense that they could visit the city) although he complained that the cost of the tram – two francs at the time – was too expensive for many of the workers to leave the camp regularly.\footnote{ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Letter from Trong N. to Cuong N., 25 December 1939.} Another wrote his brother noting he had visited the city to get a haircut after the month long voyage from Saigon, although he made sure to wash his hair beforehand so as to not be treated like a “dirty Annamite.”\footnote{Ibid, Letter from L.K. Loc to Pham C., 7 January 1940.}

Although there was apparently some apprehension over the type of reception they would receive, many workers specifically emphasized greater social equality in the métropole compared to Indochina. As one interpreter at Baumettes stated, “the Tây (French) here think of us better than the band of colons back home, because here we are French
The fact that this interpreter seems to have believed that colonials became citizens when arriving in France, suggests the desire for equality was intense among some of the highly educated Vietnamese arriving in France. Likewise, Hoang N. wrote to a friend in Annam noting that the police in Marseille were very honest and courteous, not like the “clique” which one encountered in the colony.9

As more and more colonial workers started arriving in early 1940, however, authorities in the Bouches-du-Rhône became worried about the potential effects that North Africans and Vietnamese would have on the French population. There was also growing concern over a perceived reticence among MOI officers to enforce strict discipline and encadrement. The meningitis epidemic in northern Indochina, the image of thousands of colonials loitering in a camp close to a major French city, and the perception among many officials that Asians and Africans were unhealthy and prone to disease, led to growing fears within the prefecture. As the prefect noted in a letter to the MOI, there was “apprehension because of a lack of hygiene among the indigenous workers housed in the Baumettes ‘Welcome Centre’.” Fears had been amplified after a group of Indochinese workers had been given leave from the camp on 7 February. One week later, the local health service in Baumettes reported that a young boy who attended school in the area had been diagnosed with meningitis. It was never proven that his infection originated from Asian workers but local authorities nevertheless immediately jumped to that conclusion. The prefect emphasized that without “permanent indigenous encadrement”, it would be impossible to

8 Ibid, Letter from Quynh N. to Thuan Q., 3 February 1940.
9 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Letter from Hoang N. to Hoang L., undated, but probably April or May 1940. Given the repressive policing apparatus and brutal prison system existing in colonial Indochina, it is perhaps not surprising that many workers considered French police to be “better” than their counterparts in Southeast Asia. See Peter Zinoman, The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
obtain from the workers “neither hygiene nor discipline” and demanded that the MOI limit the movement of colonial workers outside the camp.10

General Raulet, commander of Baumettes at the time, reacted immediately to this request, imposing a serious of measures that seriously restricted mobility. Twelve guards were assigned to circulate the streets outside the camp during the day, and no worker was permitted to leave without European accompaniment. The gate to the camp would be shut and guarded by MOI agents; passageways, which joined the camp to the adjoining neighborhood, sealed with barbed wire. Further, colonials working at hospitals in the region could no longer number more than fifty and would be inspected by an MOI doctor every morning before permitted to exit the camp. Every worker who left without authorization and violated Raulet’s orders would be confined to a “disciplinary cell” for a minimum of two days.11 Violations were dealt with harshly. Four Moroccans were found intoxicated and urinating on the sidewalk outside the camp after exiting without permission. After they attacked the police officers sent to arrest them Raulet had the Moroccans imprisoned and denied food as a form of punishment.12

Raulet’s promise to further monitor the entry and exit of colonials, and his draconian treatment of those transgressing his orders, failed to quell popular unrest. One petition, signed by dozens of property owners in the area, specifically referenced the section housing North Africans. Local residents complained that, “the hygienic conditions and security [of the camp] have not been studied or respected” by the MOI, and open latrines emitted an

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11 ADBR, 174 W 35, Note de service N. 141, Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène – Base Principale de Marseille, signed General Raulet, 14 February 1940.
12 ADBR, 4 M 2318, Marseille Police to the Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 29 April 1940.
almost “unbearable pestilent odor.”\footnote{ADBR, 174 W 35, Letter to the Minister of Labour, 3 June 1940.} Officials as far away as Paris even urged the MOI and prefecture to enhance medical screening and public health programs. Calling attention to the “serious risks of contamination for our population” because of the arrival of colonial workers, the prefect was asked by the Ministry of Health to “methodically organize the medical and sanitary surveillance of indigenous labour” in Marseille by better coordinating health inspections with MOI and local officials.\footnote{ADBR, 174 W 35, Ministry of Public Health to the Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 2 May 1940. The minister mentioned in particularly the Naval Health Service based in Marseille, the Health Inspector, the Municipal Hygiene Office and the medical service for foreign workers.} At a minimum, minister Héraud demanded a medical visit for all workers at the time of their disembarkation; hospitalization of the sick; isolation for those deemed to be carrying contagious illnesses; monitoring people who were in contact with them; an antiviral vaccination; and the delousing and disinfection of subjects carrying parasites, along with their clothes and belongings.\footnote{Ibid} Many of Héraud’s demands were implemented shortly afterwards by the MOI. A series of contagious disease centers \textit{(foyers épidémiques)} were created to house colonial workers deemed a threat to public health.\footnote{ADBR, 174 W 35, “Travailleurs coloniaux et étrangers,” Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône to the Ministry of Public Health, 22 May 1940.} The MOI even started to better coordinate activities with local medical authorities around France, informing them of potential health risks posed to the French population when a group of workers was sent to their place of employment.\footnote{ADBR, 174 W 35, Dr. Duguet to the Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 22 May 1940.}

II

The workers’ arrival in Marseille reveals a number of interesting elements about how colonials were perceived by French authorities. Baumettes was consciously designed to physically isolate colonials from the French population, and yet as more and more Asians and Africans arrived in the métropole, the inhabitants of Marseille became increasingly
concerned with disease, resulting in fewer rights for colonials arriving in the city. Caution over the rapid arrival of workers from the overseas empire did not end on the Mediterranean coast. MOI documents describe in much greater detail how racial perceptions governed the creation of official government policy for the workers when they were sent across metropolitan France. Following its formation in November 1939 the MOI was tasked with managing the daily lives of Africans and Asians brought to the métropole for the war effort. While MOI agents, politicians and business leaders often proclaimed that colonials were to be treated exactly like French workers, internal documents guiding official policies were often created based on the assumption that colonial subjects were fundamentally different than their European counterparts. One early document proclaimed the MOI was engaging in “the administration of men of a race and customs (moeurs) different than ours.” As such, it was deemed necessary, despite official rhetoric about equality between French and colonial workers, to design policies for their employment and housing accordingly.

Interesting parallels emerge between this emphasis on regulating and controlling the human body and Foucault’s concepts of biopower and governmentality that he discussed during his lectures at the Collège de France. Although scholars have maligned the lack of emphasis Foucault placed on understanding the emergence of racism, he briefly touched on how racial thinking emerged simultaneously with broader concerns over disease, population and sexuality in modern European society. He pointed specifically to the need of the State to rationalize and monitor its population through the use of statistical information like the census, birth, and mortality figures. One technique in particular that Foucault discussed was the need to “discipline” the human body. As he noted, this form of biopower, “centers on the

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body, produc[ing] individualizing effects, and manipulat[ing] the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile.”¹⁹ Foucault was particularly concerned with what he termed the “synaptic regime of power” that governed individual bodies and inserted itself “into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.”²⁰ Schools, hospitals, prisons, workshops and attempts to regulate human sexuality all fell into this category.

The system of *encadrement* which emerged out of a desire manage the corporeal presence of colonials was a more blunt instrument than a form of social discipline envisaged by Foucault. Although Foucault was extremely interested into how biopower became normative in society rather than being “imposed from above”, policies directed at colonial workers nevertheless reveal attempts by the French state to regulate the human body through a series of disciplinary initiatives. These were heavily influenced by what Clifford Rosenberg has termed “Republican racial thought.”²¹ MOI guidelines – and particularly the concept of *encadrement* – were driven by one underlying concept in particular: that colonials were incapable of adapting to life in France without European assistance. Policies that emerged as an outgrowth of this – tailoring employment to specific racial characteristics, constructing barracks with certain health considerations in mind, and designing separate spaces where colonials could congregate – were deeply concerned with managing colonial bodies while they were stationed in the métropole. Officials specifically pointed to the fragility of Asians and Africans, and dangers to the French population and war effort if they were not properly managed.

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managed. In this sense, the experience of colonial workers during this time period was influenced by a particular strain of French racial thought that demanded constant intervention into the lives of colonials.

Similar concepts like segregation and apartheid may seem ill-fitting considering the differences between France, the United States and South Africa, but there are nevertheless interesting comparisons to be made. In all three cases, physical separation was viewed as a solution to social ills that could result from the intermingling of different races. Both South Africa and the Jim Crow system in the American South promoted the image of child-like blacks needing white supervision and protection from themselves. And, of course, American segregation in particular was often couched in “separate but equal” terminology that heavily favored whites at the expense of blacks. But French racism never descended into such an extreme reading of racial difference as in the United States and South Africa. The creation of camps may have been intended to promote distance between colonial subject and French citizen, but Édouard Daladier’s government was unwilling to recreate Jim Crow in France. Intermarriage was never made illegal, for example, and there was no racial division of public spaces to the extent that occurred in the United States and South Africa. While segregation and apartheid were clearly intended to imbue their respective societies with racially codified hierarchies, French officials were more concerned with being able to manage the transition between life in the colonies and the métropole. This suggests that biopower is not simply normative in a universalistic sense, as Foucault posited, but heavily influenced by specific characteristics of the society in question.

One area where French racial thought became particularly prominent was in the actual employment of colonials. They were not simply to be used as an inexpensive source of
labor for employers looking to cut costs but rather as a means to augment industrial production. At the same time, MOI policy dictated that colonials were to be placed in the lowest possible positions in the workplace. Directives specified that colonials must be treated as *manoeuvres* – manual labourers – and that “indigenous workers are not interchangeable with European workers, and in addition, are not interchangeable with each other when they belong to different races.”

Pushing colonials into unskilled positions (apart from the miniscule number of skilled workers brought to France) was a form of state-sanctioned employment discrimination. No avenues were left open for North Africans or Vietnamese to eventually rise towards positions of authority. Apart from the use of indigenous interpreters acting as an intermediary between a work contingent and MOI agents, there was no chance of colonials becoming foremen or supervisors on the factory floor.

Prescribing certain jobs for colonials was obviously intended to placate French workers and union organizations worried about non-white subjects usurping skilled employment. A cursory glance at the occupations of the Moroccans stationed in Saint-Auban before they arrived in France reveals that many of them did indeed hold semi-skilled positions in the protectorate and yet their experience was often nullified when arriving in the métropole. Eight-one Moroccans were classified as “manual labourers” but there were also masons, painters, carpenters, ironworkers, mechanics, electricians, glassworkers and metal press operators among those that arrived at the factory. It was almost as if workplace

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22 ADIL, 10 M 272, MOI Note N. 278, 20 November 1939, pp. 2-3.
expertise in a colonial setting was useless regardless of interwar rhetoric over “developing” and “educating” subjects in the ways of western capitalism.24

Delineation between “races” also reflected preconceived stereotypes that imputed specific characteristics to certain groups of colonial subjects. Asians were deemed particularly suited to work that required precision, because their intelligence and attention span were seen as “evolved.” From a physical point of view, they were “agile and supple”, but not accustomed to travaux de force – work that required a great deal of strength.25 Moroccans possessed a “vigorous constitution” suited for agriculture, mining, construction and forestry. Algerians and Tunisians made good workers for heavy industry, but they required “patience and spirited attention” from their employers. Those from sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar were deemed “less evolved” than the other colonials and could only serve as manual laborers.26 This highly essentialized reading of specific ethnic attributes was closely followed when assigning employment. The vast majority of Moroccans were used as basic laborers in fields, mines and factories after they arrived in France. Algerians held a variety of positions including working for the French national rail company (SNCF), on docks in Le Havre, Nantes and Marseille, and factories around Paris and southeastern France. The French government directed Vietnamese to state-owned armaments facilities like powder and cartridge factories along with some for the aeronautics industry.

Although MOI officials had taken care to place colonials in jobs deemed best suited to their particular “race”, reactions from employers were mixed over the effectiveness of Asians and Africans in the workplace. Moroccan agricultural workers in southern France and

25 ADIL, 10 M 272, MOI Note N. 278, 20 November 1939, pp. 3.
26 Ibid
the Paris region were deemed satisfactory. Most of the praise directed at the Moroccans, however, was not for their work – indeed, the consensus was that they were not as good as European workers – but rather in countering prevailing stereotypes of North Africans as being unintelligent, violent, erratic, shiftless and lazy. Some farmers were even surprised that the workers knew specialized skills like how to drive a tractor and described their work as “robust, tireless” and the workers themselves as “very docile.” Monsieur Bernaudou from St-Martin-de-Crau near Marseille called his workers “obedient and intelligent” and another noted, “their morality is very good” and “[they] do not lack intelligence.”27 The president of the Arles agricultural syndicate wrote to the MOI in May 1940 praising the “good attitude” and “understanding” of his Moroccan employees. “They have, however, a tendency to work lightly and cannot totally be assimilated as European workers.”28

Moroccans surprised French farmers with their work ethic and knowledge of modern agricultural practices. The productivity of Vietnamese, by contrast, was often constrained by their supposed racial attributes. As one MOI agent later noted, “the Annamite is not strong and robust. He is incapable doing of difficult work (we classify him in an intermediary category between male work and female), but properly guided and supervised, he can acquire a significant degree of aptitude for physical labor.”29 Falling into this category between male and female, employers relied on what they described as the “natural qualities” of Vietnamese workers: patience, intelligence, curiosity and a “sense of imitation.” For the director of the powder factory at Bergerac, Asians were essentially children who could not properly comprehend the importance of their work:

27 MAE, Manneville, pp. 18-19.
28 Ibid, pp. 20.
29 ANOM, 3 ECOL 41, George Cariven “Petite enquête sur les travailleurs annamites en France pendant cette dernière guerre,” Mémoire de l’Ecole coloniale, 1944, pp. 3.
The European instructor must repeat before the Annamite worker the exact operation that we want him to do and often he will need all the patience possible. More experienced Annamite workers already engaged in the same work can also serve as guides for those who are just beginning. Very simple and clear small diagrams posted on the wall, including very short notes, will also allow the worker to remember what he needs to do and what is expected of him. During the execution of work, surveillance must be always present, but with patience as well. One must make the Annamite understand, using all possible methods, the best way for him to succeed at his task.  

Many found themselves making fuses for cartridges, working with chemicals, or building aircraft frames in aviation factories – in essence, manual labour requiring dexterity and repetition rather than physical strength. The work may have been less intensive physically but it caused significant health problems. Workers noted years later how the yellow powder used in cartridges and shells caused irritation when it came into contact with the skin. One stationed near Bordeaux noted how the powder entered the nose, mouth, and hair during work, leaving many men unable to eat afterwards and resulting in weight loss. Eventually this led to fatigue and illness, although the numbers affected are hard to gage properly. Huu T – “Toto” – was working in Oissel outside of Rouen and wrote his friend stating “the Annamites are weak and cannot work like the French so our hours have been reduced, that is to say, no more than 48 hours per week. In spite of this, there are a still a number ill.”

Despite French officials and the MOI tailoring work to the supposed strengths of Vietnamese, many employers found their performance lacking. The first contingent “delivered” to powder facility in Toulouse was already proving “disappointing” in its effectiveness compared to French and Spanish workers just a few months after arriving.  

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32 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Huu T. to Truong S., 4 May 1940.  
Personnel in Toulouse also began to complain about the “indolence, apathy and poor attitude” among Vietnamese, although some MOI agents did try and temper criticism by pointing out the men were working in a factory for the first time.\textsuperscript{34} Subsequent reports indicate perceptions of Vietnamese actually decreased over the course of their stay. They were deemed to have given “little satisfaction” despite their adaptation to French life and one foreman even accused them of “working lightly…under the pretext of incomprehension.” “It seems that in spite of the attempts of the higher-ups,” the report continued, “this labour force needs to be trained \textit{dressée} a little more forcefully.”\textsuperscript{35} The last report, written in the midst of the French defeat, shows a more explicitly racial critique of the workers: “The Indochinese appear resolved to not separate themselves from their natural indolence. It seems, however, very much the case that this contingent of colonials persists in this \textit{apathy} which seems to be the dominant trait of their character.”\textsuperscript{36}

Comments about the apathy, indolence and less than desirable productivity of colonial workers in France suggest that, despite public proclamations, Asians and Africans were never perceived as being equal to French workers. While this is reflected in the nature of their employment, institutional racism also extended to the method by which the workers were paid. This was especially true for Vietnamese. Rather than receive a paycheck, their earnings were instead placed in a savings account the worker was not allowed to access until he had returned to Indochina. A portion was then used by the MOI to pay for housing, food and administrative costs. Withholding wages was officially proclaimed a paternalistic


measure to prevent colonial workers from squandering their money on gambling and alcohol. The MOI also hoped that it would promote a “taste for saving” (le goût de l’épargne) that could be useful for when they returned to the colony.\textsuperscript{37} The real impact of this measure, however, is quite obvious. Given the cost of living in France during the war, Vietnamese workers were reduced to an almost total dependence on the MOI.

As a means to counteract possible disturbances over the fact that wages were being withheld, the MOI instituted a variety of monetary allocations and bonuses. Each worker was given a “daily allocation” of one franc per day. Further, MOI agents believed that a “work bonus” (prime de travail) would “stimulate the zeal of the worker and assure good productivity.”\textsuperscript{38} A three-tiered system was thus introduced which paid the workers an extra sum per day based on their productivity as determined by MOI agents.\textsuperscript{39} In Le Ripault, for example, of the over six hundred Indochinese working at the powder factory, fifty-three were described as “very good,” 152 as “good” and 431 as “average.”\textsuperscript{40} The MOI in Nantes did not provide an exact number of those falling into each category, but the over two hundred workers earned an hourly wage of 3.50 francs with bonuses between two and four francs per day for productivity.\textsuperscript{41} Technically speaking, then, Vietnamese were paid comparable wages to French workers, but they saw very little of this money. They were instead given meager bonuses and allocations specifically to prevent them from achieving financial independence while in France.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] ANOM, 3 ECOL 41, Cariven, “travailleurs annamites,” pp. 5.
\item[38] ADIL, 10 M 272, MOI Note N. 137, 8 January 1940. “stimuler le zèle de l’ouvrier et d’assurer un bon rendement.”
\item[40] ADIL, 10 M 273, “Compte-rendu de quinzaine – Groupement de Salbris,” 14 June 1940.
\item[41] ADIL, 10 M 273, “Rapport bi-mensuel – 11ème compagnie,” 11 June 1940.
\end{footnotes}
While there were no large-scale protests by Vietnamese workers over wages, letters to their family and friends display discontent with the level of pay. A man originally from Tonkin stationed at facility in Bourges complained about his modest pay and inability to buy tobacco. Another wrote to his uncle that his wages “were not anymore than that of a coolie back home.” Earning more money in France was one of the key selling points for recruiters overseas, but many began to complain about the fact they were earning less than in the colonies. A Cambodian worker stationed near Marseille noted that while he made sixty francs per month at home, in France he did not make more than thirty. The fact that the workers were dependent on the MOI and their employer may have lessened the fact that they were often earning less than they had in Indochina, but there was a much broader dissatisfaction with the cost of living in France. A handkerchief that may have cost eight sous in Indochina was over two francs in France; a chicken was fifteen francs in the colony but now thirty francs in France. “I am an indigent in France,” wrote one working in a hospital in Marseille, complaining that it was at least five times more expensive in France than Indochina.

Payment policies for colonials, however, were not uniform and in a certain sense reflected hierarchies within French racial thought. Since there had been a significant number living in the métropole during the interwar years, North Africans were perceived as slightly more mature than Asians and thus the MOI allowed them to receive wages directly from their employer. Although concern existed over how North Africans would spend their earnings, the Ministry of Labor instructed all employers in January 1940 that they had to be guaranteed

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42 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Tran D. to Pham N., undated
43 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Pham T. to Nguyen N., undated
44 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Nha to Dong S., 12 February 1940.
a net daily wage of at least fifteen francs. At the same time, the MOI directly contradicted promises made in the colonies over who would cover the cost of their stay. Workers were often promised food and lodging as a means to facilitate recruitment, but the MOI began deducting money from paychecks to reduce expenses for the French government and employers. As the following table from an ironworks facility near Saint-Etienne indicates, it was often standard policy to withhold fifteen francs per day for housing and food, between ten and twenty percent of their daily wages for administrative costs, five to seven percent for social insurance, and a tax on all paychecks designed to partially finance the war:

**Wages for Moroccan workers at Acières de Firminy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average weekly hours:</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly salary:</td>
<td>5.12 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly salary:</td>
<td>204.80 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary hours:</td>
<td>15 (at 3.05 francs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>250.55 francs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Salary (6 days):</td>
<td>41.75 francs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**With deductions of**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4% for social insurance:</td>
<td>1.65 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contribution nationale extraordinaire:</strong></td>
<td>1.20 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.90 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and housing:</td>
<td>15 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.90 francs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained by the State (10%):</td>
<td>4.01 francs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Net daily wage:** 19.89 francs

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45 ADL, 1 ETP 510, “Salaire mimimun des TM,” Capt. Lussagnet of the MOI to the Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy, 5 February 1940.
46 MAE, Manneville, pp. 29-30.
It should come as no surprise that many North Africans recruited by the MOI were not thrilled with the deductions made by their employers. They questioned why they were forced to pay for recruitment, transport, food and housing when it had been promised free of charge in North Africa. Moreover, many became agitated when they learned their French and “free” North African counterparts were earning considerably more for the same work. French officials were deducting over three hundred and fifty francs per month for food and housing when it cost between thirty and fifty francs per month to rent a bed in a North African rooming house. Further, the French state was deducting money for social insurance from workers who had never lived in France and would be automatically repatriated in the event they somehow became unemployed. It is not clear from the archival record what wages had been promised to the workers in North Africa but many complained about their pay in France, especially related to their “free” North African counterparts.

III

Keeping colonial workers healthy and productive in the factory was closely tied to the environment in which they lived. Because colonial bodies were envisaged as inherently unhealthy compared to European norms, the MOI paid close attention to housing and living conditions. Its doctrine suggested non-white subjects required constant supervision by the state after their arrival in the métropole. Not only would a properly constructed environment reduce the possibility of disease and ill health, but also promote better relations between Africans, Asians and the French population. Managing the workers’ living conditions, the argument went, would reduce xenophobic reactions over the presence of people widely viewed as carriers of germs and serious illnesses. Camps thus took on a dual purpose for French officials, and yet also marked colonials as distinct and different from metropolitan
citizens. Indeed, while allowing MOI agents to monitor the health of workers from North Africa and Indochina, they also excluded them from French society, thus rendering official pronouncements of equality unworkable in practice.

Housing allocated to colonial workers was first created on an ad-hoc basis. After war was declared the mayor of Bergerac – which would later receive thousands of Southeast Asians for the nearby powder factory – indicated that the city was completely unprepared to house supplemental workers. Although the town was scheduled to receive over 16,000 new workers, no plans had been made to ensure suitable housing at all. The mayor suggested that the inhabitants of Bergerac could receive French workers but any colonials or foreigners should be relegated to specially constructed camps.47 Those employed at the Arsenal Maritime de Lorient in Brittany were initially kept in buildings normally reserved for cadets at a nearby naval school.48 In Monts and La Montagne – two small towns in northwestern France – the Indochinese were directed to hastily constructed wood buildings built on an open field and soccer pitch, respectively, or to crumbling, vacated warehouses.49

There is little archival evidence about the housing of colonial workers in larger urban areas, but it seems as though the porous and poorly constructed nature of the camp in Toulouse heightened tension between local inhabitants and Vietnamese. The police reported “disagreeable reactions on the sidewalks and cafés” in the city, especially on the rue de Muret near the camp itself. Several complaints were registered with MOI agents because the doors of the camp were left open during the evening allowing the workers to leave

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47 Archives départementales de la Dordogne (ADD), 1 Z 138, Mayor of Bergerac to the sous-préfet of Bergerac, 11 August 1939.
unsupervised. Indeed, on the first night that the workers arrived, two were found in the
apartment of a young women, supposedly buying furniture; others were scolded for
“exhibiting themselves” in front of French women.\textsuperscript{50}

The MOI responded to concerns about housing Asians and Africans with a series of
instructions outlining the characteristics of colonial work camps. Unlike provisional camps
intended for refugees from the Spanish Civil War, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the
physical and “moral” wellbeing of the workers. Perceptions that people from the colonies
were unusually susceptible to disease because of the change in climate and eating habits
meant that their living environment had to be properly regulated to guarantee productivity.
As one document noted, colonials have “less physical resistance [than Europeans] and also
are more receptive to illness. [Because] they live in warm climates and are mostly peasants
and fishermen…it will be difficult to lead a life working in armaments or manufacturing.”\textsuperscript{51}

To combat what was seen as colonials’ inability to quickly adapt to the French climate, the
MOI specified that the barracks must be built of hard materials such as wood or stone to
guard against the cold outside. Windows, doors, and heating in the winter would ward off
potential illnesses. Each worker was given a locker for their personal belongings and clothing
– which was to be washed regularly – and the MOI even specified how far apart the beds
should be placed (50 centimeters) and the volume of air which should be present for every
individual (17 meters cubed). Officials seemed worried about what effect a change in diet
would have on productivity so MOI agents were told to gradually move towards European
foods. And in keeping with their emphasis on health, it was specified that indoor plumbing

\textsuperscript{50} Archives départementales de la Haute-Garonne (ADHG), 2008 W 23, “Rapport au sujet d’Annamites
cantonnés à l’A.N.S.,” Police to Prefect of Haute-Garonne, 4 December 1939.
\textsuperscript{51} ADIL, 10 M 272, “L’installation matérielle des travailleurs indigènes,” pp. 2, MOI Instruction No. 267, 18
November 1939.
should be installed, and washrooms and showers should be kept in the same building in which the workers lived. Further, each camp was to keep an infirmary for the ill and an area where those with contagious diseases should be quarantined.52

Managing disease and illness was indeed one of the greater concerns for MOI agents within the confines of the camp. Along with traditional fears over tuberculosis and venereal disease the MOI was concerned with a variety of more mundane ailments that could spread rapidly among men in close quarters. Instructions were disseminated in early 1940 to deal with scabies and other skin infections caused by coming into contact with chemicals and other hazardous materials. MOI agents were instructed to immediately isolate the ill and engage in a closely monitored disinfection process using “white soap”, hot showers and benzyl benzoate as a means of containing the rate of contagion.53

Similar to paternalistic concerns over wages and payment, Southeast Asians received more attention in this regard than North Africans. Fears were obviously amplified by the ongoing meningitis epidemic in Indochina, but instructions also imputed susceptibility to disease rooted in their ethnicity. “Fragility and receptiveness to illnesses provoked by the cold” among Asians was noted as well as “imprudence [and] indifference to climatic conditions.”54 This “untroubled nature, little disciplined, infantile even,” necessitated constant inspection by government officials. In April 1940 the MOI declared that a doctor would inspect all Asian workers two times per week. One of these visits would be dedicated to “infectious diseases and the possible incubation of venereal diseases.” If the doctor

52 Ibid
53 ADIL, 10 M 272, MOI Instruction No. 66, 5 January 1940.
54 ADIL 10 M 272, “Conditions générales auxquelles doivent repondre les cantonnements des travailleurs indochinois,” undated.
discovered an illness he would be required to notify departmental health authorities that would either isolate the workers or send them for special medical treatment in Marseille.\textsuperscript{55}

It is difficult to determine the prevalence of disease among Vietnamese stationed in wartime France. Reports from Nantes, for example, deemed the health of Indochinese workers “very good”, while those in Lorient, Monts and Salbris indicated that illness was more common.\textsuperscript{56} The archives, however, reveal a great degree of psychological anxiety among the French population over the presence of colonials nearby. Medical inspectors in Lorient reported the health of Vietnamese workers had caused “rather large apprehension” among the French personnel working at the local arsenal. An outbreak of mumps eventually led French workers to demand punitive measures against their colonial colleagues, requesting an isolation of the sick and a removal of the remaining Asian workers until symptoms had subsided.\textsuperscript{57} The commander of a Vietnamese work contingent at a munitions plant in Salbris reported a measles epidemic in May 1940. As in Lorient, French workers demanded the entire company be confined to their camp. MOI agents at Salbris, however, were less sympathetic to this request than their counterparts in Lorient. Despite fears of contagion by the French personnel the MOI argued that almost seven hundred Vietnamese – helping to

\textsuperscript{55} ADIL, 10 M 273, MOI Instruction No. 3593, 15 April 1940.

\textsuperscript{56} ADIL, 10 M 273, “Compte-rendu du quinzaine – Groupement du Ripault,” Illegible to Colonel Barbier, 14 June 1940 and “Rapport bi-mensuel – Groupement de Salbris,” Commander Durut to Colonel Barbier, 12 June 1940. Durut stated that fifty workers had been infected with mumps and thirty-three with measles, which accounted for almost fifteen percent of the Vietnamese workforce. “Compte-rendu de la visite faite au casernement de cette Compagnie, le 14 mars 1940,” 30 March 1940; “Compte-rendu de la visite faite au 21ème compagnie le 15 mars,” 20 March 1940; “Visite au casernement de Monts-Le Ripault. Démarrage médical,” 30 March 1940. All three are from Doctor Robert to Colonial Barbier, Commander of 4\textsuperscript{th} Legion of Indochinese workers.

\textsuperscript{57} ADIL, 10 M 273, “Compte-rendu de la visite faite au casernement de cette Compagnie, le 14 mars 1940,” Robert to Barbier, 30 March 1940.
produce between 15,000 and 17,000 75mm anti-tank shells per day – were too important for production at the present time to be sequestered in their camp.\footnote{ADIL, 10 M 272, “Etat sanitaire – Groupement de Salbris,” Bi-monthly report to Commander of 4th Legion, 25 May 1940.}

**IV**

While the MOI sought to manage the health and daily life of workers through a close control of their housing, colonial workers were not prisoners. They were often permitted to leave the camps during specified hours, visit nearby cities and towns and interact with the local population. At the same time, the MOI and local French authorities were extremely wary of potential relationships that could develop, especially between white women and men of color. While they could not confine workers to camps given their civilian status, officials did seek to limit contact between subject and citizen, imposing a series of legal restrictions on colonial workers differentiating them from the local population. In this sense, the distinction between French and colonial was not just theoretical; we can see how the rights of colonial workers were limited by the Third Republic to manage public safety concerns.

Letters written by colonials while stationed in France offer a glimpse of how they perceived life in the métropole but must be recognized as a product of class, social standing and education. Educated interpreters – those who had attended French schools in the colony and were fluent in written and spoken French – typically had a much more positive view of metropolitan society than ordinary workers. Similarly, interpreters and adjuncts to French staff earned more money, enjoyed greater social privileges, and had less strenuous work than those employed in munitions or manufacturing.

The vast majority of letters presented an image of metropolitan France as much less socially and racially hierchical than in the colonies. “The French here,” claimed one
Southeast Asian, “are not at all like those of the colony…Since I arrived I have not envied a return to Indochina”\(^{59}\) Another in Bergerac wrote his brother enthusiastically informing him that “one is much better here than in Indochina because of the motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. [These ideals] are clearly much friendlier here than back home.”\(^{60}\) Racial and social segregation in the colonies was not totally complete but subjects rarely interacted with French *colons* on an equal basis. This ability to participate in banal activities often associated with the colonizers amazed some Asian workers sent to France. Whereas French settlers in Indochina created separate *quartiers*, clubs and leisure activities predicated on racial exclusion, many workers lauded the fact that Vietnamese could freely visit cafés and converse with ordinary French citizens. One interpreter stationed in Bourges wrote a friend that he had begun to frequent a café where would be given cigarettes, drinks, pastries and questioned on life in Indochina by the local patrons. “We joke with the waiters,” he wrote, “who are very pleased to meet a *homme jaune* who can speak French clearly.”\(^{61}\)

Colonial workers may have believed they enjoyed greater social equality because Republican ideals were more faithfully applied in the métropole. But there was nevertheless a strong undercurrent of racism and social superiority in French society. Rather than manifesting itself in violence, ideas about the inferiority of colonial subjects were often expressed through jokes, cartoons and off-handed remarks. An interpreter stationed in Bordeaux, while noting the French “like us a lot”, also mentioned back-handed compliments paid to Asians at the factory: “the older men who experienced the Great War and worked with the Annamite workers of that era congratulated us on becoming much more civilized,

\(^{59}\) ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Letter to Lien T., 12 February 1940.
\(^{60}\) ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, M. Hiep to M. Dong, undated.
\(^{61}\) ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Vinh T. to Ninh T., 26 April 2940.
and knowing how to care for, as well as conduct ourselves, better than them.” The idea that Asians should be glad to have evolved from “savages” to something approaching “civilized men” was a common trope in letters home. One colonial working in Toulouse elaborated on this more thoroughly:

The French say that in contrast to the Annamites of the previous war, those here are 100% different. They say that in a little more than twenty years this evolution has arrived at a point that one could not have imagined. They proclaimed the Annamites of 1914-1918 savages, and at the beginning of our arrival, they believed to find us the same, but after several days they were forced to reassess. This is because all of us had taken French and could speak it.

Interpreters even began to assimilate this rhetoric when describing their less educated compatriots. In Avignon, interpreters noted some of the “bad tricks” that ordinary workers were playing on the local population: “They weave through the towns, looking for young women to court; if they encounter French children, they roll up their lips to show their blackened teeth in a grimace that had many of the children fainting from fright. Our contingent is the third. Since our arrival, we have been compelled to remain in the area. We do not have the same freedoms as the others, our predecessors here, because they acted like savages.” These conflicts between groups of colonials, inflected by their social standing, was portrayed in a cartoon published in *Notre Equipe*, a newsletter for the powder factory in Toulouse (Figure 1). It portrays an interpreter attempting to instruct an ordinary worker on how to speak French properly; the joke is not only that Indochinese spoke French poorly, but the fact that fellow colonial subjects were often instructing the less educated workers under their supervision. The fact that this cartoon was intended for a French audience suggests that Asian workers were privately ridiculed more than personal correspondence allows.

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62 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Dinh G. to Kim K., 15 April 1940.
63 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Quy to Hieu N., 22 February 1940.
64 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Phan D. to Bui P., 28 January 1940.
Government authorities were also intensely preoccupied with socialization outside the workplace. Concerns over sex, health and labor productivity often converged in order to legitimize the social exclusion of Africans and Asians from metropolitan society. Potential sexual and romantic relationships between white French women and men of color received significant attention right away. Because the Asian body was rendered “feminine” and physically weak, they often worked alongside French women – who comprised twenty percent of the workforce in armaments facilities after September 1939 – on the factory floor. It is impossible to determine how prevalent relationships were at this time, but letters frequently referred to interactions with women in the workplace. In the case of Bordeaux, the “pretty and free-spirited” female employees at the local munitions facility frequently wrote
love letters to their Asian counterparts. As one Indochinese worker stationed in Toulouse indicated:

The female co-workers flirt all day...For my part, there is an older woman who would like to be my patron. She would like to, she said, me reconnaître pour son fils [recognize me as her son] and introduce me to a French woman. I responded that I am not staying in France more than nine months, and in these conditions, marriage will be impossible. She responded that the administration would not repatriate me if I married a French woman. It would be fair to say that French woman are very pleasant. They are content if we flirt all day with them and when we help them to fix their machines. Morning and evening, they give me candies and question me on my home.

Relationships also extended beyond factory floor. As one worker in Bergerac noted, “the young women like us a lot. Here, were have the freedom to walk arm-in-arm, talking all the time...Really, that makes us laugh. These workers do not know one word of French and only know how to say: oui, non, ça va and the women like them nevertheless.” Complain emerged that these infatuations were forcing some to “forget their familial duties”, spending money on the cinema, dancing, and buying things for their lovers which was supposed to be sent back home. Others actually went so far as to solicit items from their family members, as one worker in Normandy asked his friend to send him stamps from Indochina that could be given to his girlfriend’s father.

As the historical anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has remarked, métissage and inter-racial sex was “seen as a threat to white prestige, an embodiment of European degeneration

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65 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Dinh G. to Kim K., 15 April 1940
66 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, Hung to Tran T., 22 December 1939.
67 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, M. Hiep to M. Dong, undated. “Les demoiselles françaises nous aiment beaucoup. Ici on a la liberté de se promener bras dessus bras dessous tout en causant…Vraiment cela nous fait rire. Ces ouvriers ne connaissance aucun mot de français et savent à peine dire: oui, non, ça va et cependant ces dames les aiment ainsi.”
68 ANOM, RSTNF 6527, illegible to Nguyen L., 12 April 1940.
69 ANOM, SLOTFOM XIV, carton 4, Tho H. to Sanh T., 4 May 1940.
and moral decay” in the colonies. The same idioms were applied to France itself. Relationships between young French women and African and Asian men, while not legally prohibited in France, were clearly seen as a subversion of racial hierarchies and a danger to colonial rule. In order to preserve “color-blind” Republican equality, authorities instead instituted a series of measures that were not explicitly racial but nevertheless intended to promote social segregation. Rumors were circulated that colonials would not be allowed to return home if they married a French woman. Government authorities also spread stories about the difficulties that women would encounter because of cultural and religious differences. In March 1940, prefects were told to disseminate information about a French women that had married an Algerian man, only to discover upon a trip to North Africa that he had several other wives. Denouncing this “pitiful case”, the report noted that “calling indigenous and colonial workers to the Metropole could lead to a frequent occurrence of similar cases…We should in particular caution French women on the difficulties which can present themselves when the indigène returns to his homeland.”

Preventing “inter-racial” relationships also extended to public spaces. Wary of explicitly barring colonials from entering European establishments, agents from the MOI instead pointed to the “inability” of Asians and Africans to properly consume alcohol as a reason to prevent socialization. Attempts by authorities to prevent access to cafés, bars and social clubs was also influenced by the widely held belief that drinking decreased their productivity in the mine or factory. Jules Amar, a well-known specialist in “work-science”, argued that alcohol increased the possibility that workers contracted diseases like

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tuberculosis and render them incapable of doing work requiring patience and precision.\textsuperscript{72}

This theory about a decrease in the productivity of workers who consumed alcohol, combined with fears about public drunkenness, disorder and stereotypes about colonials often led to the prohibition on wine, beer and spirits for colonial workers after 1939.

In January 1940 the MOI formally prohibited the consumption of alcohol by Vietnamese stationed in France, stating that they were “little or poorly equipped to consume alcoholic beverages” because most were peasants who had never encountered it before.\textsuperscript{73}

This order seems to have been applied haphazardly. It did not take effect until 9 February 1940 in the Haute-Garonne, 28 February for the Basses-Alpes, and 6 March in the Dordogne. Similarly, the sale of alcohol to North Africans was prohibited on religious grounds.

Internally, however, officials worried that drinking could “relax the moral discipline necessary for their proper surveillance and the maintenance of public order.”\textsuperscript{74} Unlike for the Indochinese, there was not a widely circulated order to ban alcohol entirely for North Africans. It may have been left to the prefects to decide whether or not it should be banned, for it was prohibited in the Saône-et-Loire in March 1940, but not until May 1940 in the Loire.\textsuperscript{75} In this case, the presence of thousands of “free North Africans” living around France meant that authorities were cautious about alcohol, banning consumption entirely for this particular group.

Not surprisingly, café owners who were looking for patrons often disregarded these prohibitions. In Toulouse, the owner of the Bar du Coin was reprimanded for selling two


\textsuperscript{73} ADIL, 10 M 272, “Interdiction de l’alcool aux travailleurs indochinois,” MOI Circular No. 198, 11 January 1940

\textsuperscript{74} Archives départementales de Saône-et-Loire (ADSL), W 138178, Note from Minister of Interior to Prefect of Saône-et-Loire, 26 February 1940.

liters of wine to a Vietnamese worker.\textsuperscript{76} Some intrigue also occurred in Montchanin-les-Mines, north of Lyon, where an MOI agent responsible for a group of Moroccans in the area accused a café owner of selling alcohol to “his \textit{indigènes}.” He stated that although the workers would order lemonade, they would be covertly handed a bottle of wine under the table to share amongst themselves. When the gendarme confronted the café owner, she claimed to never have sold drinks to North Africans. Instead, she told the gendarme that the MOI agent had asked her for a bribe to allow the Moroccans to drink in her establishment and also made sexual advances on her. When she refused, the MOI agent denounced her as breaking French law.\textsuperscript{77}

The attempt by the MOI and local authorities to combat drinking took a number of other forms. The director of the powder factory in Bergerac complained that the presence of bars and cafés immediately outside the factory gates was causing disciplinary problems. After exiting work they would head to the cafés and “the men and women drink, sing, injure themselves and make horrible noise. Some are in a state of intoxication. One must tolerate this state of things though because if the police intervene in hopes of returning calm, it could invite incidents.”\textsuperscript{78} His solution to prevent this disorder – and especially the socialization of Vietnamese laborers and French women – was to have the prefect close all bars immediately outside the factory.\textsuperscript{79} After a number of letters from the factory director, the prefect refused,

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{76} ADHG, 2008 W 23, “Une vente de vin à des Indo-chinois,” Commander of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Legion of Indochinese workers to Toulouse Police, 1 March 1940.
\item\textsuperscript{77} ADSL, M 1770, “Procès-verbal constatant des renseignements sur des soi-disant ventes en cachettes des boissons alcoholisées aux sujets Nord-africains à Montchanin-les-Mines,” 2 May 1940.
\item\textsuperscript{78} ADD, I Z 138, “Débits route de Lalinde,” Bergerac Police to \textit{sous-préfet} of Bergerac, 8 May 1940.
\item\textsuperscript{79} ADD, I Z 138, “Débits de boisson au voisinage de la Poudrerie,” Director of the Power Factory of Bergerac to the \textit{sous-préfet} of Bergerac, 13 May 1940.
\end{footnotes}
stating that the best he could do was prevent the opening of any new bars five hundred meters outside the factory gates.80

One particular case, however, demonstrates the problems with attempting to prevent intermingling of the French and colonials without resorting to explicitly discriminatory measures. In the Saône-et-Loire – north of Lyon and close to Burgundy – local functionaries argued for the creation of cafés maures (Moorish cafés) as a means to prevent North Africans from visiting establishments frequented by French people. Although a mostly rural region, the towns of Monceau-les-Mines, Montchanin, Gueugnon, and especially Le Creusot were important manufacturing centers. While there were a small number of North Africans in the area before the war, their numbers had swelled to more than seven hundred by mid-1940. The massive increase in the North African population led the prefect, Hyacinthe Tomasini, to write his subordinates in early February 1940, stating that “all measures must be taken to acclimatize these workers to operate in the best conditions and so that the move to France will not harm their morale.”81

Tomasini emphasized two things: one, the notion that colonials must return home with a positive image of France, and second, the need to prevent workers from drinking and carousing with the French population. Indeed, he wanted France to show “the notion of empire is not just a meaningless word”, that they return to Morocco satisfied with their voyage because “they are very much considered to be sons of the same national family.”82 At the present time, however, Tomasini believed that this was not being accomplished because “when they leave the factory they feel abandoned, tempted to drink in French cafés alcoholic beverages to which they are not accustomed and which risks having the most harmful effects

80 ADD, 1 Z 138, Sous-préfet of Bergerac to the Director of the Powder Factory of Bergerac, 10 May 1940.
81 ADSL, W 138178, “Création des cafés maures,” Prefect of Saône-et-Loire to sous-préfets, 6 February 1940.
82 Ibid
on them.” Unlike other French officials, however, he was loath to simply forbid North Africans from access to nearby drinking establishments that were frequented by French workers. Enamored with sentiments of “equality”, they considered this measure discriminatory, and so to prevent harmful propaganda which could arise from this situation, he proposed the creation of cafés maures where the workers could meet and “revive the atmosphere of their ancestral homeland.” Installed at minimal cost, the cafés would feature card games, “Arab music”, North African cuisine like mint tea, couscous and “hygienic beverages.” They would become a place where the North Africans would want to meet rather than French cafés, and Tomisini also noted that it would increase the ability of informants to engage in surveillance.84

The prefect quickly began to solicit money, donations and help from employers and various government agencies. The Chamber of Commerce in Mâcon refused to contribute any funds for the project because there were so few North Africans in the area, but the Mayors of Gueugnon and Le Creusot, as well as the Schneider Company, agreed the creation of Moorish cafés was an excellent idea. The prefect even received a letter from Georges Le Beau, Governor General of Algeria, stating that he had been notified of Tomasini’s initiative and wanted to provide assistance.85 Tomasini in turn requested a number of items that were difficult to find in France like a date press used in making pastries, a special type of tobacco from Algeria and any propaganda or images that could be used in the cafés.86

While Tomasini was involved with organizing the creation of the cafés, however, there was an incident at the North African camp in Montchanin. One evening a number of

83 Ibid
84 Ibid
85 ADSL, W 138178, Governor General of Algeria to Prefect of Saône-et-Loire, 24 February 1940.
86 ADSL, W 138178, Prefect of Saône-et-Loire to Governor General of Algeria, 2 March 1940.
Moroccans came back to the camp drunk and threatened an MOI agent. The men were sent to a prison in Mâcon; Tomasini suggested that this incident validated his desire for the cafés were alcohol would be prohibited. The Ministry of the Interior thought otherwise, writing to the prefect shortly afterwards that the consumption of alcohol by North Africans should be forbidden in the department. Rather than simply accept this decision, though, Tomasini actually attempted to prevent the decree’s application under his jurisdiction. He wrote to the Minister of the Interior stating that he had banned the drinking of alcohol by North Africans outside of bars and cafés, but he refused to outlaw its consumption entirely. He noted that his meager police force was ill equipped to rigorously enforce something that only applied to one tenth of the population and the creation of the cafés maures would make these types of situations less common. Presenting his support from business leaders, the Governor General of Algeria and the Amités Africaines, he assured officials in Paris that the cafés would stop North Africans from visiting French establishments. Further, “it will not possible to forbid for a few indigenous workers who, distinguishing themselves from their comrades, would like to continue to visit French cafés, the access to these bars.” An “exceptional measure” such as this, he claimed, “would run counter to our objectives, [because] cafés where alcohol is sold exist in all the cities and towns of North Africa, and not being forbidden to the indigènes there, they will ask, with good reason, why, in coming to France, they are treated in a different fashion than in our overseas provinces.” Instead of blaming the North

87 ADSL, W 138178, Prefect of Saône-et-Loire to Minister of the Interior, 21 February 1940.
88 ADSL, W 138178, Ministry of the Interior to Prefect of Saône-et-Loire, 28 February 1940.
Africans, Tomasini instead argued that the MOI needed to ensure “appropriate encadrement.”

Tomasini was positive that the opening of the cafés maures would dissuade some North Africans from frequenting French drinking establishments. This turned out to be incorrect. When the Ministry of the Interior “invited” the prefect to once again ban the consumption of alcohol in late March, he complied with the order. His decree mentioned that French café owners had “infringed upon the prescriptions set forth in the Koran” by continuing to sell alcohol. Further, because it was the duty of France to “respect the beliefs…of North African subjects”, he was prohibiting the sale of alcohol because it “violates the wishes of many North Africans, which risks troubling the public order.” Indeed, the prefect actually received a letter from a group of North Africans at Montchanin with “their respectful thanks for the decree which took on the subject of alcoholic beverages forbidden by the Koran. Faithful Muslims hope that by the grace of this measure several of the misled among them will begin again along ‘the right path’, and they express to Monsieur le Prefect their feelings of deference and their sincere desire to work for France.” Tomasini also received a letter from Algerian Cheikh Mohamed el-Kassini expressing his admiration that France was respecting the Muslim faith and helping to reinforce “Franco-Muslim friendship.”

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The creation of Moorish cafés and promoting voluntary social segregation was one way in which French authorities sought to exercise benign influence over the colonial

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90 Ibid.
91 ADSL, W 138178, Arrêté préfectoral of 20 March 1940.
92 ADSL, W 138178, Letter from Moroccan workers of Montchanin to the Prefect of Saône-et-Loire, 27 March 1940.
93 ADSL, W 138178, Cheikh Mohamed el-Kassini to Prefect of Saône-et-Loire, 23 April 1940.
workforce. But they also attempted to heighten policing, surveillance and institute a number of measures on a more individual level to increase control over Africans and Asians in France. In this case, managing colonials extended beyond physical isolation – creating camps and separate spaces for socialization – to a much more individual level. Efforts were primarily focused on North Africans. Because so many Algerians and Moroccans had been living in France in 1939, authorities were deeply concerned about ensuring the productivity of this industrial workforce. Fears had been compounded by the massive departure of Algerians from French soil in September and October 1939. As the previous chapter demonstrated, authorities on both sides of the Mediterranean attempted to limit individual mobility by prohibiting free migration between France and North Africa after the declaration of war. A desire to control individual mobility also extended to metropolitan France itself. Under the law of 11 July 1938, workers over the age of eighteen deemed necessary for the war effort were prevented from leaving their employment. Since this included many industries which employed North Africans – especially mining, manufacturing and chemical production – the Ministry of Labour clarified in January 1940 that it applied not only to “those who enjoy the rights of French citizenship,” but also “all the indigenous French subjects, that is to say, all of those coming from a territory which has the juridical quality of a French colony.”

94 Moroccan workers were also placed under requisition and some mining companies in the Loire even went so far as to post the order in North Africans cafés around Saint-Etienne.95

94 ADL, 1 ETP 111, Alexandre Parodi to the Secretary General of the Central Committee for French Collieries, 26 January 1940
95 ADL, 1 ETP 505, Chief Engineer of Mines to Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy, 30 January 1940.
Preventing “free” North African workers from leaving their place of employment proved to be a serious challenge for the French government. Initial efforts to enforce requisition were shouldered by various SAINA offices around France but many were unable to cope with the increased burden. Bureaus in Marseille and Saint-Etienne, for example, did not even have a proper chiefs of staff, instead relying on poorly paid low-level French functionaries and North Africans to deal with thousands of colonials under their jurisdiction. Enhancing the effectiveness of SAINA in Marseille was a particular subject of concern because of its centrality as the port of disembarkation for North Africans coming to France. Rather than simply increase funding to hire more personnel, however, Louis Poussardin, the de-facto head of the Marseille bureau, was asked to do more with the same amount of money. “The situation, which as always been poor, has become untenable,” he wrote in late 1939, as his overwhelmed staff was asked by Paris to heighten surveillance and prevent North Africans from leaving France until their military service has been verified.

Local businesses were particularly displeased with the performance of the SAINA office in Marseille. In Lyon, on the other hand, SAINA dramatically increased the scope of their operations. Despite the fact that the local SAINA office was extremely effective in deporting unemployed North Africans during the 1930s local officials decided that the city needed a specialized police force as well. In early 1940 a North African Brigade was formed out of police and military officers in the region who could speak Arabic to monitor the political activity of Algerians and Moroccans.

96 AN, F 60 720, Minister of the Interior to Governor General of Algeria, 29 April 1939.
97 ADBR, 1 M 759, SAINA Marseille to Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 7 October 1939.
98 Archives départementales du Rhône (ADR), 10 M 223, Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of the Rhône, 28 February 1940.
Requisition and creating enhanced policing networks often proved ineffective when it came down to actually preventing North Africans from leaving their jobs. Industry in Marseille was particularly displeased with Algerians deserting. Employers had a very difficult time transitioning from the seasonal or contractual nature of work in the port city to a full-time workforce after the declaration of war. Further, because industry in Marseille was primarily concerned with chemical refinement – fertilizers, oil, soap, and agricultural products – the jobs were often poorly paid and undesirable. These emerging trends hit the Verminck chemical company particularly hard. In early 1940 the gendarmerie reported forty-four desertions out of three hundred Algerians working at the facility. Vermick stated it was having trouble procuring necessary primary materials for the refinement process, and as a result, had been forced to lay-off its workforce for several days a week. Many North Africans responded by simply leaving the factory altogether. At a neighboring chemical factory owned by the Victor-Régis Company, six of its workers not only “deserted”, but told their remaining North African compatriots to do the same. The prefect also started receiving similar notices from the sugar refinery at Saint-Louis and a variety of chemical companies operating around Marseille.

After conducting an investigation into these events, police in Marseille noted that a “malaise” had set in among the North African population largely employed in industries that had trouble attracting French workers because of low salaries and dangerous nature of the employment. While factory workers were making around fifty-six francs per day, dock workers could make between one hundred and one hundred and thirty francs per day. Since

101 ADBR, 4 M 2361, Divisional Inspector of Labour to the Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 27 February 1940.
many of the French workers on the docks had been mobilized, by early 1940 there was an increasing demand for men to unload cargo. It is only natural, the police noted, that the workers would want to leave poor paying employment for wages double what they were currently making. While the “obvious solution” would have simply been to arrest the workers and return them to the factories, both the police and industry wondered if this would create “discontent” among the workers and reduce production.\textsuperscript{102} There was also a question of whether the men were actually under requisition. Daladier’s July 1938 labor law was extremely broad and focused mainly on mining, manufacturing and armaments as essential war industries. Was producing soap for Vermick, for example, or sugar at Saint-Louis necessary for the war effort? Employers certainly argued they were – especially given particularly acute labor shortages – but the police remained unconvinced and were often more concerned other responsibilities in a bustling port city like Marseille. It seems that police, SAINA and industry never fully grappled with how to keep North Africans in place, as a survey just before the defeat in June 1940 showed eighty workers had quit the previous month.\textsuperscript{103}

Coal mining, on the other hand, was certainly viewed as an essential war industry. Collieries in southern France had historically relied on workers from rural areas, Spain, Italy and Eastern Europe to supplement their labor force. An inability to attract foreign workers after September 1939, and with requests to drastically augment coal production, some mine operators went to drastic lengths in order to keep North African workers from leaving.

Unlike industry in Marseille, the coalmines consistently berated the French state for its

\textsuperscript{102} ADBR, 4 M 2361, “Nord-africains,” Police to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 27 March 1940.
\textsuperscript{103} ADBR, 4 M 2361, Police to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 10 June 1940. The survey lists twenty-six workers from the refinery at Saint-Louis, seventeen from the Marseille Sulfur and Charcoal Society, and thirty-seven from various soap and chemical manufacturers.
apathy in dealing with North African workers. An exasperated director of one of the largest coalmines near Saint-Etienne wrote to a regional business association about the “total lack of co-ordination” and “the inefficiency in the application and execution of orders” from the French government. He was constantly being requested to increase coal production and yet to do this, he stated, “it would appear elementary, **first of all**, to maintain in place the personnel working there.” Algerians and Moroccans had been placed under requisition, but “no practical measure has been taken and the clandestine departure of this group of workers has proven itself catastrophic for the effectiveness of our workforce.” Moreover, while the police were supposed to enforce the requisition of North Africans, the direction claimed that they barely proceeded with their inquiries or it took them much too long to be effective.104

The mines were so displeased with the performance of SAINA and the police that many began to make the requisitioning of North Africans an internal matter, instituting a series of measures on a much more individual level. In Saint-Etienne, a number of the mines took this opportunity to start a thorough survey of the North Africans under their employ. The name, place and date of birth, profession, and date of arrival at the mine would all be taken, kept under file by the mine and then disseminated to the SAINA office in Saint-Etienne. The director made clear that this was “to stop the departure of North African workers and to facilitate searching for them” and not an administrative formality.105 To gain this information a series of notices were posted around the complex in early April stating that North Africans would not be paid until they had given their identification card to

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104 ADL, 1 ETP 111, The Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy to the President of the Loire Colliers Committee, 1 March 1940. Emphasis is in the original.
105 ADL, 1 ETP 510, Chief Engineer of the Mines to the Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy, 6 April 1940
administration. It was not divulged that the mine was planning to stamp their cards *requis à Saint-Etienne* – “requisitioned in Saint-Etienne” – at the same time to prevent the workers from leaving and aide searching for them if they did. Despite the threat of not paying the workers without handing over their personal information, it seems a great number simply refused. In May the director of the mine noted that “our Moroccans, even under the threat of not paying them, systematically refused to give us their work cards…Not having noted at the moment the workers were hired all the information contained on their cards, it has been impossible for us to proceed with the survey.”

The desertion of North Africans often led to severe responses by the French state if they were later caught or arrested. In April, Mohamed M., an Algerian from Constantine, was arrested in Marseille after soliciting a visa to return to North Africa. The police noted that he was on a list sent to them by the mines at Grand’Combe of those who had left without authorization. But Mohamed told the police that he had never been employed at Grand’Combe. First arriving in December 1937, he had taken up employment at Cessous – not Grand’Combe – where he stayed until October 1938. He quit for health reasons and claims to have gone back to Algeria. Returning to Cessous in October 1939, Mohamed had only worked for a few weeks. Falling ill again he was hospitalized in Alès for a number of months before receiving permission to return home. The police officer noted at the end of the report that “I believe that this is a case of mistaken identity,” but there is no indication of whether he was allowed to return Algeria. Mohamed was fortunate that he could speak

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106 ADL, 1 ETP 510, “Avis aux Ouvriers Algériens, Marocains, Tunisiens, Djiboutiens ou Ressortissants d’une Colonie Française,” 9 April 1940.
107 ADL, 1 ETP 510, Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy to Engineers, 16 April 1940.
108 ADL, 1 ETP 510, Director of the Mines of Roche-la-Molière and Firminy to Chief Engineer of the Mines (Loire), 15 May 1940.
109 ADBR, 4 M 2361, Head of the Sûreté to Police, 16 April 1940.
French well enough, but this demonstrates the danger of fleeing work. North Africans were routinely sentenced from months to possibly years in French prisons for breaking their requisition.\footnote{ADSL, M 1770, Prefect of the Saône-et-Loire to Minister of Labour, 22 April 1940. Eleven Moroccans were imprisoned for breaking requisition at Montchanin in April 1940.}

Attempts to unilaterally limit the rights of “free North Africans” also provoked more extreme responses. In Alès, just north of Nîmes, seven thousand coal miners in the area included over 1500 North Africans. Much like Saint-Etienne, the mines denounced the “continual departure” of North Africans that had begun the previous autumn. Despite uninterrupted hiring, the Algerian workforce employed at the mines fell fourteen percent between October 1939 and February 1940. This led to director to note, “it is absolutely necessary to stop this exodus which greatly compromises the production demanded by the Government and making redundant the recall of mobilized French miners.”\footnote{ADBR – Annex Aix-en-Provence, 99 W 78, Chief Engineer of the Mines (Gard) to the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 26 February 1940.} Not only was the departure of North Africans hurting production, then, but also harming the sacrifices made by white French soldiers in returning to the mines. As a result, all North African identification cards were to be stamped “requis pour les Mines de l’Arrondissement Minéralogique d’Alès”, or the workers would not be paid.\footnote{Ibid} While the police condescendingly noted, “they do not seem to know the exact significance” of the measure “they nevertheless consider it an insult.” Unlike in Saint-Etienne where the workers simply refused to hand over their identification, in Alès they stopped working. Over three hundred North Africans walked out in late March; three days later there were still almost one hundred and fifty on strike.\footnote{ADG, 1 M 803, “Le cessation du travail par des ouvriers Nord-Africains, aux Mines de la Grand’Combe,” report from Gendarmerie Nationale – Section d’Alès, 21 March 1940.} Unlike with the case of assigning specific jobs to certain groups of
colonial subjects or designing living conditions for their particular health and physiological needs, then, preventing the individual mobility of “free North Africans” proved to be a much more difficult task. Economic opportunities created by the mobilization of French workers precipitated “desertions” that the state was often unable to prevent.

VI

The social and civil rights which colonial workers enjoyed in France during the drôle de guerre were profoundly complex and always evolving; the reactions of employers, administrators and the workers themselves varied just as much. Brought to France to act as a supplement for the metropolitan labour force in agriculture and industry, workers from Africa and Asia were recruited with promises of high wages and gratitude from the Mère-Patrie. Above all, many expected to be treated as français comme les autres – “French like the others”, enjoying equal rights in the workplace and a degree of social equality that had escaped them in the colonies. Instead, while they could enjoy relations with French women or possibly a drink with their colleagues, their place in France during this tumultuous time was severely circumscribed. While it is true that the rhetoric surrounding the place of North Africans and Vietnamese in the French national community was far more inclusive than it had been during the 1930s, their rights were perhaps even more curtailed than the interwar period. Unable to change or even pick their employment, prohibited from consuming alcohol and directed towards cafés and meeting places whose goal was to promote social exclusion, colonials were often placed in an unequal position based on their status as French subjects. A degree of equality may have been promised during recruitment but that was certainly not the case after leaving Marseille.
Above all else, the experience of Asian and African colonial migrants on metropolitan soil during this period shows that they often embodied the fears and contradictions of French colonialism itself. Their bodies were often presented as deficient in a variety of ways. Asians were too effeminate, unable to consume alcohol and poorly suited to the French climate. North Africans were too unintelligent to be given complicated tasks and their productivity – as well as mobility – was constantly under attack by the French state. Positioning colonials as physiologically incapable of living in France without proper supervision reveals the extent to which ideas about the undesirable and unequal nature of French colonial subjects had permeated metropolitan society by this point in time. Given the necessity of rapidly enhancing industrial production under wartime circumstances, the more insalubrious elements of African and Asian physiology – their indolence, lethargy, weakness and unintelligence – needed to be managed through a close supervision of their daily lives. In this sense, encadrement and many of its attendant policies was not simply about paranoia and interracial sex, but also due to fears that if colonials were not swiftly integrated into important economic sectors, France’s mobilization efforts would be significantly hampered.

The initial decision to treat colonials as French workers, and then the actual application of policy which often targeted them for special measures, suggests a great deal about the cultural embeddness of French colonial hierarchies. Clearly the ideals of the Republic– Liberty, Equality and Fraternity – were not enough to combat prevailing stereotypes about subjects from North Africa and Asia and fears about their presence in France. Whether that suggests Republicanism was simultaneously “inclusive and exclusive” is not clear; what is apparent is that the legal, social, and indeed racial, inequality of colonial subjects compared to their French counterparts was the basis for much of the discrimination
that they faced. Whether it be the supposed necessity for medical testing after a small child fell ill, the rapid decision to force all colonials from abstaining from alcohol, or frequenting French drinking establishments, the rights of colonials could be curtailed almost in an instant. Local authorities thought nothing of circumscribing these rights because colonials had so little rights to begin with. As colonials arrived in ever-larger numbers through 1940 and the demands on employers increased, policies became more draconian. An interpreter in Marseille might have though they were “French citizens” in France, but the overwhelming sentiment among Europeans was expressed by the Provençal wine grower employing Moroccans: they would never be like French workers. This sentiment manifested itself more forcefully after June 1940. As Vietnamese and North African workers were repatriated or expelled to southern France after the defeat, Maréchal Pétain’s government at Vichy would decide who was to be considered French in the New Order.
Chapter Three


Defeat by Nazi Germany in June 1940 wrought a shattering trauma on the French nation and led to a dark period known as les années noires. The newly created regime of Maréchal Philippe Pétain, armed with a heterogeneous collection of ministers, technocrats, and civil servants, sought to refashion all aspects of French society. Central to his program of Rénovation Nationale (which later became known as the “National Revolution”) was an extreme emphasis on purging “foreign influences” considered a threat to the nation.¹ A variety of groups including Jews, communists, freemasons, Romani peoples, recent immigrants and refugees were stripped of their social and civil rights, harassed by the regime, forcibly confined to camps, and in some cases, deported to their deaths in Nazi-controlled Eastern Europe.² Although it has received little attention from historians of the period, North

African migrants living in France became targets of the regime as well. The evolution of their place in French society — which had always been tenuous during the interwar period — reveals a great deal about the racially coded nature of Vichy’s policies. As the following discussion demonstrates, the regime’s perceptions of who should gain access to employment and welfare had an enormous impact on how North Africans experienced the defeat and navigated the first two years of the Vichy period.

This chapter in particular revolves around how Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians were positioned in Vichy France between June 1940 and November 1942. Like characters in a novel, North Africans were often given specific roles to play in the New Order being established by the regime, which were influenced by a variety of competing forces: authorities at Vichy, local officials in the provinces, and businesses and employers. Immediately following the defeat, thousands of North Africans were fired, systematically denied unemployment and refugee benefits, and then deported from France often by force. These policies were initially generated at the local level, among civil servants who had served under the Third Republic and were now confronted with massive unemployment, millions of refugees seeking shelter in southern France, and tenuous political and military situation — in short, a type of social dislocation that had never been seen in France on this scale. And yet the gradual exclusion of North Africans was often deliberate. Many were fired

from their jobs before French and foreign workers, and social assistance purposely withheld to facilitate their departure from metropolitan territory.

As the ideological project of Vichy began to take shape in the autumn of 1940, the “North African question” became an important social issue for the regime. In an event prefiguring the deportation of Jews in 1942, Pétain’s government ordered that all unemployed North Africans be expelled from metropolitan France. Determined to preserve jobs and social assistance for French citizens, Vichy constructed an elaborate system to identify, arrest and then deport colonials deemed a burden on the French nation. Concerns over colonial rule in North Africa led officials to reassess these measures for one group: “mixed-race” families. North Africans married to French women were often spared deportation, while couples that actually wanted to return were barred from leaving metropolitan France. In the midst of these debates, officials at various levels of the French state even attempted to regulate marriage and sexual relations between Franco-North African couples, arguing that Vichy’s emphasis on the health of the French race necessitated a focus on whether “mixed-race households” were desirable.

Economic considerations, however, forced the regime to reassess the position of North Africans in 1941 as they became increasingly important in efforts to reconstruct the French economy. Collaboration with Nazi Germany and need for enhanced production meant

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3 This is not to suggest that the treatment which North Africans endured during this time was as terrible as the fate which awaited French and foreign Jews residing in the country. Many Jews had their citizenship revoked, were forcibly confined to their homes, prevented from working for the state or holding certain professions, witnessed their belongings and businesses expropriated and then in some cases deported to their deaths in eastern extermination camps. At the same time, the socio-economic and legal situation of North Africans was quite different. Most were migrant workers and French subjects rather than citizens and thus being fired from their jobs and deported from France was often the extent of their treatment. This suggests that the anti-semitic impulses under Vichy were often much more intense than the general xenophobia and fear of foreigners that pervaded this time period. At the same time, the general treatment all ethnic minority groups endured during this time shows a drive towards isolating, containing, and eliminating what were viewed as foreign influences from French society.
that country faced serious labor shortages – a role North Africans were now expected to fill. Although initially hesitant about the possibility of a large North Africa presence at a time when French identity was becoming rooted in biological conceptions of belonging, the regime heeded local demands from employers and agreed to recruit North Africans in 1941, just a few months after thousands had been expelled from the métropole. While they regained a place in the French labor market, their undesirability as full-fledged members of the national community led to the creation of recruitment regime geared around limiting access to metropolitan territory through a process of “professional selection” enforced by medical screening. Although promoted by technocrats as a solution consistent with efforts to create a more managed, controlled immigration system, it buckled under its own inefficiencies by the end of 1942. In this sense, the regime justified the disaggregated nature of North African social and labor rights – they were “workers” but not real members of the French national community – by positioning them as essential for economic production but not in any way a desirable members of society itself.

Following the invasion of northern France on 10 May 1940, and the collapse of the French army shortly afterwards, millions of French people took to the roads and rails to escape the German military. This massive exodus (l’exode) wrought profound social dislocation on French society. Although evacuations of civilian populations were supposed to be coordinated by local officials and the government in Paris, after the sudden breakthrough of the German army in mid-May, people largely ignored pleas for a more ordered departure, if any authority existed where they lived at all. Western and southwestern parts of France were the intended evacuation zones. Instead, many simply fled using any means at their
disposal – automobile, train, bicycle, and even by foot – making their way slowly south with no particular destination in mind, hoping to cross the Loire or Rhône where it was assumed bridges would be destroyed behind them to prevent the German advance. The unorganized nature of this massive population movement created a crisis for local authorities in southern France charged with receiving refugees. Food, fuel, and housing all became scarce as millions attempted to flee southward.

Colonial migrants – North Africans in particular – became caught up in this event. Many were working in the heavily populated corridor between Paris and Marseille. Millions of French refugees headed to these areas and the position of North Africans in France became extremely untenable as a result. In the absence of central government authority local officials were often given broad discretion over how to deal with Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians under their jurisdiction. Historians have referred to this as *Vichy avant Vichy* – the period in the summer of 1940 before the regime was firmly established. Examining this era from a local level allows a glimpse into how the defeat provoked widespread xenophobia and a popular reaction against those considered foreign and un-French. Despite the fact that North Africans, and especially Algerians, were supposed to be provided legal protection by French authorities, they were often the first group to lose their jobs, have social assistance

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5 Bruttmann, *Au bureau des affaires juives*, 15-17. One shortcoming of Bruttmann’s book, however, is that he does not examine the germination of popular anti-semitism during this period among the French population but rather the creation, and then application, of state policy. This chapter seeks to address this lacuna by demonstrating how non-state actors such as employers and everyday citizens could impact the lives of North African minorities during the initial years of the regime.
terminated, and eventually deported from France. When forced to choose between whether to give North Africans or French citizens assistance, or whether to keep French or North Africans employed, the choice was often easy to make. This reaction was fueled by the increasingly xenophobic proclamations coming from Vichy and also the material, daily concerns that inundated local authorities over the summer of 1940.

As early as 20 June – even before the armistice was signed between France and Germany – employers were writing prefects asking that Algerians and Moroccans be sent back to North Africa. For the most part, complaints revolved around the idea they were no longer needed for production and their current living conditions could not be guaranteed. In several small industrial towns near Saint-Etienne, the MOI was flooded with dire proclamations over the situation of Moroccan workers in the region. Industrial facilities had been damaged as the Wehrmacht shelled factories during its advance, often destroying company canteens and storehouses. One company fearfully suggested it could only feed its contingent of Moroccans for another two days before running out of supplies and thus the workers should be sent to Marseille immediately.⁶ While other employers did not report such alarming information they nevertheless worried about effects the German advance could have on morale. Further, given scrounging for food was now necessary, dozens of Moroccans were breaking encadrement and coming into contact with “dubious elements” of the French population.⁷ Absence of control over North African workers appeared to worry some companies more than the lack of food or potable water. “The situation could quickly become

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⁷ ADL, 7 W 28, Director of Forges et Aciéries de la Marine et d’Homécourt to the Prefect of the Loire. 24 June 1940.
grave,” reported a factory in Unieux. “Could one not consider assembling [the Moroccans] in a barracks in Saint-Etienne where surveillance could be applied?”

Forcibly confining North Africans became an important preoccupation for authorities in the Loire. On 27 June, the prefect wrote his subordinates concerning their eventual internment at the vélorome d’hiver in Saint-Etienne for deportation from metropolitan France. Individuals were to be targeted first rather than large contingents. As he noted, “indigenous North Africans who are refugees here, coming from regions previously occupied; and those who, even habitually resident in the region stéphanoise, are presently unemployed either following a dismissal or for any other reason” were to be arrested under the pretense of their imminent expulsion from the métropole. Fears were probably heightened after a bread truck was stopped near Saint-Etienne, looted by unemployed North Africans, and its owner attacked by the assailants. Eventually all North Africans would be targeted in the Loire but the fact that the first individuals indentified for punitive measures were either refugees or long term residents speaks to the paranoia that pervaded southern France at the time.

The treatment of North Africans in the Loire emerged organically as a product of local fears about the scarcity of food and specter of violence if they were not hastily removed from the region. Indeed, there seems to have been very little guidance from the central government at this point. Moving from Paris to Bordeaux, then Clermont-Ferrand and finally Vichy, very broad telegrams were issued on the subject of colonials in France. The first was sent to all French prefects on 8 July from the Sûreté National: “If you discover in your

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8 ADL, 7 W 28, Director of Etablissements Jacob Holtzer to Monsier Faure, Departmental Inspector of Labor, 27 June 1940.
9 ADL, 7 W 28, Prefect of the Loire to Gendarmerie Nationale – Saint-Etienne, 27 June 1940.
10 ADL, 7 W 28, “Marocains qui ont pillé un camion chargé de pain à La Terrasse,” Commissaire de Police – Saint-Etienne to Commissaire Central de Police, 20 June 1940.
département indigènes from the colonial empire, including Algeria, send them to Marseille where they will be placed in a camp in lieu of their eventual repatriation.”\footnote{ADL, 7 W 28, Ministry of the Interior to Prefects of France, 8 July 1940.} Perhaps realizing this meant tens of thousands of colonials would be directed towards Marseille, it was clarified the telegram applied only to those who had entered France after September 1939 or if colonial migrants were deemed to be in an “irregular situation.”\footnote{ADL, 7 W 28, Ministry of the Interior to Prefects of France, 10 and 13 July, 1940.} This term was never fully clarified – whether it meant unemployed, a refugee, or some other status – gave local authorities broad discretion in how they should deal with North Africans.

The two urban centers most involved with deportations in the wake of the defeat were Lyon and Marseille. Two of the largest cities in southern France, as well as home to considerable North African populations during the interwar years, Lyon and Marseille were flooded with refugees in June and July 1940. Lyon was occupied by the Germans on 19 June and they begun a veritable pillage of industry including machinery, primary materials, vehicles and textile products. The only concession made to the prefect and business leaders was that employment and salary would not be disturbed, although it was unclear how this would be accomplished given that the Germans were expropriating machinery necessary for production. Economic uncertainty led to drastic reductions in working hours, mandated to be no less than thirty hours per week by the prefect; in some cases, it reached thirty-six or forty hours for certain industries.\footnote{Patrick Veyret, Lyon 1939-1949, De la collaboration industrielle à l’épuration économique (Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne: La Taillanderie, 2008): 11-24.}

The prefect’s office circulated a report outlining the situation of Lyon’s North African population in late July. It bemoaned the constant presence of numerous unemployed Algerians at the Bourse de Travail (Labor Exchange). “They are almost all without work,”
the memo began, “either following the closing of the factory which employed them, or following a reduction of personnel which, they say, targets them before foreigners…Several of them added that their employer had fired them under order from the [employment] Placement Office.” 14 Although North Africans were legally entitled to French social assistance programs, they had clearly received no help from local authorities because of prejudicial attitudes. Unemployment assistance, bread and even free soup had been denied. The treatment meted out to North Africans was state sanctioned rather than simply an individual reaction from xenophobic functionaries. Indeed, in a note addressed to the mayor of Lyon and its surrounding communes, the prefecture had declared that no assistance should be given to North Africans unless they agreed to be repatriated. Those not originally from Lyon – typically refugees from areas occupied by the Germans – were denied access to refugee benefits and told to leave the city. 15

This was far from the intention of the telegram sent by Vichy to prefects that only identified colonials brought to France after 1939 as targets for deportation. The report noted that it would be difficult to forcibly expel long-term metropolitan residents, many of whom were veterans of the previous war and often had French wives and children. Moreover, North Africans complaining about their treatment appeared to be “good subjects” in proper standing with French authorities, which made some of the following statements overheard by informants all the more troubling for the prefecture:

‘France came to look for us when it needed us and now that we are no longer necessary, we are being driven out.’
‘We are keeping foreigners in the factories and there is no work for us who are French.’
‘We have given our blood for France and now she rejects us.’

15 Ibid
‘We are keeping Italians in France, and yet we, who are French, are sent away.’
‘As France has driven us away, we will drive the French out of Algeria.’\(^{16}\)

Attached to the report was a letter sent by a group of North Africans working in the industrial suburb of Givors. Their employer summarily dismissed them with no financial compensation, and in conjunction with the mayor’s office, denied them assistance despite the fact that they had lived in the métropole for many years. After protesting outside the hôtel de ville, police arrested the men and sent them to a prison in Lyon.\(^{17}\)

In late July a dozen North Africans invaded the Labor Exchange in Lyon to “violently protest” their treatment. The Germans had expelled six from Alsace as part of their project to ethnically cleanse areas incorporated into the Reich and were now in Lyon with no work or assistance from authorities, refusing to be repatriated. “This last measure,” the report noted, “appears to be the only method available because the Rhône is not a receiving département [for refugees].”\(^{18}\) One of those at the Labor Exchange had been in France for eighteen years and was married to a French woman; another claimed to have no family in Algeria and did not want to be repatriated. Local authorities were also informed that several employers had fired their North African workforce in order to preserve jobs for French workers.\(^{19}\) “The dismissal of a number of North Africans is evidently being presented as an unjust measure,” the local Sûreté office proclaimed in an accompanying memo.\(^{20}\)

Forced repatriations appear to have aroused the anger of the previously dormant Parti du Peuple Algérien in Lyon, which began a campaign against the measure that August.

Mohamed Beddek, a metalworker living from a neighboring industrial suburb married to a

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) ADR, 53 W 71, Letter from North African workers of Badan to Prefect of the Rhône, 7 July 1940.
\(^{18}\) ADR, 53 W 71, “Note pour Monsieur le Secrétaire Général pour la Police,” 26 July 1940.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
French woman, wrote a Lyonnais union association expressing a number of concerns about the treatment North Africans received from French authorities. Denouncing collaboration between employers, unions and the government to fire and then expel North Africans under the guise of not having a job, Beddek asked that the results of these actions be reconsidered. The number of “vagabonds” and those permanently out of work in Algeria would increase dramatically. Because remittance payments were crucial to so many across the Mediterranean, families were being harmed due to the expulsions. Most importantly, expelling Algerians would turn the population permanently against France. Beddek demanded that authorities in Lyon cease their activities immediately and rehire all Algerians and Moroccans that had been dismissed. Beddek continued to meet with Algerian workers through August, telling them to resist deportation by French authorities, but was expelled from Lyon sometime in late 1940.

Officials within the labor division of the prefecture were enraged that Beddek had written to the Ministry of the Interior complaining about their behavior. The fact an Algerian had the temerity to instruct French authorities how to act no doubt played into their response as well. The labor office within the prefecture disagreed with the assertion employers were ordered to fire North African migrants. Economic conditions in Lyon had deteriorated to such a degree, it argued, that finding positions for French workers had taken precedence. As a result, some companies had simply “instructed” their North Africans employees to return home until conditions improved. The director of the labor division then totally dismissed all of Beddek’s claims, calling him a “trouble maker” and arguing employers were free to hire or fire North Africans as they wished. The issue of forcible deportations was mostly avoided,

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although an accompanying memo noted that 2,500 had been “directed” towards Marseille since the defeat.\textsuperscript{22} The prefect himself also denied expelling North Africans. When the Ministry of the Interior asked him what exactly was taking place in his département, he responded:

\begin{quote}
[T]he assertion that the Algerians in my département ‘are being systematically refoulés [expelled] to their country of origin’ deserves no response. None of the 2500 free [meaning free of charge] repatriations accomplished since the beginning of last July have been imposed. It is possible, however, that a certain number of [North Africans] left reluctantly [partis à contre-coeur] because it was impossible for them live in the Métropole. In fact, many employers have had to send back North Africans to conserve or hire French [workers], but no order has been given on this subject by my administration.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

These statements are clearly at odds with the testimony of North Africans in Lyon and the prefect was certainly parsing words in this case. Forcible deportations did not take place; the victims were simply fired to preserve jobs for French workers and then denied assistance, which necessitated their return to Algeria.

There is much less information about the situation of North Africans in Marseille during the summer of 1940. The available evidence, however, suggests similar measures were taken. Workers targeted for repatriation began to arrive in the city from around France in late June. The Sûreté reported almost one hundred arriving from Bordeaux at the Gare Saint-Charles on 27 June; on 7 July over three hundred were noted coming from Lyon, Nancy and Brest. Some of these would have been taken to the MOI camp at Baumettes but many “free” migrants were directed towards the local Labor Exchange and forced to find

\textsuperscript{22} ADR, 53 W 71, “Nord-africains,” Director of the Rhone Departmental and Lyon Municipal Placement Office to Prefect of the Rhône, 29 August 1940. See attached numeric daily summary of deportations from Lyon to Marseille, which ranged from several hundred per day at the beginning of July to much smaller numbers by the end of August.

\textsuperscript{23} ADR, 53 W 71, Prefect of the Rhône to Ministry of the Interior, 5 September 1940.
their own accommodations. This massive influx of North Africans into the city began to worry the prefect and local SAINA bureau. SAINA chief Louis Poussardin instructed the prefect’s office on the situation in mid-July:

"Most of the indigenous Algerians found in Marseille are unemployed and it does not seem, given the events, that they can quickly find work. Among these unemployed, some request to be repatriated. Others, on the contrary, refuse to leave because having little money, they prefer to wait – hoping for better days and often fearing, they have acknowledged to me – that once they leave they may not be authorized to come back to France once work returns."

Poussardin was worried about the current state of affairs because North Africans who refused to leave often had little money or resources, and had taken to loitering around the certain areas of the city searching for friends or acquaintances. The number of unemployed was growing larger by the day as more arrived from other parts of France or were being fired from their jobs in Marseille. The MOI, whose resources must have been stretched incredibly thin at this point, wanted nothing to do with refugee and unemployed colonials. SAINA suggested that all unemployed North Africans in the city – refugees or not – be grouped into a camp and then repatriated as soon as possible. Poussardin also mentioned that any employer willing to fire North Africans and replace them with French workers were free to do so as well.

"By late August the Bouches-du-Rhône had close to 27,000 unemployed formally requesting social assistance. It was thus deemed impossible to provide any help to colonials so long as the current state of affairs continued." As in Lyon, a number of employers began reducing their North African workforce. In early September the prefect received a letter from

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25 ADBR, 1 M 759, SAINA Marseille to Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 11 July 1940.
26 Ibid
27 ADBR, 14 M 2964, Departmental Inspector of Labor to General Deligne of the MOI, 4 September 1940.
six Algerians working on an oil refinery owned by Morel-et-Prom. Resident in France for “several years” before the defeat, Morel-et-Prom had shuttered its facility and dismissed all workers: French, foreign, and colonial. While the “Armenian, Italian and French” received financial compensation due to lack of notice from Morel-et-Prom, Algerians were not given similar assistance because “they said we were not French.” “We believe, Monsieur le Prefect, that Algeria is French and that we indigenous Algerians – we are French and we have always done out duty for la Mère Patrie with loyalty and respect.” They requested the prefect “uphold our rights” and “cease the injustice” of their employer. The Labor Office thought otherwise, arguing that because of their “qualité” all North Africans should instead “provisionally return to their département of origin and wait for the recommencement of activity in the oil industry.” Agreeing that uncertainty in the refinement sector guaranteed prolonged unemployment in the oil industry, the labor inspector assigned to review the case recommended deportation for the men. Even though the Algerians had invoked their rights as French nationals and their presence in the métropole for a number of years, social welfare was clearly becoming based on ethnic parameters for the administration in Marseille. If French workers remained unemployed, North Africans should not only be dismissed but also repatriated from France altogether.

Faced with unemployment, material shortages and thousands of refugees, deporting North Africans from Lyon and Marseille was clearly viewed as an acceptable course of action to preserve social assistance for more desirable candidates. A comparison with the Alps region is instructive because it reveals the ideological nature of expelling North Africans during this period. The Alps never witnessed the degree of social dislocation

28 ADBR, 10 M 57, Letter from six Algerians to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 3 September 1940.
29 ADBR, 10 M 57, Divisional Inspector of Labor to the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 13 September 1940.
30 Ibid
evident in Lyon, Marseille and Saint-Etienne; unemployment in the region remained relatively slight. Electrochemical and manufacturing facilities in southeastern France employed hundreds of Moroccans and Algerians in 1940. The prefect of the Savoie was notified to keep all North Africans in place until instructed otherwise but employers became restless towards the end of July.  

On 24 July, the *sous-préfet* of St-Jean-de-Maurienne received a letter from the Alais, Froges et Camargue (AFC) factory under his jurisdiction. He was notified that the presence of several hundred Moroccans was no longer desired because of reduced production, and they should be sent away as soon as possible. “It is incontestable,” the factory director stated, “that the presence of 200 malcontents of a simple mentality could constitute, in a totally demilitarized area, a danger for the public order and we believe we must draw your attention to this subject and solicit your intervention.”  

The director expanded upon his fears with the MOI agent assigned to the area:

> We have been very displeased for several days with the indigenous work companies placed under your command. We have brought to your attention several cases of poor attitude, strikes being discussed, and even refusals to obey orders.  

> Not wanting to complicate the situation due to the assurances that have been given that these workers will be sent away shortly we have been patient, but today the whole detachment at St-Michel, without any real reason, refused to work and created several disturbances this morning.  

> In these conditions, we request, without delay, the immediate evacuation of the entire detachment because work discipline is not being respected.

Local authorities were cautious about whether these workers actually constituted a danger to the public order, but leapt at the chance to decrease local unemployment by deporting North

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31 ADS, 1382 W 142, Commander of the MOI Departure Base in Marseille to Prefect of the Savoie, 12 July 1940.  
32 ADS, 1382 W 142, Monsieur Torchet, Alais, Froges et Camargue, to *sous-préfet* of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, 24 July 1940.  
33 ADS, 1382 W 142, Monisier Torchet of Alais, Froges et Camargue to Lieutenant Nelson of the MOI, 24 July 1940.
Africans in the area. Several days later – after a gendarme was attacked during another work stoppage – the sous-préfet requested all the Algerians be removed.

While local authorities were dealing with the situation of North Africans under encadrement, however, those who were employing “free” Algerians and Moroccans also started inquiring whether they could be repatriated as well. Nine Algerians employed in Ugine were declared “no longer necessary” for production and could easily be replaced by recently demobilized troops or French refugees. Several weeks later another employer wanted to dismiss twenty-three Algerians hired the previous April. “It seems to us,” the letter continued, “that the repatriation of these indigènes has at present become easier, and we do not desire to retain this North African personnel whose presence is causing reduced hours for Savoyard workers.” A related facility claimed it was forced to dismiss nine French workers although they could be rehired if a comparable number of Algerians were sent to Marseille for deportation. A sense of social conformity is at play in these requests. Once an employer requested its North African employees undergo deportation many others followed suit. In this case xenophobia, and a belief that French workers had greater entitlement to employment and benefits, acted to reinforce and indeed condone xenophobic behavior within the Savoie.

The fact that North Africans appear to have been targeted for dismissal so French workers could be hired in their place is at odds with later statements from the French government. In its view, the repatriation of Moroccans and Algerians was undertaken

35 ADS, 1382 W 142, sous-préfet of St-Jean-de-Maurienne to Prefect of the Savoie, 26 July 1940.
37 ADS, 1382 W 142, Société d’Electro-Chimie et d’Electro-Métallurgie à Notre-Dame-de-Briançon to the sous-préfet of Albertville, 26 July 1940.
because factories had dramatically decreased production or had been closed following the
defeat. AFC employed hundreds of Algerians and Moroccans in 1940 and deported many of
them. But its workforce in certain facilities actually increased over the course of 1940.
Shortly after the Moroccan “troublemakers” in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne were repatriated, the
number of workers at the factory grew from 1070 in September 1940 to 1167 by the end of
the year. In Saint-Auban, where a contingent of Moroccans was deported in August 1940, the
workforce increased from 1306 in September to 1412 by December.\(^{39}\) This is hardly
representative of every situation in which North Africans found themselves after the defeat
but the intent seems to have been clear: North Africans were being replaced with recently
demobilized or unemployed French workers.\(^{40}\)

The defeat and subsequent social dislocation had obviously rendered the place of
many “free” North Africans undesirable and dismissals continued in the Alps region through
autumn. In October, a Renault factory in the area reported having “28 Algerians whose
employment is no longer indispensible and whose departure will permit us to hire fathers of
families living in St-Michel or neighboring hamlets.”\(^{41}\) The firing and subsequent deportation
of the North African workforce was not just about decreased industrial production after the
defeat. Local authorities and employers clearly decided who was desirable given the current
economic situation – typically French workers and the recently demobilized – and those now
viewed as expendable.

\(^{39}\) Institut pour l’Histoire de l’Aluminium – Archives Privées de Péchiney (IHA), 072-11-70-068. These
numbers are taken from monthly reports issues by each factory between September 1940 and December 1940.
The monthly workforce for Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (between September 1940 to December 1940) was: 1070,
1103, 1167 and 1161. For Saint-Auban (between September 1940 and December 1940): 1306, 1383, 1388 and
1412.

\(^{40}\) IHA, 072-11-70-106, Compte-Rendu du Comité Exécutif d’Alais, Froges et Camargue, 9 September 1940.

\(^{41}\) ADS, 1382 W 142, Usines L Renault to the sous-préfet of St-Jean-de-Maurienne, 12 October 1940.
Many of the decisions taken during the summer of 1940 concerning the place of North Africans in France were generated at the local level, and suggest state-sanctioned xenophobic measures designed to isolate and punish un-French elements was not the exclusive domain of Pétain’s regime at Vichy. There is no indication that employers were forced to fire North Africans and replace them with local workers before the autumn of 1940. Moreover, since unemployment and refugee benefits were often distributed based on the whims of politicians and bureaucrats in cities and départements, they could decide who was worthy of assistance or exclusion. In this case, evidence suggests that North Africans were denied benefits to improve the chance that they would simply leave France altogether. What occurred over the course of July, August, and September 1940 in many areas of southeastern France was a locally generated program of excluding Algerian and Moroccan workers from jobs, social benefits, and unemployment allocations. On a much more subconscious level these decisions were obviously engineered to promote the marginalization and removal of North Africans from French society itself. The Labor Office in Marseille referenced the qualité of North Africans – a term frequently employed in the colonies to create a division between citizen and subject – as a justification for their employer denying assistance after dismissal.

II

Although the locally driven nature of expulsions during the Vichy avant Vichy period is symptomatic of the incredible amount of authority prefectures were given in helping to reshape French society, by September 1940, Pétain’s regime was forcefully embarking on an ideological project of its own. The “National Revolution” was based on a variety of intellectual currents rooted in the history of French and European far-right ideological
traditions. As Philippe Burrin has argued, its two motivating principles were privileging collective rights over individual rights, and purging foreign influence from France. In this sense, eliminating *métèques* (the “un-French”) was inherently tied to reinforcing “natural communities” that would create a well-ordered, stable society.\(^{42}\) Republicanism had deviated from this script by promoting liberal attitudes towards equal rights and democratic values, thereby decaying French society from within. Vichy instead prescribed a vision of France rooted in social hierarchies that emphasized the organic nature of national belonging. In the words of Robert Paxton, “defeat cried out for scapegoats, and scapegoats were ready to be had.”\(^{43}\)

In Pétain’s France, the enemies were obvious: freemasons, communists, Romani peoples, “foreigners,” and especially Jews. By October 1940, Vichy was already enacting legislation that disenfranchised virtually all French Jews, gave prefects the authority to intern foreign Jews at their discretion, and barred Jews from entering certain professions.\(^{44}\)

It was in this context of lingering grassroots xenophobia, punitive measures by local French authorities, and the emergence of National Revolution ideology that officials at Vichy formally began to consider the position of North African migrants in France. Chaired by MOI chief Marcel Segalat at the offices of the newly created Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor, high-ranking functionaries from a variety of ministries met to discuss the “North African question” on 7 September 1940.\(^{45}\) Segalat acknowledged the ongoing repatriation of North Africans and then arrived at the heart of the issue: what to do with unemployed North Africans currently receiving government assistance. How to deal with

\(^{43}\) Paxton, *Vichy France*, 171.
\(^{44}\) Poznanski, 68-69.
those that managed to receive unemployment payments was deemed more complicated than simply expelling them from the métropole. It was suggested that there were six thousand in Paris and perhaps two thousand others in the provinces. None had requested repatriation and it was doubtful this position would change. After all, many of them had resided in France since the 1920s and often had wives and children. However, given the recently instituted rationing system, scarce government resources, massive unemployment that estimates suggested reached almost one million French at this point, and moral concerns—namely, that the Ministry of Labor did not want them “taking on the appearance of being ‘professionally unemployed’”—Vichy was “re-evaluating” their position. From this point onwards, North Africans receiving assistance were officially barred from future unemployment and refugee benefits and then subject to repatriation, as their presence in France was deemed “undesirable.”46 Indeed, one representative from the Ministry of Refugees even suggested expelling all North African migrants resident on metropolitan territory, although he was mildly reprimanded by his colleagues because “this is not the focus of the meeting.”47

Social welfare in Vichy France is a subject that has received little attention in the historiography, but it speaks to the nature of how authorities positioned certain groups outside the French national community. Pétain’s government did make an effort to expand family allocations, health services, old-age pensions and workplace accident insurance.48 At the same time, however, it purposely excluded certain elements of the population from these programs. Jews living in France were fired from their jobs and eventually disallowed from attending hospitals and medical clinics not specially designated for their use. The working-

46 Ibid
class bore the brunt of certain measures as well. Pétain’s government cancelled *all* unemployment assistance for French citizens in 1940, spurring protests from underground elements of the French Communist Party (PCF).\footnote{Matt Perry, *Prisoners of Want: The Experience and Protest of the Unemployed in France, 1921-1945* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007). Perry fails to note that unemployment assistance was actually cancelled by the regime, which could explain why there was such protest by the working class in 1940 and 1941.} It replaced unemployment payments – symptomatic of the “lazy Third Republic” – with public works programs. Unemployment benefits may not have been not specifically “racialized” given the French working class also suffered punitive measures, but North Africans were often barred from these work projects in favor of those from the “white race.”\footnote{Archives départementales du Nord (ADN), 85 W 50018, “Chômage,” sous-préfet of Douai to Prefect of the Nord, 11 October 1940.} While Vichy functionaries decried the problem of unemployed North Africans who lacked means of support, then, it was often a problem of their own creation.

After cancelling unemployment assistance for North Africans living in France and declaring that they should be deported, a system was created to manage expulsions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formally notified of the decision in late November 1940.\footnote{MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Minister of Industrial Production and Labor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 29 November 1940} In December, the Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor wrote the Resident General in Rabat to inform him North Africans currently receiving unemployment benefits were to be repatriated and given a lump sum of 450 francs upon their return to Morocco.\footnote{Note from the Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor to General Nogués, Resident General in Morocco, 31 December 1940.} The circular was formally issued to every prefect in France on 2 January 1941. Stating that all MOI workers and “free” North Africans who “requested” to return home after June 1940 had been repatriated, it was now time to focus on those benefitting from unemployment assistance. Save for a few exceptional cases, they were all to be repatriated, willingly or not. Prefects
were requested to begin a census of all North Africans under their jurisdiction, noting those subject to repatriation or free to stay in France.\footnote{MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, “Circulaire à MM. les préfets portant instructions relatives au rapatriement des travailleurs nord-africains sans emploi bénéficiant des allocations de chômage ou de refuge,” Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor to Prefects, 2 January 1941.} Transit camps – created near Paris, Dijon and Bordeaux – were intended to receive deportees in occupied areas, which would then send the colonials to Marseille.\footnote{MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, “Rapatriement des travailleurs nord-africains,” Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor to Prefects of Occupied Zone, 2 January 1941.}

The largest number benefitting from some form of monetary assistance was in Paris. Shortly after the formal directive was issued, the prefect of police calculated 3,682 North Africans benefiting from unemployment allocations in the city. Names and addresses were sent from the local SAINA office to the police, collected in a central fichier, and arrangements made for arrest and deportation.\footnote{MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Note from Prefect of Police – Service des affaires indigènes nord-africains to Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor, 19 February 1941.} Just a few months after the infamous fichier juif was established, then, similar tactics were used against unemployed French colonial subjects.\footnote{Jean François, chief of SAINA Paris between 1939 and 1940, was actually made the head of the Service des étrangers and des affaires juives in October 1940, suggesting that there was some fluidity between the policing of Jews, foreigners and North Africans during this period. Jacques Simon, his predecessor, served as head of the Renseignements Généraux (a type of French FBI) in Paris until 1941. See Blanchard, La police parisienne, 59.} This process began to draw the attention of North Africans in Paris, raising serious objections from those who wanted to stay in France and search for work. The police noted that there were in fact jobs available: in various industries which could not find workers for undesirable jobs; in forestry and road projects; and especially for the German occupiers, who were recruiting many North Africans to build fortifications and other military installations in northern France.\footnote{Ibid} The prefect of police also wondered whether mass expulsions of people who had been living in the city for many years could produce discontent in Algeria and Morocco. Agreement was reached over suppressing unemployment benefits but the prefect
cautioned the Ministry of Industrial Production that repatriation had to be used more prudently.  

Whether police employed a more “prudent” use of deportations is unclear, but the number being sent back to North Africa did in fact decline over 1941. Between July and December 1940, the French government had officially repatriated 25,631 individuals: 14,146 Moroccans and Algerians brought to France under the MOI recruitment program, and also 11,485 “free” North Africans. After the January 1941 decree requesting further deportations, only 2,906 were expelled until the repatriations ceased in July. The pace of deportations obviously decreased because so many had been sent back to Algeria or Morocco over the previous months, and by the spring of 1941, the economic situation in France began to improve slightly, making it easier for mayors and prefects to justify not dedicating time and resources sending North Africans to Marseille. On the other hand, the demographic profile of deportees shifted dramatically over 1941. Initial efforts to expel North Africans were almost evenly split between MOI and “free” workers. Those arrested and deported during 1941 were almost entirely Algerians and Moroccans who had been living in the métropole before the war broke out. Improprieties were rife during this period as some colonial migrants were clearly expelled from metropolitan France even though they maintained stable employment.

In early February 1941 a group of “unemployed” North Africans were sent from Saint-Etienne to Marseille for deportation. They petitioned the Bouches-du-Rhône prefecture for their release because none of the men were actually out of work. Several of them were

58 Ibid
married to French women and many spoke of living in France since the 1920s and early
1930s. One had attached a bank receipt confirming that he had over 18,000 francs to his
name. 61 Interestingly, all of the men were arrested after leaving their apartments in the
morning, suggesting that the action was highly coordinated and the deportees taken into
custody at a time of day that would not arouse suspicion. They went on to write that an
official working in the SAINA Saint-Etienne office had requested a bribe, and if it was not
paid, threatened them with deportation. 62 The SAINA office in Marseille was not at all
surprised by these accusations. It noted several complaints had been registered from North
Africans arrested in Saint-Etienne and called their treatment “strangely brutal” and their
deporation “of a strange and brutal fashion.” Officials in Marseille declared their intention to
launch an investigation but there is no indication whether it was actually carried out. 63 After
another similar incident in June – this one originating from a group arrested in Lyon – the
Service des Affaires Algériennes (SAA), an organization created by Vichy in 1941 to help
coordinate affairs between Algeria and metropolitan France, issued a warning against further
actions of this kind. More concerned with the resulting impact on Algeria and Morocco, the
SAA condemned unfocused deportations as unwise for colonial rule. Noting that law-
abiding and gainfully employed North Africans should be spared police actions, it did support
deportations for the “inveterate unemployed,” “the physically incapable” and migrants
“unable to support themselves.” 64

61 ADBR, 76 W 204, “Refoulement de travailleurs indigènes dur l’Algérie,” Report from Service des Affaires
Algériennes de Marseille (SAA), 24 March 1941.
62 ADBR, 76 W 204, Letter from Ameur Yacef to the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 19 February 1941.
63 ADBR, 76 W 204, Report from SAINA Marseille, 1 March 1941.
64 ADBR, 76 W 206, “Refoulement d’indigènes algériens sur leur pays d’origine,” Report from SAA, 21 June
1941.
One particular group not listed by the SAA received special attention by French authorities: “mixed-race” couples. In the chaos that ensued after the defeat, several hundred European women traveled back to Algeria and Morocco with their husbands and children, obviously looking to escape unemployment, material hardship and the refugee crisis after the defeat. Although the 7 September 1940 meeting at Vichy briefly considered the question, no formal measure was taken at the time. By the end of October, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a letter from Rabat demanding this type of migration cease immediately. “There is a grave inconvenience in the return to Morocco of French or European women,” it stated, focusing specifically on the question of polygamy among North African men. European women were often “completely ignorant of the living conditions…in Morocco, in le bled (“bush”, or rural areas) notably. Moreover, from a political point of view, it is not desirable and it is even inopportune that women, other than Muslim women, live with Moroccans in their village à la mode indigène, especially if they have children.”

Engaging in such behavior, Resident General Noguès warned, “risks, in the majority of cases, imposing on them a way of life incompatible with the dignity Europeans must have in the land of Islam, and to which a French woman cannot adapt.” He concluded by suggesting the number of unemployed or refugee families in this situation was so insignificant that it would have no effect on the metropolitan economy to keep them in place.

After raising objections over the impact of these relationships on colonial gender politics and the “sensibilities” of French women, the number of “mixed-race” couples allowed to depart Marseille decreased substantially. Whereas 621 European women and children had been repatriated during between July and October as local governments tried to

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66 Ibid
rid themselves of families to support, official statistics indicate that only 42 were allowed to leave metropolitan France between November and January.\textsuperscript{67} This was due to a number of measures put in place. North African men wanting to return home were typically granted passage free of charge in order to facilitate their exodus; North Africans accompanied by European women were denied this possibility. Even if they could pay for the voyage themselves, port authorities in Marseille, Sète and Toulon were instructed to prevent Franco-North African families from boarding the ship. If European women attempted to purchase tickets on their own, they were questioned on the purpose of their voyage to North Africa and warned they would be placed on a ship for France immediately if found to be transgressing the newly instituted policy.\textsuperscript{68}

This practice of denying “mixed-race” couples entry to North Africa affected two Franco-North African families in different ways. Salem ben Ahmed, a “Moroccan negro”, arrived in France during the First World War. He managed to avoid deportation in 1919 and eventually settled in Pantin, on the outskirts of Paris, taking a job at the Manufacture d’Estampage du Nord-Est, eventually marrying a French woman. During the evacuation of Paris in June 1940, ben Ahmed and his wife fled south to stay with relatives in Issoire, just across the demarcation line separating occupied and unoccupied France. When they attempted their return to Paris, ben Ahmed was arrested by the Germans and eventually sent to Marseille for repatriation. He complained of having no family left in Morocco. If permitted to stay in France he could find work with his family in Issoire and eventually return to his wife in Paris. Even though ben Ahmed could not provide evidence that he would

\textsuperscript{67} MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, See “Etat des travailleurs nord-africains rapatriés,” from the Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène for September 1940, October 1940 and January 1941.

\textsuperscript{68} MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Ministry of Industrial Production and Labor to the Ministry of Foreign Affaires, 26 November 1940.
be able to find work, he was released by the MOI under the grounds that repatriation was impermissible for North Africans legitimately married to a French woman. In this case, the fact that ben Ahmed could possibly remain unemployed was outweighed by his supposed attachment to France due to his French wife.

A second family seeking permission to return, however, was summarily denied passage across the Mediterranean. Originally from Sarrebourg in the Moselle, the Germans expelled Mohamed Dordrane from Lorraine in September 1940 as part of the project to ethnically cleanse territories being incorporated into the Greater German Reich. Dordrane and his wife had three children, were expecting a fourth at the time of the expulsion, and eventually settled in Barcelonnette north of Marseille. Unable to find work in the region, he was nevertheless known to have a “good reputation” and had been awarded the Croix de Guerre for his military service in 1940. The family requested their passage to Tlemcen in Algeria where Dordrane believed he could find work with relatives. Dordrane was informed by the local refugee service it would enthusiastically support his request.

It wrote the prefect of the Basses-Alpes – who had circulated a memo in January 1941 that all “mixed-race” families were to be denied access to North Africa – the Governor General of Algeria, the Ministry of Interior and Minister for Refugees at Vichy soliciting the repatriation of the Dordrane family but received no response. Eventually the Mayor of Barcelonnette wrote Marshal Pétain requesting travel papers. He highlighted Mohamed Dordrane’s military service, large family, work ethic – all solid Pétainist values – and only mentioned the fact

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69 MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, “Salem ben Ahmed,” Director of the Moroccan Office in Marseille to the Director of the Moroccan Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 November 1940.
70 ADAHP, 32 W 6, “Renseignements sur les époux Dordrane qui sollicitent leur rapatriement en Algérie,” Sûreté Nationale – Poste de Barcelonnette to Sûreté Nationale à Digne, 7 July 1941; Letter from Lucien Archen, Delegate for Refugees in Barcelonnette to Prefect of the Basses-Alpes, 11 August 1941.
that Mohamed was Algerian once, which was underlined by authorities receiving the letter.\textsuperscript{71}

Ultimately, it appears fears about disturbing gender and racial hierarchies in North Africa outweighed concerns about financially supporting mixed-race families.

Various levels of the French bureaucracy often did not bother responding to why a family was being denied travel papers for North Africa. Internally, however, jurists and legal experts attempted to validate the measure through shady justifications based on nationality and citizenship. They also took up the case of whether French women married to Algerian, Moroccan or Tunisian men could be considered \textit{indigène} under French law. Vichy actually invoked the 1927 Third Republic nationality law in arguing against this possibility.

Inaugurated because of demographic concerns in the wake of the Great War, the revised nationality law allowed women to keep French citizenship if married to a foreigner, although they could still claim their husbands nationality if desired.\textsuperscript{72} The situation was extremely murky with regards to Algeria because it was governed using a combination of Islamic and French civil law. The French Protectorate of Morocco, however, was considered foreign territory. Vichy legal scholars argued that Moroccan nationality could only be acquired through \textit{jure sanguinis} - being born of “Moroccan blood.” Because of this, it was impossible for a French woman to become Moroccan. Moreover, children from mixed race marriages – who typically took their father’s nationality after birth – were to be French rather than Moroccan, also according to the 1927 nationality law.\textsuperscript{73} In this case, Vichy was so concerned about mixed race families returning to North Africa that they were willing to recognize \textit{métis} children as French even though born to a Muslim father. This stands in stark contrast to

\textsuperscript{71} ADAHP, 32 W 6, Letter from Mayor of Barcelonnette to Marshal Pétain, 14 August 1941. Since the letter remains in the départemental archives, it appears never to have been sent to Pétain.
\textsuperscript{72} Camiscioli, \textit{Reproducing the French Race}, 129-137.
\textsuperscript{73} MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, “Ménages mixtes,” Generale Noguès, Resident General of France in Morocco to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 10 April 1941.
people of mixed Jewish and Christian heritage under Pétain’s, many of whom were branded démi-juif and stripped of French nationality.\textsuperscript{74}

Although Vichy was concerned about regulating the movement of “mixed-race” couples, Pétain’s government never formally prohibited relationships between North African men and European women. Some officials did begin to question the desirability of “mixed-race” marriages. This was nothing new. As the previous chapter indicated, the influx of colonial workers in 1939 and 1940 led to fears over miscegenation and inter-racial relationships. Under Pétain’s regime, however, officials actually worked to prevent these “arrangements” from being legally codified. In the spring of 1941, the prefect of the Sarthe in northwestern France requested information on a Moroccan living in Le Mans. Ahmed ben Mahjoub Boujema Benaied was living with a French woman and had asked for a marriage certificate from the prefect.\textsuperscript{75} As General Noguès wrote in response to the request:

In the view of the Protectorate, it is not the time to favor the celebration of mixed marriages which, for political and social reasons that cannot be dealt with here, could cause grave inconveniences for one or both spouses, and also for the children which could be born from these unions.\textsuperscript{76}

Not only was the prefect asked to deny the marriage certificate solely on the grounds that a marriage between a French woman and North African man was undesirable, but Noguès also inquired as to the status of this particular Moroccan. If he had come to France after 1939, as Noguès suspected, then he should be arrested by the police and sent to Marseille for deportation.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{74} Weil, \textit{How to be French}, 87-124.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid
Noguès was attempting to prevent what he viewed as potentially harmful relationships that could damage colonial power relations, and this became an object of concern for justice officials in metropolitan France as well. Noting that “serious inconveniences” were caused by marriages between Muslim men and French women, the Ministry of Justice was dismayed by the fact that current law made no attempt to bar marriages between these two groups, as was now common for Jews and non-Jews. “Ethnic, moral, social and political reasons make it undesirable that these unions be allowed. It follows that marriages undertaken in these conditions are to be viewed as extremely untenable.” This sentiment that marriages between North African men and French women were somehow less valid than those between French men and French women was widespread. Documents from the period usually employ the term *ménage mixte* – mixed-race household – rather than the more formal *marriage mixte*. One handwritten report found in the Bouches-du-Rhône archives suggested that women who married North African men could be considered psychologically disturbed, and thus Franco-North African unions were not desirable for a regime obsessed with improving French racial stock. Indeed, the Minister of Justice even notified local authorities in mid-1941 that prefects could decide whether to issue marriage licenses, inferring that they should be denied to Franco-North African couples in particular.  

Attempts to regulate sexual relations between Europeans and French colonial subjects in many ways prefigured Vichy’s 1942 law that required medical examinations and consent from the French state before marriage could take place.  

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78 MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Justice, 16 May 1941.  
79 William Schneider has also noted Vichy’s attempts to regulate marriage in his work, but he does not discuss how efficiently this policy was actually applied. It was actually retained by postwar governments and remains official state policy to this day. See Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 268-271.
Vichy may not have formally prohibited Franco-North African marriages, then, but authorities at the Ministry of Justice clearly attempted to prevent them from occurring. Local officials also got into the act of policing marital relations. In July 1941, the Ministry of Justice received a proposal from the Appeals Court in Aix-en-Provence. It noted the significant number of marriage contracts solicited by French women in the area hoping to marry North Africans. Complaints from the Appeals Court centered on the gap between French and Islamic law, differences in climate, customs, religion and language, and also apparently that North Africans were too poor. How would French women be able to “live decently”, the report asked, if they married Muslim men? For these reasons, the prosecutor found it necessary “to protect, in the greatest possible way, our compatriots against deceptions and dangers which they do not expect.” In the case where women were persistent, the prosecutor recommended that North African men should be legally required to provide documentary evidence that they were not married to an indigenous woman. If this could not be furnished then the marriage should be disallowed by French officials, even though the prosecutor acknowledged this was illegal under French law and could provoke discontent overseas. What shines through in this debate over “mixed” marriages is not just the racial anxiety driven by the possibility of interracial sex but also the strident paternalism involved. As carriers of the French race, women needed protection, and the interests of the Vichy state in promoting more desirable marriages could supplant the individual rights of French women.

80 ADBR, 76 W 2006, Note from the Public Prosecutor of the Appeals Court of Aix-en-Provence to Ministry of Justice, 22 July 1941.
81 Ibid
82 Ibid.
83 This is broadly in line with what historians of women and gender under Vichy have previously argued. The most notable policy was the declaration of abortion as a capital offense, but it consciously sought to promote the right kinds of reproduction through disallowing marriages between Jews and non-Jews as well as a variety of
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The position of North African workers in France had evolved dramatically by the beginning of 1942. Arrested, deported, and expelled from metropolitan territory following the defeat, economic recovery, and especially labor shortages in mining and industry, meant that finding workers (preferably experienced workers) became a frantic pursuit for many French companies shortly afterwards. Even though they were in the midst of deporting the unemployed, prefects and the Ministry of Industrial Production at Vichy began receiving requests for new North African workers in the spring of 1941. Rather than totally dismiss these demands the regime eventually responded by agreeing that North African could serve as a useful source of manpower during the renovation of the French economy – as long as migration was managed and controlled by the state. Although historians have typically emphasized Vichy’s traditionalism, the migration system designed by bureaucrats was broadly in line with ideas of state-planning and economic intervention that swirled around the hallways of the ministries of Labor, Industrial Production and Finance in the first years of the regime. In this case, the needs of French industry, local officials charged with carrying out economic reforms and functionaries at Vichy were broadly in sync. Companies would receive North African workers but their selection and arrival was to be managed by the government. In rejecting the so-called “laissez-faire” immigration system of the Third

Republic (more myth than reality) Vichy’s self-styled migration regime would prove disastrous when it came down to actually providing French business with new workers.\textsuperscript{84}

Although \textit{les années noires} are typically associated with hunger, material deprivation and poor living conditions, the French labor market rebounded significantly by late 1941, and within a year unemployment had been largely eliminated in Vichy France. This was driven by two factors. First, Vichy was active in trying to reduce unemployment using state-led efforts. Pétain created the Commission for Fighting Unemployment (Commissariat à la lutte contre le chômage or CLC) in the autumn of 1940 and began a series of public works projects around France shortly afterwards. Unemployment assistance was actually cancelled by the regime and those looking for jobs shuffled into CLC projects around the country.\textsuperscript{85} State-led employment projects were initially designed to stifle dissent and build support for the embryonic regime, but they soon became synonymous with back breaking work and largely depended on coerced foreign labor by 1943. Second, internal and external demand for French products and resources created a need for new workers. Businesses were permitted to re-establish relations between the occupied and unoccupied zones with an eye towards improving economic efficiency. Vichy designed a series of committees to manage the French economy along a proto-\textit{dirigiste} model.\textsuperscript{86} Above all, German orders for French aluminum (central to the aircraft industry), chemical products, and internal demand for coal and charcoal restored employment and even created labor shortages in these sectors.\textsuperscript{87}

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\textsuperscript{84} This paragraph is based on Philip Nord’s \textit{France’s New Deal}, especially Part 1. As the following discussion will show, Nord’s contention that Vichy’s \textit{dirigiste} model was based more on decree and fiat than compromise with employers is very much the case when in came to recruiting North Africans.


\textsuperscript{87} See \textit{Les entreprises françaises, l’Occupation et le second XXe siècle}, ed. Olivier Dard, Hervé Joly, and Philippe Verheyde (Metz: Centre régional universitaire lorrain d’histoire, 2011); \textit{l’Economie de la zone non}
Coal and other sources of fuel were particularly important at this time. France was the world’s largest coal importer in 1939; over thirty percent of its average annual domestic coal consumption was imported. Since the Germans were now diverting resources from the coal-rich Nord-Pas-de-Calais region to Germany, French officials were desperate to increase coal production at the remaining mines near Alès, Marseille, Saint-Etienne, and elsewhere in the south. Some of the most vivid memories contained in memoirs from the war related to the lack of coal and heating fuel during winter months. In this sense, increasing coal production was paramount for Petain’s government. Giving people enough coal or charcoal to heat their homes during the winter could have a tangible benefit for the regime. Complaints from mining companies thus had real impact on policy makers at Vichy. Saint-Etienne, the largest remaining coal basin under French control, received permission to recruit Moroccans in the spring of 1941. Mines around Alès were facing growing concern about the availability of workers as well and authorized to recruit one thousand Algerians that April.

Other industries began complaining to French authorities about the lack of workers. The French aluminum industry was ordered by the Germans to drastically increase aluminum production. This was mainly focused in the Rhône-Alps region of southeastern France and included dozens of small, mono-industrial factory towns involved in electro-chemicals and hydro-electrics. Because their facilities required huge amounts of electricity, the so-called high season for manufacturers ran from the spring through autumn, when rivers following

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88 Millward, New Order, 38.
89 MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Secretary of State for Labor to General Noguès, Resident General of France in Morocco, 13 March 1941.
down from the Alps could generate more power in nearby hydroelectric turbines.91 Employers historically relied on migrant labor from Italy and increasingly on North Africans over the 1930s. Italians were now prevented from coming to France and so business associations and employers began petitioning Vichy to allow the recruitment of North Africans. These were the same companies that had recklessly demanded deportations several months previously.

In April 1941, a manufacturing association located in the Isère informed the local prefect and the Ministry of Industrial Production about the scarcity of workers in the area. It claimed North Africans were suited to electrochemical production particularly well because they were “resistant to the heat of the ovens” used in the smelting process and could return home after the high season.92 This initial request for five hundred Algerians was denied. Restoring full employment for those living in southern France clearly took priority at this time and employers were instead told to look for unemployed French workers closer to home.93

Vichy began to waver several months later. In July 1941 the Council of Ministers finally allowed for the recruitment of two hundred North African industrial workers. Recruitment was only intended to focus on those who possessed “good morals” and a “good

92 ADR, 130 W 170, Syndicat Patronal des Industries Electro-Métallurgiques, Electro-Chemiques et Connexes de l’Isère to General Director of Chemical Industries at Vichy, 10 April 1941.
attitude” – “the best of their race”, according to the Council.\textsuperscript{94} Further, the parameters put in place by the MOI during 1939 and 1940 were maintained and even strengthened. Workers would be placed under extreme surveillance, not permitted to change employment without official authorization and required to return home after their contract expired – in essence, they would be guest workers in France. Any type of “clandestine migration” – and this included North Africans attempting to cross the Mediterranean or recruited by employers without official authorization – was disallowed.\textsuperscript{95}

Scholars have with good reason stated the Vichy regime had no immigration policy.\textsuperscript{96} Migration from Italy, Spain and Eastern Europe was blocked after 1939. The inherently xenophobic nature of the Pétain’s government saw immigration from supposedly inferior nations as one of the reasons for France’s decline. The fact remained, however, that if the regime desired a refurbished industrial sector and greater economic collaboration with Nazi Germany, workers would have to be found somewhere. The memo circulated by the Council of Minister contained several ideological kernels that could be used to create an acceptable immigration policy. Recruitment should be based on French economic need rather than personal rights. If the métropole required more workers then the regime would issue more travel permits. The vague allusion to professional selection based on “moral” and “racial” considerations suggested that immigration and population concerns were being officially fused together. The Third Republic had favored migrants from European nations but had refused to officially bar migrants from certain countries or ethnic groups. By stressing the


\textsuperscript{95} MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, Secretary of State for Labor to General Noguès, Resident General of France in Morocco, 15 July 1941.

\textsuperscript{96} Viet, \textit{La France immigrée}, 55.
need for increased state involvement, the regime was implicitly supporting the ascension of a quota-based system like in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and Australia that would select the most desirable North African candidates. Because France actually controlled the territory North African migrants were originating from, however, the regime sought to develop demographic concerns in a much more rigorous way. The regime could literally select the “best” migrants available and bring them to France as temporary workers.

Although this justification for increased reliance on North Africa as a source of labor (and nothing more) appeared theoretically sound elements within the regime pointed to a series of problems. The colonial governments in North Africa initially brushed aside calls for further worker recruitment. Describing the moment as “inopportune”, General Noguès in Morocco noted his own desire for increased economic development and rejected the proposal. General Weygand’s office in Algeria was also hesitant. Fears over living conditions in France and the start of colonial development projects meant that the three departments could “unclog” (décongestionner) urban areas, but further recruitment efforts were not desirable. Figures on the other side of the Mediterranean expressed similar apprehensions. Prime Minister François Darlan’s office was unenthusiastic, as one lengthy report noted, because of fears the French population was “contaminated” by North Africans in France. They were not subject to proper screening and thus there was no guarantee of their

99 MAE, GV-M, dossier 66, “Retour et envoi dans la Métropole de travailleurs nord-africains,” Vice-Admiral Fenard, Permanent Secretary General to General Weygand in French Africa to the Secretary of State for Labor, 28 November 1941.
“physical, mental and moral health.”\textsuperscript{100} The report also framed North Africans as carriers of syphilis, tuberculosis, dysentery and other “colonial afflictions.” Driven into poverty and squalor following their arrival, many came into contact with the “worst elements of the French population” like pimps, prostitutes and criminals. Miscegenation and the birth of \textit{démi-indigènes} with undesirable physical characteristics was apparently another concern. While not wanting to promote “racist tendencies,” the report nevertheless argued that the prewar system of allowing “uninhibited access to France” was untenable. Other nations considered North Africans racially undesirable and had taken action to bar other “Asiatics” from entry. If France could emulate these racially based laws – and the report pointed not only to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, but also Great Britain and the United States – then some migration could prove useful.\textsuperscript{101}

Given the pervasive xenophobia that defined the period, reticence over bringing North Africans to France is not surprising. In this case, however, employers were convincing with their arguments that enhanced industrial development was impossible without new North African workers. Concerns emanating from North Africa and elements of the regime were not enough to override increasing labor shortages, and so recruitment began. According to official statistics, 7,702 North Africans were brought to France between 1941 and 1942. The number requested by employers, however, was 14,434.\textsuperscript{102} Why did only half of the migrants arrive? To answer this question, historians must look to the archival record left by French business. It demonstrates how a system once considered promising by both the


\textsuperscript{101} Ibid

\textsuperscript{102} AN, 72 AJ Papiers privées d’Henri Maux, carton 3, dossier Travaillleurs étrangers, “Recrutement des travailleurs nord-africains du 1 janvier 1941 au 9 novembre 1942,” Commissariat à la lutte contre le chômage, undated.
regime and employers broke down in 1942 as Vichy sought to bring migration under state control.

Recruitment efforts in the Alès mining basin became emblematic of this process. Located north of Nîmes near the Cevennes forest, Alès was the third-largest coal producing area in France after the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Saint-Etienne. It was also one of the first areas to focus on North African worker recruitment in the 1920s. Significant links were built between the region and Algeria during the interwar period, with over two thousand Algerian miners present in 1940. Vichy, satisfied that the mines could not locate French workers, allowed companies to recruit several hundred Algerians in 1941. Although needing official authorization to move forward with the process, Alès’s largest mine – Grand’Combe – was initially allowed to recruit workers without any direct intervention from Vichy or the colonial administration in Algeria.  

103

Grand’Combe director Pierre Boyer wrote Auguste Arestan, the administrator of Bourj-Bou-Arréridj in the Kabyle region, in April 1941 informing him that worker recruitment had begun and the mine was interested in hiring someone to supervise the process. The director asked Arestan to recommend an “honorable man” (un homme de confiance) who could deal with the bureaucracy in Algiers and then escort the workers to Marseille. 104 Boyer wrote Arestan several weeks later noting the mine could afford to pay this supervisor thirty francs for every worker that arrived at Grand’Combe plus five francs per worker for administrative costs. Of particular concern was the process of having labor

103 There is very little archival discussion of the initial steps employers had to take with the recruitment process. Apparently requests were sent to the MOI along with twenty-five francs to ensure secretarial costs were covered. In the case of Grand’Combe, it had sent 2500 francs to the MOI by May 1941 to cover the cost of creating labor contracts for one thousand Algerians. In addition, the mine sent 286 francs to the MOI for every worker whose contract was deemed acceptable. See ADG, 18 J 150, Pierre Boyer to Departmental Labor Office of the Gard, 12 May 1941.

104 ADG, 18 J 150, Pierre Boyer to Auguste Arestan, Administrator of the commune-mixte of Bourj-Bou-Arréridj, 28 April 1941
contracts approved by the government in Algiers. Boyer specifically wanted former workers from Alès and believed this could be achieved by hiring a retired member of the colonial bureaucracy. Eventually Grand’Combe hired Monsieur Duffau, the former administrator of a commune-mixte in the Kabyle. He was required to complete all the necessary paper work as well as accompany the Algerians to Marseille. The mine arranged for the Agence Central de Transports Groupes (CENTRALAG) to transport the workers across the Mediterranean, and they were also asked to complete medical testing, focusing on possible hernias and poor eyesight.

What emerges from this initial correspondence over the recruitment program is the relative independence afforded to Grand’Combe. The mine was required to obtain official permission from the MOI, as well as confirm the number of workers being brought to Alès, but the company could hire a supervisor in Algeria and arrange for transportation. Apart from this added element of state intervention, the process was remarkably similar to what had existed before the war. Although Grand’Combe was very disappointed with the slow nature of labor recruitment because of transportation issues – only 250 of the 950 requested workers had arrived by November 1941 – it nevertheless maintained control of the process itself.

The ideological impulses of the regime began to prevail in 1942. Incessant demands for workers from various sectors of French industry apparently forced the regime to confront the fact that labor shortages were not confined to mining; only allowing two hundred North African industrial workers was insufficient. For Vichy functionaries René Belin and Jean

105 ADG, 18 J 150, Pierre Boyer to Auguste Arestan, Administrator of the commune-mixte of Bourj-Bou-Arrérîdij, 10 May 1941.
106 ADG, 18 J 150, Pierre Boyer to Monsieur Duffau, 3 June 1941.
107 ADG, 18 J 150, Pierre Boyer to Agence Centrale de Transports Groupes, 25 August 1941. CENTRALAG did note, however, that the mine could simply retain 600 francs from the workers’ paychecks to help defray the expense.
Bichellone, however, simply allowing unfettered access to France ran contrary to a properly constituted migration regime. They required a system that could supply workers and yet not negate the regime’s obsession with the health, wellbeing and biological regeneration of the nation. Luckily for authorities at the Ministry of Labor, theorists obsessed with population, demography and immigration proliferated under Pétain. “Experts” like Alexis Carrel, René Martial, Georges Mauco and Alfred Sauvy were all strident proponents of limiting “undesirable” sources of immigration (including North Africans), arguing their presence in France was decaying society from within.\(^{108}\) They were not totally opposed to the process of migration itself, instead arguing that France should only accept the most “assimilable” candidates to stem the tide of biological degeneration. As the French sociologist Francine Muel-Dreyfus has argued, discussions of degeneration under Vichy “became a social theory, and the telescoping of social and biological determinisms founded a political rhetoric in which the biological metaphor was central.”\(^{109}\) The process of North African migration was inserted into this discussion as the regime consciously sought to meld economic considerations with concerns about the “French race.”

Released in February 1942, Vichy’s migration policy was predicated on the assumption that North Africans, even Algerian French nationals, had no formal right to access metropolitan territory. Instead, migration was based on a “necessary equilibrium between the needs of the metropolitan labor market and that of North Africa.”\(^{110}\) North Africans were not authorized for employment in France unless demanded by a French

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\(^{109}\) Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 258.

employer and entry would also be denied if deemed “inconvenient” for the Algerian or Moroccan economy. This essentially removed all possibility that Algerians could come to metropolitan France without European consent. Further, those who arrived in France were legally bound to their employer. Employees were unable to change jobs without official authorization while the employer was required to pay for the cost of transporting, housing and feeding the workers. Technically speaking, North Africans earned the equivalent of French wages, but the fine print within contracts typically stated French companies could recoup recruiting expenses by deducting money from the workers’ paychecks; by mid 1942 this amounted to over 1000 francs.\textsuperscript{111} It also should be noted that the work contracts were written entirely in French rather than Arabic. Given that illiteracy reached upwards of ninety percent in Algeria it is not impossible to imagine that recruiting improprieties were widespread.

This heavily regulated recruitment process extended to French soil as well. Medical testing was paramount in selecting suitable candidates and workers were rigorously screened in Algiers and Marseille. According to the process established in late 1941, contact with “French soil” was forbidden before sanitary precautions were undertaken. European personnel directed the workers to a “closed car” once they had arrived in Marseille, where they would be transported to a nearby camp for shaving, showering, disinfection of clothes and personal belongings, and vaccination.\textsuperscript{112} Since disinfectant was in short supply, French officials used warm vinegar on the recruits, eliciting a mountain of complaints from those

\textsuperscript{111} ADBR, 144 W 12, “Contrat d’Engagement,” Ministry of Labor – MOI, 12 February 1942.
that had just arrived. Contact between the French population and the newly arrived was disallowed until they had undergone the process. The MOI was to be notified if the worker had demonstrated a “poor attitude” in the workplace or was deemed unsatisfactory in any way. Work abandonment would be dealt with harshly with the possibility of fines, prison sentences or even internment in a concentration or work camp.

Although there are many parallels between the Third Republic and Vichy’s recruitment regimes, the rhetorical difference in the documents are striking. Third Republic policies were always driven by paternalistic impulses that prescribed heavy government involvement in the lives of colonials to effectively manage their transition to metropolitan life. Colonials were guaranteed treatment exactly like French workers but the encadrement program reflected beliefs over the physiological, cultural, and indeed racial problems that resulted from trying to integrate people considered “ethnographically distinct.” Under Vichy, by contrast, there was no pretense of equal treatment. North African workers were expected to serve French industry and then return home after their contracts expired. By virtue of defining their existence in the métropole as a product of economic interest rather than legal right, it was assumed that they had no place in French society other than as temporary workers. The Third Republic may have been worried about North African migration and attempted to curtail the movement of Algerians across the Mediterranean, but it was Pétain’s regime that sought to erect a literal cordon sanitaire around metropolitan society from a North African influence.

The new migration was envisioned as a product of technocratic efficiency par excellence and French industry was remarkably unworried after its introduction.

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Grand’Combe sent Monsieur Duffau a copy of the decree in March 1942 and he concluded that the only problem could be with the practice of *contrats en blanc* – unnamed contracts which could produce sub-standard workers for the mine. After only one month, however, the mine was increasingly worried about Vichy’s new system. The regime had originally intended recruitment to be undertaken by North African colonial administrations in conjunction with employers. This proved too onerous. Finding recruits was instead contracted out to two private entities: the Société Générale d’Immigration (SGI) for mines, and CENTRALAG for industry. Grand’Combe was extremely nervous about this proposal because it would no longer be able to guarantee the “quality” of workers being sent to the mine.

Over the spring of 1942 apprehension devolved into outright anger. Complaints poured into prefectures, labor offices, and various levels of the Vichy government about serious deficiencies with the new recruitment system. Above all, employers complained about the non-arrival of workers for whom they had paid considerable sums of money. By the end of April, only thirty-eight North Africans had arrived in France. Only 220 Algerian miners had been received in mid-July, 355 in August, and 850 by that October. This was obviously far short of the two thousand workers that had been promised in the spring. Further, electrochemical and hydroelectric firms were not receiving their allotted workers either. Companies throughout the Rhône-Alps had requested almost seven hundred workers for the so-called high season when water levels allowed for increased production. But throughout the summer prefects in Chambéry, Grenoble and Lyon received correspondence

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114 [ADG, 18 J 150, Director of Grand’Combe to Monsieur Duffau, 4 March 1942.](#)

noting that production efforts were being compromised given the slow pace of North African arrivals. By the beginning of June many employers had received less than half the workers requested.\footnote{See telegrams from various chemical companies to the regional office in Lyon in ADR, 130 W 170. The Ministry of Industrial Production also collated these complaints into two reports in F12 10925, “Compte-rendu mensuel de Juillet 1942” and “Compte-rendu mensuel d’Août 1942,” both from Ingénieur en Chef des Services Chimiques d’État – Lyon to Secretary of State for Industrial Production, July and August 1942.}

The failure of Vichy’s migration system was due to a variety of different factors. A typhus epidemic engulfed parts of Algeria in the spring of 1942, cancelling departures for several months until new sanitary measures were instituted. Following this, recruitment was only allowed in areas officially declared free of typhus, limiting the pool of available workers.\footnote{ANMT, 40 AS 48, Note to Director of the Société Générale d’Immigration, 9 April 1942. The three areas targeted were the Grande Kabylie (département d’Alger), Petite Kabylie (département de Constantine) and around Batna in the Aurès Mountains of eastern Algeria.} But internal issues with the system caused many of the problems. Medical testing, while paramount for the regime in order to find physiologically and racially viable workers, was incredibly onerous in practice. The SGI was ordered to carry out no less than two medical tests in Algeria alone: one in the commune-mixte to determine “physical fitness” and then another in Algiers. Medical doctors located in rural Algeria were virtually non-existent and so recruiting agencies or low-level colonial functionaries were forced to perform the tests. Not surprisingly, their medical acumen left something to be desired. Many workers that arrived in Algiers were turned away by maritime health inspectors who often had much more rigorous criteria than recruiters.\footnote{ANMT, 40 AS 48, Société Générale d’Immigration to the Comité des Houillères de la Loire, 14 April 1942.}

Employers had their own criteria for defining an acceptable worker. Many specifically stated their desire for Algerian Kabyles or Moroccans rather than Arabs; those located in the Alps wanted individuals from mountainous areas and cooler climates. Some companies instead accused the Governor General’s Office, the SGI and CENTRALAG of...
purposely recruiting workers of poor health. A mine near the Swiss border sent dozens of
“physically unfit” Algerians back to the MOI in Marseille and was instructed to stop
immediately or no workers would be sent in the future.\textsuperscript{119} The Committee for Ferrous-Metals
(Comité d’Organisation des Ferro-Alliages) in the Rhône-Alps region received several
complaints from its affiliated factories, most notably Bozel-Maletra. One of the more famous
French chemical companies at the time, Bozel-Maletra complained about North African
productivity compared to its French and Italian employees, specifically condemning the
“natural indolence” among Algerians. As the committee wrote to officials in Lyon:

One Algerian was found by a foreman hidden in a corner – doing nothing – with a
cigarette in his mouth. The foreman asked him: ‘You are not working?’ The Algerian
responded tranquilly: ‘I am smoking.’ The foreman told him: ‘Go do something.’
After being supervised for a time [he] seemed to start working again.
The foreman came back a half-hour later after the work had not progressed. He said
to him: ‘You have done nothing since I came by here before.’ The worker remained
still without responding or moving. The foreman insisted and said: ‘If you don’t want
to work, get out of here.’\textsuperscript{120}

Supposed incidents like this were used to validate stereotypes about shiftless and lazy
colonial subjects, and indeed, Bozel-Maletra went on to state that an Algerian was precisely
half as effective as a French or Italian worker. Of the seventy-nine Algerians received by the
company:

Fifty are absolutely undesirable, who have now come to live like parasites on the
French community. The country is not rich enough to give these people the luxury of
doing absolutely nothing. One could say that the colonial authorities have
intentionally chosen undesirables to be removed. It is necessary that the appropriate
services understand the difficulties which we have encountered and that they should
send to France only men capable of working.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} ADI, “Travailleurs Algériens refusés par un employeur pour inaptitude physique,” Secretary of State for
Labour to Secretary of State for Industrial Production, Mining Office, 16 April 1942.
\textsuperscript{120} ADR, 130 W 170, Comité d’Organisation des Ferro-Alliages to Committee for Organizing the Chemical
Industry in Lyon, 12 August 1942.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
Vichy never admitted publicly that its state-controlled method for bringing North Africans to France was proving to burdensome and ineffective. Internally the MOI and Ministry of Industrial Production held a series of meetings that demonstrated frustration with the slowness of recruitment. While officials had concluded that a state-managed migration regime was in the best interest of the French economy, they did not take into account that mountain of paperwork and resulting bureaucratic morass. Contracts – in triplicate – had to be sent from the employer to the MOI at Vichy. These demands were relayed to functionaries in Algeria who constructed a dossier for every single worker coming to France including a standard fiche with personal information, photographs, fingerprints, medical records and signed copies of the work contract.\textsuperscript{122} When officials met in August they argued for a simplification of the process. In the meantime, however, Algerians and Moroccans recently arrived in France should simply be kept at their place of employment, regardless if their contract had expired or not.\textsuperscript{123}

Apart from the mountain of paperwork the Ministry of Industrial Production began to suspect subterfuge within the colonial administration in Algeria. General Weygand’s personal secretary, a colon and landowner named Monsieur Ettori, was eventually accused of working to ensure the recruitment program did not compromise the ability of European settlers to procure inexpensive indigenous workers.\textsuperscript{124} There was also a transportation crunch at this time. The autumn citrus harvest was being taken to France and the German occupiers had also begun ferrying Algerians to work for the Organization Todt.\textsuperscript{125} All of these factors

\textsuperscript{122} ANMT, 40 AS 48, “Note sur les conditions de recrutement et l’introduction de la main-d’œuvre algérienne à destination de la Métropole, Ministry of Industrial Production – Mining Office, 15 July 1942.
\textsuperscript{123} ADR, 130 W 170, “Main-d’œuvre pour l’électrochimie,” Ministry for Industrial Production – Office of Chemical Industry to Committee for Organizing the Chemical Industry in Lyon, 15 August 1942.
\textsuperscript{124} ANMT, 40 AS 48, “Main-d’œuvre nord-africaine – Compte-rendu de voyage de Monsieur Ploix à Vichy,” Comité d’organisation de l’industrie des combustibles minéraux solides, 17-19 October 1942.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid
combined – the recruitment process, unhappiness of Algerian officials, and trouble transporting workers from Algeria to France – explain why many employers were receiving only half the amount of workers they requested.

The failure of Vichy’s North African recruitment system not only impacted the pride of officials that touted technocratic intervention as the solution to economic problems but the shortfall of workers for French industry also expanded rights for North Africans that actually arrived. Whereas many colonials had been driven out of the métropole in 1940, Vichy was so desperate to placate its North African workforce in the autumn of 1942 that it expanded social benefits. Family allocations for those men whose wives and children remained in Algeria were introduced for the first time; the regime had previously refused to consider benefits for indigenous family members living in the Algerian departments. A policy that had more direct impact on metropolitan French companies was the question of *congés* – a paid leave of absence.

*Congés* for North African workers were formally suppressed in April 1942 following the Algerian typhus epidemic. By that summer the regime was clearly considering whether re-authorizing leaves would help to placate the North African population living in France. There were fears suppression of *congés* would produce “discontent” among the North African population. On the other hand, if leaves were restored, what might happen to coal extraction and manufacturing? Several employers became concerned that if workers were permitted *congés* they would not return and French industry would be faced with even greater labor shortages. Although some employers did not agree that restoring this right was the best course of action the vast majority called for a re-introduction of the policy. The

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126 ADI, 9 S 10/173, Secretary of State for Industrial Production – Mining Office to Secretary of State for the Interior – Algerian Office, 30 July 1942.
127 ADI, 9 S 10/173, Director of the mine of La Plagne to Chief Engineer of the Mines, 4 July 1942.
syndicate for electrochemical firms in the Isère wrote to Vichy requesting the regime re-
instate *congés* for North Africans as “difficulties were becoming more critical, day by
day.” It warned that if leaves were not restored, North Africans could begin departing
factories in a “totally irregular fashion” for North Africa or perhaps even the German
occupied zone. A “malaise” had set in among North African workers who had been in France
for months or years and had not been permitted to see their family:

This malaise could rapidly translate into discontent, first against the employer, and
then against the state…[K]nowing the Arabs, if we do not give them this satisfaction
at the present time, they will leave themselves, and no state service will be able to
stop them. They will return to Algeria and agitate against France, agitate against their
employers and thus all of the good elements among the population will be lost for
absolutely everyone. It is not clear what type of system was formally established to govern North African *congés*,
but appeals from employers and local officials seem to have persuaded the regime that
restoring this right was essential for a compliant workforce. Vichy re-established leave of
absences for North African workers starting in mid-September 1942 and continued until
migration was disturbed following the Allied invasion of Algeria and Morocco in November
1942.

**IV**

In 1939, seething with hatred at the constant influx of immigrants into French
territory, the notorious Pierre Drieu La Rochelle described his malice in *Gilles*: “He despised
and hated with all his mans heart the prodigious, vicious, and asthmatic nationalism of this
radical party that left France childless, that let it be invaded and cross-bed by millions of

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128 ADR, 130 W 170, Syndicat Patronal des Industries électro-métallurgiques, electro-chimiques et connexes de
l’Isère to Ministry of Labour – MOI, 27 August 1942.
129 ADR, 130 W 170, “Congés des Nord-africains,” Syndicat Patronal des Industries électro-métallurgiques,
electro-chimiques et connexes de l’Isère to Office of Chemical Industries, Lyon, 27 August 1942.
foreigners, Jews, wogs, Negros and Indochinese.” Given Drieu La Rochelle’s association with colonial migrants and the degradation of French society, he would no doubt have been pleased with the treatment meted out to North Africans during the first two years of the Vichy era. Targeted as unwanted elements by local authorities during the summer of 1940, thousands of Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians were fired from their jobs, denied access to benefits and then deported from the country. The scarcity of food and jobs, uncertainty about the future, and the presence of refugees and recently demobilized soldiers marked them as expendable. No longer a local initiative by that autumn of 1940, the Vichy regime latched onto the deportations as a way to expel unemployed North Africans from French territory. Maintaining racial and gender hierarchies across the Mediterranean, however, forced French officials to prohibit “mixed-race” couples from returning.

The position of North Africans as an unwelcome social presence evolved along with the economic situation in southern France. Algerian and Moroccan labor was viewed as a potential benefit so long as migration could be managed and controlled by French authorities. They were thus declared a necessary – but limited – component of the workforce that would undergo professional selection and medical testing by recruiting agencies. Chased from France a few years previously, the recruitment of North Africans demonstrates certain malleability in Vichy’s racial ideology. It could use concerns over the potential demographic and social ills of a large, uncontrolled Algerian and Moroccan population in France by applying its theories to fit more pragmatic ends.

This last element of how roles for North African migrants were defined in Vichy France begs the question, if Algerians were viewed as indolent and unhealthy but could be

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130 Quoted in Muel-Drefyus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 86.
used as workers, why not Jews? Though an organic understanding of French national belonging heavily influenced the experience of both groups, discontinuities in the way Vichy treated Jews and North Africans emerge after closer examination. Both groups were harassed by the regime, subject to punitive measures like arrest and deportation, and declared an unwanted presence. Vichy’s treatment of the Jewish population living in France, however, was conditioned by a need to remove all “Jewish influence” from French life. Jews were blamed for the defeat; blamed for corrupting the family; blamed for “infiltrating society” and polluting “racial stock.” Their businesses were expropriated, legislation enacted to legally define a Jew through genealogy, forced to wear a yellow star marking them as distinct, and prohibited from living in certain areas of the country. In this way, Vichy’s anti-semitism was extremely “redemptive” in nature, as purging Jewish influences would act as a force of social regeneration.

At the same time, an examination into the social positioning of North Africans under Vichy demonstrates how ethnicity, population and belonging within the French body politic influenced everything from employment, welfare assistance, migration, and marriage during these years. During the first year of the regime, North Africans were inscribed with certain characteristics that marked them as unwanted elements. Their qualité could be used as a means to justify firings, denial of financial assistance and even expulsion from metropolitan territory. Even when the labor market began to improve in 1941, they were still described as an unwanted element in French society and thus transformed into “guest-workers” in the service of the national economy. This was a step politicians under the Third Republic were

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131 Jews were actually used as workers in very limited numbers. Historians have calculated that approximately 20,000 were grouped into GTE camps in southern France. Poznanski, Jews in France, 176-178.
132 Ibid, 74-75.
unwilling to take, giving credence to Robert Paxton’s assertion that the defeat was seen as “liberation from encrusted procedures and political immobility.” Indeed, no regime since Vichy has so explicitly, officially, and openly fused population, demography and immigration together into concrete policy. North Africans, however, were not the only colonial migrants that suffered from punitive measures under Vichy. The thousands of Vietnamese who remained in France after June 1940 would quickly see their position deteriorate as well.

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134 Paxton, *Vichy France*, 137.
Chapter Four

The Immoral Economy: Race, Rationing, and Vietnamese Workers during les années noires

In January 1943, a farmer named Monsieur Robert arrived at the gendarmerie station in the small town of Saint-Martin-de-Crau along the Mediterranean coast. Described as “agitated” and “considerably emotional” during his visit, the gendarmerie noted that Monsieur Robert kept bees for honey production and was the victim of a recent theft. Someone had looted his beehives and caused over 400,000 francs in damage to the property while doing so. After noting the growing problem with thefts in the region, Monsieur Robert and the gendarmerie eventually agreed that a contingent of Vietnamese workers stationed nearby were the culprits. The gendarmerie assured Monsieur Robert that surveillance would be increased and every effort made to ensure these “undesirable workers” were removed from the area.\(^1\) Officials in the town were unable to complete the transfer, though, and the gendarmerie archives show continued annoyance with the presence of Vietnamese workers in the Camargue throughout 1943 and into 1944.\(^2\) After several more complaints, the gendarmerie declared their intention to “to rid the region of these undesirables.” While no one had actually

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\(^1\) ADBR, 97 W 19, Gendarmerie Nationale – Section Saint-Martin-de-Crau to sous-préfet of Arles, 9 January 1943.

\(^2\) As the gendarmerie archives show, this was most likely due to the scarcity of farm workers in this particular region of Provence.
caught Asians in the act of stealing, “there is no doubt that [the crimes] have been committed by the Indochinese. The population is extremely over-agitated against these individuals. They have threatened to take justice themselves (faire Justice elle-même) if no action is taken in this situation. Regrettable actions are feared.”

How are historians to interpret this particular incident in a small southern French town under the Vichy regime? Complaints like these happened frequently under the rule of Marshal Philippe Pétain. Local archives are filled with reports that demonstrate the dire material situation, denunciations over theft of food, and people being pursued or arrested for black market activities. As the conflict between Monsieur Robert and the workers show, there were very few issues that potentially divided people more than rationing and food supply in wartime France. Just as with North Africans in the previous chapter, examining Vietnamese during les années noires reveals the extent to which race, racial perceptions and racial animosity affected the ability of people to find food under Vichy. Since obtaining enough to eat during the war revolved around personal relationships and complex social interactions, studying how rationing affected colonial workers also gives us some indication of how race and colonial status could impact the acceptance or exclusion of Vietnamese migrants during this period. Indeed, as this chapter will show, historians need to think carefully about how these issues together – race and ethnicity, subject status, and daily interaction – could actually affect the experience of people of color in France.

Although dominated by questions of collaboration and resistance for years, the historiography of the Vichy period has been grappling with how the everyday lives of men

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and women in France were altered by war and occupation.\textsuperscript{4} Of course, the xenophobic atmosphere of the Vichy period has been studied extensively as well. But there has been less attention to how these two issues influenced each other.\textsuperscript{5} As Shannon Fogg has pointed out, daily interactions between French and foreign, “reveals the ways in which shortages shaped, created, and defined interactions between social, religious, and cultural groups during the war.”\textsuperscript{6} In her work, however, she focuses on groups – Jews and Roma most notably – historically seen as culturally distinct and often denounced by Vichy as unwanted elements in France. Vietnamese, by contrast, had virtually no presence in rural France before their arrival during the war. Further, Vichy did not intentionally seek to define them as a racial and physical threat to the nation as was the case with Jews and “Gypsies”. Examining their experience, then, gives us some idea of how pervasive colonial ideals were at the time and whether they had any affect on the relationships forged between colonial subjects and French citizens in the métropole. Much like with North Africans in the previous chapter, focusing on the daily lives of Southeast Asians allows us to investigate how animosity towards a group seen as racially or culturally different could affect the generation of discriminatory policies under Vichy.

This chapter addresses a number of issues. First, it discusses the situation of Vietnamese workers after the defeat and the various types of employment given to them by the French state. Second, it discusses how race and colonial ideology impacted the


\textsuperscript{5} The most notable example is Fogg, \textit{Everyday Life}.

\textsuperscript{6} Fogg, \textit{Everyday Life}, 2.
implementation of rationing policy for Indochinese workers. Last, it investigates how this system of rationing influenced relations between workers, employers, and the French population at large. Racial ideas were influential for structuring Vietnamese life in France during this period. Workers were kept in a system of *encadrement* designed to socially and physically isolate them from the French population. This not only defined them as distinct and different from white French citizens but created problems with rationing and food supply. Workers could (and did) push back against this system, an action not typically noted in histories of colonial migrants in France. Extreme hunger resulted in various responses including strikes, intimidation of French officials and theft of food. Because of this, the workers also confronted animosity from society at large, especially employers and the French population. These intertwined narratives – policies created by Vichy, the response of the workers, and the reaction of various segments of French society – reveal a great deal about how Vietnamese experienced the war, and the extent to which perceptions of them as being a threat to metropolitan French citizens limited their rights in France.

I

Vietnamese workers had a tumultuous experience during the German invasion. Most were located in southern France and thus not directly affected by the Wehrmacht’s advance. The 4th Legion of workers stationed in central and western France, however, was ordered to move south in June because of fears over what would happen if the Vietnamese were caught by the Nazis. These efforts were hampered by unauthorized departures by several MOI agents charged with monitoring the workers. Further, a lack of transportation, fuel, food, and the fact that roads and railways were inundated with French refugees fleeing south,

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7 ADIL, 10 W 273, “Compte-rendu N. 664,” Ministry of Labour, Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène – 4th Legion at Tours, 7 June 1940. The most notable MOI agent to leave his post during the invasion was the commander of the workers stationed at Bourges in central France.
debilitated efforts to move Asians away from the German military. The 33rd Company stationed at Oissel outside of Rouen were taken to Tours on 13 June and then housed with a large contingent of workers at the Ripault powder factory.\(^8\) Several days later the original group from Oissel and those working at Ripault were gradually sent south – by foot and car – stopping at a series of small towns on their way to Angoulême.\(^9\) The contingents stationed at Salbris and Bourges were taken prisoner by the Germans for a short period of time and then eventually sent to Pamiers and Perpignan near the border with Spain.\(^10\)

The vast majority of Vietnamese were located on territory directly under French control, however, and so a comparison with the experience of North Africans during this period is worthy of note. Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians were almost immediately fired, witnessed social welfare suppresses, and in some cases, deportated from metropolitan France. A similar fate awaited the Vietnamese. Because they were almost uniformly employed in the armaments industry or factories producing for the war effort, the vast majority found themselves out of work in the summer of 1940. They were transferred to a series of large transit camps around southern France at Marseille, Sorgues (near Avignon), Bergerac and Agde (near Montpellier) for their eventual removal from the country. There were two smaller groups stationed in Lyon and Roanne.\(^11\) Officials also declared the necessity of enforcing a stricter version of *encadrement* to preserve “public safety.” Contact with the neighboring French population was largely disallowed and any kind of disturbance or protest from the workers dealt with harshly. Unlike with the North Africans, however,

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\(^8\) ADIL, 10 M 273, “Situation de la 4ème Légion,” Colonel Barbier, Commander of 4th Legion of Indochinese Workers to the Minister of Industrial Production and Labour, 26 July 1940. 
\(^9\) Ibid. The workers stopped at Thilouze on 18 July, Pouzay-sur-Vienne the next day, then Vellèches and Lencloître. It seems the workers were able to secure transportation at Châtellerault and eventually arrived in Angoulême by late June. 
Vichy made no attempts to deport Vietnamese workers in the summer of 1940. As long as *encadrement* was rigorously enforced, officials with the MOI were perfectly willing to let them linger under confinement until suitable transportation could be found.

Since deportation from metropolitan France was not undertaken immediately their experience continued to be dominated by life in the camps. The Ministry of Colonies investigated living conditions in late 1940 and then again in mid-1941, and reports focused in particular on the moral of the workers.\(^\text{12}\) Initial reports indicated housing was “satisfactory” but heating in the barracks was often non-existent. Furthermore, many of the workers had lost clothing and personal effects during their move so the necessity of providing suitable clothing and shoes or boots to the workers was of paramount importance in light of the coming winter months.\(^\text{13}\) Even though the workers were not part of the rationing program that hit Vichy France in September 1940, their food intake was nevertheless tightly controlled by the MOI. Workers noted they were not receiving enough to eat, especially meat and vegetables, and were quickly angered by French attempts to limit food consumption. The mission sent to investigate living conditions noted another more insidious reason why those confined to the camps complained about not receiving enough to eat: MOI officials and indigenous adjuncts were clearly taking food and diverting it to the growing black market.\(^\text{14}\)

Although the living situation was fairly uniform for the workers regardless of which camp they were located, reports painted a particularly grim picture of Agde. Far from any artillery or munitions plant, the camp was originally constructed in 1939 to house Spanish

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\(^{12}\) ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Travailleurs coloniaux en France,” Secretary of State for the Colonies to Secretary of State for Industrial Production and Labour, 8 November 1940. The investigation was undertaken by Bui Quang Chu, a member of the Conseil supérieur de la France d’outre-mer who had been sent to France in May 1940 to tour the camps of Indochinese workers. The hostilities had delayed both the tour and his return to Cochinchina but he was tasked by Vichy with undertaking the survey sometime in late October 1940.

\(^{13}\) ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Rapport de mission dans les camps de la Main-d’oeuvre Indochinoise,” Ministry of Industrial Production and Labour, 8 December 1940, pp. 2-3.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, pp. 3-5.
Republicans seeking refuge in France, but quickly became a *Centre de rassemblement des étrangers* – a foreign concentration camp – under Vichy. By January 1941 there were over six thousand people held at Agde including almost three thousand Vietnamese workers.\(^{15}\)

Reports from early 1941 indicate that inmates did not have access to clean drinking water. A four-kilometer trip to Vias was necessary so that potable water could be brought back to the camp, although the lack of fuel and transportation meant that inmates were often forced to walk.\(^{16}\) Housing provided to those staying in the camp was clearly unsuitable. Barracks lacked heating and were poorly constructed, leaving a doctor to conclude that there was a “very strong chance of mortality” if the was situation not remedied immediately.\(^{17}\) The workers were also hounded by an eccentric local notable who complained of thefts from his garden and the use of his pond by Asians to wash clothing or to bathe. After several incidents he sent a letter to authorities in Montpellier – along with a rambling, six-page declaration of his loyalty to Pétain – requesting the removeal of Vietnamese from the area.\(^{18}\)

The MOI and camp officials were initially unconcerned about living arrangements. Notes were made about the importance of improving food supply and housing, but little was actually done to act on these instructions. Keeping the workers in camps was simply a means to an end for Vichy at this point. Surely, the thinking went, they will be sent back to Indochina shortly. After initial problems in finding ships able to transport the workers, convoys finally began in January 1941. But they continued for less than a year and only managed to send 4,434 of the 20,000 that arrived in France back to the colonies. After

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\(^{15}\) Archives départementales de l’Hérault (ADH), 2 W 620, “Arrivée de Travailleurs Indo-chinois,” Agde Police to Prefect of Hérault, 11 November 1940.

\(^{16}\) ADH, 2 W 620, Note from General Secretary for Family and Health in the Hérault to the Prefect, 14 January 1941.

\(^{17}\) ADH, 2 W 620, Doctor of Indochinese workers to the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Legion of the MOI, 13 January 1941.

\(^{18}\) ADH, 2 W 595, Letter to Commander of Agde Camp, 21 February 1941.
organizing the containment of thousands of workers after the defeat why did Vichy stop the convoys?

The paucity of archival material makes it difficult to determine why. Moral concerns apparently weighed in the decision. Some documents indicate that the Ministry of Colonies was wary of repatriating the workers given Japanese control over Indochina as well as the uncertain economic situation in the colony.\(^\text{19}\) Relations with Great Britain were strained following the June 1940 armistice and subsequent attack on the French Navy at Mers-el-Kebir. Shipping lanes had been disrupted due to British control over the Suez Canal and lack of available transport to Indochina. Space was reserved for sending military personal back first, largely to combat the growing threat of encroachment on Laos from Thailand and to strengthen the military presence in the colony. Several hundred workers never made it home as one transport was stopped by a British military vessel off the South African coast and the Indochinese interned at Pietermaritzburg before being sent on to Madagascar, where they remained until 1946. Finally, a British blockade of French military vessels traveling to Southeast Asia made transporting the remaining workers impossible after October 1941.\(^\text{20}\)

This failure to effectively send the vast majority of workers back to Indochina meant that 15,000 would be forced to suffer the Vichy years and the German occupation of France.

II

Employment and the availability of work was an immediate concern for MOI and local administrators. While work and rationing may appear to be distinct issues, the type of employment given to Southeast Asians, as well as payment policies, greatly determined the acquisition of food. In this sense, work and rationing were intricately connected. Although

\(^{19}\) ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor General of Indochina, 10 November 1940

the period after 1940 differed depending on where the workers were located, employment given to the Indochinese can be broken into roughly three periods. At first, many Vietnamese were unemployed or engaged in temporary work for the French state. As the economic situation stabilized after mid-1941, however, employment increased dramatically as the workers were directed towards a variety of factories and public works projects. Following the German occupation of southern France in November 1942, the Organization Todt—an enormous German construction conglomerate—began to utilize Vietnamese labor for building military fortifications along the Mediterranean coast. Throughout this time period, workers were moved around constantly. They would be hired out for a certain period of time, taken back to one of the large camps after being dismissed from their task, and then sent out again. One worker was given nineteen different appointments between the summer of 1940 and spring of 1944, for example, moving from agricultural work in southwestern France to the textile industry in Roanne, among several other placements.21

Following the defeat, in an effort to preserve jobs for French workers or simply because armaments factories were unsure of how to proceed, many Indochinese were removed from the workforce or given significantly reduced hours.22 Material shortages, unemployment and the presence of millions of refugees in southern France often meant that French citizens were privileged when it came to finding workers at the expense of colonials. At the same time, officials from the MOI became concerned with the effects of idleness on morale. Prefects and other local officials were constantly attempting to occupy Southeast

21 ANOM, Haut Commissariat de France en Indochine (HCl), Conseiller Politique (CS), carton 23, “Affectations successives avec l’emploi occupé,” Fiche d’identité de travailleur annamite.
22 The contingent at Saint-Chamas saw their hours fall from ten hours per day to six hours per day. Asian workers in Sorgues were down to five hours per day by the autumn of 1940. ADBR, 144 W 127, “Poudrerie de Saint-Chamas –des 17 et 18 Decembre 1940, “Director of Poudrerie Nationale de Saint-Chamas, 18 December 1940.
Asians despite the perilous economic situation.\textsuperscript{23} Rather than focus on urban areas MOI officials gradually turned to rural southern France as a source of employment. Whereas North Africans were often barred from taking part in CLC projects to facilitate their deportation, the MOI promoted the use of Vietnamese workers as useful for Vichy’s efforts to renovate the French economy. Despite the widely held belief that Asians were physically incapable of strenuous manual labor, economic considerations often forced them into jobs that would have been unthinkable just a few months previous. Employment for colonials during the \textit{drôle de guerre}, after all, was based on racial and physical considerations that rendered Asians effeminate and physically weak. Vichy was forced to eschew this logic in the face of unemployment. By late 1940 Asians were used on road construction, irrigation projects, forestry, in artisanal workshops, the grape harvest, and even the salt industry along the Mediterranean coast.\textsuperscript{24}

Prefects were cautious over using colonial workers in projects like these and forced MOI officials into creating justifications based on supposed cultural attributes. Although the workers had largely been employed in jobs requiring dexterity rather than brute force under the Third Republic, officials were now forced to admit that performing some physical labor was well within the limits of Vietnamese physiology. One MOI agent stationed in Roanne noted that as “born farmers and peasants,” Vietnamese could be effectively utilized in agriculture, irrigation projects and even in the forestry industry. These jobs corresponded to the largest economic sectors in Indochina during the interwar period so perhaps this official was arguing that perceptions of Asians as incapable of physical labor were antiquated given

\textsuperscript{23} Angeli, “Travailleurs Indochinois,” pp. 37.
\textsuperscript{24} ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Rapport de mission,” pp. 5-7.
economic development in Indochina. This newfound acceptance of Asians as potentially useful workers had its limits. Despite the dearth of miners under Vichy there were no attempts to transfer Indochinese into this sector, although many were used in the charcoal industry, like the Cardarache production facility north of Marseille. One of the main problems with using Asians on these projects, however, was the fear that maintaining *encadrement* could prove difficult. As a solution the MOI suggested that rather than using large camps small groups of workers could kept in warehouses, garages and even prisons to ensure social control while on the jobsite.

Arguing for the viability of Southeast Asian labor in Vichy France was also accompanied by attempts to present it as a kind of paternalistic training program for colonial subjects. This reflected increasingly prevalent National Revolution ideology emphasizing the importance of work for personal development. One memo written by an Indochinese functionary named Nguyen Van Danh stated that in lieu of repatriation, the migrants should be placed in workshops and factories to learn useful trades that could be brought back to Indochina. Apparently an ardent believer in the necessity of colonial development, Danh proposed imparting a type of “civic education” that could be used in Indochinese society to further modernization. A similar argument was developed by the MOI officer leading a small continent of workers at – ironically enough – Vichy. Education programs had long

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25 At the same time, however, officials involved in the forestry sector were initially wary of conscripting Southeast Asians. The forestry service in Vaulcuse noted how many were unfamiliar with techniques used in France and differences between the “tropical forests” of Asia and those in southern France meant that Indochinese could only serve as woodcutters rather than skilled workers. Archives départementales de la Vaucluse (ADV), 3 W 918, “Grands Travaux – Rapport complémentaire,” Report from Direction Générale des Eaux et Forêts, 16 July 1940.


27 ADBR, 14 M 2964, “Note sure l’utilisation possible de la Main-d’Oeuvre Indochinose en France,” Commandant Maugeis de Bourgesdon of MOI, undated (August 1940).

28 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, Note from Captain Nguyen Van Danh to Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 1940.
been seen by administrators around the French colonial empire as a way to imbue non-western subjects with notions of France and French culture. In the view of this MOI officer Asians stationed in the métropole constituted “the best carriers of propaganda that could return to their homeland.” Vichy should transform these men into vanguards of French colonialism and carriers of the National Revolution. Learning the value of hard work and sacrifice should be accompanied by walking tours of the French countryside, instruction in the French language, and lessons in the history of French civilization.29

Attempts to reposition Vietnamese as physically capable workers and French apprentices began to pay dividends in 1941. Approximately 1800 stationed near Marseille were employed by mid-1941, mostly in forestry, charcoal manufacturing, public works projects, and the Camargue marshlands salt industry. About two thousand from the Agde region found themselves dredging canals around Aigues-Mortes, in the forestry sector and also working for the military in Toulouse, Tarbes and Montauban. Several hundred in the Dordogne were being sent to an irrigation project and slightly less than one half of the Sorgues contingent was employed in forestry and chemical industries around the southeast.30

The Ministry of Food Supply had also informed the MOI that it intended to use the remaining workers during the harvest that autumn.31 As this indicates, employment had changed dramatically over the course of a year. Originally intended to supplement metropolitan industrial labor they now held predominantly seasonal jobs in parts of rural France that had historically witnessed an outmigration of workers to large urban centers. This new position as a rural workforce in poor, southern, semi-agricultural areas had a major impact on the

29 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Note sur les Travailleurs Indochinois actuellement à Vichy,” undated (1940).
30 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Compte-rendu de mission,” Report to Cabinet of Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 June 1941, pp. 4-6.
31 Ibid, pp.6
provisioning of food to the workers and their subsequent interactions with the local population.

The salience of rural spaces in National Revolution rhetoric was extremely prominent. Pétain put emphasis on what he termed the retour à la terre (return to the soil), which meant both a greater emphasis on the place of agriculture and farming in the economy, but also on rural folklore and peasant life as an essential component of national identity. As scholars like Chris Pearson have noted, this served as a dual purpose for the regime. Not only was the French population encouraged to return to the land for ideological purposes – reconnecting with their ancestors by eschewing the corrupting influence of urban life – but France desperately needed workers in rural areas as well.32 At a time when the German military was expropriating huge amounts of food the régime made it part of their economic agenda to increase the productivity of French agriculture. It began dredging swamps and replanting forests across southern and western France. Youth organizations like the Chantiers de la Jeunesse and Compagnons de France may have been learning the value of hard work and re-connecting with their peasant roots, but they were also working in rural areas for more pragmatic reasons.33

There was another reason to promote the use of Vietnamese labor at this time: it was inexpensive. Just like in the period before June 1940, Indochinese workers were paid considerably less than their French counterparts. Asians working on an irrigation project in

the Dordogne were initially paid seven francs per day; the wages for French rural workers in this region, by contrast, often approached fifty francs per day. This discrepancy is explained by the continuation of payment policies instituted in 1939. Workers would not be given their wages directly and were instead paid an indemnity ranging from one to three francs per day. In addition, some employers attempted to increase productivity by offering bonuses of one or two francs per day for the best workers. The MOI justified this policy by arguing that the employer and French government were providing food and housing and so there was no need to actually supply wages.

Initial attempts to transform Vietnamese into a rural workforce converged on one project in the Dordogne. Although small villages in the predominantly rural southwest were often used as an exemplar of what Pétain meant by stressing France’s peasant past, the regime embarked on a series of rural modernization projects. Hydroelectric projects in the Corrèze and Pyrenees were intended to dramatically increase electricity production and the regime put a particular emphasis on improving agricultural productivity in the region. The Grande Beune and Petite Beune (not to be confused with Beaune in Burgundy) near Sarlat became the site of one of Vichy’s largest irrigation projects. The land had fallen into disuse by the 1890s, but the regime identified the Beune river valleys as a target for rural development in early 1941. In April 1941, after a decree was published stating that the French government would be willing to assist in funding irrigation projects to improve

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34 ADD, 11 W 153, Note from Commander Braun, 2nd Legion of Indochinese workers, to Prefect of the Dordogne, 10 April 1941.
36 ADD, 11 W 153, “Cahier des charges, clauses et conditions relatives à la mise à la disposition d’entreprises privées ou publiques de travailleurs indochinois,” Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène, 12 February 1941.
37 Ibid
agricultural productivity, a group of local notables requested assistance from Vichy. Led by Armand Triplet, a refugee from the Nord, the Syndicat Intercommunal d’Assainissement des Vallées des Beunes (SIAVB) argued that the region could be used as a center for hemp production. Not only would this satisfy Vichy’s demands for more arable land but the hemp could also be used to manufacture cloth and other woven materials lacking in southern France.\(^39\) The two river valleys were to be assainisser – a very difficult verb to translate that invokes a combination of dredging, irrigating and environmental improvement – before the hemp could be planted. Construction was initially to be subsidized by the French government at a cost of one million francs.\(^40\)

Vietnamese recently fired from the nearby Bergerac gunpowder facility were presented by the MOI as a prefect fit for Triplet and his association. They were, after all, used to working on irrigation projects in Indochina and had recently completed some work on a similar project in the Charente.\(^41\) The prefecture began constructing camps for the workers in mid-1941; by August there were 750 Vietnamese along with an assortment of Spanish and unemployed French near Sarlat. The MOI’s initial enthusiasm about the project quickly vanished. Triplet was first accused of not providing suitable accommodations. The isolated nature of working in the region rendered it impossible to outfit the barracks with electricity and so the workers were forced to use lamps and open fires for heating and cooking.\(^42\) A few months later, the MOI was disappointed that one of the project engineers disallowed a

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid. This summary of the project indicates that this money was to be loaned to the prefecture, and then paid back to the government over a ten-year period with an interest rate of 1.85%. It is not clear how the Ministries of Labour and Agriculture envisaged this loan to be repaid but some documents indicate it was to be derived from taxation on landowners.

\(^{41}\) ADD, 11 W 153, “Note sur les travaux,” pp. 3.

weatherization to make the barracks more hospitable in colder temperatures.\textsuperscript{43} Moreover, the MOI had difficulty in reaching the camps for surveillance and supplying the workers with food due to gasoline shortages.\textsuperscript{44} Triplet also had constant funding issues. MOI officials complained on several occasions that they had not received their wages or indemnities used to pay for gasoline. Indeed, the local MOI Legion appears to have been more concerned about how Europeans were getting to work each day than living conditions of the Vietnamese. Eventually payment for Europeans was not the only concern as the syndicate was accused of not paying the colonials promptly or providing sufficient medical assistance.\textsuperscript{45} A Jewish doctor living nearby had originally been hired to provide medical assistance attention but Triplet and his syndicate simply stopped paying him.\textsuperscript{46}

Problems on the project continued into 1942. The MOI and prefect had a spat in February over the number of workers that would be provided and increased wages. Relations grew so acrimonious that the prefect complained directly to Vichy’s Commission for Fighting Unemployment.\textsuperscript{47} Eventually the MOI only sent 250 workers to Triplet, a drastic reduction from the previous year.\textsuperscript{48} The situation had not improved by the summer. In July the syndicate was notified that the theft of fruit and vegetables from nearby farms was become a serious issue.\textsuperscript{49} Several weeks later there were complaints that work contracts had not been returned, MOI agents lacked enough funds for transportation purposes, and that

\textsuperscript{43} ADD, 11 W 153, Commander Braun of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Legion of Indochinese workers to SIAVB, 20 November 1941.
\textsuperscript{44} ADD, 11 W 153, “Syndicat des Beunes,” Commander Braun of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Legion of Indochinese workers to Prefect of the Dordogne, 4 August 1941.
\textsuperscript{45} ADD, 11 W 153, Memo from SAIVB, 12 September 1941.
\textsuperscript{46} ADD, 11 W 153, SAIVB to Prefect of the Dordogne, 14 October 1941.
\textsuperscript{49} ADD, 11 W 153, Commander of 14\textsuperscript{th} company of Indochinese workers to SAIVB, 28 July 1942. There was no mention of the fact that the MOI was responsible for supplying rations to the workers and thus their lack of food and money may have forced the workers to seek supplies by stealing.
once again salaries were not paid on time. Barracks for the Indochinese workers had insufficient lighting and were now infested with fleas and lice. There was a dearth of entertainment and medical facilities along with fuel and supplies. Indeed, colonials were now forced to work in bare-feet because new boots had not been issued. All but seventy-five of the Indochinese were pulled off the project in September and reallocated to the grape harvest or farm work in the region. The syndicate was furious with this decision, accusing the head MOI agent of “obfuscation” and funneling food towards the black market. Triplet had obviously angered the wrong people with his accusations. He was told to look for an alternate source of labor because Vietnamese would not be provided to the project in 1943. Authorities in the Dordogne eventually petitioned Pierre Laval for a contingent of North Africans to complete the project, but like most endeavors undertaken by Vichy, the irrigation project remained unfinished when the war ended.

Efforts to grow hemp in the Dordogne were not just hampered by squabbling between various interest groups. Serious problems emerged over how to house and feed colonials living in remote areas as well as provide effective surveillance. But the position of Vietnamese workers within southern France had clearly evolved over this period as well. In 1941 the MOI was thrilled to situate several hundred colonials with Triplet; by 1942 the CLC clearly had other plans for employment: in industry, an increasing emphasis on forestry and the cultivation of food to help alleviate material conditions.

The use of Asians as rural laborers reflected the scarcity of French workers available to local officials in conjunction with a new emphasis on trying to maximize agricultural

50 ADD, 11 W 153, Commander of 14th Company of Indochinese workers to SAIVB, 11 August 1942.
51 ADD, 11 W 153, SAIVB to Engineer of Rural Works, 21 September 1942
production. For example, several hundred workers were employed in the chestnut harvest around the Dordogne. Typically utilized by the local population as feed for livestock, chestnuts were identified by the Ministry of Food Supply as a supplement for wheat flour – now being diverted to Germany – or even ground coffee. Others were sent to harvest Spanish Broom, a plant used to make yellow dye as well as fibers for the production of ropes and cloth.53 Britain’s blockade of the French empire also promoted some industrious individuals to promote rice cultivation in the Camargue marshland. Rice was periodically grown in the region over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but efforts were abandoned because producers lacked the necessary expertise and skilled workers. The presence of underemployed Vietnamese around Marseille and Avignon allowed for the re-establishment of cultivation, and by the end of 1942, hundreds of workers were growing rice in the Camargue, often in terrible conditions.54

The presence of Vietnamese in agriculture was only matched by their importance for French forestry. A lack of coal and heating fuel because of requisition, rationing and supply shortages forced the French population to rediscover the traditional importance of wood products during the war.55 Vichy instituted a number of measures to increase production of timber, charcoal and gazogène, essentially forcing owners of forests over ten hectares to exploit fifty percent more wood than normal and created fines for those not in compliance.56 There was a lack of experienced woodcutters, however, as approximately thirty-five percent of the pre-war forestry workforce was interned in German POW camps. The result was an

54 Indochine de Provence: Le silence de la rizière, ed. Eve Duperray et al. (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012)
55 Pearson, Sacred Landscapes, 45.
56 Ibid, 47.
increasing reliance on foreign and Indochinese workers during the first few years of the Vichy period. By mid-1942, thirty-six percent or approximately five thousand Southeast Asians were building forestry roads, cutting timber and working at charcoal production sites in the forests of Aveyron, Cévennes, Provence and the Alps. Physiological considerations took prominence during the deployment of Asian workers to French forests. Men from lowland regions of Tonkin and Annam were considered of less hardy stock than “highland peoples” like the Hmong and “Moi” and so Vichy was reticent to send men above 600 meters in altitude.

These concerns did not extend to living conditions. The forestry sector was known for notoriously hard work because of its isolated nature, which partly explains the reticence of young French workers to take up employment in the industry. An inspection tour of a work camp near Toulouse in late 1943 revealed that barracks used to house Southeast Asians were poorly constructed of discarded pieces of timber. Found hundreds of meters above sea level, they were penetrated by wind and cold in winter months and rain and humidity during the summer, often forcing the workers to seek shelter during inclement weather.

The German occupation of southern France in November 1942 once again meant change for the Vietnamese as the Wehrmacht exploited colonial labor for its own projects. As Armelle Mabon has shown, the use of colonial prisoners of war in both occupied northern France and southern France – the so-called Groupements de militaires indigènes rapatriables (GMICR) – was widespread during this period. The Germans also utilized

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58 “Moi” is a derogatory term developed by the French in Indochina that translates into “savage” although it is often used to describe people from mountainous areas of Southeast Asia.
59 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Rapport à Monsieur le Chef du Service Social Colonial,” Secretary of State to the Colonies – Service d’Assistance à la Main-d’Oeuvre Coloniale, 13 November 1943.
Vietnamese workers under the jurisdiction of the MOI program, immediately requesting the use of colonial workers for construction projects. Eventually the French Armistice Commission instructed the Secretaries of State for War and Labor that the Wehrmacht would indeed have access to colonial workers stationed in southern France.\(^{61}\) By February 1943, just a few months following the occupation of the “free zone”, German authorities were employing hundreds of Indochinese, and also requested that French officials undertake a census of all colonial workers in the country; this was eventually provided to German authorities in July.\(^{62}\) By the beginning of 1944, approximately twenty-five percent of the Indochinese stationed in France worked for Nazi Germany and this number had grown to over thirty percent by July 1944. Most were used in building fortifications along the Mediterranean coast near Antibes, Toulon, La Ciotat, Port de Bouc, and Sète but some were sent to powder and cartridge factories in Toulouse, Bergerac, Bordeaux and Salbris.\(^{63}\) After the war ended many colonials situated in these towns along the coast were accused of collaboration but records show that Asian workers actually reveal that their employment was highly uncoordinated. One report from 1944 noted very few of the Indochinese were actually given work by the Germans and instead sat around in their camp all day waiting for instructions.\(^{64}\)

\(^{61}\) AN, 41 AJ 1112, Telephone conversation between Lieutenant Colonel Arnoux and Captain Bouquet, 21 January 1943.


\(^{63}\) Angeli, “Travailleurs Indochinois,” pp. 46.

Conflict sometimes erupted between French authorities looking to preserve influence over colonial subjects and the German occupiers. On one occasion the Germans attempted to shift Asians into the mining industry, particularly the bauxite mine at Brignolles, but French authorities claimed this did not correspond to the “physical capacity of the workers” and vetoed the move. They also prevented Southeast Asian conscription into forced labor programs like the Service de Travail Obligatoire (STO) that sent young French males to factories in the Reich. French and German officials also fought over more mundane and yet highly symbolic issues. One incident emblematic of these troubles occurred in November 1943 over the use of the French or Nazi flag at a Vietnamese work camp. The Germans now perceived French colonial subjects as their employees, working the Nazi war effort, and thus the camp should proudly display the swastika. The French, on the other hand, argued that they still maintained jurisdiction over Southeast Asians and not displaying the French flag would weaken allegiance to France and the colonial empire. The debate turned so acrimonious that the MOI agent was taken prisoner and interned by the Germans after ripping down the swastika flag without authorization.

For the workers themselves, however, the defining feature of les années noires was hunger and lack of food. Food shortages in France were never as widespread as in other parts of Nazi occupied Europe but the country was nevertheless dramatically affected by the war. German demands for French agricultural products led to extensive food rationing by Vichy in

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67 AN, 41 AJ 1230, Dossier Travailleurs indigènes coloniaux, “Incident avec troupes d’occupation,” Captain Dupuis to General Carton, 23 November 1943.
68 Ibid
September 1940, giving French citizens a lower daily caloric value than all but a few western occupied countries. While some goods had been rationed under the Third Republic the system was now extended to more important products like bread, cheese and meat. Officially at least, French adults received 1200 calories per day in 1940 – about half of what medical professionals stated was required to maintain proper health – and this total dropped to less than 1000 calories by 1944. Ration booklets were given to the population and certain products were distributed based on age, employment and gender. Children and the elderly often had easier access to milk while working-age men employed in labor-intensive industries received more food and wine. Rationing simply failed to provide enough to eat. Only twenty-five percent of the population had sufficient amounts of food during the war, and fifty-five percent of the French people found provisioning difficult or nearly impossible.

Hunger typically transcended class but access to food was greatly dependent on where one lived. It was often more difficult to survive for those located in urban areas compared to their rural counterparts; those in southern France – particularly in winemaking areas along the Mediterranean coast – fared worse than in occupied northern France. This was because occupied France often included the richest agricultural areas, producing three-quarters of all French wheat for example, which was now either being kept in the north or sent to Germany. While starvation almost never occurred during these years the effects of malnutrition were frequently mentioned. A report on the health of children in the Paris area noted forty percent had lung and skin problems related to lower rations. Seventy-five percent

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69 Fogg, *Everyday Life*,
72 Alary, *Quotidien*, 158-159.
of conscripts into forced labor programs were underweight compared to prewar averages.\textsuperscript{74} Infant mortality increased, rates of disease nearly doubled in areas of central France, and a rise in workplace related accidents – blamed on fatigue and malnourishment – were noted as well.\textsuperscript{75}

Vichy attempted to cope with the shortage of food by instituting a series of price controls on consumer products.\textsuperscript{76} These efforts also failed. Inflation, stagnating wages, continued requisitioning of products and declining agricultural productivity often forced the French population into illicit so-called black and grey markets. Covert exchanges between producer and consumer, and town and country, now dominated the search for food. Rather than the standard market-oriented transaction between buyer and merchant, finding food during the war often became a more haphazard and spontaneous endeavor involving personal relationships between friends and family, bartering for goods, direct interaction between consumers and farmers, and theft or other covert means.\textsuperscript{77} People in urban areas contacted relatives in the provinces, hoping to augment their diet by dealing directly with farmers. Requests from food scarce areas to family members viewed as potentially having access to provisions were poorly regarded by Vichy, which publicly acknowledged the shortages but preached the necessity of austerity and sacrifice. Exchanges, however, were eventually permitted under a variety of government programs that allowed people to send family members food and supplies through the mail.\textsuperscript{78} As local stores and merchants became unable to provide enough food after rationing began, many urban residents also began venturing into

\textsuperscript{74} Mouré and Schwartz, \textquotedblleft On vit mal,	extquotedblright 266-267.
\textsuperscript{76} Kenneth Mouré, \textquotedblleft Food Rationing and the Black Market in France,	extquotedblright \textit{French History} 24, no. 2 (2010): 262-282.
\textsuperscript{78} Fogg, \textit{Everyday Life,}
the countryside to barter with farmers – working a certain amount of days on the farm in exchange for meat or vegetables was a common transaction – or to buy food directly. Eventually this led to a reduction in market activity as peasants found it easier to simply wait for those needing food to come to them.\textsuperscript{79}

The question of how those considered “un-French” fits into the subject has been neglected until fairly recently. Ethnic and religious minorities as well as “foreigners” or “undesirables” were severely disadvantaged when it came to finding provisions during the war. The best-known case is that of Jews living in France. Anti-semitism was a perfect pretext for Vichy and some elements of the population to lash out at this unwanted or undesirable element in French society. Jews were often banned from stores and markets around France. Their restricted freedom of movement made it difficult to line up for rations and their purported activity in leading the black market, and spurring inflation and price increases was often used to justify their arrest and deportation.\textsuperscript{80} Sinti and Roma also suffered because of government rationing. Historically mistrusted by the French state and society at large, Sinti were constantly portrayed as rootless nomads, a threat to public order and the sensibilities of the new regime.\textsuperscript{81} Stereotypes about Sinti and Roma being duplicitous thieves and scavengers, when combined with material shortages, often led to serious persecution and eventually incarceration for some at Saliers near Marseille. In both cases, animosity was two-pronged, from both above and below: state-directed discrimination sought to divide these two groups from French society by depicting them as decidedly un-French while depravation, the effects of occupation and popular animosity and prejudices among the French population also made daily life extremely arduous for minority groups.

\textsuperscript{80} Poznanski, \textit{Les Juifs en France}, 75, 84-85.
\textsuperscript{81} Fogg, \textit{Everyday Life}, 75-84.
The experience of Vietnamese was also determined by state-led efforts in the form of rationing policies and conflict with the local French population. Unlike Jews or Sinti, however, there were no official efforts to render Asian colonial subjects a threat to the nation. In fact, as Eric Jennings has shown, Vietnamese were declared part of a broader French imperial community, certainly not racially or culturally equal to white French citizens but whose societal values broadly conformed to those of the National Revolution and the ideological disposition of the French state.\(^{82}\) In France itself, imperial propaganda – widely displayed during the war for consumption in the form of public exhibitions – was also highly racialized but nevertheless attempted to instill an image of a fraternal empire.\(^{83}\) In one small southwestern village a group of workers even performed a “dragon dance” during a local peasant festival, a curious mix of colonial and French influences obviously intended to draw a link between France and Indochina.\(^{84}\) Efforts were also made to tie Vietnamese living in France to Pétainist values. An October 1941 article from l’Illustration on the Beune irrigation project emphasized the importance of the Vietnamese migrants in helping to restore French glory and implementing Vichy ideology. It also focused on the highly-regimented nature of their life in France. Pictures of the work camps were accompanied with images of MOI officers standing menacingly over the men on the job site.\(^{85}\) Material such as this hoped to demonstrate that Asians were in France to help the nation recover and yet posed no threat to public order by virtue of their closely-monitored existence.

\(^{82}\) Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*, 130-198.


\(^{84}\) *Courier du Lot*, “Saint-Cirgues, avec l’équipe des travailleurs annamites,” 19 September 1941.

Attempts to associate Indochinese migrants with French peasants, however, were hindered by rationing and material shortages. Denunciations and requests for removal were clearly inflected by xenophobia with talk of “strangers” and “undesirables” in letters addressed to prefects and MOI officials, but this conflict was often caused by the rationing system introduced for Vietnamese under encadrement. Vichy, like the Third Republic before it, embraced paternalistic impulses when dealing with colonial subjects living in France. This ideology clearly influenced rationing policies intended to create a dependency on the MOI and limit personal contact with French villagers. Vietnamese workers were formally prohibited from obtaining rationing cards allowing them to queue for food. The MOI, or employers in certain cases, was the only organization allowed to provide rations. This dependency proved to be useful during the drôle de guerre – when only certain luxury items were in limited supply – but it was ineffective in a world of extensive rationing and price controls. Historians have estimated that workers needed to make between 13.5 and 17 francs an hour to keep up with the rising cost if living. Even when family and cost of living allowances were introduced by Vichy, it cost an average family of four 3500 francs per month to live near Clermont-Ferrand – a relatively productive agricultural region – and it would certainly have been higher in food-scarce areas along the Mediterranean coast. Asian workers, as shown in the discussion on the Beune irrigation project, were often earning less than ten francs per day in actual wages.

While developing family or personal contacts was essential for others to secure adequate food, Asians often lacked the necessary language skills and money to barter with farmers or engage in black market activities. Because the MOI eschewed wages in favor of a daily work or productivity bonuses, it was critically important those under encadrement

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86 Sweets, Choices, 17-20.
receive sufficient rations from the MOI. Not only were they placed on rations that became increasingly lower over the course of the war, but were largely unable to participate in other socially acceptable ways of gathering food like direct interactions with farmers, soliciting family and friends in the countryside, and the black market. The use of socially unacceptable forms of feeding themselves became necessary as a result, predominantly the theft of agricultural products, producing tension with French farmers.

Further, the system of *encadrement* undoubtedly worked to render Vietnamese distinct, and indeed inferior to French citizens, despite the propaganda emanating from Vichy. Under the Third Republic, *encadrement* policies were highly influenced by racial thinking, but their main purpose was to guarantee colonial labor productivity in the face of wartime shortages. Vichy had an entirely different view of Vietnamese *encadrement*. There was no discussion of its use as a means to promote physical fitness or ease the transition to life in the métropole. For officials under Pétain’s regime, it was viewed as a way to stifle dissent, enhance European control over the workers, and as a tool of social exclusion. In this sense, it was enormously successful. Letters sent by farmers to government authorities often presented Asians as a mysterious, unwelcome presence in the area where they lived. The use of work camps on the edge of towns and constant surveillance by Europeans created a perception that the workers were somehow different and a possible threat despite the shared suffering that often resulted from lack of food in southern France. Despite Vichy’s efforts to create a link between French and colonial subjects in the métropole, then, the policies crafted by the state conspired to mark Vietnamese as an unwanted element in French society.

Difficulty in supplying the workers was commented upon by officials from the MOI and Ministry of Food Supply almost immediately. The major problem became the extreme
centralization of the process. Rather than able to procure their food locally each Legion possessed a central storehouse that was used to distribute rations to each company, initially set at 350 grams of rice, 250 grams of bread and 100 grams of meat per day. Fresh vegetables, clothing, shoes and other basic necessities were rationed as well.\textsuperscript{87} Transporting food to each company eventually created problems of re-supply, however, particularly with perishable items like tomatoes, two-thirds of which had to be discarded by one company in the southwest because they had turned rotten before arrival.\textsuperscript{88}

As food became more difficult to procure through legal means, it became harder to maintain ration levels. By mid-1941, the MOI was complaining to the Ministry of Food Supply about a scarcity of rice that was causing reduced rations.\textsuperscript{89} It also complained about clothing shortages and the lack of boots or footwear.\textsuperscript{90} As the food situation worsened over the course of 1942, rations were further reduced. The Sorgues Legion implemented what was described as a “massive and brutal” reduction in April 1942 that saw levels fall to 21 grams of rice, 350 grams of bread and 50 grams of meat per day.\textsuperscript{91} Clothing was now “insufficient” to meet demand and indeed the Legion admitted that it had no boots, jackets or pants left at all.\textsuperscript{92} The situation around Marseille was similar; finding bread fewer than two days old and

\textsuperscript{89} ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Alimentation en riz des travailleurs indochinois dans la Méropole,” Secretary of State for the Colonies to Secretary of State for Food Supply, 12 November 1941.
\textsuperscript{90} ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Besoins en Textiles du Service de la main-d’oeuvre indigène,” Secretary of State for the Colonies to Secretary of State for Industrial Production, 8 December 1941.
\textsuperscript{91} ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Mission des 28-1er juin 1942 dans la région de Sorgues,” Ministry of the Colonies – Office of Political Affaires, 3 June 1942.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid
adequate meat for the workers was nearly impossible. Marseille also had trouble re-supplying some of the more isolated companies in the Camargue and mountainous areas of Provence.\footnote{ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Marseille.”}

Food shortages around southern France combined with intense, physical employment often contributed to deterioration in the workers’ health. “The medical condition of the men…is becoming disturbing,” reported the MOI in 1944. The annual mortality rate rose steadily after the defeat: 68 men died in 1940; 91 in 1941; 170 in 1942 and 262 in 1943 or 591 men in total. Vichy’s Commission for Fighting Unemployment noted a growing dysentery epidemic among Vietnamese in 1942 because were eating so many grapes during the harvest season.\footnote{AN, 72 AJ Papiers Henri Maux, carton 3, “vendanges.”} Deaths from tuberculosis increased from five in 1940 to 178 in 1943. The colonial hospital “Le Dantec” near Marseille was described as “overflowing” by April 1944 with 550 sick, almost 300 of which had tuberculosis. A villager near Marseille reported that half of the almost 300 Indochinese stationed nearby had symptoms of tuberculosis.\footnote{ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Situation sanitaire de la main-d’oeuvre indochinoise,” Ministry of the Colonies – Office of Political Affairs, 18 April 1944.} The mortality rate for Indochinese dying from tuberculosis was almost double that of the French population, and by the end of 1943 over 900 Vietnamese had died from tuberculosis and other medical ailments. While health officials attributed this to a change in climate and demoralization, the main culprit was viewed as intense work and poor rationing.\footnote{Ibid}

\section*{IV}

Problems with rationing and food supply did not solely affect the workers. Dissatisfaction with their condition often manifested itself in several ways, most notably strikes, work stoppages, theft from rural French villagers, and even conflict with the MOI.
The relationship between MOI agents and Vietnamese had totally soured by the end of the war. Most of the men referred to the period after 1941 as “the time of the gangsters” out of the belief that MOI officials were siphoning off food for personal use or to sell on the black market. Given the isolated nature of their work and it is difficult to determine how prevalent conflict between the two sides became. The archival record does reveal some minor incidents. Several companies of workers employed in the Camargue salt industry refused to work in August 1941, threatened the MOI officers nearby and left for Marseille. They blamed poor rationing and the fact that men were developing lesions and sores on their feet and hands from working in bare-feet and without gloves; their employer could not supply the proper equipment and yet made them work all the same. When the Ministry of Colonies toyed with the notion of sending the workers back to Indochina as punishment, Henri Maux, in charge of the CLC, disagreed based on his belief that this could encourage further dissent. He instead recommended that they be kept in France and the leaders of the protest sent to a disciplinary brigade.

A group stationed just north of Aix-en-Provence had originally arrived as forestry workers in 1941 and were receiving officially reported rations of 350 grams of bread, 20

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97 Archival evidence suggests that conflict between individual workers and their European superiors did occur, although references are sparse. See ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, dossier 1941, “Condemnation de l’ex-interprète Duong Van De de la 1ère légion de travailleurs indochinois,” Secretary of State for Labour to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 November 1941. This short telegram notes that Duong Van De, an interpreter, was condemned to one year in prison by a court in Béziers for fighting with his superior. Given that similar incidents between French civilians and Southeast Asians typically resulted in sentences of one or two months, the length of Van De’s conviction suggests that the MOI and French judicial system was particularly harsh with those workers who challenged the authority of Europeans in France. By contrast, no evidence was found indicating whether violence against Indochinese was punished in a similar fashion.

98 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, dossier 1941, Secretary of State for Labour to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 August 1941.

99 AN, 72 AJ Papiers Henri Maux, carton 3, “Incidents parmi les détachements de travailleurs indochinois en France,” Secretary of State for Labour to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 September 1941.
grams of oil, 8 grams of dried vegetables, 70 grams of rice and 50 grams of meat per day.\textsuperscript{100} The men could not survive on this amount of food and so began bartering with nearby villagers for vegetables and other items. Once their meager savings ran out the workers were forced to eat leaves from local shrubs and, according to the police report, the straw used in their pillows in order to survive.\textsuperscript{101} They also, not surprisingly given their hunger and lack of money, began to steal food. Relations between the Vietnamese migrants and French population became quite acrimonious over the next several weeks. The MOI responded by suppressing the workers’ daily bonus payments. Pushing the men further into poverty, however, not only increased thefts from local farms but also increased animosity towards the MOI.\textsuperscript{102} Violence erupted several months later as the Vietnamese threatened their European supervisors with knives and axes, demanding their removal from the worksite.\textsuperscript{103}

The most common type of dispute was clearly between the workers and their employer. One of the larger incidents took place at Saint-Auban – an industrial complex in the Alps northeast of Marseille. Southeast Asians first started arriving at the facility owned by the chemical company Alais, Froges et Camargue (AFC) during April 1941, and by May, there were 135 workers at the complex. This particular group of Indochinese had been stationed at Sorgues for much of the previous year but had not yet been employed in France. Their ship arrived in June 1940 just as the French military was collapsing, and they were totally unfamiliar with the style of policies utilized by employers and the MOI. Like their compatriots elsewhere, the Asians were only given a small daily allowance rather than actual

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid
wages. When the first payments were delivered the workers suddenly realized that their wages were being withheld. Rather than earning fifty francs a day like their French colleagues, Vietnamese were being paid four francs per day. This caused, according to the MOI, “profound discontent” among the workers, who “little appreciated” the policy of making them work for little money. The situation was further aggravated by the decision of AFC to increase the workweek from forty-eight hours to fifty-six without a corresponding rise in pay. At noon on 6 May, the Indochinese workers employed at Saint-Auban walked off the job as a means to show their displeasure. Work resumed normally the next day, but as of late May, whenever a Vietnamese unit was assigned a night shift they refused. Officials were cautious to assign “communist influences” blame for the incident given that few of the workers actually spoke French. MOI agents initially attempted to mediate between colonial subjects and AFC. The head of the work contingent wrote to the local prefect and AFC in June, essentially requesting higher daily allowances to prevent any future problems. AFC, however, insisted that nothing needed to be done and it refused to reduce hours or give the workers more money.

This decision precipitated a second wave of strikes in early August. The Vietnamese workforce was now over 300 hundred men, and on 3 August the night shift refused to return to the factory; the next morning two other contingents declared their intention not to work

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105 ADAHP, 42 W 28, “Détachement de Travailleurs Indochinois de Saint-Auban,” General Secretary for the Police at the Ministry of Interior to Secretary of State for Labour, 24 May 1941.
106 Ibid
108 ADAHP, 42 W 28, Director of Alais, Froges et Camargue – Saint Auban to Prefect of Basses-Alpes, 13 June 1941.
that day as well. The MOI contacted the police, who then promptly arrested four men deemed to be the leaders of the disturbance. Unlike the previous strike – which revolved around wages and working hours – this incident was driven by an obvious displeasure over rationing. This complaint was completely rejected by AFC, which argued that Vietnamese were receiving rations “far superior to that of a European worker” and local MOI administrators had increased the amount of meat and fresh vegetables available in the past few weeks. Indeed, the company attempted to downplay the disturbance, commending an MOI officer who stopped the strike by dealing with the workers’ “peculiar customs” and “very special temperament.” Rather than acknowledge concern over rationing at this time, the factory-director stated the cause of the strike was still undetermined and that AFC was conducting its own internal review of the situation.

This review seemed to change his mind. In late August AFC held a meeting with the MOI. While still asserting that the workers were receiving higher rations than Europeans, the factory director now acknowledged that worker rationing was insufficient and could lead to future unrest, along with a decrease in worker productivity. As a result, he was dedicating nine francs per worker of company money to augment MOI rations. The local food supply, however, was rapidly depleting as well. Although the nearby Durance river valley was remarkably productive for southern France, the only meat available for the workers was sheep, considered less beneficial from a nutritional standpoint than beef. Local markets, receiving five times less produce than before the war as farmers hoarded stock, often sold out

111 ADAHP, 42 W 28, Director of Alais, Froges et Camargue – Saint-Auban to sous-préfet of Forcalquier, 5 August 1941.
112 ADAHP, 42 W 28, Director of Alais, Froges et Camargue – Saint-Auban to Prefect of Basses-Alpes, 21 August 1941.
in a matter of hours. The presence of *jardins ouvriers* were helping French workers get by but Asians did not have access to communal land reserved for town residents. After taking stock of the situation AFC and the MOI were clearly concerned about how to feed the workers. They were requesting the Ministry of Food Supply accord one hundred kilograms of potatoes for each Vietnamese worker at the factory; local authorities were also tasked with supplying more meat – rabbit, chicken and fowl – to the workers as well.\(^{113}\)

Although French officials were gradually coming to the realization that the rationing system was failing to provide enough food, they still looked pointed towards “outside elements” as a cause of workplace agitation. Several “free Indochinese” who had started working at the factory in the interwar period became an object of focus. All of these men were married to French women, had lived in the area for many years, were described as good workers with no history of being involved in syndicalism or union activity, and yet they were seen as suspicious because they interacted with the newly-arrived Asians frequently, often speaking Vietnamese.\(^{114}\) This was a common occurrence during the war. Agitation from Indochinese workers was viewed as driven not only by the material situation in southern France, but also from communists, labor syndicalists or educated interpreters holding radical anti-colonial politics.\(^{115}\) When workers stationed at Saint-Chamas outside of Marseille demanded more food, for example, it was not just caused by hunger but also external elements looking to exploit the situation for their own benefit. The MOI seized one pamphlet

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113 Ibid


115 One such interpreter, Hoanh Khoa Khoi, was closely watched by the MOI during his time in France. He had been arrested in July 1939 in Nam Dinh while attending a “communist meeting” but for some reason – perhaps due to the lack of qualified interpreters – was allowed to leave for France in April 1940. Vichy began reporting on his activities after he was accused of leading a protest of Indochinese forestry workers stationed north of Marseille in late 1941. Khoi was eventually remanded to the MOI base at Mazargues. See CAOM, III SLOTFOM 51, “Cas du sergent interprète Hoang Khoa Khoi,” Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor General of Indochina, 12 November 1941.
from French communist elements in Saint-Chamas that addressed the Indochinese stating:
“To our Annamite brothers: We have stolen your country from you, and Vichy has sold it to Germany. Refuse to obey those who treat you like dogs. Poorly fed and starving: we make you work for those that have sold off your village, your wife and your children. Defendez-vous! Be strong because you are the victims of the Germans and Vichy.”\(^{116}\) There is no evidence that these proclamations had any effect on the workers. Even though many spoke little to no French and generally appeared uninterested in French political struggles, officials were incapable of believing that rationing animated Vietnamese protests. Stereotypes that Asians were intelligent but easily prone to persuasion and mimicry, or as naturally mischievous and untrustworthy, clearly influenced perceptions that they were targeted by nefarious elements within the French working class.

Food Supply officials were wary of further strike action and subsequently rations slightly, but they were unable to prevent further Vietnamese labor disturbances the next year. On 15 June 1942 two hundred Vietnamese refused to work, complaining about insufficient food and lack of shoes and clothing.\(^{117}\) Three strike leaders were arrested and authorities stated they would not be released until their compatriots had returned to work. While some took this threat seriously, forty remained on strike the next day and were subsequently arrested by the police as well. The workers’ actions were once again deemed “unjustified” by local authorities as they were receiving rations “above those of a majority of the French population.”\(^{118}\) Rather than breaking their resolve, however, the Indochinese not only

\(^{116}\) ANOM, III SLOTFOM 51, “Propagande communiste,” Secretary of State for Labour to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 September 1941.
\(^{117}\) ADAHP, 42 W 28, “Attribution exceptionnelle de supplements aux travailleurs de Saint-Auban,” Director of Food Supply to Prefect of Basses-Alpes, 17 May 1942.
continued to demand higher rations but also wanted to be relocated from Saint-Auban altogether. The MOI and local authorities were initially unwilling to meet this request but in 1943 all Southeast Asians were pulled out of Saint-Auban and replaced with a contingent of Moroccan and Malagasy workers.

Strained relationships developed between Southeast Asians, employers, and the MOI during this time, but conflict with French villagers often had a much more serious impact on their lives. Although the system of *encadrement* was designed to isolate French citizen from colonial subject, there was contact between the two groups and it often revolved around the acquisition of food. Archival evidence shows that Vietnamese workers were frequently arrested for stealing food, clothes and other provisions. Further, the neighboring French population was swift in condemning the workers and demanding they be harshly punished. By the end of 1943, French wartime courts handed out over one thousand sentences to Vietnamese, about ten percent of which were for second, third, fourth and even fifth or six offenses. In total, approximately seven percent of the Indochinese population in France was arrested and prosecuted by the judicial system, and it almost always involved theft of food. Lam Nem stationed near Marseille stole potatoes from a farmers’ field in December 1942; he was sentenced to two months in prison. Two others were condemned to lengthy prison sentences for stealing rice and coming to blows with a shopkeeper in Marseille.

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119 ADAHP, 42 W 28, Letter from Indochinese workers to Captain of Indochinese detachment at Saint-Auban, 15 June 194A2.
120 ADBR, 144 W 12, “Main-d’oeuvre électrochimie,” Telegram to Alais, Froges, et Camargue – Saint-Auban, 18 May 1943.
123 ANOM, III SLOTFOM, carton 51, “Travailleurs Indochinois dés永不 devant le Tribunal Correctionnel de Marseille,” Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor General of Indochina, 2 January 1942.
The number arrested during the Vichy years and Occupation, however, only tells part of the story as Indochinese in more rural areas were often accused by French villagers of theft, intimidation, and violence. Cautious of seeming to favor colonials over peasants, conflict often led to a decrease in rights for Southeast Asians, although MOI agents sometimes tried to defend their wards from punitive measures. A food-scarce area to begin with, the Mediterranean coastal region was at the heart of this conflict. The workers stationed in the Camargue – whether working in the salt and chemical industry or the nascent rice fields of the region – drew attention because of the sheer volume of complaints received by the police. Despite the sparsely populated area, between 1941 and mid-1943 the gendarmerie opened almost seventy investigations into theft by Vietnamese workers, leading to twenty-nine arrests. Honoré Aubert complained to the police in September 1943 that someone had been stealing large quantities of crops from his land: four hundred kilograms of melons, four hundred kilograms of corn, and five hundred kilograms of wheat. Neighboring farmers had over six hundred kilograms of potatoes stolen as well as onions, rice and other green vegetables. All of the farmers had no doubt that Vietnamese stationed in the Camargue were responsible and asked the police, the MOI, and employers to strengthen surveillance and guard against any future theft. The police admitted that this was impossible, theft of food continued apace, and it was never proven that Asians were in fact to blame. In November, a nearby rice farmer informed the police that over two thousand kilograms of rice valued at 30,000 francs had been stolen from his property. After searching the workers’ barracks some of the rice was eventually found stashed in the woods strung up on tree branches. One of the

125 Ibid
126 Ibid
men eventually confessed to the theft, stating that the operation had been undertaken at night over the course of several weeks.127

Farmers further west in the Languedoc-Roussillon had to contend with hundreds of Asian workers near their land. Since this area was dominated economically by viticulture, historians have labeled the western Mediterranean region one of the most prone to food shortages during the war.128 Tensions between peasants and the growing maquis movement were also fraught during this period, but did not generate the intense animosity directed towards Indochinese stationed in rural France. As the resistance took shape over the course of 1942 and 1943, poorly supplied maquis resorted to theft from French farmers, often done in conjunction with food suppliers and in some cases local authorities. H.R. Kedward notes in his study of rural southern France that resistance groups would steal cattle only after it had been sold to Vichy’s Ministry of Food Supply as a means to guarantee the farmer some income. They also targeted symbols of the increasingly hated regime, like raiding the prefect’s office for ration cards or attacking supply depots of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse. Indeed, the resistance tapped into dwindling support for Pétain from the rural population over labor requisitions, price controls and food shortages. The image of the resistors as “men of the woods” who were constantly pillaging French farms was partly cultivated to assert their dominance in the face of Vichy’s declining popularity and ensure peasants were willing to supply them with food.129

129 H. R. Kedward, In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in southern France, 1942-1944 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), especially 73-115. Kedward also notes that peasant support for the maquis had is limits. Resistance organizations would sometimes target threshing machines and even resort to burning fields during the harvest as a means to prevent Vichy and the Germans from gaining further supplies. Causing physical damage to property typically made some farmers less willing to deal with resistance organizations.
This relationship between the *maquis* and farmers obviously differed from the approach taken by Vietnamese. Although there were some attempts to forge relations between Indochinese and French peasants, language barriers, a lack of money and supplies to barter, racial and cultural differences, and the presence of *encadrement* made it difficult to establish and sustain dialogue. Farmers would have been reticent to inform gendarmes and police if attempts had been made to circumvent rationing guidelines, but it is clear that Indochinese work groups were widely regarded as an alien and unwelcome presence outside of villages. The inability or unwillingness to communicate, combined with material shortages on both sides, put Vietnamese looking to supplement their meager MOI rations, and farmers desperate to feed their families, on a collision course that usually resulted in decreased rights for colonial subjects.

Thefts reached their pinnacle in 1943 and led to a series of contentious exchanges between the MOI, the French state and rural inhabitants. As one petition to the prefect of the Hérault demanding the removal of workers stated: “They pick the plants and trees of their fruit before maturity. They dig up potatoes and cook them right there, risking a fire during the dry season. They destroy the grapes before the moment of maturity, diminishing the amount available for harvest.” Others complained of them stealing sheep, vegetables and acting in a threatening manner when approached by local villagers. Alleged problems with the behavior of Vietnamese in the area often led to petitions for their removal. The mayor of Aniane in particular was adamant that despite a local labour shortage the Vietnamese should be taken out of the fields and replaced with a more desirable source: juvenile delinquents.

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130 ADH, 2 W 765, Petition from property owners in Saint-Jean-de-Fos to Prefect of Hérault, 9 July 1943.
131 ADH, 2 W 765, Petition from inhabitants of Saint-André-de-Buèges to Prefect of Hérault, undated.
housed in a local detention centre. Not surprisingly, the prefect attempted to re-station at least some of the migrants, requesting they be moved to coastal areas for salt production.

Villagers in the Gard accused Vietnamese of stealing sheep, poultry and potatoes but focused specifically on the apparent unwillingness of MOI agents to enforce encadrement: “[They] do not have a single guard and wander at will on the neighboring farms, seizing poultry, rabbits, digging up the soil to find potatoes, stealing laundry out to dry and scoffing at even the farmers with an amazing audacity.” Local farmers had also been “terrorized” by these men the previous year and now wished “to be rid of (débarrassée) these undesirables” for good. The police were informed that if thefts continued farmers would arm themselves while patrolling their fields and enforce their own kind of justice on the perpetrators. Gendarmes seemed at a loss with how to proceed. Not because they doubted the colonials were to blame but rather “it is difficult to arrive at a positive result because these foreigners all have the same physiology and the witnesses cannot distinguish among them.” For the police in this area, then, all Asians looked alike and thus identifying the alleged thieves proved difficult.

Responses to these incidents varied from village to village. There was an almost uniform desire that the thefts stop, but some local French villagers denounced Vietnamese with violent rhetoric, while others did in fact try and understand why the crimes were occurring. Perhaps as a means to diffuse rising tensions, the police in one area attempted to create a sense of solidarity between Asian workers and French villagers, pointing out their

133 ADH, 2 W 765, “Travailleurs Indochinois,” Regional Prefect for Montpellier to Ministry of Labour, 9 July 1943.
135 Ibid
136 Ibid
shared penury and the fact that in many cases thefts were driven by extreme hunger. One report noted colonials were forced to hunt for leaves and buds off of shrubs and trees as well as entrails from slaughtered animals. A property owner in Gignac verified the troubles, admitting that difficulties were caused by insufficient food in the area, although he was less willing to dismiss thefts than the police, stating his intention to shoot anyone stealing food from his land.

A descent into violent rhetoric like this became a common occurrence. In the village of Sauve near Nîmes, the local agricultural syndicate could no longer tolerate these “illegal actions” by the summer of 1943. Louis Brunel, head of the syndicate, called the Indochinese un pègre – a criminal gang – worried they were “reputed to be especially dangerous,” and stated that the farmers of the region wished to be pillaged and attacked no longer. Most of his criticisms were reserved for the French state and particularly MOI agents though. They allowed the workers to be lazy, were incapable of commanding the men, and he also obliquely suggested the MOI was supportive of attempts to steal from local farms. Brunel closed his letter by exhorting the regime to protect agricultural producers. While farmers watched their sons be sent away to work for the Germans, they were forced to contend with a lack of labor and now a gang of “bandits” threatening their livelihood. Brunel foresaw the creation of a local security force to defend farmers’ crops if French authorities refused to take action.

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138 ADH, 2 W 765, Letter from Jacques Tricot to Prefect of Hérault, 19 July 1943.
140 Ibid
141 Ibid
His threat of violence against the workers warranted a response from the MOI, which declared his letter “very exaggerated and false on many points.” Rather than motivated solely by anger over theft, the MOI suggested Brunel was driven by ulterior motives, namely the fact that colonial subjects were not part of the Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO) that sent young French males to Germany. The prefect was asked to consider that Vietnamese had “voluntarily” come to France and that they had made a “sacrifice much greater than those young people we request to leave for Germany.” Rather than be viewed with distain, they should be “welcomed with sympathy” for leaving their families and helping France in her time of need. This response from the MOI insinuated local conflicts were about much more than theft of food. Brunel was obviously upset that the regime had placed agricultural workers in the STO program and there were clearly concerns about how this would affect the oncoming harvest season. The paternalistic tone of the MOI response is worthy of note as well. Although many of its policies were driven by fears over the co-mingling of French citizen and colonial subject, this administrator seems, to a certain extent, have venerated the workers for coming to France as “volunteers” while many French youths typically avoided forced labor programs like the STO at all costs.

What local authorities, the MOI and French population in contact with the Indochinese did agree on was the necessity for better surveillance and a strengthening of _encadrement_ policies. Although Indochinese workers subject to _encadrement_ had extremely limited freedom of mobility to begin with, this was further restricted as crimes escalated over the course of 1943. The prefect of the Hérault, obviously looking to maintain fading support for the regime in an area that was increasingly becoming a hotbed of resistance activity,

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143 Ibid
asked the MOI to implement more rigorous measures for monitoring the workers. The MOI was instructed to further limit colonial mobility and responded by co-opting a March 1943 decree that specifically targeted “foreigners” in southern France. According to this newly instituted policy, Vietnamese were required to carry their identification booklet at all times, and second, they needed to be in possession of written orders from their MOI officer confirming that they had permission to leave their work camp. Along with periodically moving the workers to avoid protracted confrontation with French villagers, this new policy sought to criminalize any unauthorized movement among Vietnamese colonial subjects living in France.

In this case, conflict over rationing and theft of food had a direct result on the rights of Indochinese. The MOI and prefecture may have attempted to placate concerns over a colonial presence in the Languedoc-Roussillon but their freedoms were always sacrificed in the face of criticism from the French population. Whereas theft of food from the maquis eventually led to accommodation between resistance groups and French farmers – and indeed, rationing problems actually allowed organizations like the Francs-tireurs et partisans (FTP) to more or less establish themselves as the governing authority in certain parts of rural France by early 1944 – conflict between colonials and French citizens led to decreased rights for Asian workers. Clearly rationing and food supply had manifold effects on how farmers greeted friends and foreigners in southern France at this time.

Historians have emphasized the salience of race and foreignness under Vichy. As an examination of Vietnamese migrants shows their experience in France was impacted by multiple forms of racial prejudice that influenced relations with the French population. Historians have typically presented a dichotomy between urban and rural areas as emblematic of how people experienced the occupation; colonial status and “foreignness”, however, clearly had a huge impact as well. Although the vast majority of the workers were located in rural areas, and thus according to the traditional narratives of the war more likely to have an adequate source of food, French government policies and locally-driven animosity meant Vietnamese suffered extreme hardship under Vichy. Brought to France to act as workers for the war effort and expecting to receive a degree of social equality unavailable at home, their lives were governed through a series of racially-influenced policies which guaranteed they would be received differently by metropolitan society. At the root of this was the MOI policy of encadrement, and when applied to the rationing system under Vichy, it meant they were often at a disadvantage in terms of securing food. Dependence on the MOI for food, and receiving little money for their work, ensured that the workers would be forced to rely on alternate means of securing food as widespread hunger emerged across Vichy France during the war.

Race and colonial ideology thus had an impact on the lives of Indochinese workers under Vichy. But when examined at the local level, racism often emerged in manifold ways, which demonstrates the pernicious nature of colonial ideology. The director of the factory at Saint-Auban frequently called the workers “ungrateful” for receiving, in his view, better rations than some white French citizens, but he was also responsible for a training program
that attempted to teach the workers French during the war and seemed respectful of their cultural beliefs. Were the denunciations and conflicts with local French villagers driven by racial anxiety rather than the scarcity of food? The police reports remain unclear on this point. None of the letters or petitions addressed to French authorities contains racially-charged language like the familiar *bicot* and *sidi* slurs typically directed against North African Muslims. They instead use “foreigner” and “undesirable” when referring to the presence of the workers nearby. This would suggest, as Clifford Rosenberg points out in his work, that the initial reception of colonials in France on a local level often mirrored those of previous waves of Italian and other European immigrants over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.  

And yet racially-coded language is often evident, like references to the fact all Asians “looked alike” or were lazy, unproductive workers.

This is not to suggest that racism had no influence in relations between French and colonials during the war. The system of *encadrement* was successful in this sense because it rendered the Asian workers as something alien and foreign, in need of direct supervision by the French state for their survival. War and social anxiety, combined with material deprivation, often caused many to strike out at strangers or those considered foreigners. Despite the fact Vietnamese had no presence in these areas before the war and Vichy attempted to tie them to the National Revolution, they were still targeted by the local population. Populist condemnation of the Vietnamese was directly related to the theft of food or jealously over their “privileged” status exempting them from compulsory labor programs, not just their presence in the area. Alternate methods of securing enough to eat may have become a necessity but theft of another farmers’ crops was still deemed socially unacceptable. It appears people were objecting to this breaking of social convention –

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stealing food from people attempting to feed their families and earn a living – as much as the fact that Vietnamese were considered strangers, foreigners and an unwanted presence. Indeed, we can see how these two elements reinforced each other: as theft became more common, the Vietnamese presence was considered more and more undesirable.

In this sense, locally driven animosity could be extremely potent. Anger at the theft of food drove criticism of the workers, and eventually the French state, for failing to stop the illegal activity. The curtailed rights which colonials endured – increased surveillance or restricted movement for example – was partially driven by complaints from local villagers and not just discriminatory policies being implemented from above by the Vichy government. For every state directed policy aimed at isolating those deemed undesirable, then, there were also local considerations – desire to take over a Jewish business for example, wanting to get rid of Gypsies or preserve food from theft by Indochinese – that made these policies socially acceptable to the French population. As we will see, this idea of curtailing the rights of colonials under Vichy due to both state-led and popular intervention was critically important for North Africans after 1942 as well.
Chapter Five

Beyond the Color Line: North African Mobility, Vichy Sovereignty, and the Dynamics of Collaboration

In April 1942 two gendarmes – Auguste Minoux and Jean Bellugeon – were completing their rounds in the small town of Louhons, not far from the demarcation line separating occupied and unoccupied France. Shortly after noon they proceeded to stop four men. Not for actions one would typically associate with this area – perhaps smuggling between the two zones or engaging in illicit black market activities – but rather because the individuals had “the appearance of being North African, [and were] unknown in the area.”¹ Indeed, this was the only reason stated in the report for stopping them. Minoux and Bellugeon then transferred the North Africans to the local police station for further questioning. Two of the men, Larbi Djaber and Yousef Allem, told the gendarmes they had recently worked for a factory in Saint-Etienne.² Minoux proceeded to check a fichier of those North Africans who should be arrested for “work abandonment” and found that none of the men had been identified as of yet. Nevertheless, a call was placed to the factory Saint-Etienne, which then informed the

² Ibid
gendarmes that Djaber, Allem and the two other men were part of a contingent that had left without authorization the previous week.3

The North Africans who “deserted” Thinet’s factory in Saint-Etienne had stories of their own. Larbi Djaber came to France in July 1941, recruited by a factory in the Gard where he stayed for only thirty-six days before leaving to work at a used shoe market. He then departed for Lyon, eventually moving to Saint-Etienne and taking up a job with the factory.4 Similarly, Yousef Allem had arrived in October 1941, worked for the coalmine at Grand’Combe for several months, and then proceeded to make his way to Saint-Etienne.5 Neither claimed to know that it was illegal for men to leave their employment without permission, argued the factory had paid them too little, and emphasized they were not attempting to cross into the occupied zone, a practice the Vichy government was policing heavily by this point. Although the men told Minoux and Bellugeon they only looking for work in the region and carried nothing to suggest suspicious activities, they were nevertheless arrested, transported to Mâcon and then on to Marseille.

By the time Labri Djaber and Yousef Allem were arrested, North African worker mobility had become a key issue for employers, local officials, and the Vichy government. Although defeat and occupation precipitated a massive deportation of North Africans living in France, economic considerations led to their re-emergence as an important source of labor in certain sectors of the southern economy by 1942. This necessitated the recruitment of thousands of Algerians and Moroccans in North Africa – a system hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies as Vichy sought to balance its ideological aims of curtailing “free migration” to

3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 ADSL, W 137999, dossier arrestation de travailleurs étrangers, “Procès-vebal constant l’arrestation pour rupture de contrat de ALLEM, Yousef,” Gendarmerie Nationale – Brigade Louhans, 2 April 1942.
the métropole and the needs of French employers. This subject has been covered in Chapter 3, but the importance of North Africans for coal, chemical and electrochemical production after 1942 also created an increasing necessity of preventing them from leaving their jobs in southern France. Just as poor rationing led Vietnamese to steal food from French farmers and protest on the job, North Africans responded by leaving en masse – some hoping to return home or to look for work elsewhere, most to occupied northern France where they believed better paying jobs with the Organization Todt awaited them.

This became an important issue for Vichy. Not only were these workers seen as abandoning France and French industry, but also engaging in “anti-national activities” because of their desire to work for the German occupiers. French authorities feared this would case colonial subjects to fall under the spell of German propaganda against French control over North Africa.\(^6\) As a result, Vichy, local officials, and employers created a program of internal controls designed to prevent North Africans from crossing the demarcation line separating “free” and “occupied” France. As the situation with Djaber and Allem illustrates, however, this system was not always foolproof. Just as attempts to rationalize migration across the Mediterranean failed, so too did efforts to control North African movement within the métropole itself. North Africans developed incredibly sophisticated means of evading French police. The state may have issued decrees attempting to curtail the movement of North Africans and punish them for abandonment, but as seen above, fichier identifying those who had fled were often inaccurate and police relied more on their instincts, and indeed an assumption that all North Africans were potentially criminals, when enforcing these decrees. Much like the case of Jews living in France, the subject of North African work abandonment demonstrates the importance of local, individual actions

during the war – police officers making their rounds and devising ways to stop potential evadees, functionaries working with employers to stem desertions, and legal officials reading legislation in often draconian ways – rather than simply the germination of policy at Vichy.⁷

Managing the migration of North Africans living in the unoccupied zone eventually became much more than a social issue, quickly morphing into a question of national sovereignty. Djaber and Allem were arrested not only for breaking the law but also because they were viewed eschewing French control in favor of the Nazis. Relations between the French state, employers, colonial functionaries in Algeria, and the Germans, reveals a great deal about the necessity of preserving at least some degree of independence in the midst of foreign occupation. Officials under Vichy did not want Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians heading to northern France. The Germans, on the other hand, often disregarded these directives about the recruitment of colonials. How far were the French willing to go – possibly souring relations between the two parties – in order to enforce what they saw as a legal right to hold their North African subjects in southern France? In the end, the state was so ineffective at preventing workers from leaving that confrontation never occurred. The French approach thus varied between firmness and vacillation.⁸ North Africans in the free zone would be prevented from leaving their jobs; recruitment in Algeria itself, however, was permissible. Workers were employed in northern France on German construction projects but their recruitment into the STO for work in the Reich itself was forbidden. This is not to suggest that Vichy was somehow a “shield” for North African workers, as Pétain famously claimed when discussing his actions after the war. Rather, as with a variety of other issues,

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limits were set on how far the Vichy state would go in terms of preserving nominal
independence from Germany during both parties’ desperate scramble for labor after 1942.

The question of policing under Vichy has received increased attention in recent
years.\(^9\) Initially portrayed as non-political or simply acting under orders from the Germans
when rounding up Jews and resisters, scholars have since discovered French police
 collaborated willingly with the Nazi occupiers. The infamous Bousquet-Oberg agreements in
the summer of 1942 – named after René Bousquet and Carl Oberg, heads of the French and
German police services – guaranteed police participation in the Final Solution.\(^10\) In this
sense, the police under Vichy was very political indeed. Along with the Légion Française des
Combattants and later, the Milice française, French police and gendarmes should be regarded
as an ideological arm of the French state.\(^11\) They monitored public opinion, arrested those
circumventing rationing regulations, and interned people speaking out against the régime.
Pétain, as Simon Kitson notes, regarded support from the police as essential if his
government was to survive.\(^12\) This support eventually wilted within the police services just as
in many other segments of French society. Between 1940 and 1943, however, they were
largely responsible for fighting what the régime called “anti-national activities” which
eventually included unauthorized North African mobiliy.


\(^10\) Poznanski, Jews in France, 251-302.


\(^12\) Kitson, “French police and Vichy,” 373.
This was not the first time the French state had become concerned with migrant workers. Economic change, the advent of French industry, and the decline of agriculture as a viable way of life for many over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, forced large-scale migration across France, a veritable “floating population” according to some.\(^{13}\) Especially during the nineteenth century, this was viewed as a serious social problem, and brought about the introduction of workbooks, visas and passports so that police and local officials could – at least to some degree – monitor who was coming and going.\(^{14}\) The first efforts to exert some sort of control over this population were typically presented as well-ordered, rationalized means of identifying and monitoring people: indeed, a very “scientific” solution embodying enlightenment values and emergent state power.\(^{15}\) Initial efforts to monitor migrants were ineffective but the increasing necessity to police this floating population, John Merriman argues, actually contributed to the rise of the nation-state itself.\(^{16}\)

Indeed, migration control was first a *national* issue before becoming an *international* issue

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\(^{15}\) The best example of this is the police inspector Jacques-François Guillaut, who proposed a devise for monitoring newly arrived migrants in Paris very similar to the fichier system that would emerge in the twentieth century. See Vincent Milliot, “La surveillance des migrants et des lieux d’accueil à Paris du XVIe siècle au années 1830,” in *La ville promise: Mobilité et accueil à Paris (fin XVIIe-début XIXe siècle)*, ed. Daniel Roche (Paris: Fayard, 2000).

with the advent of citizenship, nationality and territoriality in the later stages of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{17}

With the beginnings of workers crossing national boundaries, however, came the rise of immigration control in the early twentieth century. As scholars like John Horne, Mary Lewis and Clifford Rosenberg have demonstrated, the First World War and subsequent demobilization forced officials to grapple with how immigrants should be monitored, and what social services or protections they should enjoy.\textsuperscript{18} North African subjects living in France became an important issue during this period with the creation of specialized police brigades and SAINA offices, reflecting an increasing concern with their presence in the métropole. During the interwar period, however, the obvious solution to the “North African problem” was simply deportation from metropolitan soil. This became impossible after 1941 as North African labor became increasingly important for the economy in southern France. Refocusing the discussion of North African polcing away from major urban centers also demonstrates the limits of state control. Paris, for example, had the most well funded police force in France. But when we take a broader view of the situation under Vichy, it becomes clear that policing North African mobility was often haphazard and ineffective. The government could decree that Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians were not permitted to leave their jobs, but many simply rejected and ignored these orders, calling into question to what extent Vichy could actually implement its ideological agenda without the support of various local actors.

\textsuperscript{17} It was also a colonial issue as policing power was strengthened across the French empire. See Martin Thomas, \textit{Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder after 1914} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Patrice Morlat, \textit{La repression coloniale au Vietnam, 1908-1940} (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1990).

It becomes quite clear when examining the history of North African migrants in France that interwar mobility was actually promoted by various levels of the French state. These actions often worked in tandem with seasonal migration patterns. In an interesting parallel to parts of southern and central France, the gradual impoverishment of rural Algerians over the course of colonial rule – especially in mountainous areas like the Kabyle – made migration to France an increasingly necessary tool for survival.\textsuperscript{19} Some settled permanently in the métropole but the vast majority crossing the Mediterranean only stayed for one or several years.\textsuperscript{20} This combination of declining agricultural productivity in Algeria and increasingly draconian policing measures in France meant that many North Africans migrants were on the move.

Because the unemployment situation was initially so dire after the French defeat in 1940 local officials seemed not to care that North African workers in certain economic sectors were still legally under requisition; they were more concerned with deporting the unemployed anyway. Vichy never repealed the 11 July 1938 Daladier labor laws stating that all workers in positions deemed most important for “national defense” like mining and specific manufacturing industries could not leave their jobs without authorization.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, these regulations were carried over into the Vichy period and used ferociously by various levels of the French state to stem North African desertions. Although rules officially applied to all workers – French, foreign and colonial – North Africans perceived this as a special measure targeted directly at indigenous subjects, perhaps due to the long history of mobility

\textsuperscript{19} Neil MacMaster, \textit{Colonial Migrants and Racism}, 34-49.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 57-82
\textsuperscript{21} Crémieux-Brilhac, \textit{Les Français de l’an 40} vol. 2, 100.
controls in colonial Algeria.\textsuperscript{22} Some overtly suggested revolutionary activity would take place if they were not allowed leaves of absence from their jobs.\textsuperscript{23} Functionaries charged with monitoring North Africans in the Bouches-du-Rhône quietly wondered what effect not allowing these men to leave would have on morale in Algeria and Morocco. Employers, on the other hand, sought increased policing of itinerant North Africans as the economy started to improve.

If increased policing gradually took place over 1941 and 1942, access to the occupied zone for those living in southern France was racially coded almost immediately. As Éric Alary has explained, it was extremely difficult for anyone to cross the line of demarcation without an \textit{ausweiss} or German-issued pass.\textsuperscript{24} The line initially proved incredibly disruptive for business operating in both zones and refugees hoping to return home. Authorities explicitly targeted Jews, foreigners and people of color though. The Germans turned Gaston Monnerville, the Guyanese deputy, away in the summer of 1940 because, as he said, “no blacks, Jews and ‘mixed-bloods’” were being allowed into occupied France.\textsuperscript{25} While Monnerville attributed this policy to the Nazis, Lamine Guèye noted that when he was denied entry in the fall, the Germans informed him it was a French policy coming from Vichy.\textsuperscript{26} Eric Jennings and Tal Bruntmann have subsequently argued that regulations disallowing Jews, Africans, Asians, and other “undesirables” from crossing the demarcation line were indeed instituted by Vichy in the summer of 1940, just as thousands of Algerians and Moroccans

\textsuperscript{22} ADBR, 76 W 206, “Main-d’œuvre indigène maintenue en état de requisition,” Report from Service des Affaires Algériennes (SAA), 24 June 1941.
were deported from France and the civil rights of Jews curtailed. As the Minister of the Interior instructed prefects in October and then again in November, “the German military administration has not forbid the return of Français de couleur to the occupied zone.” It was instead a French policy prohibiting colonials and people of color from crossing into occupied France, although the question of why regulating movement became such an obsession for French authorities remains unclear. Nevertheless, turning the demarcation line into a literal “color line” became a central tool in Vichy’s attempts to regulate North African mobility.

II

The experience of North African workers in Vichy France during this time was inextricably linked to the economic situation. Although the French state quickly attacked joblessness, and unemployment had been lowered significantly by mid-1941, the question of rationing and material depravation remained an object of concern throughout the Vichy years and into the postwar period. The working class in particular was dramatically affected by low wages and high rates of inflation that made finding enough to eat difficult. Much like Vietnamese, French, and foreign workers, rationing, price controls and material shortages also had a dramatic impact on North Africans during the war. Unlike the Vietnamese under MOI supervision, however, North Africans living in France were designated as part of the rationing system introduced by Vichy in the autumn of 1940. They were issued rationing booklets like French citizens and expected to abide by laws governing the sale of food. Just like everyone else, then, North Africans typically experienced food shortages and employers

28 ADBR, 160 W 13, “Rapatriement en zone occupée des Français de couleur,” Secretary of State for the Interior to Prefects of the Occupied Zone, 23 November 1940.
often wondered how this would affect Algerian and Moroccan workers. The director of the mines at Decize in the Nièvre wrote as early as March 1941 that potatoes were in short supply and it was difficult to find goats, sheep and lamb because of newly introduced regulations on buying products from directly from farmers. Experienced Moroccan workers were leaving the area because rationing had not been introduced in Protectorate as of yet.

Rampant inflation hit wages hard as well. A group of four Algerians living in the Gard noted that they could only manage to spend 745 francs every two weeks, which amounted to approximately 15 francs per day for each man. “This is hardly enough to eat well,” they declared to the administrators at their mine who, like their counterparts in Decize, worried this would precipitate departures. While poor wages were pervasive among the working class at this time, and North Africans were usually paid the same as their French counterparts, they were not given certain monetary benefits afforded to French citizens. The most important of which – family allocations – were distributed only to those whose wives and children lived in “France”. Of course, Algerians lived in “France” legally speaking, but they were nevertheless denied assistance by the Vichy government and thus had to send money to their families at a time when it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide for themselves.

As the report from Decize also indicates, however, personal prejudice against North Africans contributed to their increasingly poor situation. When Moroccans queued at the market, they were apparently turned away because “the owners served them less willingly

29 Ibid
30 ANMT, 40 AS 48, “Main-d’oeuvre Marocaine,” Director of Decize to President of Comité d’Organisation de l’Industrie des Combustibles Minéraux Solides, 12 March 1941.
than they would for Frenchmen.” Knowing that this would have detrimental effect on morale because Moroccans “are like large children, timid and subdued (effacé),” the manager called the police to report that certain merchants were not following the law. Eventually he found one shopkeeper willing to accept rationing cards from Moroccans but was clearly worried that these events would destabilize his workforce. The French population emulated this reaction in other locales where North Africans were heavily concentrated. One official near Marseille noted shopkeepers “claimed not to be able to give them anything other than bread,” which was exacerbating material woes of Algerians nearby. Another in Alès wrote “the Arab is not treated on the same footing as other workers” at local markets. While neither contacted the police as in Decize, mines in both Alès and Valdonne were forced to create cafeterias for North Africans where they could be guaranteed at least something to eat.

Along with prejudicial treatment from French shopkeepers, North Africans faced rationing problems because of their position in the workplace. Typically given the least desirable jobs in mines and factories, many Algerian employees at the mines near Alès were relegated to the night shift and typically did not finish until mid-morning. As a result, it was difficult for them to attend markets or queue for rations in the mornings. Further, because food supply was tightly controlled, pork was occasionally the only meat available for purchase, which went against the dietary restrictions for practicing Muslims. While there is evidence many workers ate pork and did not strictly follow a halal diet, the inability of officials to accommodate the needs of North African Muslims was seen as a problem in need.

32 ANMT, 40 AS 48, “Main-d’oeuvre Mariocaine.”
33 Ibid
35 ADG, 1 W 654, “Ravitaillement alimentaire du bassin d’Alès.”
36 Ibid
of a solution. Following this report in Alès, managers from at least one mine did attempt to provide a special abattoir where animals could be slaughtered according to Islamic custom.\footnote{Ibid} Officials in Marseille went even further, opening the Franco-Muslim Butcher in March 1943. Although the Algerian Affairs Office in Marseille viewed this a solution to the dietary problems Muslims had been facing, it actually exacerbated rationing difficulties. Over three thousand individuals had registered to buy meat in July 1943; the average non-\textit{halal} butcher typically served nine hundred people. Muslims thus ended up receiving less meat than their French counterparts, and when some attempted to switch back to their regular butcher (an Armenian is mentioned in the archives), they were denied permission by officials in the Bouches-du-Rhône.\footnote{ADBR, 76 W 206, “Ouverture d'une boucherie franco-musulmane à Marseille,” Director General of Food Supply for Marseille to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 19 July 1943.}

While these few anecdotes obviously only provide some indication of how North Africans experienced the Vichy years, it is evident that several factors influenced their lives in the métropole. Not only were they mostly poor workers who subsisted – like their French and foreign counterparts – on meager wages and suffered because of material shortages and rationing, but the unavailability of couscous,\footnote{ADBR, 76 W 205, “Approvisionnement de la population indigène de la métropole en couscous,” Report from SAA, 10 December 1941.} \textit{halal} meat and discrimination at the hands of French shopkeepers also impacted their existence. And, like other people in France at the time, North Africans reacted in several ways. Some resorted to theft, like Mohand Chalal who was arrested by the gendarmerie in July 1942 for stealing some onions from a garden.\footnote{ADS, 1411 W 3, “Procès-verbal constatant l’arrestation délit de vol du sujet algérien CHALAL, Mohand, Lakehel, au préjudice de M. Garbolino demeurant à St. Michel de Maurienne (Savoie),” Gendarmerie Nationale – Bridage de St. Michel de Maurienne, 20 July 1942.} Others sought to exploit the rationing system itself. In the Isère, for example, officials charged with monitoring North Africans became exasperated by efforts to obtain illicit ration
cards. Workers would give an alternate name to the local mayor’s office or claim their booklets had been lost or stolen. Once a new booklet had been issued it could then be sold on the black market or used to receive higher rations.⁴¹ Indeed, some started selling portions of the ration booklets as well, exchanging tickets that could be used to buy wine for coffee and sugar coupons. While this was common for French and colonial alike, police viewed North African attempts to circumvent rationing guidelines as a challenge to European authority and the beginnings of unacceptable criminal behavior.⁴²

Although local archives contain numerous references to individual acts of circumventing the rationing system, collective actions – often in the form of strikes and work stoppages – were another method of forcing officials to address North African concerns. In July 1942 a large contingent of Algerians arrived at the Gresaque coalmine. Their meals were to be supplied by a North African caouch (“helper” or “office boy”) but it became clear to many of the new arrivals that this person was not giving them their full rations, instead selling the remaining food on the black market.⁴³ The director of the mine dismissed their complaints entirely; the next day fifty North Africans refused to descend down into the pits.⁴⁴ A group of Algerians working in the Alps also stopped work in June 1942, telling their supervisor that there was too little food. The sous-préfet seemed surprised by the strike, requesting gendarmes obtain the “real reason” for this work stoppage.⁴⁵ He suspected that the

⁴² ADR, 130 W 170, Report from Direction des Industries Chimiques in Lyon, 28 August 1942.
⁴⁴ Ibid
⁴⁵ ADS, 1411 W 1, “Cessation du travail aux usines de Prémont (Orelle)”, sous-préfet of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne to Prefect of the Savoie, 23 June 1942.
“real reason” was not a lack of food, but rather unscrupulous recruiters in Algeria “who had promised them better rations in France” to meet their quotas.  

Rationing and material shortages provoked one response above all others: desertion. Desertion, as historians of the working class have pointed out, has always been a means of counteracting poor living and working conditions. While no summary exists detailing the exact number of North Africans who fled their jobs under Vichy, local statistics reveal a great deal about its prevalence and potential effects on employers. As of August 1942, almost three hundred Algerians had left the mines in Alès during the previous year, which amounted to over ten percent of the pre-war North African workforce. One company alone registered 234 Algerian desertions between December 1941 and May 1942. This phenomenon was not confined to the Gard: mines around Saint-Etienne counted approximately 2000 Algerians and Moroccans by late 1940. The number had dropped to 1598 by the end of 1941, 1322 in 1942 and 725 in 1943 or thirty-eight percent of the workforce in total. North Africans working in the Alps region left in massive numbers during 1942 as well. Almost six hundred were recorded living in the Isère as of September; by year’s end the prefect counted only 389 under his jurisdiction.

46 Ibid
49 ADG, 25 J 33, Director of Grand’Come to Head Engineer for the Mines, 21 May 1942.
51 Figures are taken from annual mining reports dated 1941, 1942 and 1943 in ADL, 2065 W 29. After 1943, however, the number of desertions rapidly diminished, suggesting that the departures may have been prominent among those who had been in France for a short period of time, or that North Africans no longer saw a need to move after the total occupation of France in November 1942.
Testimonials of those arrested provide fascinating insight into why North Africans decided to leave their jobs. In September 1942 Lakdar Hadibi and Tahar Aoussar fled Saint-Auban where they had been working with several hundred other Algerians for Alais, Froges et Camargue (AFC). Recruited in Constantine during the drôle de guerre, Hadibi had first come to France in May 1940 where he took up a job at Grand’Combe in Alès.\(^{53}\) Claiming that “he wasn’t suited to this work”, Hadibi parted amicably with the mine and found a job with AFC in Saint-Auban.\(^{54}\) Aoussar followed a similar path, arriving to work at the anthracite mines of La Plagne in June 1941 and then left shortly after this because of poor health.\(^{55}\) They painted a grim picture of work in the aluminum industry:

North Africans are very poorly considered. We were poorly fed at the Algerian cafeteria and we did not have the right to take our meals in the French restaurant. We were housed in common rooms (about thirty men each). These were situated right beside a creek where all of the acid and detritus from the factory flowed by. The air was not breathable. We slept without sheets and only had two blankets to cover us. We did not have the possibility of showering. We had to live in a repugnant environment. It is for these reasons that I decided to come to Ugine to work in the factory with my brother who has been located here for some time.\(^{56}\)

Both Hadibi and Aoussar were arrested and apparently returned to Saint-Auban but this story reveals a number of important elements. Conditions were bad and workers clearly wanted to escape but desertion, at least in this case, was facilitated by the knowledge that Aoussar’s brother was living nearby in Saint-Auban. Migration patterns forged in the interwar period clearly made some men more willing to strike out on their own, and given the small size of

\(^{53}\) ADS, 1398 W 31, “Procès-verbal d’arrestation et conduit à son lieu de travail du sujet algérien HADIBI Mohand Lakdar employé aus Acières d’Ugine (Savoie),” Gendarmerie Nationale – Brigade d’Ugine, 24 March 1943.

\(^{54}\) Ibid


\(^{56}\) Ibid.
the Southeast Asian community in interwar France, it could partly explain why there was such a paucity of Vietnamese work abandonment during the wartime period.57

Others noted arduous working conditions in their conversations with the police. Mohand Moulai was recruited to work in Alès but left in August 1942, making his way to Ugine and the electro-chemical industry like so many of his compatriots. He claimed mining were too hard for him after his arrest but was nevertheless transferred back to Alès for trial.58

While Moulai sought to leave the mines, others were migrating out of the Alps. Gendarmes patrolling the train station in Notre-Dame de Briançon spotted a number of Algerians attempting to leave for Marseille one evening in November 1942. They were all coming from the anthracite mine nearby, clearly in violation of requisition laws. Some claimed to know this; others had no idea workers could not leave their jobs. Sentiment against returning to Aime was unanimous though. As one explained to the police: “I prefer to be arrested than return to the La Plagne mine.”59 North Africans on hydroelectric projects fled their jobs in droves as well. Complaints about lack of clothes, shoes, food and poor pay were widespread among a group arrested and then transported to Marseille. French officials vacillated between deportation to Algeria or perhaps returning the men to their previous employer. Those under internment disagreed with the later option and were no less hyperbolic than their compatriots in Notre-Dame de Briançon. As the report notes: “several of them have forcefully declared

57 The MOI only officially recorded 313 desertions by Indochinese workers between 1940 and the end of 1943. See ANOM, III SLOTFOM 51, dossier 1944, “Note sur le Comité d’information indigène,” Report from Inspector General of the Colonies Le Grégam, 1 May 1944.
58 ADS, 1398 W 31, “Procès-verbal relatant la conduite à son lieu de travail de Moulai (Mohand) employé aux acièries d’Ugine (Savoie),” Gendarmerie Nationale – Brigade d’Ugine, 20 July 1943.
59 ADS, 1398 W 31, “Procès-verbal relatant l’Arrestation en flagrant délit de rupture de réquisition de TAHNI (Méziane) manœuvre aux mines d’Aime (Savoie),” Gendarmerie Nationale – Brigade Notre-Dame de Briançon, 8 November 1942.
that ‘they prefer to have their heads chopped off’ than to be returned to their previous positions.”

Harsh working conditions and material shortages were often compounded by the fact that recruiters had promised North Africans higher wages and better benefits that they received. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, although terms of employment were standardized for all workers being hired in Algeria, there were numerous problems with the system itself. One of the issues identified by employers was dubious behavior from members of private agencies, CENTRALAG and SGI, tasked by the Vichy government with bringing North Africans to France. As an employer greatly impacted by the departures stated:

The recruiting agents gain a percentage [of the sum] per worker. They have to make them many promises, often those concerning payment, food, clothing and family allocations. Who they recruit isn’t important, and the local administrators [in Algeria] profit by getting rid of their poor subjects.

A group of sixty-seven Algerians working in Notre-Dame de Briançon and Saint-Marcel also noted similar reasons as motivation to leave. As one worker emphasized upon his arrest, “These promises have not been kept by the company and so I decided, with my comrades, to return to Marseille to find more advantageous employment which will permit me to provide for the needs of my family.”

As the discussion above indicates, North Africans were often driven to desert and leave their place of employment for a variety of reasons. Work, rationing, low wages, and what many perceived as discriminatory polices, exacerbated poor living conditions and

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forced some to choose between staying in their jobs, or breaking requisition and looking for work elsewhere. The presence of family members in France also clearly facilitated desertions in hopes that relatives could help them find a better job. One motivating factor is mentioned above all others in police reports though. As officials in the Gard wondered, “What has become of these workers? There is no doubt that most have left for the occupied zone, several of them to Germany, but we cannot say how many.”\textsuperscript{64} As difficult as it may be to comprehend, faced with poor living conditions and substandard wages, many North Africans wanted to leave the “free zone” for occupied France and work for the Germans. As one Algerian who signed up for work in Brittany exclaimed:

> It is better for use to leave and work for the Germans in order to improve our lives. When we were hired in Algeria we were promised 10 fr. per hour and many other things that were never given. We were paid only 6 fr. and if we express our discontent or a desire to depart, we know that nothing other than sanctions are for us.\textsuperscript{65}

North Africans were often attracted by the promise of better food and pay, that family allocations would be provided and the workers would be able to take regular leaves of absence: in short, benefits not available in Vichy France.

**III**

The story of forced labor recruitment in France is well known. Under the guidance of Minister of Armaments Fritz Todt (1940-1942) and Albert Speer (1942-1945), Nazi Germany sought to maximize labor productivity in the Reich. Polish civilians and prisoners of war were targeted in 1939 and 1940, and affiliated Axis powers like Italy, Hungary and Slovakia also sent workers to Germany. The program spread east in 1941 as the Werhmacht launched a brutal roundup of Soviet civilians to use as slave labor in the Reich. Inability to

\textsuperscript{64} ADG, 1 W 649, “Départ d’ouvriers mineurs en zone occupée,” sous-prefet of Alès to Prefect of the Gard, 28 September 1942.

\textsuperscript{65} ADBR, 76 W 206, “Etat d’esprit des indigènes embauchés par l’Allemagne,” Report from SAA, 1 August 1942.
swiftly defeat the Soviet Union and increasing casualties on the Eastern Front, however, necessitated the use of more workers in armaments, farm work and manufacturing. In collaboration with Speer and Herman Goering, General Plenipotentiary for Labor Mobilization Fritz Sauckel – a former lathe operator and *alter kämpfer* – instituted a series of draconian recruitment programs across Nazi-occupied Europe beginning in 1942. The Nazis also sought to fully exploit the massive camp system under their control, sending inmates to industrial sites and utilizing camp facilities like Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gross-Rosen, and Mauthausen.  

French officials initially sought to temper the forcible conscription of workers in both the free and occupied zones by co-operating with the Germans. Throughout 1940 and 1941, representatives from the Ministry of Labor were in frequent dialogue with the occupiers. Discussions typically revolved around Organization Todt, the German construction conglomerate responsible for building military installations around occupied Europe. Economic collaboration was partly engineered by François Lehideux, then a functionary within the Ministry of Labor, and later Secretary of State for Industrial Production between July 1941 and April 1942. In December 1940, Lehideux accepted in principle that France and specifically the CLC would find civilian workers for Nazi Germany. Foreigners were viewed as the most acceptable bargaining chip, first Italians and “stateless persons” – mainly

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67 AN, 72 AJ 2266, “Demandes de main-d’œuvre française faites par les Allemands,” Note from Jean-Jacques Heilmann, Commissaire à la lutte contre le chomage, undated. This document shows that officials in Paris met frequently with the German authorities over late 1940 and early 1941 over the question of providing workers in places like Brest, Lorient and Beauvais for the Organization Todt.

68 Ibid
Poles – and then Spanish refuges, thousands of whom were sent north from their camps in southern France to Brittany and Normandy. Some actually disagreed with this plan, noting it would strip southern France of agricultural workers, but most government functionaries were in agreement that providing foreign workers would relieve the pressure for widespread recruitment in northern France.

Indeed, initial steps towards collaboration over labor issues fulfilled a dual purpose for both parties. Lehideux’s use of non-French immigrants was an attempt to stave off broader (perhaps forcible) dragooning of French citizens into work for the Germans. This demonstrated that France could co-operate with Hitler’s regime on certain issues as well as build support among the French population by sending foreigners to Organization Todt projects rather than French citizens. The Germans, of course, were all too happy to accept workers as well as prevent any large-scale confrontation given the meager military force that controlled France while the Wehrmacht shifted east.

With the appointment of Sauckel, however, coerced recruitment became inevitable. Labor conscription finally reached France in mid-1942, first with the relève that sent workers in exchange for French prisoners of war, and then with the hated Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO) in February 1943. The STO led to a rapid growth in the maquis, caused thousands of young people (especially men) to flee for mines and rural areas, and contributed to a final collapse in support for the régime. These workers – many of whom died as the

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70 AN, 72 AJ 2266, “Compte-rendu de la Conférence qui s’est tenue le 2 octobre 1941 dans le Cabinet de M. Fourcade, Directeur de la Police Territoire et des Etrangers au sujet d’un nouveau recrutement éventual par l’Organisation Todt de travailleurs étrangers,” 2 October 1941.
Allies increasingly attacked German industrial facilities from the air after 1942 – were commemorated after the war as victims of National Socialism. But many people living in France also volunteered to work for the Germans well before the STO was instituted, especially “foreigners”, the unemployed, the destitute, and criminals in need of a job after the defeat.\(^{72}\) Almost 300,000 workers left France before the institution of the STO program in 1943.\(^{73}\) Even though economic collaboration began in earnest straight away, Sauckel sought to further exploit French labor reserves after being appointed. In order to temper his desire for forced recruitment, Vichy authorized the creation of Office de Placement Allemand (German Recruitment Offices) or OPAs in mid-1942, the largest of which were located in Marseille, Lyon, and Toulouse.\(^{74}\) As Patrice Arnaud has noted, the Nazis developed sophisticated recruitment methods like brochures, posters, and newspaper bulletins to inform French workers about the benefits of working for Germany.\(^{75}\)

Propaganda efforts had little impact on French workers but thousands of North Africans living in the south flocked to OPAs or attempted to cross the demarcation line after learning about the higher wages and benefits awaiting them in northern France. The OPA in Marseille even had a North African section that circulated pamphlets in specific parts of the city where many resided.\(^{76}\) The Algerian Affairs Service in the city also noted several individuals sent south from Paris for the sole purpose of recruiting North Africans to work in the occupied zone.\(^{77}\)

\(^{72}\) Arnaud, *Les STO*, 1-2. Arnaud notes that by the end of October 1940, only 16.3% of those who had volunteered to leave for Germany were French.

\(^{73}\) Vinen, *Unfree French*, 249.

\(^{74}\) Arnaud, *Les STO*, 3.

\(^{75}\) Ibid, 2.

\(^{76}\) ADBR, 76 W 206, “Travailleurs indigènes pour l’Allemagne,” Report from SAA, 2 July 1940.

\(^{77}\) ADBR, 76 W 206, “Recrutement de la main-d’oeuvre indigène pour les allemands,” Report from SAA, 15 July 1942.
It is difficult to get an accurate picture of how many North Africans were recruited in southern France through the OPAs. The ratio of North African to French and foreign workers, however, is astounding. The seventh worker convoy departing Marseille’s St. Charles station in July 1942 included 205 French, 90 foreigners and 225 Algerians.\textsuperscript{78} The next group totaled 141 French, 66 foreigners and 154 Algerians.\textsuperscript{79} Given North Africans constituted but a fraction of Marseille’s population, these proportions are incredible. This trend continued for several weeks and by the end of July over one thousand North Africans had left on OPA convoys from Marseille.\textsuperscript{80} When asked why so many were tempted by the offer to work for Nazi Germany, one man responded:

Yes, we are going [to work for Germany] because we know that we will not be deceived. France, where we are not given rights, has lied to us. In Algiers we were fed hollow promises from employers that seemed to be made without the knowledge of employers or without the consent of those who wished to exploit us. When we express our discontent – or even our inclinations of running away – we are threatened without anyone bothering to investigate the underlying motives for our attitude. This situation cannot be prolonged indefinitely and it is why we have come to the German [Placement] Office.\textsuperscript{81}

Statements of this nature suggest material conditions made traveling to northern France more palatable, but unscrupulous recruiting methods and indeed the belief that North African men were not viewed as socially equal in the métropole also pushed some to the OPAs.

French officials were troubled by German agents’ seeming unwillingness to follow orders banning the recruitment of North African under requisition or on labor contracts. The North African Labor Office in Lyon notified its affiliated bureaus in Grenoble and Clermont-


\textsuperscript{80} ADBR, 76 W 206, “Embauchage d’ouvriers nord-africains chez les allemands,” Report from SAA, 30 July 1942.

\textsuperscript{81} ADBR, 76 W 206, “Etat d’esprit des indigènes embauchés par l’Allemagne,” Report from SAA, 1 August 1942.
Ferrand that German officials were sending workers to these cities because it was seen as easier to sign up for work in occupied France. They were instructed to rigorously check the identification papers of all those wanting to go north and not fall for duplicitous behavior like requesting new identity cards solely for the purpose of evading detection. The German occupiers – even though they had been told by French officials not to recruit North Africans under requisition – could not care less about these orders. Their first priority was simply obtaining as many workers as possible. German agents with knowledge of Arabic frequented North African cafés in order to dredge up recruits for Todt, and simply dismissed concerns from French functionaries about their behavior. An OPA functionary in Marseille was confronted after allowing six Algerians under requisition on one convoy. He simply shrugged his shoulders and responded “c’est juste.”

There was nothing technically illegal about North Africans leaving if they had official authorization and were not subject to requisition or on a labor contract. Employers nevertheless attempted to counteract the desertions in a number of ways. Mines apparently began stamping identity and rationing cards much like they had done in 1939 and 1940, identifying certain individuals as being under requisition. Others posted notices around their facilities in order to inform North African workers they were not permitted to leave if they arrived in France on a labor contract. But the vast majority of employers expected the government, and especially gendarmes and the police, to prevent workers from leaving their

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82 ADI, 52 M 311, “Recrutement d’ouvriers N.A. pour l’Allemagne,” MONA Lyon to MONA Grenoble and MONA Clermont-Ferrand, 10 July 1942.
84 ADBR, 144 W 12, Head of Service des Industries chimiques for Marseille to Divisional Inspector of Labour, 17 July 1942.
jobs. Pétain’s régime responded to these demands the only way it knew how: issuing decrees to local authorities.

Entitled “On North African workers discovered in an irregular situation in the free zone”, the first came in January 1942. North Africans who left their job while “under requisition” were to be arrested, charged under the 11 July 1938 labor laws, and then transferred to a prison at their previous location for trial. When an indigenous Algerian was stopped and questioned, and then pretended to have left his job with formal authorization, the police were to call his previous employer and verify the story.\(^86\) This assumed, of course, that the police would automatically stop North Africans. The decree reaffirmed the necessity of Algerians carrying their identity papers with them at all times, and for Moroccans, their carte de protégé français.\(^87\) North Africans found entering metropolitan France illegally by the Mediterranean coast were to be arrested and deported; if coming from occupied France without permission, arrested and sent to Marseille for further questioning. Later that month the Minister of the Interior clarified that not only were those under requisition prohibited from crossing the demarcation line, but North Africans were also required to possess an official labor contract to gain admittance to the occupied zone.\(^88\)

The February 1942 decree creating the North African recruitment regime also addressed policing. Employers victimized by desertions were to notify the MOI whenever a worker fled. The MOI would note the man’s name, date of birth, douar of origin, and where the worker had been employed.\(^89\) Starting in mid-1942, this information was collected and

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\(^86\) ADBR, 144 W 12, “Travailleurs nord-africains découverts en zone libre en situation irrégulière,” Secretary of State for the Interior to Prefects of the free zone, 13 January 1942.

\(^87\) Ibid

\(^88\) ANOM, ADO, 5I 39, “Rapatriements des réfugiés de la zone occupée non interdite,” Secretary of State for the Interior to Prefects of non-occupied zone, 19 January 1942.

\(^89\) Many of these fiche can still be found in Marseille. See ADBR, 76 W 207.
circulated among prefects and police, especially those bordering the demarcation line.\footnote{ADI, 52 M 311, “Chute de Cordac n. 5/6 Main-d’oeuvre,” Société Hydro-Electric du Dauphine to Société Générale d’Enterprises à Corps et à St-Etienne, 12 May 1942. An example of a surviving fiche can be seen in ADG, 1 W 649, Secretary General of the Police to the Prefect of Police, Prefects, and Police Services, 16 March 1943.} 

Although the January 1942 decree had stressed the importance of deporting those found trying to illegally cross into occupied France, perhaps due to the ineffectiveness of recruitment in North Africa, this was revised in August. Afterwards, workers were not deported but rather sent back to their previous place of employment, sentenced to jail time, and then put to work once again after their imprisonment.\footnote{ADBR, 144 W 12, “Indigènes Nord-Africains,” Secretary General for the Police to Regional Prefects, 1 August 1942.}

The well-known 4 September 1942 labor law was also used to prevent North Africans from leaving their jobs. Under this decree, which Patrice Arnaud argues was used to justify the implementation of the STO program several months later\footnote{Arnaud, \textit{STO}, 8-10.}, Vichy sought to “facilitate the execution of all work that the government will judge of best use in the higher interests of the nation.”\footnote{ADI, 78 J 178, “Loi n. 869 du 4 Septembre 1942 relative à l’utilisation et à l’orientation de la main-d’oeuvre (Journal Officiel du 13 Septembre 1942),” Decree from Philippe Pétain and Council of Ministers, 4 September 1942 (published 13 September 1942).} Applying to all “French and French nationals,” this sounded very innocuous. But the decree specified that all men between the ages of 18 and 55, and all unmarried women between 20 and 35, could be required to do any work that the government deemed necessary. Employers were prevented from firing workers without official permission and individuals could not leave their place of employment unless authorized by local labor inspectors.\footnote{Ibid} Individual employment rights were thus rejected in favor of collective service to the nation through labor, although much more local research is needed to understand how the decree affected French workers.
These initiatives to stem North African desertions reveal several things. First, the system was wildly inefficient. The MOI would compile a list of men who had abandoned their jobs monthly, and then send it along to prefectures and police services bordering the demarcation line. But North African deserters traveled north as fast as possible, frequently negating the purpose of the fiche. Second, and related to the point above, these policies were sufficiently broad to target all North Africans living in Vichy France. How was a police officer or gendarme, for example, to determine what a “North African” looked like? Whether someone walking down the street was a deserter or in an irregular situation? What, exactly, was an “irregular situation”? In this sense, the policies were so poorly defined that they introduced the necessity of randomly stopping North Africans on the street or train and demanding to see their identification. Many police reports – as with the four men mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – were arrested and questioned simply because they “had the appearance” of being North African.

Prefects, labor inspectors, and police thus played an important in determining how to apply decrees locally. It was, after all, employers who first identified desertions as a salient issue. Their calls were taken up prefects and sous-prêfets requesting that something be done on a national level. Pétain’s régime may have created the legislation, but policemen arrested those in violation of the law, and courts then prosecuted offenders. Police in the Isère, for example, began taking their lists of North African deserters to local hotels and rooming houses where they would cross check registers for any matching names.95 Officers in Mâcon – the last major stop before the demarcation line on the busy Marseille-Lyon-Paris rail line –

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patrolled train cars for North Africans, asking to see their papers and permission to leave unoccupied France.

Apart from simply stopping and questioning those visually identified as North African, the legal system was also employed to prevent departures. Two brothers working in Alès – Dalmane ben Ammar Zouari and Ahmed Abderrahmane Zouari – had first come to the Grand’Combe mine in early 1942 on one-year contracts. They had never set foot in France before and anticipated a short stay in Alès before returning home. Not only did they have the cost of food, housing and transportation deducted from their pay but, after informing the mine they wished to leave after their contracts terminated in March 1943, they were told this was not possible as all miners were considered requisitioned civilians.96 This decision was obviously duplicitous. Both men had agreed to come to France on one-year contracts and then, once that period had ended, were informed that no miners were allowed to find alternate work. The Zouari brothers petitioned local mining authorities and the Ministry of Labor that they did not expect to return to Algeria. Rather, both had worked as miners in North Africa for lengthy periods of time and were simply tired of doing so. “For seven years we have suffered in the mines,” they wrote. “Our health is decline these days. We want to work outside the mines now and seek alternate employment. We implore you. We are good workers. We do not want to do as the others who have abandoned their work.”97 Authorities in Alès also denied their request even though the Zouari’s emphasized their respect for French law and were declared “good subjects” by the French state.98

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96 AN, F12 10814, Dalmane ben Ammar Zouari and Ahmed Abderrahmane Zouari to Minister of Labour, 8 February 1943.
97 F12 10814, Dalmane ben Ammar Zouari and Ahmed Abderrahmane Zouari to Minister of Labour, 21 March 1943.
98 This type of reasoning appears to have been quite prominent among mines in southern France. The anthracite mines in Aime also noted how some of their Algerian workers came to France on contracts but nevertheless argued that requisitioning laws overruled their ability to leave. La Plagne was supported by the local North
As draconian as the arrests and legal obstacles remained, however, they did not stop desertions. North Africans responded by developing alternate ways of breaking requisition and attempting to cross into occupied France. Officials in the Gard noted how some claimed to be ill or would even slightly injure themselves. After this they could obtain an official leave of absence for two weeks before moving north. It was only after they did not return that the mine could report them as deserters.99 One man using this tactic was arrested in the Saône-et-Loire carrying a piece of paper with the words “BIGOT Lucien, Bourg (AIN)” in his pocket, presumably the name of a paid contact to take him across the line.100 As the sous-préfet of Alès and several others noted, situations like this were compounded by the fact that many North Africans had multiple forms of identification and thus could lie to the police or OPAs.101 Factory managers in the Alps mentioned how some of their workers had clearly volunteered for Vichy’s recruitment program specifically so they could come to France and then leave straight away for the occupied zone.102

The desire to move to occupied France, as well as intransigence from employers and the French state, led to the creation of several smuggling networks. Gendarmes in Saint-

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100 ADSL, W 137999, Renseignements Généraux – Contrôle de la ligne de demarcation to Renseignements Généraux – Mâcon, 17 April 1942.
101 Ibid. The regime actually remedied this situation by issuing an identity card for Algerians living in France in 1943. Before this point, Algerians had used a variety of identification including cards issued by their douar of origin, military identification, or simply the cards issued to average metropolitan French citizens. After 1943, however, the regime began to issue identity cards that read “Carte d’Identité (Algérien)”, which marked them as distinct from other demographic groups in France. Jews were also issued separate cards, although it varied between cities, départements, and zone of occupation until a decree was issued at the end of 1942 forcing Jews to buy a card stamped “Juif” or “Juive”. See Pierre Piazza, Histoire de la Carte Nationale d’Identité (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004): 274-277.
Etienne charged seven individuals – six North Africans and one French – with transporting workers across the demarcation line. The police noted how after these men were taken into custody departures ceased for a short period of time and then began once more a month later.\textsuperscript{103} They had apparently been replaced by a group of North African restaurant owners who would organize discreet convoys for the occupied zone, typically on the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 25\textsuperscript{th} of each month, which corresponded with pay cycles. Just like in the Gard, men obtained a leave of absence for illness, moved to Lyon, then Bourg-en-Bresse, and finally Saint-Amour in the Jura where they would cross to Lons-le-Saulnier.\textsuperscript{104} Lyon also contained a smuggling network led by Mohamed Krimou, a metalworker living in Villeurbanne. It became a regional hub for smuggling men as hundreds came down from the Alps looking to get to the occupied zone. As in Saint-Etienne, all those wishing to move north met at several North African cafés, were taken by automobile to Bourg-en-Bresse, then Ouroux-sur-Saône, where they proceeded on foot to Varennes, evading French controls at Gevrey.\textsuperscript{105} This proved not only dangerous but extremely expensive as well. One rabbateur in Marseille was thought to have charged 800 francs per person to take workers across the demarcation line; another in Alès 1400 to 2000 francs per man.\textsuperscript{106}

Employers, not surprisingly, were furious and criticized government agencies for their failure to curtail desertions. The Bessèges colliery near Alès was the most strident in its criticism of local authorities. By mid-1943, they had lost over one hundred North Africans.

\textsuperscript{103} AN, F\textsuperscript{12} 9967, “Rapport de gendarmes Richard de St-Etienne sur le débauchage des Nord-Africains dans les mines,” Gendarmerie Nationale – Section de Saint-Etienne to Prefect of the Loire, 15 March 1942.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid
\textsuperscript{105} ADI, 52 M 311, “Recrutement de la M.O. Nord-Africaine pas les Autorités occupantes,” Director of Regional Labour Office in Lyon to Departmental Labour Offices, 10 March 1942.
\textsuperscript{107} AN, F\textsuperscript{12} 10814, “Débauchage de main-d’oeuvre nord-africaine dans le département du Gard,” Secretary General for Industrial Production – Mining Office to Secretary General for the Police, 22 June 1942.
Most of these men had worked at the mine for lengthy periods of time and thus not easily replaceable. What enraged company managers most was their belief that the local North African Labor Office was complicit in the desertions.\textsuperscript{108} Although Bessèges managers were always prompt in informing the police and \textit{sous-préfet} when a worker left, nothing was done.\textsuperscript{109} MOI officials offered to replace them with North Africans who had been previously arrested for desertion but some of these were deemed “unsatisfactory” by the mine and demonstrated a “poor attitude” when asked to work.\textsuperscript{110} The manager not only called local authorities incompetent but demanded that the fees for recruiting the workers be returned to him.\textsuperscript{111} It was proven that some officials were indeed helping North African workers evade controls. One employee of the SAINA office in Marseille, Mohamed ben Hadj, was fired for soliciting bribes in exchange for falsified identity papers.\textsuperscript{112}

Apart from giving police more authority to arrest North Africans, the Vichy government had no idea how to stop the departures. Some officials pleaded with employers to improve rations and working conditions, and to provide extra monetary benefits like work bonuses.\textsuperscript{113} Regional business associations suggested that some companies request assistance from the \textit{Secours Nationale} in order to provide proper clothes and more food for their North African workforce.\textsuperscript{114} In some cases, abuses by employers were condemned. For instance, the North African Labor Office in Grenoble was forced to threaten one company under its jurisdiction because it had received so many complaints about foremen mistreating and

\textsuperscript{108} ANMT, 40 AS 48, Compagnie Houillière de Bessèges to Head of Mining Office, 31 March 1943.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid
\textsuperscript{110} ANMT, 40 AS 48, Compagnie Houillière de Bessèges to President of Comité d’Organisation des Combustiles Minéraux Solides, 31 March 1943.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid
\textsuperscript{112} See AN, F\textsuperscript{1a} 5012, dossier BAMNA de Marseille, SAINA Marseille to SAA, 23 September 1941.
\textsuperscript{113} ADBR, 144 W 12, “Main-d’oeuvre nord-africaine,” Direction des Industries chimiques to Regional Directors, 14 September 1942
\textsuperscript{114} ADBR, 144 W 12, “Ouvriers nord-africain,” Comité d’Organisation des industries chimiques to Marseille office for Chemical Industries, 19 November 1942.
sanctioning Algerians without official authorization.\textsuperscript{115} The Alais, Froges et Camargue facility in Saint-Auban received similar treatment and then lashed out at authorities in Marseille. AFC claimed that a “deplorable spirit” had overtaken its Algerian workforce with “poor attitude manifesting itself in the workplace, non-authorized and repeated absences, refusal to execute orders, insolence, etc.”\textsuperscript{116} MONA had apparently urged AFC to deal with their “problem” in a non-draconian fashion but this was rejected as “insufficient” because further issues could arise if sanctions were not taken against actions deemed harmful to the company.\textsuperscript{117} Once again, Vichy proved unable to placate the demands of AFC, simply suggesting that the Marseille division of the Office of Chemical Industries conduct an investigation into “the work and living conditions” of North Africans and take the appropriate measures to address some of their concerns.\textsuperscript{118}

IV

If Vichy was incapable of stopping North Africans from leaving, the broader imperial dimension of economic collaboration stands in stark contrast. While Pétian’s régime attempted to prevent migration from the unoccupied to occupied zones, it willingly engaged in recruitment for the Germans in Algeria itself.\textsuperscript{119} The discontinuity in these positions is striking. Why prevent North Africans from leaving southern France but then recruit workers in North Africa? As Simon Kitson has noted, Vichy was often “caught between the often-conflicting desires of asserting its own independence from the Germans whilst still promoting a policy of active collaboration.”\textsuperscript{120} In this sense, disallowing the recruitment of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] ADI, 78 J 163, Letter from MONA Grenoble to Director of Keller et Leleux, 11 February 1943.
\item[116] ADBR, 144 W 12, Letter from Alais, Froges et Camargue – Saint-Auban to MONA Marseille, February 1943.
\item[117] Ibid
\item[118] Ibid
\item[119] Ibid
\item[120] Cantier, \textit{L’Algérie sous Vichy}, 166-169.
\item[120] Kitson, \textit{Nazi Spies}, 6.
\end{footnotes}
North Africans deemed economically important in the “free” zone was an exercise in preserving a measure sovereignty and, perhaps more importantly, placating French business. But, just as in the initial phase of collaboration when foreigners were used to prevent the forcible conscription of French workers, Vichy’s insistence that North Africans under their jurisdiction in France not be recruited had to be tempered by cooperation elsewhere. In this case, it was finding workers for Nazi Germany in Algeria as a means to avoid further requisitions of French citizens.

As part of Pierre Laval’s efforts to promote better co-operation between France and Germany after his reappointment as First Minister in April 1942, authorities in Algeria and Morocco were instructed to find workers for the Nazis, typically against the wishes of European settlers and the colonial administration. Settlers in overseas territories – especially Algeria – were some of the most ardent supporters of Pétain and the National Revolution. ¹²¹ Despite this, Algerian colons proved helpless to prevent recruitment across the three departments. Why Algeria was targeted is unclear. Perhaps the perception of North Africa as being home to vast labor reserves, or indeed as something different than mainland France, meant that Algerian workers were perceived as a useful tool by Laval and his government that would not upset tenuous support among the French population.

Very little information has survived regarding the first days of this effort but it appears to have started with a speech broadcast on 22 June by Laval himself. Word spread that workers were being sent to France. Four days later, over one hundred Algerians had

¹²¹ Cantier, *L’Algérie sous Vichy*, 197-246; Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*, 81-85; Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*, 43-44, 70-71, 136-137. Settler populations across the French empire varied greatly – in Algeria it approached one million while in West Africa it numbered no more than several thousand – but affinity for Pétain and the National Revolution was nevertheless fairly consistent due to a variety of economic, political and ideological motives.
volunteered for recruitment at the departmental labor office in Constantine.\footnote{ANOM, ADC, B3 794, “Recrutement de la main-d’oeuvre pour l’envoi en Allemagne,” Prefecture du Constantine – Centre d’Information et d’Etudes (CIE), 27 June 1942.} By the end of June, 558 had registered in Oran; this had swollen to 1920 Muslims, 210 Europeans and 211 foreigners by 7 July, giving credence to assertions that hundreds were registering every day.\footnote{ANOM, ADO, 5I 39, “La main-d’oeuvre indigène volontaire pour se rendre en Allemagne,” Prefecture d’Oran – CIE, 30 June 1942 and “Main-d’oeuvre volontaire pour l’Allemagne,” Prefecture d’Oran – CIE, 7 July 1942.} The vast majority were urban inhabitants who wanted nothing to do with agricultural work. Numbers for rural areas were unknown, mostly because administrators simply refused to notify the local population that a recruitment program existed.\footnote{ANOM, ADC, B3 658, “Envoi de la main-d’oeuvre en Allemagne,” Préfecture de Constantine – CIE, 3 July 1942.} Once Muslim villagers did learn that they could earn three times as much in France working for the Germans, there was desire in more remote areas to register. In Guelma, however, local authorities responded by placing four hundred under “obligatory requisition” because of their importance for agriculture.\footnote{Ibid} Hunger was also employed as a weapon to prevent departures: “suppression of rationing cards in case of refusal to be hired [by settlers], is giving good results,” noted one report from Constantine.\footnote{ANOM, ADC, B3 794, “Recrutement de la main-d’oeuvre,” 27 June 1942.}

Officials cloaked their displeasure that indigenous Muslims were being sent to the métropole out of a desire to preserve French prestige in the face of occupation. But their main concern was clearly the labor market in Algeria. As one noted, it was thus necessary, contrary to Laval’s orders, “to not intensify our recruitment effort of indigenous labor for Germany by way of newspapers.”\footnote{ANOM, ADC, B3 658, “L’activité indigène dans le département de Constantine,” Préfecture du Constantine – CIE, 29 June 1942.} Algerians should be allowed to register but the effort not widely publicized. Indeed, the prefect of Constantine requested clarification from the

Governor General because he had been instructed to allow the recruitment of workers but the departmental labor inspector was told – verbally – to discourage *indigènes* from leaving. The prefect seemed to agree with this last sentiment, stressing the impact of widespread departures on the local labor market.128 These fears were summarized in a letter from Governor General Chatel to Pierre Laval in mid-July. He noted how medical testing was required to determine whether workers could adapt to the climate in northern France; effects on the local labor market; and finally, that many workers had “little desire” to go to France, which was directly contradicted by the numbers volunteering.129 Laval responded to these complaints several days later but made it known that collaboration between France and Germany necessitated the recruitment of Algerian workers.130

Functionaries in the Algerian colonial administration spent much of July 1942 devising ways to limit recruitment. The prefect of Constantine, for example, proposed a propaganda campaign in the press and radio, emphasizing that local officials were only conducting a *census* of those wishing to work for the Germans, and thus *indigènes* were not permitted to leave until given formal authorization.131 The *sous-prefet* of Bougie echoed this sentiment, suggesting “it will be indispensable to specify, with extreme urgency, and also as exactly as possible, the conditions for sending workers to Germany (need for various specialties, physical and professional selection, etc).”132 Although the vast majority of applicants were general laborers or peasants, *Dépêche de Constantine* informed its readers on

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130 AN, 72 AJ 2266, dossier Organization Todt, Secretary of State for the Interior to Governor General of Algeria, 25 July 1942.
131 ANOM, ADC, B3 658, “Recensement des travailleurs volontaires pour l’Allemagne,” Prefect of Constantine to Governor General of Constantine, 10 July 1942.
22 July that only “specialized metal workers” were being sent to France; all others should return to their homes and not leave until requested.\textsuperscript{133} The commune-mixte of Morsott also witnessed a departure of local indigènes. Like the sous-prefet of Bougie, the administrator saw medical testing as a way to limit recruitment. Faced with complaints from colons and mining concessions, he wrote: “it would be convenient, from our perspective, that a very rigorous application of restrictive medical formalities was made on the candidates, in order to limit insofar as possible, an exodus that continues to appear, from many vantage points, very worrisome.”\textsuperscript{134} Officials applied screening measures very rigorously indeed. Of the 149 men examined on 20 July in Constantine over 20\% were declared incapable of working in France.\textsuperscript{135}

Although colonial functionaries were told to take “professional selection” of workers into consideration – meaning, to refuse indigènes working in agriculture – the decision whether to allow a potential worker access to the German recruitment effort was firmly based on medical criteria.\textsuperscript{136} “All workers, without exception,” began the directive, “will be submitted to an individual examination which will give an idea as exact as possible of their capacity to work.”\textsuperscript{137} Only those “robust” enough and between the ages of 18 and 45 were to be considered and no subject suspected of having a contagious illness allowed to depart.

Those with contagious skin ailments, poor teeth and eyesight, and hearing problems were

\textsuperscript{134} ANOM, ADC, B3 658, “Exode de travailleurs indigènes,” Commune-Mixte de Morsott to Prefect of Constantine, 22 July 1942.
\textsuperscript{136} Governor General Chatel, for example, wrote the prefect of Constantine in late July stating it was never the intention of the Vichy government to deprive settlers or industry of workers. Rather, the program was intended to focus on the unemployed and indigent, which was an odd statement considering “specialized metal workers” was publicized as the first individuals targeted for recruitment. Chatel mentioned how those considered dégagé from their obligations could be refused when attempting to register and sent back to their douar of origin. See ANOM, ADC, B3 658, Governor General of Algeria to Prefect of Constantine, 20 July 1942.
\textsuperscript{137} ANOM, ADC, B3 794, “Main-d’oeuvre Algérienne à destination de l’Allemagne,” Governor General of Algeria to Prefect of Costantine, 24 July 1942.
dismissed. Most importantly, medical staff focused on the respiratory, cardiac and digestive systems, and external musculature. Algerians considered carriers of tuberculosis, possessing hernias and “malformations”, typhoid or dysentery, venereal diseases – especially syphilis – or those “mentally unstable and psychopathic”, could prevent workers from registering. This sounded very scientific and orderly but doctors were also instructed to use their own judgment as well. Recruits were denied simply because they were not viewed as suitable for work in metropolitan France.\(^\text{138}\)

Attempts to limit recruitment were mostly unsuccessful. Thousands\(^\text{139}\) of North Africans were sent to northern France for the Organization Todt despite the objections of settlers and the colonial administration. This stands in stark contrast to the inability of private firms like the SGI and CENTRALAG to find labor for employers in southern France, speaking to the better wages and benefits offered by the Germans. Indeed, the Nazis were requesting that recruitment be increased substantially before the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942 made this impossible.\(^\text{140}\) There is no direct evidence that the future STO program was caused by the rupture in relations between France and North Africa. Indeed, pressure had been building for almost a year from the Germans to institute a forced

\(^{138}\) Ibid

\(^{139}\) Cantier, \textit{L’Algérie sous Vichy}, 168-169. Cantier notes “the organization implemented by the Government General permitted, between the end of August and the beginning of November, the departure of 6500 workers.” It is unclear from this whether he means the system was designed to transport this many workers or that this was the amount sent to France. Archival material in Marseille recording the arrival of workers from North Africa for Organization Todt puts the number at 10,283 Algerians and Moroccans; 149 of these were declared sick or incapable of working, although the numbers are imprecise and, interestingly, show that none were declared “incapable” after early October, suggesting all workers were accepted regardless of their health after this point. All of the North Africans were sent to a transit camp near the Breton town of Langon where they were distributed among the various construction projects in the area. See ADBR, 76 W 205 for summaries of the number arriving in Marseille.

\(^{140}\) AN, F37 49, “Accroissement des transports de travailleurs indigènes algériens à destination de la métropole,” Secretary of State for the Navy to Secretary of State for Labour, 28 September 1942 and “Transport supplémentaire de travailleurs indigènes d’Afrique du Nord vers la Métropole,” Secretary of State for the Navy to Monsieur Conty, Délégation Générale aux Relations Economiques Franco-Allemandes, 31 October and 3 November 1942. According to this correspondence, one convoy carrying several hundred workers was to depart Algiers on 8 November: the very same day Allied forces invaded Algeria.
labor draft. But it is nevertheless interesting that once the possibility of placating the occupiers with North African workers ended, the STO was finally inaugurated several months later.

Even when the STO was finally established in February 1943, Vichy steadfastly refused German demands to include colonial subjects as possible conscripts.¹⁴¹ The official STO decree stated that all male French citizens and “French nationals” born between 1920 and 1922 could be placed under mandatory work service and sent to Germany. Some initial restrictions were imposed, mainly with regards to rural areas. Agricultural workers, those in forestry or rural artisans were all initially exempted from the STO, as well as police officers, students and government functionaries. These restrictions were gradually removed as Germany demanded more workers from France over the course of 1943. At the same time, German demands were often contradictory and lessened the amount of workers for industry in France. The designation of certain industrial facilities as Rüstungsbetriebe (producing for the Germans) and Vorzugsbetriebe (producing partially for the Germans) in 1942 was suppose to spare these facilities from labor requisitions. These were eventually re-classified as Speer-Betriebe factories and given immunity from the STO program. Although the STO had originally intended to focus on industrial workers – particularly skilled ones – efforts to protect this workforce led to the gradual erosion of promises originally given to people in rural areas. Further, desertions among younger males and the need to replace them increasingly meant that older workers were forced to go in their place over the course of 1943.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ By late 1943, however, there was apparently no concern over using Italians as a supplement for North African and French workers. This obviously coincided with Allied invasion and subsequent collapse of Mussolini’s regime. See reports on STO convoys in ADR, 45 W 132.
¹⁴² Gildea, Marianne in Chains, 277-279.
Segments of the French population targeted by the STO program gradually evolved over the course of 1943 and 1944, but the position of colonial workers remained unchanged. They were placed on the STO restricted list right at the onset and never removed. “French subjects from Algeria,” “French subjects originating in French colonies,” and “French citizens, born in Algeria or the colonies, whose father or mother are not of European origin,” were all prohibited from being recruited.\footnote{It is unclear how this decree was applied towards French citizens from Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, and the quatre communes in Sénégal. Did the fact their parents were not of “European origin” disqualify them from the STO?} Protégés or indigènes from protectorates or mandates like Tunisia and Morocco were not to be included either. “French citizens of the white race from the colonies,” however, could be sent to Germany.\footnote{ADR, 3704 W 13, “Note pour Monsieur Azario, Chef de la Brigade Nord-Africaine,” Préfecture du Rhône to Brigade Nord-Africaine, 11 August 1943.} As labor desertion became prominent after the institution of the programs, and officials were forced to meet recruitment quotas, attempts to breach these restrictions did occur. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned the prefect of the Rhône that STO agents had approached some Syrians and Lebanese living in Lyon about registration. Because they were “foreigners” enjoying “most-favored nation” status people from the Levant were not to be targeted and the prefect was instructed to monitor these developments closely.\footnote{ADR, 3704 W 13, Director of Office des États du Levant sous Mandat Français to Prefect of the Rhône, 15 June 1943.}

The STO itself – again, after the Germans had demanded more workers – instructed the Rhône prefecture in May 1943 that Moroccans and Tunisians should be registered for the program.\footnote{ADR, 3704 W 13, Commissaire Général au Service du Travail Obligatoire de la zone non occupée to Prefect of the Rhône, 20 May 1943.} Because this region was home to the majority of Moroccans living in France, and the February 1943 decree had stated otherwise, the prefect was obviously concerned about attempts within the STO apparatus to send North Africans to Germany. He requested
clarification from the STO, pointing out the contradiction in orders, all the while instructing his staff in Lyon to prevent Moroccans and Algerians from leaving French territory.\textsuperscript{147} Recruitment for the Germans did take place, but throughout this process and into 1944, officials at Vichy charged with supervising colonials in France continually refused to send colonial workers to Germany. By early 1944, thousands were employed on construction projects around France, but they were never given official permission to leave for the Reich. Maintaining French prestige and preserving some degree of sovereignty despite total occupation of the country at times took precedence over supplying workers for Nazi Germany.

\textbf{V}

Atmane Amraoui, like many others from Algeria, was arrested in April 1942 and condemned to one month in prison for leaving his job without permission.\textsuperscript{148} During his trial in Carcassonne, he traced a history in France that would be familiar to many of his contemporaries: Amaroui first arrived from Constantine in 1932 and then returned to Algeria one year later. He travelled back to the métropole in the late 1930s, taking up a job in Salsigne, then on the grape harvest in the southwest, and finally, at a electrochemical factory in the French Alps. Amaroui then returned to Salsigne, could only find work at a quarry in the area, and then deserted when his request to change employment was denied by the prefecture; he was arrested just before crossing the demarcation line in May 1942, charged with anti-national activities and work abandonment.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{149} ADA, 107 W 370, Procureur de la République to Prefect of the Aude, 5 June 1942.
Amaroui spoke little French and thus his reasons for leaving Salsigne were not clear. But based on the statements of hundreds of others, his motivations were likely fueled by two interrelated issues. First, concerns over lack of food, rationing, poor housing, substandard wages and arduous working conditions precipitated many departures. Second, there was a widespread belief that North Africans were victims of prejudice, discriminatory policies, and not equal to metropolitan citizens in Vichy France. North Africans were not only routinely denied food when queuing for rations, but did not have access to family allocations and were often lied to by recruiters in Algeria. Indeed, this sense of discrimination fed off material problems: many started to believe their poor social position in France was directly tied to their status as French subjects, and the hardships they endured derived from their lack of social equality. The measures that Vichy employed to counteract this sentiment – creating special abattoirs conforming to Islamic practice or urging employers to treat their workers better – were always halfhearted and unable to stem this feeling of discrimination.

Desertions in turn led to a series of measures intended to punish those that fled. The story of how these policies were created reveals a great deal about the interplay between local and national authorities under Pétain’s regime. There was widespread popular support for the National Revolution in Vichy France – at least initially – but the drive to stem North African deserters was first and foremost driven by employers and labor inspectors. The problem was then passed along to prefects, eventually making its way to Pétain’s government at Vichy, which crafted decrees allowing business, police, and local functionaries to deal with the problem. Along the way, these multiple parties often came into conflict with one another: employers criticizing the government for not effectively dealing with the problem, for example, and functionaries scolding French business for treating their workers so poorly.
This multi-layered story about the creation and implementation of Vichy policy is absent from much of the historiography on Vichy France. The police were often caught in the middle of this, attempting to prevent North Africans from reaching occupied France while at the same time not precisely knowing who should be arrested. Just as the previous chapters have indicated, the National Revolution may have been something handed down from above, but many of the more discriminatory policies which targeted North Africans and Vietnamese had a great deal to with impetus from local actors – employers, the French population, and functionaries in the police and prefectures – and not just Pétain, Laval and the other cadres at Vichy.

The story of North African desertions also helps revise our understanding of the nature of collaboration and national sovereignty during the war. Robert Paxton’s argument that the French government willingly and enthusiastically collaborated with Hitler’s regime is an important one: collaboration allowed southern France to remain unoccupied for two years, and Pétain his chance to renovate a supposedly decaying French society. But to do this, the regime had to walk a fine line between ensuring support within certain segments of the French population and cooperation with the Nazis. Labor issues represent an important area of focus in this regard. Vichy was willing to placate Germans demands for workers before 1943 up to a certain point. French workers were often spared forcible labor conscription by giving the Nazis foreigners and the ability to recruit people willing to work for them. When they showed willingness to hire French colonial subjects, however, this went to far for the French regime and all of the policies designed to prevent North African migration actually worked against the spirit of collaboration. This is not to suggest that Vichy was playing a double game, but rather that it worked to preserve certain areas of
French sovereignty, especially in the colonial sphere where honor, prestige, and authority represented key concepts. When viewed through this lens, the deportations of Jews living in France between 1942 and 1944 are all the more horrifying. Vichy was willing to preserve colonial subjects from work in German factories but proved unwilling to prevent the deportation of thousands of Jews to their deaths.

Attempts to prevent North African mobility under Vichy not only elicit comparisons with the fate of other minority groups during the war but also with the postwar period itself. Indeed, all of these policies to prevent Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians from leaving the free zone prefigured the period after 1945 when North Africans would begin to settle in large numbers in the métropole. Just as these draconian policies were sometimes justified based on the assumption that North Africans possessed a “nomadic instinct” that needed to be controlled by the French state, so too did attempts to manage migration between France and North Africa. As Pétain’s regime collapsed after the Allied invasions of France in June and August 1944, policing, controlling, and managing colonial subjects took on a newfound importance in the Liberation era.
Chapter Six


“The Liberation has produced a need for liberty and a thirst for equality that exists in the hearts of all men – but it will be difficult to satisfy.”
- Ministry of the Colonies, January 1945

If the defeat in 1940 wrought a shattering trauma on the French nation, the Liberation was seen as the dawn of a new era. Albert Camus described the period in August 1944: “The end of the ordeal can now be glimpsed ahead. It is easy for us to make time for celebration. Joy now takes the place in our hearts that for five years had been occupied for hope. There, too, we shall keep the faith. But the time that is now upon us calls for joint effort. The magnitude of the task that now awaits us obliges us to stifle our cries of joy and ponder the fate of the country for which we have fought so hard.” A time for revolution and renovation, the period between 1944 and 1947 was viewed by many as the start of a new era in French history. Indeed, many of the visible symbols of postwar French society can be traced back to this

period immediately following Vichy and the Occupation: women’s suffrage, economic modernization, an enhanced welfare state, new cultural initiatives, and immigration and population policies.³

Colonial politics also received pride of place. The Free French movement had partly begun in the colonies and de Gaulle had made a series of promises about reform, culminating in the Brazzaville Conference held just before the Allied liberation of Normandy.⁴ It was assumed, and indeed even desired in some quarters, that the Liberation would mark a new era in relations between France and its empire. De Gaulle and his ministers not only attempted to remove some of the more odious aspects of French rule – especially forced labor and the code de l’indigénat – but also inaugurate a reformed type of colonialism under the banner of co-operation. A Union française was later enshrined in the constitution of 1946 and new rights were formally given to Algerian Muslims in 1947 that were intended to place them on an equal footing with metropolitan French citizens.⁵ These initiatives ultimately failed in the face of rising anti-colonial sentiment, first in Indochina and the across the empire over following decades.

Although historians have typically focused on how the Liberation influenced colonial politics writ large, colonial workers living in France were also affected by the postwar

period. Just as former subjects within the overseas empire hoped for a more liberal, reformed French colonialism, so too did Vietnamese and North Africans in the métropole argue for enhanced rights and the abolition of policies instituted by the Third Republic and Vichy. Both groups participated heavily in the Liberation, joining resistance organizations like the Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur (FFI) fighting to liberate French soil from Nazi Germany. During this period of confusion, fear, hope, and optimism for a brighter future, initiatives introduced by previous regimes were hotly debated. The viability of organizations like the MOI, North African police brigades, and social assistance organizations designed to manage colonials in France were questioned in particular. At the same time, however, colonials were often subject to discriminatory policies and hostile actions from the French population, suggesting a darker side of the liberation that often echoed the Vichy period. While serious reforms were undertaken during the period between 1944 and 1946 – especially with regard to Algerians – just like in the empire itself they were more cosmetic than substantive. The new government was still motivated by ethnically influenced perceptions of colonial migrants and the fear of anti-colonial activities, just like its predecessors.

Although the MOI was modified following the disastrous Vichy-era in which colonials faced extreme hunger and material depravation, conflict in Indochina and the growing possibility of Vietnamese independence meant that relations between Vietnamese workers and the French government quickly turned hostile. The vast majority of Vietnamese responded enthusiastically to Hồ Chí Minh’s declaration of an independent Viet Nam in 1945 and worked at a local level to gain support from unions, labor syndicates and the French people. These “troublemakers” quickly became despised by the French government, which maintained policies like encadrement designed to restrict contact between French and
colonial. As Jews and other déportés made their way back to France, and foreigners were released from GTE camps, Vietnamese were unceremoniously kept under guard. Anti-colonial activism and worry over repatriating them to a war zone meant that many of the workers, first brought to France in 1939 and 1940, did not return home until the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The postwar governments also attempted to follow through with a series of initiatives designed to erase the distinction between “Algerian” and “citizen” on metropolitan soil. Free migration was re-affirmed, first in 1946 and then officially in 1947, when it was written into the so-called loi organique d’Algérie that defined the relationship between France and French Muslims from Algeria (FMAs). Tens of thousands of Algerians moved to France from this point onward, escaping poor living conditions that had only been exacerbated by the war. Whereas the North African population in France stood at between 80,000 and 100,000 in 1945, by the end of the decade over 200,000 were residing in the métropole. Increased migration across the Mediterranean caused profound alarm within France at all levels. Although FMAs were now French citizens, perceptions of them as prone to disease, criminality, and unemployment led some officials to declare unregulated migration undesirable and propose controls designed to hinder Algerian movement to France. This tension between pronouncements of equal treatment and the ethnic undesirability of Algerians meant that even in the immediate postwar period of legal equality, North Africans were still perceived as something less than full-fledged French citizens. In this sense, the experience colonial migrants in the immediate postwar period reveals the massive contradictions in the project of reforming French colonialism and suggests the gulf between citizen and colonial subject was never fully bridged.
The Liberation of France is usually dominated by images of flag-waving civilians greeting Allied soldiers or Free French forces marching down the Champs-Élysées in August 1944. In reality, the end of Pétain’s rule and German occupation was chaotic and at times dominated by much more sinister events. Following the liberation of Normandy in June, and then southern France in August, French territory was gradually cleared of German forces; by September the Wehrmacht had been pushed back to eastern France. The Vichy government retreated along with the Germans, leaving de Gaulle, his administration in waiting and local functionaries to pick up the pieces and run the country in the midst of full-scale military action. Forces opposed to Vichy had been planning their assumption of power for some time. Resistance organizations constructed Comité départementale de la Libération (CDL) to advocate for their interests following the end of Vichy rule. Along with this, de Gaulle handpicked eighteen Commissaires Regionaux de la République (CRDR), designed to act as intermediaries between the Free French, local resistance figures, and the prefects, mayors, and police officers, that had held power under Vichy and were still technically in control of the levers of the French state. The CRDR held sweeping authority to re-organized certain sectors of the French economy although most were more concerned with rationing, unemployment, policing and other activities designed to create a stable transition between Pétain and de Gaulle’s regimes.

The retreat of Vichy and collaborationist forces to Sigamingen Castle in Germany, however, often presaged a settling of scores and demonstrated the limits of maintaining order at this time. Parts of France had descended into violent confrontation well before the Allied

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7 For one specific example of how the CRDRs ruled, see Pascal Convert, *Raymond Aubrac: résister, reconstruire, transmettre* (Paris: Seuil, 2011).
advances. Joseph Darnand’s Milice and the German Wehrmacht were embroiled in fighting against increasingly aggressive *maquis* units over the course of 1944, and especially after all militarized resistance organizations were re-organized as the Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur (FFI) in the spring of 1944. The FFI were intended to have limited authority. Violent reprisals against French civilians by the retreating German military, along with infiltration of the FFI by shady elements of the population, however, meant that some looked to use the chaotic period as a means to engage in violent, criminal behavior. Historians estimate that this *épuration sauvage* resulted in between 9,000 and 11,000 deaths, although the exact number is a matter of contention. A police chief in Brittany, for example, was dragged into the street by the FFI and shot after demanding the extra-legal executions cease immediately. Women accused of sleeping with German soldiers were targeted as well with head-shavings and other forms of public humiliation designed to punish them for “horizontal collaboration” with the occupiers. Jews were also targets during the Liberation. Although some resistance organizations explicitly rejected Vichy’s anti-semitism, when Jews argued for the restoration of their property and business that had been expropriated and then sold to eager elements of the French population, riots and vitriolic language demonstrated that anti-Jewish sentiment did not end with Pétain’s government.

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French officials sought to temper reprisals against those accused of collaboration, and the process was brought under government authority over the course of 1944 and 1945. Known as “the purge” (l’épuration) a series of courts – the cours de justice and chambres civiques – meted out justice for those accused of “unworthy conduct.” These trials continued well into the postwar period and have aroused considerable debate over the nature of postwar justice. High-level figures were often dealt with more harshly than business leaders, low-level functionaries and those who joined the resistance at the last minute.

Colonial migrants were often targets and occasionally participants in the violence that marked the era. Along with obvious signs of racism and xenophobia, punitive actions were tied to the idea that North Africans and Vietnamese were somehow “collaborators” or had been afforded a “privileged position” under Vichy. A union newsletter from the Paris region noted in November 1944 that North Africans were being herded into concentration camps near Cherbourg and Laval. Many of them had been employees of Organization Todt and thus visible symbols of co-operation between France and Nazi Germany. Some café owners and merchants that had moved to Brittany and Normandy to serve the North African population, however, were also arrested. There were also reported killings in northern France of North Africans laboring for Organization Todt.

17 Luc Capdeville mentions in his local study of Brittany during the Liberation that foreign workers employed by Organization Todt were executed in the region as well. See Capdevilla, *Les Bretons*, 132-133.
While violent actions against groups of colonials obviously took place, discrimination manifested itself in more mundane ways. The same Parisian newsletter noted North Africans were denied unemployment and housing assistance due to their association with “black market activities” – eerily similar to the treatment they received under Vichy following the defeat.\(^\text{18}\) Farther south, a group of sailors from French Somalia (Djibouti) had been stranded in Marseille since 1942 and attempted to seek social welfare due to their joblessness. Denied entry into the *maquis* because of their “color”, they had been forced to take up employment with Organization Todt in southern France and were now being denied unemployment assistance by French authorities.\(^\text{19}\)

The FFI also began to target materiel depots used to supply Vietnamese. This was a common occurrence during the Liberation as resistance forces typically portrayed illegal thefts as a patriotic sacrifice that would be reimbursed after the war ended.\(^\text{20}\) One week before the invasion of southern France, a supply warehouse in the Hérault was raided during the night by a local FFI contingent. They dragged the European official charged with guarding the depot into the street and instructed him to open the doors or face execution. Armed with machine guns and grenades, the defenseless MOI agent relented to the *maquis*, who then stole a number of items including bicycle tires, soap, fuel, food and shoes.\(^\text{21}\) A few weeks later in Sorgues the FFI attacked another supply depot, killing one Vietnamese worker who attempted to stop the theft of food. The head MOI agent in the region complained vociferously, noting the warehouse was used to provision thousands of Vietnamese workers.

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18 “Nord-Africains,” *La Vie Ouvrière*.
19 ADBR, 149 W 137, Radhi Abdul Guebar to Raymond Aubrac, Commissaire Régional de la République, 7 March 1945.
20 Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 203-204.
in the region and further actions of this kind made it difficult to maintain order. After scolding the FFI for not respecting “individual property rights” and demanding the return of aluminum buckets used in the ongoing grape harvest, the FFI formally apologized for the death.  

Rowdy FFI members, however, came back to arrest MOI agents charged with collaboration or “enemy sympathies.”

The sight of French citizens brazenly fighting with each other clearly pushed Vietnamese that had been mistreated by the MOI to take actions of their own. Spurred on by the Allied liberation of Normandy, Vietnamese began to advocate for a removal of certain MOI agents, denouncing the two head MOI officers in Marseille for treating them like “beasts of burden” and selling rations on the black market.  

Events reached a tipping point several days after the landings of southern France as Commander Sacripanti and Colonel Young were once again accused of stealing food and supplies. In order to maintain discipline among the emboldened workers, members of the Comité départemental de la Libération ordered both Europeans placed under arrest and taken before a comité de l’épuration. This provoked further calls for the removal of certain MOI agents. As one letter sent to the CDL stated, “the Liberation must mark the end of abuse by Vichy functionaries. The declarations by Monsieur le Commissaire du Gouvernement Aubrac have been enthusiastically welcomed by all Indochinese and colonials…In consequence, and in the name of all the Indochinese workers of Marseille, I request you to order the necessary épuration of the Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène so that French justice and equity can reign once more.”

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22 ADBR, 149 W 137, “Compte-rendu chronologique et concret des incidents survenus à la 3ème Légion de travailleurs indochinois à Sorgues,” Commander Joué, 3rd Legion of Indochinese Workers, 20 September 1944.
23 ADBR, 149 W 137, Letter from MOI in Sorgues to prefect of the Vaucluse, 29 August 1944.
25 ADBR, 9 W 45, Pierre Bich to the Comité départemental de la Libération, 13 September 1944.
Not satisfied with the slow pace of purging the MOI, Vietnamese in Marseille launched their own operation to arrest those accused of misbehavior under Vichy. Several Europeans – including a female nurse – were taken into custody along with Vietnamese interpreters and hospital workers.\(^{26}\) In one extreme case of Liberation-era justice, an MOI agent in Le Canet accused FFI affiliated colonials of arresting two Vietnamese interpreters during the night, taking them to a nearby prison, and then torturing them in order to force a denunciation against Sacripanti.\(^{27}\) Officials at the Ministry of Labour, who had been internally discussing the removal of MOI agents suspected of Vichy sympathies, were alarmed by these actions, particularly the subversion of racial hierarchies implied by colonial subjects arresting Europeans. As a result, the MOI argued for the formation of a purge committee that included both French and Vietnamese representatives.\(^{28}\) Comprised of two Europeans and one Vietnamese, the committee assessed accusations by colonial workers and then passed on any relevant information regarding mistreatment or pro-Vichy sympathies to departmental purge committees.\(^{29}\) The Ministry of Colonies noted in January the purges’ importance for improving worker morale, arguing they should be sped up, “by every means possible and significant publicity given to the measures that will be taken.”\(^{30}\)

Although French authorities had deliberately isolated the workers since their arrival in France to avoid politically charged encounters, the Liberation and unauthorized departures of MOI agents responsible for surveillance meant that desertions for the FFI increased

\(^{26}\) ADBR, 149 W 137, Agents of the Main-d’Oeuvre Indigène to Commissasire du Gouvernement, 10 October 1944.

\(^{27}\) ANOM, INF 3314, Commander of 35\(^{th}\) company of Indochinese workers to Minister of the Colonies, 22 October 1944.

\(^{28}\) ANOM, INF 3314, “Epuration des cadres européens et indigènes de la Main-d’Oeuvre Indigène?” Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène to Ministry of Colonies, 17 October 1944.

\(^{29}\) ADBR, 149 W 137, “Commission mixte de Préépuration,” Service de la main-d’œuvre indigène, 16 November 1944.

dramatically. Joining the FFI had obvious benefits for Vietnamese placed under *encadrement* for the previous five years. Those who enlisted typically received better rations that the average French citizen and had access to other supplies. Discipline was strict in FFI brigades but MOI deserters enjoyed substantially more freedom than had they remained under *encadrement*. Although the government debated whether colonial subjects should even be allowed join the FFI given the political ramifications of having them participate in a “liberation movement,” Vietnamese volunteers were accepted in large numbers. By early 1945 over 4,000 had formally joined the FFI.\(^{31}\) The Ministry of War, however, was extremely cautious about incorporating colonials. It wanted to prohibit Vietnamese volunteers, arguing instead for “militarization” and their use as general laborers, stretcher-bearers, runners, clerks, and cooks.\(^{32}\)

Officials were obviously concerned about mixing French and colonial together. Historians have similarly noted how the arrival of non-white troops to France brought about the state-sanctioned policy of *blanchiment*, which gradually removed Africans and Antilleans from active military service and replaced them with white French volunteers.\(^ {33}\) The same idea was applied to Vietnamese FFI members, directing them towards segregated brigades attached to the French Expeditionary Forces of the Far East (Force Française Expéditionnaire d’Extrême-Orient) – rather than the regular French army – and largely kept away from the front lines. Vietnamese FFI brigades in Toulouse, for example, guarded German Prisoner-of-War Camps while their compatriots from Nîmes followed behind the French military as a

\(^{31}\) Ibid
\(^{32}\) ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 401, “La Commission pour l’emploi des Indochinois du service de la main-d’oeuvre indigèn” État Major Général de la Défense Nationale, 6 December 1944.
policing force, eventually making their way to Alsace and Germany. Unlike the Toulouse contingent, which was commanded entirely by Europeans, the group from Nîmes referred to itself as the “Viet Nam Battalion” and was led by a Vietnamese soldier named Tran Ngoc Diep. He arrived with the military in 1939, signed up with the MOI as an interpreter after the defeat, and was sent to a disciplinary work brigade under Vichy for insubordination.

Cautiousness over using colonials in the FFI was obviously caused by more than their fighting effectiveness. Throughout 1944 and 1945 de Gaulle’s Provisional Government became worried about unsupervised colonial subjects roaming around France. While the government formally dissolved all of the GTE foreign work camps in December 1944, there was never any doubt about whether to maintain *encadrement* for Vietnamese after the Liberation. De Gaulle’s Commissioner for the Colonies, René Pleven, had decided well before the invasion of southern France to not only maintain – and even strengthen – *encadrement* by using officers from the colonial army to supplement current MOI agents. He accepted that the treatment colonials received under Vichy had been dreadful but did not question the utility of *encadrement* itself, simply suggesting that a “more favorable climate” should be created for Indochinese subjects in the métropole. In this sense, Pleven had assimilated Vichy’s model of *encadrement* as a means of social control. Initially designed for guaranteeing labor productivity, the Vietnamese camp system under the Fourth Republic was clearly viewed an ideal way to promote discipline and French authority in the face of

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36 ANOM, INF 1594, “Indochinois en France,” Commissaire for the Colonies to Commissaire of War, 4 August 1944.
upheaval. Sentiment regarding *encadrement* became more paternalistic over time. By late 1944 rhetoric coming from de Gaulle’s government was emulating previous regimes, noting the Provisional Government “must assume the material and moral obligations assumed by France towards workers that have been recruited in Indochina.”

If Pleven did not want to end the system instituted by the Third Republic and Vichy, how did Liberation-era authorities approach reform efforts? This project was spearheaded by the Ministry of Colonies, which gradually began to takeover responsibilities previously allocated to the Ministry of Labor. Pleven met with a group of Vietnamese in Marseille shortly after it was taken from the Germans. Several weeks later he was handed a lengthy report from colonials stationed in Marseille describing draconian employment policies, terrible pay and miserable living conditions. They were poorly fed, clothed, given no medical care by French authorities, and hated by the local population due to the necessity of theft and unwillingness of MOI officials to advocate on their behalf. The Vietnamese concluded by arguing for a radical overhaul of the current system. They declared *encadrement* “a way of organizing work and assuring productivity incompatible with the laws of civilized countries,” called for a purge of the MOI, and creation of education programs rather than confinement to unskilled positions in the workforce. Salaries – which were apparently half what foreign workers were making in Marseille at this time – increased and every effort made to improve living conditions. Finally, workers should be able to participate in running the MOI,

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38 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 401, Note from Ministry of Colonies – Office of Political Affairs, undated [December 1944].
39 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 401, untitled paper communicating René Pleven’s itinerary between 8 and 13 September 1944.
demonstrating a spirit of co-operation between French and colonial that would mark the start of a new era.  

After receiving this report and consulting with the MOI, Pleven ordered a far-reaching investigation into Vietnamese living conditions and possible reforms. Responsibility for undertaking the mission, and proposing solutions to their situation, was handed to Inspector of the Colonies Jean Raymond. Over the course of 1944 Raymond visited every MOI Legion in France, eventually supporting Pleven’s assertion that *encadrement* was necessary to guarantee “order and security” for the “little and poorly” evolved Vietnamese.  

While keeping the workers confined to camps counteracted “homesickness” among the colonial contingent, however, it also made them substantially less employable than French or foreigners. This was certainly not due to their pay – which was described as “excessively low” by one company commander in October 1944 – but rather because employers were forced to cover the soaring cost of food and housing.  

A potential remedy for growing Vietnamese unemployment occurred to Raymond as he travelled around southern France. In November 1944 he began arguing for a so-called “professional apprenticeship” program. Rather than hired out to private and public enterprises, several thousand Vietnamese should be directed towards training centers to learn specialized skills, which would then be employed upon their return to Indochina. As one European functionary explained to him during his visit to the Camargue, the MOI “must in the future no longer be considered as a simple dispenser of labor, but rather as an educative  

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40 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 401, Report for head of Service de la main-d’oeuvre indigène, 27 September 1944.  
41 ANOM, INF 3314, “Rapport de Monsieur l’Inspecteur des Colonies J. de Raymond sur la réforme de la M.O.I.” Report from Ministry of the Colonies, 8 November 1944.  
organization” that had a duty to aid colonial development by transforming unskilled colonial subjects into productive members of a modern economy.\textsuperscript{43} This was never the intention of the MOI when it was formed – documents from 1939 and 1940 explicitly stated that colonials were “manual laborers” – but Raymond clearly believed that previous employment policies should be modified along these lines. Educated specialists in the colonies were hard to come by, he argued, and thus creating an educated cadre of indigènes mutually beneficial for France and the Indochinese population.\textsuperscript{44} Placing half of the Vietnamese population (about 7,000 migrants) in agricultural, craft and trade schools was surely of better use to French colonialism, as long as encadrement of the students remained in place.\textsuperscript{45}

Selecting Vietnamese apprentices was carried out through a bevy of medical and “physio-psychological” evaluations intended to determine the most physically and “intellectually” fit candidates.\textsuperscript{46} The methodology of Swiss psychologist Hans Spreng was a guiding light in this process. Spreng was particularly concerned with discovering how effectively individuals could be selected for specific jobs if given a series of basic tests. Subjects were first asked to place small weights that ranged from 135 to 165 grams (but were the same size and shape) in descending order, and then instructed to fashion an equilateral triangle and perfect circle using a vice, pliers and metal rod.\textsuperscript{47} When Spreng tested a small group of Vietnamese workers in 1940 he noted that French government policies, with their

\textsuperscript{44} A Southeast Asian functionary working for the MOI also advanced this idea to his superiors, suggesting that volunteers be taken to engineering schools around France and trained before their return to Indochina. See ANOM, INF 3314, “Projet de reorganisation de la main-d’œuvre indochinoise,” Tông-Viêt Trieu to René Pleven, 3 November 1944.
\textsuperscript{46} ANOM, INF 3314, “Note sur l’Orientation professionnelle aux Colonies,” Report from Ministry of Colonies, 9 December 1944.
\textsuperscript{47} Hanns Spreng, \textit{La sélection rapide du personnel}, translated by Philip Muller (Paris and Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1944): 53-60.
essentialized reading of “racial attributes,” were partly misguided. According to his results, seventy-five percent of the Vietnamese test subjects performed “average” or “above average”, suggesting that Asians could be used as skilled workers and even supervisors in some cases. They were physically overmatched compared to Europeans and Moroccans and demonstrated a “lack of creative thought,” but possessed incredible grip strength given their small stature.\textsuperscript{48} If the French government took into account individual characteristics rather than simply racial ideology, some colonials could indeed serve as productive workers in a modern industrial economy. De Raymond clearly subscribed to this view. Over the winter and spring of 1945, 8,826 were tested and 3,957 declared fit for professional apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{49} By mid-1946 approximately 1,500 Vietnamese were located at training centers in Paris, Marseille, Grenoble and the Sochaux Citroën factory.\textsuperscript{50}

The second question preoccupying de Raymond was the structure of the MOI and how to direct the ongoing purges. During the period when European and indigenous functionaries were being dismissed, Vietnamese workers began forming grassroots leadership committees that attempted to usurp command from the MOI. The possibility of “Consultative Committees” comprised of colonials was discussed in documents after the Liberation, but whether or not they enjoyed any actual authority remained unclear. This was typically negotiated at a local level between the workers and remaining MOI agents. In Toulouse the MOI commanding officer delegated the responsibility distributing food and managing living conditions directly to the workers’ committee, although he also remarked that this newfound power was making some arrogant, refusing to salute European agents, for

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 64-72.
\textsuperscript{49} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Note pour la Direction des Affaires Politiques,” Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois to Direction des Affaires Politiques, 24 January 1946.
\textsuperscript{50} ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 400, “Note pour le Monsieur le Minsitre de la France d’outre-mer,” Direction des Affaires Politoques, undated [1946].
The shift in the power relations was palpable. MOI officials elsewhere reacted angrily to this turn of events, noting that previous efforts to include colonials in the running of companies had given “disastrous results” and could have “profound repercussions on the future of French politics in Indochina.”

Conversely, the inability of some European agents to delegate authority produced discontent among the Vietnamese. The Committee at Sorgues officially complained about not being given enough authority, something considered “contrary to Franco-Indochinese collaboration in this new era.” In Bordeaux, Bergerac, and Lodève disagreements about the slow pace of purging MOI agents, lack of responsibility for the workers’ committees, and unfilled promises over increased pay degenerated into protest and violence. Three hundred marched into the center of Lodève in December 1944, carrying a huge tricolor flag and signs that read: “Down with the profiteers of the MOI and thieves of the 1st Legion of Indochinese workers.” Committees in both Bordeaux and Bergerac demanded the dismissal of specific MOI agents – in Bordeaux this included the chef de compagnie himself – which led to the heavily publicized arrest of leadership committee members. It was suggested to the Minister of the Colonies that actions such as these were antithetical to promoting good relations between France and the people of Indochina.

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52 ANOM, INF 3314, “Compte-rendu sur les effets d’un soi-disant rapport de M. Aubrac à M. le Ministre du Travail parmi les unités de T.I. stationnées à Marseille,” Commander of 35th company of Indochinese workers to Minister of the Colonies, 23 October 1944. Emphasis found in the original.
53 ANOM, INF 3314, “Quinzaine de décembre.”
54 ANOM, INF 3314, “Manifestation indochinoise du 2 décembre,” Police of Lodève to Prefect of Hérault, 4 December 1944.
55 ANOM, INF 3314, “Rapport sur les événements survenus dans les 14ème et 64ème compagnie de la 2ème legion de la M.O.I.,” Tong uy-ban dai-diem Viet-Nam (Délegation Générale des Indochoinois) to Minister of the Colonies, undated [February 1945].
In this sense, protest from colonials had shifted dramatically since the Vichy period.

Mostly concerned with rationing and employment before 1944, Liberation led to the emergence of more politically-oriented demands expressing a desire for equality, and then later, anti-colonialism preaching the necessity of an independent Vietnam. The descent into confrontation between French and Vietnamese, however, first emerged with the failure to allow more cooperation between citizen and subject within the MOI framework. While the government did rename the MOI the Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois (Office of Indochinese Worker Management) in May 1945 to dispose of the original moniker, the central tenet of pre-Liberation life for Vietnamese migrants in France – *encadrement* – was maintained into the postwar period.

II

Around the same time Vietnamese leadership committees were arrested in Bordeaux and Bergerac, a regiment of the *tirailleurs algériens* (Algerian riflemen) was welcomed in Saint-Etienne. Shortly after a party held at a *café maure*, the head of the local SAINA office, Monsieur Roth, invited the regiment’s European officers for a soirée occurring afterwards at the Hôtel de Ville. Several North Africans attending the reception reacted negatively, arriving at the prefect’s office to ask why they had not been invited either. Despite their protestations, however, the reception remained for Europeans only, and the local *marabout* along with several Algerian students were told to leave immediately. As this story suggests, discriminatory behavior did not end with the Liberation, despite promises emanating from the French government and demands by North Africans for greater social equality.

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Following the Allied landings in Algeria and Morocco, nationalist movements used the opportunity created by Free French assumption of power to demand political and social reforms. Handed to Governor General Georges Catroux in March 1943 the “Manifesto of the Algerian People” marked, according to historian John Ruedy, a transition in Algerian nationalist thought from assimilation to independence. After denouncing French colonialism in Algeria the manifesto went on to call for the right of Algerians to determine their own fate, equal participation by Muslims in government, and freedom of the press and association.\(^57\)

Given the necessity of securing indigenous manpower for the military the French administration responded on 7 March 1944 with the first major political reforms since 1919. The hated *code de l’indigénat* was permanently abolished and 65,000 Muslim Algerians granted French citizenship without losing their personal status. This fell short of total enfranchisement, but de Gaulle’s government promised that further efforts would be undertaken after the war ended. In the meantime, all males could now vote in the second Muslim Electoral College and their representation in local consultative bodies was raised to forty percent.\(^58\)

The narrative of decolonization often assumes that French authorities grudgingly offered reforms to colonial subjects and made no effort to follow through on their promises. But some officials within the government did attempt to guarantee at least some semblance of legal equality for North Africans living in France during the Liberation and immediate postwar era. Indeed, several figures within de Gaulle’s government now argued that the 7 March 1944 Ordinance needed to be rigorously applied on metropolitan territory, which necessitated either modifying or abolishing previous mechanisms of North African social

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\(^{58}\) Ibid, 147.
control. Newly elected Muslim representatives to the Provisional Assembly like Mohamad Bendjelloul, a conservative nationalist from Constantine, and Adrien Tixier, de Gaulle’s first Minister of the Interior between 1944 and 1945, attempted to ensure that Algerians living in France were put on an equal footing with French citizens.

Following the liberation of Paris in August 1944, Benjelloul travelled to the capital in order to take up his place in the Provisional Assembly. He immediately met North Africans living in region and was inundated with complaints about their treatment before and during the war. Officers from the North African Brigade were accused of forcing migrants into working for the Germans, François de la Rocque’s Parti Social Français or even with Joseph Darnand’s Milice. As Clifford Rosenberg has noted, “even the most hawkish, pro-Algérie française members of municipal council admitted that the North African Brigade had been aberrant, corrupt, and violent,” and the North African population of Paris no doubt agreed. Petitions were subsequently addressed to various levels of the government demanding the dissolution of the Brigade, the Bureau des Affaires Musulmanes Nord-Africaines, the Service de la main-d’oeuvre nord-africaine (MONA), the Franco-Muslim Hospital in Bobigny, and North African rooming houses owned by the prefectures of the Seine and Seine-et-Oise.

60 The Bureau des affaires musulmans nord-africains (BAMNA) was created by Vichy in 1943 to replace the Service des affaires indigènes nord-africains (SAINA). Unlike SAINA, which was funded and operated by the prefectures, BAMNA was run through joint co-operation between the Ministry of Interior and prefectures. Very little information has survived but many of the BAMNA offices in Marseille, Lyon, and Saint-Etienne appear to have existed only on paper before the beginning of 1944. It is unclear why Vichy sought to create a new organization to supplant SAINA. However, there were jurisdictional issues often emerged between the state-run BAMNA and separate North African surveillance organizations run by prefectures and municipalities that existed before its creation. The office in Lyon, for example, complained about a North African police brigade in the city usurping its authority but it is not clear exactly what many of the BAMNA offices actually did before the Liberation.
One group in particular, l’Avenir Nord-Africain, supported their demands by referring to the number of North Africans that had joined the “resistance” and participated in the liberation of Paris. According to their statement, over fifty Algerians and Moroccans were killed or injured, while at the same time often provoking suspicion and even outright hostility from their French counterparts. The resistance had been formed on the principle of liberating French soil from authoritarian practices. It was thus unacceptable that an organization whose sole purpose involved terrorizing the North African population of Paris remained untouched. As the document noted, “North Africans have, in the center of Paris, a special administration, a kind of Arab Bureau, perpetuating in the heart of the city of light the regime of the l’indigénat which acts in a totally arbitrary fashion without distinction against all colonials.” It ended by imploring the French government to abolish all special services so “equality [and] the social liberation of the French and North African peoples.”

Authorities perhaps would have simply dismissed these complaints in the interwar period, but the combination of Algerians’ new civil status as well as Benjelloul’s advocacy pushed the issue into the spotlight. Following his letters to the President of the Provisional Assembly and the Minister of Interior in which he called for the abolition of separate North African welfare offices, Charles Luizet, recently appointed prefect of police, responded harshly. Luizet sent several multipage reports to various government offices in the autumn of 1944, denouncing attempts to have the organizations eliminated and expounding upon their benefits. Luizet mostly skirted alleged improprieties by the rue Lecomte, instead

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62 Ibid
63 Ibid
64 AN, F1a 3347, Dr. Bendjelloul to President of the Provisional Consultative Assembly, 4 September 1944; Dr. Bendjelloul to Minister of the Interior, 10 October 1944.
focusing on medical assistance provided by the Franco-Muslim Hospital and efforts to provide free soup during the war. Arguing the organizations should stay open because they in no way violated the principle of equal treatment, the prefect instead proclaimed Bendjelloul an anti-French radical, obviously hoping that character assassinations would have some effect.\textsuperscript{66} He also ordered an investigation into the activities of North African Brigade officers during the Occupation. Perhaps not surprisingly, the report was mostly self-serving, concentrating on attempts to help North African POWs escape German controls rather than allegations of collaboration.\textsuperscript{67}

Luizet’s arguments, however, did find some resonance within certain circles at the Ministry of Interior. An independent report from the Ministry of Interior argued that North Africans objected to separate welfare offices, hospitals and rooming houses not because they promoted isolation from the French population, but rather the confluence of policing, surveillance, and social assistance made them unpalatable. Since officers of the North African Brigade often held dual positions as dispensers of housing, welfare and employment assistance, aide provided to North Africans in Paris was tainted by the actions of the unit. Thus, de Gaulle’s government could abolish separate police forces and still retain distinct services for North Africans living in France, especially in light of their “popularity.”\textsuperscript{68} The author did not seem to realize that the Franco-Muslim Hospital was so “popular” because North Africans were often forbidden from obtaining medical care elsewhere.\textsuperscript{69} Several

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] AN, F\textsuperscript{1a} 3347, Prefect of Police to Minister of the Interior, 24 November 1944.
\item[67] AN, F\textsuperscript{1a} 3346, “Note sur l’activité clandestine de la Bridage Nord-Africaine pendant l’occupation Allemande,” undated [1944].
\item[68] AN, F\textsuperscript{1a} 3346, “Note sur les services nord-africains de la rue Lecomte à Paris,” Report from Ministry of the Interior – sous-direction for Algeria, 23 February 1945.
\item[69] Rosenberg, Policing Paris, 191-192.
\end{footnotes}
months later, Lieutenant Colonel Georges Spillman, Secretary General for the Committee on North Africa, concurred with this report, arguing:

the moment is poorly chosen for purely and simply cancelling these organizations without replacing them with an equivalent. When these organizations disappear, we will no longer have official contact with the North Africans dispersed throughout France, who will be entirely left to their own devices…The suppression at the present time of organizations which are dedicated to North Africans could have serious repercussions…

The Paris municipal council disagreed, quietly disbanding the North African Brigade in June 1945. Arguments that policing and welfare could indeed be separated obviously had an impact on Minister of Interior Tixier. Referring specifically to the Ordinance of 7 March 1944, Tixier agreed to abolish all pre-Liberation organizations charged with monitoring North Africans, and argued his position during a subsequent cabinet meeting. This decision was formally codified in a decree from Charles de Gaulle in November 1945. All Third Republic and Vichy-era North African policing and surveillance forces were abolished, along with distinct welfare offices. The decree did, however, leave open the possibility of creating social assistance agents within prefectures charged with helping North Africans resident in metropolitan France. In the end, the government decreed that distinct organizations were antithetical to the legal equality between Algerians and French citizens, but specific agents that spoke Arabic and were familiar with “native customs” necessary to facilitate integration within metropolitan society.

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70 AN, F1a 3292, “Note à l’attention de Mr. Joxe Secrétaire Général du Gouvernement relative au Service des Affaires Indigènes Nord-Africaines à Paris (Services de la Rue Lecomte),” 23 May 1945.
71 Blanchard, Minister of the Interior to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 29 May 1945.
72 AN, F1a 3292, Minister of the Interior to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 29 May 1945.
Erasing over twenty years of institutional discrimination against North Africans in France was easier said than done. The issue of identity cards issued in Marseille is a case in point. In February 1946, Tixier formally instructed all prefectures to stop issuing the Algerian identity card created by Vichy in 1943. After this point, at least theoretically, Algerians living on metropolitan territory received the same card issued to French citizens from the very same section of the prefecture.\(^{74}\) Ethnicity and religion, in other words, should not have disqualified them from equal treatment. After the North African Affairs office in Marseille was abolished, however, the prefecture transferred the responsibility for issuing identity cards not to the regular police service, but rather the office responsible for managing foreigners in the department. The CRDR in Marseille was alarmed by this decision, arguing it violated the sprit of recent reforms intended to associate Algerians with French citizenship, and would produce “extreme psychological repercussions” within the population living in the city.\(^{75}\) When asked why North Africans were being sent to an office reserved for foreigners, the head of the bureau that had made the decision responded that there was not enough space to house all of the dossiers and *fiche* accumulated by the various North African Affairs offices over the years, and the only room available was in the foreign section of the prefecture.\(^{76}\) He did make a number of suggestions for resolving the situation: create a separate entrance for North Africans to enter the foreign office; place a sign over the door outside that read “Carte d’Identité des Français Nord-Africains”; and finally, reserve a room specifically for North Africans where they could receive their papers.\(^{77}\) Apparently the newly

\(^{76}\) ADBR, 150 W 170, “Cartes d’identité des Musulmans Nord-Africains,” Head of the 1\(^{st}\) Division of the Prefecture of the Bouches-du-Rhône to Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône 19 November 1945.
\(^{77}\) Ibid
reinstated principles of republican universalism had not penetrated certain segments of the prefecture at this time.

This obviously ran counter to the November 1945 reforms but nothing was done to stop the officials in the Bouches-du-Rhône from essentially reestablishing a separate organization to issue Algerians’ identification. The CGT in Marseille formally complained to the prefecture in May 1947 that Algerians were still facing discrimination and received a response noting that, technically speaking, there was nothing in the now-deceased Tixier’s order that specified where to issue identity cards but rather that they must be exactly the same as those given to metropolitan French citizens.78 Although the prefect was formally scolded by the Ministry of Interior a few weeks later, and then instructed the foreign bureau to stop issuing papers to Algerians, it is not clear if this was actually achieved.79 The image projected by the actions of the prefecture is striking nonetheless. Despite their formal association with French citizenship, authorities felt it necessary to visually mark and identify Algerians as un-French by assigning them a segregated space within the prefecture. Algerians were not “French” but rather “French North Africans” and this attitude continued to affect policy into the postwar era.

III

As France moved beyond the Liberation into the postwar period, imperial problems waned in importance as authorities were faced with the obstacles of reconstruction. Nevertheless, the Provisional and Constitutional Assemblies debated reform of the empire

78 ADBR, 150 W 170, Union Locales des Syndicats Ouvriers de Marseille to Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône, 6 May 1947; Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône to General Secretary of the Union Locales des Syndicats Ouvriers de Marseille, 29 May 1947.
relentlessly between 1945 and 1947. While early drafts for the new constitution proposed a radical overhaul of colonial rule including equal representation of former colonial subjects in the National Assembly and French citizenship for all, the gradual erosion of reform efforts by lobby groups and increasing conservative prominence in the Constitutional Assembly after the spring of 1946 meant that the end result was much less substantial.\(^{80}\) When the French Union was formally codified in the constitution of 1946 reforms were significant in some places and hollow in others. Most importantly, the *code de l’indigénat* was repealed across the empire. The so-called *vielles colonies* of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, and Guyane – where the inhabitants were French citizens – formally became overseas *départements*. Colonial subjects elsewhere were not given full-fledged French citizenship but rather a common citizenship in the French Union. As a result, they could not elect representatives to the National Assembly in Paris, which still held legislative power, but rather to the Assembly of the French Union, which was almost wholly consultative. Further, the powers of the Governors General were maintained, hindering efforts to create more locally elected councils comprised of indigenous representatives. Finally, the vast majority of the former empire was still considered “dependencies” (much of sub-Saharan Africa) or “Associated States” (Morocco, Tunisia, and perhaps Indochina) of metropolitan France.\(^{81}\) Even during the subsequent period when French government officials touted the existence of a French Union or French Community, then, the empire remained extremely disaggregated with various

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\(^{81}\) Lewis, “MRP and French Union,” 207-208.
juridical categories for differing parts, and virtually all power was still concentrated in Paris; it was certainly not an “imperial-nation state” even in this period of reformist impulses.

Lawmakers of the Constitutional Assembly purposely avoided discussing what would happen in Algeria, leaving subsequent reforms to the Fourth Republic. The Muslim Electoral College was not expanded beyond the parameters set forth in the Ordinance of 7 March 1944. When the National Assembly took up the question of Algeria in 1946 and 1947, then, it was almost entirely European with little Muslim representation. That being said, proposals from the Socialist and Communist members of the National Assembly did heed calls for greater equality. In both cases, they proposed maintaining the dual-college voting system while gradually transitioning to a point where Muslims would receive full representation on par with their European counterparts. The PCF called for the abolition of the Governor Generalship and full powers given to an Algerian Assembly, which would have significant control over “internal questions.” 82 In the end, however, the loi organique d’Algérie of 27 September 1947 more closely resembled French Union-style reforms rather than earlier calls for total legal assimilation of Algerian Muslims. The dual college system was maintained, giving an equal number of seats in an Algerian Assembly to the “civil” (predominantly European) and “personal” (Muslim) electorates. While 70,000 Muslims maintained the full French citizenship that had been granted in 1944, the “civil” college represented only ten percent of the population while the “personal” ninety percent. Further, the Algerian Assembly had very little actual power, most of it invested in the Governor General and the National Assembly. Muslim Algerians were given the French citizenship promised to them in

1944, but it was a type of citizenship that held much less caché than for European settlers and metropolitan French.\(^{83}\)

Rising anti-colonialism as a result of these failed reforms would ultimately occur across North Africa and elsewhere. But it was in Indochina where the tide of decolonization and revolt against French rule first came to prominence in the postwar period. Syria and Lebanon achieved their full independence a few years previous, but these were League of Nations mandates that had much less currency in the French imagination than Indochina.\(^{84}\)

France’s problems in Southeast Asia were irrecoverably tied to the events of the war. Japan had occupied parts of northern Indochina in 1940 and led a \textit{coup d’état} against French rule in March 1945. Following the end of war in the Pacific Theatre, France – with the assistance of British soldiers and some Japanese prisoners-of-war – sent a military contingent to re-establish control over the territory. In the meantime, however, the end of French rule led Hồ Chí Minh – mysterious leader of a mix of socialists, communists, and anti-colonialists called the Viet Minh – to proclaim the existence of an independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 2 September 1945.\(^{85}\) While the Far East Expeditionary Force of Philippe Leclerc was able to re-establish French rule in Saigon one month later, simmering animosity towards France that reached far back into the interwar period was now out in the open. Vietnam was independent, only to be recolonized by France. Over the next several years Hồ Chí Minh and

\(^{83}\) Weil, \textit{How to Be French}, 153.


the French government negotiated the future of Vietnam, eventually leading to war in December 1946 that would last until 1954.86

Separated from these events by thousands of kilometers, Vietnamese migrants living in metropolitan France followed the situation in Indochina closely. Their actions also mirrored the move from nationalism to separatism. During the spring and summer of 1945, political agitation was focused more on greater rights for colonial subjects rather than an outright rejection of French rule. Protest in France was spearheaded by the Tong uy-ban dai-diem Viet-Nam, which the French translated as the Délégation Générale des Indochinois en France (DGI). It was formed at a meeting in Avignon in December 1944 and comprised of a central leadership committee as well as representatives from every work company stationed in France.87 Authorities were concerned about the radical nature of the organization and one meeting in Marseille was described as a “revolutionary nationalistic atmosphere”, but it is hard to discern any strident anti-colonialism in its initial literature apart from calls for “free elections” and an end to economic exploitation.88

After the declaration of an independent Vietnam in September 1945, however, the DGI transformed itself from an advocacy group preoccupied with representing the interests of Vietnamese migrants to a political wing of the Viet Minh on metropolitan soil. It began petitioning foreign governments in Paris to support Vietnamese independence at the newly created United Nations. The Vietnamese contingent stationed in Marseille unilaterally changed the name of their camp from “Pham-Quynh” to “Viet Nam” and unfurled the flag of

87 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 400, “Manifeste du congrès national des Indochinois à Avignon,” 17 December 1944.
88 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 400, “Meeting organisé à Marseille le 3 juin 1945 par la délégation des Indochinois de Marseille,” Forces Expeditionnaires Françaises de l’Extrême Orient, 8 June 1945.
independence beside the French tricolore. When asked by a European DTI agent what the red banner and yellow star represented, one worker responded: “Mau do da vang” – red blood and yellow skin.

French authorities became increasingly concerned over this type of behavior. At a meeting of all the Legion commanders in Paris on 3 October 1945, it was communicated to the Ministry of the Colonies that the workers were less and less preoccupied with following orders. In secret memo to Henri Laurentie several days later, the director of the DTI wrote: “If…it seems difficult to passively tolerate the insults of the Délégation [Générale des Indochinois] any longer, it appears, in the same vein, impossible to let this indiscipline fester any longer among the workers. The moment to undertake a rectification of the current state of affairs appears opportune.” While the memo suggested re-creating the disciplinary work brigades that existed under Vichy, or possibly sending “anti-national elements” to Corsica, other officials obviously had a much more sinister idea. On 6 October the police judiciaire in Paris conducted a raid on the Vietnamese political leadership in France and eventually arrested forty-two people. Over the next several months, dozens more individuals scattered among the various worker companies were taken into custody by authorities for disseminating anti-French propaganda. The government also formally dissolved the DGI, although they were helpless to watch it re-emerge several months later as the Viet Khieu Lien Minh (VKLM or Rassemblement des Émigrés Vietnamiens).

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89 Pham Quynh was a Vietnamese author, translator, moderate nationalist, and, for the Viet Minh, a traitor, executed in early September 1945.
90 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 400, Base Principale de Marseille to Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois, 18 September 1945.
91 ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Directeur des Travailleurs Indochinois to Direction des Affaires Politiques, 5 October 1945.
92 ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Directeur des Travailleurs Indochinois to Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 12 October 1945.
The arrests do not appear to have been orchestrated by the DTI, regardless of its growing impatience with waning discipline among the workers stationed in France. Indeed, the director of the DTI was fast to publically proclaim his non-involvement with the actions of the *police judiciaire*, quickly writing subordinates that he was not consulted and intended to ask for the release of those arrested.\(^3\) This message was eventually communicated to the workers in December but the damage had already been done. Following the arrests in October political agitation dramatically increased among Vietnamese migrants, and it would largely continue until the early 1950s. In this sense, it was not just the Vietnamese declaration of independence that precipitated acrimonious relations between the workers and French government, but also the initial attempts to decapitate the political leadership of the migrant community in metropolitan France. Complaints poured into government offices from Vietnamese work companies. One letter from a small contingent stationed in the Eure asked President de Gaulle a simple question: was France a democratic state or fascist regime? How could fighting for liberty and democracy be “anti-French”, they asked, if the same principles animated the resistance against Vichy and Nazism? “As *le premier resistant* of France against Nazism, you know better than anyone else that foreign domination of any form is wrong, you have accepted in the Charter of the United Nations the liberty of all peoples, and finally you know the price that must be paid for independence.”\(^4\) They ended the letter by imploring de Gaulle to release those imprisoned and stop the ongoing transportation of troops to Indochina.

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\(^3\) ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Directeur des Travailleurs Indochinois to Commandants of the Legions, 9 October 1945.

\(^4\) ANOM, INF 979, Travailleurs de la 17ème compagnie Indochinoise (Bernay, Eure) to General de Gaulle, Head of the Provisional Government, 16 October 1945.
Letters eventually gave way to more visible signs of discontent with the French government. The Vietnamese community called for labor strikes on 8 October, followed by a one-day hunger strike against the arrests. They also attempted to introduce the subject of Vietnamese independence into larger gatherings. In Bergerac, Bordeaux and Marseille, small groups of Vietnamese attempted to hand out leaflets at the fifty anniversary celebrations of the CGT, although the police in Marseille knew about this beforehand and managed to arrest twenty workers before arriving at the demonstration. Agitation in smaller towns was much more low-key but protests by Vietnamese workers in Badevel (Doubs), Courpière, (Puy-de-Dôme), Montauban (Tarn-et-Garonne), and Moulins (Allier) during the fall of 1945 were noted by local authorities. Handing out leaflets to passersby or marching to the local Hôtel de Ville caused alarm within certain quarters but the agitation aroused curiosity and incomprehension from the local population more than anything else. Petitions from French unions in support of their Vietnamese colleagues demonstrated some knowledge of the arrests and demonstrations. Advocacy, however, typically stopped after simply informing prefects and mayors the CGT was displeased with arrests or heavy-handed actions against peaceful protestors.

Protests throughout France continued sporadically in early 1946, but never reached the level immediately after the arrest of Vietnamese political leaders and suppression of the DGI. The migrant community, however, became associated with political radicalism and their insistence on calling for support from French unions and the broader public made their

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96 ANOM, Cabinet, carton 60, dossier 400, “Note sur le moral des Unités des Travailleurs Indochinois,” Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois, 16 October 1945.
97 ADBR, 149 W 137, Union Départementale des Syndicats Ouvriers des Bouches-du-Rhône to Commissaire Régionale de la République, 12 October 1945.
presence in France undesirable for the government. The question of repatriating the workers had been lingering since the Liberation and picked up pace with the end of the war in the Pacific. By late 1945 the Ministries of Colonies and the Interior were clearly bent on repatriation as soon as possible. In mid-December the Indochinese Section at the Ministry of Colonies began openly discussing repatriations, arguing that sick and injured workers should be sent back first, and an organization created in Indochina to facilitate their re-integration into colonial society.\footnote{ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Rapatriement des Indochinois,” Report from meeting of Direction de l’Indochine, 16 December 1945.} The government also intended to create a central fichier to help intelligence services in Indochina identify the workers viewed as a security risk after their time in France.\footnote{ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Note pour le Direction des Affaires Militaires,” Direction des Affaires Politiques to Direction des Affaires Militaires, 27 December 1945.}

The desire of metropolitan officials to repatriate Asian workers, however, came up against similar concerns emanating from Indochina, and particularly High-Commissioner Georges Thierry d’Argenlieu. Fearing seditious activities when they returned home, d’Argenlieu, his associates and the military would work to stop, or at least slow down, the repatriation of workers over the next several months. In December 1945 d’Argenlieu wrote the Ministry of Colonies that no action should be taken until order had been re-established in the territories, and when the repatriations did begin, to only send workers in small, manageable contingents.\footnote{ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Telegram from High Commissioner for France in Indochina to Ministry of the Colonies, 3 December 1945.} By February 1946 he had accepted the necessity of sending some workers from France to Indochina but insisted that it was only safe to repatriate Cambodians and Cochin Chinese. Ninety percent of those living in France originated from Annam and Tonkin, so d’Argenlieu’s acceptance of a small number of workers meant the majority of
Vietnamese migrants would be left in metropolitan France for some time.\textsuperscript{101} Although the administration in Indochina was reticent over the repatriation program, Marius Moutet eventually overruled d’Argenlieu. The Minister for Overseas France confirmed in March 1946 that the government had decided to send all the workers back to Indochina due to concerns over their behavior resulting from “fatigue and moral lassitude.”\textsuperscript{102} The DTI also positioned repatriations as a necessary measure to relieve budgetary pressures on the French government. Less money spent on Vietnamese workers stationed in France, its director suggested, meant more for French workers.\textsuperscript{103}

After the government formally agreed to begin the repatriation process, the Ministry of Overseas France and the administration in Indochina were left to organize the initiative. In early June 1946, the Indochinese section held a meeting in Paris and largely ignored d’Argenlieu’s advice for a gradual repatriation programs. This particular meeting suggested repatriating 3,500 Vietnamese over a two-month time frame with departures beginning at the end of June.\textsuperscript{104} Those who wanted to remain in France were free to do so, but much like Franco-North African couples under Vichy, the possibility of Vietnamese men married to French women returning to the colony was portrayed as undesirable.\textsuperscript{105} French authorities were reticent to completely bar married couples from returning, suggesting their repatriation was permissible but should not be publicized within the migrant community.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{101} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Telegram from High Commissioner for France in Indochina to Comité de l’Indochine, 9 March 1946.
\textsuperscript{102} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Minister of Overseas France to Army Chief of Staff, 25 March 1946.
\textsuperscript{103} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Ministre,” Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois to Minister of Overseas France, 29 April 1946.
\textsuperscript{104} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Rapatriement des Tirailleurs et des travailleurs indochinois,” Note for Directeur des Affaires Politiques, 4 June 1946.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid
\textsuperscript{106} In December 1946, the right to free passage for Franco-Vietnamese couples was decreed by the French government. One month later, however, d’Argenlieu managed to suppress the decree and place all demands
Several close associates of d’Argenlieu in the Ministry of Overseas France, however, still openly questioned the decision to begin repatriations. Sending thousands of migrants back to Tonkin and Annam, they argued, invited catastrophe given the Viet Minh presence in northern Vietnam. Further, it gave authorities in Indochina little time to prepare. D’Argenlieu had commissioned a camp to receive Vietnamese, but its construction was only in the initial stages and would be very difficult to complete before arrivals began that July. Another official sent to France from Indochina in the spring of 1946 was astonished at the degree of “radicalization” and political organization among the migrant community. He pointed not only to the VKLM but a series of committees that had formed along geographic lines for workers from Bac Ninh (Tonkin), Quang Nom (Annam), Nghe An and Hatinh (Northern Annam). Typically labeled “assistance organizations,” French authorities suspected they were simply a means for separatists to organize before returning to Indochina.

Mistrust between the migrants and government worked both ways. Vietnamese leadership committees clearly believed that French authorities were not truthful when they announced the beginning of repatriations. Although the government tried to organize a large convoy for 17 July 1946, Vietnamese designated for the voyage refused to leave, arguing from married couples under his own personal authority. When repatriations commenced again in 1948, the same system was maintained, and migrants were forced to write the Ministry of Overseas France for permission to return with their French wives and children. Eventually a separate barracks was constructed for them at Cap Saint-Jacques. Repatriations were still highly mediated based on personal circumstance though. One couple requesting repatriation was granted free passage because the husband’s Vietnamese sister was married to a French policeman in Hanoi. Another couple, however, was denied permission due to the fact French authorities discovered the husband was already married to two Vietnamese women in Tonkin. See ANOM, HCI, CS, carton 23, dossier repatriations particulières.

108 ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Telegram from High Commissioner for France in Indochina to Comité de l’Indochine, 16 June 1946.
they did not recognize the French authority any longer and wanted a formal agreement reached between Marius Moutet and Ho Chi Minh.\textsuperscript{110} This was finally signed at the end of July and promised various forms of financial compensation upon arrival at Cap Saint-Jacques.\textsuperscript{111} It proved difficult for the French government to follow through with the program. Space had been reserved on transportation vessels and then cancelled following Vietnamese refusals to leave metropolitan France. Maritime authorities were then left scrambling to find adequate places on ships leaving for Indochina and came up against the necessity of reinforcing the French military contingent overseas. The DTI tried to secure space for one thousand Vietnamese on the Pasteur in mid-September but were told that the vessel was reserved for military personnel. One hundred were sent back at the last minute as a symbolic gesture of goodwill towards the repatriation process. When another transport was arranged in mid-October, migrants were subordinated to the interests of the military once more.\textsuperscript{112}

Cautious of French intentions over repatriations a few months previously the Vietnamese community in France began to grow angry that the program was not being given high enough priority by officials in Paris. Just over three hundred had left by the end of October 1946, leading to a series of protests later that year.\textsuperscript{113} Echoing the demonstrations the previous autumn these new manifestations of discontent blended calls for Vietnamese independence with concerns of the migrant community in France. Vietnamese and members

\textsuperscript{110} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Note au sujet du rapatriement des travailleurs indochinois,” Report from Direction des Travailleurs Indochinois, 8 October 1946. Migrants had good reason to suspect the intentions of the colonial administration. D’Argenlieu had in fact suggested sending the workers “anywhere else” rather than allowing them in Southeast Asia, pointing in particular to Guyane and Pacific islands like New Caledonia or the New Hebrides.

\textsuperscript{111} The formal agreement – in French and quoc ngu – was disseminated to the Vietnamese camps during the summer of 1946. Entitled “Indépendence-Liberté-Bonheur,” the pamphlet was labeled “République Démocratique du Viet Nam” and not from the République Française. See ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438.

\textsuperscript{112} ANOM, AffairesPolitiques, carton 3438, “Rapatriement des travailleurs,” 8 October 1946.

\textsuperscript{113} ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Rapatriement des travailleurs indochinois,” Comité de l’Indochine to Minister of Overseas France, 29 October 1946.
of the CGT protested in front of the prefecture in Marseille demanding that the sick and infirm be sent home immediately. This clearly alarmed the prefect who then sent a telegram to several different ministries in Paris requesting the immediate evacuation of as many as possible.\footnote{AN, F\textsuperscript{11a} 3302, Telegram from Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône to Ministries of Interior, Public Works, and Overseas France, 19 November 1946.} Demonstrations also occurred in Avignon as 800 Vietnamese descended on the downtown area, marching through the streets with signs that read, “Enough Promises. Boats!” before arriving at the prefecture to hold a rally for independence.\footnote{AN, F\textsuperscript{11a} 3302, “Manifestation des Travailleurs Indochinois,” Prefect of the Vaucluse to Ministry of the Interior, 19 November 1946.} Similar activities took place across France from Montauban and Mont-de-Marsan in the southwest, to Moulins and Lyon in the southeast. Protests were closely coordinated with highly similar rhetoric over France’s duty to repay the workers for almost seven years away from their families.\footnote{AN, F\textsuperscript{11a} 3302, Telegram from Prefect of the Rhône to Ministries of Interior and Overseas France, 23 November 1946.} Prefects were unanimously in favor of these demands as well, especially given economic problems and increasing co-operation between colonials and French labor syndicates.

National security considerations quickly rendered the repatriation program undesirable for the French government. Ho Chi Minh reached an agreement with French representative Jean Sainteny in March 1946 that envisaged an autonomous Vietnam within the confines of a French Indochinese Federation. As Martin Shipway as shown, however, the colonial administration in Saigon was simultaneously maneuvering for confrontation with the Viet Minh. High Commissioner d’Argenlieu called the Ho-Sainteny agreement the “Indochinese Munich” and sought to undermine the accords. He proclaimed the existence of an independent “Republic of Cochin China” in June, and the French navy bombarded Haiphong on 19 November, killing an estimated 6000 civilians. The Viet Minh attacked
Hanoi several weeks later and full-scale conflict between France and Vietnamese independence forces had begun. D’Argenlieu finally received his request to halt the repatriation program for Vietnamese workers stationed in France at the end of December, claiming that sending migrants openly hostile to French rule back to Annam and Tonkin presented security risks and an inconvenience for the military campaign.117

The outbreak of war in Vietnam had both short and long term repercussions on metropolitan Vietnamese relations with the French state. The initial response from the migrant community was to organize a series of demonstrations on 25 December 1946, protesting the commencement of military operations against the Viet Minh and calling for independence from France. In the small shipbuilding town of Port-de-Bouc near Marseille Vietnamese began disseminating flyers on the street with the title “S.O.S. Indochina. Appeal to the French People” several days before hand, comparing the actions of the French government to the Germans at Oradour-sur-Glane.118 Vietnamese militants were not only deftly tapped into the memory of the German occupation, but were also clearly referencing journalist Andrée Viollis’s well-known SOS Indochine, a condemnation of French colonial rule published in the 1920s.119 Possible demonstrations along the Canebière in Marseille were viewed as a much bigger security risk and the police estimated 4,000 Vietnamese could arrive to take part. The prefect ordered six Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS) brigades to surround the camp in the morning and prevent all Vietnamese from participating in the demonstration.120 CRS contingents were removed from guarding the camp two days

117 ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, Telegram from High Commissioner for France in Indochina to Comité de l’Indochine, 28 December 1946.
118 ADBR, 148 W 188, Police of Port-de-Bouc to General Secretary for the Police in Marseille, 25 December 1946.
later but the use of *blockage* to prevent Vietnamese from protesting became a common occurrence in Marseille over the next several years.

Relations between the workers and French government deteriorated after this period. But it also brought about growing conflict with the French population. Tension had been building over much of the previous year as reports from prefects and DTI officials noted deteriorating relations between the two groups. In Carcassonne, just to employ one example, a fight had broken out on 17 March at the Café des Américains between Vietnamese hoping to attend a dance, and a group of young French males trying to deny them entry. A reinforced contingent of Vietnamese returned to the café several minutes later armed with sticks and clubs, and subsequently “invaded” the dance floor.\(^{121}\) Similar incidents occurred across southern France over the course of 1946, and indeed, deteriorating relations were cited by the DTI in Bergerac as one of the main arguments for repatriating all of the workers. In was in the Rhône-Alpes area, however, that tension took on a much more sinister dimension.

On 25 December hundreds of Vietnamese stationed in the area marched through the streets of Lyon, making their way along the quai Gailleton to the place Bellecour and the Bourse de Travail. Police observing the demonstration noted that people were mostly apathetic, although former members of the military apparently exchanged insults with the workers.\(^{122}\) Several days later the Sûreté reported increased conflict between demobilized soldiers and Vietnamese living near Lyon.\(^{123}\) On 5 January two grenades were thrown at Vietnamese work camps in Saint-Marie-de-Beynost (Ain) and Neuville-sur-Saône (Rhône). There were no injuries reported and only slight damage to living quarters but this type of

\(^{121}\) ADH, 999 W 228, Carcassone Police to General Secretary for the Police in Montpellier, 18 March 1946.

\(^{122}\) ADR, 437 W 149, Telegram from Prefect of the Rhône to Ministry of the Interior, 26 December 1946.

\(^{123}\) ADR, 437 W 149, “Incidents entre militaires français rapatriés d’Indochine et travailleurs indochinois,” Ministry of the Interior to Prefect of the Rhône, 31 December 1946.
radical behavior had been building for most of the previous year. In May the police outside of Audincourt (Doubs) arrested five French males carrying grenades outside a work camp, apparently trying to scale the fence with the intention of removing the Vietnamese flag of independence.

Conflict also emerged over the presence of Vietnamese symbols of independence on French territory. Officers from the colonial army on leave in Lyon complained about “the enemy Viet Minh flag” being shown beside the French flag at the workers’ camp in the city. They demanded it be removed immediately, but the DTI officer in charge worried that any sign of aggression could provoke further demonstrations the French government was hoping to avoid by this point. When a small contingent of workers marched through the street of Belfort to protest military action in Vietnam, an article appeared in a local newspaper with the sensational headline, “Offement, near Belfort, is terrified by a Vietnamese Republic being created in the area.” In Remiremont (Vosges) Vietnamese workers walking through the center of town spotted six French males wearing the insignia of the Far-East Expeditionary Force after attending a veterans’ function. Insults were exchanged between the two parties, and several minutes later, almost thirty Vietnamese descended on the soldiers, beating them with clubs until chased away by local villagers.

Over the next several years until repatriations were finally reauthorized in 1948 relations between colonials and the French government deteriorated significantly. One solution envisaged was simply to move Vietnamese migrants away from major urban areas.

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125 ANOM, Affaires Politiques, carton 3438, “Incidents avec la population française,” undated [1947].
126 ADR, 437 W 149, Untitled memorandum from 17 March 1947.
128 Ibid
At the same time, police actions became increasingly draconian. When workers attempted to protest on the anniversary of independence, for example, or during May Day parades, they were typically harassed by the police and often prevented from attending demonstrations altogether. The perception of Vietnamese as “anti-national” also sometimes led to strained relations with French men and women, especially as the war dragged on. In one extreme case, a Vietnamese worker was found hanging from a tree in a small town near Lyon. The police concluded it was a “suicide” but given events in the region from previous years it is not impossible that an alternate scenario occurred as well.129 Vietnamese also struggled over political issues within their own community in France. Conflict between Stalinists, Trotskyites, nationalists, and Catholics, did occasionally take place, such as a large brawl at the camp in Marseille in 1948 between different political factions.

Above all, the apparent danger of politically radicalized Southeast Asians worked to reduce their migration rights. “National security” considerations meant that the many workers who first came to France on short-term contracts in 1939 and 1940 did not return home until the late 1940s and early 1950s. Even when the French government finally sent them home they were not immediately free. All of the migrants passed through a camp at Cap Saint-Jacques (present day Vũng Tàu) that was specifically designed to “manage the transition” between life in France and Viet Nam – coded meaning for engaging in surveillance activities. While many of the workers had been amazed by French cities and culture at the start of their voyage, letters written upon their arrival in Vietnam show disillusionment and anger over the level of poverty and their treatment by France. They were given a lump sum of 15,000 piastres by colonial authorities, but this was barely enough to

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live in Hanoi or Saigon for two months, and they speak in florid language about the shanty towns, emaciated bodies, lack of medicine and schooling that now demonstrated the “benefits” of French colonialism to the people of Indochina. Brought to France as supplemental labor for the war effort their stay transformed many of the migrants into a vanguard of anti-colonialism.

IV

Political agitation and the commencement of the war in Indochina seriously restricted rights for Vietnamese migrants after 1946. Muslim Algerians also faced challenges in receiving treatment commensurate with their new status as French citizens. Even though the possibility of distinct police forces and welfare services for North Africans had been ended by the November 1945 decree, the possibility of a large, permanent population of Algerians living on metropolitan soil became a key issue for authorities involved with immigration and economic reconstruction in the immediate postwar period. The euphoria that gripped French society following the Liberation quickly ended after recognizing the task that lay ahead. France lost 500,000 dwellings, many of its major ports were damaged, rationing remained in place until the late 1940s, and inflation hit the working class especially hard. On the other hand, 600,000 were killed during the war, exacerbating the so-called interwar “demographic crisis,” and forcing French authorities involved with economic planning to call for thousands of foreign immigrants over the next decades.

The politically charged nature of the subsequent immigration debate revealed the difficulties in mediating various interests groups, some of which had been enormously influential under Vichy and still retained positions of influence into the postwar era. Georges

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130 ANOM, HCI, SPCE 73, ‘X’ to Mademoiselle Georgette Hau (Angers), 13 September 1948
Mauco and Alfred Sauvy, interwar “experts” that had called for an immigration policy based on ethnic selection, were appointed by de Gaulle in 1945 to oversee committees charged with fashioning the postwar landscape. In their proposals to the government, Mauco and Sauvy argued for an immigration regime that would limit immigrants from “undesirable races” in favor of those that could “assimilate” to French society. As the political scientist Vincent Viet has argued, Mauco and Sauvy were highly influenced by ideas concerning the health of the “French race.” In their view, the process of immigration could have two effects: it could serve as an instrument of demographic regeneration, or conversely, a poison that would infect and decay French society from within. As a result, both committees argued that France not only needed workers, but ethnically desirable workers from European countries. According to Mauco, fifty percent of new immigrants should be taken from “Nordic” populations (Belgians, Swiss, Dutch), thirty percent “Mediterranean” (Italians, Spanish, Portuguese), twenty percent “Slavic” and the remainder “exceptional cases” coming from other geographic areas.

Advocates for an immigration regime geared around ethnic criteria came up against opposition from Minister of Interior Adrien Tixier, Minister of Labour Alexandre Parodi, and Minister of Justice Paul-Henri Teitgen, who managed to quash the work of Mauco and Sauvy before it became law. When national immigration policy was unveiled in November 1945 it made no mention of only allowing immigration from specific areas, although the creation of the Office national d’immigration (ONI) – which operated the recruitment system itself – led to conflict between the Ministry of Labor, concerned with finding workers, and the Ministry

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133 Viet, *La France immigrée*, 103.
of Population and Public Health, that wished to apply specific health and family considerations when deciding to allow immigrants to France. The ONI was created as a prototypical “color-blind” model of Republican immigration and yet it only created offices in specially sanctioned countries – Italy, Poland, and Yugoslavia, for example – forcing other immigrant groups to find their own way to France. Further, it clearly privileged immigrants willing to settle in France permanently by granting them special rights to marry and hold better jobs than transient workers. Categories of “temporary,” “ordinary,” and “privileged” immigrants were not created equal. Mauco and Sauvy may have been “defeated” technically speaking, but many of their adherents held positions of authority within the Ministry of Population and Public Health well into the postwar period.

It is not surprising that at a time when politicians, bureaucrats, and “experts” were debating the desirability of certain ethnic groups the subject of Algerian migration appeared. The right of “free migration” had been temporarily ended in 1939 when the Third Republic instituted its wartime recruitment system. Vichy, of course, maintained this policy until late 1942 and the Liberation era governments saw no reason to revise the situation immediately after the war ended. Indeed, some argued the current situation was much more desirable than the interwar attitude towards Algerian migration. During the deliberations of Sauvy’s committee, he denounced the permanent settlement of “Arabs” on French soil, arguing that the effects of métissage and racial intermixing were detrimental to a properly constituted immigration and population policy. Lumping French North Africans with other “Asiatics”, his report peddled familiar ethnic stereotypes about health and security concerns should Algerians and Moroccans permanently settle in France. Sauvy did accept the necessity of

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135 Viet, Français venus d’ailleurs, 176-177.
136 Spire, Étrangers à la carte, 30-50.
North African workers given the demographic crisis France was experiencing but, just as with Vichy’s recruitment program in 1942, he suggested their use as temporary “guest-workers” rather than full-fledged immigrants.\textsuperscript{137} Other figures responsible for monitoring North Africans during the war concurred with Sauvy, arguing for a tightly regulated system of migration that would provide the French economy with Algerian workers but disallow them from settling permanently.\textsuperscript{138}

Most officials and demographic experts were realistic, however, that movement across the Mediterranean would not be prohibited given the citizenship status of Algerian Muslims. Sentiment even emerged that migration could prove useful in allowing French social, legal and cultural norms to permeate Algerian society. And given the outbreak of violence at Sétif and Guelma in May 1945, the French government was extremely reticent to curtail newly awarded civil rights to FMAs. Nevertheless, the Algerian Office within the Ministry of Interior did not immediately allow “free migration.” Under the direction of Maurice Papon, it only authorized the recruitment of three thousand Algerian miners in September 1945, and then issued a lengthy report on the subject of migration.\textsuperscript{139}

Rather than turn solely to Europeans as Sauvy and Mauco argued, the Algerian Office suggested that France needed to privilege its own nationals when looking for future workers. It agreed with the position that Algerians were less productive than Europeans but argued that if medical and intellectual testing were applied during recruitment, then the “most assimilable” elements of the Algerian population should be allowed to settle in France.

\textsuperscript{139} CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Movements de main-d’oeuvre entre l’Algérie et la Métropole,” Governor General of Algeria to Minister of Labor and Social Security, 12 December 1945.
permanently. Finding the most “assimilable” candidates involved a combination of blood, radioscopic and aptitude testing that would aid in “only sending to the Metropole subjects of a recognized physical integrity…verifying the proper social desirability of the interested; unfavorable elements would then be conserved in Algeria where their surveillance is much easier.” While adopting a more liberal position than Mauco and Sauvy, then, the Ministry of the Interior was unwilling to entirely dispense with the principle of managed migration.

When Algerian migration was discussed in a larger meeting held at the Ministry of the Interior in May 1946, Papon and his staff appear to have modified their position slightly. Still taking a pragmatic stand on the issue – France needed workers and Algeria could supply them in droves – the desire to select specific candidates was viewed as impossible. The fact that Algerians were French citizens did not allow for the creation of separate migration regulations prohibiting them from coming to metropolitan France. Carrying an identity card was necessary for crossing the Mediterranean, and the possibility of medical testing for all passengers wanting to board a transportation vessel left open for discussion, but a specific migration regime governing the entry of Algerian Muslims was not feasible. Papon was supported by the Governor General in Algiers, who noted the creation of specific requirements for select groups – needing a labor contract, for instance, or “aptitude testing” – could be disastrous for France’s position in Algeria given pronouncements of legal equality. If specific individuals could not be “selected” to settle in France, the Ministry of Interior and

141 CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Compte-rendu de la Conférence du 30 mars 1946 – Problème de l’emploi de la main-d’oeuvre algérienne en France.”
Governor General both suggested that the government would need to make use of specially
designed welfare programs to “train” and “educate” migrants arriving on metropolitan soil.\textsuperscript{142}

The Ministry of Population, still holding out hope for prohibiting permanent
settlement, vehemently disagreed with these principles later that summer. At a gathering
chaired by Raymond Haas-Picard, a high-ranking official within the Ministry of Interior,
demographic experts again put forth their opinion that Algerian migration was only an
“economic necessity” and “not an enterprise for repopulation.”\textsuperscript{143} They furthermore
presented “sanitary measures” and controlling “French borders” as benevolent policy
intended to promote social assimilation. “It is believed that, without these precautions,” one
attendee noted, “it will not be possible to prevent in regions that will have a strong
concentration of North Africans the emergence of strongly xenophobic atmosphere.” Hass-
Picard agreed with calls for medical requirements, and even that Italians were more
“assimilable” than Algerians, but once again emphasized the Ministry of Interior was not
prepared to create separate entry requirements for Algerians. Officials at the meeting,
however, also brainstormed ways to slow down migration, and specifically mentioned giving
migrants free passage if they agreed to sign a labor contract with an employer.\textsuperscript{144} As with
Papon’s group there was uniform opinion about the necessity of social services designed to
“integrate” North Africans, if slightly less agreement over who should pay for them.

The meeting chaired by Hass-Picard came at a crucial time in the history of North
African migration to France. In the spring of 1946 transportation vessels began accepting
Algerian Muslim passengers without official authorization. Once word spread that it was

\textsuperscript{142} CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Immigration de la main-d’oeuvre Algérienne dans la Métropole,” Governor
\textsuperscript{143} CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Procès-verbal de la conférence du 9 juillet sur le problème de l’emploi de la
main-d’oeuvre algérienne en France.”
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid
finally possible to make the trip to metropolitan France, thousands headed for Algiers and Oran. The Sûreté reported over 11,000 left for the métropole during September 1946 and police in Marseille calculated another 22,500 arrivals between October 1946 and mid-April 1947. Settlement in France by Algerians looking to escape drought and poverty had such a dramatic impact on Marseille in particular that officials calculated the North African population *doubled* within this short time frame.

The massive influx only exacerbated perceptions Muslim Algerians constituted a social problem. Reports from multiple levels of the French state – policing services, prefectures and ministries in Paris – constantly portrayed Algerian migrants as a burden on French society and a threat to the body politic (sometimes literally). In Marseille, for example, officials complained that Algerian Muslims were simply “congregating” in the city, not attempting to find work, and loitering in the streets. Labor inspectors noted that twenty-five percent were out of work and often refused employment in nearby mining industries. These themes were particularly prominent in Paris where the police service – still bitter about the North African Brigade’s dissolution – complained about black market activities and signs of increasing criminality. One report noted that twenty-five percent of the arrests for theft and burglary in the city were North Africans and many young males simply refused to find a job. Concerns over the spread of tuberculosis, syphilis, typhus and other diseases emerged as well, and not just from demographic and health experts. The CGT in

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147 Ibid
Marseille on one occasion portrayed Algerian migrants as carriers of deadly germs and suggested they were not desirable workers for French industry.\textsuperscript{150}

Most importantly, there was an acute shortage of housing in France, particularly for the working class. Poverty and cautiousness over government-sponsored rooming houses led migrants to rent inexpensive hotel rooms and apartments – sometimes twenty men to a single flat – which again raised health issues and sometimes thinly veiled references to homosexuality among the North African male population.\textsuperscript{151} At the same time, the permanent settlement of Algerians and its social consequences aroused the ire of certain individuals. One memo addressed to Prime Minister Georges Bidault pointed to 10,000 “mixed-race” births between 1940 and 1945, which could very well be true, but in this case clearly used to stoke fears of interracial sex at a time when raising the birthrate was considered a national priority.\textsuperscript{152}

Initial responses to fears over disease, unemployment, criminality, and “racial intermixing” varied between short-term solutions and much more insidious policies that shaped responses to Algerian migration through the postwar period. As a means to counteract Algerian “criminality” and “vagrancy” – shorthand for the concentration of North Africans in major urban areas – more rigorous policing measures were promoted. Paul Pagès, head of the Sûreté Nationale, argued that “all Muslims without work and resources, considered indigent” on metropolitan soil face the threat of deportation. The construction of specially designed

\textsuperscript{150} ADBR, 14 M 2964, Confédération Général du Travail in Marseille to Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône, 5 October 1946.


\textsuperscript{152} AN, F\textsuperscript{60} 865, “Note à l’attention de M. Bidault, Président du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française,” Report from Secrétaire Général du Comité de l’Afrique du Nord, 30 October 1946. I have found no other reference to the occurrence of 10,000 métis births under Vichy and the Occupation, and it is unclear how the French government could even have obtained this information.
camps might also prove useful as a means to exert some semblance of social control.¹⁵³ Newspapers in Paris began a campaign in May 1947 to reconstitute the North African Brigade, relaying a series of sensational stories about violent crimes committed by recent Algerian immigrants. “Five attacks: The perpetrators are all North Africans,” declared one story in Le Pays, while L’Aurore argued in one editorial, “Too many North Africans are becoming ‘bad boys’ in Paris.”¹⁵⁴

While officials in the city were slightly worried about xenophobic reactions against recently arrived Algerians, multiple reports nevertheless argued that the massive increase in the Parisian North African population necessitated specific policing measures. Reconstituting the North African Brigade was dismissed given legal equality between Algerian Muslims and French citizens. On the other hand, the prefect of police saw no problem moving former members of the Brigade to areas of the city witnessing a heavy concentration of North African migrants. Several reports specifically referred to the fourth, fifth, and eighteenth arrondissement, and the industrial suburbs of Asnières, Boulogne, Ivry, and Saint-Denis, as a target for surveillance by officers within the Brigade Volante of the police judiciaire.¹⁵⁵ The association between criminality and the Algerian population led to increasingly draconian actions over the 1940s and 1950s. In the midst of anti-colonial political agitation in Paris, the police created a new division within the police judiciaire named the Brigade des Agressions

et Violences (BAV). As Emmanuel Blanchard has shown, the BAV signified a virtual reconstitution of the North African Brigade in all but name.\footnote{Emmanuel Blanchard, “Police judiciaire et pratiques d'exception pendant la guerre d'Algérie,” Vingtième Siècle, no. 90 (2006): 61-72.}

Just as much attention, however, was placed on attempting to control Algerian migration and “assimilate” new arrivals. If the French government was helpless to prevent migration in the postwar period some functionaries argued that it could at least be slowed down and managed. These measures were often described as “extra-legal” means of preventing the unregulated arrival of Algerians. After receiving several requests from the health and social affairs divisions in Paris, the Governor General of Algeria launched a press and radio campaign to convince potential migrants that unemployment, poverty, and a lack of housing made travelling to France a dubious proposition at this time. Propaganda instead promoted the idea of obtaining work contracts from recruitment offices staffed by members of the colonial administration or French employers, rather than travelling to France on their own.\footnote{CAC, 19860271, carton 2, Governor General of Algeria – Labor Office to Ministry of Labor – Director of Labor, 19 March 1948.} Actions such as these had their limits, mainly because of widespread illiteracy and lack of radio access in rural Algeria. Nevertheless, suggesting the use of contracts allowed officials to set a precise number on the number of entries into metropolitan territory and could aid in directing workers to certain industries – mainly mining and agriculture – or areas like the Alps and parts of eastern France that needed labor.\footnote{CAC, 19860271, carton 2, Governor General of Algeria – Labor Office to Ministry of Labor – Director of Labor, 15 May 1948.} Further, the use of unnamed contracts meant that French officials could group individuals from specific villages or
communes together which, it was argued, decreased “nomadic instincts” among Algerian migrants, making it less likely they would leave their jobs after a short period of time.\footnote{CAC, 19860271, carton 2, Ministry of Labor – Director of Labor to Governor General of Algeria – Labor Office, 14 April 1948.}

Using contracts also allowed French authorities to engage in medical and ethnographic testing on potential workers. Disease and hygiene were two of the most prominent social issues of the era and yet little effort was made to combat the introduction of “physically unfit” Algerians. The under-Secretary of State for Muslim Affairs suggested invoking international maritime law – particularly a 1926 convention on the arrival of “emigrants” – to enforce health requirements for Muslim Algerians arriving on metropolitan soil, but nothing was done to act on his suggestion.\footnote{AN, F\textsuperscript{60} 865, “Note au sujet de l’immigration des travailleurs nord-africaine en France,” Report from sous-secretaire d’Etat des Affaires Musulmanes, 3 January 1947.} Officials in Marseille complained relentlessly over the course of 1947 and 1948 about Paris’s unwillingness to fund a specially designated service for North African medical and aptitude testing.\footnote{CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Visite médicale d’aptitude au Travail,” Prefect of Bouches-du-Rhône to Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 17 June 1947 and “Organisation des visites médicales de travailleurs à Marseille,” Director of Labor to Director of Labor Inspection Médicale du Travail, 3 March 1948.}

Because of this, the Ministry of Labor suggested that using unnamed labor contracts would allow the colonial administration to determine the applicability of Algerians to certain types of work, often based on ethnographic studies that argued individuals from certain “tribes” were better suited for industrial occupations and more “assimilable.” Indeed, the Ministry of Labor argued for the construction of an “ethnographic map” that would facilitate recruiting the best workers by narrowing down specific areas of Algeria with the most ethnically desirable candidates.\footnote{CAC, 19770623, carton 83, “Selection professionelle des mineurs,” Report from Ministry of Labor and Social Security – Inspection Générale de la Formation Professionnelle, 8 February 1946.}

As this would suggest, physical fitness, productivity and social desirability were very much fused together when thinking about migration. But the French government also looked
towards welfare and social programs to ease the transition of Algerians once they arrived.

Although the interwar “Republican Colonial Consensus” was rejected in the sense that French law now prohibited distinct welfare services for Algerians, ideas over the necessity of training and “adapting” recent arrivals to the métropole remained. Indeed, divisions always occurred over whether specific requirements could be imposed on migrants crossing the Mediterranean, but the use of social welfare was much very the new postwar consensus. One of the first measures implemented in this regard were the creation of Bureaux sociaux and contrôleurs sociaux (Social Inspectors) in June 1946.163 These were specially designated government functionaries placed in cities with large North African populations. Designed to act as an intermediary between the French state and North African migrant workers, the contrôleurs sociaux were concerned with employment, housing, making sure that Algerians possessed identity cards, and knew how to access social welfare programs. Assigned a desk within the labor division of the prefecture and familiar with Arabic and “North African customs,” it should come as no surprise that the vast majority of the agents had cut their teeth in Vichy’s MONA offices during the war.

Specific social services also emerged for Algerian migrants on both sides of the Mediterranean. Often disguised as benign training programs, they were rooted in the assumption Algerians needed instruction on how to hold “European” jobs and assimilate into French society. The French government created a training center in Algiers designed to transform unskilled peasants into industrial appetencies for the postwar French economy. Planners simply argued that France needed skilled workers, and Algerians were being given an opportunity to obtain a higher quality of living, but evaluations were based on ethnically

163 AN, F 60 865, “Création de contrôleurs sociaux spécialisés pour les questions nord-africaines, “ Decree from Minister of Labor and Social Security, 13 June 1946.
driven assumptions rooted in supposed social and biological sciences. At the center in Algiers, candidates were graded on a combination of physiological criteria including height, vision, auditory perception, the types of climate in which they were able to “perform” (“outside”, “in a workshop”, “confined space”, “vitiated or toxic”, “humid”, “cold”, “hot”, “rapid change of temperature”), “psycho-motor skills”, and “intellectual” aptitude. All of these criteria were taken into account and the subject directed towards an industry best matching his physiological makeup.164

Training in the métropole took on a range of forms, from “professional training centers” operated by the Ministry of Labor to French-language “education centers” in Paris. René Capitant, who began the later project in 1945, closely associated personal development with language skills, arguing that knowing French aided North African migrants in finding a better job and acclimating to life in France.165 The centers could eventually expand into “Welcome Centers” which would “respond to the task of ameliorating the physical and moral conditions in which North African workers live…Education programs and the social development of the indigenous population is going to be more and more associated with the future of France.”166 Located in schools across Paris, instructors were hired from the Alliance Française and focused on improving “everyday language skills,” literacy (virtually all students were illiterate in both French and Arabic), basic mathematics, and there was even mention of personal hygiene, with instructions on how to seek medical attention at health clinics and care for themselves given the change in climate.167 Recruitment efforts focused on

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164 CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Fiche d’étude sommaire de poste de travail main-d’oeuvre nord-africaine,” Centre de Sélection Professionnelle d’Alger, undated.
165 MAE, Série M – Maroc, 1944-1955, dossier 637, Minister of National Education to French Resident General in Morocco, 19 September 1945.
166 Ibid
167 AN, F60 865, “Un an d’éducation pour les travailleurs nord-africains de la région Parisienne,” Ministry of National Education, 1 August 1946.
North African cafés in Paris but very few Algerians actually registered. As Amelia Lyons has shown, underlying racism and prejudice in French society also worked to counteract education efforts. Very few of trainees from Algiers and Paris were able to find skilled work; job postings in newspapers frequently declared “No North Africans” when listing non-manual labor positions. Nevertheless, these welfare services demonstrated the extent to which various state actors attempted to promote “social adaptation” as a means to deal with an increasingly large North African population in France.

Housing provided another area where the differentiation of Algerians from the metropolitan French population was applied. Historians focused on the 1950s and 1960s have pointed to the infamous HLM and SONACOTRAL apartment complexes were people from the (former) colonies were often relegated after arriving in France. As Kristin Ross has argued, pushing Algerians to industrial suburbs and apartment complexes, often far away from the city center, was symbolic given decolonization. Even in the 1940s, however, dedicated housing for Algerian migrants often took on the appearance of segregated spaces. The Centre d’Hébergement Nord-Africain, which opened in the Part-Dieu section of Lyon in 1946, catered solely to North Africans and more closely resembled a minimum-security prison than a rooming house. Its director argued that a “liberal” system of discipline “cannot obtain anything other than disappointing results” when dealing with North African

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170 As the mission statement declared, “it is by priority, and exclusively, reserved for North African workers…”, which seems to counter the officially declared principle of not creating distinct services for North Africans in France. See ADR, 437 W 113, “Reglement intérieur pour le centre nord-africain de la Part-Dieu,” undated.
migrants, suggesting the use of police officers to patrol the building during the night, only employing European staff, and barbed wire to make the centre more “secure.”¹⁷¹

Tension between the legal equality of Algerians and their social desirability in metropolitan France, of course, persisted through the postwar era. French authorities were constantly balancing the right of Algerian migrants to live in France with demands to reduce their presence because of unemployment or ethnically driven motivations. Belfort in eastern France, just to use one example, complained about the arrival of Algerian workers and requested their removal from the area.¹⁷² The High-Committee on Population and the Family, chaired in the mid-1940s by Robert Schumann, presented a troubling memo to the government arguing for the necessity of labor contracts and permission from local authorities in Algeria before migrants were allowed to cross the Mediterranean.¹⁷³ Those who failed to find work in France or meet certain medical requirements, he argued, should be expelled. None of these proposals came to pass and Ministries of Interior and Labor in Paris were often forced to remind the interested parties that Algerians were in fact French citizens with freedom to access metropolitan soil.

V

The Liberation of France was intended to mark an era of restored French imperial power and renewed relations with la France d’outre-mer. It instead resulted in unfulfilled promises, acrimony, and eventually violent conflict just a few months after the Fourth

¹⁷¹ ADR, 437 W 113, “Projet pour une organization plus rationelle de la gestion du Centre Nord-africain de la Part-Dieu,” undated [1948].
¹⁷³ CAC, 19860271, carton 2, “Immigration nord-africaine en France,” Minister of Foreign Affairs to Président du Conseil, 16 August 1948.
Republic was formally established. The experience of North African and Vietnamese migrants living in France during this period was very much emblematic of the tension between reforming colonialism and the lingering desire to preserve European superiority. French officials talked a great deal about changing the MOI, for example, or treating Algerians like French citizens, but these efforts often came up against a series of obstacles. Entrenched interests within metropolitan society that had invested their careers in arguing for the necessity of distinct programs were furious about attempts to quash their legacy. Pierre Godin, a Parisian politician that helped to create the North African Brigade and SAINA during the 1920s, remained incredulous that his “expertise” was rejected after the war.174 MOI agents also argued that giving more control to Vietnamese workers would undermine their authority, and by implication, colonial rule in Indochina itself.

Second was the continued – and institutionalized – assumption that colonials were not French and that treating them as such was undesirable. Todd Shepard has argued in his work that it was only during the Algerian conflict that politicians in the postwar period began to use the idea Algerians were not French as a means to justify decolonization.175 As the previous discussion indicates, however, the idea that Algerians were not French was pervasive in the postwar period. De Gaulle and his administration did indeed point to the fact that Algeria and Algerians were different than metropolitan citizens to justify his policies, but this was a cynical maneuver had been employed regularly over the previous decades. In this sense, de Gaulle was simply recognizing what French republican authorities argued amongst themselves for years.

174 AN, F60 865, Pierre Godin to Lt. Col. Spillman. 8 August 1945.
Decolonization and anti-colonialism also informed policies directed at Asians and Africans living on metropolitan soil, although in different ways. The draconian policies directed at Algerians in France during the 1950s and 1960s – which included arrests, internment, deportations, and even the use of torture – are well known, but similar policies were used against Vietnamese migrants in the 1940s. The French state explicitly maintained *encadrement* until repatriations ended in the 1950s as a means to limit contact between the migrant community and French population, as well as facilitate military operations in Indochina. Leaders of anti-colonial movements were arrested and jailed; workers were kept from protesting French actions in Vietnam; and migration was limited based on the need to preserve French colonialism. Jim House and Neil MacMaster point to policing tactics developed in Algeria as a key influence in how the government dealt with the FLN in France during the 1950s, but the necessity of dealing with Vietnamese protest during the 1940s in teaching the French police about how to deal with anti-colonial movements should not be discounted either.\(^\text{176}\)

While the Vietnamese community was hounded by the French state, Algerians enjoyed legal protection because of their newfound status as French citizens. Although their permanent presence in France was deemed not desirable by a bevy of “experts” and politicians, wariness over anti-colonialism made the creation of distinct, ethnically driven entry requirements for French Muslims from Algeria impossible at this time. Politicians instead resorted to a variety of “extra-legal” and welfare oriented policies intended to manage migration patterns. It is not clear how successful the use of labor contracts or medical testing was during this late 1940s and early 1950s. But the legacy of social programs lingers. As I have demonstrated here, successive French governments consciously assigned colonial

\(^{176}\) House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*. 
migrants to welfare programs designed to help them “adapt” to life in France. Following the independence of Algeria in 1962, migration rights were theoretically still granted to Algerians wanting to work in France. In 1964, however, the Neccache-Grandval Accords limited Algerian immigration. As the agreement noted, Algerian migration to France would be based on “availabilities” of Algerian labor and “openings” in the French job market.177

This chapter ends in the late 1940s with the position of Asian and Africans in French society unresolved. Vietnamese had just witnessed repatriations halted because of fears over their re-introduction into colonial society would cause problems in the midst of war and decolonization. Algerians faced the contradictory position of enjoying more rights than their Vietnamese counterparts but were nevertheless considered ethnographically undesirable as full-fledged “immigrants.” In this sense, the point at which this story ends is somewhat arbitrary. But no more arbitrary, I would argue, than the years 1954 or 1962, which marked the beginning and end of the Algerian conflict. Indeed, the legacies of the period under discussion – when the nature of French colonialism and desirability of non-European colonials were being debated in postwar France – are still with us. Just before the recent French elections in early 2012, the Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme (CNCDH) also released an alarming survey showing almost 80% of the population considering Romani peoples “un-French,” over 50% for Muslims, 40% for North Africans and 38% for Asians.178 Despite the supposed constitution of a color-blind Republican society, then, systematized discrimination – both at the state and popular level – of non-white immigrants continues to this day.

178 “On assistait à un recul des préjugés racistes, la tendances s’est inversée,” Libération, 27 March 2012.
Conclusion

‘The Illness of Immigration’

“I will always remember this image of my arrival in France, it is the first thing I saw, the first thing I heard: you knock at the door, it opens on to a little room that smells of a mixture of things, the damp, the closed atmosphere, the sweat of sleeping men. Such sadness! Such misery in their eyes, in their voices – they spoke softly – in their words. That gave me insight into what loneliness is, what sadness is: the darkness of the room, the darkness of the room… the darkness in the streets – the darkness of the whole of France, because, in our France, there is nothing but darkness.”


There is a famous picture taken on Ellis Island from the late nineteenth century that has become etched into the history of immigration to the United States. Rows upon rows of Irish, Italians, Poles, Germans, Russian Jews, Greeks and others in neat lines that stretch out of the photograph. They await American authorities to call them forward, where, in huge books, they write their names upon the ledger and are welcomed into the United States. The actual history, of course, is more complicated. But comparable iconic images do not exist in the history of French immigration. Despite the fact that one out of every five French citizens is the descendant of an immigrant, the idea still exists that France is a country that welcomes

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foreigners and not a “nation” of immigrants.² If a photograph did exist, perhaps it would be of ships pulling in to Marseille from Algeria in the 1940s, and unloading hundreds of men wearing their bournous, hoping to find work on the other side of the Mediterranean. Instead, as the above quote transcribed by the Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad indicates, immigrants in the French context are typically cloaked in darkness or portrayed as an “invasion” attacking the French social body like an unwanted biological element.³

I

The experience of colonial migrants in Wartime France represents a crucial moment for discovering how and why people from the French empire became shrouded in darkness or associated with disease. Metropolitan France was an arena in which forms of knowledge that circulated around the empire met North African and Vietnamese migrants. In this sense, it represents a metropolitan space as well as a colonial space, revealing the stratified nature of race, ethnicity and colonialism in the French imagination. Examining the presence of colonial migrants demonstrates the extent to which colonial rule and its attendant consequences pervaded French society at the time. It shaped ideas of labor productivity, health, social mores, and perceptions of the colonial body under the Third Republic. It influenced access to social assistance, welfare, employment, and rations under Vichy. It impacted the reception of anti-colonial protest in postwar France, migration rights, and conceptions of Algerian citizenship. And it invariably influenced the way in which the French population reacted to their presence in France. The French might very well have been “absentminded imperialists” but colonialism undoubtedly permeated every aspect of French life at this time.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Minister of Colonies Georges Mandel called on the colonial empire to contribute workers for French farms and factories. Between September 1939 and June 1940, approximately 40,000 Algerians, Moroccans and Vietnamese arrived on metropolitan soil, joining thousands of their compatriots who had moved to France during the interwar period. They had been identified by the colonial state in remote areas, brought to a port of disembarkation, and then put on a ship for France. While the process itself demonstrates the enormous sophistication of colonial rule, recruitment was riddled with inefficiencies, as interwar censuses of labor were incorrect and transportation hobbled by outbreaks of disease. When the workers arrived, a degree of social equality that eluded them in the colonies was expected in France. While many did enjoy more social rights – the ability to date white women and converse with the French in cafés, for example – their lives were governed by the system of *encadrement*, placing them at the mercy of the government. Their employment was highly racialized, housing designed to promote health and productivity, and they were subject to exclusionary policies creating social isolation from the general population.

The establishment of Philippe Pétain’s Vichy regime in 1940 significantly altered the situation of colonial migrants in France. Imbued with an organic, highly exclusionary conception of belonging, Pétain’s government embarked on a project to radically alter French society. Thousands of Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians were expelled from metropolitan soil and Vietnamese relegated to work camps immediately after the defeat. Welfare and employment became highly contingent on national belonging, and North Africans in particular were targeted with exclusionary measures. Although historians treat the Vichy years in a continuum, beginning in 1940 and steadily degrading to 1944, the position of colonials in
French society was significantly altered by a rebound in the French labor market. After 1942, colonial migrants were assigned a special place in Vichy France – “workers” – although ideology continued to govern the specific jobs they held, and for North Africans, the creation of a recruitment regime which rejected their ability to live in France permanently.

Material scarcities, demands from employers, animosity from the French population, and authoritarian policies from the government heavily impacted life in Vichy France for colonial migrants. Vietnamese were used as an inexpensive source of rural labor for the regime and kept under *encadrement* despite its obvious failures. The rationing system designed by authorities was clearly incapable of providing them with sufficient food, leading to confrontation with the French population as Vietnamese resorted to theft. North Africans also suffered from material shortages and xenophobic behavior in markets and shops, leading to desertions from their jobs. In both cases, local demands for curtailing the rights of colonial migrants became a way to build support for the regime. Both groups suffered restricted mobility, and for North Africans, a special police network that was forced to balance the demands of French business as well as pressure from the German occupiers.

Liberation spurred hopes the spirit of co-operation that had overtaken France would soon be applied to colonial issues as well. In France itself, thousands of colonial migrants participated in resistance movements or joined the FFI, with others became targets of prejudice, discrimination and violent reprisals. Calls for a removal of organizations like the MOI and North African Affairs offices emerged at this time. The MOI was simply renamed rather than abolished, and Vietnamese continued their lives under *encadrement*, but the French government, in light of reforms declaring Algerians French citizens, dissolved the programs intended to isolate North Africans in the métropole. Decolonization and lingering
hostility towards a permanent Algerian population living in France, however, soon affected the two groups in different ways. The deteriorating situation in Indochina – and eventually outbreak of war – relegated Vietnamese to the metropolitan France until the late 1940s and early 1950s, as colonial authorities became worried about their seditious behavior. Algerians did not lose the right of free migration, but perceptions about their undesirability in France created hostility, “extra-legal” policies, and social welfare programs that assumed colonials required assistance “adapting” to French society.

The place afforded to colonials in wartime France was complicated and constantly evolving, driven by the interplay between various segments of French society. The government at Paris and Vichy was, of course, enormously influential. It designed the system of encadrement, controlled the physical infrastructure of the MOI, along with various organizations for monitoring North Africans around France. Most importantly, the central government was highly involved in controlling borders and frontiers, suggesting a great deal about how it used the disaggregated nature of French colonial rule for its own benefit. If Vietnamese migrants were viewed as a potential threat to the French presence in Indochina, they could be prevented from returning. North Africans were barred from entering metropolitan soil under Vichy except as guest workers. And throughout the period, fears over destabilizing colonial racial and gender hierarchies often worked to curtail migration rights for “mixed-race” couples.

At the same time, however, the national government was not the sole arbiter for determining the colonial migrant experience. It was played out on the streets of Paris, Marseille, and Lyon; in the mines of Alès and Saint-Etienne; in the factories of the Alps; in small villages across southern France; and in ration queues, welfare offices, prefectures, and
police stations. The colonial migrant experience, in other words, was fundamentally shaped by their interaction with French society at a local level. Some of these encounters produced marriages and long lasting friendships. During *les années noires*, however, the demands of business and French men and women – desperate for food, jobs, housing and meager state resources – often influenced the position of North Africans and Vietnamese in French society through different forms of racial prejudice. Prefects, labor officials and policemen created their own policies or demanded the central government respond to local concerns. Farmers wrote petitions about the undesirable nature of Vietnamese forestry workers nearby, and shopkeepers occasionally refused to serve Algerians. Business bristled at labor shortages and demanded police keep their workforce in place. This interplay between local and national actors had a profound affect on colonial migrants, expanding, contracting, and creating a separation between the rights they enjoyed.

The migrants responded to all of this throughout their stay in a variety of different ways. Long-term residents of metropolitan France often described themselves as “French” when seeking aide from the government or claiming social rights. Did Algerians demanding unemployment assistance in 1940, for example, think of “Frenchness” as defined solely by the law? Was it someone that had lived in the métropole for many years? Their perception of French identity remains unclear but speaks to the complicated nature of belonging for many colonials at this time. Others, by contrast, clearly became embittered through their experience. The most obvious examples are Vietnamese – in some cases kept in France for over ten years – who clearly did not believe in the idea of French superiority by the end of their stay. North Africans faced daily, mundane forms of discrimination, ranging from harassment by the police, to duplicitous behavior from recruiting agents and functionaries
serving the French state. This, perhaps more than anything else, demonstrated the chasm between Algerian and French, citizen and subject.

II

The story of colonial migration to France does not end in the 1940s. Indeed, it is at the very heart of postwar French history. Following the formal establishment of “free” mobility between Algeria and metropolitan France, hundreds of thousands made their way across the Mediterranean in hopes of a better life. By the start of the Algerian conflict in 1954, just over 220,000 North Africans were living scattered across metropolitan territory. Rather than work to slow down migration, war and vicious pacification tactics by the French military actually increased its pace. In 1962 authorities counted approximately 350,000 in the métropole. Racism and discrimination against Algerians in particular exploded during these years. As Neil MacMaster has shown, the outbreak of war against the Front de Libération National (FLN) led to newspapers denouncing the violent behavior of migrants in France itself. Areas in urban centers that had been mixed in the years immediately following the war were irrecoverably changed after 1954. France’s version of “white flight” eventually led to the concentration of North and West African immigrants in “ethnic enclaves”; new apartment buildings constructed by SONACOTRA sprouted up on the outskirts of major urban areas like Paris, Lyon, and Marseille and remain one of the most visible symbols the postwar housing crunch.

4 Viet, La France immigée, 184.
FLN tactics also drove xenophobic impulses during the war. As part of its efforts to turn the French population against the conflict, it launched a series of coordinated attacks within France against police and military depots. This supposedly justified the re-emergence of specific North African police and surveillance forces that had been declared antithetical to the process of political assimilation after 1945. In 1956 Maurice Papon, a former Vichy functionary charged with deporting Jews from Bordeaux, was appointed to an important position within the colonial administration in eastern Algeria. He helped to form a special organization – the SAS – dedicated to “pacifying” the region through a combination of social assistance programs and brutal policing measures, including the use of torture. Two years later Papon was named Paris prefect of police and brought members of the SAS back with him to the métropole. These officers employed torture on metropolitan soil as a means of eliciting confessions and information from suspected members of the FLN in France, and then on 17 October 1961, beat peaceful protesters in Paris objecting to a recent decree on curfews, killing at least thirty of them, and dumping their bodies into the Seine. The conflict ended in 1962 with independence for Algeria, but Algerians nevertheless enjoyed the right of “free migration” until the early 1970s, and the population exploded to more than 800,000 by the time France closed its borders to all foreign immigration in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.

The history of postwar Vietnamese migration is much less well known but filled with stories of violence and rupture nonetheless. As French subjects, their right to seek entry on

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11 L’immigration algérienne, 18.
metropolitan soil was not absolute. In the first half of the twentieth century migration between France and Indochina was often driven by coercion – as in the case of workers during the Second World War – or heavily mediated by the French government. The outbreak of war only exacerbated difficulties for those living in France, as they often became targets of animosity from the French population and discriminatory policies preventing them from returning home. In the end, most did return in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but several of the original migrants settled in France permanently, either out of a desire to attend school or because they had married a French woman.\textsuperscript{12}

Similar to many former West African veterans who continue to argue for pension and other monetary benefits because of their service to France, by the 1970s, Vietnamese workers were also demanding compensation. In 1976, a Vietnamese worker named Nguyen Van Viet petitioned the French government for a pension because of his service during the war. Viet had been stationed at Saint-Chamas outside of Marseille and managed to stay in France during the postwar repatriations. Raymond Picot, a government official assigned to review Viet’s case, responded positively, noting that the former worker could seek a pension because he had lived in France continuously since the 1940s and received French citizenship in 1975. On the other hand, Picot noted that this was an “exceptional case” and that future decisions of this nature should only “benefit workers…that have held a single and continuous career in France.”\textsuperscript{13}

When Viet was being awarded his pension, several other Vietnamese came forward to demand compensation. The relative of a former Vietnamese worker wrote the government

\textsuperscript{12} Daum, \textit{Immigrés de force}, 175-190.
noting that his father (or grandfather?), Nguyen Van Phat, had worked in Angoulême between March and June 1940 but had never received his wages. In this case, the fact Phat had been repatriated to Saigon in 1952 and was a Vietnamese citizen disqualified him from financial compensation. Even though a former engineer at Angoulême provided an official statement attesting to Phat’s presence, the Ministry of Defense noted his story could not be “verified” because part of the archives had been destroyed during the war. Five years later, another former worker named Paul Nguyen Sao was denied access to his wages, still held at a facility in Bordeaux, because his identity could also not be “verified” by authorities.

Rather than this narrative – of a France constantly making claims on its Indochinese subjects and often denying them wages or benefits – there is instead the image of a benevolent, welcoming France that typically revolves around two dates in particular: 1954 and 1975. In 1954, the French military allowed thousands of so-called rapatriés (repatriates) to “return” to the métropole after the independence of Viet Nam. The term rapatriés is peculiar since many of those brought back to had never set foot on metropolitan soil. Instead, they were French loyalists, naturalized citizens, or “Franco-Vietnamese Eurasians.” Like previous waves of Vietnamese migrants before them, they were relegated to “welcome camps” that mostly served to segregate them from the neighboring French population.

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housed Vietnamese workers under Vichy. Similarly, after the American military withdrew from Saigon in 1975, hundreds of thousands fled the reunified state over the next decade. The so-called “boat people” mostly settled in Australia, Canada and the United States, but close to 200,000 made their way to France as well. They, too, were shuttled into centers designed to facilitate their integration into society.

III

Prejudice against both the descendants of North African Muslims and former Vietnamese colonial subjects has shaped their postwar experience, but anti-immigration rhetoric is not new. It emerged in the late nineteenth century as Italians and Belgians made their way to France, continued into the interwar period in the form of quotas for certain professional occupations, and then into the postwar era when the prime focus became not Italians or Jews, but dark-skinned, Muslim immigrants from France’s colonial – and then former colonial – possessions. Journalists in the Anglophone world have become obsessed by the rise of the extreme-right Front National (FN) over the last thirty years, but have paid less attention to how much of their discourse – while perhaps not as extreme – has been present in immigration debates over the last hundred years.

In 2006, following the riots in suburbs across France that were sparked by the killing of a young man of North African descent in Paris, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior at the time, introduced a law in the National Assembly he had been touting for years that sought to re-open France’s borders to some immigration. It quickly drew criticism for its emphasis on what Sarkozy called immigration choisie – “selective immigration.” His immigration

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regime, much like the current system in Canada, gave preference to educated immigrants “selected” based on their desirability for the French economy. Sarkozy was quickly denounced for passing a law that violated French universalism by prioritizing certain individuals over others, and furthermore, of covertly supporting the agenda of Jean Marie (and now Marine) Le Pen’s Front National. Sarkozy, of course, argued that selecting immigrants was just sound public policy. “If Le Pen said ‘the sun is yellow’,,” he asked in a televised interview on TF1, “should I say that it is blue?”

Several years later during his tenure as President, Sarkozy, who failed to fully implement the program as Minister of Interior, latched on to the economic downturn following the 2008 global financial crisis to propose quotas on foreign employment in France. In 2011, Claude Guéant, Sarkozy’s Minister of Interior, addressed a circular to prefects arguing that French skilled tradesmen should be prioritized over foreigners when employers were looking for workers. Again, this was reduced to Sarkozy trolling for support among France’s downtrodden working-class and FN adherents before the upcoming elections.

There was almost no analysis of how the rhetoric used by Sarkozy – declared antithetical to republican principles – mirrored previous immigration regimes in French history, particularly within the context of extra-European migration. His open insistence on “selecting” potential immigrants was against the historical norm, and to some extent mirrored Vichy’s insistence on choosing which North African could serve as useful workers. Pronouncements about the “un-French” or non-republican nature of his policies, however, elevate the republican history of French immigration – and especially the legacy of migration between France and its former colonies – to an undeserved place. In an effort to counter

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21 “Guéant veut réduire de moitié l’immigration professionnelle,” Le Figaro, 1 June 2011.
Sarkozy and the FN, some have taken this rhetoric too far, partly reproducing the notion of a “color-blind” French social body to which an immigrant can or should assimilate. One recent collection of biographical essays by foreign-born French personalities, for example, is entitled *Comment je suis devenu français*: How I Became French.22

The assumption that France should be monitoring its borders and managing “desirable” and “undesirable” migration was pervasive during the 1930s and 1940s, and indeed, throughout much of the twentieth century. Even though Vichy was much more explicit in promoting a bounded, organic conception of belonging in French society, authorities in the Third and Fourth Republics also brought their personal attitudes over “colored” immigration to bear. It might have been expressed in paternalistic terms, but the insistence on using “extra-legal” means of curtailing Algerians from permanently settling in France was not confined to *les années noires*. Indeed, it was very much central to French policy across all three regimes of the period.

The debate over Guéant’s decree also demonstrated the lack of knowledge about the history of internal discrimination against “foreigners” and immigrants in French society. France, to paraphrase Clifford Rosenberg, policed its borders not only at the frontier but also throughout the national territory, with a variety of policies and administrative agencies that defined the position of colonial migrants in French society.23 Many of these were influenced by conceptions of African and Asian bodies, their relation to metropolitan society, and their position as “subjects” and “French nationals.” As Abdelmalek Sayad noted, “the immigrant, or the man we are talking about, exists, in reality, only insofar as he has been constructed, shaped, and defined. Perhaps no social object is more basically shaped by the perception we

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have of it than the population of immigrants.”\textsuperscript{24} As colonial migrants made their way to France, their very presence in metropolitan society became an object of focus, and it usually revolved around physical and intellectual characteristics deemed less evolved than Europeans. At the same time, the very nature of French racial thought meant that the question of whether they could “adapt” to metropolitan society was never fully solved, and indeed, it still propels discussions of the immigrant in France today.

While the focus was historically on the Asian and African body – its health, productivity, sexual mores, and receptiveness to the French climate – contemporary discourse is centered on one aspect above all: religion. Although France is currently undergoing debates over whether Muslims can “adapt” to life in France – or become full-fledged members of the national community – much of the discourse from the 1940s remains. For some, French Muslims are “fanatics”, predisposed to violent behavior, and have created “ethnic enclaves” in cities “separated from French territory.” In this sense, the discontinuity between France and its empire has now become embedded within the métropole itself, as the children and grandchildren of former colonial subjects live in “colonies” that no longer resemble French territory. North and West Africans in particular have become associated with welfare and social assistance and thus objects of hate from the Front National. What gets lost in this rhetoric, however, is that welfare policies were specifically designed to “integrate” people from the French empire to life in the metropolitan France. Despite hostile proclamations from the FN, the reality is much different, as a recent study from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted that immigrants were four times more likely to live in poverty than French citizens.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Sayad, \textit{Suffering of the Immigrant}, 175.
A historic photograph of French immigration, then, would take into account not only the French side of the story, but that of the immigrant as well. The path forward lies in breaking down the image of a universalistic, welcoming France that has largely shied away from using race and ethnicity as a social marker. As I have shown here, that was clearly not the case. French authorities constantly discussed colonial migration through reference to race, ethnicity and colonial status during the 1930s and 1940s, and yet were unwilling to publically proclaim their belief non-European migrants were undesirable candidates for permanent immigration. A pluralistic France that accepts ethnic and religions difference would in no way violate the spirit of French republicanism. As Fanon noted in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “an individual must endeavor to see the universalism inherent in the human condition.” Following this prescription would help bring the history of immigration to the forefront, recognizing its centrality to the modern French nation; and the immigrant, out of the darkness and into the light.
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