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Rachel White April 7, 2010

Redeeming the Past:
The 2001 Commemoration of the Paris Massacre of 17 October 1961

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Abstract

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By Rachel White

On the night of 17 October 1961, 30,000 Algerians, including families dressed in their Sunday best, poured into central Paris from the suburbs to protest the discriminatory curfew imposed upon them several days before. Alarmed by the large numbers of protesters and incited to brutality by Paris police prefect Maurice Papon, the Paris police opened fire on the demonstrators. It is still unknown today how many people lost their lives that evening and in the following days, but historians' current estimations range from 32 to 200 deaths. The massacre was an act of police vengeance and retribution for the FLN assassinations of 29 police officers in the preceding months. Most importantly, the French state directly contributed to the cover-up following 17 October 1961. In the first chapter, I present the massacre in the context of the Algerian War (1954-1962) and the turbulent history of colonization and de-colonization in Algeria. The second chapter addresses the media reaction in the months immediately following the massacre and the reasons for the supposed "occultation" of the massacre from French memory. In the third chapter, I examine the process by which this event returned to the public scene during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the final chapter, I demonstrate the extent to which the 2001 commemoration for the 40th anniversary of the massacre of 17 October 1961 reflects non-Algerian French society's attempt to rewrite or revise its own history. The commemoration represented a step towards an official recognition of the massacre but stopped short of acknowledging state responsibility or of offering an official apology; president Jacques Chirac made no official statement for the commemoration. Through a study of the press from the period immediately following 17 October 1961 and the week surrounding the 2001 commemoration, concentrating on the newspapers *La Croix, Libération,* and *L'Humanité*, I explain how the respective newspapers attempted to justify their actions in 1961 and redeem their shortcomings through their coverage of the commemoration. Finally, I frame the discussion of the commemoration in the context of questions of memory and the limitations of commemorative projects.

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Introduction

"Sûrement la Seine était rouge ce jour-là, de nuit on voyait pas."[1]
- Leila Sebbar, *La Seine était rouge*

On the night of 17 October 1961, 30,000 Algerians, including families dressed in their Sunday best, poured into central Paris from the suburbs to protest against the discriminatory curfew imposed upon them several days before. Although they were summoned by the FLN, the Algerian National Liberation Front, the unarmed demonstrators sought only to assert their presence in the French metropolis and demand an end to the policies of harassment and discrimination that plagued their daily lives. Alarmed by the large numbers of protesters and incited to brutality by Paris police prefect Maurice Papon, the French police force opened fire on the demonstrators. More than 10,000 Algerians were taken by buses or police cars to stadiums on the outskirts of Paris or to the central police prefecture. Thousands remained detained for days and weeks and several hundred were deported to Algeria, while untold numbers flooded hospitals in the wake of the massacre with severe head traumas from beatings and "interrogation techniques." It is still unknown today how many people lost their lives on that evening and in the days that followed, but historians' current estimations range from thirty to two hundred deaths. The massacre was an act of police vengeance, which served as retribution for the FLN assassinations of about sixty police officers in the Paris region in the months preceding the massacre. Most importantly, the French state directly

[1] "Surely, the Seine was red that day. At night, you couldn't tell." Leila Sebbar, *La Seine était rouge* (Paris: Thierry Magnier, 1999), 63.

contributed to the cover-up following the events of that evening, thus rendering the massacre an act of state terror.

In the wake of 17 October 1961, the liberal French press published extensively on the massacre and its aftermath. Despite its pleas for an investigation, the Prefect of the Paris Police, Maurice Papon, enforced the official silence and effectively blocked an investigation into the occurrences of that night, acknowledging only two deaths related to the incident and insisting that his police officers acted purely in self-defense. It soon became clear even to the most conservative sectors of society that the death toll was far higher than the police wished to admit. Papon, however, maintained his dubious story until the clamor had subsided, effectively stopping the momentum of the press. Additionally, another act of police repression less than four months later served to monopolize public sympathy and distract the French left from demanding the truth about 17 October 1961. During the suppression of an anti-OAS demonstration,[2] nine French communists were killed at the Charonne metro station on 9 February 1962. The public outcry and citywide demonstrations effectively paralyzed Paris in the days following Charonne, in marked contrast to the minimal protests following 17 October 1961. With the end of the Algerian war in March 1962, President Charles de Gaulle encouraged the nation to look forward and move past the terrible events of the preceding years, thus permitting the massacre of 17 October to fade even further from public discussion. Finally, the disenfranchised state of the Algerian immigrant population in France and schisms within the French left, the group in French society most likely to champion such

[2] The OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète) was a far-right terrorist organization that fought for the preservation of *Algérie Française* throughout the conflict in Algeria.

a cause other than the Algerians themselves, resulted in the disappearance of the massacre from the public scene for several decades.

During the 1980s and 1990s, scholars, activists, and descendants of Algerian immigrants finally succeeded in breaking the "silence" regarding 17 October 1961. A renewed interest in the massacre, spearheaded by the French left and antiracist activist organizations such as SOS Racisme, le collectif du 17 Octobre 1961, and Au nom de la mémoire, led to pressure for due recognition of the suffering of the victims of the massacre and a rendering of historical justice. The most decisive event, responsible for a deluge of media attention to the 17 October 1961 massacre, was the trial in 1997-98 of Maurice Papon, chief of the Parisian police during the 1961 massacre, for his role in the deportation of French Jews during the Vichy regime.[3] Although Papon had been exonerated in the 1962 Evian Accords for his actions in the 17 October 1961 massacre, the historian Jean-Luc Einaudi, an expert in the field and author of the book *La Bataille de Paris* (1991), was invited to testify at the trial. The evidence he presented illustrated Papon's role in giving carte blanche to the Parisian police to render "la vengeance préventive" at their discretion and with complete impunity. When Papon objected to Einaudi's use of the term "massacre" to describe the violence of 17 October 1961, the ensuing lawsuit for libel decided in Einaudi's favor, thus publically and legally validating that a massacre had in fact taken place in Paris on 17 October 1961.[4] With the connection between Papon's role in the Vichy debacle and the massacre of 17 October 1961

[3] Richard J. Golson, *The Papon Affair: Memory and Justice on Trial* (New York, Routledge, 2000).
[4] When Papon sued Einaudi for libel in February 1999 for stating that Papon had incited his police officers to commit a "massacre," the court ruled that Einaudi's use of the word "massacre" to describe the events of 17 October 1961 was appropriate. Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 313-314.

illuminated through the trial, the French media at last began to demonstrate renewed zeal for the questions surrounding the massacre of 1961.

Although the trial significantly contributed to the reawakening of public interest in the events of October 1961, historians began to reexamine the massacre several years before Papon's trial. A brief survey of the historiography regarding the massacre of 17 October 1961 and its context provides not only a framework for subjects treated in this thesis but also an important examination of the political issues surrounding the study of the massacre. Additionally, each work illustrates a development in the study of memory surrounding 17 October 1961 and represents an attempt, however successful, to impartially examine the massacre and its context in light of new historical research.

The first major scholarly analysis to break the silence surrounding the massacre of 17 October 1961 appeared in 1991, thirty years after the massacre, as historian Jean-Luc Einaudi's work *La Bataille de Paris: 17 octobre 1961,* which sought to disprove the "official version" of the events of that notorious evening.[5] Although barred from the official police archives, Einaudi employed FLN archives and oral testimony to substantiate his argument that the Paris police had shot, drowned, and massacred unarmed Algerian demonstrators protesting against the curfew imposed upon them several days earlier. The momentum incited by Einaudi's ground-breaking work, magnified by the media frenzy surrounding the 1997-98 trial of Maurice Papon during which Einaudi served as an expert witness, forced the French government to grant limited access to government and police archives concerning the massacre. Einaudi remained excluded from archival access even after the government granted permission to three hand-picked historians, notably Jean-Paul Brunet, a historian at the Sorbonne and the École Normale

[5] Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La Bataille de Paris: 17 octobre 1961*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 1991).

Supérieure. In 1999, only a year after being granted archival access, Brunet published *Police Contre FLN: Le drame d'octobre 1961*,[6] which criticized Einaudi's reliance on FLN archives and oral testimony and proposed a strictly "unemotional" approach to the study of the massacre. Despite his claims of academic impartiality, his work largely reflects the interests of the French government and police force by proposing a minimum estimation of thirty deaths based almost exclusively on police and government records. Einaudi retaliated two years later with *Octobre à Paris: un massacre à Paris*,[7] in which he painstakingly cited evidence for each of the 200 deaths he associated with 17 October 1961. His sources include the FLN archives and oral testimonies rejected by Brunet but he cross-references this data with the government archives to which he finally gained access. Despite his careful documentation of every death, Einaudi acknowledges that many occurred in the weeks before and after the massacre, not just during the massacre and its immediate aftermath.

The most complete, unbiased study of the massacre remains Jim House's and Neil MacMaster's book *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (2006). House and MacMaster distance themselves from the highly politicized debate over the number of deaths related to 17 October 1961. Although the authors favor Einaudi's estimation and certainly reject the government's underestimation, they insist that the primary concern of historians should be to seek an understanding of the complex issues that set the stage for the violence of 17 October. Additionally, *Paris 1961* sheds light on the highly contested question of responsibility; rather than seeking to pinpoint blame, the authors deliberately examine the complicated situations of both the FLN activists in Paris and the Paris police

[6] Jean-Paul Brunet, *Police contre FLN: Le drame d'octobre 1961*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).
[7] Jean-Luc Einaudi, *Octobre à Paris: un massacre à Paris* (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

force under Maurice Papon. The second half of the work analyzes the memory, absence of public memory, and implications of the massacre in French society, as well as the reasons for the political and social marginalization of the events of October 1961 and the changing circumstances that allowed the reopening of the discussion of 17 October and its eventual commemoration in 2001. The 2001 commemoration, sponsored in part by the government of Bertrand Delanöe, socialist mayor of Paris, marked the 40th anniversary of the massacre with a weeklong series of events, including a ceremony at Pont St-Michel, where a plaque was placed in memory of the Algerians who lost their lives during the police repression on the night of 17 October 1961.

This thesis will continue the work of House and MacMaster by building on their analysis of memory, explaining how and why the 2001 commemoration finally gained political support and what this commemoration meant for different sectors of French society. House and MacMaster mention the commemoration only in passing, primarily as an illustration of the changing climate of memory and acceptance regarding the massacre. The events of the week surrounding 17 October 2001 can be studied as an important benchmark for a change in societal attitudes, which manifest themselves in the actions taken by certain groups, notably the Paris government and the French left, on the occasion of the commemoration of the massacre. The commemoration necessarily begs the question of significance for the descendants of Algerian immigrants involved in the massacre; certain newspaper articles point to a general sentiment of "moving on," compounded by decades of willful forgetting and determined silence.[8] Although undoubtedly important as a recognition of the immense suffering of Algerian immigrants in Paris, the commemoration of the massacre appears to have been more politically useful for certain

[8] Notably *La Croix*, 17 October 2001

sectors in non-Algerian French society, especially the French left. I argue, therefore, that certain sectors in non-Algerian French society used the 2001 commemoration of the massacre of 17 October 1961 to rewrite or justify their actions or inactions at the time of the massacre. By examining the attitudes of both the national government under President Jacques Chirac and the Parisian government under Socialist Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, I will explain the ambiguous engagement of the French government in the 2001 commemoration.

While the commemoration represented a first step towards an official recognition of the massacre, it stopped short of acknowledging state responsibility or offering an official apology for the government's role in both the massacre itself and the suppression of an investigation. The absence of such a statement was especially noticeable given Chirac's apology in 1995 for the French state's role in the deportation of Jews during the Holocaust.[9] Although Mayor Delanoë, accompanied by a delegation from the Parisian government and representatives from Leftist political parties, placed a commemorative plaque on Pont St-Michel in the 4th arrondissement of Paris, president Chirac made no official statement for the commemoration.[10] Representatives from conservative political parties chose not to attend the plaque ceremony, and the Parisian police protested that the plaque included no mention of the officers slain by the FLN during the war. In contrast to the spirit of the commemoration, the police continued their attempts to justify their actions in 1961 and exonerate themselves of responsibility for the massacre. The commemoration

[9] Julie Fette, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," In *Historical Justice in International Perspective: How Societies are Trying to Right the Wrongs of the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[10] The text of the plaque reads: "À la mémoire de nombreux Algériens tués lors de la sanglante répression de la manifestation pacifique du 17 octobre 1961." The use of the passive voice will be discussed in Chapter 4, which deals with the 2001 commemoration.

was thus an ambiguous gesture, markedly divided by party loyalties and political agendas. Despite the significant media attention it attracted, it hardly represented the unified national commitment to acknowledging the massacre and honoring the victims that the organizers had intended.

Although my methodology is primarily a study of the press from both the period immediately following 17 October 1961 and the period surrounding the 2001 commemoration, concentrating on the newspapers *L'Humanité, Libération,* and *La Croix*, I hope to frame this study in the context of memory and commemoration as well. Through an examination of the press, I will demonstrate how the respective newspapers attempted to justify their publications and actions in 1961 and redeem their shortcomings through the coverage of the commemoration. All three newspapers represent various facets of the French left, ranging from the Communist *L'Humanité* on the far left of the political spectrum, followed by socialist *Libération*, and Catholic leftist *La Croix.* Particularly in the case of *L'Humanité*, the official organ of the French Communist Party (PCF), the commemoration provided an opportunity to explain the accusation that the newspaper had literally closed its doors in the face of the victims of the massacre; because the PCF had failed to advocate adequately on behalf of the massacre's victims in 1961, the commemoration was an essential component of the struggle of the PCF, and by extension *L'Humanité,* to redeem their past actions and inactions. Using these newspapers as a window into the mindsets of their various constituencies, I hope to discover how the role of the French left ("gauche") and its various factions has evolved in the forty years between 1961 and 2001 and how the awareness of the shortcomings of the left, both with regard to the massacre and more broadly in issues of race and immigration,

helped to spur the commemoration and the reawakening of the discussion surrounding 17 October 1961.

Finally, in the context of the study of memory and the "*travail de mémoire*," I will address the limitations of the commemoration and the necessity for concrete action and policy change as a supplement to "memory work." Because President Chirac decided against presenting an official apology, the commemoration lost much of its significance and essentially became a vehicle for certain groups in French society to justify or redeem past actions. For descendants of Algerian immigrants, however, the commemoration proved meaningful by recognizing their past suffering, but without a state apology, it failed to demonstrate a national commitment to making symbolic amends. As several interviews published in *La Croix* on 17 October 2001 suggested, many Algerians had already "moved on" from 17 October 1961; with the end of the Algerian war for independence, the atrocities of the war years were rarely discussed and were thus quickly occluded from memory. The commemoration, then, largely served the interests of those in non-Algerian French society whose political motivations compelled them to rewrite their past.

Chapter 1

A prelude to 17 October 1961: the FLN, the French Police, and a nameless "war"

The massacre of 17 October 1961 can be seen as the violent culmination of the complicated history of France's involvement in Algeria. To explain the historical context and the implications of the massacre and of the war for Algerian independence that provided the immediate provocation for the violence of 17 October, a brief survey of France's colonization of Algeria is essential. The tangled Franco-Algerian relationship began on June 12, 1830, when France launched a three-week invasion of the port of Algiers. According to legend, the dey of Algiers assaulted a French ambassador with a fly swatter in 1827, prompting three years of French blockades of Algiers and eventually the invasion in 1830. In fact, the French king Charles X faced popular antagonism at home and perhaps sought to improve his domestic support with a successful invasion. Although Charles was deposed almost immediately after the invasion, the battle for control of Algeria continued for 17 years after the victory in Algiers. France faced significant opposition from the emir Abd el Kadar, who enjoyed the support of numerous tribes throughout Algeria and controlled the vast majority of the land at the height of his power. Abd el Kadar was finally forced to surrender to the French army in 1847 after years of guerrilla warfare and resistance to French rule.[11] From this violent inception, France's 132 years of colonial rule in Algeria remained plagued by opposition to French rule, exacerbated by continued policies of exploitation and repression of the indigenous population for the benefit of the European settler minority.

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[11] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 20-21.

Ostensibly, the French government justified its presence in Algeria by framing colonization as a "civilizing mission" to provide culture, education, technological reforms, and other benefits of European civilization to indigenous people. In addition, France's most idealistic proponents of Algerian colonization advanced the policy of assimilation in their treatment of the non-European population, advocating French citizenship for all Algerians at some point, if not immediately. However, this policy was gradually abandoned during the period between 1847 and the First World War, as France faced the difficulties of governing a population with already entrenched local codes of behavior.[12] Although the French Second Republic declared that "the indigenous Muslim is French," it specified that Muslims in Algeria would be governed not by French law but by Muslim law, as they had been prior to French arrival.[13] Thus, the indigenous population, while technically "French," possessed only a denatured nationality with no rights. Algerian Jews were granted French citizenship in 1870, while only a tiny percentage of the best-educated, most elite male Muslim natives were allowed to apply for French citizenship and even fewer chose to do so.[14]

Following the service of Algerian soldiers in World War I, many Algerians expected compensation in the form of citizenship or at least an end to the blatant exploitation of the indigenous people by the European settler population.[15] Although the French government made a few nominal concessions to the indigenous population,[16] the relationship of colonizer to colonized remained firmly entrenched in the cycle of

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[12] *Ibid.*, 22-24.
[13] Sylvie Thénault, *Histoire de la Guerre d'indépendance algérienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 21-2.
[14] Patricia Lorcin, *Algeria and France: 1800-2000. Identity, Memory, and Nostalgia.* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 56.
[15] At the end of the Second World War, the indigenous population of Algeria numbered about 9 million, while the dominant European population numbered one million. House/MacMaster, 2.
[16] In 1919, Algerians could apply for naturalization via judicial proceedings, making citizenship slightly more accessible. No real changes were effected from this law, however.

European privilege that had reigned in Algeria since 1830. The interwar period saw the rise of the "Young Algerian" movement, led by Khaled Bel Hachemi, the grandson of Abd El Kadar. This movement condemned the construct of unequal citizenship status for Algerian Muslims and demanded that full French citizenship and rights be granted without requiring Muslims to relinquish their personal status as "Muslims."[17] When the French government chose to ignore their demands, supporters of the "Young Algerians" transferred their loyalties to the FLN, demanding independence from France. Although certain reforms to expand the rights and citizenship possibilities of the indigenous population were proposed in 1936, 1944, and 1947, the European population in Algeria and right-wing political parties in France usually prevented the ordinances from being enacted. When reforms were passed, as in the case of the ordinance of 1947 that created a particular status for Algeria and its own representative body with two "houses," Europeans in Algeria maintained control through blatant electoral fraud to guarantee the continuation of inequality in Algeria.[18]

After the Second World War, Europe's imperial powers faced increased restlessness and challenges in their colonies, and France was no exception. Rather than embracing the opportunity for reforms to improve the lot of the indigenous population, France's Fourth Republic, pressured by the European *pied-noir* population,[19] rejected implementing political, social, and economic reforms in favor of enforcing the old system of privilege with military force. The violent conflict that ended the era of French colonization in Algeria thus largely resulted from the failure of the French government

[17] Thénault, *Histoire de la Guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 24.
[18] Ibid., 24-26.
[19] The term *pied-noir* indicates settlers of European origin living in Algeria, some since the beginning of French colonization of Algeria in 1830.

and *pied-noir* population to enact necessary reforms and grant equality to the indigenous population, although some scholars assert that regardless of reforms or improvements in Algeria, independence was nonetheless inevitable.[20]

From its outbreak on 1 November 1954, the war for Algerian independence, usually referred to in France as the "opérations de sécurité et de maintien de l'ordre,"[21] was marked by extreme violence, campaigns of terror and untold atrocities. Unlike revolts in France's other colonies, such as Tunisia and Morocco, which led to relatively peaceful negotiations for independence, the uprising of "la Toussaint Rouge"[22] on 1 November 1954 in Algeria provoked a military campaign of violent repression that continued for nearly eight years. Throughout the conflict, the French government staunchly refused to accord the so-called "événements" in Algeria the status of a war.[23] The rules of war were ignored on both sides, leading to numerous cases of torture, summary execution, internment camps, and acts of terrorism. In its first four years, the conflict escalated to such proportions that it precipitated the end of the French Fourth Republic and the collapse of Félix Gaillard's government in 1958. General de Gaulle's return to power and the declaration of the Fifth Republic in 1958 signaled the beginning of negotiations between the French government and the Algerian forces.[24] However, violent resistance from right-wing factions such as the OAS (Organisation armée secrète)

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[20] See Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, for a discussion of varying theories on the necessity or inevitability of independence in Algeria. Shepard asserts that during and after the war, the French government "invented" decolonization in order to explain the failure of its attempts to make Algeria "French;" by arguing that decolonization was the necessary outcome of any colonizing or civilizing mission, France could justify its 'decision' to grant Algeria independence without undermining its republican values.

[21] "Security operations and maintaining of order"

[22] First labeled as such by Yves Courrière in *La Guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Fayard, 1972).

[23] President Jacques Chirac acknowledged the conflict in Algeria as a war only in 1999.

[24] Thénault, *Histoire de la Guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 87, 159-165. At the beginning of the war, Algerians favoring independence were divided into many different factions, the most notable of which were the MNA and the FLN. Eventually the FLN consolidated its power and demanded recognition as the sole representative organization of the Algerian people.

and even de Gaulle's own reticence to relinquish the idea of *l'Algérie française* stalled negotiations for another three and a half years until the Evian Accords of March 1962.[25] By October 1961, despite seven years of pursuing an "armed solution" in Algeria, de Gaulle had finally recognized the inevitability of Algerian independence and had launched efforts to end the war as quickly as possible.[26] Despite the rapidly approaching end to the conflict, the situation for the approximately 350,000 Algerian workers in France became increasingly precarious during the last few months of the war. Even before the hostilities began in 1954, Algerians in France, particularly those working in the Paris region, suffered from unfavorable work conditions, extremely low wages, food shortages, insalubrious and inadequate housing, and few prospects for social and economic mobility. Many immigrants lived in the "bidonvilles," or shanty-towns, of Nanterre, Aubervilliers, Argenteuil, or Bezons in make-shift housing without running water, and those who acquired housing often suffered from overcrowding and daily commutes exceeding one hour each way.[27]

In addition to the daily struggle for survival, the entire Algerian population in France had to endure close surveillance from the French police, who considered all Algerians potential supporters of the FLN and therefore enemies in the conflict. Especially after Maurice Papon's appointment as the head of the Police Prefecture in 1958, the French police force implemented increasingly extreme measures to control, harass, and terrorize the Algerian population in the Paris region. Prior to his appointment in Paris, Papon had served as the prefect of Constantine in Algeria, where he learned "interrogation strategies" and brutal methods of population control which had been used

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[25] *Ibid.*, 214-217.
[26] Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 73-76.
[27] Thénault, *Histoire de la Guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 234-35.

for years to combat Algerian nationalist forces.[28] Upon his arrival in Paris, Papon created a special "Force de Police Auxiliaire," composed of Algerians who "volunteered" for the post, to disrupt the complex, highly secretive FLN network in Paris and further tighten the grip of the police on the Algerian population through extreme violence and terror.[29] Additionally, the police frequently employed Harki forces, composed of Algerians who supported the French claim to *Algérie française*, in its most sordid missions to arrest, interrogate, and torture Algerians suspected of FLN sympathies.

Despite the brutality of these police measures, the FLN largely retained its hold on the Algerian population through obligatory taxes and extensive social influence, if not always because of genuine loyalty to its cause. Although many Algerian workers in France were desperately poor, they still collectively furnished 80 percent of FLN monetary resources during the war.[30] In many communities, FLN leaders strictly enforced Islamic law, including the interdiction of alcohol and the regulation of marriages, and exerted significant control over the political and moral activities of the population.[31] So great was their command of the Algerians in the Paris region that 30,000 responded to the FLN call to action for the demonstration of 17 October 1961 in central Paris.[32]

The increasingly tense situation in Algeria exacerbated the war in mainland France between the FLN and the French police, as each attempted to undermine the other's efforts with terror, guerilla warfare, and the manipulation of the Algerian population in France. To this end, the FLN intensified its assassination campaigns in

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[28] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961,* 38-40.
[29] *Ibid.*, 77-79.
[30] Ibid., 65.
[31] Ibid., 66.
[32] Ibid., 115.

France during the war, especially following the failed negotiations of the summer of 1961. Between January and October 1961, 29 police officers were assassinated in the Paris region and 76 others significantly wounded, most during the months of August, September, and October. This campaign of terror produced widespread panic among the French police, provoking measures to protect the police force at all costs and with no regard for the legality of their actions. Thus, on 5 October 1961, the police prefecture in Paris ordered a curfew forbidding all Algerians in the Paris region from leaving their residences after 8:30 pm.[33] In addition to the blatant racial discrimination, the curfew affected the many Algerians who held night jobs, further complicating their commute and subjecting them to brutal interrogations, beatings, and detainment without explanation.[34] Most significantly, Papon authorized the use of "la vengeance préventive," essentially giving carte blanche to all police officers to shoot immediately if they felt "menaced."[35] This sense of complete impunity, reinforced by Papon's vindictive call to action, would have tragic consequences on the night of 17 October 1961.

The violence itself began several weeks before 17 October 1961, but the night of the demonstration marked the peak of the institutionalized repression directed at Algerians in the Paris region. Historian Jean-Luc Einaudi emphasizes the extended nature of the massacre by including deaths from September and October 1961 in his total body

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[33] Ibid., 99.

[34] Paul Thibaud, "Le 17 octobre 1961: un moment de notre histoire," *Esprit*, November (2001): 9. Police frequently stopped anyone who "looked" Algerian for interrogation. Many Algerians had work papers, but the police often shredded their papers or confiscated them, forcing workers to reapply for their papers and to remain vulnerable to arrest and deportation in the interim.

[35] House and MacMaster*, Paris 1961*, 96, 105. "La vengeance preventive" is a term used by historians House and MacMaster, among others, in reference to the "shoot to kill" policy implemented by Papon in the months preceding the massacre. Papon ordered that "Les membres des groupes de choc armés surpris en flagrant délit de crime devront être abattus sur place par les forces de l'ordre." ("Members of [FLN] armed commandos caught in the act of crime should be shot on the spot by the police forces") (96), and other officers noted that "the Prefect goes down among the men and says almost in so-many words that we can kill North Africans… After an attack you can bring down as many as you like!" (105). Cited from the Archives SGP-FO, Conseil syndical gardiens, 3 October 1961, 22.

count for the massacre.[36] The weeks preceding the massacre left a trail of beaten, tortured, and drowned North Africans whose deaths could not be directly traced to the police. When confronted, Papon unfailingly attributed the deaths to infighting between the FLN and the MNA (Mouvement National Algérien), a rival group for control of the Algerian nationalist movement, or to brutal punishments enacted by the FLN on "traitors" to its cause. As both Einaudi and House/MacMaster point out, however, eyewitnesses and sometimes survivor accounts confirm the police's role in the killings of 246 Algerians in 1961, with 142 of those deaths in September and October.[37] On 5 September, Papon instructed his officers to "shoot first and ask questions later," thereby sanctioning the killing of innocent Algerians and assuring his officers of their complete impunity.[38] It is no coincidence that these instructions coincided with a sharp rise in the deaths of Algerians during September and October. This precedent of violence, combined with Papon's carte blanche and the French police's desire for revenge, set the stage for the peaceful demonstration of 17 October 1961 to disintegrate into a bloodbath.

In organizing the demonstration of 17 October, the FLN responded to the police repression and attacks on the Algerian population with what the organizers hoped would be a "defiant and proud gesture."[39] The demonstration's main goal of asserting the presence of Algerian workers and families in Paris and demanding the repeal of the discriminatory curfew necessitated the protests' strictly peaceful nature. FLN leaders

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[36] Jean-Luc Einaudi, *Octobre à Paris: un massacre à Paris* (Paris: Fayard, 2001); Einaudi painstakingly documents all 200 deaths associated with the massacre, including those several weeks before 17 October and those in the immediate aftermath. He argues that police brutality and attacks on the Algerian population began long before the night of 17 October and traces the explanation for the violence of that night to a significant pattern of violence, terror, and torture throughout the preceding months.
[37] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 107. Source: Géronimi Report, 18-19.
[38] Ibid., 110. This is House's and MacMaster's phrase, but it effectively summarizes the tone of Papon's orders to his subordinates.
[39] Ibid., 112

even performed searches to verify that all Algerians had arrived unarmed. The FLN also insisted that demonstrators arrive dressed in their Sunday best in order to emphasize the dignity and humanity of the workers and to arouse the sympathy of Parisian observers and the press.[40] Although the demonstration was organized just days ahead of 17 October to thwart police intelligence measures, the FLN succeeded in mobilizing 30,000 Algerians in the Paris region and organizing orderly processions from the Parisian suburbs and outer arrondissements into the city center. Around 8:30 pm, as three main columns of Algerians moved into central Paris, the first at Pont de Neuilly-Étoile, the second on Boulevards St-Michel and St-Germain, and the third between the Opéra and the Place de la République, they met almost immediate resistance from the Paris police forces. Papon's police intelligence had intercepted the FLN plan, including the interdiction of arms, and awaited the arrival of the protesters with pistols, matraques, and submachine guns, despite their knowledge that the demonstration included women and children.[41]

In the confused and chaotic aftermath of 17 October, the details of that night remained unclear, but even on 18 October, many newspapers indicated that a violent clash had occurred between the police forces and the Algerian demonstrators.[42] What gradually became apparent was the vicious and premeditated nature of the police reaction to the unarmed protestors. Some historians have argued that the police were caught by surprise, overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of Algerians, and driven to extreme

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[40] Thénault, *Histoire de la Guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 235. "La dignité des manifestants frappe ainsi les journalists, qui insistent sur la tenue endimanchée des hommes venus des garnis, des foyers et des bidonvilles de la region parisienne…" "The dignity of the protesters thus struck journalists, who insisted upon the Sunday dress of the men who came from the tenements and shanty-towns of the Paris region."
[41] Ibid., 116-7.
[42] *Le Monde, La Croix, L'Humanité, Libération*, 18 October 1961. All newspapers included some mention of the conflict, although details were lacking and no one yet recognized the scale of the massacre.

reactions by fear and self-defense.[43] However, police intelligence records and the systematic nature of the police reaction suggest otherwise; studies by historians Einaudi and House/MacMaster of eyewitness accounts and hospital registers describe severe beatings and injuries from police matraques and attest to numerous instances of police throwing Algerians into the Seine, where most drowned or died from injuries. According to some accounts, police fired into the crowd, leaving "pools of blood" and untold casualties. One witness, policeman Paul Rousseau, described the gleeful reaction of his colleagues: "Certains avaient du sang sur les mains. Ils en étaient fiers. Ils montraient leurs mains et disaient, 'Tu vois, on les a eus, nos bougnoules!'"[44]

As the demonstration dispersed in the face of the police onslaught, between 6000 and 7000 Algerians were herded into police cars and buses and taken to the Palais des Sports, an additional 2600 detained at the Stade de Coubertin, and over 3000 held in various police stations and in the courtyard of the central Police Prefecture of Paris. Among those who spent the night at these detention centers, hundreds left gravely injured, often with head traumas caused by the police's interrogation methods. Others never left: savage beatings and shootings continued at the stadiums and inside the Prefecture itself.[45] Thousands of Algerians were held for days or weeks in these detention centers, and several hundred were eventually deported to Algeria with no explanation and no opportunity to contact family members.

Despite extensive evidence of police brutality both on the streets of Paris and in detainment centers, Papon asserted that only two Algerians died on the night of 17

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[43] See Jean-Paul Brunet's *Police contre FLN: Le drame d'octobre 1961*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).
[44] Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La bataille de Paris* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 124. "Certain [policemen] had blood on their hands. They were proud of it. They showed their hands and said, "You see, we got them, our wogs!"
[45] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 132.

October 1961 and that FLN combatants had fired on the police forces, obliging them to defend themselves. Papon failed to explain the fact that no police officers were injured during the demonstration but Parisian hospitals were flooded with Algerian victims in the days that followed. As investigations of hospital records in the Paris region have revealed, at least 515 Algerians were treated for injuries ranging from bullet wounds to internal injuries, broken bones, and fractured skulls.[46] Despite the archival data and oral accounts collected in the last few years, historians still disagree on the number of deaths directly related to the massacre of 17 October, but current estimates suggest that at least 30 Algerians lost their lives that evening, perhaps as many as 246.[47]

[46] Ibid., 134.
[47] See Brunet's *Police vs. FLN* for a defense of the estimate of 30 deaths. In *Octobre à Paris*, Einaudi defends his assertion that 246 Algerians died in the massacre, but he includes the weeks surrounding the massacre as well. House and MacMaster make no estimate of their own but emphasize the extreme violence of the police repression and suggest a high number of deaths.

Chapter 2

Immediate Reaction and Eventual Occultation

On the morning of 18 October 1961, Parisians awoke to find commentary on the bloody repression of the demonstration the evening before splashed across the pages of many daily papers. On 19 October, the massacre dominated front-page headlines. Each day that followed brought increasingly dire news of the thousands of Algerians still detained in various stadiums in the Paris region. Although the police acknowledged only two deaths related to the events of 17 October, *L'Humanité* wrote as early as 18 October that the number of deaths was "certainement plus élevé" than officials were willing to admit. In the days after the massacre, left-of-center newspapers including *Libération, Le Monde,* and *L'Humanité* published articles condemning the repression and suggesting that the gravity of the situation was yet unknown and perhaps willfully concealed by authorities.[48] As *L'Humanité* was quick to point out on the day after the massacre, "sur ce qu'a été cette tragique journée d'hier, nous ne pouvons tout dire. La censure gaulliste est là."[49] Even less radically leftist newspapers, such as the Catholic journal *La Croix*, condemned "la répression extrêmement rigoureuse… et d'un caractère racial,"[50] although, like most other papers, it considered the FLN partially to blame for the police

[48] In 1961, these newspapers were all classified as left-of-center, with *L'Humanité* the official journal of the PCF, *Libération* officially non-Communist but barely right of *L'Humanité* on the political spectrum, *Le Monde* left of center but mainstream. *La Croix* officially represented the Catholic Church, and in 1961 was not yet extremely progressive but still left of center. In 2001, this paper was much more progressive, paralleling a shift in Catholic doctrine during the papacy of John Paul II. Interestingly, even in 1961, some of the strongest denunciations of the massacre and police repression come from *La Croix*, despite its placement farther right on the political spectrum than *L'Humanité* or *Libération*, for example.

[49] "About yesterday's tragic day, we can't say everything. Gaullist censorship is here." *L'Humanité*, 18 October 1961.

[50] "The extremely rigorous repression… of a racial nature"

reaction.[51] *La Croix* condemned the police's contradictory treatment of Algerians, on the one hand affirming that the FLN forced their presence at the demonstration and on the other, punishing their actions by deporting them to Algeria.[52] *Le Monde* shared *La Croix*'s opinion that the FLN bore a considerable part of the responsibility for the tensions between the French police and the Algerian community in France, but both papers nonetheless recognized the severity of the repression and condemned the unwillingness of the police to permit an investigation.[53] Many articles published in the weeks following the massacre expressed frustration at the paucity of details regarding the number of arrests, injuries and deaths or the exact occurrences of that evening.

After several weeks of reports on the massacre and its aftermath, the liberal press asserted the likely culpability of the French police in the repression. As *La Croix* recognized on 19 October 1961, "la plupart des Algériens appréhendés n'offraient aucune résistance. Les bras levés, ils allaient se ranger le long des murs ou place de l'Étoile."[54] This acknowledgment that Algerians were not resisting the police suggests that the police repression was unprovoked and excessively violent. Similarly, *L'Humanité* cited press

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[51] *La Croix*, 19 and 20 October 1961; "Les dirigeants du FLN qui donnent aux Algériens des consignes dont personne ne peut prévoir des conséquences assument une lourde responsabilité… le couvre-feu imposé aux Algériens est certes une mesure sévère; il constitue une discrimination préventive et comme telle, odieuse. Pourtant, le gouvernement, tenu de limiter des attentats terroristes, est obligé de prendre des mesures." "The leaders of the FLN who give Algerians orders of which no one can know the consequences assume a heavy responsibility… the curfew imposed upon Algerians is certainly a severe measure; it constitutes a preventative discrimination and as such, an odious one. And yet, the government, charged with limiting terrorist attempts, had to take action."

[52] *La Croix,* 20 October 1961, page 1. "Le danger que court le gouvernement, c'est la pratique d'un politique de répression massive. Il est contradictoire d'affirmer… que de nombreux manifestants étaient de "pauvres bougres" entraînés là par contrainte, et de les "rapatrier" en Algérie pour les y assigner à résidence. Alors, s'ils n'étaient pas solidaires du FLN, ils risquaient de le devenir."

[53] *Le Monde*, 20 October 1961; Although *Le Monde* published articles on the repression, an article on 20 October 1961 clearly blames the "contre-société FLN" (FLN counter-society) in France and claims that "c'est le terrorisme musulman qui est à l'origine de ces drames" (it's Muslim terrorism at the origin of these dramas) rather than the institutionalized police violence against Algerian workers in France.

[54] "Most of the Algerians who were apprehended offered no resistance at all. Their arms in the air, they lined themselves up along the walls or in the Place de l'Étoile."

"pétitions contre la répression et les violences policières," thus asserting the unique responsibility of the police forces for the violence of 17 October. [55] And as *Libération* asked on 19 October 1961, most likely rhetorically, "Si tout cela est exact, et nous avons de bonnes raisons de le croire, qui sont les auteurs de ces crimes?"[56] Despite the media uproar in the wake of the massacre, however, the French police and the French government refused to authorize a press investigation. Journalists remained barred from the interiors of the stadiums where thousands of Algerians were detained, and Papon forcefully denied the responsibility of the police in the deaths and injuries of Algerians that surfaced in the wake of 17 October.[57]

When historians or journalists discuss the massacre of 17 October 1961, they often highlight the "silence" surrounding the massacre and the absence of a public outcry in its wake, but in fact, the liberal press published extensively in weeks following the massacre.[58] Even the more conservative press, such as the newspaper *Le Figaro*, acknowledged the repression and reported to some extent on the developments in the aftermath of the massacre.[59] The majority of articles detailed the available statistics on the number of Algerians detained and recounted the locations of various conflicts and demonstrations; regardless of the stance a particular journal took on the severity and the blame for the massacre, no newspaper neglected to report on the basic facts of the

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[55] *L'Humanité*, 19 October 1961. "Petitions against the repression and the police violence."
[56] "And if all this is true, and we have good reason to believe it, who are the instigators of these crimes?" This question most certainly implicates the police and demonstrates *Libération*'s conviction that the police were at fault.
[57] Papon maintained his story even years later; with the publication of his book *Les Chevaux de Pouvoir* in 1988, Papon attempted to justify the official version of the events of 17 October and assert the innocence of the police forces. His trial in 1997-8 and subsequent publications by historians Einaudi, House, and MacMaster, among others, have since thoroughly disproved his claims.
[58] House and MacMaster*, Paris 1961*, 18.
[59] In general, the conservative press, including newspapers *Le Figaro, Le Parisien libéré, L'Aurore,* and *Paris-Jour*, merely reiterated the official position of Papon and de Gaulle, stating that the police attacked in self-defense and that only two deaths resulted from the conflict.

repression and its aftermath. Thus, although public opinion remained divided on the question of responsibility for the events of 17 October, Parisians were certainly not ignorant of the massacre or the continued conflicts and detainments in the weeks that followed.

The so-called "silence" surrounding 17 October 1961 refers not to the immediate press reaction but rather to the absence of any significant reaction in Parisian society following the massacre and also to the eventual cessation of discussion several months after 17 October 1961. Although the massacre occurred in plain view of Parisian society, relatively few Parisians protested in the streets in the days that followed. Among the newspapers that extensively covered the events of 17 October, only one, *L'Humanité,* attempted to accentuate the so-called "solidarity" of Parisian workers with "les travailleurs algériens."[60] Perhaps more in the name of workers' unity than anything else, *L'Humanité* emphasized the donations collected for the women and children of the "bidonville" and the Parisian student protest on 22 October 1961 organized at the initiative of the Comité anticolonialiste. An article on 23 October announced that more than 3000 students demonstrated against the police repression, a minuscule number considering the scale of the massacre and the influence of the 17 organizations that composed the aforementioned Comité anticolonialiste. Algerians themselves continued to protest at the urging of the FLN in the days that followed, resulting in even more arrests, injuries, and several deaths.[61] However, with the exception of the small demonstration on 22 October, no other evidence of protest from within non-Algerian French society

[60] *L'Humanité*, 19 October 1961; "Algerian workers"
[61] *Ibid.,* 125-129.

appeared in the papers in the weeks after the massacre.[62] Thus, although the liberal press and Algerians themselves protested the repression and demanded permission to investigate, French society remained relatively calm in the wake of the massacre, tacitly allowing the police to maintain their recalcitrant stance.

Occultation

"Silence" descended in the months that followed for several reasons, including Papon's effective disarming of the liberal press, de Gaulle's attempts to hastily efface the Algerian war from French memory, the police amnesty provision in the Evian Accords of March 1962, the French left's reticence to champion the cause of the Algerian victims of police repression, and finally, the social marginalization of Algerians themselves. Faced with both a hostile political situation, which prevented an ongoing discussion of the war and blocked an investigation into the events of 17 October, and the lack of support from within French society, especially the left, the few activists who continued to protest the massacre became increasingly isolated. In mainstream French society, discussion ceased altogether.

Although many newspapers clamored for an investigation into the police's role in the repression and a full examination of the number of deaths related to the massacre, Papon refused to authorize an investigation. Every newspaper repeated, with more or less

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[62] On 22 October 1961, an article in *L'Humanité* indicates a humanitarian initiative from members of the PCF that attempted to aid women and children in the bidonvilles. With this exception, no other protests or movements from within French society condemned the massacre or took action to aid the affected Algerians.

skepticism, the "official version" of the events of 17 October as announced by Papon: two Algerians died during the demonstration, and the police reacted to defend themselves in response to FLN provocation. Although the liberal press openly doubted the veracity of this statement, it nonetheless repeated it, as did the conservative press. Frustrated by Papon's uncompromising insistence on his version of the events and thwarted by a lack of new information to publish, newspapers gradually ceased publishing articles on the massacre of 17 October. Despite their open criticism of the police repression, journalists could not prove the police's intention to massacre the Algerian demonstrators, nor were they able to gain access to definite statistics on the numbers of deaths and injuries resulting from the repression. In the absence of new information and newspaper publications on the massacre, discussion of 17 October 1961 in the press finally ceased in the months that followed.

De Gaulle's policies following the end of the Algerian war in March 1962 brought an abrupt end to all discussion of events, especially atrocities, that occurred during the war. De Gaulle's government, faced with the clear failure of its efforts to retain *Algérie française* or at least to preserve French economic interests in Algeria, such as the Saharan oil fields and nuclear test sites, urged France to look ahead to a new era of modernization and engagement with the rest of continental Europe. Although some historians have suggested that de Gaulle worked carefully and consistently in the face of ring-wing pressure and reactionary generals to end the conflict in Algeria, a closer look at his actions between 1958 and 1962 suggests an active attempt to retain the colony by any means possible, including an escalation of military intervention.[63] Although de Gaulle

[63] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 4. See House's and MacMaster's detailed account of de Gaulle's military initiatives and evidence of his resistance to the idea of granting independence to Algeria.

had announced the prospect of self-determination for Algeria in a radio address in September 1959, the war continued for another two and a half years, clearly indicating de Gaulle's resistance to granting Algeria independence. In order to limit the political repercussions of his failed strategy in Algeria, de Gaulle immediately refocused his agenda on the EEC (European Economic Community) and encouraged France to leave behind the conflict in Algeria and look ahead to the future.[64] To further this end, de Gaulle resisted attempts to investigate war atrocities, including the widespread use of torture in both Algeria and France, and effectively silenced those who demanded further inquiry into the events of 17 October 1961.

Additionally, de Gaulle inserted a provision for the amnesty of the police officers involved in the massacre of October 1961 into the Evian Accords of March 1962 and ordered the closure of the cases of all Algerians who died or were wounded as a result of the police repression.[65] With this legal order, no police officers could be tried for their actions, including Papon, and an investigation was definitively thwarted. Thus, de Gaulle's government succeeded in preserving the official silence surrounding 17 October 1961. Until the opening of the police and government archives following Papon's trial in 1998, proof of government responsibility in the cover-up of the massacre remained deeply buried.[66]

House/MacMaster suggest that de Gaulle finally recognized the inevitability of Algerian independence in fall 1961 only after every effort to retain the colony had failed.

[64] *Ibid.,* 3-4.

[65] *Ibid.,* 153. In fact, the amnesty of 22 March 1962 included "all acts committed by security forces during the 'events'." Thus, torture and other atrocities, both in Algeria and in France, were never investigated and no police officers were ever tried for their actions. Also, all cases regarding the deaths of Algerians in 1961 were "closed by a 'non-lieu'."

[66] Although Papon could not be tried for his role in the massacre of 17 October, his trial in 1997-98 for his role in Vichy provided a forum for historians and others to discuss the massacre of 17 October. As such, it became an unofficial double trial for the crimes of two eras, despite the official amnesty in 1962.

Certain groups within French society might have been expected to protest the violent repression of Algerians and de Gaulle's refusal to permit an investigation, most particularly the French left. Throughout the Algerian war, the left remained preoccupied with its fight against fascism,[67] in particular the OAS, and the anti-Gaullist movement, to the detriment of the cause of 17 October.[68] Well before the outbreak of the Algerian war, however, both the French Socialist Party (SFIO) and the French Communist Party (PCF) held ambiguous and generally lukewarm positions on Algerian nationalism from the 1920s on that made both parties reluctant to support the FLN and Algerian independence. Before the Second World War, the SFIO supported the imperialist "civilizing mission," encouraging the French Third Republic to implement technology and secular education in its colonies rather than promoting independence for the colonies. Although the PCF during the same period strongly supported anti-imperialist activism, its stance changed in 1935 when it privileged the theory of class conflict over anti-imperialism as the most effective route to a Communist victory. Because the PCF saw little potential for a Communist revolution in Algeria, it refused to support the independence movement. The PCF doubted the motives of the Algerian nationalist movement and considered the divisions of ethnic origin and religion within the Algerian working class detrimental to the unity of the proletariat. Such concerns prevented even anti-racist organizations such as the Ligue internationale contre l'antisémitisme and the Ligue des droits de l'homme

[67] According to the PCF, the extreme right-wing OAS epitomized the alarming rise of "fascism" in France; many of the PCF's efforts centered on this anti-fascist struggle. (House/MacMaster, 245-46).
[68] As an example of the anti-Gaullist preoccupation of the PCF, the Bureau Politique du PCF's framed its most immediate condemnation of the massacre in the context of anti-Gaullism, as did the PCF in general: "Le PPCF dénonce la politique colonialiste du pouvoir gaulliste, illustré une fois de plus par les sanglants événements d'hier." "The PPCF denounces the colonial politics of the Gaullist power, illustrated once more by the bloody events of yesterday." (*L'Humanité*, 19 October 1961, front page)

(LDH) from denouncing French repression of Algerians.[69] Without the support of the primary leftist parties, Algerian nationalist organizations found themselves shunted to the margins of the political spectrum, garnering support only from extreme leftists such as the Trotskyites.

House and MacMaster suggest that the combination of ideological objections to Algerian nationalism and socialization in favor of imperialism of the World War II generation of French citizens created a situation highly unfavorable to French support for Algerian independence, even from the parties of the left.[70] In the period before the outbreak of hostilities in Algeria, the vast majority of French citizens, on both ends of the political spectrum, favored France's imperial activities and largely considered non-Western countries in need of guidance from European powers. Some, like the socialists, sought the implementation of "civilizing" programs and technologies in the colonies, and others eventually decried the violent methods used to maintain this empire, but only the most radical activists sought the end of the French empire on principle.[71] Throughout the war, especially after both the SFIO and the PCF voted in favor of the Special Powers act in March 1956 that granted the state exceptional latitude in its repression of Algerian nationalism, only politically marginalized groups of activists supported Algerians, either in the fight against racism or in the struggle for independence.[72] At times, Algerians and

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[69] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 195.
[70] *Ibid.,* 194-96.
[71] The PCF and *L'Humanité* sometimes took issue with the brutality and torture used in both France and Algeria to maintain *Algérie Française* during the Algerian war and during various episodes of repression prior to the war, such as Sétif in May 1945. When *L'Humanité* protested too loudly, however, the government censored the newspaper's publications. (House/MacMaster 195-96)
[72] Such groups included 'Dreyfusard' protesters who fought primarily against racism that they associated with Vichy-like singling out of people because of their appearance. Many of these protesters (Sartre and De Beauvoir for example) objected to the government's methods in Algeria and the police repression of Algerians in France, but were not pro-independence per se. Most considered that the government's policies undermined traditional French republican values. A small percentage of activists actually dissociated

the PCF formed an uneasy alliance, but when the PCF had to choose between furthering its goals and protesting the repression of Algerians in France and in Algeria, it always chose the former.[73] Thus, until the end of the Algerian war in 1962, the mainstream left generally shied away from strongly denouncing France's policies in Algeria.[74]

In addition to the left's ambiguous relationship to the FLN and its reticence to strongly condemn the massacre of 17 October, another occurrence of police repression only a few months later effectively monopolized the left's energies and prevented further discussion of 17 October. During an anti-war and anti-OAS protest organized by the PCF on 8 February 1962, the police intervened once again; de Gaulle had explicitly prohibited such demonstrations in his declaration of a state of emergency in April 1961, and thus authorized Papon to suppress the protest with force if need be. As demonstrators fled the police truncheons, they took refuge in the metro station Charonne, where eight protesters died trampled by the crowd or from head wounds and other injuries. One additional demonstrator died later in the hospital from injuries. This event particularly traumatized the left and the PCF, but the rest of French society also rose up in protest at the deaths of the nine protesters who, although mostly Communist, were French citizens. Many Parisians went on strike on 9 February, and massive protests completely paralyzed Paris on 13 February as many thousands accompanied the victims to their interment at one of

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themselves from France by supporting independence for Algeria and an end to imperialism. These activists, the *porteurs de valises*, actively aided Algerians and the FLN, but according to House/MacMaster, there were never more than 1000 Frenchmen actively engaged in this effort. (pp. 201-202)

[73] *Ibid.,* 198. See House/MacMaster for an example of a Communist demonstration in 1953 that resulted in the deaths of seven protesters (six Algerians). In this case, the Algerians marching in the parade were set apart, both physically and in their goals in protesting (they appeared as part of the MTLD to demand Algerian independence). After the police repression, the PCF and the CGT (Confédération générale du travail) did little to demand police accountability. The same pattern would repeat itself after 17 October 1961.

[74] *Ibid.,* 194-198.

Paris' oldest and most renowned cemeteries, Père Lachaise.[75] Because of the scale of protests it engendered and especially because all the victims were French, Charonne largely replaced 17 October 1961 in mainstream French memory. After Charonne, only certain anti-racist organizations or individual members of leftist parties continued the underground discussion of 17 October 1961. For most of French society, however, 17 October was effectively occulted from memory.

Finally, the social alienation of Algerians from mainstream French society during and after the war denied them the social leverage necessary to demand justice effectively. Both materially and socially, Algerians remained on the outskirts of society; many recent immigrants retained hope of someday returning to Algeria, thus preventing their wholehearted participation in French society. Although certain newspapers, such as *La Croix*, cited the miserable environment of the bidonvilles as a partial explanation for Algerian actions during the war, the insalubrious living conditions of many Algerian workers remained until the late 1960s and 1970s, physically isolating Algerians and preventing their social integration.[76] Many Algerians in the Paris region still struggled for survival and social acceptance and thus refrained from openly protesting the police brutality of the war era.

Even if Algerians had managed to mobilize the support of mainstream French society to address the events of 17 October and demand official recognition, many simply chose not to revisit the ordeals of the war era for cultural or personal reasons. According to many sources, few victims of the repression openly discussed the massacre of 17

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[75] Dewerpe, *Charonne*. The numbers of protesters differ greatly depending on the source; according to the Police Préfecture, 150,000 people attended the demonstrations and according to *L'Humanité*, the numbers reached one million.
[76] *La Croix,* 20 October 1961.

October or the atrocities of the war in general, even within the Algerian community or their own families.[77] At times, this reticence came from cultural codes that forbid dwelling on the past, lamenting individual suffering, or recounting the injury or loss of a loved one, but some Algerians deliberately chose to conceal the most traumatic memories from their children in order to permit the new generation's integration into mainstream French society.[78] Only during the 1980s and 1990s, when left wing, anti-racist activists became more vocal and historians such as Einaudi began interviewing survivors of 17 October, did the descendants of these Algerian immigrants demand the truth from their relatives who survived the repression and begin to pressure the French government for recognition of the brutal treatment they had endured.

[77] See Leila Sabbar, *La Seine était rouge*; House/MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 269-275; *L'Humanité* 17 October 2001; *La Croix* 17 October 2001.
[78] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 271-2.

Chapter 3

Anamnesis and the Path to Commemoration

From 1962 until the early 1980s, the massacre remained occulted, or at least extremely marginalized, in the collective memory of French society and arguably even in the memory of the Algerian community in France. Those who witnessed or fell victim to the massacre often maintained "strategic silence" on both the atrocities of the Algerian war and the massacre of 17 October specifically.[79] As the last chapter suggested, Algerians who remembered the massacre frequently chose not to discuss it for a number of reasons, although the descendants of these immigrants would prove essential to the revival of interest in 17 October starting in 1980. Although the left came to power with the election of socialist President François Mitterrand in 1981, the political culture of the 1980s was paradoxically marked by an increase in racism and the rise of the far-right Front national (FN) party, whose stance on immigration threatened to create a hostile political environment for descendants of migrant workers from the Maghreb.[80] To counter this hostility, anti-racist activists and descendants of immigrants from the Maghreb, especially Algeria, founded organizations such as the Sans Frontière, the Association pour une nouvelle generation immigrée, Radio-Beur, and SOS-Racisme during the early 1980s. Most of these organizations represented certain ethnic constituencies, usually Arab or Kabyle, although SOS-Racisme attempted to widen its representation to combat the "exclusivity" of the other movements. The 1980s also saw

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[79] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 265. "Strategic silence," or the decision not to discuss a certain memory for personal reasons or for fear of negative repercussions, was a term used by Ronald L. Cohen in "Silencing Objections: Social Constructions of Indifference," *Journal of Human Rights* 1, no.2 (June 2002), 187-206.

[80] *Ibid.*, 289-90.

the rise of the "Beur" movement, which represented an attempt by the new generation of descendants of migrant workers from the Maghreb to assert their identity while rejecting the often discriminatory label of "Arab."[81] Through these various anti-racist organizations, the so-called "Beur" generation began to fight for the reconstitution of memories relating to the institutionalized police repression of the Algerian war era, especially the massacre of 17 October 1961. A number of these organizations coordinated commemorations for 17 October at various times, although the lack of unity within the anti-racist movement meant that the commemorations were sparsely attended and largely ignored in mainstream French society. By 1990, although many individuals and organizations were engaged in the struggle to revive the memory of 17 October, no consensus had been reached either within the anti-racist movement or among leftist parties, and mainstream French society remained largely unaware of these attempts to reawaken the discussion of 17 October 1961.[82]

During the 1990s, the focus of anti-racist groups and other activists shifted from the creation of internal awareness of 17 October among the Algerian community to an outreach campaign in mainstream French society and appeals to the government for official recognition of the massacre. Another organization, Au nom de la mémoire (ANM), founded in 1990, greatly advanced the cause of 17 October by working to unite

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[81] "Beur" is the verlanization of the word "Arabe;" during the 1970s, Verlan emerged as a counter-culture language that reverses the syllables of French words and includes words from Arabic, Creole, and American slang. Originally, Verlan was used mostly in the poorer *banlieues* and *cités* in the Paris region among descendants of immigrants, but eventually, young people from bourgeois families also began to speak Verlan to separate themselves from their parents' generation and values. For a comprehensive discussion of Verlan, see: Michel Laronde, *Autour du roman beur: immigration et identité. Critiques littéraires: immigration et identité* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1993) ; Natalie Lefkowitz, "Verlan: Talking Backwards in French," *The French Review* 63, No. 2 (Dec., 1989), 312-313; Alexander Stille, "Backward Runs French. Reels the Mind," *The New York Times*, 17 Aug. 2002; and Albert Valdman, "La Langue des faubourgs et des banlieues: de l'argot au français populaire," *The French Review* 73, No. 6 (May, 2000), p. 1188.

[82] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961,* 290-295.

the various movements that had previously commemorated the massacre and by expanding its outreach to greater French society. Although ANM sought to raise awareness more generally on issues pertaining to France's colonial past, including the Algerian war and the accompanying atrocities, 17 October remained a focus of the organization's efforts. For the 30th anniversary of the massacre in 1991, ANM, supported by the Ligue des droits de l'homme and other groups, sponsored a number of projects, including a film by Anne Tristan, *Le Silence du fleuve*, and a book by the same name. This same year, Jean-Luc Einaudi published his groundbreaking work *La Bataille de Paris*, which provided a detailed examination of the context and events surrounding 17 October and provided the most substantial evidence yet for the police's involvement in the deaths of over 200 Algerians in the period surrounding 17 October.[83] Einaudi's claims, and the extensive research and documentation he provided to substantiate them, fueled the activists' challenges to the French government's "official version" in which only two Algerians had died and the police had acted entirely in self-defense.

These publications and the continued efforts of activists contributed to a new wave of interest in 17 October 1961 and resulted in the first commemoration of the massacre to reach beyond the marginalized, left-wing activist organizations into a slightly broader public. For the 30th anniversary, about 10,000 people commemorated the path of the demonstrators on 17 October, walking from Canal Saint-Martin to the Rex Cinéma.[84] Significantly, the leftist press, especially *L'Humanité* and *Libération*, covered this commemoration quite extensively, although the Parti Socialiste and the Parti Communiste were not directly involved in its organization. Previous coverage of

[83] See the introduction of this thesis for a brief historiographical review, as well as a discussion of Einaudi's work, including *La Bataille de Paris*.
[84] *L'Humanité*, 18 October 1991.

commemorations had been limited to the newsletters or newspapers of the organizations that sponsored them or the publications of select anti-racist groups, but the participation of the French left in this commemoration marked a turning point in the struggle for recognition and awareness of 17 October.

The commemorations of the 1990s also set the tone that would characterize future activism and commemorations of 17 October; activists for the memory of the massacre pressed for "symbolic reparations in the form of truth, recognition, and justice," rather than evoking anger or demands for tangible reparations.[85] Even achieving symbolic reparations, however, proved difficult in the face of continuing resistance from the French government, which refused to open government archives or officially recognize its own responsibility in the massacre. Increasingly, activists demanded "the truth" about 17 October, insistently denouncing the continued refusal of the French government to permit an investigation. Many, including historian Einaudi, considered this failure on the part of the government a serious issue for all French citizens, who deserved to know the truth about their government's actions.[86] For Mouloud Aounit, president of the MRAP, government recognition was essential to ensure a unified societal memory of the massacre: "Symbolic reparation is necessary for what happened. What is needed is for everyone to share the memory of 17 October, for all victims to be recognized as such, and for this to be accepted by all sectors of society."[87] For the most part, organizations demanded merely a symbolic recognition from the government, preferably in the form of an official apology, accompanied by the opening of the archives, rather than calling for

[85] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 296.
[86] *Ibid.*, 297; cited from Jean-Luc Einaudi, *À propos d'octobre 1961*, 58.
[87] *Ibid.*, 297; cited from 'Sortir de l'oubli', *Differences*, 190 (Nov. 1997), 1.

monetary reparations for the victims or trials for those responsible for the massacre and its cover-up.

The one notable exception to this pattern appeared in the mid-1990s, when increasing pressure from the media and activist organizations resulted in the decision in 1995 to bring Papon to trial. As previously noted, however, the amnesty of 1962 had allowed Papon to escape trial for his actions during the Algerian war; thus, the trial of 1997-98 for his actions during the Vichy regime became an unofficial forum for discussion of his role as the Prefect of Police in 1961. For activists involved in the fight for recognition of 17 October 1961, this trial provided the ideal opportunity to elucidate the truth about the massacre and to hold Papon accountable for his actions, even if justice could not be served.

The inclusion of Einaudi's testimony in the trial of Papon for his crimes of the Vichy era thus represented a symbolic victory for those who sought public recognition for the massacre of 17 October. Although the trial necessarily focused on Papon's role in the deportation of Jews during the Vichy regime, specifically the infamous round-up at the Vél d'Hiv in July 1942, the examination of his record regarding 17 October became an integral element of the trial. Prosecutors framed the discussion of 17 October as a "trial within a trial," linking the suffering of the descendants of the Jews deported from the Gironde to the suffering of the descendants of Algerians who demonstrated on 17 October.[88] Despite the media attention the trial had incited, however, the context of the courtroom complicated the attempt to define the "truth" about 17 October.[89] Papon

[88] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 310.
[89] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 265. Rothberg notes the unsuitability of the courtroom as a forum for the discovery of historical truth. In effect, a courtroom necessarily pits two versions of "the

maintained his version of the story throughout the trial, although he acknowledged fifteen to twenty deaths rather than the initial two, and Einaudi's attempts to demonstrate the unreliability of Papon's statements were not entirely successful.[90] The main result of the trial, in addition to Papon's conviction on the charges of "illegal arrest" and "arbitrary detainment," was the media uproar it instigated and the public awareness of 17 October it achieved.[91]

The inclusion of 17 October in this highly controversial trial not only expanded the discussion of the massacre to include mainstream French society, but also succeeded in creating a media storm at the national and international levels. Thus, the campaigners for the memory of 17 October, including ANM, accomplished their goal of raising awareness of the massacre in France, although the trial provided no definitive answers to their quest for the "truth" regarding 17 October. However, the media reaction following the trial forced the government to consent to a very limited opening of the archives relating to 17 October. In October 1997, the Interior Minister commissioned the Mandelkern Report, which was to examine and report on the archives relating to 17 October; when the report was quietly released in May 1998, it suggested several dozen deaths related to the repression, but also seemed to reinforce the police's claims, including the notion that the demonstrators had in fact opened fire, provoking the police

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truth" against each other and attempts to decide between them. For a historian, this process is potentially devastating and not always conducive to historical methodology. In the Papon trial, Einaudi was asked to serve as an expert witness, and although he saw the trial as an opportunity to promote the cause of recognition for 17 October 1961, other historians, including Henry Rousso, refused to testify. Rousso argued that a historian should not participate in such proceedings. He cited the potential harm to his career and to the general credibility of the historical profession that the trial could inflict.

[90] That is, Einaudi could not disprove all of Papon's claims, in effect validating Rothberg's statement that trials pit two versions of "the truth" against each other. House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 311-12.

[91] Papon was found not guilty on the charge of "complicity in murder" for the deporation of Jews in the Gironde. Throughout the trial, he maintained that he was under orders from de Gaulle's government to quell the demonstration. Although he recognized fifteen to twenty deaths relating to 17 October, he staunchly denied police responsibility, attributing the deaths to FLN/MNA rivalry instead. House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 310-312.

reaction.[92] More than once, Mandelkern insisted that "des coups de feu ont été échangés," indicating quite clearly that he partially blamed the demonstrators for the ensuing violence.[93]

Einaudi's furious reaction to this seemingly biased report included the accusation that led Papon to sue Einaudi for libel: "a massacre in Paris carried out by the police acting under the orders of Maurice Papon."[94] The ensuing trial furnished yet another opportunity for Einaudi and activists for the memory of 17 October to provide evidence that a massacre had in fact taken place on that night. The court's validation of the legitimacy of the term "massacre" to describe 17 October 1961 dealt a significant blow to the credibility of the official version propagated by Papon and represented a crucial victory for campaigners for the recognition of 17 October. Largely as a result of the decision of this trial, the government finally granted access to the archives to three hand-picked historians not directly affiliated with the government, including Jean-Paul Brunet, a professor at the Sorbonne and the ENS (École Normale Supérieure). Einaudi was denied access until December 2000, after the publication of Brunet's *Police contre FLN* in 1999.[95] These two trials nonetheless signaled a turning point in the fight for recognition of 17 October, generating significant public awareness and forcing the government to loosen its grip on the archives regarding 17 October. Although it required nearly forty years, the "silence" surrounding 17 October 1961 had finally been broken,

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[92] Dieudonné Mandelkern, the president of the National Commission of Control of Interception of Security, was given exclusive access to the archives in order to produce this report. *Le Figaro*, 3 May 1998.
[93] *Rapport Mandelkern*, Section 1.2.1. http://17octobre1961.free.fr/pages/dossiers/Rapport.htm; "gunshots were exchanged"
[94] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 313. Cited from *Le Monde*, 20 May 1998.
[95] See the introduction of this thesis for a discussion of Brunet's work; his book largely defended the interests of the police and the government by arguing for a minimum of deaths related to 17 October. His sources were almost exclusively the police and government archives, which did not reveal the full extent of the violence of 17 October 1961.

replaced by a robust public debate on the questions of responsibility and justice and an active pursuit of the “truth” about the massacre.

Chapter 4

The 2001 Commemoration and Its Implications

In light of the developments discussed in Chapter 3, campaigners for the recognition of 17 October could finally organize a commemoration for the fortieth anniversary of the massacre that would reach a broader segment of French society than ever before. The 2001 commemoration represented the first truly national attempt to recognize the significance of 17 October 1961 and engage a large percentage of French society, either through direct participation or through publicity and publications. In large part, this shift from the marginalized, disjointed commemorations by various groups in the 1990s to the mainstream, unified commemoration in 2001 reflected both the changing political situation following the trial of Papon and the increased unity among groups campaigning for recognition of 17 October. Notably, the formation of a new umbrella organization, Le collectif unitaire du 17 octobre 1961, helped to spearhead the commemoration efforts. Composed of many separate groups, including the Ligue des droits de l'homme, MRAP, CIMADE, GISTI, Act Up, certain labor unions including the communist CGT, departmental unions including the CFDT and the SGEB-CFDT, parties of the left and extreme left, notably La Lutte Ouvrière, LCF, Verts, PCF, and the Fédération de Paris du Parti Socialiste, le collectif unitaire du 17 octobre 1961 helped to mobilize the 2001 commemoration by consolidating competing commemorations from different organizations.[96] Additionally, the association Le 17 octobre 1961 contre l'oubli channeled the influence of memory activists Olivier Revault d'Allonnes, Olivier Le Cour

[96] *L'Humanité*, 18 October 2001.

Grandmaison, and Sidi Mohammmed Barkat to demand official recognition from the French government and a memorial to recognize the victims of the massacre.[97]

Unlike previous commemorations, which resulted exclusively from the initiatives of private activist organizations, the 2001 commemoration included some elements of official sponsorship, notably the involvement of socialist mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë. Also, the locations of certain events within the week-long commemoration indicated a certain level of official support from within the Paris government, even if the national government under conservative President Jacques Chirac avoided taking part in the commemoration.[98] Some historians have suggested that this "substitution" of the Parisian government for the national government in the official capacities of the commemoration indicated an intentional deflection of activists' demands for official recognition.[99] By allowing Mayor Delanoë to speak for Parisians during the commemoration, President Chirac managed to avoid embroiling his government in a politically delicate issue while appeasing the demands of certain activist groups. Nonetheless, the 2001 commemoration allied activist organizations such as the collectif unitaire, Le 17 octobre contre l'oubli, and ANM with the active participation of Delanoë's socialist government, thus representing the first official, albeit limited, support for a commemoration of the massacre.

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[97] House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961*, 317.

[98] Events included an exposition at the Conciergerie in Paris entitled "17 octobre, 17 illustrateurs," inaugurated on 17 October 2001 by Michel Duffour, secrétaire d'État au Patrimoine et la Décentralisation culturelle. (cited in *L'Humanité*, 17 October 2001). Also, the placement of a plaque at the Pont St-Michel was decided upon in the Paris City Council chamber following proposals by Delanoë. This plaque represented the first official placement of a plaque to commemorate 17 October 1961; previous plaques sponsored by other organizations had all been removed by the French government shortly after their placement. (House/MacMaster, 315-17)

[99] Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, quoted in House/MacMaster, 317. House and MacMaster tentatively agree with Le Cour Grandmaison's suggestion.

Although the left-wing press had reported on the 1991 commemoration and on previous commemorations directly sponsored by affiliated organizations, newspapers such as *L'Humanité* and *Libération* played an active role in the 2001 commemoration, both by reporting on the activities of the week and by serving as agents in the commemorative process. Both newspapers devoted significant space on 17 October 2001 and the days that followed to coverage of the commemoration and articles on various subjects related to the long struggle for recognition of the massacre. Almost every major left-of-center newspaper included significant references to the commemoration in the days surrounding 17 October 2001, but each paper had its own specific focus in the series of articles published for the occasion. At times, these various emphases can be attributed to differences in readership or in the constituencies each paper represents, but each newspaper's emphasis also seems to reflect an attempt to redefine and ameliorate its relationship to the commemoration.

In the case of *L'Humanité*, the official organ of the PCF, the 2001 commemoration provided an important opportunity to make amends for many years of ambiguity and waffling in its support, or lack thereof, for recognition for 17 October 1961. *L'Humanité*'s coverage of the commemoration was among the most extensive of any paper in France. On 17 October 2001, the newspaper published three full double-page spreads devoted entirely to the commemoration, including photographs, drawings, and numerous articles. *Libération* published one double-page spread on the occasion of the commemoration on 17 October 2001, but it also published double-page spreads on 15 October 2001 and 16 October 2001. *La Croix* published only one double-page spread, but it was also the only paper to focus on the perspective of Algerians or descendants of

Algerian immigrants. The other papers, perhaps preoccupied with their political issues and focused on reframing their past actions in a more positive light, tended to ignore "cultural issues" in favor of more political ones.

As discussed in Chapter 2, both the PCF and the Parti Socialiste had held rather ambivalent attitudes towards the FLN and Algerian independence at the time of the massacre, and their ensuing reactions to 17 October reflected an inability to reconcile political concerns with the moral necessity of strongly denouncing the massacre and the government's refusal to permit an investigation. In the weeks and months following 17 October 1961, neither the PCF nor the Parti Socialiste wholeheartedly attempted to rally support from within its party or from greater French society to protest the massacre. On 21 October 1961, *L'Humanité* cited the "solidarity of French workers" with the Algerian workers affected by the massacre and its aftermath, but the only concrete measure of "solidarity" appeared to be the collection of money and goods for Algerian women and children living in the bidonvilles.[100] The PCF organized no substantial demonstrations or political actions to supplement this humanitarian effort, clearly indicating the Party's reluctance to become significantly involved in the protest against the repression. Although *L'Humanité* attempted to stress the importance of the approximately 3000 students who protested following 17 October 1961 at the initiative of the Comité anticolonialiste*,* this demonstration drew pitifully small numbers of supporters in comparison to the 150,000 to a million protesters who had accompanied the victims of the Charonne tragedy to their interment on 13 February 1962.[101] In comparison to the PCF's unwavering support of the Charonne protests, the unwillingness of the PCF to

[100] *L'Humanité*, 22 October 1961.
[101] *L'Humanité*, 21 and 22 October 1961; for statistics on the Charonne demonstrations, see Alain Dewerpe, *Charonne: 8 février 1962. Anthropologie historique d'un massacre d'État.* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)

directly sponsor or encourage protests following 17 October 1961 becomes even more discomfiting. Although *L'Humanité* consistently published articles in the aftermath of the massacre, its condemnation of the repression consisted primarily of an attack on Gaullism and the supposed "fascist" forces at work in the police and the OAS.[102] The PCF's weak support for the protests following 17 October remained a topic of discussion within the party for years after the massacre, but it was only during the 1990s that the PCF finally began to rally support for the commemorations of 17 October and attempted to overcome its own shortcomings regarding its actions following the massacre.

The numerous articles published either in the print newspaper *L'Humanité* or on its website in the days surrounding 17 October 2001 betrayed two significant motivations: firstly, all vehemently condemned the massacre in the strongest possible terms, perhaps to compensate for the lack of strong condemnation in the years following the massacre. Secondly, most articles, editorials, or interviews published insist upon the responsibility of the government of Charles de Gaulle, "le pouvoir gaulliste," and Maurice Papon, with "les mains pleines de sang."[103] Additionally, many articles evoked the supposed forty-year "mur de silence," allegedly broken with the 2001 commemoration; however, as the discussion in Chapter 3 has indicated, the twenty years prior to the 2001 commemoration had brought about significant challenges to this "wall of silence." The PCF and *L'Humanité*, however, were simply not initially active in the

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[102] *L'Humanité,* 19 October 1961: "Le PPCF dénonce la politique colonialiste du pouvoir gaulliste, illustré une fois de plus par les sanglants événements d'hier." ("The PCF denounces the colonialist politics of the Gaullist power illustrated once again by the bloody events of yesterday.") The PCF frequently referred to its struggle against the OAS as a struggle against "fascism" and its opposition to de Gaulle as a struggle against Gaullist powers.

[103] *L'Humanité*, web publication on 13 October 2001 and print article on 17 October 2001. ("hands covered in blood.") Second quotation comes from an editorial by Charles Silvestre; "Un Maurice Papon, aux mains pleines de sang, le mensonge au sautoir, s'en est cyniquement servi pour infliger un 'leçon' aux Algériens en général et au FLN en particulier… page noire du gaullisme qui connaîtra encore un épisode sanglant à Charonne." 17 October 2001

organization of previous commemorations or protests. Thus, the de-emphasis on the early activities of such groups as ANM and SOS-Racisme served the interests of the PCF, for whom non-involvement in previous years reflected poorly on the image of activism and social conscience it seemed keen to evoke through the coverage of the 2001 commemoration.

L'Humanité also tended to emphasize the connection between the massacre of 17 October 1961 and the repression at Charonne on 8 February 1962. In a prominently featured editorial on 17 October 2001, journalist Charles Silvestre drew a direct parallel between these two incidents of police repression:

> "17 octobre 1961 des Algériens, 8 février 1962 des militants, pour la plupart communistes. L'écho, on le sait, ne fut pas le même, même s'il y a eut à chaud une vigoureuse dénonciation dans le premier cas. La raison, avec le recul, apparaît évidente: ce n'était pas le même peuple qui était frappé."[104]

Although certainly Silvestre is correct to indicate that the reaction after Charonne was so much greater because the victims were French, he does not imply that the PCF and the left in general were wrong to focus so exclusively on their own victims to the detriment of the Algerian victims of 17 October. Throughout the editorial, he seems to suggest the fault of the French state, both in the atrocities and repressions that occurred during the Algerian war and in the willful concealment of these events:

> "On n'en finira pas avec la guerre d'Algérie sans que ses crimes de guerre, ses crimes d'État, la 'torture institutionnalisée' (Massu), comme les noyades dans la Seine, soient une bonne fois pour toutes dévoilés et officiellement condamnés."[105]

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[104] "17 October 1961 for Algerians, 8 February 1962 for militants, mostly Communists. The echo, we know, was not the same, even if there had been a vigorous denunciation immediately after the first event. The reason, in retrospect, appears evident: it was not the same group of people that was struck."

[105] "We will never finish with the Algerian war unless its war crimes, its state crimes, 'institutionalized torture' (Massu), as well as the drownings in the Seine, are once and for all unveiled and officially condemned."

In implying the exclusive fault of the French government in the occultation of 17 October and other atrocities from the Algerian war era, Silvestre implicitly acquits the PCF and the left in general from the charge that their inaction after 17 October resulted in the massacre's disappearance from public discourse for several decades. In the immediate aftermath, the French police and de Gaulle's government had faced only minimal and short-lived pressure from certain activist groups, including the left-wing press, to investigate the happenings of 17 October 1961 and acknowledge police and state responsibility. Compared to the reaction following Charonne, however, the minimal protests and significant but quickly silenced press coverage had amounted to little pressure on the government for action regarding 17 October. By the end of the Algerian war in March 1962, the issue had been effectively swept under the carpet and sealed away in the archives. *L'Humanité*'s insistence upon the continued government resistance to an official condemnation of 17 October thus serves to minimize the PCF's less than commendable actions in the wake of the massacre.

In almost every article published in *L'Humanité* on 17 October 2001, references are made to the landmark nature of the 2001 commemoration, suggesting that this week surrounding 17 October 2001 finally dismantled the supposed "mur de silence" that had remained unchallenged for forty years. Silvestre noted "qu'il ait fallu 40 ans pour que ce crime soit reconnu," implying that until the moment of the commemoration in 2001, the massacre had remained entirely occulted and unrecognized.[106] Other articles included commentary such as "la silence n'est plus mise," and "une fenêtre s'ouvre," portraying the 2001 commemoration as the moment of truth for the (re)discovery of the massacre.[107]

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[106] "That forty years were necessary for this crime to be recognized"
[107] "There is no longer silence." "A window opens."

Additionally, *L'Humanité* presented the results of a survey it conducted to establish the level of public knowledge regarding 17 October.[108] According to the article, 47 percent acknowledged "having heard of the event" and 21 percent indicated knowing "exactly what it was." These statistics were accompanied by commentary stating that such widespread knowledge would have been "unimaginable" ten years before, or even one year before.[109] All of this evidence suggests that in the eyes of *L'Humanité*, the year 2001 represented a crucial turning point for 17 October 1961, especially regarding public awareness of the massacre. Although the 2001 commemoration was certainly important both for its magnitude and for the legitimacy lent by Mayor Delanoë's official participation, it was by no means the first commemoration or the first indication of a fissure in the wall of silence. The commentary presented in *L'Humanité* emphasizes the watershed moment of the commemoration without referencing or crediting the activists and organizations whose efforts throughout the 1980s and 1990s eventually made this commemoration possible.

One final characteristic of *L'Humanité*'s coverage of the commemoration was its tendency to favor or even exaggerate Jean-Luc Einaudi's estimation of the number of deaths related to 17 October 1961. In an article published on 13 October 2001, *L'Humanité* wrote, "Aujourd'hui encore - comble de l'horreur -, on ne sait pas combien,

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[108] *L'Humanité*, 13 October 2001: "'Les Français et la manifestation du 17 octobre 1961.' Sondage exclusif CSA-l'Humanité, réalisé par téléphone le 4 octobre 2001 auprès d'un échantillon national représentatif de 1008 personnes âgées de dix-huit ans et plus, constitué d'après la méthode des quotas (sexe, âge, profession du chef de ménage), après stratification par région et catégorie d'agglomération." "'The French and the demonstration of 17 October 1961.' Exclusive poll by the CSA-L'Humanité, conducted by telephone on 4 October 2001 from a representative national sample of 1008 people aged 18 and above, constituted after a method of quotas (gender, age, profession of the head of the household), after stratification by region and population density."

[109] Survey results published online on 13 October 2001, and in the print edition on 17 October 2001.

parmi eux, moururent: 200, 300, 400?"[110] Einaudi suggests in both of his books, *La Bataille de Paris* (1991) and *Octobre à Paris* (2001), that about 250 Algerians died as a result of police repression, either on the streets of Paris or in detention centers in the Paris region, although in his first book he suggests that perhaps up to 400 Algerians died. Upon careful reading of his work, especially his second book, published after he consulted the official government and police archives, one should note that Einaudi includes deaths that occurred *before* the massacre, as early as September 1961, in his overall body count. He carefully provides evidence, including precise circumstances and dates, when available, for all deaths in order to counter his opponents' claims that a smaller number of Algerians had died in the massacre and the surrounding weeks. Einaudi considers that the demonstration on 17 October 1961 represented the peak of the discriminatory police repression in the Paris region that had been going on for months, but had become especially violent in September and October 1961. Thus, his inclusion of the deaths for that entire time frame (September and October 1961 and a few deaths in early November) represents his wider conception of the term "17 October 1961."

However, when the press refers to 17 October 1961, it is usually a reference to the massacre on the night of 17 October and the smaller demonstrations on 18, 19, and 20 October 1961. The phrase "17 October 1961" also includes the deaths and injuries that Algerians sustained in detention centers in the Paris region, many of which probably remained undocumented. Any newspaper that cites Einaudi's estimation of 200+ deaths for the massacre of 17 October in its smaller, more confined sense (17-20 October and deaths in the detention centers) thus misinterprets Einaudi's information, either accidentally or intentionally. In the case of *L'Humanité,* which published a lengthy

[110] "Today still- horror of horrors- we still don't know how many among them died- 200, 300, 400?"

interview with Einaudi on 13 October 2001 and frequently referenced both Einaudi and his work in many articles,[111] it is likely that this misuse of Einaudi's estimate was intentional. Perhaps *L'Humanité* wished to denounce the massacre in the most vehement manner possible and considered that the highest possible estimation of deaths would strengthen its condemnation. In any case, the clear exaggeration of Einaudi's estimate probably represents an attempt to recast *L'Humanité*'s role in the 2001 commemoration as one of unflagging support in an attempt to minimize its past shortcomings.

Finally, in its coverage of the events of the commemoration on 17 October 2001, *L'Humanité* places significant emphasis on denouncing the political parties that refused to participate in the commemoration. An article on 18 October 2001 indicates that representatives from the parties RPR, UDF, and DL boycotted the ceremony on the Pont St-Michel, where Mayor Delanoë placed the commemorative plaque on the morning of 17 October 2001.[112] Protesters from the MNR, a far-right nationalist political party, even carried banners with slogans such as "Honte aux collabos du FLN," "FLN Assassin," and "La France aux français."[113] Other MNR representatives cited "des amalgames douteux avec la situation internationale marquée par les attentats du 11 septembre" in an attempt to suggest that the commemoration of 17 October was inappropriate in light of the terrorist attacks a month before.[114] Indeed, it is worth noting the extent of the coverage of

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[111] Interview conducted by Lucien Degoy and Charles Silvestre of *L'Humanité*, published on 13 October 2001. The interview specifically addressed Einaudi's new book, published in September 2001, and his commentary on both the massacre and its context more generally and the upcoming 2001 commemoration.
[112] RPR, Rassemblement pour la République, was President Chirac's political party until 2002, when he founded the UMP, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire. Both are right-of-center parties, but not as far right as the Front National. The other parties listed as part of the boycott included the UDF, Union pour la démocratie française, a center-right party, and DL, la Démocratie libérale, now part of the UMP.
[113] The MNR stands for the Mouvement National Républicain and was founded in 1999. Slogans are translated as "Shame to FLN collaborators," "FLN Assassin," and "France for Frenchmen."
[114] "Dubious remarks concerning the international situation marked by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001"

the commemoration *despite* the tumultuous international situation and the abundance of news material in the weeks following 11 September 2001. In the same article, *L'Humanité* listed the PCF as part of the Collectif unitaire du 17 October 1961, an umbrella organization composed of activist organizations, left and far-left political parties, and leftist labor unions, including the CGT, directly affiliated with the PCF. The juxtaposition of the condemnation of those who boycotted the commemoration with the praise of the Collectif unitaire du 17 October served to highlight the PCF's realignment within the ranks of the supporters of the fight for recognition of 17 October 1961.

One final element of note in *L'Humanité*'s reportage of the 2001 commemoration is a small exchange between *Libération* and *L'Humanité.* On 17 October 2001, Ange-Dominique Bouzet of *Libération* authored an article suggesting that "Le journal (*L'Humanité*) soucieux de protéger ses locaux, avait fermé ses grilles au nez des manifestants en détresse. Au lendemain de la manifestation, il se contentera de parler de 'la tragique soirée.'"[115] The next day, *L'Humanité* responded with an article entitled "À propos de deux petites phrases de *Libération*," in which *L'Humanité* attempted to justify its actions and limit the damage of the accusations in *Libération*. Although it did not deny the fact that its doors were indeed closed, stating that "Oui, les grilles furent fermées - et cela s'inscrit sans doute dans le trouble, dans les violences de l'événement, comme dans les réflexions que l'on peut avoir aujourd'hui sur les comportements de l'époque," *L'Humanité* did attempt to dispel the implied accusations of indifference to the fate of the

[115] *Libération*, 17 October 2001. "The newspaper (*L'Humanité*), concerned with protecting its property, shut its doors in the face of distressed protesters. The next day, it would content itself with speaking of 'the tragic evening.'"

Algerians and a lack of coverage of the massacre in its immediate aftermath.[116] The article suggests that *Libération*'s attacks concern "moins le sens de l'information que le parti pris d'un dénigrement systématique à l'égard des communistes et de *l'Humanité*, qu'il s'agisse de cette époque ou d'aujourd'hui."[117] To combat the claim of indifference, the article points to a number of phrases included in *L'Humanité*'s reports in the days immediately following the massacre that testify to the gravity of the situation:

"En plusieurs endroits, les policiers et les CRS ont chargé et tiré. Il y a des morts. Aux dernières heures de la nuit, les dépêches d'agences en annonçaient deux. Le nombre est certainement plus élevé. Il y a de très nombreux blessés. Quant aux arrestations, elles se chiffrent par milliers."[118]

Additionally, the article cited *L'Humanité*'s fear of government censorship as a reason why even more explicit denunciation of the massacre did not immediately appear: "Sur ce qu'a été cette tragique soirée d'hier, nous ne pouvons tout dire, la censure est là."[119] Clearly, the PCF's arguably insufficient actions following the massacre remained a sensitive issue even in 2001. The commemoration thus provided an opportunity for the PCF and *L'Humanité* to justify their perceived shortcomings in 1961 and redeem these past inactions with vigorous participation in the events of 2001.

In contrast to the somewhat defensive stance adopted by *L'Humanité* during its coverage of the commemoration, articles in *Libération* were marked by significantly less exaggeration and less vehemence. The headline on 17 October 2001 illustrated *Libération*'s moderate position on the "numbers debate" (referring to the number of

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[116] "Yes, the doors were closed- and that can be undoubtedly explained by the confusion, the violence of the event, as well as the reflections that one might make today on the behavior of that time"
[117] "Less the content of the information than a systematic denigration of communists and of *L'Humanité*, both in that era and today."
[118] "In many places, the policemen and the CRS charged and fired. There are deaths. In the last hours of the night, agency dispatches announced two. The number is certainly higher. There are very many wounded. As for the arrests, they number in the thousands."
[119] "Regarding what was yesterday's tragic evening, we cannot say all, censorship is there."

deaths related to 17 October): "Il y a 40 ans, la police tuait entre 32 et 200 Algériens: une 'tragique soirée' en toute discrétion."[120] Unlike *L'Humanité*, which chose to exaggerate the numbers of Algerians killed beyond even Einaudi's estimate, *Libération* cited a range of numbers proposed by Brunet (32 deaths) and Einaudi (200 deaths). Additionally, *Libération* did not hesitate to present the opinions of those who opposed the commemoration, including an article published on 16 October 2001 that addressed the dilemmas of police officers. Without attempting to villainize the police officers who refused to support the plaque at Pont St-Michel, the article noted that "même ceux qui ont, à l'époque, dénoncé les violences de leurs pairs, refusent une plaque commémorative aux seuls Algériens tués. Et nos morts, disent-ils?"[121] In this case, *Libération* maintained a careful line of impartiality, noting that most police officers objected to the "one-sided" commemoration that honored the Algerian deaths while ignoring the losses from within the police forces. By citing an instance of a policeman's denunciation of the massacre in 1961, the article explicitly attempted to counter the stereotype that all police officers were racist OAS supporters who denied the fault of the police in the massacre. However, the article did not deny the collective responsibility of the police in the massacre and blamed Papon for his fervent incitement to violence: "intoxication qui a poussé en masse les uniformes à se venger."[122] This relatively unbiased account of the dilemmas facing Paris police in 2001 illustrated the intentionally impartial tone *Libération* evidently hoped to achieve through its coverage of the commemoration.

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[120] "Forty years ago, the police killed between 32 and 200 Algerians: a 'tragic evening' in the greatest secrecy"
[121] "Even those who, at the time, had denounced the violence of their peers, refuse a commemorative plaque for just the Algerians who were killed. And our losses, they ask?"
[122] "intoxication that pushed the officers to vengeance en masse."

Not to be outdone by *L'Humanité*, however, *Libération* included articles emphasizing the excessively violent nature of the police repression in 1961. One article, published on 15 October 2001 and entitled "trois jours de violence inouïe: dans la foulée du 17, la police se déchaînera sur tout ce qui ressemble à un Algérien," suggested the blatantly racist tactics employed by the police in 1961.[123] Such a commentary hardly represented an exaggeration, however; Einaudi's two books and other publications had sufficiently proven that institutionalized, discriminatory repression tactics were first used in Algeria and then implemented in Paris to combat the FLN. *Libération* thus remained factually accurate in its coverage while clearly emphasizing its position in favor of the commemoration and in support of official recognition for 17 October 1961. The only overtly political statement appeared in its attack on *L'Humanité* on 17 October 2001; in that one instance, *Libération*'s attempt to distinguish its response in 1961 from the PCF's and *L'Humanité*'s perceived inaction in the wake of the massacre betrayed the political slant of its coverage.

In comparison to the politically charged coverage of the commemoration and analysis of the massacre in other left-wing newspapers, articles on the commemoration in *La Croix* struck an entirely different, almost apolitical tone. Despite its relative conservatism in 1961, *La Croix* had actually quite forcefully condemned the massacre in its immediate aftermath, in contrast to the mixed reactions from *L'Humanité* and *Libération*, farther left on the political spectrum. Perhaps because *La Croix* had no need to compensate for a perceived shortcoming in its reaction to the massacre in 1961, its coverage of the 2001 commemoration provided a general overview of the massacre and

[123] "Three days of unprecedented violence: in the chaos of the 17th, the police would let loose on anyone who resembled an Algerian."

its context, but concentrated on the memory of 17 October, mostly within the Algerian community. *La Croix,* which is unaffiliated politically and represents the official French Catholic Church perspective, largely eschewed political commentary and focused almost exclusively on the cultural impact of the massacre on the Algerian population in France and the ongoing "memory work" within the Algerian community. It would appear that *La Croix* was intentionally apolitical in its coverage of the commemoration; the "numbers debate" was addressed vaguely in a sub-headline: "Pendant une semaine, des débats, des projections, des expositions sont organisés pour se souvenir de la nuit du 17 Octobre 1961, qui vit le massacre de dizaines d'Algériens venus manifester à Paris."[124] While employing the word "massacre," which had caused significant controversy in 1998-99, but also referring to "dozens" of deaths (rather than "hundreds," as did *L'Humanité*), *La Croix* managed to convey its sympathy with the plight of the victims and clearly illustrated its condemnation of the massacre while avoiding any tendency to exaggerate the number of deaths to illustrate its political sympathies.

A number of brief interviews of Algerian immigrants and their descendants in *La Croix* suggest a different tone from the militancy often implied in overtly political publications; most of the interviews confirmed that in the eyes of many Algerians, "le passé est passé" (Bachir Madani). Although the commemoration was certainly important as part of a growing wave of societal recognition and limited official recognition for the massacre, a number of interviewees seemed to consider that France itself needed this commemoration more than Algerians and their descendants did. "C'est la France qui remue ça. Il faut en parler, mais sereinement," observed Hocine Missouni, who had

[124] "Throughout the week, debates, film screenings, and expositions were organized to remember the night of 17 October 1961 that saw the massacre of dozens of Algerians who had come to demonstrate in Paris."

demonstrated with his wife on 17 October 1961 and had witnessed scenes of extreme violence.[125] Mustapha Tazaroute, president of the Amicale des Algériens d'Ile-de-France and a former member of the FLN, acknowledged that "on n'oublie pas, ce serait un crime contre l'histoire. Mais on n'en veut pas à la France. En 1962, les Algériens ont tourné la page."[126] Among descendants of Algerian migrant workers, the sentiment is largely the same; according to Alima (no last name given), "mes parents n'ont jamais exprimé de ressentiment à l'encontre de la France. Ils parlent de cet événement comme quelque chose qui leur est arrivée, c'est tout."[127]

The article emphasized that although those interviewed expressed no resentment or anger against France for the massacre, the Algerian community and descendants of Algerian immigrants did have one demand, that the truth about the massacre be revealed and acknowledged in society. As Mehdi Lallaoui of the association Pour la Mémoire noted, "Voilà des années qu'on attend une parole là - dessus!"[128] *La Croix*'s own commentary suggested that France did indeed have some "repenting" to do in 2001: "Que la France fasse sa repentance et gomme la 'tache,' répare le 'trou,' ou le 'mensonge,' selon les expressions des uns et des autres, c'est ce que demandent les Algériens pour que, enfin, tout malaise soit dissipé."[129] *La Croix*, as the voice of the Catholic Church in France, was well placed to make such a remark, both because of its relatively blameless record in 1961 and because of the moral weight of the religious authority it represents (although in this case, *La Croix* spoke independently of any French bishop or other

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[125] "It's France that is still upset about this. It's necessary to talk about it, but serenely."
[126] "We don't forget, that would be a crime against history. But we don't resent France. In 1962, Algerians turned the page."
[127] "My parents have never expressed resentment against France. They spoke of this event as something that happened to them, that's all."
[128] "We've been waiting for years for a word about that (the truth about the massacre)!"
[129] "That France make its repentance and erase the "stain," repair the "hole" or the "lie," according to the expressions of various people, that's what Algerians demand so that, finally, all malady can be dissipated."

religious figure). This call for recognition and "truth" seems to reflect the primary goals of most moderate activist organizations for the memory of 17 October 1961; all but the most extreme sought symbolic recognition, and perhaps repentance, above anything else in their demands for justice. Because of the police amnesty in 1962, literal justice could not be served and reparations to the victims could not be made, forcing most campaigners to demand symbolic forms of recognition rather than lawsuits or monetary compensation.[130] It seems, then, that *La Croix*'s commentary accurately reflected the tone of the commemoration within the Algerian community in France.

According to both the interviews published in *La Croix* and comments made by historians and campaigners, the primary goal of the commemoration in 2001 was the official recognition of 17 October 1961. As Jean-Luc Einaudi stated in an interview for *L'Humanité* on 13 October 2001,

> "Ce que je demande donc au premier ministre et au président de la République, c'est de se prononcer clairement, de façon officielle, en reconnaissant que ces crimes ont été commis et en les condamnant au nom des principes proclamés de la République."[131]

Mouloud Aounit, secretary general for the activist organization MRAP (Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples), agreed with Einaudi that official recognition of 17 October 1961, in addition to open archival access and the inclusion of the massacre in French history books, would finally allow "la crampe mentale" to

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[130] House and MacMaster also suggest that most activist organizations demanded "symbolic reparation" for the massacre, partly out of necessity (no other form of reparation could be expected) and partly out of a desire for eventual reconciliation. House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961,* 295-7.

[131] "What I'm therefore asking of the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic, is to state themselves clearly and officially, recognizing that these crimes were committed and condemning them in the name of the proclaimed principles of the Republic."

relax.[132] Despite this relative consensus among activist organizations, official recognition from the national government of France remained elusive during the 2001 commemoration. Not a single member of Chirac's government was present at the plaque ceremony at the Pont St-Michel on 17 October 2001, and all members of Chirac's political party boycotted the commemoration altogether. Although Mayor Delanoë's presence at the ceremony signified official support from within the Paris bureaucracy, the national government did not participate in the commemoration in any way; however, it did not actively attempt to impede Mayor Delanoë or the activist organizations in their efforts. President Chirac's record on issues of memory and national responsibility had been relatively strong prior to the 2001 commemoration of 17 October. On 16 July 1995, he publicly acknowledged the fault of the French state in the events of Vichy, notably the deportation of French Jews.[133] When it came to recognizing state responsibility for 17 October 1961, however, Chirac proved intransigent. His decision to avoid acknowledging responsibility partly reflects the political climate of 2001, which had become relatively unfavorable to such a declaration, but the decision to acknowledge 17 October would have also inevitably implicated former President Charles de Gaulle. Chirac, himself a Gaullist president, would have been in the position of condemning the actions of one of

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[132] "the mental cramp"; statement published in *La Croix* on 17 October 2001. In "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," Julie Fette notes that Chirac's apology for the state's role in the deportation of Jews during the Vichy regime prompted "the revision of textbooks in the 1990s" to include more information about Vichy and France's collaborative role. Presumably, the same "revision of textbooks" could be expected if a state apology were offered relating to the Algerian war in general, the institutionalized use of torture, and/or the massacre of 17 October 1961. Clearly, activists for the memory of 17 October 1961 expected that the state can and should reevaluate the content of the textbooks used in public schools in France, although certainly the curriculum in private schools would not be subject to state influence. Julie Fette, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France" in *Historical Justice in International Perspective: How Societies are Trying to Right the Wrongs of the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 163.

[133] Declaration of 16 July 1995, on the 53rd anniversary of the round-up at the Vélodrome d'Hiver: "Ces heures noires souillent à jamais notre histoire et sont une injure à notre passé et à nos traditions. Oui, la folie criminelle de l'occupant a été secondée par des Français, par l'État français." Cited in William Edmiston and Annie Duménil, *La France Contemporaine*, Gardners Books, 2009. 212

the most revered war heroes and statesmen in French history. The crimes of Vichy France were committed under a separate regime, unlike the crimes of 1961, which were effectively authorized by the French Fifth Republic and President de Gaulle. The heavy implications of such an official recognition for the French state and for Chirac himself would have called into question so many of the Fifth Republic's most important entities, including President de Gaulle, the French police force, and the constitution of the Fifth Republic. For these reasons, perhaps, Chirac chose not to participate in the 2001 commemoration and refused to officially acknowledge state responsibility for the massacre.[134]

However, the refusal of the national government to participate in the commemoration and above all the continued silence on state responsibility undermined the significance of the commemoration for those who had fought for years for recognition of the massacre. The apposition of the plaque at Pont St-Michel by the Mayor of Paris represented an important first step in the struggle for official recognition, but the plaque's wording remains frustratingly ambiguous for activists for the memory of 17 October 1961. The plaque's inscription, "à la mémoire des nombreux Algériens tués lors de la sanglante répression de la manifestation pacifique du 17 octobre 1961," [135] indicates that many Algerians were killed but it omits saying by whom. It avoids any hint of blame or responsibility for the French government or the police forces, implying only the

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[134] Chirac never made a statement of any kind regarding his decision not to acknowledge the state's role in the massacre. His avoidance of the issue confirms his decision not to participate in the commemoration, but he never actually explained that decision publicly. In "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," Julie Fette speculates that Chirac's participation in the Algerian war as a lieutenant might well have deterred him from making a public declaration regarding Algeria, just as former French president François Mitterrand's "compromised personal history prevented him from leading the nation to come to terms with its past" regarding the Vichy regime (139, 160).

[135] "To the memory of the many Algerians killed during the bloody repression of the peaceful demonstration of 17 October 1961."

innocence of the victims, who had been participants in the peaceful, unarmed demonstration. The vague reference to “nombreux Algériens” references the ongoing, highly politicized “numbers debate” in which historians Brunet and Einaudi set forth archival and other evidence for widely differing estimates of the number of deaths related to 17 October 1961. The plaque does not even attempt to answer that question definitively, avoiding the issue altogether with the ambiguous suggestion of “many” deaths. However, the socialist mayor Delanoë’s instrumental support of the plaque suggests that the mainstream left, including the SFIO, had finally taken its place among the activists for the recognition of 17 October. His support represented a significant victory for these campaigners, one that proved crucial to the effectiveness of the 2001 commemoration.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the commemoration was the public awareness it created, both through the press and through various exhibitions, film screenings, and demonstrations. Because of the unified nature of the commemoration, activists and members of all the groups under the umbrella organization Le collectif unitaire and Au Nom de la Mémoire were present at the demonstrations, making this event by far the most successful of the commemorations of the massacre to this day. Additionally, prominently featured exhibitions drew public attention to the massacre in ways never before possible; both the location and the official endorsement of the exposition at the Conciergerie in Paris entitled “17 octobre, 17 illustrateurs,” inaugurated on 17 October 2001 by Michel Duffour, secrétaire d’État au Patrimoine et la Décentralisation culturelle, promised to greatly expand the potential audience for such an

exhibit.[136] Duffour's statement at the inauguration represented the only instance of a state bureaucrat openly acknowledging the repression, although he spoke only for himself, not in the name of the state:

"Le 17 octobre n'est d'ailleurs pas, sur ce point, une journée absolument singulière. Elle constitue un pic dans la répression féroce qui sévissait depuis des années. La mémoire de cette répression a été volée, falsifiée. Le détournement d'archives, les entraves mises à leur consultation ont été l'instrument de ce silence imposé."[137]

In addition to this important exhibition, the commemoration prompted theatre productions, notably performances of *Déni de justice (témoignages contre l'oubli)*, directed by Nabil Farès, and publications of novels and other works relating to 17 October, including Mehdi Lallaoui's *Une nuit d'octobre*, Gérard Streiff's *Les Caves de la Goutte d'Or*, and a collection of photographs and commentary by Jean-Luc Einaudi and Élie Kagan entitled *17 octobre 1961*.[138] Films such as *Le Silence du Fleuve* by Agnès Denis and Mehdi Lallaoui, and *Une Journée Portée Disparue* by Philip Brooks and Alan Hayling, both produced in 1992, reached new audiences through the events of the commemoration. Through this abundance of literary and journalistic activity, the commemoration of 2001 succeeded in involving a wider swath of the Parisian public than ever before.

Ultimately, however, the commemoration fell short of expectations, simply because the French state remained uncompromisingly silent on the issue of official recognition. Although almost 50% of the public indicated some knowledge of the events of 17 October 1961, the battle for official acknowledgment could not boast such

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[136] *L'Humanité*, 17 October 2001.
[137] *L'Humanité*, 24 October 2001. "17 October is not, moreover, an absolutely unique day. It constitutes a peak in the ferocious repression that raged for years. The memory of this repression was stolen, falsified. The misappropriation of the archives, the restrictions put on their consultation were the instrument of this imposed silence."
[138] *Le Monde*, 16 October 2001.

substantial progress as the fight for public awareness.[139] Until a declaration of the state's role in the massacre of 17 October 1961 is made, like the one President Chirac delivered in July 1995 admitting state responsibility in the deportation of Jews from Vichy, commemorations of the massacre will remain of questionable significance; in a statement delivered on 15 October 2004 and signed by representatives from the PCF, Verts, LCR, LO, Alternative citoyenne, the LDH, and MRAP, it is clear that the state's selective memory remained a point of contention for activists for the recognition of 17 October: "Il ne peut subsister dans notre pays une mémoire à deux vitesses : celle reconnaissant la période vichyste et celle occultant la période coloniale."[140] Until the crimes of decolonization are recognized as those of the Vichy era have been, there can be no true reconciliation and no relief for the "crampe mentale" that has lasted almost fifty years.

[139] See poll results published on 13 October 2001 in *L'Humanité*.
[140] *L'Humanité*, 15 October 2004. "There cannot survive in our country a two-speed memory: one recognizing the Vichy period and one concealing the colonial period."

Conclusion

Five years after the 2001 commemoration, on the 45th anniversary of the massacre in 2006, official recognition of state responsibility in the massacre remained a distant hope for the activists who were still fighting, despite years of setbacks and discouragement. They had one reason for optimism, however; the 2006 commemoration was organized for the first time at the initiative of the Socialist Party, led notably by the Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë.[141] Although the Socialists had participated in the umbrella organization Le collectif unitaire du 17 octobre 1961, which had orchestrated the 2001 commemoration, the events of October 2006 represented the first time that such a commemoration was led principally by a political party of the mainstream left. The massacre of 17 October 1961 had finally become a significant political issue for the left, which had never championed the cause while in power.[142] Although this shift can perhaps be attributed to the usefulness of the issue in challenging the party in power, the UMP, the left's support in recent years has undeniably helped perpetuate the commemoration of 17 October 1961, including the events in 2006. Mayor Delanoë, the politician who had been so instrumental in effecting the apposition of the plaque at Pont St-Michel, continued to be actively involved in later commemorations, stating the necessity of reconciling "les mémoires des Français et des Algériens."[143]

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[141] *Libération,* 18 October 2006.

[142] When the left coalition was in power under François Mitterrand, it had largely rejected the opportunity to officially recognize or commemorate the massacre of 17 October 1961. Once out of power, however, both the PCF and the Parti Socialiste became much more favorable to such measures. This partially reflects the Left's tendency to use the issue of 17 October as leverage against the party in power. It also might suggest that a distancing from power has allowed the left to adopt this cause free from the concerns that Chirac faced, including the possibility of undermining the values and legacy of the Fifth republic. Any party out of power is automatically distanced from that legacy and is thus better positioned to criticize it.

[143] *Libération,* 18 October 2006. The plaque at Pont St-Michel was the result of Delanoë's petition, which was voted on by the city council in 2001.

And yet, despite the left's progressive stance, it seemed that France had taken several steps backwards in the five years between the commemorations of 2001 and 2006. On 23 February 2005, a law was passed that instructed public schools in France to affirm "le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accord[e] à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit."[144] By propagating a positive image of France's former colonial presence, this law effectively undermined activists' attempts to increase public awareness of past atrocities during the colonial era, including the institutionalized use of torture during the Algerian war in both Algeria and France and the systematic terrorization of Algerian migrant workers living in France, which had culminated in the massacre of 17 October 1961. In light of this measure, the possibility of official recognition of the massacre became even more distant.

Those present at the 2006 commemoration seemed fully aware of this shift in the political climate. According to an article in *Libération* on 18 October 2006, "l'amertume était palpable dans la petite foule présente,"[145] especially because of a perceived hypocrisy from within the French government. Just two weeks before, during a visit to Turkey, President Chirac had noted that "tout pays se grandit en reconnaissant ses erreurs et ses drames," speaking in reference to the Armenian genocide during the First World War.[146] Despite his willingness to acknowledge the shortcomings of other nations, Chirac remained silent in his own country on the issue of 17 October 1961, a fact that the press in both France and Algeria did not fail to notice. In Algiers, the daily newspaper

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[144] http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/ta/ta0389.asp; "the positive role of the French overseas presence, notably in North Africa, and accord the sacrifices of the combatants of the French army originally from these territories, the distinguished place in history to which they have the right."
[145] "Bitterness was palpable in the small crowd present."
[146] *Libération,* 18 October 2006. "Every country matures by recognizing its errors and its tragedies."

L'Expression denounced "la double lecture de l'histoire faite par la France," ironically noting that "alors que la France oblige la Turquie à reconnaître le génocide arménien, ce qui est valable pour les autres l'est au moins pour soi."[147]

In the face of continued resistance from the French government, the French left appeared to stand more united than ever in its demand for official recognition of 17 October 1961. Both *L'Humanité* and *Libération* published interviews with the president of Au Nom de la Mémoire*,* Mehdi Lallaoui, who condemned the continued inaction of the State: "Il faut, maintenant, une parole de l'État. Si cette parole ne vient pas, c'est que l'occultation dure et que ceux qui refusent cette parole sont complices de l'occultation."[148] Notably, in contrast to the 2001 commemoration, the left in 2006 had finally laid aside feuds and rivalries from decades before; no accusatory articles appeared such as those published in *L'Humanité* and *Libération* on 17 and 18 October 2001, in which *Libération* had denounced the closure of *L'Humanité*'s doors in the face of fleeing protesters on 17 October 1961. With the PCF and the Parti Socialiste squarely on the same side of the struggle for the recognition of 17 October, the unified left now possessed enough strength to petition the Assemblée Nationale for official recognition of 17 October. And yet, to this day, no such proposal has been seriously entertained, despite the general consensus within the left that state recognition is essential to the "devoir de mémoire" of 17 October 1961.

Perhaps there is much truth, then, to the hypothesis presented by Mehdi Lallaoui as to the intransigent silence of the French government and the seeming reticence of the

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[147] Cited in *Libération*, 18 October 2006. Quotations from *L'Expression,* 16-17 October 2006. "France's double reading of history;" "while France obliges Turkey to recognize the Armenian genocide, what is valid for others is at least so for oneself."

[148] *L'Humanité*, 17 October 2006. "A word from the State is now necessary. If this does not come, the occultation remains and those who refuse to acknowledge it are accomplices to the occultation."

French population to pressure the government to action: "Parce que la reconnaissance de ce crime d'État n'est pas consensuelle: une partie de l'électorat n'a toujours pas digéré l'indépendance de l'Algérie. Parce que le racisme anti-algérien hérité de cette période reste ancré."[149] This statement might also help explain why, in contrast to the perpetual inaction regarding 17 October 1961 and the Algerian war atrocities in general, the French state finally acknowledged its complicity in the crimes of the Vichy era. Chirac's statement on 16 July 1995 coincided with the expansion and unification of the European Union during the 1990s and early 2000s, evoking Tony Judt's statement in *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*: "Holocaust recognition is [the] contemporary European entry ticket."[150] However, the recognition of the atrocities associated with decolonization has remained discretionary for the countries of the EU. The Algerian war represented one of the most brutal conflicts of decolonization waged in the post-World War II era, yet France has managed to avoid officially recognizing the State's directive role in the institutionalization of torture and the countless atrocities that occurred under the State's orders.[151] Perhaps it is as Lallaoui suggests, that the "anti-Algerian racism inherited from that period" has remained a powerful force in the State's decisions and in popular opinion throughout France. While the definition of Jews as victims of the Holocaust is non-negotiable, there are still parts of French society that would attribute the police repression

[149] Ibid. "Because the recognition of this state crime is not consensual; one part of the electorate has still not digested the independence of Algeria. Because the anti-Algerian racism inherited from this period remains deeply rooted."
[150] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 803.
[151] As Julie Fette points out, the French parliament did respond to "an increased social demand for reconciliation with the Franco-Algerian past" by declaring the Algerian conflict a "war" in 1999 and designating a national day of commemoration for the *harkis*. Regarding 17 October 1961, the only semi-official gesture was the apposition of the plaque at Pont St-Michel by Paris Mayor Bertran Delanoë. Also, French Ambassador to Algeria Hubert Colin de Verdière stated in 2005 that the French "massacre" of many thousands of Algerians at Sétif in May 1945 was an "inexcusable tragedy," but the French state has yet to apologize for the Algerian war, the use of torture, or the massacres (in Sétif and in Paris) associated with the war. Julie Fette, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," 158-59.

of Algerians to in-fighting between the FLN and the MNA or would simply fault the migrant workers for having come to France in the first place.[152] And indeed, many of the countries complicit in the Holocaust have undergone regime changes since World War II that have allowed present governments to distance themselves from the transgressions of past eras, making the admission of involvement in the Holocaust somewhat more tolerable.

As a result of the French state's reluctance to confront its colonial and post-colonial past, especially the Algerian War, descendants of Algerian migrant workers in France continue to express the sentiment that justice has not been served. As Mehdi Lallaoui lamented, "Nous voulons simplement en finir avec cette occultation, avec ce déni de justice. La reconnaissance, ce n'est pas la repentance. Nous sommes des enfants de la République. Et cette République n'existe que s'il y a la justice."[153] Although the commemorations of the past decade have certainly contributed to a sense of progress, the primary demands of activists remain unanswered. In a report on the 2009 commemoration in Aubervilliers, *L'Humanité* summarized the three essential issues still officially unaddressed: "la reconnaissance officielle du 17 Octobre 1961 comme crime d'Etat, l'ouverture et l'accessibilité aux Archives nationales, l'inscription dans les

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[152] The French presidential election of 2002, during which Jacques Chirac and Jean-Marie Le Pen were the final competitors, testified to the growing climate of racism in France in the early 2000s. Le Pen, president of the far-right nationalist party Le Front National, eventually lost the election to Chirac, who won with 82% of the vote. Although Le Pen lost to Chirac, the fact that the former managed to garner almost twenty percent of the vote indicated widespread support within France for his nationalist, often blatantly racist ideas. Some have also accused Chirac of echoing certain ideas of the Front National in opposition to the left in order to win supporters in 2002, demonstrating to what extent the political climate had shifted to the right in the early 2000s.

[153] *L'Humanité*, 17 October 2006. "We simply want the end of this occultation, with its denial of justice. Recognition is not repentance. We are children of the Republic. And this Republic does not exist if there is no justice." Lalloui seems to imply that activists for the memory of 17 October 1961 wanted not only an official recognition of state responsibility but also an apology (repentance), along the lines of the apology that Chirac offered for Vichy in 1995.

manuels d'histoire de cette tragédie."[154] Until these demands are met, full reconciliation between the French state and the activists for the recognition of 17 October will be at a standstill and "ce déni de justice" will remain.

Although undoubtedly important, symbolic recognition of past sufferings alone cannot ameliorate the sense of alienation experienced by many immigrants and their descendants in France today. Thousands of car burnings and weeks of turmoil in Paris' most troubled suburbs in November 2005 testified to ongoing issues of poverty and material inadequacies that prevent the integration of immigrants into mainstream French society.[155] As Communist militant Pierre Girault noted of the conflicts, the inhabitants of these suburbs "se sentent abandonnés" by the French government.[156] This sense of abandonment and "non appartenance" derives from a lack of social mobility, physical relegation to the suburbs, and difficulty integrating into French society, but it arguably also reflects the ongoing refusal of the French government to recognize its colonial past and especially the atrocities of decolonization.[157] President Nicholas Sarkozy, elected in 2007, has implemented stricter immigration policies in recent years, including "ambitious quotas for the deportation of illegal immigrants and… two laws to restrict immigration,"

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[154] *L'Humanité*, 18 October 2009. "The official recognition of 17 October 1961 as a state crime, the opening and accessibility of the national archives, and the inscription of this tragedy in the history books" (presumably on the state's initiative).

[155] *The New York Times* and *L'Humanité*, 27 October 2005- 1 January 2006

[156] *L'Humanité*, 7 November 2005. Quotation from Pierre Girault: "Mais si la condamnation des violences est claire, les habitants des cités savent aussi la responsabilité du gouvernement. Ils se sentent abandonnés." "But if the condemnation of the violence is clear, the habitants of the housing projects also cite the responsibility of the government. They feel abandoned."

[157] *L'Humanité*, 25 October 2008. Article on catcalls from young Frenchmen during the playing of the national anthem at the beginning of the France-Tunisia match. Comment from Mimouna Hadjam: **"**Ces enfants ne se sentent pas français. Dans la cité des 4 000, à La Courneuve, des Français de classe moyenne, il n'y en a plus. Il n'y a plus de mixité. Les Blancs sont où ? Dans les quartiers neufs ou dans le centre. Cela aussi aggrave le sentiment de non-appartenance à la France. Pour ces jeunes, la France, ce sont les autres." "These children do not feel French. In a suburb of 4000, at La Courneuve, middle-class French aren't there anymore. There's no intermixing. Where are the white people? In the new neighborhoods or in the center. This also aggravates the sentiment of non-belonging in France. For these young people, France, that's other people."

and even a proposal for DNA testing for immigrants.[158] Under the current political climate, shaped by Sarkozy's apparent determination to reign in France's formerly generous immigration policies, it is unlikely that the French government will consider recognizing the massacre of 17 October 1961 on its 50th anniversary in 2011.

Activists have by no means abandoned their struggle, however, and it remains to be seen what the commemoration of 2011 will bring. What is certain, however, is that this commemoration will take place; the victories of public awareness in the past decade, supported by a more united left, have guaranteed the place of the massacre of 17 October 1961 in the annals of history and will necessitate its ongoing commemoration. Even if official state recognition remains elusive for now, the risk of this "journée portée disparue" remaining lost to history has been overcome.[159]

Final Thoughts on Memory and Commemoration

Until recently, those who objected to commemorations usually protested the content of what was being commemorated; for instance, many members of the Paris police force rejected the plaque at Pont St-Michel on the grounds that it ignored the losses within the police forces from guerrilla attacks by the FLN. For historians and all others who claim to elucidate the truth of the past, a commemoration should present the past as it occurred, remembering the victims and blaming the perpetrators when possible.

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[158] *The New York Times*, 12 June 2007 and 11 October 2007. The DNA testing proposal was related to the "regroupement familial" policy that allows family members from outside France to rejoin family living legally in France. The DNA testing would supposedly speed up the process for genuine applicants while distinguishing "true" applicants from others hoping to take advantage of the policy.

[159] Phrase used frequently in reference to 17 October 1961, especially as the title of the 1992 film, but cited here from *L'Humanité*, 19 October 2007.

However, some historians, including Pierre Nora and Pierre Vidal-Naquet of the association "Liberté pour l'histoire," have recently faulted the "current prominence of memory in French public discourse."[160] Nora suggests that

> "we have passed from a modest memory, which only demanded to make itself admitted and recognized, to a memory ready to impose itself by any means… So much so that we are less sensitive to the suffering that it expresses than to the violence by which it wants to make itself heard."[161]

For Nora and for the other historians affiliated with "Liberté pour l'histoire," the main problem with this supposed overemphasis on memory and the insistence with which memory "imposes itself" is the moralization of history. Commemorations contribute to this moralization by "rewriting of history from the point of view of the victims," especially when professional historians cannot entirely mediate the public reaction and other interpretations presented in the media and through other organizations.[162] As Nora states, "historians are the best situated, between social pressure and intellectual expertise, to say to all- and for all- what the past authorizes and what it does not permit."[163] This statement implicitly suggests that the state is often ill-equipped to handle the nation's past and to commemorate events appropriately or recognize the state's role in these events. In the case of 17 October 1961, Nora's suggestion clearly applies; the French state still has not adequately (i.e., not officially) recognized its role in the massacre, leaving the victims and their descendants in the limbo of illegitimacy.

Nora seems to disregard the voices of the victims themselves in the commemorative process, however, opting instead for the more holistic and

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[160] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 268-9.
[161] *Ibid.* Nora's statement comes from an interview in *Le Monde* in February 2006.
[162] *Ibid.*
[163] *Ibid.*

"authoritative" perspective historians can offer. In the case of 17 October, the role of activists and descendants of Algerian migrant workers was undeniable; the success of the commemoration of 2001 was largely due to their untiring efforts throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Only recently have the contributions of historians effectively impacted events in the public sphere, most obviously in the case of Einaudi's participation in the Papon trial in 1997-98. Reliance on historians alone would not have resulted in the explosion of interest in the massacre in recent years, nor do works by historians necessarily result in more "correct" versions of history or memory. Jean-Paul Brunet, for instance, claimed to uphold the most rigorous standards of the historical profession in his work *Police vs. FLN*, yet his omission of important FLN archival sources and oral testimonies betrayed political motivations and a determination to support the lowest possible estimate of deaths related to 17 October 1961. Historians are therefore not infallible, nor do they represent a guaranteed solution to the difficulties of commemoration and memory work.

Some historians fault the media for the problems relating to coming to terms with the past. Regarding the Vichy syndrome, Henry Rousso and Eric Conan have noted that media slogans and the highly publicized "obsession" with past traumas have "take[n] away from the victims that which is rightfully theirs, and this is done over and over again in the name of the duty to remember, if not because of less noble preoccupations."[164] According to Rousso and Conan, the "devoir de mémoire," the oft-repeated phrase used to justify continued "obsession" with Vichy and efforts to remember the Algerian War and the massacre of 17 October 1961, has become almost counterproductive in France,

[164] Henry Rousso and Eric Conan*, Vichy: An Ever-Present Past* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New Hampshire, 1998), 203-205.

serving to erase rather than preserve certain forms of memory.[165] The authors suggest that constant reminders in the media of the "devoir de mémoire" have enforced a certain streamlining and moralization of history, which negate individual experiences and "rewrite" history anachronistically or misleadingly. All of these questions complicate the issue of commemoration beyond simply overcoming the political or social obstacles to public recognition of the event thus commemorated.

Because the 2001 commemoration of the massacre of 17 October 1961 was organized in large part from the ground up, thanks to the efforts of activist organizations and the descendants of Algerian immigrants, the risk of erasing individual memories in the interest of unity remained relatively low. However, the two purported goals of the commemoration led to questions of significance both for its organizers and for greater French society. The commemoration largely achieved its first goal, to raise public awareness regarding the massacre, mostly because of the extensive press coverage of the commemoration and a number of events in Paris that attracted a wider audience than ever before. The second goal proved much more complicated to achieve: activists sought official recognition acknowledging state responsibility for the massacre. While they were partially gratified by Mayor Delanoë's orchestration of and participation in the apposition of the plaque at Pont St-Michel, the continued and marked absence of an official declaration on the subject represented a partial failure of the 2001 commemoration in the

[165] Olivier Lalieu in "L'invention du 'devoir de mémoire'" also notes the role of the media in popularizing (perhaps excessively) this term: "Son utilisation se banalise dans les médias, les déclarations des hommes politiques, les discours des responsables religieux... Le 'devoir de mémoire' est ainsi assimilé à une 'nouvelle religion civique' privilégiant l'émotion, sans véritable contenu, inefficace sur le plan politique." "Its use has become commonplace in the media, the declarations of politicians, the speeches of religious leaders… The 'duty of memory' is thus assimilated as a 'new civic religion' privileging emotion, without real content, ineffective on the political level" (83). Rousso and Conan seem to agree with Lalieu's critiques of the "devoir de mémoire." Olivier Lalieu, "L'invention du 'devoir de mémoire," *Vingtième Siècle* 69, Jan.-March (2001): 83-94.

eyes of its organizers. As comments from activists in the years since 2001 have shown,[166] the hope for an official recognition of responsibility remains a constant preoccupation for memory campaigners. In their opinion, a "déni de justice"[167] remains as long as the state continues to skirt responsibility for its role in the massacre. For them, official acknowledgment of responsibility is the equivalent of exposing the truth about the massacre, regardless of the numerous texts and abundant evidence that prove the culpability of the state in the massacre even without an official statement to confirm it.

This insistence upon the necessity of a state declaration of responsibility for its role in the massacre derives largely from the marked contrast between the French state's apology for Vichy and its avoidance of issues related to the Algerian War. As Julie Fette noted in her discussion of state apology in "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," Chirac's apology "for Vichy had paved the way- linguistically, socially, and politically- for a French engagement with its colonial past" and the Algerian war specifically.[168] According to Fette, the Vichy apology has led to increased expectations of the French state for an official apology regarding the Algerian war, and activists' mention of an ongoing "déni de justice" references the notion, suggested by historian Raoul Girardet, that "selective repentance" is not acceptable.[169] In the view of activists for the memory of 17 October, the French state doubly insulted those affected by the Algerian

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[166] See "Conclusion" for examples of interviews with activists published in *L'Humanité* and *Libération* that illustrate this point.
[167] "Denial of justice"
[168] Julie Fette, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," 157.
[169] *Ibid.*, 155-56. "Selective repentance" indicates a choice made by an organization or individual to "repent" for one action and ignore another; in this case, Chirac offered an apology for Vichy in 1995 in the name of the French state, but the French government has yet to speak out about the Algerian war, the use of torture, or the massacre of 17 October 1961.

war by apologizing for Vichy but not for the Algerian war or the atrocities related to it.[170] This quest for state recognition and apology, then, will likely remain the goal of future commemorations until the French government finally provides its admission of responsibility.

Although the 2001 commemoration fell short of the expectations or hopes of its organizers, it seemed to serve another, rather unexpected, purpose as well. As the analysis of the press coverage of the commemoration in this thesis has attempted to prove, the French left seized the opportunity of the commemoration to redeem its past actions or shortcomings. In some cases, such as the exchange between *Libération* and *L'Humanité*, this design was clearly discussed, but other instances appeared in less obvious circumstances. The exaggeration of the number of deaths and the almost hyperbolic condemnation of the massacre and its perpetrators in many articles published in *L'Humanité* betrayed a desire to overcompensate for the newspaper's perceived inaction in the wake of the massacre. Likewise, *Libération*'s accusation against the PCF and *L'Humanité* for their failure to respond adequately to the massacre indicated a certain degree of insecurity and a need to transfer blame away from its own pages. Indeed, Hocine Missouni's comment that "C'est la France qui remue ça"[171] could indicate that the commemoration was perhaps more useful for the rest of French society, i.e. those

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[170] A number of historians, including Julie Fette, have offered explanations for why the French state has apologized for Vichy but not for the massacre of 17 October 1961; Fette suggests that the fact that "President Chirac himself served as a young lieutenant in Algeria during the war" might have deterred him from accepting public responsibility for the Algerian war or issues related to it. "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," 160. Also, the fact that the Vichy regime was a separate government from the current French Fifth Republic permitted Chirac, who was still a child during World War II, to apologize for the actions of a government with which he had no affiliation. Apologizing for the actions of his own government would have been considerably more complicated for Chirac, especially given his political ties to President de Gaulle, whose role in the massacre of 17 October 1961 was far from blameless.

[171] *La Croix*, 17 October 2001. "It's France that's still upset about this." (as opposed to the Algerians affected by the massacre or their descendants)

who did not directly organize the commemoration, than it was for the memory activists and descendants of Algerian immigrants. It clearly served the political goals of the parties of the left and provided an opportunity for a rewriting or "redeeming" of history. The commentary of Rousso and Conan would apply to this aspect of the commemoration, that of the rewriting of the past for the purposes of memory or in the name of the "devoir de mémoire."[172]

However, while Rousso and Conan took an almost exclusively critical view of commemorations and the "devoir de mémoire," Julie Fette pointed out that the "process of *critical inquiry*" as related to state apologies and acts of commemoration can "allow French society to 'move on' in a cleansed way."[173] She argued that "apologies for Vichy were most effective when they combined both critical inquiry and judgment, thereby engendering a healthier relationship… between the duty of memory and the necessary travail of forgetting."[174] If the French state does eventually offer an apology for the massacre of 17 October 1961, this same combination of critical inquiry and judgment would be essential to its positive impact in French society. This is what activists for the memory of 17 October 1961 have sought for the past thirty years: public and official state recognition of the historical truth regarding the massacre, accompanied by the identification of those responsible and the recognition of the victims. Although it remains to be seen if the French state will offer an apology for the massacre of 17 October 1961, the work of historians and memory activists during the past thirty years has effectively

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[172] In Rousso and Conan's work, the "rewriting" of history takes on a strictly negative connotation; the authors suggest that any manipulation of the strict historical record must necessarily be misleading at best, disingenuous at worst. They condemn attempts at "rewriting" history that emphasize certain elements over others, for instance, by describing World War II from the exclusive perspective of the Jews who were victims of the deportation while marginalizing other elements, such as the Resistance.
[173] Fette, "Apologizing for Vichy in Contemporary France," 162-63.
[174] *Ibid.*, 163.

ended the occultation of the massacre and greatly expanded public awareness. Regardless of the French government's inaction, continued historical research, scholarly and popular publications, and ongoing commemorations will guarantee the place of the massacre of 17 October 1961 within the collective memory of French society.

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Appendix of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANM – Au Nom de la Mémoire (In the Name of Memory); Memory Activist Group

CFDT - Confédération française démocratique du travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor); French Communist Labor Union

CGT - Confédération générale du travail (General Workers' Confederation); French Communist Labor Union

CIMADE – Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès Des Evacués; organization initially formed in 1939 to aid displaced persons, now primarily focused on undocumented immigrants and refugees

DL – Démocratie Libérale (Liberal Democracy); political party, predecessor to the UMP

EEC – European Economic Community

ENS – École Normale Supérieure; prestigious Grande École in France

FF-FLN – Fédération de France du FLN (French Federation of the FLN); branch of the FLN operating in mainland France during the Algerian War

FLN – Front de Libération National (National Liberation Front); Algerian National Liberation Movement

FN – Front National (National Front); French political party of the extreme right led by Jean-Marie Le Pen

GISTI - Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés (Information and Support Group for Immigrants); French immigrant rights activist group

LCF – Ligue Communiste de France (Communist League of France); Trotskyite political party

LCR – Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League); French political party of the far left

LDH – Ligue des droits de l'homme (League of the Rights of Man); French human rights organization

LO – Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Struggle); Trotskyite political party

MNA – Mouvement National Algérien (National Algerian Movement); Algerian National Independence Movement, in competition with the FLN

MNR – Mouvement National Républicain (National Republican Movement); political party of the extreme right

MRAP - Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (Movement against racism and for friendship among all peoples); Anti-racist activist organization

OAS – Organisation Armée Secrète (Secret Armed Organization); far right terrorist organization for the preservation of *Algérie Française*

PCF – Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)

PS – Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party); French Socialist Party, also known as the SFIO

RPR – Rassemblement pour la République (Rally for the Republic); former French political party of the right, associated with the Gaullist movement; Jacques Chirac's former political party before the UMP

SFIO – Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (French section of the Workers' International); French Socialist Party, also known as the PS

UDF – Union pour la Démocratie Française (Union for French Democracy); center or center-right French political party, incorporated into the UMP

UMP – Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (Union for a Popular Movement); French political party of the right or center-right; founded in 2002, supported Jacques Chirac's reelection