

The return and reintegration of the Algerian refugees following the independance of Algeria (*)

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When one talks or writes about refugees in Algeria he has to be aware of the fact that there are no books or articles on this subject. I must admit that I came to conclusion that most writers give a little attention to human issues like the subject of refugees and focus on political issues only. Furthermore, it is astonishing that public agencies do not keep files or documented information which can be used as a reference. It is for such reasons that this paper will be based essentially on the information provide by the interviewees or the official records of the United Nations.

DEFINITION OF A REFUGEE

What is meant by *a refugee* here is a person who fled Algeria across the international frontier between 1954-1962. When we use the term of a *disperced person* it is meant by that an individual who fled homestead, village or forced to leave his home town during the war of liberation (1954-1962) but remained within the international borders of Algeria. As for the term *a returnee*, it is intended to refer to a refugee and a disperced person. That is to say all the people who returned to their village from Tunisia and Morocco or from concentration camps inside Algeria. In this sense, a refugee is not a migrant individual who leaves his residency for economic reasons or seek political asylum in another country voluntarily. A refugee in this paper is the person who is obliged or forced to leave his country or his home for political reasons, war or natural catastrophes⁽¹⁾. According to this criteria, the Algerian migrant workers in France are not considered to be refugees even a large pourcentage of these migrants consider themselves to be political refugees. They claim that

(*) I Wish to express particular thanks and gratitude to Mr Sultan Guebaili and Mr Mohamed El-Hadi Moussaoui who introduced me to the individuals I interviewed and participated in the process of organizing the group discussions in Souk Ahras Derahma and Sidi Fredj in the wilaya of Souk Ahras from Octobre 24 to 26, 1990.

(**) This paper is prepared for Harare Symposium on social and economic aspects of mass voluntary return of refugees from one African country to another, to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe in March 1991.

(1) For further information on the definition of a refugee, the reader is advised to consult: *International Encyclopedia*, edition of 1968, p.362 or consult the 1951 United nations Convention or the 1967 United Nations Protocol.

they were obliged to leave Algeria during the war of liberation (1954-62) because the French settlers chased them from Algeria.

FACTS ON REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Before we describe the social and economic conditions of the returnees, it is essential to present some facts on the Algerian refugees and displaced persons who fled their villages during the war of liberation, 1954-1962.

As for the refugees, it can be said that, in the beginning of the war, it was unconceivable for the majority of the people that one day they would be obliged or forced to flee their country and live in exile. But in 1958 when things turned to the worse and each side tried to set up military operations and win the war, the civilians found themselves squeezed between the French army and the Algerian rebels. What made things worse for most of families living in mountains and in international borders of Algeria is the decision taken by the French army to burn mountains and create new areas called "No man's Land". That is to say the people who used to live in the frontiers must leave their homes, properties and their lands if they were settling within 45 km from the Tunisian and Moroccan borders. As result of this brutality, the Algerian refugees began drifting out of Algeria since their towns and homes were destroyed, their crops and cattle were taken⁽¹⁾. But the influx of refugees to Tunisia and Morocco was slowed down when the French installed the electrified barrage (The Challe-Morice lines) on each side of Algeria in late 1958 and early 1959.

By the 1962 the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco numbered 300,000 people. According to the official statistics of the Algerian Red Crescent, there were 160,000 refugees in Tunisia and 140,000 in Morocco. Of those 300,000 people, about 50% were children under fifteen years of age, 35% were women, and 15% were men generally too old or too ill to join the maquis⁽²⁾.

As for displaced persons who were forced to move to concentration camps, it can be said that their conditions did not become critical or alarming until 1957 when the French authorities started to expel the civilians from their homes in the area which became the strong hold of Algerian fighters. But this process started to spread to other hot spots especially in late 1957 when the French military authorities decided to bring the population to camps during the day light and allow them to go back home in the evening. However, this strategy was modified when the French military authorities stepped up military operations against the rebels. As they decided to relocate one million peasants the French resorted to some sort of action because they were convinced that France can not win the war if the civilian population are not separated completely from their compatriots. "By uprooting villagers from their ancestral homes and field and placing them in barbed wire encampments where they lived bewildered and listless lives, the French bequeathed to independent Algeria a large improvised and often psychologically disturbed mass of the people"⁽³⁾.

(1) Richard and Joan Brace, *Algerian voices*, New-York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1965, p.19.

(2) *Ibid*, p.19.

(3) David C. Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p.64.

At any rate, in 1958, the inhabitants of rural areas found themselves in concentration camps under the direct control of the military authorities. According to the statistics available on this subject, the number of displaced persons⁽¹⁾ (or the so called "refugees" inside Algeria) varied between 1,250,000 persons and 1,500,000 human beings (statistics of March 21, 1960). Some French journalists conveyed the feeling that the first number may be considered a reference to the hostages or refugees in official concentration camps and the second number may be a reference to the well known concentration camps and secret locations which were not declared to the public⁽²⁾. According to the Algerian sources there were 700,000 displaced persons in the region of Constantine, 600,000 displaced persons in the region of Algiers and 500,000 displaced persons in the region of Oran⁽³⁾. In short, the displaced persons were grouped in 3425 camps guarded by the French army. The French authorities claimed that 1,200 camps were villages and 2225 were centers for resettlement which can be regarded as camps.

HOW DO THEY OBTAIN INFORMATION ON THEIR COUNTRY?

In fact, the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco did not have any difficulty in obtaining the information on their country. In the judgement of many refugees, the main source of information was "the voice of Algeria" a daily programme of two hours, broadcasted from Radio Tunis Radio Tanger (in Morocco) and Radio Cairo. Why the refugees wait for this daily programme impatiently? because it gave them news about their country, provided them with the point views of their national leadership, and conveyed to them what was the action taken on their behalf and how to remain vigilants and mobilized to serve their national cause. Furthermore, "the voice of Algeria" became a symbol of hope and source of good news which will come to them one day and get the message from the warring factions that the war is over and they could return home and resume their normal life⁽⁴⁾.

In addition to the radio, the refugees used to buy French newspapers (especially *Le Monde*) and *El-Moudjahid* which reflects the point of view of the Algerian leadership. Perhaps, it is worth while to mention here the fact that most refugees used to get together each evening either in café shops or in centers where they usually live, and ask one of them to read newspapers for them and analyze for them the political events in Algeria. The reason for such behaviour and social communication is due to the fact that most of the refugees were unable to read and write and for some people they could not afford to buy newspapers.

One also may point out that the information about relatives and personal business of refugees inside Algeria, is usually conveyed to them by telephone or by correspondence. Sometimes the refugees communicate with their friends or relatives in France and obtain the essential information on their country because it was very easy for them to get in touch with metropolitan France and there was a relaxed censorship on information coming from France.

(1) Le terme utilisé en Français est : *refugie* dans le camp.

(2) *France Soir*, issue of April 14, 1960.

(3) *El-Moudjahid*, issue N° 62, 1960.

(4) Mr Hassani Abdelkrim wrote an interesting book on the war of waves between the FLN and the French Government. For further information this subject, please read: Hassani Abdelkrim, *Guerilla sans visage*, Alger: OPU, 1988.

THE PROCESS OF REPATRIATION

After the signature of the Evian Agreement, on March 18, 1962, the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco started to prepare themselves for the eventual return back-home. This possibility of going back home, however, depended on the decisions taken by the executive Power or the provisional government formed jointly by the French and the Algerian government in exile. This government by interim was supposed to govern Algeria until the outcome of self determination which had to be organized within time allowed between three months and six months. Since it was stated in article 4 of Evian Accords that "the French forces stationed in the frontiers will not withdraw before the proclamation of the results of self-determination", the refugees could not enter Algeria until the interim government authorizes them to come back to their homes.

But the dilemma of civil war between the French government and its right wing secret army organization (O.A.S) which seemed to be determined to keep Algeria French postponed the return of refugees until April 1962 when the joint commission (or the newly created Franco-Algerian provisional government) started to negotiate with the O.A.S and put an end to the local resistance by the French settlers against the Evian Accords which stipulated that ⁽¹⁾:

« refugees abroad can re-enter Algeria. Committees to be set up in Morocco and Tunisia will facilitate this return. Displaced persons who have been regrouped can come back to their place of abode or normal residence.

The executive power will take the preliminary social, economic and other measures destined to insure the return of those people to a normal life''⁽²⁾.

At any rate, it was in April 1962 that a committee of High Commissariat for Refugees (UNHCR) decided to participate in the process of repatriation of refugees. Naturally, the Algerians and the French authorities welcomed the move, and the three authorities worked together to set up a central committee for the repatriation of the refugees, in addition to 3 subcommittees composed of three members.

What seems to be very interesting about the preliminary steps of repatriation is the fact that the Algerian Red Crescent and the UNHCR Co-operated with each other and made all the necessary arrangements for the repatriation of the refugees, and the Franco-Algerian authorities facilitated the process of their return to Algeria legally. According to eye witnesses, there was a sharp difference between the Algerian authorities. Some of the officials of the Algerian Red Crescent had asked the refugees to leave everything and return home without taking any thing with them. But this initial decision was reversed and new instruction was given to refugees to take blankets, food, oil, tents and their belonging with them ⁽³⁾.

With regard to the efforts made by the UNHCR for the repatriation of refugees, it was able to set up 12 medical teams and bring in 15,000 tents and provided the transportation from the Moroccan and the Tunisian centers to the Algerian borders where the French and the Algerian authorities facilitated the process of crossing the borders.

(1) Ben Youcef Benkhedda, *Les Accords d'Evian*, Alger: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1986, p.76.

(2) Chapter I (L) in *Les Accords d'Evian* in Ben Khedda's book, *op.-cit*, p.81.

(3) This information was conveyed to the author in a group discussion with former refugees in Bani Abbas, municipality of Sidi Fredj Daira de Merahna, wilaya de Souk Ahras, on Thursday October 25, 1990.

In Morocco the process of repatriation of refugees began on May 10, 1962 and ended on July 25, 1962. There were 61,400 persons who received aid from the committee in charge of the refugees. In Tunisia, the process of repatriation started officially on May 30, 1962 and continued until July 20, 1962. There were 120,000 persons who received aid from the committees in charge of the refugees. The cost of repatriation for the UNHCR totaled about 1,241,000 US Dollars. According to the records of the UNHCR, there were 200,000 individuals who received assistance from the committees in charge of refugees after the arrival of returnees to Algeria⁽¹⁾.

When former refugees were asked why the number of refugees in Tunisia and Morocco was estimated to be around 300,000 but only about 200,000 returned, carrying with them official documents that they were refugees, the answer to this question was that the refugees on the borders were able to cross the frontiers and go back home on their own initiatives. If they were caught by the French authorities, they would be sent back to Tunisia or Morocco. If they were not caught, they just returned home very quickly in order to find out what had happened to their relatives and properties⁽²⁾.

What ought to be stressed here is the fact that most of the refugees returned home before the first of July 1962, because the FLN wanted them to participate in the referendum of self-determination which was scheduled for July 3, 1962. In fact, the leaders of the FLN were afraid that the French authorities may influence the course of events by inducing its loyal allies to vote "No" or against the creation of an independent state in Algeria. Indeed, the returnees adopted the strategy of the FLN and encouraged everybody to vote massively "Yes" which meant the creation of a sovereign state in Algeria. Obviously, the results of the referendum which took place on July 3, 1962 confirmed the success of returnees in influencing the process of voting. Out of 6,000,000 voters, 5,971,581 voted "Yes" and only 16,534 voted "No"⁽³⁾.

It should be emphasized here, however, that each refugee decided by himself when to return back home and the Algerian authorities arranged and Co-ordinated between different centers so that they can fix the dates and provide the means of transportations for every refugee. As for the logistical problems of travelling home, it is well known fact that a large pourcentage of the refugees crossed the borders in trucks belong to the Algerian army of liberation. This decision was taken by the Algerian authorities because the committees in charge of refugees found it difficult to generate funds and vehicules for the transportation of refugees. In this way, the problem of shortage in cash and the strong desire of the returnees to go back home quickly since the Evian Accords allow them to return at any time they wished, were solved rapidly and efficiently.

PROBLEMS OF REINTEGRATION

The tragedy of most of the Algerian returnees was that they found "No homes, No jobs and perhaps only a limited welcome. Certainly those who stayed and "Won

(1) United Nations, *Rapport du Haut Commissaire pour les Réfugiés*, New-York, 1964, p.13.

(2) Mohamed Ben Ali Guebaili, born on April 24, 1912, refugee in Tunisia until 1962, interviewed on Wednesday October 24, 1990 in Sidi Fredj.

(3) Pierre Montagnon, *La Guerre d'Algérie*, Paris : Pygmalion Gérard Watelet, 1984, p.400.

the war” may be less than generous with those that return”. For instance, on May 15, 1962 “there was no indication any place that efforts, any plans were being made to assist them in the repatriation in Algeria”⁽¹⁾.

It can be stated in the beginning of this section that the initial destination of the Algerian returnees on arrival in Algeria were the centers which were designated for their reception. As a matter of fact, the organizers in Tunisia and Morocco did excellent job because each refugee was provided with his card of refugee and transported to the closest transit centre where he is supposed to be received and rejoin his family as easily as possible. In other words, there were very few returnees who remained in transit centers. Practically, everybody joined his family or went back to his home.

Thanks to the aid received from relatives who stayed behind, the returnees were able to buy food, cloths, and resume normal life. What was very hurting for most of the returnees is the fact that most of their houses were destroyed during the war and they lacked funds to reconstruct them as rapidly as possible. In reality, what proved to be helpful for the returnees was their properties, cattles or stores they left behind when they sought refuge in Tunisia and Morocco. As soon as they returned home, most of the returnees found a lot of money waiting for them because the people who were left behind inside Algeria had exploited their properties, saved 50% of the revenue for the original owners. In the judgement of Mohamed Ben Ali Guebaili, 78 years old, owner of several hectares of land in the municipality of Sidi Fredj, daira of Derahma, wilaya of Souk Ahras: “without the money received from these who left behind and exploited our land, probably we will not be able to survive in 1962”⁽²⁾. Mr Guebaili, however, indicated that there were many returnees who brought with them some money from abroad. He revealed that thousands of refugees took some money with them when they left the country, and naturally invested their savings in some economic projects. Such investment was very fruitful and many refugees made financial gains.

Although Mr Guebaili affirmed that he received once a little aid from the government (the wilaya of Annaba), because he asked for it (about 400 FF), the returnees declared that they never received any financial aid from the Algerian government. In fact, Mr Ammar Houas, 45 years old, artisan or craftsman who is repairer of guns, denied that the government had given any financial aid to anybody. When he was asked how did he resume normal life after his return in 1962 without any aid? Mr Houas answered this question by saying that he and his father fled to Tunisia during the war of liberation and resumed their activities in that country. In 1962, he said “we started from zero when we returned. Fortunately for us, we brought with us some money from outside, in addition to other revenues from rented land to the people who were left behind”⁽³⁾.

In short, the absence of any financial aid to the returnees from the Algerian authorities or the repatriation committees made it necessary for the returnees to go back to their home towns and resume normal life there. In a group discussion, Mr Ammar Bouhencher, 71 years old, mayor of the municipality of Merahna from

(1) Brace, *op-cit*, p.207.

(2) Mohamed Ben Ali Guebaili born on April 24, 1912, is a farmer in Sidi Fredj, wilaya de Souk Ahras, interviewed on Wednesday October 24, 1990 in Sidi Fredj.

(3) Amar Houas, born on August, 14, 1945, artisan, interviewed in his work shop in Merahna, wilaya de Souk Ahras Thursday October 25, 1990.

1962 to 1971 revealed to us that his municipal council of 7 members did not have any money to give to former refugees. In the beginning he said “we received limited financial aid and we gave 30 FF to each returnee possessed a carte of refugee. But this symbolic aid which came to the Daira (Sous-Préfecture) of Souk Ahras at that time was interrupted because there was shortage of funds”. In his judgment, “the returnees who migrated to big towns, returned to the municipality and resumed work in farms because they could not find jobs in big cities, and they were obliged to come back and cultivate land. Without exploiting fertile lands, the people could face starvation”⁽¹⁾. He asked: “what do you expect the returnees to do in order to live and feed their families? There was no choice for them except to cultivate land and wait for the crops”. Mr Bouhencher informed his listeners that “fortunately for the returnees that the Europeans quit and left their crops behind them in June 1962. The returnees benefited from the crops and supplied their families with sufficient wheat, corn and barley”.

Perhaps, it should be pointed out here that most of the returnees and displaced persons were not skilled and were unable to do any thing else except to cultivate land. Furthermore, the Algerian leaders were involved in political struggle in 1962 and no one offered or presented an economic programme which was aimed at getting rid of unemployment, poverty and misery. This sad atmosphere coincided with the total upset of the social system as a result of the war. In fact, there were a few people who were living in fairly good conditions, but they were upset by the prolonged war, either because they took sides in the war or because they were very poor and possessed nothing before 1962, but thanks to the revolution, they joined the FLN and took part in the fight against the French settlers and eventually emerged as the winners. Naturally, those people who participated in the war of liberation were entitled to get benefits, but the returnees were not entitled to get any thing from the government.

In addition to the problem of social inequality created by the war, there was the fantastic problems of 300,000 orphans, 3,000,000 displaced persons in camps, 400,000 jailed persons, 700,000 individuals who moved from rural areas to big towns, and the population of 8,000 villages which were completely destroyed⁽²⁾.

What really facilitated the process of reintegration of the returnees is the warm relations between the people who remained in Algeria and their compatriots who left the country and came back in 1962. There was a mutual need of each other, and the lack of skilled persons (especially in agriculture) induced all individuals to co-operate with each other. Mr Salah Saadi, who was only 20 years old in 1962 said he “should not forget the fact that every family had suffered from the loss of many persons who used to cultivate land and raise cattle. The death or disappearance of such persons from the market of labour, created vacuum in the field of agriculture, and the people sought the help and assistance of each other”. Mr Saadi who works now as taxi driver in the municipality of Merahna, said that “there was no feeling of alienation or gap between the refugees who returned and their compatriots who stayed behind in Algeria”⁽³⁾. In the judgement of Mr Saadi, “The ones who could not make the adjustment were the children who could not find schools near their

(1) Ammar Bouhencher, born in 1919, was the first mayor of the municipality of Merahna, Daira de Souk Ahras, Département de Annaba (ex-Bône) from 1962 to 1971.

(2) FLN *La Charte d'Alger*, Constantine: Edition du journal An-Nasr 1964, p.94.

(3) Salah Saadi, born in 1942, taxi driver, interviewed in Souk Ahras on Thursday October 25, 1990.

homes. While in exile, the children used to find schools in the area where they usually live. But after their arrival back home, they encountered great difficulties, either because schools were very far away from their homes or because there were no teachers". Mr Saadi indicated that "many people volunteered to take the children in rural areas to big cities in tractors because there were no buses available for the transportation of adults or children".

In brief, the returnees found it very difficult to gain their livings because there were no specific projects or economic programmes to help them. The lack of financial assistance from the government which had an empty treasury, made it necessary for the returnees to rely on themselves and understand that international and state assistance was designed to help the refugees survive until the end of the war. Since the independence of the country has been achieved, all the Algerians have to count on themselves only.

THE ROLE OF RETURNEES IN LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps it is essential to mention here the fact the urgent need for the Algerian government in 1962 is to reestablish order after the end of the 7 1/2 year war for independence, and the serious effects of the mass exodus of French administrators and technicians. In fact, the treasury of the newly created Algerian state was empty and the economy was still tied to that of France. "With 4 1/2 millions Algerians deemed to be in a state of total poverty, it was only American surplus wheat that kept the population alive over the first months of independence"⁽¹⁾.

What is needed to be stressed here is that most of the returnees were disillusioned and disappointed when they realized that the Algerian state was incapable of providing them with the necessary assistance. But they were happy that their country has become independent and they are no longer humiliated or exploited by the European settlers.

In reality, the lack of assistance from the government or international organizations induced the returnees to organize themselves and make their livings. Their sources of revenue for investment in local projects came from:

- 1) Money earned while abroad (rented farms, cattle, commerce etc...).
- 2) Savings brought from outside Algeria.
- 3) Extra revenue supplied by relatives or migrant workers in France.
- 4) Sale or renting parcels of land to other people.

In fact, Mr Bouhencher, who was mayor of Merahna from 1962 to 1971 was very clear about the issue of self-reliance. "Since the government did not have any cash available for assistance, what do you expect us to do? to die? There was no choice but to rely on ourselves and each one has to take care of himself"⁽²⁾. When he was asked: how did you live in the summer of 1962? He said: "fortunately for us, there was the American corn and wheat which were distributed as a donation by the municipality in exchange for building roads, schools and planting trees". Then, he

(1) Alistaire Horn, *A savage war of Peace, Algeria: 1954-1962*, London: Mc Millan 1977, p.540.

(2) Amar Bouhencher, mayor of the city of Merahna from 1962 to 1971 interviewed on Thursday October 25, 1990.

added: "one should not forget the fact that if we survived in the summer of 1962, thanks to the crops left behind by the French farmers. We just went to the abandoned farms and brought in the harvest".

In brief, thanks to the joint efforts of the returnees and the people who stayed behind that the country became capable of feeding itself. The Co-operation between land owners and unemployed returnees solved partially the problem of cultivating fertile lands. It is this type of productive work that enabled farmers and workers in agriculture to produce basic food locally and make it available to the people in the local markets.

Unfortunately for the returnees and the farmers in general, unlike the Europeans who used to own large farms and use modern machines and equipments to get the best results of their harvests, they worked on small farms and the plots, whether considered the property of the tribe, a family or individuals, are worked jointly by a Kin group, and all members of the family share in the field work. Furthermore, methods of cultivation were generally primitive because of ignorance of better methods, lack of capital for investment in machinery and improvement of the land and the small size of the plots. What also hurted the returnees most is the rapide growth of population to the extent that the land available to subsistence has become insufficient to support them and their families. As a result of this, many farmers are forced to seek supplementary income by working on a commercial farm or to migrate to the city⁽¹⁾.

In spite of all those problems, the returnees succeeded in preventing massive migration of young workers to cities or to France. Many groups of the returnees were able to revive interest in agriculture and induce unemployed workers to be engaged in productive programmes. In fact, the returnees very often hired laborers as needed, and seasonal workers, including many women and children. They also asked the government to undertake some programmes to provide young labourers with fertilizers and insecticides to build small irrigation works for their benefits, and to introduce the use of tractors for plowings⁽²⁾.

The efforts of the returnees and the encouragement of the government by giving seeds, loans to buy machines and tractors boosted the moral of returnees and inspired them to work harder in their home areas and create some sort of social and economic prosperity at their local level.

Perhaps, it can be said that the returnees have had strived to change their physical and social environments and have done what ever they could within their limitation to reach their goals of providing food and shelter for their families, and economic security for their home areas. In general, they have contributed to the well-being of their relatives. Certainly, the returnees have never achieved self-sufficiency and reached a high standard of living, but it is quite accurate to say that the returnees have had contributed to the stability of the Algerian society. Instead of becoming nomads as a result of the war of independence with its direct destruction of animals and its indirect effects on land and the regroupement of the population, the returnees made fantastic efforts to rebuild flocks and herds and induced the government to import thousands of head of cattle from Europe, and eventually provided meat and proteine to all Algerians. At least, they have succeeded in

(1) *U.S army area handbook for Algeria*, Washington D.C: U.S Government printing office, 1964, p.379.

(2) *Ibid*, p.380.

reducing imported meat, cereals, and dairy products and, thus, participated in meeting partial needs of the Algerian society.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON REINTEGRATION

When the Algerian leadership took over in 1962, Mr Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria, was faced with the problem of 2 millions people or one half the labor force unemployed⁽¹⁾. In order to make political gains, Mr Ben Bella demanded in the autumn of 1962 the revision of the Evian Agreements and declared that his government was not bound by them and announced that those agreements were incompatible with the Tripoli Programme of June 1962⁽²⁾. This move strictly in breach of Evian Agreements, and they were going to have a negative effect on the policies and programmes adopted by the Algerian government. Furthermore, it was stipulated in the Evian Agreements that there would be free movement of workers between France and Algeria. This would have helped many unemployed Algerians to seek jobs in France. But the departure of one million of French settlers to France in 1962 and the nationalization of their properties by the Algerian government, induced the French government to request the revision of Evian Agreements. On July first, 1964 France decided to regulate the movement of Algerians toward France in accordance with the ability of the French economy to absorb the migrant workers. For the Algerian Government this represented a dilemma "since it must balance the fact that approximatively 2 millions Algerians dependent on the earnings and family allowances remitted by their men in France"⁽³⁾.

In brief, the Algerian Government decided in early September of 1962 to help the returnees. But the unexpect exodus of one million Europeans after independence, resulted in blocking the French financial aid because the Algerian Government has decided in 1963 to nationalize the vacant properties. In June 1963, the French Government decided to retain the financial aid to Algerian Government which was supposed to be around one billion New Francs. This huge amount of money which was retained by France was used to compensate European farmers whose land had been seized by the Algerian Government⁽⁴⁾. Thus, the 2.5 million acres of European lands which were vacated by their owners and taken over and operated by the Algerian workers who had been employed on the farms, ruined the chances of returnees to get financial aid from the Algerian state.

In reality, when one talks about the policies and programmes undertaken by the government, the reference is undoubtedly to the agricultural sector which is the backbone of the Algerian economy. The paysants form 70% of the population. Out of 11 millions, 7 million Algerians lived in rural areas and derived their livelihood directly from agricultural activities⁽⁵⁾. This explains why the first programme of the Algerian government in the field of economics is the *Tripoli Programme* which was approved in May 1962 and it called for the reform and modernization of agriculture.

(1) *U.S army area handbook for Algeria*, Washington D.C: U.S Government printing office, 1964, p.421.

(2) Horne, *op-cit.*, p.540.

(3) *U.S army area handbook for Algeria*, *op-cit.*, p.80.

(4) *Ibid*, p.376.

(5) Arsalam Humbaraci, *Algeria: a revolution that failed*, New-York: Praeger, 1966, pp.82-83.

It was in the beginning of 1963 that the government decided to design programmes which would help the returnees and other unemployed workers. In March 1963 the Ministry of Agriculture decided to initiate the agrarian reform by creating the so called *autogestion* (self-management) sector. This policy was conceived as an economic system based on workers' management of their own affairs through elected officials and Co-operation with the state through a director and national agencies. "The state had the function of guiding, counseling and Co-ordinating their activities within the framework of an evolving national plan". This was seen as a stage in the transformation from a colonial to a socialist economy⁽¹⁾. This sector represented 44% of irrigated lands, and consists of 2,300 mechanized state farms that cover more than 2 millions hectares of the best agricultural land. These state farms employ about 180,000 permanent and 100,000 seasonal workers or about 20% of agricultural labor force. Through the Ministry of Agriculture, the state appoints a manager on each farm to ensure that land development conforms with national planning objectives. The state farms account for 60% of total agricultural output⁽²⁾. The main problem in these farms is that the bureaucracy controls them and the farms could not achieve their potential. It was also easy to detect that the people who work on the farms were not trained or specialized in agriculture.

It should be emphasized here that the policies and programmes of the Algerian Government in the area of agriculture were aimed at expanding agricultural programmes in order to meet the needs of an internal market. The Algerian authorities were also hoping to change rural ways of life and raise the standards of living in the countryside to that of urban level. Furthermore, the reforms in the agricultural sector were aimed at preventing the exodus of peasants from rural areas to overcrowded and under services in cities.

Yet, until 1990, those reforms, have not achieved the desirable results. The returnees may have earned salaries but they could not participate in the process of raising production, and the internal market is weaker than before. The efforts by the officials to slow down the exodus from rural areas to big cities have failed.

The good intentions of state officials to help the returnees and create programmes and policies which encourage them to work and improve their standard of living, did not work out, mainly because the socialist regime in Algeria deprived the peasants of initiatives and bureaucracy imposed heavy restrictions on the workers. Furthermore, in a socialist state like Algeria, the means of production were owned and controlled by the state and consequently the private sector was put aside.

In other words, the policies of the government were aimed at encouraging the returnees to rely on the programmes and projects prepared by the officials instead of encouraging them to rely on themselves. As one scholar has pointed out: "A heavy handed bureaucracy, overcentralized decision making, and widespread instances of corruption, mismanagement, price fixing, blackmarketeering, and interventions of unregulated middlemen and commercial profiteers have in combination revealed a fundamental problem with a strategy of the reforms, namely the political mobilization of the peasantry from above"⁽³⁾. In essence, this means that the central

(1) John P. Antelis, *Algeria: the revolution institutionalized*, Boulder Colorado: West View Press, 1986, pp.140-141.

(2) *Ibid*, p.142.

(3) Antelis, *op-cit*, p.145.

government rather than the peasantry itself determined the priorities of planning, production and pricing. It was for such reasons that peasants have been stripped of their ecological and sociological meaning. "Feeling alienated and isolated, the new rural worker could no longer identify with the land upon which he was working" ⁽¹⁾.

The programme which worked very well in 1962-1963 was "operation construction programme" which aimed at providing 400,000 jobs to poor people in rural areas. What is very interesting about this programme is that the workers were paid by the United States agricultural surplus. One of the most pleasant surprises during our trip from the municipality of Merahna to Beni Abbas on October 25, 1990 was that the route we took was built by the American aid. Our taxi driver Mohamed Brazguia, reminded us that most of the returnees worked and paved this road in 1963 and "thanks to the American oil, wheat, and corns that the former refugees built this road and helped us to get out of isolation". ⁽²⁾ When the mayor of the city of Merahna from 1962 to 1971, Mr Bouhencher was asked why did you give the American aid to the returnees to build roads? He quickly answered me by saying: "the aid was a donation and it was supposed to be given to the poor, but we decided to make them do something like building roads instead of remaining idle". Then, he added, "we have had received instructions from the wilaya of Annaba (Bône) to create some jobs for the people who receive American aid" ⁽³⁾.

In spite of shortages in funds, it was the policy of the Algerian government to help many people who suffered from the war. In the area of social protection of orphans, victims of the war and widows, the government decided to come to their assistance. According to the law N° 63-99 of April 2, 1963, the victims of the war who could not work because they were disabled, they were allowed to get pensions up to 3,600 New Francs each year ⁽⁴⁾. The same law authorized the Ministry of Finance to pay 30 New Francs each month to each child of the victim of the war. In addition to that, each child received a scholarship from the government as long as he goes to school. Widows were authorized by the law to receive pension and allowance of 30 New Francs on each child ⁽⁵⁾.

In the field of employment, the Algerian government decided on August 31, 1963 to facilitate the reintegration of refugees and participants in the war of liberation by ordering all departments in the nation to allocate 10% of jobs to the victims of the war ⁽⁶⁾. It was specified in this law that the victims of the war were entitled to get 10% of available jobs in each enterprise either public or private, in the cultural or industrial sectors.

On May 3, 1965 the Algerian government decided to create new jobs for the victims of the war. Initially, it was decided to distribute 2,500 permits on the victims of the war so that the unemployed individuals could acquire stores to sell cigarettes and provide food for their families ⁽⁷⁾. The success of this operation induced the authorities to expand this type of permits to small towns where the individuals in rural areas suffered from unemployment.

(1) *Ibid*, p.145.

(2) Mohamed Brazguia, taxi driver, born on July 1, 1956 interviewed on October 25, 1990 in Beni Abbas.

(3) Ammar Bouhencher, the first mayor of the municipality of Merahna, Souk Ahras, from 1962 to 1971, interviewed in Beni Abbas on Thursday October 25, 1990.

(4) Article 5 of the law N° 63-99 of April 2, 1963.

(5) Article 29 of the law N° 63-99 of April 2, 1963.

(6) Article 12 of the law N° 63-321 of August 21, 1963.

(39) Article 2, of the Decree (Executive order) N° 65-137 of May 3, 1965.

A similar action was taken also in 1965 to create new jobs for the victims of the war. It was on May 3, 1965 that the Algerian government decided to create committees in each wilaya (Department) and distribute permits of acquiring taxis and help returnees to earn sufficient income for living⁽¹⁾. In fact, this action generated thousands of new jobs and large number of refugees who settled in rural areas benefited from this decree.

On December 30, 1968 the Algerian authorities came up with new concept of helping the victims of the war. The new idea was to give loans to these who participated or suffered during the war of liberation and give them chance to buy machines and establish industrial units for production⁽²⁾. Thanks to these loans many people took the initiative to construct factories and invest in capital goods. What was very interesting about these loans was that the rate of interest on the loans did not exceed 1%, and the reimbursement of loans given by: *Le Crédit Populaire d'Algérie* will be in the coming 15 years.

As for the orphans, especially the children of the people who died for the national cause, the government created special schools for them and took care of them until 1988 as far as I know. Mr Arezki Salhi who was in charge of 12,000 pupils of refugees in Tunisia said that the children of refugees faced great difficulties when they came back to Algeria, because they were used to Tunisian programmes of education and suffered from the question of age. That is why the Algerian Ministry of Education decided in 1962 to create special schools for them in oran, Constantine and Algiers. but at the end, the committee in charge of this programme succeeded in creating a special school which admitted the former pupils in Tunisia and Morocco who were between the age of 12-18 years old. Mr Salhi indicated that about 9,000 pupils completed their education in this special school which is called now: Lycée Ibn Khaldoune⁽³⁾.

CAUSES FOR THE SUCCESS FOR REINTEGRATION

In reality, the Algerian returnees (about 200,000 persons), displaced persons (3,000,000 individuals), and 400,000 jailed persons have succeeded in resuming normal life, largely because they relied on themselves and there were favorable circumstances which worked in their favor. What is ought to be kept in mind is the fact the Algerian authorities and international organizations, including the UNHCR, have had worked very hard to rescue the refugees and save their lives by presenting regular aid and assistance to them while the war was going on in their country. But once the war was over and no longer in danger or peril, the returnees have to rely on themselves and solve their problems in their own manners. If we take into consideration this fact, we will understand why the returnees have succeeded in resuming their normal life without waiting for aid of their government or international organizations.

The first factor which helped the returnees to be reintegrated in their society is the informal organization and the philosophy of self-reliance. When the former

(1) Decret N° 65-140 du 3 Mai 1965 relatif aux licences de taxis.

(2) Ordonnance N° 68-654 du 30 Décembre 1968 portant loi de finance pour 1969.

(3) Arezki Salhi, co-ordinator of academic programmes of schools for the Algerian refugees in Tunisia from 1958 to 1962. Interviewed in his office of Unesco in Algiers on Sunday October 21, 1990.

refugees were asked the vital question: How did you manage and succeeded in providing food and shelter to your family in 1962? The answer of most the returnees was that "we got in touch with the people who remained behind and exploited our lands, commerce and took care of our cattle until we came back. When we returned back home, we received our share of profits and benefits from our properties during the period of absence"⁽¹⁾. As for the returnees whose land was exploited by European settlers, they took over and replaced the french settlers who left the country in 1962. In the case of landless individuals or simple workers, they received tents from committees in charge of repatriated refugees, and municipalities provided them with food on montly basis. Mr Guebaili confirmed the fact that the state helped, in general, its fighters and veterans of the war of liberation. But the state also provided paysants with seeds of wheat and barley. This was also the point of view of Mr Bouhencher, the former mayor of the city of Merahna from 1962 to 1971. In a broad sense, the state helped its veterans of war and paysant to get seeds, but the big boost to the returnees came from informal arrangements with other compatriots who exploited their properties and submitted to them their shares of profits when the returnees reached their villages.

The second factor which helped the returnees to survive is the massive departure of the French settlers in 1962. The exodus of Europeans helped the returnees in a double way. They lived on the crops left behind in June 1962, and worked on "roughly 2.5 millions acres of European land, most of it in large domaines owned either by individuals or agricultural companies". Those farms which were vacated by their owners, were taken over and operated by the Algerians⁽²⁾. In a way, the departure of one million Europeans and some 20,000 Algerians who were attached to France, generated and created at least one million opportunies to replace them and find sources of income.

The third source of income or the returnees and the Algerian Government, as well, was the Algerian migrant workers in France. It is well known fact in Algeria that the migrant workers in France who where around 600,000 persons in 1962, were the main source of funds for the Algerian revolution and, in independence they also became the principal source of revenue for their families in Algeria. According to the statistics, the migrant workers have had sent to their families in Algeria 38 milliards of French Francs in 1955. Furthermore, the Algerian migrant workers in France reduced the pressure on the government in the area of employment. For instance, in 1963 there were 50,443 individuals left Algeria to France and another 43,802 workers migrated to the same country in 1964⁽³⁾. In short, the migrant workers in France who are around 900,000 persons in 1990, have had always helped their families and their government to receive a large sum of money (especially hard currency) which was used to buy goods and services and provide education for the children of Algeria. It was for such reasons that the Algerian government has always encouraged the migrant workers in France to invest their money in Algeria and provide them with social assistance wherever they live in France.

The fourth factor which helped the returnees and their children to be reintegrated was the aid received from the Arab states. What is needed to be emphasized here is the fact that the returnees wanted the government to focus on the field of

(1) Sultan Guebaili, Son of a farmer, interviewed on Friday October 26, 1990 in the city of Souk Ahras and participated in the group discussion in Beni Abbas on October 25, 1990.

(2) U.S Army, Area Handbook for Algeria, *op.-cit.*, p.376.

(3) Ammar Bouhouche, *The Algerian Migrant Workers in France*, Alger: SNED, 1979, p.195.

education and give chance to their sons to receive a good education and compete for top positions. Furthermore, it was the policy of the Algerian government to train the adults and replace the Europeans who fled the country after the independence. Since the treasury of the newly formed government was empty, the aid from Arab states was very vital to the success of the government actions to provide education for the pupils and training for adults. It was the big hope of the Algerian authorities to come up with new programmes of training Algerians who could replace the Europeans Technicians⁽¹⁾. According to the instructions of the Algerian officials, the adults should not remain idles or count on the government to give them any money. In other words, the local officials were asked to use fully the existing schools and give the adults chance to be trained and to do something to help themselves and their families. This message was well received by the Algerian local authorities and they asked for specialists in training to help them improve the skills of thousands of Algerians who wanted to improve their living conditions and social status. The Arab teachers and trainers were over 30,000⁽²⁾.

The fifth factor which helped a great deal in facilitating the process of reintegrating the returnees was the availability of material and infrastructures left by the French. The Algerian Government was very fortunate to find in 1962 constructed houses, factories, schools, machines and paved roads. Naturally, the existence of such infrastructures created excellent opportunities for the Algerians to work and earn money without borrowing or asking for international assistance. Furthermore, the re-utilization of machines and exploitation of lands left by the French did not resort to the importation of any goods since there were sufficient goods produced locally.

The sixth factor which helped the government to overcome unemployment and provide jobs for returnees was the vacuum left by the death of about one million of Algerians during the war of liberation and the departure of about 20,000 Algerians who took the French side during the war of Liberation and automatically left Algeria and chose to live in exile after 1962⁽³⁾. As we have indicated earlier, all the vacant positions, either because of death or exile were filled by the returnees who were interested in these vacant positions.

In my judgement, those factors helped the returnees to be reintegrated in the Algerian society. It seems evident that the Algerian Government did not have sufficient funds to generate and create jobs for 3 millions displaced persons and 200,000 returnees from outside Algeria, but the richness of Algeria from oil, the savings of the returnees which were given to them by the people who were left behind, hard currencies received from migrant workers, departure of one million of Europeans and the death of another one million of Algerians in the war, have made it easy for the returnees and displaced persons to find jobs and feed their families. However, my trip to the border of Tunisia where most of the former refugees live convinced me that a large percentage of the returnees are still living in deploring conditions. Their grievances stem from heavy handed bureaucracy, overcentralized decision-making and widespread instances of corruption, mismanagement, price-fixing. In other words, it is the central government which determines the priorities of

(1) According to the official statistics of the French Government, there were 968,685 French repatriated individuals who left Algeria in 1962 and never came back, see: Patrick Eveno and Jean Planchais, *La Guerre d'Algérie*, Alger: Laphomic 1990, p.336.

(2) Eveno, Planchais, *op.-cit.*, p.378.

(3) *Ibid*, p.337.

planning, production and pricing. The paysants feel that they have been reduced to the status of mere agricultural labourers “a kind of rural proletariat in which “farmers” and “paysants” had been stripped of their ecological and sociological meaning⁽¹⁾.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REHABILITATION OF THE RETURNEES

The Algerian refugees in Tunis and Morocco were very lucky to receive the aid of 29 governments and 65 international organizations. The total amount of aid was over 22 millions dollars⁽²⁾. The 181,400 repatriated refugees (120,000 from Tunisia and 61,400 from Morocco) were also able to obtain 1,241,000 US Dollars from the UNHCR after their return to Algeria (up to December 1962)⁽³⁾. This aid includes 240,000 Dollars given to the Algerian Government for the purpose of creating educational centers and medical units in small villages. Furthermore, the UNHCR precised in its reports that the aid was supposed to be given to the returnees from outside Algeria and to the displaced persons inside Algeria⁽⁴⁾. This was also the policy of the Algerian Government which considered former refugees in Tunisia and Morocco and displaced persons inside Algeria alike and both of them were eligible for its aid.

Perhaps, it will be wise to mention the sources of aid which was channeled to the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco up to 1962. According the reports of the United Nations, the aid came from:

1) The UNHCR	7,487,624 U.S Dollars ⁽⁵⁾
2) Donations by governments	6,640,005 U.S Dollars
3) Red Cross Organizations	4,872,057 U.S Dollars
4) Donations by private organizations	3,204,198 U.S Dollars

Total . 22,158,884 U.S Dollars⁽⁶⁾

In brief, it can be said without hesitation that the international assistance to the Algerian returnees almost ceased to come as soon as the war was over and Algeria became an independent state on July 5, 1962. It was true that some international organizations like: The *UNHCR*, *Quakers* and *CARE* from the United States of America, *La Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix Rouge*, *Red Cross*, a British organizations called *War on Want* and *English Committee for the Aid of Algerian Refugees* tried to continue giving aid to the returnees even after war, but in vain, and the displaced persons confirm this fact. What most of the people remember about the international aid in the post independence area is the American surplus food and the Arab teachers who came to teach in primary schools and train adults in vocational centers.

(1) Lentis, *op.-cit*, p.145.

(2) *Rapport du Haut Commissaire des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés*, New-York: 1963, p.9.

(3) *Rapport du Haut Commissaire des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés*, New-York: 1964, p.13.

(4) *Ibid*, p.13.

(5) Including 4,814,113 U.S dollars donated by 32 governments and 2,673,511 US dollars given by private organizations.

(6) *Rapport du Haut Commissaire des Nations-Unis pour les Réfugiés*, New-York: 1963, p.9.

As an eye-witness indicated in his reports on May 15, 1962 when he was in the city of Bône inside Algeria: "there is nothing here for refugees, no homes, no jobs and perhaps only limited welcome. At the present, there is no indication in any place that any efforts, any plans are being made to assist them in repatriation in Algeria"⁽¹⁾. In the judgement of Mr Brace who was a representative of an international organization and his colleague Bill Huntington of the American Organization, the Quakers, there was a great disillusion in 1962 because some Algerians and international organizations think in terms of "greatest need" and "new goals" but top officials were pre-occupied with power struggle going on at higher levels⁽²⁾. It became evident for the representatives of international organizations in September 1962 that "there was no chance of success in our project until a stable government was set up". They realized that "the Algerian children fund turned to interim relief projects, food distribution to the needy of Bône, and the setting of sewing atelier to teach women how to make cloths and to produce clothing which was needed imperatively by the poor of the cities and the countryside"⁽³⁾. This gentleman who participated in the process of helping the returnees complained in October 1962 about the "inability of certain persons to give a definite reaction to proposals concerning the sewing center. I have just emerged from a period of furious frustration brought about by the failure of some officials to move even when they give everything but their kids as assurance. I feel that this failure to act when action is beneficial will remain a chronic weakness for many moons"⁽⁴⁾.

In fact, the international organizations like the Red Cross, the Quakers and Care were interested in the continuous programmes of refugees in Tunisia and Morocco. They wanted training schools for sewing, public health, and education to be transfered from the frontiers to Algeria. But the local authorities who were unfamiliar with the projects and sometimes they were replaced by new ones, did not have money to participate in financing the projects. The excuses used by local officials were that crucial decisions have had to be taken by their superiors. Furthermore there was no a clear cut policy in this field. That is why nobody was ready to take the risk of approving a programme unless it was endorsed by top officials.

What ought to be mentioned here is the fact the international aid which was needed most, was in cash but the aid provided by international organizations was in kind. This meant that even there were machines, equipments and raw materials, there were no sufficient funds to pay instructors and supervisors of the projects.

There was also another element which made thing more complicated for international aid, that is the unwillingness of most contributors to aid, to continue giving assistance after the independence of Algeria. They were no longer generous as before and the organizations did not receive financial support any more. The general feeling in 1962 was that the independent state of Algeria is capable of taking care of those persons who are no longer entitled to consider themselves refugees.

(1) Richard and Joan Brace, *Algerian Voices*, New-York: D. van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1965, p.207.

(2) *Ibid*, p.214.

(3) *Ibid*, p.214.

(4) *Ibid*, p.214.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the bloody conflict in Algeria from 1954 to 1962 had resulted in the death of more than one million human beings and four million displaced persons. Fortunately for the Algerian refugees in Tunisia and Morocco, they were well received and helped by the two host countries and international organizations. Thanks to the “Voice of Algeria” broadcasted from Radio Tunis and Radio Tanger in Morocco, the Algerian refugees, were able to learn about the conditions in their home country. Obviously life in exile was very difficult, but it was very pleasant for most of returnees to come back home, and to meet again with their neighbors, friends and relatives who survived this difficult war of liberation which lasted almost eight years.

Perhaps, it is worth while to mention here the fact, that as a result of the war, the returnees found it very difficult to stay together and work in rural areas like before. Some displaced persons have moved to towns and some others remained where they were forced to stay during the war of liberation. In other words, members of one family were dispersed and everyone settled wherever he could find a job or friends with whom he could get a long very well. What ought to be stressed in this conclusion is that the massive departure of French settlers from farms in rural areas and factories in big towns had induced the returnees to become interested in salarial work instead of seasonal work in agriculture.

Naturally, it was easy for the returnees to re-establish contacts with their compatriots back home, simply because there was no friction or differences between the refugees and their fellow country men who remained inside Algeria. However, they suffered from the lack of skills, regular aid for living and limited resources because the treasury of the state was empty and taxes were not collected in very efficient way.