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The Voice of Algeria Radio and Its Role in the Algerian Revolutionary Mobilization (1956-1962 AD)

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Abstract

The "Voice of Fighting Algeria" radio played a pivotal role in the Algerian Revolution (1956-1962), transcending its function as a mere news outlet to become a primary tool for revolutionary mobilization. The National Liberation Front (FLN) recognized early on that the struggle was not just military but also informational, aimed at countering French propaganda. Through its shortwave broadcasts and support from Arab and international stations, the radio successfully boosted morale, fostered national unity, and clarified the revolution's political goals. It employed innovative mobilization techniques like national anthems, drama, and direct messages to connect combatants with the population. This media experience created a parallel front of struggle, effectively contributing to winning the revolution's psychological and political battle.

Keywords: Revolutionary Media, Mobilization, National Liberation Front, Voice of Algeria Radio, Colonial Propaganda.

Introduction

The Algerian Revolution was not merely a military confrontation between a colonized people and a colonial power; it was a comprehensive revolution that employed every possible tool to break the grip of the French occupation. Among the most prominent of these tools was media, whose importance was recognized early on by the National Liberation Front (FLN) for winning hearts and minds, refuting the colonial narrative, and building a public consciousness committed to the liberation project.

In this context, the "Voice of Fighting Algeria" radio emerged as one of the revolution's most significant media gains. It did not just report news; it played a pivotal role in strengthening national spirit, connecting the mujahideen with the people, and delivering the voice of a free Algeria to the world.

How did the Voice of Algeria radio contribute to supporting the liberation revolution, and to what extent was it effective in countering French propaganda and mobilizing public opinion both internally and externally?

Answering this question requires delving into the nature of the revolutionary media's role, analyzing the messages broadcast by the radio, and measuring its impact in the face of the colonial media machine, in addition to understanding the circumstances of its inception and its operating techniques under censorship and siege.

First: Revolutionary Media in Algeria

Since the start of the November 1, 1954 Revolution, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) realized that the battle against French colonialism would not be won solely on the battlefield. It would also be decided in the public consciousness and in shaping public opinion[1]. From this perspective, the need arose to establish a revolutionary media apparatus to keep pace with the developments of the struggle, penetrate the propaganda blockade imposed on the Algerian people, and expose the colonial narrative broadcast through French media outlets.

In this context, the Voice of Fighting Algeria radio emerged as one of the most prominent tools for unconventional revolutionary mobilization, where it combined a communicative function with a mobilizational role and a political message[2].

This radio was not just a platform for broadcasting news or issuing communiqués; it was a living collective voice that conveyed the pulse of the Front, carried the hopes of the people, and reflected the struggle of an entire nation on the path to liberation.

The Voice of Algeria radio became a daily revolutionary school, contributing to mobilizing the masses, explaining the liberation project, and instilling hope in the darkest moments of repression and destruction, in addition to its role in refuting French propaganda and influencing global public opinion[3]. This unique media experience today serves as a role model for struggle in the history of resistance media, not only in Algeria but also in liberation movements across the world.

Second: The Historical and Political Context of the Emergence of the Voice of Algeria Radio

The establishment of the "Voice of Fighting Algeria" radio was a necessity of the struggle in light of France's suppression of any form of free expression inside Algeria. With the outbreak of the liberation revolution on November 1, 1954, the French occupation tightened its grip on the press and publications, and subjected the official radio station entirely to colonial propaganda, which described the revolution as a "limited armed insurgency"[4].

Given this situation, the leadership of the National Liberation Front realized that the media struggle would be decisive in winning over the Algerian people and drawing the attention of international public opinion. Therefore, in late 1956, it decided to establish a radio station that would speak for the revolution, be its voice, and address the masses in a revolutionary, mobilizing language[5].

The Voice of Algeria radio was established in December 1956, beginning its broadcasts from a border area inside Algeria, and later moved to Tunisia after the French intensified their pressure. The first call broadcast by the station was:

"We are the voice of fighting Algeria... We are the voice of a people being slaughtered and fighting for their freedom... We do not lie, nor do we sell out, nor do we tremble!"[6].

The radio relied on shortwave broadcasting and received technical support from friendly stations such as **Sawt al-Arab** (Voice of the Arabs), **Sawt al-Jazair min Dimashq** (Voice of Algeria from Damascus), Radio Prague, and the Voice of the Arab Maghreb radio from Tunisia[7].

Historian **Mohammed Harbi** affirmed that the establishment of this radio "represented a strategic leap in the Front's struggle, as it allowed the battle to be brought to a daily public level, transcending armed action to psychological and political confrontation"[8].

Third: The Mobilizational Function of the Revolutionary Radio

1. Psychological and Moral Mobilization

The radio played a central role in raising morale, especially after massacres or acts of repression. It narrated the heroes' exploits, mourned the martyrs with epic words, and emphasized the inevitability of victory[9].

Radio excerpt (1957): "To the residents of Beni Ounif... do not despair, the blood of your children will not be in vain... the revolution will avenge them"[10].

2. Political Mobilization and Revolutionary Awareness

The radio explained the political principles of the revolution, such as the November 1st statement, the resolutions of the Soummam Congress, and the objectives of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic.

Abou El Kacem Saâdallah wrote that "the radio played the role of the political intellectual for the people; it was the one that explained why we fight, whom we are fighting, and what we want"[11].

3. Mobilization for Specific Groups

It dedicated programs to:

- Workers in France (in French and Darija)
- Students abroad.
- Algerian women.
- Children and the elderly[12].

Excerpt (1959): "You are the midwives of the revolution... those who hide bullets under bread and teach children the meaning of a homeland"[13].

Fourth: Broadcasting Methods in Service of Mobilization

1. Language and Discourse

The radio used simple Standard Arabic, Darija, Amazigh, and even French, depending on the target audience[14].

Example: "From the Voice of Algeria to the women of the Aurès... Your dignity is from the dignity of the homeland, and your silence is a betrayal"[15].

2. Revolutionary Anthems

National anthems, such as "**Qassaman**" (The Oath), were used as tools of emotional mobilization and were broadcast before or after the news bulletins[16].

3. Audio Messages

It transmitted messages between the mujahideen and their families, and between students abroad and their peers at home, which created a deep emotional connection[17].

Example (1959): "My mother, I am not dead... I am alive in the mountains, do not cry... rather, be proud that your son is writing the history of Algeria"[18].

4. Drama and Performance

The radio utilized dramatic scenes, poignant real testimonies, and theatrical conversations that employed national sentiment[19].

Fifth: The Practical Impact of the Mobilization

1. National Unity:

It helped to overcome regional and linguistic barriers.

2. Enhancing Trust in the Leadership:

It became a trusted source that surpassed French media.

Testimony of Abdelhamid Mehri: "The Voice of Algeria was a daily communiqué from the leadership to the people"[20].

3. Popular Recruitment:

Large segments of youth joined the revolution as a result of the mobilizing discourse[21].

4. Supporting the Home Front:

It was a source of resilience during moments of setbacks, such as the events in the Casbah[22].

Sixth: Popular Interaction

The radio was a "sacred daily meeting" in Algerian homes. People would secretly gather after the evening or dawn prayer to listen to it, despite the jamming and penalties.

Lakhdar Bouregaa: "People would put themselves in danger just to hear five minutes of it"[23].

French Intelligence Report (1959): "The revolutionary radio has become more dangerous than leaflets because of its emotional and direct influence"[24].

Seventh: Arab and International Media Cooperation

1. **Sawt al-Arab (Cairo)** dedicated daily programs to the Algerian Revolution[25].
2. **Voice of Algeria from Damascus:** Established with Syrian support, it broadcast appeals to the diaspora[26].
3. **Prague and Romania:** Supported programs for the mujahideen and linked them to the African struggle[27].
4. **International speeches:** Speeches by Ferhat Abbas at the United Nations were broadcast, which contributed to internationalizing the issue[28].

Mohammed Harbi: "This cooperation brought the revolution out of isolation and opened new media fronts against France"[29].

Eighth: Slogans and Constant Documents

Repeated mobilizing slogans included:

- "From the Voice of Algeria to every free heart!"[30].
- "The blood of the martyr is not forgotten"[31].
- "The radio of the revolution does not die"[32].

The archive of the National Museum of the Mujahid documents them as "tools of daily emotional reinforcement"[33].

Written document from Tunis: "The Voice of Algeria cannot be silenced, even if the airwaves are bombed. We write with blood, and we triumph with our voice"[34].

Ninth: Technical and Logistical Challenges

- Weak electro-acoustic capabilities, short broadcast duration.
- Constant French jamming, which necessitated frequent changes in frequencies.
- Lack of trained media personnel at the beginning.
- The pursuit of broadcast centers and the destruction of some by raids[35].

French newspaper *Le Monde* (1958): "The revolutionary radio represents a daily challenge to the French army because of its influence in Paris and the capital"[36].

Conclusion

The Voice of Algeria radio proved that revolutionary media is a true front of struggle, parallel to the rifle, and indeed, complementary to it. This radio was a tool for shaping consciousness, instilling hope, and exposing the falsity of French propaganda.

The radio was able to overcome censorship and geography, connect the interior with the diaspora, and mobilize the nation with the power of the word. If battles are won with weapons, revolutions only triumph when they possess a sincere voice that expresses their essence.

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Footnotes

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