



Jerzy Zdanowski

# Can Muslims be French Citizens?

The North African Muslim Soldiers  
in the French Army during  
the Great War (1914–1918)



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# Abbreviations

AMAE – Centre des Archives diplomatiques, Ministère des Affaires étrangères

GCC – General Commander-in-Chief

GGA – Governor-General of France in Algeria

ICMA – Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs

MC – Minister of Colonies

MF – Ministry of Finance

MI – Minister of Interior

MW – Minister of War

PC – President of Council

PR – President of the République

RGM – Resident-General of France in Morocco

RGT – Resident-General of France in Tunisia

SHD – Service historique de la Défense, Ministère des Armées



Hernicourt. A corner of the village. Tunisian *spahis* returning from the horse walk, February 1916  
(VAL 314/109)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/a011432125258GmE9zl/10ac7fb1d1>

# Preface

## 4th Regiment of Tunisian *Tirailleurs* on the front lines of the Great War

**T**he 4th Regiment of Tunisian *Tirailleurs* was one of many sent from North Africa to the Great War in Europe. Its road to the front and the combat trail were also similar to others. The regiment had begun to be assembled five years before the war from among Tunisian peasants and artisans, and in 1914, it consisted of three battalions – the first, fifth and sixth. On August 2, 1914, only the 6th Battalion was in Tunisia in Kairouan. The 1st Battalion was stationed in Fez and the 5th in Meknes, also in Morocco. On August 6, 1914, the 6th Battalion left Kairouan and arrived in Algiers on August 8. On August 10, it was embarked on two steamers, and on August 12, it came at Sète, from where it set off by train to Avignon. The completion of the line-up took place, and on August 16, the Battalion set off to the front in Anor, where it arrived in the evening of the next day.

Meanwhile, on August 9, the 1st Battalion set off for Algiers, and on August 15, it sailed to Sète with the reservists who came from Tunisia and then set off for Avignon. On August 21, the 1st Battalion took up combat positions at the front in Berzée, Belgium, and on the 22nd, it escorted artillery of the 3rd Corps. The two battalions joined together on October 29 after taking part in combat operations on August 22, when for 24 hours, the 1st Battalion held positions between Hanzinne and Hanzinelle under fire from heavy German artillery and infantry attacks. The first killed and wounded fell that day. The 5th Battalion left Meknes on August 13 and was in Sète on the 21st. On August 25–26, it arrived in Charleville, where it immediately began fighting at the front.

On October 29, 1914, the three battalions joined together near Paissy and fought united together from that time under the command of French officers, each with experience of commanding North African troops. On November 16, 1918, the 2nd Battalion took control of the border along the Rhine in the Lake Geneva area, and on November 21, 1918, its troops submerged the regiment's banner in the waters of the Rhine. During the war, the Regiment was cited in six orders of the Army and was awarded *le Croix de guerre* with palm and *le Croix de la Légion d'honneur*. Moreover, its battalions and companies were mentioned 45 times in the lower levels of command. The unit was mentioned in the orders of: the 10th Army, Order Number 104 of September 16, 1915, after the Battle of Artois for capturing 4 lines of trenches; the 4th Army, no. 478 of January 30, 1917, for the fighting in Champagne on August 25, 1915, in the Sabot forest, where Tunisian soldiers remained under heavy fire, and then attacked and captured 400 soldiers, including 11 officers; the 2nd Army, no. 900 of September 20, 1917, for the fighting at Verdun on August 20, 1917, when soldiers entered enemy territory 3 km beyond the front line and took 400 soldiers prisoner and captured 6 cannons and 11 machine guns; the 10th Army, no. 341 of September 20, 1918, for the fighting in Soissonnais in the period from May 28 to June 17, when the Tunisians held a 2-kilometer section of the front despite enemy attacks with a four-fold superiority in numbers; the 4th Army, no. 1445 of November 10, 1918, for the fighting in Champagne on September 26–29, when, fighting along the 11 km of the front, they captured 838 soldiers, including 11 officers in the area of la Butte du Mesnil on the Gratreuil and Marvaux plateau.

In the sixth order of the Chief Commander, which the 10th Army issued after the Battle of the Ailette in August–September 1918, we read:

*Elite regiment with a glorious past. Under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Aubertin, during operations from August 30 to September 3, 1918, gave again the measure of its tenacity and heroism. Following on from an infantry regiment whose attack had been started with the heaviest losses, it was able, despite the numerous enemy machine guns which remained intact and a particularly violent barrage, to bite into enemy positions occupied by a resolute adversary, forcing it to retreat and thus achieving a subsequent advance of 4 kilometers.*

The regiment took part in 27 combat actions. The first took place at Fosse-a-l'Eau on August 28, 1914, and the last on October 18–20, 1918, at Ravin de Beaurepaire (Argonne). On October 29, 1914, the regiment

consisted of 61 officers and 3,800 soldiers. These numbers fluctuated, which revealed the number of dead and wounded. The regiment had the smallest number of soldiers on May 1, 1918, which was 1,859 soldiers. On November 11, 1918, the unit consisted of 64 officers and 2,127 soldiers. The losses among the officers amounted to 62 killed, 207 wounded, and seven missings from August 2, 1914, to November 11, 1918. They were mainly French because Tunisian officers were few. From August 23, 1914, to October 26, 1918, the casualties amounted to 2,059 killed, 10,259 wounded, and 3,165 missings, thus totaling 15,483 soldiers. The bloodiest combat action of the regiment took place at the end of the war. In attacks by Tunisian battalions on German positions from August 19 to September 3 at Cr cy-au-Mont in Champagne, 112 soldiers were killed, 584 wounded, and 79 missing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, *Histoire sommaire du 4<sup>e</sup> R giment de Marche de Tirailleurs tunisiens* (Bordeaux: Imprimeries Gounouilhou, 1919); Capitaine M. Mennerat, *Tunisiens h roïques au service de la France. L' pop e du 4<sup>e</sup> tirailleurs sur le front fran ais, guerre 1914–1918*, sous le Haut Patronage de S.A. le Bey de Tunis, pr face de M. le Mar chal Franchet d'Esp rey de l'Acad mie Fran aise (Paris:  ditions Berger-Levrault, 1939).



Sompuis (near). Training of black troops. Senegalese behind beams, at the end of a break, June 12, 1917 (VAL 106/042)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/a011593078327JvyVeq/2610b5e847>

# Introduction

This book reveals a fascinating and epic history of Muslim soldiers from North Africa who served in the French Army during the First World War. French North Africa was at war on August 3, 1914, with Algeria being part of France and Tunisia and Morocco as French protectorates. Already on August 5, 1914, the Minister of War decided to send eight battalions from Morocco to Europe, including five composed of Moroccan soldiers. They were to be directed to Cette, and from there to Bordeaux, which was to be the leading dislocation site for North African units.<sup>2</sup> As early as August–September 1914, 32 infantry battalions from all regiments of North Africa were sent to Europe, of which 12 regiments were assembled in France. The war with Germany forced the French authorities to mobilize all human resources. The situation in this respect became dramatic in 1917. The battalions had three companies instead of four on the European front, as there were no conscripts in the metropole to supplement them. Historians are unanimous that the colonies and protectorates became a great reserve of human and material resources, and successive generations of recruits from Asia and Africa joined the French Army. During 1914–1918, the French Army deployed almost three hundred thousand Muslims from North Africa. They were sent to the most critical positions on the front, including Verdun.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Minister of War (MW) to the General Commander-in-Chief (GCC) of the 16th Region, 5 Aug 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194 (Maroc. Afrique du Nord, August 1914–May 1915); MW to the GCC of North-East Army, 20 Aug 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>3</sup> G. Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* (Paris: Librairie Larose, 1943), 2906; G. Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée. La guerre de 1914–1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle* (Genève-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1981), 793; M. Michel, *L'appel à l'Afrique. Contribution et réaction à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F., 1914–19* (Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1982), 533. On the eve of the war, the line infantry

This fact initiated discussions about equal rights for the colonial soldiers, including granting them French citizenship as a remuneration for their fight. However, despite being put forward by the Minister of War himself, such a proposal was rejected due to opposition from the colonial lobby. The book exposes arguments of the conservative party of why Muslims could not be French citizens. At the center of the narrative is the discussion held in 1915 at the highest level of state administration about granting the quality of citizen to Muslim soldiers from North Africa. The presence of the Muslim soldiers in the French Army provoked tensions between the idea of Republican citizenship and colonial policy and revealed imperial pride and racial prejudices. The fact that the indigenous people of Algeria received the French nationality on the basis of the sénatus-consulte of 1865 but were deprived of the quality of citizen was called the “republican compromise” or the “paradox of French republicanism.” It was expressed in the limitation of the universal meaning of citizenship and the introduction of the criterion of nationality as the only legally legitimate criterion for political discrimination.<sup>4</sup>

L. Blévis writes that the history of Algerian citizenship during the colonial period underwent few inflections after 1865, which strengthened France’s presence and brought institutionalization of colonial domination.<sup>5</sup> The proof was the Jonnart Law on February 4, 1919. While it increased the number of Algerian Muslims eligible to vote for Muslim members of city councils and departmental council members, it omitted several other important reform proposals that were not in the interest of *colons*.

The book discusses the steps and legal procedures adopted by the French authorities in response to the presence of Muslim soldiers in the army. Its novelty is in extracting three fields of the discussion – cultural identity, social benefits, and political participation – as critical for the coherency of culturally diverse societies. Its author considers that the social

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of the French Army was divided into 173 active regiments and an equal number of reserve regiments. There were 12 regiments of cuirassiers, 32 regiments of dragoons, 21 regiments of chasseurs à cheval and 14 regiments of hussars. See also, B. Nagaro, *La Main d'œuvre étrangère et coloniale pendant la guerre* (Paris, New Haven: Les Presses universitaires de France, Yale University Press, 1926), 25.

<sup>4</sup> G. Noiriel, *Le Creuset français. Histoire de l'immigration XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1988) 110–113.

<sup>5</sup> L. Blévis, “Les avatars de la citoyenneté en Algérie coloniale ou les paradoxes d’une catégorisation,” *Droit et Société* 48 (2001), 559.

benefits (family allowances, indemnities, and pensionary benefits) for colonial soldiers equal to the French, being an underdeveloped issue in the majority of studies, should be taken as critical for the study on the further erosion of colonial policy of racial, religious and ethnic hierarchies in France. The book concludes that as a result of the measures adopted by the French Government in response to the presence of the Muslim soldiers in the French Army, a comprehensive model of, later on, called multiculturalism, was adopted in France. However, this model contained a contradiction of serious consequences.

Although the book refers to a short period in French history and a specific feature of the republican model, it addresses in a broader sense equality and fair treatment of people with different skin colors or religions. The arguments of the opponents of the equal treatment of culturally different people in 1915 did not become a thing of the past. This problem is still valid today and would probably be hotly discussed in the framework of today's standards of political correctness. However, at that time, this subject was raised by a small group of members of the French Parliament representing the indigenous people of France's overseas possessions or being *indigènes* themselves. Their voices met the wall of the silence of the then political correctness, which was defined by the political culture of the Third Republic.

### The Third Republic and colonial people

The First World War was a breakthrough in the relationship between the metropole and North Africa. Numerous authors emphasize this. G. Meynier writes that “the first world war discovered the existence of Algeria for the world, the colonization of which began in 1830, and the world in response showed the Algerians the historical and political conditions of its existence”.<sup>6</sup> In 1914–1918 the nationalist movements were born, which was essential for the colonial system. In Algeria, nationalism was born as a protest against the unfair treatment of the country by the metropole. “The First World War “discovered” Algeria’s serious disease when France imposed a burden on the Algerians disproportionate to the country’s abilities.” In response, in 1916, the *Comité pour l’indépendance de l’Algérie*

<sup>6</sup> Meynier, *L’Algérie révélée*, 219. Meynier emphasizes that 300,000 Algerians – soldiers and workers – contributed to the victory over Germany.

*et de la Tunisie* was formed in Berlin. In Switzerland, a committee called Union et Progrès was born to start an uprising in Africa from Eritrea to the Maghreb, and in Barcelona, Moulay Hafid and his followers aimed to spark an uprising in the Maghreb. Nationalists met in Lausanne and turned to Constantinople, Berlin, and Vienna to fight the “oppressive regime” for “independence”.<sup>7</sup>

In the trenches of the war, the brotherhood of North African *indigènes* with the soldiers of the metropole was born. This equality in distress became a stimulus for demands for political and legal equality after the war. In France, colonial workers engaged in political and union activities on an equal footing with French workers.<sup>8</sup>

Farhat Abbas wrote in his book *De la Colonie vers la Province*, published in 1931, on the eve of the centenary of Algeria’s conquest by France, which was at a time when the *indigènes* demanded only equal rights with Europeans, that “the war of 1914-1918 fundamentally changed the nature of the Algerian problem”. After France introduced the military service obligation for the *indigènes* in Algeria in 1912 and entered the war in 1914, an entire army of Muslims was deployed across the Mediterranean Sea to defend the metropole from the German threat. At the same time, multitudes of hired workers found themselves in the metropole and discovered another France for themselves, other work opportunities, and other living conditions. “A social revolution began to sprout in their minds”.<sup>9</sup>

The Algerian problem could be expressed in one word – justice, which meant equality before the law.<sup>10</sup> In 1913, just before the war, economist Charles Gide, uncle André Gide, referred to the issue, saying that unless there were reconciliation and cooperation between the *colons* and the *indigènes*, sooner or later, the *colons* would “be pushed into the sea”. Similar opinions were voiced earlier. In 1887, the deputies Alfred-Nicolas Gaulier and Henri-Joseph Michelin proposed the equality of *indigènes* in Algeria with the French and granting them full rights as French citizens. This project was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies in 1890 and

<sup>7</sup> A. Nouschi, *L’Algérie amère, 1914–1994* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1995), 77, 80.

<sup>8</sup> *Histoire de l’Algérie à la période coloniale (1830–1962)*, eds A. Bouchène, J.-P. Peyroulou, O.S. Tengour, S. Thénault (Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 2014), 320.

<sup>9</sup> F. Abbas, *De la Colonie vers la Province. Le Jeune Algérien (1930) suivi de Rapport au Maréchal Pétain (Avril 1941)* (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1981), 22.

<sup>10</sup> See, *La justice en Algérie, 1830–1962*, ed. F. Banat-Berger (Paris: La Documentation française, 2005).

rejected.<sup>11</sup> The need to eliminate injustice guided eminent politicians in France. These included MPs Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Abel Ferry, Jean Jaurès, as well as Paul Bourde, Charles Gide, Charles Jonnart, Georges Clemenceau, Maurice Violette, and Léon Blum. At the end of the Great War, Clemenceau wanted to emphasize and commemorate the Algerians' participation in the French victory. Together with Leygues and Jonnart, he prepared a project to reform the political structure in Algeria, but the *colons* did not agree to any changes, even though the draft law of 1919 only modified the system. The *colons* were a state within a state. They had their sociologists, economists, and thinkers: Eugène Étienne, Max Régis, Louis Bertrand, and André Servier.<sup>12</sup> Granting the rights of French citizenship to *indigènes* was not allowed.

Number of sociologists, historians, and political scientists underline the role of the French Revolution in the development of the nation as a "community of citizens" (*communauté de citoyens*) and stress that the history of citizenship (*citoyenneté*) and democracy in colonies shows the "paradox of French republicanism," which was the contradiction between the desire to assimilate others in the name of the universalism of republican values and the implementation of these intentions.<sup>13</sup> This paradox was based on the concept of active citizens and passive citizens, introduced by the Revolution of 1789. These two types of citizens were distinguished by Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès in his work *Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée Des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, which was a proposal for a state constitution. Article XVI of this proposal stated that every citizen is obliged to submit to the authority of the law, which expresses the community's interests. A passive citizen had the right to enjoy the benefits of living in society but had no right to participate in the formation of public institutions. All the inhabitants of the country enjoyed the rights of passive citizens in the

<sup>11</sup> See, Annexe No. 857, Séance du 21 juillet 1890, *Proposition de loi ayant pour but d'accorder progressivement la naturalisation française à tous les indigènes musulmans d'Algérie*; Annexe No. 883, Séance du 26 juillet 1890, *Proposition de résolution sur le service militaire des indigènes musulmans d'Algérie*, in Documents Parlementaires, (Chambre), 1624–1627, Session de 1890.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 24–25; C.M. Andrew and A.A. Kanya-Forstner, "The Group Colonial in the French Chamber of Deputies, 1892–1932," *The Historical Journal*, XVII, 4 (1974): 837–866.

<sup>13</sup> Blévis, 559; see also *Citoyenneté, république, démocratie. France 1789–1899*, ed. L. Hincker (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Atlande 2014), 359; F. Lebrun, "Les nouveaux citoyens de la Révolution," *L'Histoire*, 193, 1995; D. Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens. Sur l'idée moderne de nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 152.

sense that they were guaranteed personal protection and the protection of their property, but only those who made up the public sphere were truly active citizens. Being an active citizen meant having political rights, and the primary political right was the right to vote. Children, women, and foreigners did not have political rights and did not shape public institutions.<sup>14</sup> The National Constituent Assembly decided that approximately 70% of men over 25 years of age could be active citizens.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of citizenship and its application were from the very beginning an instrument of political struggle, used as early as 1789 against the aristocracy.<sup>16</sup> Then, in the same year, the possibility of depriving Jews of political rights and thus eliminating Jews as a non-Christian religious group from public life was considered, and it was not until 1791 that Jews received the rights of active citizens. Another reason for the deprivation of the rights of an active citizen was skin color.<sup>17</sup>

Naturalization was legally sanctioned in 1792. The Naturalization Law created the concept of *nouveaux français* and referred to those foreigners who defended the Republic. At the time of the First Empire, 14 million New French had theoretically the same rights and guarantees as to the French, but the incorporation of new citizens into the “nation” raised the problem of France’s political identity. The main question then was: what did it mean to be French? Thus, three terms and concepts entered the discourse: *citoyenneté*, *naturalité*, and *nationalité*. These terms, transferred to colonial politics and the discussion of slavery and races, gained additional meaning.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* par l'Abbé Sieyès, 1789, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k41690g.texteImage> (1.09.2020). See also, A. Pauquet, *Une histoire de la citoyenneté politique en France. 30 documents d'archives du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> *Citoyenneté, République, Démocratie en France*, ed. M. Belissa, Y. Bosc, R. Dalisson, M. Deleplace (Paris: Elipses, 2014), 20. See also, R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> See, P. Sahlins, *Unnaturally French. Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 267–312.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 113–117; P. Weil, *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 14–18. See also, J. R. Lehning, *To be a Citizen. The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

A unique role in answering who can be considered an active French citizen was the 'science' of races, the pinnacle of which was the work of Arthur de Gobineau *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* of 1850. Its author recognized that all races are inferior to the European race, although some of them – like the Arabs – can assimilate with the European race because of the outstanding achievements of civilization in the past. On the other hand, other races – mainly *Nègres*, had no chance of assimilation and were to remain at the level of the animal world and eternal alienated from the European race.<sup>19</sup>

Racial theories became very popular in the Third Republic in creating a colonial empire to rebuild the greatness of France, weakened by the defeat to Prussia and the loss of Alsace. On July 28, 1885, during the parliamentary session on the military expedition to Madagascar, Jules Ferry presented the foundations of the colonial doctrine of the Third Republic. Colonization brought benefits, and the colonies were an economic and military base for the metropole and a reason for national pride and the basis for France's international prestige. The metropole had one duty to the colonies – to civilize *indigènes* as inferior races. Human rights were not automatically acquired by virtue of one's humanity but belonged to the civilized race; according to Ferry, the privilege of the white race was a kind of aristocracy. Belonging to the nobility was determined by skin color and civilizational affiliation.<sup>20</sup>

The colonial doctrine met with criticism against colonization. Georges Clemenceau considered the tenets of Ferry's declaration to be hypocritical. He expressed doubts about the superiority of the white race over the others and pointed to the atrocities committed by the Prussians against the French in Alsace after 1870. Colonization did not benefit the colonial peoples because it deprived them of resources for the benefit of the colonizers, Clemenceau said. The meaning of his speech boiled down to the fact that the domination of some nations over others was unlawful. However, his voice and the voices of those who thought like him were not strong enough at the time. Back in 1931, when a unique colonial exhibition was held in Paris, supporters of colonialism triumphed, and the

<sup>19</sup> Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86266802.image>

<sup>20</sup> See, *Citoyenneté, République, Démocratie en France*, 236–237; see also, T.F. Power, *Jules Ferry and the Renaissance of French Imperialism* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1944); M. Burrows, "'Mission civilisatrice': French cultural policy in the Middle East, 1860–1914," *Historical Journal* 29.1 (1986): 109–135.

Ferry doctrine seemed to be tested. Nevertheless, 30 years later, when the decolonization wave blurred the great colonial empires, it turned out that Clemenceau was the more forward-looking man.<sup>21</sup>

Racial theories were transferred to the military domain in the *racés guerrières* theory which said that non-European races, especially Africans, were more valiant than Europeans and were excellent material for soldiers. It was supposed to result from the “warrior instinct inherent in primitive races.” The most famous exponent of this theory was General Charles Mangin, who in 1907–1911 was the commander of the French armed forces in West Africa. In 1910 his book *La Force Noire* was published. The author postulated West Africa as a reservoir of soldiers for the French Army due to the unique abilities of some African peoples, especially Senegalese, for the military craft. Africans had the natural attributes of being excellent soldiers – they could withstand extreme climatic conditions, cover long distances without problems, and their nervous system made them more resistant to pain than “whites”. According to Mangin, “those primitive people for whom life has such a low price, and whose veins have young blood and if it is not shed, will manage to reach the level of French bravery and revive her if need be”.<sup>22</sup> Mangin’s views sparked a lively debate with the military, scholars, parliamentarians, and journalists about increasing the share of non-European races in the French Army. How widely this theory was discussed is demonstrated by the impressive number of 4,300 press articles published on this subject in 1909–1912.<sup>23</sup>

Mangin’s theory was popular during the Great War. In 1916, the *Société des études coloniales et maritimes*, which published the popular magazine *Revue indigène*, called for the introduction of compulsory conscription in Algeria and Morocco, similar to the one in Tunisia, to create three armies among the North African *indigènes*. The appeal authors argued that the *indigènes* from Africa showed great bravery and could form large military formations. They referred to the project of Adolphe Messimy, a member of the budget committee of the Chamber

<sup>21</sup> *La Politique coloniale. Clemenceau contre Ferry. Discours prononcés à la Chambre des Députés en juillet 1885*, préface de Jean-Noël Jeanneney (Paris: Magellan, 2012), 7 and 13.

<sup>22</sup> C. Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), 228 and 288–289.

<sup>23</sup> J. Lunn, “Les Races guerrières: Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, 4 (1999), 523.

of Deputies and later, the Minister of War (1911–1912), who in 1908 called for the introduction of conscription of recruits from *indigènes* in Algeria as a cheaper method than contract service for creating military forces. In 1916, the ‘high recognition’ of the *indigènes*’ organizational skills and their military prowess was understandable for other reasons. At that time, the French Army was beginning to experience a shortage of soldiers from the metropole at the front. It was necessary to mobilize soldiers from colonies and protectorates.<sup>24</sup>

The colonial orientation had opponents. Anti-colonial traditions in France date back to the Enlightenment. The voices of economists significantly strengthened moral arguments against the colonization of the so-called “barbaric peoples” in the nineteenth century. If the work of Paul Leroy-Beaulieu in 1874, the *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* became the bible for supporters of colonialism, most of the laissez-faire economists gathered around Gustave de Molinari. They considered colonialism as the most expensive and least profitable form of state activity. C.-R. Ageron lists other colonial tendencies besides liberal anti-colonialism, namely: republican anti-colonialism, right-wing opposition against colonialism, including opposition from liberal monarchists, opposition from nationalists – both left-wing and right-wing, socialist anti-colonialism, anarchist and workers anti-colonialism, and Christian anti-colonialism. In 1867, Frédéric Passy founded *la Ligue internationale et permanente de la Paix*, and in 1889 – *l’Union interparlementaire pour l’arbitrage entre les nations*; he condemned the colonial policy of Jules Ferry and defended the Malagasy right to independence.<sup>25</sup>

In 1881, André-Saturnin Morin described colonial politics as “a system of barbaric violence,” and in 1884, he formulated “Sudan for the Sudanese,” which later became extremely popular with other colonial peoples. A year later, a group of radicals formulated a Manifesto in which they unconditionally condemned the policy of colonial conquest. This group gathered famous figures of anti-colonialism: C. Pelletan, G. Périn, and G. Clemenceau.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See P. Bourdarie, *La Lutte des impérialismes coloniaux* (Paris: Thouras, 1916), 13–15 and 20–21. See also B. Recham, *Les musulmans algériens dans l’armée française (1919–1945)* (Paris, Montreal: L’Harmattan, 1996), 17.

<sup>25</sup> P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1886); C.-R. Ageron, *Anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973), 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

However, in the years before the First World War, the political forces of anti-colonialism began to weaken. Between 1907 and 1911, most anti-colonialist radicals moved to a pro-colonial camp for political reasons. As Jules Ferry stated, patriotism turned out to be a religion that left no room for atheism. In France, as in other European countries, a wave of national revival (*Réveil national*) swelled.<sup>27</sup> If in 1885, there were 267 anti-colonial deputies in the legislative branch and 215 in 1889, their number shrunk to 85 in June 1912. Colonialists, conversely, grew more assertive. In 1892 there were 91 in the Chamber of Deputies, and in 1901, as many as 200 of them. Protests in Parliament against the colonial conquests grew weaker and weaker. In 1892, 177 deputies protested against the expedition to Dahomey, and in 1894, 143 deputies were against the expedition to Madagascar. However, the incorporation of Touat into Algeria resulting from a military expedition in 1901 was criticized by just over 50 MPs. Criticism of the seizure of land in colonies and protectorates by French settlers was particularly unpopular. In 1912, the socialist opposition in Jaurès rallied only 104 deputies to vote on the takeover of land for *colons* in Tunisia.<sup>28</sup>

The conflict in Algeria in 1830 initiated the occupation of this country by France. In 1857, after the conquest of Kabylia, all of Algeria was in the hands of the French. Algeria was incorporated into France as an integral part, divided into departments and covered by French legislation. The country was treated specially, so it was, as Célestin-Charles Jonnart, minister, senator, and later the Governor-General of Algeria, wrote in 1893, neither a colony nor separate departments. The political regime introduced in Algeria was not intended to grant it autonomy or assimilate it with the metropole. The Law of December 19, 1900, provided that Algeria was to have a separate budget, governed by two assemblies of representatives of the population – *les Délégations financières* and *le Conseil supérieur*. The indigenous population was represented in these assemblies as well as in city councils.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See, A. Rambaud, *A. Jules Ferry* (Paris: Plon, 1903), 25; A. Horne, *The French Army and Politics, 1870–1970* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 30.

<sup>28</sup> Ageron, *Anticolonialisme en France*, 37–39.

<sup>29</sup> A. Bernard, *L'Afrique du Nord pendant la guerre* (Paris, New Haven: Les Presses universitaires de France, Yale University Press, 1926), XIII–XIV; J. -C. Vatin “Retour sur les spécificités algériennes,” in *Faire l'histoire du droit colonial. Cinquante ans après l'indépendance de l'Algérie*, ed. J. -P. Bras (Paris: Karthala, 2015): 27–28; J. Frémeaux, *La conquête de l'Algérie: la dernière campagne d'Abd el-Kader* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016).

In 1881, Tunisia and 1904, Morocco became the protectorates of France, which meant that the local structure of power, headed by Bey in Tunisia and Sultan in Morocco, and a social organization were maintained. North Africa became the destination of French colonization. The French settled in the countries, and capital was invested. Factories and mines were established. In 1911, 4,740,000 people lived in Algeria, including 752,000 Europeans, 304,000 of whom were French. Tunisia had a population of 1,928,000, of whom 1,730,000 were *Indigènes*, 50,000 Israeli and 148,000 Europeans, including 46,000 French. In Morocco, the population was 4.5 million *indigènes* and 50,000 Europeans, including 28,000 French. Between 10 and 11 million *indigènes* and around one million Europeans were living in the three countries of North Africa. In Algeria, the proportion of Europeans and *indigènes* was 1 to 6, and in the Department of Oran, 1 to 3.<sup>30</sup>

France's policy in North Africa was to plant the French there and gain the favor of the *indigènes*. It meant double assimilation: the French from Algeria should look like the French from France, and the *indigènes* should look like the Europeans. The *sénatus-consulte* from 1865 was to serve this purpose. It made it possible for *indigènes* to obtain the rights of a French citizen, but the condition was to give up the personal status of a Muslim. Naturalization was therefore associated with assimilation, and very few Algerian Muslims chose to do so. The low number of applications for naturalization caused astonishment in France, and it was explained by the ignorance of Muslims who did not realize what benefits of civilization were brought by naturalization.<sup>31</sup> Those who did not decide to naturalize-assimilate, and thus the vast majority of Algeria's population, received special status, that of the *indigénat* or native population. In 1881 a *code de l'indigénat* or native penal code created penalties unknown to common law for forty-one offenses 'peculiar to natives.' These offenses were scaled down to twenty-one in 1890. Until 1919, Muslims had to pay various taxes, so-called *impôts arabes*. From 1901 onwards, a new native policy had been officially introduced, entitled the "policy of association". The principle of legislative assimilation was rejected, and the new policy aimed at the "advancement of Muslims within their civilization."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Bernard, XVIII.

<sup>31</sup> L. Hamel, *De la naturalisation des indigènes musulmans de l'Algérie* (Alger: Adolphe Jourdan, 1880), 6.

<sup>32</sup> C.-R. Ageron, *Modern Algeria. A History from 1830 to the Present*, trans. By M. Brett, (London: Hurst, 1991), 69 and 73–74; see also, R.F. Betts, *Assimila-*

Already in 1892, Eugène Etienne, an exponent of colon ethnocentrism, called for a strict separation of Muslims and *colons*.<sup>33</sup> However, as R.S. Fogarty and D. Killingray write, “assimilation, as the orthodox republican justification for empire, never entirely disappeared as a theoretical goal of French colonialism.”<sup>34</sup> The new policy carried out until the 1930s, was more sophisticated than the previous one and aimed at reforming and reviving local culture. The official point, of course, was “to fulfill our duties as a civilizing power,”<sup>35</sup> and the author of these words was Marcel Morand, from 1910 Dean of the Faculty of Law of Algiers University. In the years 1905–1914, he, at the behest of the colonial authorities, conducted the codification of the Muslim Algerian law formally in terms of adapting the Islamic legal doctrine to the needs of the modern state but finally of increasing the control of the colonial administration over the sphere of indigenous culture. The authors of the new politics assumed that if the natives did not want to accept our culture, we would adopt their culture to ours. So, it was still about assimilation.

### The Great War and North African soldiers

The armed forces of France consisted of three main formations: the metropolitan army, the so-called Army of Africa (*Armée d'Afrique*), and the *Troupes Coloniales* (*La Coloniale*). The metropolitan army was assembled by drawing upon recruits. The service time during the war of 1870–1871 was five years, and in 1899 it was reduced to three years. France, during the Third Republic, constantly increased the size of its army. In 1900, the army numbered 600,000, and in 1913, 800,000 soldiers. If in 1872 it was assumed that 1,250,000 men would be mobilized in the event of hostilities, then in 1914, this number was increased to 3,500,000.<sup>36</sup>

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*tion and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 106–133.

<sup>33</sup> See J. J. Cooke, “Colonial propaganda and legislation, 1880–1920,” *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 1 (1976), 18.

<sup>34</sup> R.S. Fogarty, D. Killingray, “Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, 1 (2015), 115.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted after O. Arabi, “Orienting the gaze: Marcel Morand and the codification of Le droit musulman algérien,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, 1 (January 2000), 52.

<sup>36</sup> See, J. Revol, *Histoire de l'armée française* (Paris: Larousse, 1929), 203–204. On the eve of the war, the line infantry of the French Army was divided into 173 active

As a rule, metropolitan conscripts served on French territory. Exceptionally, they were sent outside France, which included Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. The *Armée d'Afrique*, actually the Army of North-West Africa, was created after the conquest of Algeria in 1830 to replace the metropolitan units that had been withdrawn to France. The *Armée d'Afrique* was not a single formation but a collective name for separate units stationed in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. They consisted – theoretically – of regiments completed from among Europeans. These were an infantry regiment known as the *Zouaves*, a cavalry known as the *Chasseurs d'Afrique* and the Foreign Legion (*Légion étrangère*), as well as punishment battalions known as the *Infanterie Légères d'Afrique*. In addition to the units in which Europeans served, regiments were assembled composed of *indigènes* from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. These were light infantry units known as *Tirailleurs* and cavalry units called *Spahis*. French officers commanded these units. In addition, less numerous units of the regular army were created, of which the Moroccan Goums stood out. They were tribal warriors organized into a regular army under the command of the French. The formation known as *La Coloniale* had been assembled from the 17th century based on French garrisons in the colonies of the Caribbean and Africa. Some colonial regiments were created by voluntary enlistment from among Europeans and were therefore called *Coloniale Blanche*. At the same time, units were formed among the indigenous people, thus establishing the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and *Tirailleurs Malgaches* branches and similar units in Indochina.<sup>37</sup>

North African troops fought on various fronts in France and the Balkans. Their participation in the Great War should be considered in the broader context of the plans of the command of the French Army to

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regiments and an equal number of reserve regiments. There were 12 regiments of cuirassiers, 32 regiments of dragoons, 21 regiments of chasseurs à cheval and 14 regiments of hussars. On the eve of the war, the line infantry of the French Army was divided into 173 active regiments and an equal number of reserve regiments. The conscription policy in the years of the Third Republic is discussed by R.D. Challener, *The French theory of the nation in arms, 1866–1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 46–90. See also W.T. Dean (III), “The French Colonial Army and the Great War,” *The Historian* 76, 3 (2014): 479–517.

<sup>37</sup> See A. Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), 6–7; J. -C. Jauffret, “Les armes de la plus grande France,” in *Histoire militaire de la France. De 1871 à 1940*, ed. G. Pedroncini (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992), 43–69.

include the soldiers of the colonies and protectorates in the operations on the front in Europe.

The idea of a colonial army was formulated in the late nineteenth century, but the military command was not fully convinced that this army would have high combat value. Initially, it was decided to use the human resources of West Africa to create troops that would replace the French troops from Europe in Morocco, where tribal revolts continued to be relieved. The garrison from Algeria and Tunisia, numbering 70,000, took part in the pacification actions, and half of them were French.<sup>38</sup> The first Senegalese troops arrived in Morocco in 1911, but reports from the French command were not optimistic. The Senegalese people were sick, and they did not take the chilly weather well. As a result, in August 1914, there were no strong West or North African troops ready to join the war in Europe.<sup>39</sup> However, with the outbreak of the war, doubts about the combat value of the colonial population were pushed aside, and from August 1914 to March 1915, 53,000 people in West Africa were called to arms. They were sent to Morocco to replace the Senegalese troops stationed there, which were sent to Europe in September 1914.<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, North African troops were directed to the European front. In 1915, North African troops remained in Europe, and Senegalese were sent to North Africa due to the exhaustion of soldiers and their low combat value.<sup>41</sup> In Senegal itself, recruitment was underway, and in October 1915, 70,000 men were called to arms.<sup>42</sup> At the beginning of 1916, 65,000 of them were sent back to the front in Europe, and 21 of their battalions participated in the offensive fights on the Somme and eight on the Verdun. Their losses were huge due to poor training, so it was decided that they would only fight in mixed units with the French. In late 1916, new conscription was ordered in the colonies, including Madagascar and Indochina. As a result, the forces from the colony increased to 430,000 soldiers.<sup>43</sup> The force consisted of 33 North African battalions of high

<sup>38</sup> G. Martin, "German and French perceptions of the French North and West African contingents, 1910–1918," *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 56 (1997), 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Michel, 43; C.-R. Ageron *et al.* *Histoire de la France coloniale 1914–1990* (Paris: Armand Collin, 1990), 67.

<sup>42</sup> Michel, 44, 287; C.-R. Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871–1919)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), vol. 2, 1144.

<sup>43</sup> Martin, 46.

combat value that fought as independent units under French command or in mixed formations. In addition, there were 86 Senegalese battalions in Europe, which were part of the mixed regiments. Only two regiments consisted entirely of Senegalese, commanded of course by the French. In 1917, the Senegalese were withdrawn from the Western Front, despite the shortage of soldiers in the French Army, and its command abandoned plans to recruit soldiers from tropical Africa further.<sup>44</sup> In the opinion of the French command, the most valuable soldiers were the Moroccans and Algerians.<sup>45</sup> After joining the US war in April 1917, the French command began to count on the help of American troops rather than soldiers from their colonies. However, while waiting for US soldiers, new conscripts were carried out in Africa. The goals formulated by the Clemenceau government after November 16, 1917, were to provide 47,000 recruits from West Africa by the end of 1918 and the same number from Algeria. At the same time, thirteen thousand recruits were to be sent to Europe from East Africa.<sup>46</sup> Clemenceau also continued the policy from the end of 1914 of replacing the French troops serving in Morocco (approx. 90,000 in 1918, including 50,000 French) by the Senegalese.<sup>47</sup>

Various numbers of North African Muslim soldiers participating in the war are given in the literature. The most comprehensive statistics are in the works of Albert Sarraut and Augustin Bernard from 1923 and 1926. Bernard, a geographer, and historian, also gives numbers for the participation in the war by the French and other Europeans living in North Africa. These numbers say that 155,000 French and other Europeans were mobilized in Algeria, 115,000 were sent to fight outside Algeria, with 22 thousand of them being killed. In Tunisia, 9,000 French were mobilized to cavalry and infantry. The Tunisian French fought in the bloodiest combat operations of the entire war. In effect, the European population of Algeria and Tunisia provided 55,000 soldiers in 1914. In Morocco, the situation was similar. European residents mobilized 41,000 soldiers in 1914, 9,000 of whom served on the spot in Morocco during the war. In addition, during the war, 31,000 Europeans in

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<sup>44</sup> Michel, 125, 134, 313; C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, "France, Africa, and the First World War," *The Journal of African History* 19, 1 (1978), 11–23.

<sup>45</sup> C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *France overseas: the great war and the climax of French imperial expansion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 134.

<sup>46</sup> Michel, 224.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew, Kanya-Forstner, "France", 140; Michel, 225.

Algeria and 2 thousand in Tunisia were mobilized from conscription in 1915–1920.<sup>48</sup>

However, many authors believe that these statistics are inflated. Bernard himself, who collected data at the Ministry of War, the Governorate General in Algeria, French Residences in Tunisia and Morocco, and reports from parliamentary committees, admits that the number of 155,000 includes troops from Europe who arrived in Algeria from Europe before the outbreak of the war and returned to their main operating bases in France at the time of the war. Among their ranks were French who did not come from North Africa.<sup>49</sup> J. Frémeaux, who refers to Sarraut's calculations, believes 92,000 French citizens were mobilized in North Africa, 73,000 in Algeria, 10,000 in Tunisia, and 9,000 in Morocco. In addition, approximately 30,000 volunteers of 52 different nationalities fought in the *Légion étrangère*, of which 5,000 lost their lives on the battlefield.<sup>50</sup>

As for the mobilization of the indigenous peoples, until 1912, there was no conscription of recruits from among the *indigènes* in Algeria. The decree of July 11, 1903, provided for the possibility of voluntarily enlisting in the army and specified the amount of the bonus and the amount of the military pension. In October 1907, a special commission began to propose steps better to use North Africa's human resources for military service. In 1912, two decrees – on January 31 and February 3 – introduced military service from conscription and modified the rules of voluntary enlistment. In the latter case, 3-year military service was introduced, with the possibility of extending the contract to 12 years. Drafted recruits were to receive the same financial benefits as enlisted soldiers. The draft was carried out by drawing lots, as there was no need to appoint all conscripts from a given year. It was also possible to replace one conscript with another, so that richer *indigènes* could “buy” young men from more impoverished families to replace their sons who had been selected for service in the army. It was often the case among tribes when poorer tribespeople replaced the sons of the tribal sheikhs in exchange for a sheikh fee. After completing their service, the soldiers remained in reserve for seven years at the disposal of the Minister of War. In 1914, with the beginning of hostilities, 2,500 conscripts were mobilized, and the entire contingent

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<sup>48</sup> Bernard, 1–3.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 2, footnote 2.

<sup>50</sup> J. Frémeaux, *Les colonies dans la Grande Guerre: Combats et épreuves des peuples d'outre-mer* (Paris: Soteca, 14-18 Editions, 2006), 55, 57.

of Algerian *indigènes* numbered 45,000 soldiers. On August 1, 1914, there were effectively 3,878 conscripts in active service and 26,930 enlisted soldiers. The whole contingent was directed to France, and there were no soldiers in the operating base in Algeria.<sup>51</sup>

After the bloody battles at Charleroi and the Marne, the indigenous Algerian regiment was not replenished. In September 1914, the French Government asked the Governor-General to increase the number of conscripts to 10,000 in 1915 and to increase the Algerian contingent by 15,000 within three weeks. The 15,000 was completed by voluntary recruitment at the end of the year, so there was no need to increase recruits from the conscription in 1915. On December 31, 1916, the number of Algerian soldiers from the voluntary enlistment among the *indigènes* was 40,000. There were 2,500 recruits from the conscription of 1915 and 5,900 of 1916.<sup>52</sup>

On September 7, 1916, a decree was issued that modified the 1912 decree. It made it obligatory to remain in reserve at the disposal of the Minister of War, not only of conscription recruits, as provided for in the 1912 decree, but also of enlisted soldiers. Additionally, conscripts unable to serve due to their health condition could be recruited into auxiliary units. In July 1916, conscription lists were drawn up for the 1917 conscription. This time all young *indigènes* from that year were drafted into the army: 18,695 for active service and 9,975 for auxiliary service. From January 1, 1918, the right to replace one conscript with another was suspended, as provided for in Article 8 of the decree of September 7, 1916. By January 1, 1918, Algerian *indigènes* mobilized 75,000 soldiers from voluntary enlistment and 40,000 conscripts from August 1, 1914. In the first half of 1918, an additional 40,000 soldiers were mobilized, and as a result, A. Bernard reports that Algeria sent 173,000 indigenous men to the fronts of the Great War from August 1, 1914, including 82,751 conscripted, 87,519 from voluntary enlistment, and 2,749 reservists, i.e., 3.6 people per 100 indigenous people.<sup>53</sup>

A. Sarraute, a politician who became a future French Prime Minister, and during the war years the Governor-General of Indochina, reports that from August to the end of 1918, 172,800 indigenous soldiers were mobilized in Algeria, of which 83,650 from conscription, 84,400 from

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 5.

voluntary recruitment and 2,750 from the reserve. In Tunisia, during this period, 60,000 conscripted and voluntary soldiers were mobilized, and in Morocco, 37,150 soldiers were exclusively volunteers. It meant that a total of 269,950 indigenous soldiers were mobilized in North Africa. Given that 28,200 of them were killed and 7,700 missings, the loss of human lives was 35,900, representing 0.3% of France's indigenous North African population. For comparison, France's population losses amounted to 3.3% of the population. As all French colonies and protectorates mobilized a total of 587,450 soldiers, North Africa provided 50% of the colonial soldiers.<sup>54</sup>

G. Meynier gives similar figures for Algeria, referring to the data collected by C.-R. Augeron. According to this data, from August 1914 to the end of 1918, 82,751 soldiers were mobilized in Algeria as part of the compulsory recruitment, of which 69,265 for active service and 13,486 for auxiliary units. The most numerous were the conscription in 1917 (25,925 soldiers) and 1918 (34,173 soldiers). At the same time, 86,519 soldiers voluntarily enlisted in the army, the most significant being in August 1914 (25,052 soldiers), and the minor volunteers (6,261) enlisted in 1917. In total, 172,019 soldiers were mobilized in Algeria:

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<sup>54</sup> A. Sarraault, *Le mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris, Payot, 1923), 40–42. J. Frémeaux gives very similar figures. In Algeria, 172,800 indigenous soldiers were mobilized, of which 125,000 were directed to the front in Europe. In Tunisia, the number of mobilized during the war amounted to 60,000, of which 38,000 went to the front in Europe. In the case of Morocco, the number of mobilized was 37,150, and 25,965 of them fought at the front in Europe. North Africa mobilized 269,950 soldiers and directed 70% of them (188,965) to the European front – Frémeaux, 63. The authors of the *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre, 1914–1918*, gave comprehensive figures on the participation of the French Empire in the French military effort during the First World War. A total of 607,000 people were mobilized into the army in the colonies, protectorates, and Algeria. The most significant number, 294,000, were from North Africa, followed by West Africa – 171,000 mobilized into the army – *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre, 1914–1918. Histoire et Culture*, ed. S. Audoin-Rouzeau and J.-J. Becker (Paris: Bayard, 2004), 323. The authors point out that it is difficult to provide exact numbers. In the case of North Africa, the difficulties resulted from the fact that in the so-called *l'Armée d'Afrique*, and actually in the 19th Corps in Algeria, they served conscripts from Europe. M. Michel gives some similar figures. Six hundred seven thousand two hundred fifty-six people were mobilized throughout the French colonial empire, including 293,756 from North Africa, 170,891 from West Africa, 48,922 from Indochina, 41,355 from Madagascar, 22,695 from Antilles and Guyana, and 17,910 from East Africa – Michel, 242–243, 260, 404.

82,751 conscripted, 6,519 from a voluntary enlistment, and 2,749 from the reserve.<sup>55</sup>

In Tunisia, the draft of recruits was introduced in 1860 and became established under the French protectorate. It was specified in detail by the Bey's decree of March 23, 1899. The conscripts were selected from among young people of a given year by lot, and each year about 8,000 men were drafted into the army. One could buy out of the service by paying certain sums to a special fund from which voluntary enlistment soldiers were paid. After three years of service, the soldiers remained in reserve for seven years and could be called up under arms at any time. According to Bernard, In 1914–1918, 56,300 conscripts and 9,900 contract soldiers were sent to the front from Tunisia. In addition, 14,000 men were called to arms from among reservists born in 1904–1910. In total, 80,000 men were sent from Tunisia to France or 4.4 people per 100 people. This number is much higher than Sarraut's (60,000), but Bernard does include reservists. There was no conscription of recruits in Morocco, as the Sultan and French authorities feared protests by the population. Instead, there was a system of voluntary enlistment, and thanks to Resident-General Lyautey's active enlistment campaign, the French Army added 2,574 soldiers in 1914, 5,027 in 1915, and 7,740 Moroccan *indigènes* in 1918. In total, 40,398 men enlisted in Morocco during the war, and this number is similar to that given by Sarraut (37,150).<sup>56</sup>

The mobilization and recruitment of recruits in North Africa were virtually uninterrupted. Only in Algeria in 1916 was a revolt of local people in the Aurès region against the compulsory call-up reported.<sup>57</sup>

The number of people killed during the war is difficult to define unequivocally. Different sources gave different numbers. For Algeria, 25,171 dead and missing are most often reported, although according to other sources, 56,000 *indigènes* were killed or missing. For Tunisia, 10,723, and according to other sources, 15,000 were killed or missing. For Morocco, there were 9,000 killed and missing. The Algerians lost 14 soldiers per 100 active soldiers, the Tunisians – 14, and the Moroccans lost 22 soldiers. For all of North Africa, the losses were 44,894 (37,194 killed and

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<sup>55</sup> G. Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée. La guerre de 1914–1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle*, Thèse de doctorat d'Etat (Nice: Université de Nice, 1979), 1077–1078; Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée* (1981), 405.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Ageron, *Modern Algeria*, 78.

7,700 missings), or 12 out of 100 active soldiers. By comparison, the French infantry lost 19 out of every 100 soldiers during the war. Indigenous troops from North Africa were directed to the front lines in the first period of the war, fighting at Charleroi and the Marne. Recruitment in Algeria was intensified only in 1917, and in 1918, no troops were sent to Europe. Relative to the total population, Algeria and Tunisia lost 0.5 people per 100 inhabitants, and for the whole of North Africa, it was 0.3 people. France's losses were much higher and amounted to 3.3 people per 100 inhabitants to the total population.<sup>58</sup>

### The challenges for the colonial policy

“North African Muslims gave their best sons to fighting for France and responded enthusiastically to France's call to join the fight against Germany. They sent their best sons into the ranks of the French Army. /... / They showed loyalty to the degree that amazed even the greatest Arabophobes. In this situation, we ask the French authorities: are the indigenous soldiers – conscripts and voluntary enlistments for the entire duration of the war – going to die as patriotic defenders, or are they cattle led to slaughter by ruthless Arabophobic officers”?<sup>59</sup>

The author of these words was Lieutenant Rabah Boukabouya, an *indigène* from Algeria, a school teacher from Constantin, and a lieutenant in the Algerian units of the French Army. In 1915, he deserted along with 70 other soldiers and was sentenced by the French military to death as a traitor *in absentia*. Under the banner of Germany, he became an active propagator of Pan-Islamism and a spokesman for the transition of French Muslim soldiers to the side of the Ottoman Caliph. He wrote several brochures, which were followed with anxiety by the French authorities. The most famous of them – *L'Islam dans l'armée française: (Guerre de 1914–1915)* – was published in 1915 in Constantinople and contained an account of the author's visits to a camp for soldiers from North Africa interned by Germans. The brochure rebuked France for its disrespectful attitude towards Muslims, which was manifested, among other things, by high illiteracy among indigenous soldiers.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>59</sup> El Hadj Abdallah, *L'Islam dans l'armée française: (Guerre de 1914–1915)* (Constantinople: 1915), 3–4 and 33, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k854595g.image>.

Although Boukabouya's publications did not provoke wide unrest among Muslim soldiers and resulted in few desertions, they stimulated discussions about the need to redefine colonial policy. It is proved by the documents of institutions related to the conduct of war and colonial policy: the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Colonies, the Parliament Committees, the French Residencies in Morocco and Tunisia, the office of the Governor-General in Algeria, as well as by statements of individual deputies in Parliament, army commanders and ordinary soldiers. In 1914, a special *la Commission interministérielle des Affaires musulmanes* was established, and over 50 sessions were held until the end of the war to manage the problem of Muslim soldiers in the army.

The first challenge was the cultural diversity of the newcomers. The Muslim soldiers had to eat, drink, to be healed and buried according to their tradition; they wanted to practice religion and observe rituals and feasts, including the pilgrimage to Mecca. Military and civil authorities had to react quickly, and as a result, formal procedures and legal acts aimed at managing the cultural diversity in the army were adopted.

The second challenge was the necessity of providing social security for soldiers and their families. Soldiers received wages, enlistment bonuses, invalidity, and military pensions, and their families received family benefits, compensation for invalidity, or the death of a father or son. The question of pensions for disabled soldiers and pensionary benefits for families of those who were killed emerged after the very first battles on the very first days of the war. The question on this point was: which benefits should be the *indigènes* to enjoy and whether to the same extent as the French? Discussions on this subject continued until the very end of the war. Financial considerations were essential, as were the legal procedures that took a long time to decide. Was it just a matter of cost, or was it imperial pride, cultural, social, and racial prejudices?

At the center of the book's narrative is French authorities' third problem to deal with. It was the question concerning the naturalization of the *indigènes* and their political participation in the empire's public life. This problem mainly affected indigenous Algerians who were invested with French nationality by the sénatus-consulte of 1865 but did not have the right to vote and were subject to special legislation, and had an obligation to pay special taxes. Treating indigenous soldiers as equal to French soldiers meant granting them full citizenship rights and abolishing special

criminal and tax legislation. A group of anti-colonialists in the French Parliament made a motion to naturalize soldiers and colonial residents. Apart from humanitarian considerations, German propaganda was at stake, which exposed Pan-Islamism as an anti-colonial ideology. This propaganda had to be opposed to maintaining the empire's integrity.<sup>60</sup>

However, as some authors emphasize, France turned out to be ungrateful, and the idea of granting soldiers from the colonies and protectorates the rights of a French citizen was rejected. The answer to why this happened requires explaining the historical context of the events in question, particularly the political culture of France during the Third Republic, or at least some of its elements. On the other hand, one may ask if the discussions during the war regarding the naturalization of *indigènes* went unnoticed or contributed to the partial transformation of colonial politics in 1919 into the form known as the Jonnart Law?

### Literature overview

The presence of the Muslim soldiers in the French Army during the Great War has attracted the attention of prominent scholars and resulted in significant studies. Pioneering works by G. Meynier, M. Michel, Ch.-R. Ageron, J. -C. Vatin and J. Frémeaux have become classics and a benchmark for new research. Written based on archival materials, they contain rich statistics concerning the history of North Africa and the participation of colonial soldiers in the French war effort during la Grande Guerre.<sup>61</sup> The authors of the new studies are P. Button, Y. Gastaut, N. Yahi, P. Blanchard, X. Bougarel, R. Branche, C. Drieu, and P. Le Pautrement. E. Storm and A. Al Tuma stress that the presence of indigenous soldiers in Europe meant crossing cultural boundaries and weakened the racialized and hierarchical colonial order.<sup>62</sup> The cultural and racial relations ap-

<sup>60</sup> Germany's use of Pan-Islamism is described by: J. -Y. Le Naour, *Djihad 1914–1918. La France face au panislamisme* (Paris: Perrin, 2017).

<sup>61</sup> Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée*; Michel, *L'appel à l'Afrique*; Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871-1919)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964); J. C. Vatin, *L'Algérie politique. Histoire et société* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1983); Frémeaux, op. cit. For a discussion of the literature on France's policy in the Middle East during the Great War, see W.T Dean (III), "The French in the Middle East in the Great War: A Histogramical Essay," *The Historian* 80, 3 (2018): 485–496.

<sup>62</sup> *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914–1945. „Aliens in Uniform” in Wartime Societies*, ed. E. Storm and A. Al Tuma (New York and London: Routledge, 2016); *Com-*

proach has been discussed by R.S. Fogarty, E. Rogan, and C. Koller, who have challenged the notion that France was color-blind in that period of its history.<sup>63</sup> The francophone Northern African authors usually stress the enormous sacrifice and contribution to the final victory that the Muslim soldiers made.<sup>64</sup>

Many publications refer to the broader context of the mobilization of colonial soldiers and their presence in Europe on the fronts of the Great War, particularly the political culture of the Third Republic and the French colonial doctrine combined republican concept of citizenship (*citoyenneté*)<sup>65</sup>, and the 'science' of races.<sup>66</sup> This framework has been

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*batants of Muslim Origin in European Armies in the Twentieth Century: Far from Jihad*, ed. X. Bougarel, R. Branche, C. Drieu (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); *Combattants de l'Empire. Les troupes coloniales dans la Grande Guerre*, ed. Ph. Button and M. Michel (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2018); P. Le Pautremat, *Le rôle de la Commission interministérielle des Affaires musulmanes dans l'élaboration d'une politique musulmane de la France de 1911 à 1937*, Thèse de doctorat (Nantes: Université de Nantes, 1998); P. Le Pautremat *La politique musulmane de la France au XXe siècle. De l'Hexagone aux terres d'Islam. Espoirs, réussites, échecs* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> R.S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France. Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); R.S. Fogarty, "Out of North Africa: Contested Visions of French Muslim Soldiers during the Great War," in *Empires in World War I: Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict*, eds Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard S. Fogarty (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 136–158. E. Rogan, "No Stake in Victory: North African Soldiers of the Great War," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 14, 2 (2014): 332–333; C. Koller, "The Recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their Deployment in Europe during the First World War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 26, 1/2 (March/July 2008): 111–133.

<sup>64</sup> See M. Bekraoui, *Les Marocains dans la Grande Guerre 1914–1918* (Rabat: CMHM, 2009); R. Belkacem, *Les musulmans algériens dans l'armée française (1919–1945)* (Paris, Montréal: l'Harmattan, 1996).

<sup>65</sup> The literature on this subject is very extensive. Here are some selected items: *Citoyenneté, république, démocratie. France 1789–1899*, ed. L. Hincker (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Atlande 2014); *Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée Des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen par l'Abbé Sieyès*, 1789, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k41690g.texteImage> (1.09.2020); A. Pauquet, *Une histoire de la citoyenneté politique en France. 30 documents d'archives du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2014); *Citoyenneté, République, Démocratie en France*; Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood*; Sahlins, *Unnaturally French*; Weil, *How to Be French*; Lehning, *To be a Citizen*.

<sup>66</sup> On de Gobineau theory see: A. de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86266802.image>; see also: C. Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910); the relationship between

determined by the discourse between colonial orientation and the anti-colonial tradition in France about the ways of integrating *indigènes* with metropolitan culture.<sup>67</sup> This broad context relates primarily to the already mentioned “republican compromise” and the history of the citizenship concept. The approach from the legal tradition of France is critical. L. Blévis analyzes the case of the Algerian colonial right of citizenship between 1865 and 1919 and emphasizes that Algeria was a unique case in the French legal tradition due to the separation of citizenship from nationality by law, and synchronously analyses the production of legal acts and categorization of the norm of colonial citizenship to identify “legal coherence between two logic as antagonistic as the principles of the metropolitan legal system and colonial discrimination of population.”<sup>68</sup>

The issue of social benefits for North African Muslim soldiers has been addressed in numerous publications. C.-R. Ageron, discussing recruitment in Algeria in 1914–1918, reports that the enlistment bonuses were raised on August 3, 1914, and the daily pay also increased. The new amount of family allowances was established on August 5, 1914.<sup>69</sup> Writing about recruitment in 1917–1918, Ageron points out that the law of March 31, 1917, increased the daily *allocation familiale* to Algerian families, thus the wife of an Algerian volunteer with two children received 7 francs a day, i.e., 2,555 francs a year.<sup>70</sup> G. Meynier points out that in 1914, the enlistment bonuses for Muslim soldiers from Algeria were increased. Higher family allowances were introduced between March and August 1917.<sup>71</sup> Both Ageron and Meynier discuss the steps taken by the French authorities to increase the number of Muslim soldiers in the French army

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racial theories and colonial politics is discussed in: T.F. Power, *Jules Ferry and the Renaissance of French Imperialism* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1944); M. Burrows, “‘Mission civilisatrice’: French cultural policy in the Middle East, 1860–1914,” *Historical Journal* 29, 1 (1986): 109–135.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Annexe No. 857, Séance du 21 juillet 1890, *Proposition de loi ayant pour but d'accorder progressivement la naturalisation française à tous les indigènes musulmans d'Algérie*; Annexe No. 883, Séance du 26 juillet 1890, *Proposition de résolution sur le service militaire des indigènes musulmans d'Algérie*, in Documents Parlementaires (Chambre), 1624–1627, Session de 1890; also Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, “The Group Colonial”.

<sup>68</sup> Blévis, 559.

<sup>69</sup> Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans*, vol. 2, 1140–1162.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1163–1964.

<sup>71</sup> Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée* (1979), 1046, 1066.

and provide the appropriate numbers. Ageron emphasizes that by the end of 1917, Algeria sent about 120,000 Muslim soldiers to the front, and that fact was assessed in Paris as very effective recruitment. However, Ageron does not ask the question of what impact of social benefits policy had on this recruitment and stresses the ease of completing the formalities of enlisting in the army.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, Meynier does not raise the issue of the link between recruitment and social benefits and only emphasizes that Algerians did not receive certain family benefits until the end of the war and that there were racist motivations behind this policy.<sup>73</sup>

There is extensive literature by French, English, and German authors about the Ottoman Sultan's declaration of *Jihad* in 1914. This event is discussed in the broader context of Pan-Islamism.<sup>74</sup> M. Aksakal writes that the proclamation had both German and Ottoman origins and that "Kaiser Wilhelm II desired to undermine Berlin's rival empires, Britain, France, and Russia, whom all ruled over large Muslim population."<sup>75</sup> H. Street-Salter emphasizes that the proclamation was part

<sup>72</sup> Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans*, vol. 2, 1164.

<sup>73</sup> Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée* (1981), 548–549. See also Fogarty, *Race*, 121, 322n98.

<sup>74</sup> C. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); S. McMeekin, *The Berlin–Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898–1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2010); E. Rogan, "Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1918," *Journal of the British Academy*, 4, 1–20. DOI 10.5871/jba/004.001, posted 19 January 2016; T. Lüdke, "(Not) Using Political Islam. The German Empire and Its Failed Propaganda Campaign in the Near and Middle East, 1914–1918 and Beyond," in *Jihad and Islam in World War I. Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany'*, ed. Erik-Jan Zürcher (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 74. The same author considers that Germany over-rated the power of Pan-Islamism – T. Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005). W.G. Schwanitz, *Djihad Made in Germany: Deutsche Islampolitik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Politik, Wirtschaft, Militär und Kultur* (Berlin: Trafo, 2009). J. -Y. Le Naour in *Djihad 1914-1918. La France face au panislamisme* (Paris: Perrin, 2017) broadly analyzes France's policy towards Pan-Islamism in French colonial strategy. On the influence of German archaeologists and orientalist, especially Max von Oppenheim, on Kaiser's decisions to use Islam instrumentally for political purposes see Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany*; Rogan, *Rival jihads*.

<sup>75</sup> M. Aksakal, "The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad," in *Jihad and Islam in World War I. Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany'*, ed. E.-J. Zürcher (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 53.

of a broad-based strategy of “spreading propaganda in India, and Afghanistan.”<sup>76</sup> E. Rogan shares this view and analyses why the Ottoman attempt to turn the Great War into a holy war failed.<sup>77</sup> The works on Pan-Islamism and the *Jihad* slogans proclaimed by Germany are essential for understanding the relationship between the authorities in Paris and the colonies, mainly when they refer to the perception of these slogans by the colonized nations.<sup>78</sup>

The literature on Muslim prisoners of war in German captivity is vast. One of the first items was a book written by C. Hoffman in 1920.<sup>79</sup> The new studies refer to French and German sources and point to the active role of German officers in the indoctrination of prisoners of war.<sup>80</sup> M. Gussone published an extensive chapter on the mosque in the POW

<sup>76</sup> H. Street-Salter, *World War One in Southeast Asia: Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 38.

<sup>77</sup> Rogan, “Rival jihads.”

<sup>78</sup> See M. Abdelmoula, *Jihad et colonialisme. La Tunisie et la Tripolitaine (1914 – 1918). De la Guerre Sainte à la Guerre juste* (Tunisie: Éd. Tiers-Monde, 1987); M. Abdelmoula, *Le mouvement patriotique de libération en Tunisie et le panislamisme (1906–1920)* (Tunis: Editions MTM, 1999).

<sup>79</sup> C. Hoffman, *In the Prison Camps of Germany* (New York: Association, Press, 1920). Many German-speaking authors wrote about it. See *Fremde Erfahrungen*, ed. G. Höpp (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1996); G. Höpp, “Die Wünsdorfer Moschee: Eine Episode islamischen Lebens in Deutschland, 1915–1939,” *Die Welt des Islams* 36, 2 (1996): 204–218; G. Höpp, *Muslimen in der Mark: als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen, 1914–1924* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1997); G. Höpp, “Frontenwechsel: Muslimische Deserteure im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg und in der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in *Fremdeinsätze. Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914–1945*, ed. G. Höpp and B. Reinwald (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000): 129–41; S.M. Kreutzer, *Dschihad für den deutschen Kaiser. Max von Oppenheim und die Neuordnung des Orients (1914–1918)* (Graz: Ares, 2012).

<sup>80</sup> H. Jones, “Imperial Captivities: Colonial Prisoners of War in Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918,” in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175–193; M. Kahleß, *Muslimen in Brandenburg: Kriegsgefangene im 1. Weltkrieg: Ansichten und Absichten* (Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde, 1998); W.G. Schwanitz, “The Jinnee and the Magic Bottle: Fritz Grobba and the German Middle Eastern Policy 1900–1945,” in *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2004), 87–117; M. Gershovich, “Scherifenstern und Hakenkreuz. Marokkanische Soldaten im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Blind für die Geschichte? Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien, René Wildangel (Berlin: Hans Schiler, 2004), 335–364.

camp, stressing that its construction was an element of the strategy of drawing Muslims to the German side.<sup>81</sup> The authors point to the reasons for the failure to win the French Muslims over to Germany. Undoubtedly, the harsh penalties on the families of deserters had a dissuasive effect on those who thought of switching over to the Ottoman Empire and Germany. This aspect was highlighted by G. Höpp<sup>82</sup>. T. Lüdke and S. Kreutzer stress “the structural deficit of the German general *Jihad* strategy.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, G. Meynier believes that from 1916, France began to counteract Germanophilic sentiment in the Maghreb more effectively.<sup>84</sup>

Important historical information can be found in the books from the series *Les Armées Françaises d’Outre-Mer*, published for the Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris of 1931.<sup>85</sup> The memoirs of unit commanders or descendants of soldiers emphasize the courage and bravery of indigenous soldiers from individual military units in the face of the most significant threats and their participation in critical battles of the war, such as the Moroccans’ fight over the Marne on September 7–16, 1914.<sup>86</sup> The top French commanders wrote some of these works deeply

<sup>81</sup> M. Gussone, “Architectural Jihad. The «Halbmondlager» Mosque of Wünsdorf as an Instrument of Propaganda,” in *Jihad and Islam in World War I. Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje’s ‘Holy War Made in Germany’*, ed. E.-J. Zürcher (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016): 179–221.

<sup>82</sup> Höpp, *Muslims in der Mark*, 89.

<sup>83</sup> Lüdke, *Jihad Made*, 186; Kreutzer, *Dschihad*, 167–169.

<sup>84</sup> G. Meynier, “Les Algériens dans l’Armée française, 1914–1918,” in *Fremdeinsätze. Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914–1945*, ed. G. Höpp and B. Reinwald (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000), 38 and 52.

<sup>85</sup> *L’Armée Française en Tunisie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931); *Histoire des troupes du Levant* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931); *Les Opérations militaires au Maroc* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931); *Les Troupes coloniales pendant la guerre 1914–1918* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931).

<sup>86</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Burin des Roziers, *Le 1<sup>er</sup> Régiment de Chasseurs d’Afrique, 1832–1964* (Alger, 1963); P. Dufour, *Le 1<sup>er</sup> Régiment de Tirailleurs* (Panazol: Lavauzelle, 1999); *Histoire sommaire du 4<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Marche de Tirailleurs tunisiens* (Bordeaux: Imprimeries Gounouilhoul, 1919); Capitaine M. Mennerat, *Tunisiens héroïques au service de la France. L’Épopée du 4<sup>e</sup> Tirailleurs sur le front français, guerre 1914–1918*, sous le Haut Patronage de S.A. le Bey de Tunis, préface de M. le Maréchal Franchet d’Espèrey de l’Académie Française (Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault, 1939); R. Drevet *L’armée tunisienne* (Tunis: C. Weber, 1922); J. Mélià, *L’Algérie et la guerre (1914–1918)* (Paris: Librairie plon, 1918); *Historique du 1<sup>er</sup> bataillon de marche du Maroc et des deux compagnies blanches du 3<sup>e</sup> régiment colonial mixte du Maroc* (Casablanca: Mercier, 1920); *Organisation*

impressed with North African *indigènes* to France's victory.<sup>87</sup> These publications include the book *Serviteur de l'Islam et de la République* by Jean-Yves Bertrand-Cadi regarding the lieutenant-colonel Cadi, who belonged to the *Jeunes-Algériens* generation, which before 1914 had linked the future of their country with France. Cadi, naturalized in 1889, was the first Algerian Muslim to be admitted to the l'Ecole Polytechnique and become an officer in the French Army.<sup>88</sup> Reports of the colonial administration on the situation in the region before and during the war contain much valuable information.<sup>89</sup>

Some of these publications provide in-depth studies of the military's role in the French political system and the integration of *indigènes* with metropolitan culture.<sup>90</sup> A reflection on this issue arose right after the war. In 1925, General P.-J.-L. Azan's *L'Armée indigène nord-africaine* was published, in which a proposal was made to reform the conscription and contracting of indigenous soldiers. Initially a soldier in the 2nd *Zouaves* Regiment on the border between Algeria and Morocco, the author expressed his great appreciation for the efforts of the people of North Africa for the victory of France and expressed his regret for the missed opportunity that created the war to integrate the population of the metropole and colonies.

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*et tactique de l'infanterie au Maroc: conférence faite au centre de perfectionnement de Meknès, par le commandant Fabre* (Meknes: Impr. Rapide, G. Mercié & Cie., 1918); *Petit historique du 8e zouaves pendant la grande guerre: 1914–1919* (Paris: Levé, no date); *Historique des unités de la légion étrangère pendant la guerre 1914–1918: Maroc and Orient* (Oran: Heinz, 1922); *Historiques du service de santé pendant la guerre 1914–1918: Troupes d'occupation du Maroc* (Rabat: Imprimerie Blanc, 1920); Capitaine F.-J. Deygas, *L'Armée d'Orient dans la Guerre mondiale 1815–1919*, préface du Maréchal Franchet d'Espérey (Paris: Payot, 1932).

<sup>87</sup> Juin, Maréchal *La Brigade Marocaine à la Bataille de la Marne* (30 août au 17 septembre 1914). *Guide des champs de bataille de l'Ourcq* (Paris: Librairie Polytechnique Béranger, 1964).

<sup>88</sup> J.-Y. Bertrand-Cadi, *Le colonel Chérif Cadi, serviteur de l'Islam et de la République* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larosse, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> See *Rapport général sur la situation du Protectorat du Maroc au 31 juillet 1914 dressé par les services de la Résidence Général sous la direction de M. le Général Lyautey, Commissaire Résident Général de la République Française au Maroc* (Rabat: Résidence Général de la République Française au Maroc, 1914).

<sup>90</sup> J.-C. Jauffret, *Parlement, Gouvernement, Commandement: l'armée de métier sous le 3ème république, 1871–1914*, Doctorat d'État de l'Université de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, Tom 2 (Chateau de Vincennes: 1987); R. Menidjel, *Les Tirailleurs algériens* (Paris: Publibook, 2007); A. Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988).

After the war, the idea was that indigenous conscripts continued to serve in Algeria separately from French conscripts. Azan believed that such a separation was inappropriate and that North African regiments should also be stationed in the metropole and that indigenous recruits should be incorporated into the French Army.<sup>91</sup>

The fate of the colonial troops was shown in numerous popular publications and photo albums.<sup>92</sup>

The Gallica system of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF, provides access to many documents and in particular, the *Journal officiel de la République française*. Other documents include *Débats parlementaires*; works such as *L'islam dans l'armée française* of 1915 by Rabah Boukabouya, or *L'Algérie et l'assimilation des indigènes* of 1903 by A.-V. Passols, as well as the magazines *Revue des Troupes Coloniales* and *Revue indigène*. Document bibliographies show how rich and still unused archival resources for the history of la Grande Guerre are.<sup>93</sup> As a result, academics are still undertaking important research.<sup>94</sup>

This book uses materials of the Centre des Archives diplomatique, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in La Courneuve from the archival group Correspondence Politique et Commerciale, Nouvelle Serie, Guerre 1914–1918, Affaires Musulmanes, Soldats Musulmans dans l'armée française. They are listed in subgroups: 1664 (July 1914–February 1915), 1665 (March 1915–October 1915), 1666 (November 1915–June 1916), 1667

<sup>91</sup> P. Azan, *L'Armée indigène nord-africaine* (Paris: Ch-Lavauzelle & Cie 1925), 11 and 38. See also Bernard, *L'Afrique du Nord*.

<sup>92</sup> C. Antier-Renaud and C. Le Corre, *Les Soldats des colonies dans la première guerre mondiale* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2008); P. Dufour, P. *L'Armée d'Afrique. Une aube de gloire (1830–1852)*, tome 1 (Antony: ETAI, 2011); *Héros oubliés. L'Afrique du Nord dans la Grande Guerre 1914–1919* (Paris: La Forgotten Heroes 14–19 Foundation, 2014); L. Dornel, *Les étrangers dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2014); R. André, *Les Indigènes. Armée d'Afrique et troupes coloniales à pied en 1914* (Tours: Editions Sutton, 2015).

<sup>93</sup> Ministère de la Guerre, Etat-major de l'armée. Service Historique – *L'Afrique Française du Nord. Bibliographie militaire des ouvrages français ou traduits en français et des articles des principales revues françaises relatifs à l'Algérie, à la Tunisie et au Maroc de 1830 à 1926* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1931); *Archives de la Grande Guerre. Des sources pour l'histoire*, ed. Philippe Nivet, Coraline Coutant-Daydé, Mathieu Stoll (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, Archive de France, 2014).

<sup>94</sup> See Storm and Al Tuma of 2016, and *Combatants of Muslim Origin* of 2017, and N. Bel Ange, *Les Juifs du Département d'Oran (Algérie) dans la Grande Guerre, Tlemcen, Mostaganem, Mascara, Gélyville* of 2018.

(July 1916–December 1916), 1669 (October 1917–August 1918), 1670 (Panislamisme 1914–1915), and 1671 (Panislamism 1916). The minutes of the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs are in the same archival group, and they were an essential source for the discussion. Documents from the Ministère des Armées – Service historique de la Défense (SHD) at Vincennes were also studied, particularly GR 16N 195–198 (Maroc. Afrique du Nord). Collections of documents in Vincennes are a unique source of information about the internal situation in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, the formation and completion of the personnel of military units, and military operations against tribes from 1914 to 1919. Collection GR 16N 194 (August 1914–May 1915) contains unique desertion reports.





Passy-Grigny. Revue and regimental feast of the 1st Algerian *Tirailleurs* Regiment. Handing out decorations, September 3, 1917 (VAL 078/021)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnante.fr/ark:/14707/a0115930755905hCxtj/cad722b70f>

# Chapter 1

## Recruitment

On August 11, 1914, the Minister of War sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs a draft of a new law enabling wider participation of soldiers from French North Africa in the warfare of the French armed forces.<sup>95</sup> Until then, the law of August 13, 1910, was in force, which allowed the Tunisian Bey's subjects to join the military service of French land and naval forces while under contract for a period of 3 to 5 years. However, this law was associated with another decree of June 28, 1910, which limited the possibility of enlisting in the army only to French units stationed in Africa. At that time, the idea was to remove these restrictions and enable Tunisian subjects to take up service during the war in French units also stationed in the metropole.<sup>96</sup> The case was presented to the Bey of Tunis in the form of a message from the President of France and the Tunisian ruler expressed in this communication "feelings of deep attachment to France".<sup>97</sup> On August 13, the Minister of War proposed sending Moroccan soldiers to the war front in France, who had previously served in auxiliary units (*Troupes auxiliaires marocains*). These soldiers would have to fight in special formations called *bataillons de chasseurs indigènes*.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> MW to President of Council (PC), 29 Jul 1914, AMAE, G1664 (Jul 1914–Feb 1915); MW to GCC, Commanding the North-West Army Group, 12 Aug 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>96</sup> MW to Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), 11 Aug 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>97</sup> Resident-General of France in Tunisia (RGT) to MFA, 27 Aug 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>98</sup> MW to MFA, 13 Aug 1914, AMAE, G1664. Correspondence between the Minister of War and the French Resident-General in Morocco on the participation of Moroccan troops in the fighting in Europe in the situation of constant revolts of the Moroccan tribes is discussed by W.T. Dean (III), "Strategic Dilemmas

On August 29, 1914, the Minister of War also recommended to include subjects of the Sultan of Morocco under the new law on military service in the metropolitan territory.<sup>99</sup>

## Algeria

With the outbreak of the war, mobilization among the *indigènes* in Algeria was carried out under the previously adopted arrangements. New troops were incorporated into infantry and cavalry regiments (*spahis*), and some were transferred to artillery units, engineering troops, and auxiliary units stationed in North Africa. There were enough volunteers for the army to fulfill the mobilization plan, so it was unnecessary to reach for an additional contingent by compulsory conscription in 1915. The Minister of War set the plan to supplement the units at 15,000 soldiers until the end of 1914.<sup>100</sup>

Until 1912, indigenous Muslims from Algeria could serve in the French Army only as volunteers who signed a contract when enlisting in the service (they became *engagé* or *commissioonné*) or signed a new contract after the first term (they became *rengagé*). Such a recruitment system was introduced with the conquest of Algeria in 1830. In 1912 the indigenous soldiers formed three infantry regiments, three *Spahis* regiments, and a small number were incorporated into auxiliary units. In total, 17,000 people served in the indigenous regiments under the French command. All these units were stationed in North Africa. In 1908, the Ministry of War decided that the system was no longer effective and had to be modified. Minister Millerand wrote: “The recruitment of soldiers by voluntary enlistment is in a crisis due to many factors, the most important of which is the rapid development of our colonies. It is primarily about agriculture, which developed rapidly due to the high activity of the French colonies. As a result, the demand for labor increased, wherein agriculture became better paid than service in the army. The *indigènes* found an easier subsistence than serving in the military, and the number of volunteers for the military decreased. In a short time, the old regiment-matching system

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of Colonization: France and Morocco during the Great War,” *The Historian* 73, 4 (2011): 730–746, DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6563.2011.00304.x.

<sup>99</sup> MW to PC and MFA, 29 Jul 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>100</sup> Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs (ICMA): *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, 2–6, AMAE, G1670 (Panislamisme 1914–1915).

ceased to be efficient, and the infantry regiments began to run out of soldiers. Currently, the regiments are not fully completed. It has happened at a critical moment, and it should be of concern to us, namely, with the Algerian infantry regiments being in Morocco and taking part in military operations there; they are also to be the backbone of the occupation forces in the territories recaptured from the tribes.”<sup>101</sup>

The first to signal the decrease in the number of military volunteers in Algeria was the Commander-in-Chief of the 19th Corps of the army, who called for the urgent adoption of a new law that would enable the completion of regiments. In 1907–1908, the Government, recognizing the matter as a priority, appointed a special commission that examined the recruitment process and recommended the introduction of a new mode of recruiting indigenous soldiers in Algeria – a system similar to that introduced in Tunisia after the signing of the Protectorate Treaty and which in Tunisia, had brought the expected results. As a result, a decree was issued on July 27, 1908, that introduced a system of enlisting recruits from among the *indigènes*. Another decree of February 18, 1911, confirmed the introduction of compulsory military service and provided for an annual census of men aged 28 who were required to appear before local conscription commissions as a preparatory measure for conscription.<sup>102</sup>

On January 31, 1912, the President of the Republic issued a decree regulating the recruitment of contract soldiers. The period of service under the contract was set at three or four years. After the end of the first contract, the soldier could extend it three times more, up to the whole 16-year service period. When employed for three years, a soldier received a bonus of 250 francs, of which 150 were paid when signing the engagement, and 100 after two years of service. In the case of a 4-year enlistment, the premium was 400 francs, of which 250 were paid at the time of signing the contract and 150 after two years of service. When renewing the contract for the next four years, the bonus was 350 francs, and for the second renewal – 250 francs, payable in full when signing the engagement.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> President of the Republic (PR) to MW and Minister of Interior (MI): *Décret du 3 février 1912 sur le recrutement des indigènes algériens par voie d'appel*, 3 Feb 1912, AMAE, G1665 (March 1915–Oct 1915).

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem.

On February 3, 1912, the Ministers of War and Interior asked the President of the Republic to sign a decree regulating the military service of *indigènes* in Algeria from conscription, and President Armand Fallières signed the decree on the same day. Since the French colonists in Algeria were opposed to drafting the *indigènes* into the army, as it meant treating them as French, the drafters of the decree stipulated that the conscription would be a last resort, not a universal measure, as it was to cover only a tiny part of the annual contingent of soldiers to supplement the recruitment from voluntary enlistment. They also expressed their hope that the French from Algeria would understand that it was about the military interests of the entire state and a matter of higher necessity. As for the *indigènes* themselves, the Ministers of War and Interior were convinced that they would also accept the new rules, as conscription was not universal and only complemented voluntary enlistment.<sup>104</sup>

The decree of February 3, 1912, provided both recruiting soldiers from among *indigènes*, voluntary enlistment, and compulsory conscription. The latter form was regarded as complementary to the former. The compulsory conscription was regulated by the Commander of the 19th Corps, who had the right to request a certain number of indigenous recruits from the Minister of War and then appointed as many recruits to arms under the Governor-General's supervision as were needed to complete the regiments. Drafted soldiers served in the army on the same terms as enlisted soldiers, i.e., they were to receive the same pay and a one-time special bonus when joining the army. It was 250 francs, 150 of which were paid on commissioning, and the remaining 100 francs after two years of service. The conscripts were directed to individual units by lot. The period of conscription service was three years, and after they terminated service, they remained in reserve for seven years. From October 1 to December 1, mayors and communal administrators made lists of men born in a given commune or came from another place but had lived in a given commune for at least one year and had turned 28 in the year of the census. According to the decree, several categories of people were not subject to conscription: those who had a brother already serving in the army; a son who was the only breadwinner of the widow's mother or a grandson who was the widow's only breadwinner; an orphan who was a breadwinner for brothers and sisters who were underage or who needed care; a son who was the breadwinner of an elderly or infirm father; those

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<sup>104</sup> Ibidem.

whose brothers had either died while on military service or had been declared unfit for service because of an injury or wounds sustained in the service. Men with a height of less than 1.56 m and a weak body were dismissed from service<sup>105</sup>

The first draft of recruits from among the *indigènes* took place in Algeria on October 15, 1912, and since then, between 1.5 and 2.0 thousand *indigènes* were drafted annually into the army. Moreover, around 340 to 350 *indigènes* volunteered for the army. With the outbreak of the war, the number of volunteers increased significantly, and from August 1, 1914, to January 15, 1915, the monthly average was 3,000 volunteers. The voluntary enlistment results were higher than expected. Already in August 1914, there were 3,000 infantry volunteers; in September, 2,400 infantry and 1,650 cavalries for auxiliary units; in October, 2,000 infantry and 900 cavalrymen; in November, 2,500 infantry; in December, 2,600-foot soldiers and 600 cavalrymen for auxiliary units and until mid-January 1915 – 1,200 foot soldiers. From August 1, 1914, to mid-January 1915, 14.1 thousand infantrymen volunteered and 900 cavalrymen (i.e., 15,000 men for line service), and 2,250 cavalrymen for auxiliary units. In peacetime, the Indigènes Corps in Algeria consisted of 27 infantry battalions and 20 *spahis* regiments. After mobilization, these numbers increased to 34 infantry battalions, from 2 to 4 companies per regiment remaining in the barracks and as many as 29 regular cavalry regiments and ten auxiliary cavalry regiments.<sup>106</sup>

Service in the army in Algeria was treated as a good source of income, and in addition, the conditions for volunteers being engaged from August 1914 were more favorable than in peacetime. In times of peace, both the volunteers and conscripts in the Algerian contingent received a daily wage higher than the French military of the same rank. For the 2nd class infantryman, it was 0.28 franc instead of 0.05 franc per day. In addition, he received a seniority allowance (*haute-paie*). The bonus for signing the contract or for the conscription was: 400 francs for the volunteers for four years and a conscript with five years of service – 250 francs. The following bonus was provided for both groups: 350 francs for the first re-engagement for four years, 250 francs for the second, and 300 francs for the third re-engagement for the next four years. After the outbreak of the war, the same salary was maintained for volunteers and conscripted soldiers.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>106</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, 2–6, AMAE, G1670.

By the decree of October 15, 1915, the bonus was increased from 250 to 400 francs. Volunteers who enlisted for the entire duration of the war were entitled to an additional enlistment premium of 100 francs under the decree of August 3, 1914, which was paid every six months. Another decree of October 14, 1914, increased the enlistment premium from 100 to 200 francs, which was paid every six months, though at the original level, i.e., 100 francs. In addition, from September 1914, allowances for wives and children were introduced for all types of service (conscription and enlistment) so that the enlistment of a man into the army would not put his family would not lead to his family being left without a livelihood. In the opinion of the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs, the financial situation of the indigenous families at the beginning of 1915 was better than that of the families of soldiers from the metropole.<sup>107</sup>

The term of service for the conscription year 1912 ended in October 1915, and pursuant to the decree of February 3, 1912, soldiers leaving compulsory service remained at the disposal of the Minister of War as reservists for seven years. Upon termination of service, conscripted soldiers could choose one of three options: (1) voluntarily enlist in the army for a period of three or four years, as reviewed in the decree of January 31, 1912; (2) sign a service contract for the period until the end of the war; (3) leave the army and return to civilian life. According to the Ministry of War, this third option gave rise to severe problems in terms of warfare. After their return to Algeria or Tunisia, the demobilized soldiers were able to join those who expressed dissatisfaction with the policies of the French authorities. It could undermine the effectiveness of actions for subsequent recruitment to the army. On January 22, 1915, the Ministry of War expressed the view that Algerian soldiers should be bound by the same article 33 of the Act on universal recruitment in France of March 21, 1905, which was applied to French soldiers and which provided that military service ceased only at the end of war operations. According to the ministry, it was more justified as Tunisian soldiers were subject to the Bey decree, which provided the exact solutions as the French law. The ministry, therefore, requested the President of the Republic for a relevant decree in this matter.<sup>108</sup>

The position of the Ministry of War was supported by the Governor-General of Algeria, recognizing that the provision concerning

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<sup>107</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>108</sup> MW to MFA, Paris, 22 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1666 (November 1915–June 1916).

the automatic extension of service until the end of the war should also apply to volunteers because their consent to stop their service after the expiration of their contracts during the war would mean that they would be treated as ordinary mercenaries. Their return home, where they talked about the atrocities of war, would adversely affect the population's morale and reduce the number of volunteers in the 1915 enlistment. The Governor believed that these soldiers' service period should be extended until the end of hostilities and that they should not return to their homes until the end of the war. The regulations in this matter were also to apply to soldiers from the *l'Afrique du Nord* formation, who were transferred to the reserve after August 1908 and remained at the disposal of the Ministry of War for six years. All of them were called up under arms by the decree on the universal mobilization of August 1, 1914. According to the Governor-General of Algeria, the ban on withdrawing from service due to the end of the contract should also apply to Tunisian and Moroccan soldiers.<sup>109</sup>

## Tunisia

Tunisian *indigènes* could also serve in the French Army for three years and remained in reserve for seven in general mobilization. The basis for such a decision was the Bey decree of April 2, 1904. In mobilization, reservists were entitled to a daily allowance and additional benefits, which were to be specified in a separate decree on mobilization.<sup>110</sup> Those who served 16 years in the *l'Afrique du Nord* formations received a military pension and remained at the disposal of the Minister of War for six years, as discussed in the decree of July 18, 1913.<sup>111</sup>

The decree on mobilization was issued by the Bey on March 4, 1914, and called on former soldiers from the conscriptions of 1904–1907 to attend training. The decree specified a daily salary of 0.25 francs and a family allowance of 0.75 francs per day.<sup>112</sup>

The service of Tunisian subjects in the French Army was regulated on the French side by the decree of the President of the Republic of April

<sup>109</sup> GGA to MW, Alger, 11 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>110</sup> *Décret du 2 avril 1904 (16 moharrem 1322) Mohammed El Hadi Pacha Bey, Possesseur du Royaume de Tunis*, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>111</sup> MW to MFA, Paris, 22 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>112</sup> *Décret du 4 mars 1914 (8 Rabia-ettani 1332)*, AMAE, G1666.

13, 1910, which referred only to the possibility of voluntary enlistment in the metropolitan and colonial army units as well as the navy for four or five years. On June 28, 1910, at the request of the Minister of War, the President of the Republic signed a second decree which stated that Tunisian volunteers could serve in two military regions where the 15th and 16th Corps were stationed. There were metropolitan and colonial troops there, and Tunisian subjects could serve in the first military region (in the infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineering, and transport troops) or in the second (in infantry and artillery). Volunteers for service should be at least 18 years of age and not more than 30. They should possess an assessment of moral conduct confirmed in writing by the civil authorities in their place of residence. Moreover, they had to know both oral and written French. Article 6 provided for the possibility of signing a three-, four- or five-year contract with the right to a daily wage and premiums for enlistment. Article 7 stipulated that Tunisian *indigènes* could be promoted to higher military ranks in service only after they had been naturalized.<sup>113</sup> The idea was to prevent a situation where the French military in the French Corps was subordinated to the *indigènes*.

The issue of naturalization itself was regulated by the decree of the President of the Republic of October 3, 1910. It said that Tunisians who had reached the age of 21 and who had lived in Tunisia, France, or Algeria for at least three years had the right to apply for naturalization, and at the time of application, their habitual residence was the territory of Tunisia. The Naturalization Decree was aimed at three categories of the Bey's subjects: (1) soldiers who had volunteered for the French Army and had been in service at the time of application for naturalization or had already left; (2) civilians who had graduated from French universities and (3) officials who performed tasks of particular importance to France. The declaration of French citizenship had to be submitted in the presence of two witnesses to the magistrate at the residence, and the relevant identity certificates needed to be attached. The magistrate would hand over the documents to the Republic's Public Prosecutor, who then submitted them to the Resident-General, who in turn forwarded them to the Ministry of Justice in Paris. There, the declaration could be rejected because the applicant did not meet the requirements provided by the law.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> MA to PR: Loi du 13 Avril 1910, Paris, 28 Jun 1910, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>114</sup> *Décret du Président de la République française du 3 octobre 1910 sur la naturalisation en Tunisie; Décret du Président de la République du 6 février 1911, Complétant*

On August 10, 1914, President Henri Poincaré signed a decree, prepared at the request of the Minister of War, which allowed Tunisian subjects in military service to re-enlist in the French Army in the metropolitan and colonial units without any time limits until the end of the war. They could serve in the 15th and 16th military regions and outside them from that point on. The age for contracting was specified in the decree to be 17 years old.<sup>115</sup>

The conscription of 1914 in Tunisia did not go smoothly everywhere. German emissaries from Syria and Constantinople penetrated Tunisia and spread rumors that a new sultan appointed by the Germans would soon arrive in Algeria. It was to be the famous Emir Khaled, grandson of Emir Abd El Kader, who arrived by airplane. It was said that the airplanes had already landed in Kabylia, and the sound of their engines was heard even at night. Other rumors were that indigenous troops were sent to the front as a protective shield for metropolitan troops defending them from enemy attacks. Several indigenous soldiers who were wounded in the Battle of Charleroi and returned to Tunisia for treatment confirmed this scenario of events. The French authorities in Tunisia believed that this report had broad resonance in Tunisian society. On October 5, 1914, in Bizerte, when the list of persons designated for conscription for 1915 was published, voices of opposition and dissatisfaction with the forced enlistment into the French Army were heard. The French authorities described these voices as “an explosion of fanaticism” and nipped them in the bud. Despite the peace being restored and the rebel conscripts reporting to registration points, the case became notorious outside Tunisia. The Algerian authorities asked the Minister of War to postpone the 1915 conscription and replace conscripts with voluntary enlistment until new conscription arrangements were made. The Governor-General of Algeria also decided to reform the taxes and simplify the procedure when applying for naturalization. These steps were intended to prevent possible manifestations of dissatisfaction.<sup>116</sup>

A the same time, the appointment of reservists of all ages covered by the law of July 11, 1903, caused severe financial problems. On August

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*le décret du 3 octobre 1910 sur la naturalisation en Tunisie* – the text of the new decree was supplemented with graduates of l'École nationale des Mines de Saint-Étienne, who could also apply for naturalization, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>115</sup> *Décret du Président de la République française du 10 août 1914*, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>116</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, 8, AMAE, G1670.

10, 1915, the Commander of the French Occupation Forces in Tunisia sent a letter to the Minister of War, in which he pointed out the need to grant family allowances for Tunisian soldiers conscripted in 1911 and the coverage by the French State Treasury of other expenses related to the appointment of Tunisian appointment to arms of indigenous Tunisian reservists. Soldiers conscripted in 1911 ended their service in the fall of 1914 but were not released from the reserve due to the war. The command of the French troops in Tunisia believed that these soldiers should be treated as reservists mobilized for the war with the right to appropriate financial benefits.<sup>117</sup> Already earlier on March 25, 1915, the Minister of War had guaranteed that the French side would cover the allowances for these soldiers, and therefore the protectorate authorities paid the expenses related to it from their budget. However, on April 13, 1915, the protectorate budget was exhausted due to the additional expenses for mobilization, and no further benefits could be paid.<sup>118</sup>

Tunisian legislation provided that the *indigènes* were recruited into the army each year on a lottery basis because the number needed to replenish the contingents was lower than the number of conscripts, especially as there was a steady flow of volunteers. Those conscripts selected for service could buy their way out of serving by paying a certain amount to a special fund of the central management of the Tunisian Army. The funds collected by this fund were allocated to engaging volunteers who were directed either to the Bey Guard or to the French Corps, where they replaced those who had bought themselves out of service. The price of buying (Arabic *rahat*) a conscript from service was high, ranging from 700 to 1,000 francs. It was updated annually by the protectorate authorities and French advisers, thus becoming a vital instrument for regulating the needs of the protectorate and French authorities to maintain the appropriate size of the army. As a result, the number of buy-outs was adjusted to the number of soldiers who voluntarily engaged or were re-engaged in military service. In total, it was about maintaining a certain number of soldiers, and the funds for the commitment came only from the buy-out. The price of buying out of service was high, but this allowed for good conditions for recruiting volunteers. The soldiers who signed

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<sup>117</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 19 Aug 1915, ICMA: *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>118</sup> General Commanding the Occupation Division of Tunisia to MW, Tunis, 10 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

the engagement received a triple bonus of 400 francs and a daily pay of 0.35 franc, which amounted to 778 francs for three years of service. This sum was still 222 francs lower than the price of buying out of military service (1,000 francs). Therefore, service in the army was a chance for the poorer classes to support the family, which explained a large number of volunteers for the army. On the other hand, the military administration still 'earned' by this mechanism and used the difference of 222 francs for salaries for reservists.<sup>119</sup>

However, by appointing 12 years of reservists under arms simultaneously, the funds collected from the difference of 222 francs were immediately exhausted, and it was financially impossible to hire new soldiers. For that reason, General Charles V rand, Commander of the French Occupation Forces in Tunisia, asked the Tunisian authorities and the protectorate authorities to take appropriate steps to remedy the situation. However, the General Directorate of Finance confirmed the lack of any possibility to cover the expenses related to the mobilization of reservists from the protectorate's budget. Therefore the General applied to the Minister of War to reimburse the central administration of the Tunisian Army for the expenses incurred in appointing reservists to be under the arms. However, the Minister of War replied that he could cover these expenses in the form of repayable credits, as the settlement of this matter had to pass by voting in the Chamber of Deputies and asked the General to prepare a calculation of the expected expenses for December 31, 1915. In response to this, the Resident-General in Tunisia gave 8,026,894.16 francs, including daily wages of 1,685,775.00 francs; family allowances to the amount of 6,272,137.50 francs, and expenditure on carrying out the mobilization of reservists was set at 68,981.66 francs. At the same time, the Resident expressed that granting these loans by the Chamber of Deputies was necessary to maintain the continuity of recruiting soldiers in Tunisia and asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to help the Minister of War promote this idea in parliament. "The Tunisian budget cannot bear such a burden. In times of peace, it barely copes with the organization of recruitment. In addition, this year's budget shows revenues 12 million francs lower than last year's due to the economic crisis. Budget reserves are almost completely exhausted"<sup>120</sup> – we read in the Resident-General's letter.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem.

On November 22, 1915, the Resident-General in Tunisia wrote another letter in connection with the refusal of the Minister of Finance to grant a special loan to cover expenses related to the appointment of reservists. This time it was addressed to the President of the Council of Ministers and presented the same arguments, including Tunisia's merits for the defense of France.<sup>121</sup> As a result of these interventions, in November 1915, the Ministry of Finance applied to the Budget Committee of the Chamber of Deputies for the granting of additional funds to cover the costs of mobilizing Tunisian reservists and family allowances for reservists of all ages who were drafted into the army and served in Tunisia and as well as for 1911 and 1912 reservists who were detained in the army after 3 years of service either in France or in Tunisia. The Budget Committee gave a positive opinion concerning these requests.<sup>122</sup>

## Morocco

In Morocco, the protectorate authorities decided not to introduce compulsory military service, as it was expected that any attempt to introduce it would cause widespread dissatisfaction. Such a situation would be by all means undesirable while the tribes had not yet been subdued and the country was at war. In turn, voluntary enlistment into the Sultan's Army was widely accepted among the *indigènes*, and the number of enlisted soldiers was sufficient for the full complement of military units. The French began to create these units in 1908 from among tribes for police service and combat operations. *Goumiers* – as these units were called – were formally subordinate to the Sultan but were, in fact, part of the French *l'Armée d'Afrique* with the status of auxiliary troops led by French officers. The voluntary recruitment of Moroccan *indigènes* to the army was regulated by the instruction of the Minister of War of December 3, 1913, on the organization of Moroccan Auxiliary Units (*Troupes auxiliaires marocaines*). It provided for future contracts – for one, two, or three years with the payment of a bonus of 60 francs per year.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> RGT to PC and MFA, Tunis, 22 Nov 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>122</sup> Expenses for family benefits for those reservists who served in France were covered by the funds of the French Ministry of War – MW to General Commanding the Occupation Division of Tunisia, Paris, 1 Nov 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>123</sup> MW: *Recrutement au Maroc en 1918*, 1 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669 (Oct 1917– Apr 1918).

In May 1915, the Ministry of War proposed to transform the Moroccan infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineering troops from auxiliary troops into regular ones, which would allow them to be integrated into the French regular army units and increase the number of soldiers on the front line. This reorganization would also grant Moroccan soldiers higher salaries and pensions upon retirement. It would entail higher costs but was assessed by the ministry as an incentive for *indigènes* in Morocco to enlist as new troops.<sup>124</sup>

The Government accepted this project, and on September 16, 1915, it was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies as a joint project of the President of the Republic, the President of the Council, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, War, and Finance. The Chamber of Deputies adopted the bill at its meeting on November 25, 1915, and the new law completely changed the nature of the participation of Moroccan soldiers in the war. The new law provided for among the *indigènes*, the creation in Morocco or possibly in France, of 12 Moroccan infantry battalions and three regiments of Moroccan cavalry (*spahis*) based on the existing Moroccan auxiliary units (Articles 1 and 2). Article 12 stipulated that recruitment to Moroccan infantry battalions and *spahis* regiments would be carried out on the basis of recruitment among Moroccan *indigènes* and, in exceptional cases, military *indigènes* from other North African countries. The terms of the engagement and re-engagement of the Moroccan military were to be the same as the Algerian *indigènes*. Soldiers serving in the existing Moroccan auxiliary units could be included in the newly created units based on a previously signed contract (Article 13), or sign a new enlistment contract (Article 15). Moroccan troops serving in France during the war were to be detained in their units after the expiry of their contract until the end of the war, without signing a new contract for enlistment. Their situation would be settled upon their units' return to Morocco on the basis that a new contract would be concluded with them for a second enlistment under the conditions laid down in the auxiliary units (Article 17). From the moment the Moroccan *indigènes* signed the contract of enlistment or renewal, they enjoyed the same benefits as the Algerian and Tunisian military *indigènes* (Article 19), which was beneficial for Moroccans and was to encourage them to join the military. Regarding military ranks, the Moroccan *indigènes* having an officer

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<sup>124</sup> MW to MFA, 5 May 1915, AMAE, G1666.

in auxiliary units were to receive a lower rank of the second lieutenant in regular units (Article 20).<sup>125</sup>

### More soldiers!

The reorganization of the Moroccan military units was symptomatic. The troop recruitment system in North Africa was in crisis, and steps needed to be taken to recruit more troops. The changed system of financial incentives created such an opportunity. With the outbreak of the war, the Minister of War agreed with the French authorities in North Africa that the number of soldiers from compulsory conscription in Algeria and Tunisia would not be increased due to the possible outbreak of public discontent and that more favorable financial conditions needed to be offered to increase the number of soldiers from voluntary enlistment. These proposals were also addressed to *indigènes* in Morocco, where there was no compulsory conscription at all. From the point of view of this strategy, the most favorable one was the payment of a bonus of 200 francs for signing an enlistment contract and then 100 francs of bonus for each year of service. The payment of these sums was provided for by the decrees of August 5 and October 14, 1914. The payment of allowances for the families of soldiers turned out to be equally encouraging. As a result, by December 1915, almost 30,000 *indigènes* were enlisted in Algeria, while before the war, about 2,000 men had reported their willingness to join the army each year. In Morocco, from the beginning of the war to December 1915, 5,000 *indigènes* were enlisted, and in Tunisia, 2,500.<sup>126</sup>

In early 1915, the War Ministry took decisive steps to increase North African *indigènes* both at the front and auxiliary units. On January 25, 1915, General Auguste Jean Marie Moinier, Commander of the Infantry Units in Algeria, sent a letter to the Minister of War with a proposal to appoint reservists, who had already entered the reserve and, according

<sup>125</sup> No. 416, Sénat, Année 1915, la séance du 9 décembre 1915, *Project de loi, adopté par la Chambre des Députés, relatif à la transformation des troupes auxiliaires marocains en corps réguliers, et aux droits à pension des militaires marocains servant dans les corps réguliers, après avoir servi dans les goums mixtes et les troupes auxiliaires marocains*, AMAE, 1666.

<sup>126</sup> MW: *Note au sujet du développement des contingents indigènes*, Paris, 23 Dec 1915, AMAE, G1666.

to the law of July 11, 1903, were at the disposal of the Minister of War for ten years after leaving the service. On January 26, 1915, the President of the Republic signed an appropriate decree sanctioning the appointment of all generations who had been transferred to the reserve since 1905 to the army's ranks. It allowed for the increase in the number of soldiers from Algeria and Tunisia by about 600 people. This decree also applied to around 150 Algerians living in Tunisia. Moreover, Tunisians who had already been naturalized were called to arms together with French reservists. All reservists from these years could not be sent to the front due to their age and were assigned to auxiliary troops to keep order in the colonies and supervise prisoners.<sup>127</sup>

Already at the end of 1915, the Ministry of War drew attention to the possibility of a downward trend in voluntary applications to the army. This trend was associated with the soldiers' fatigue with the war, the lack of prospects for its end, and the high number of killed and wounded. An additional factor was the increase in the price of the labor force in North Africa caused by the lack of labor, and therefore service in the army was not as attractive as at the beginning of the war. The Minister of War, therefore, proposed to raise the bonuses for enlistment.<sup>128</sup>

The Governor-General of Algeria also believed that the financial factor was the most important instrument for increasing enlistment in North Africa. In a letter to the Minister of War on January 6, 1916, he wrote: "The *indigènes*' enlisting voluntarily into military service is not in the least a question of patriotism, but only a question of money; consequently, it is logical that increasing the signing bonus will increase the number of people willing to sign up. However, I believe that this method should only be used as a last resort. Such a policy will immediately give rise to the belief in the Muslim masses that we need men at all costs because we are so weakened; as a consequence, our prestige will greatly weaken." The Governor-General believed that the 400 francs in bonus paid over four years of service were relatively high and should continue to be attractive. He also found that awarding those who enlist for the entire duration of the war a bonus of 300 francs at the time of signing the engagement and

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<sup>127</sup> MW to MFA: *Projet de Décret modifiant le Décret du 25 Janvier 1915, relatif au rappel sous le drapeau des anciens militaires indigènes de l'Afrique du Nord soumis à des obligations militaires*, Paris, 14 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665; RGT to MFA, 19 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>128</sup> Ibidem.

200 francs for each year of service was a very favorable decision mobilizing *indigènes* into the French Army.<sup>129</sup>

The downward trend in enlisting *indigènes* from North Africa to the French Army in 1915 was confirmed by the Ministry of War in April 1916. If, during the first five months of the war in 1914, 16,604 Algerian *indigènes* were enlisted in the French Army, then for the whole of 1915, this number amounted to 12,053 soldiers. This decline was the result of several unfavorable factors: the prolongation of the war and the distance of soldiers from their homes; a form of trench warfare, which was surprising to indigenous soldiers was used to war being about displacement; high personnel losses suffered at the front by indigenous units; the influence of German propaganda; increasingly high wages for civil work in Algeria as a result of the labor shortage and an increase in the number of Kabyles employed by French industry. Despite these unfavorable factors, the enlistment in Algeria in the first three months of 1916 was significant, as it amounted to 6,536 soldiers. However, the ministry did not consider this increase meant a reversal of the downward trend and took into account the need to stimulate enlistment further.<sup>130</sup>

The second option for increasing North African troops on the front in Europe would have been the transfer of North African indigenous troops stationed in North Africa to Europe and their replacement by *indigènes* from other parts of the French empire who were less valiant and valuable at the front. They were troops from the Indochina Peninsula and Madagascar. The Minister of War had no doubts that the Annamese, Tonkinese, Cambodians, and Malagasy contingents had “the slightest combat value and any illusions about it were dangerous.” From this point of view, it would be advisable to withdraw these units from the front and send them to North Africa, from where troops composed of North African *indigènes* would be transferred as more valuable on the front. However, closer examination showed that the most valuable troops from North Africa had already been dispatched to Europe, and those stationed in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco were identified as second-class, only capable of pacifying the rebelling tribes. The most crucial argument against such a plan was the psychological factor. The Ministry of War noted that Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians “have a long-standing opinion

<sup>129</sup> GGA to MW, 6 Jan 1916, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>130</sup> MW: *Engagements volontaires des indigènes algériens*, Paris, 25 Apr 1916, AMAE, G1666.

about black and yellow soldiers (the Senegalese were the exception). Seeing the arrival of the numerous infantry units of Malagasy and Annamite on their land, they will conclude that we do not believe in them and that we fear their rise; they will become convinced of their strength and will conclude that France is exhausted and can stand against them with nothing but soldiers of the lowest class.”<sup>131</sup> Such a situation threatened a wave of social discontent with unpredictable consequences.

The Minister of War also believed that some of the laws made by Paris did not address the issue of mobilizing indigenous soldiers as a whole and that if they favored mobilization in one part of the empire, they had a daunting effect in another part. An example of this was the decree of October 9, 1915, which equated the rights of soldiers from Senegal with the rights of soldiers from Algeria and Tunisia. It increased the voluntary enlistment from Senegal but was perceived by the Algerians and Tunisians as diminishing their benefits.<sup>132</sup>

Over the following years, the enlistment of recruits began to play an increasingly important role. In January 1918, Georges Clemenceau, then President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of War, asked the authorities of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco to take all possible steps to increase the number of soldiers and workers, both through a new campaign for voluntary enlistment and by expanding conscription and requisitions. The most challenging thing was to increase the number of volunteers in Morocco because one-third of the country had been pacified only a few years earlier and an administration subordinated to the Sultan had yet to be created there. The other one-third of the country had denounced obedience to the Sultan, and his administration ceased to function there. As the French authorities feared that compulsory conscription would aggravate dissatisfaction with the Sultan's authority, recruitment remained voluntary throughout the war. Under such conditions, no more than 6,000 *indigènes* could be recruited to the army and 12,000 to work in the industry. Nonetheless, Clemenceau insisted that these numbers be doubled and expected 40,000 men from Morocco to be redirected to the needs of the front.<sup>133</sup>

However, according to experts from the Ministry of War, these expectations were impossible to meet. About 2.5 million *indigènes* in Morocco,

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<sup>131</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>132</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>133</sup> PC and MW to RGM, Paris, 2 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

of which about 1.8 million could be taken as the basis for calculating the number of future recruits. This figure was similar to that of Tunisia, and in both cases, the number of potential recruits and wage laborers was estimated at 100,000. In the case of Morocco, on December 1, 1917, 11,100 soldiers were under arms in supporting formations. In addition, Moroccans served in Algerian units (1,000), convoys supporting the front (2,400), and cavalry units of the gendarmerie. 7,200 Moroccans served in the *Goumiers mixtes marocains* formations, and 14,000 Moroccan *indigènes* were colonial workers and worked in the civilian sector in France. In total, for the needs of the front, about 40 thousand Moroccan *indigènes* were involved. It was much less than the statistics showed. Since the political situation made it impossible to announce compulsory conscription, financial incentives remained to attract volunteers. Already in the spring of 1917, the Minister of Colonies proposed raising the rates of monetary remuneration for Moroccan soldiers, but already then, they were higher than those received by Tunisians and Algerians. Moroccan soldiers also enjoyed increased rations of free meat. It was difficult to talk about another increase in the enlistment premium. The indigenous voluntary enlistment system in Morocco was different from that of Algeria and Tunisia. The instruction of December 3, 1913, regarding the organization of *Troupes auxiliares marocains* provided only for contracts for one, two, or three years. Contracts for the entire war period with more attractive hiring bonuses were not foreseen for Moroccan *indigènes*. Such contracts would undoubtedly attract more volunteers, but their introduction was constantly postponed to ensure that a steady number of troops would be maintained in times of peace and that all volunteers would not retire simultaneously with the end of the war. Only the number of colonial workers could be doubled easily because for Moroccan *indigènes*, the amount of remuneration offered by *le Service des travailleurs coloniaux* was attractive, and they were eager to sign up for work in the metropole.<sup>134</sup>

The situation with conscription was more favorable in Algeria. The conscription of Algerian *indigènes* for the year 1918 went smoothly. The review of the draft registers in the Alger, Oran and Constantine departments was completed on April 30, 1918. Thirty-six thousand conscripts were to be expected from these three departments. As early as March 31, 14.8 thousand conscripts were put under arms and assigned to units in other departments. The conscripts reported to the collection points

<sup>134</sup> MW: *Recrutement au Maroc en 1918*, Paris, 1 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

punctually. There was no case that someone did not report to the recruitment point. Parallel to the conscription, a campaign was conducted for the voluntary extension of service by volunteers and conscripts leaving for the reserve.

It was expected that thanks to this campaign, by June 30, the number of soldiers would increase by 14,000, of which 5,700 were thanks to the extension of service by volunteers, and 6,500 thanks to the extension of service by conscripts who could go to the reserve after the end of the service period. In general, the number of Algerian soldiers conscripted into the army was to be around 50,000 *indigènes* in the first half of 1918, which was in line with earlier assumptions.<sup>135</sup>

Problems with conscription occurred not only in North Africa. On January 11, 1918, the Minister of Colonies met Joost van Vollenhoven, Governor-General of French West Africa, who announced that five recruiting campaigns had been carried out in West Africa and that since the beginning of the war, 120,000 men being directed to the European front. The announcement of a new campaign resulted in a massive displacement of people from the French colonies to neighboring colonies subordinated to other European powers. The Governor-General estimated that approximately 100,000 people had fled French Africa. These movements were easy because the neighboring colonies were inhabited by people belonging to the same tribes and ethnic groups as the inhabitants of French Africa.<sup>136</sup> French soldiers also deserted to the colonies adjacent to French West Africa.<sup>137</sup> The French Governor predicted an increase in the number of refugees because 36 communities in French West Africa bordered on territories belonging to other countries. Approximately 5 million people were living there. "The only way to stop further migration could be for allies controlling neighboring colonies to recruit at the same time as us and on the same terms as us indigenous peoples into their armies. It would be a solution not only fair but also efficient," – he wrote. "Twice as many people inhabit the enclaves adjacent to French Africa on the Gulf of Guinea

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<sup>135</sup> MFA: *Bulletin de Renseignements du Ministère de la Guerre (Question musulmanes)*. Copie, Paris, 28 Apr 1918, *Recrutement indigène en Algérie*, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>136</sup> MC to PC and MW, Paris, 14 Jan 1918; PC and MW to MFA: *Recrutement indigène dans l'A.O.F.*, AMAE, 16 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>137</sup> Vice-Consul of France to General Governor of French West Africa: *Recrutement en A.O.F. et de sa répercussion en Guinée portugaise*, Dakar, Bissao, 7 Mar 1918, AMAE, G1669.

as in French Africa. The local races are viable, well-settled, and organized. English Nigeria has cities with 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants. If our allies undertook our actions in French West Africa, the army would be immediately strengthened by approximately 250–300 thousand soldiers.”<sup>138</sup>

On this issue, French diplomats approached the British, Portuguese, and Liberian authorities and guaranteed that France would cover the costs of bonuses, salaries, and allowances for the families of future soldiers. However, the proposal to carry out conscription in areas adjacent to French West Africa was not approved. The Portuguese and Liberians hesitated to respond, and the British openly refused to take military action to carry out conscription in their colonies for fear of an outbreak of civil unrest among the African population. In March 1918, the French Ministry of Cologne considered a project to conduct a direct military operation by France on Liberian territory to recruit refugee recruits, but Quai d’Orsay did not endorse the initiative.<sup>139</sup>

### *Indigènes cannot be officers*

In August 1916, the Resident-General in Tunisia suggested establishing a training center for Tunisian NCOs in Bizerte, which would help them advance more rapidly to the officer rank. In this way, it would be possible to motivate the Tunisian youth to take up the soldier profession more widely. There were no solid military traditions in Tunisia as in Algeria, where the soldier’s profession was inherited from father to son in tribal

<sup>138</sup> MC to PC and MW, Paris, 14 Jan 1918; PC and MW to MFA: *Recrutement indigène dans l’A.O.F.*, Paris, 16 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>139</sup> See Daeschner, French Ambassador in Lisbon to MFA: *Recrutement de tirailleurs en Afrique Occidentale*, 8 Feb 1918; MC to MFA, 6 Feb 1918; French Ambassador in London: *Recrutement dans les possessions étrangères de l’Ouest Africain*, 18 Feb 1918; Daeschner, French Ambassador in Lisbon to MFA: *Recrutement de tirailleurs en Afrique Occidentale*, 18 Feb 1918; French Ambassador in London: *Recrutement dans les possessions étrangères de l’Ouest Africain*, 1 Mar 1918; MC to MFA: *Nécessité d’un recrutement britannique en Afrique Occidentale*, Paris, 8 Mar 1918; MC to MFA: *Recrutement indigène dans les colonies étrangères de l’Ouest-Africain: Liberia et Guinée portugaise*, Paris, 8 Mar 1918; Vice-Consul of France to MFA: *Recrutement en A.O.F. et de sa répercussion en Guinée portugaise*, Bissao, 8 Mar 1918; MC to MFA: *Recrutement indigène en Guinée portugaise*, Paris, 2 Apr 1918; French Ambassador in London to MFA: *Recrutement des indigènes dans l’Afrique Occidentale*, 22 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.

areas. A military school for officers was opened in Algeria to better prepare for a soldier in Miliana. There were no tribal soldiers in Tunisia, known as *goumiers* in Algeria and Morocco. Service in the infantry was particularly unpopular, and Tunisian notables usually lived in cities and educated their sons for clerical professions. Those who lived in the countryside raised horses, and if they thought about a military career for their sons, it was instead in the cavalry. Major *caïds* from the Nefouza region in the Kabila governorate upheld military traditions and sent their sons to train as cavalrymen (*spahis*) at Saint-Cyr.<sup>140</sup>

The proposal of the Resident-General was undoubtedly related to the general situation in the army. The decrease in the number of *indigènes* enlisting in the army made it necessary to search for all possible reserves and make the army more attractive. Hence, in 1916, legislative work was accelerated to regulate bonuses for reservists and family allowances and widows' pensions. Such a step could be an accelerated promotion and the possibility of gaining officer skills.

Law No. 101, adopted by the Senate on September 26, 1916, and earlier by *la Chambre des Députés*, concerned the service of *tirailleurs* and *spahis* from North Africa and supplemented the Law of July 18, 1913, on the retirement pension of the indigenous military. The new law stated that if the North African *tirailleurs* and *spahis* had vacancies for an officer position as lieutenant or second lieutenant in the indigenous group, the Minister of War could appoint an *adjudant indigène*, that is, a non-commissioned officer. It meant a departure from the previous thinking dominant in the Ministry of War, which expressed the belief that *indigènes* were better in the ranks of non-commissioned officers – *adjudants-chef*, *adjudants* and sergeants or *maréchaux de logis* (equivalent to a cavalry sergeant) – at leading a squad or platoon than in officer positions. Hence, the French were recruited for officer positions in indigenous units.<sup>141</sup>

The proposal by two MPs from overseas territories, Blaise Diagne from Senegal and Gratien Candace from Guadeloupe, went further. At the session of the parliament in October 1917, both deputies proposed that the Law of April 13, 1910, which allowed Tunisian subjects to join voluntarily the units of the French metropolitan and colonial army stationed in France and the navy, should also apply to the Algerians and the

<sup>140</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 14 Aug 1916, AMAE G1669.

<sup>141</sup> Sénat. Année 1916. *Project de loi adopté le 26 septembre 1916, No 101. Adopté par la Chambre des Députés*, AMAE, G1667 (Jul 1916–Dec 1916).

Moroccans. The MPs Diagne and Candace simultaneously pointed out the weaknesses of the decree of April 13, 1910, and wanted to modify it. The idea was that the Law of April 13, 1910, provided the Tunisian subjects with the opportunity to enlist in the French corps in the metropolitan and colonial armies stationed in France and the navy, but the terms of the enlisted military service contract were to be determined by a decree. This decree was announced on June 28, 1910, but did not say anything about making the terms of service of Tunisians equal to those under which the French military served. Consequently, the provisions of the French Law on recruitment of March 21, 1905, did not apply to the Tunisian enlisted soldiers. In particular, it focused on the daily pay, bonuses for signing an enlistment contract, and the length of leave. A Tunisian soldier could not receive the same amount of benefits due to a French soldier, even if he obtained French citizenship during his service, because the conditions of the engagement only referred to a higher degree in the case of naturalization, but not equal to the French military benefits. As a result, service in France's metropolitan and colonial armies and the navy was essentially reserved for the French. The number of Tunisian *engagés* who joined the French corps under the law of April 13, 1910, was minimal, even during the war. These totaled only 300 of the 3,700 Tunisian *engagés*.<sup>142</sup>

The modification recommended by the deputies Diagne and Candace was to ensure that enticed *indigènes* from Algeria and Morocco would enjoy the same rights and obligations as the French military. It attempted, among other things, to grant equal rights to indigenous officers serving in units consisting of *indigènes* with French officers serving in the same units, and to extend the rank and file of *indigènes* who spoke and wrote fluently in French with the same rights as French enlisted soldiers serving in the same units. The granting of *indigènes* the same rights and obligations as those enjoyed by the French military in the same corps meant that: (1) *indigènes* should be covered by the recruitment law of March 21, 1905; (2) they should be guaranteed the right to advance to higher ranks on an equal footing with the French without having to obtain French naturalization and (3) they would be granted the same financial benefits as the French.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> MW: *Note au sujet de la proposition de loi de MM. Diagne et Candace Députés, N° 1795, en ce qui concerne les Indigènes algériens et marocains*, Paris, 10 Oct 1917, AMAE G1669.

<sup>143</sup> Ibidem.

However, the project of these two MPs was subject to sharp criticism from the Ministry of War, which categorically defended the dual structure of military ranks: one for the French and one for the *indigènes*. In an explanation of its position, the Ministry wrote: “The military ranks *caporal* or *brigadier*, *sous-officier*, *sous-lieutenant* and *lieutenant* in indigenous units are awarded in order to create a structure and organizational framework for military operations and to maintain discipline in units. These ranks are only ancillary to the French ranks because they require fewer demands on the *indigènes* when they are being trained. Indigenous soldiers of almost all ranks, including officers’ ranks, are illiterate in Arabic and French. *Indigènes* are included in the officer corps after passing an examination at the level of their primary school leaving certificate. The vast majority of our lieutenants in the indigenous group would not even obtain the rank of corporal in the French corps if they were subjected to the same promotion requirements as the French.”<sup>144</sup>

The Ministry of War thus conceded that the indigenous corps were second-class units, and the ranks awarded there were not as valuable as the ranks in French troops. As for the draft law providing equal treatment of *indigènes* and the French, the Ministry decided it was harmful to the state’s defense. Putting the French military under the command of the *indigènes* – despite the same military ranks – would be detrimental to the organization of our troops due to the low competence of the *indigènes*. The Ministry did not deny that there were also those who could write and speak French in the indigenous corps. However, they belonged to the group with the worst views (*le plus mauvais esprit*) and the slightest loyalty to France. From this point of view, it would be unfair to reward a French-speaking group and write military *indigènes* by likening them to the French military and subordinating to them the first group of *indigènes*.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>145</sup> Ibidem.



Fismes. A corner of the city and parade of the 8th Algerian *Tirailleurs* Regiment., April 2, 1917  
(VAL 071/075)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/a0115930751555uz3S4/69e9d481ba>

## Chapter 2

# Managing Cultural Otherness

In October 1914, a general regulation enabling the service of Moroccan and Tunisian soldiers in the French Army on the territory of the metropole created the need to regulate many specific provisions. That month, soldiers from North Africa had already fought on the European front, and many of them had been wounded. Paris directed the wounded to Tunisia, where the Tunisian authorities looked after them. The French Resident-General Gabriel Alapetite pointed out the desirability of directing wounded Tunisians for treatment to the exact specialized centers in the south of France to which French soldiers were directed. Alapetite was afraid that Paris policy would raise suspicions of discriminating against and treating Tunisian subjects as inferior.<sup>146</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shared Alapetite's view and sent a message to the Ministry of War on October 7, which the next day issued an order to all military units to direct wounded soldiers for treatment to hospitals in France. It was motivated by technical reasons, namely that it would be easier to direct healed soldiers back to the front from French hospitals.<sup>147</sup>

Following these observations, on October 7, 1914, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Alapetite to hand over postcards to the families of those wounded Tunisian soldiers who were in treatment at a military hospital in Bordeaux. In addition to Tunisian, there were also Moroccan and Algerian soldiers. Consul Émile Piat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who knew the Arabic language well and was able to talk to the soldiers in their native language, left Paris and went to see these soldiers. At the same time, he proposed to inform his interlocutors that

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<sup>146</sup> RGT to MFA, 6 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>147</sup> MW to MFA, 25 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

the Ministry would forward postcards with words to their families through the consul in Tunis (in most cases, the words were only the soldier's signature). The visit aimed at raising the morale of wounded soldiers before returning them to the front. According to Piat, indigenous families have accepted this initiative with great emotion.<sup>148</sup> Consul Piat's visit to Bordeaux was rated so high that the Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs agreed that Piat would visit several other convalescence places for soldiers of Maghreb origin, located in the Arles and Aix en Provence regions.<sup>149</sup> General Lyautey, the French Resident-General in Morocco, strongly supported this initiative, emphasizing the great political importance of such actions.<sup>150</sup>

### Muslim rituals

At this early stage of the war, the French authorities encountered the cultural diversity of North African soldiers, and the question arose of the extent to which Muslim culture rituals should be honored in the army. On October 21, 1914, this issue was raised in a letter from the Resident-General in Morocco to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Lyautey pointed out the need to establish procedures for the burial of slain soldiers of Moroccan origin fighting in the ranks of the French Army. Burying these soldiers and Christian soldiers while ignoring Muslim burial ceremonies would have awakened a negative mood in Morocco toward the French. According to a French resident, Muslims were particularly attached to these ceremonies. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt the principle that the proper ceremony appropriate to Muslim culture should be observed in the burial of at least two Moroccan soldiers. However, when burying a single soldier, this ceremony could be omitted because the risk of offending public opinion in Morocco, in this case, was small.<sup>151</sup>

The burial policy was regulated by the Minister of War in a special *Circulaire aux Généraux Commandants de Régions*. It had the character of detailed instruction on how to proceed in the event of the death of

<sup>148</sup> RGT to MFA, 14 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>149</sup> MW to MFA, 18 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>150</sup> Resident-General of France in Morocco (RGM) to MFA, 24 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664; RGM to MW, 3 Oct 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>151</sup> RGM to MFA, 21 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

a Muslim soldier while maintaining the burial rituals of Islamic culture. This concerned the regiments of *tirailleurs indigènes*, *spahis réguliers* and *auxiliares algériens* as well as *spahis tunisiens* and *chasseurs indigènes*, i.e., *tirailleurs* and *spahis marocains*. The instruction said that the funeral should occur in the company of other Muslims, who at the time of death should say *shahada*, or the Islamic proclamation of faith, and then wash – if possible – the body in warm water. The body placed into the grave should be wrapped in white cotton fabric, and in no case should it be put in a casket. In the absence of other living Muslims during burial, the body had to be buried without religious rituals. Nevertheless, place the body in the ground on the right side to turn the face toward Mecca. The Circulaire stated that the body should be laid from the southwest to the northeast to facilitate finding this direction. A stone and a piece of wood had to be laid on the grave of a buried Muslim soldier. The stone with the name of the deceased should be above the head and the wood – without any inscriptions – above the buried feet. It was necessary to avoid placing a cross or other symbols of Christian faith on the grave of a Muslim. This ban and other recommendations indicated that the Ministry did not want to offend the religious feelings of North African soldiers. The Ministry considered that the implementation of these recommendations as to the last service for soldiers who “died for France,” was feasible and referred the Circulaire to the directors of military hospitals and convalescence sites for wounded soldiers in France and North Africa, to the Resident-General in Tunis, the Governor-General of Algeria, the Commander and Chief of Land and Sea Forces in North Africa as well as the Resident-General in Morocco.<sup>152</sup>

Piat’s mission drew attention to other problematic aspects for North African soldiers, and some of them were quickly regulated by the authorities. Soldiers especially complained about the lack of Algerian tobacco in France, and the Ministry of War ordered that Algerian tobacco be imported to the places where Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan soldiers were and be sold at Algerian prices.<sup>153</sup>

In December 1914, the Resident-General in Tunis pointed out that Tunisian soldiers fighting on the European front were deprived of legal

<sup>152</sup> MW: *Circulaire aux Généraux Commandants de Régions*, Bordeaux, 16 Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664; MW to GGC, RGT, RGM and Commander-in-Chief in North Africa, 7 Dec 1914, SDH, GR 16N 194.

<sup>153</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 5 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

protection by the Tunisian judiciary, which prevented them from regulating many legal issues raised by their families in Tunisia. They were usually family matters related to property inheritance, division of property, and death of family members, which were regulated by religious law. This situation meant that the subjects of the Bey of Tunis were not treated equally compared to Algerian soldiers because the latter, as subjects of France, could report testifying in similar cases in the French courts, where there were departments for Muslims. To settle this matter, the Bey of Tunis decided to send Tunisian notaries to France, who were to be located in Arles, a place of concentration of many Tunisian infantry units. The French Resident agreed to accept the decision of the Bey since the presence of the Bey's officials in France would positively affect the morale of Tunisian soldiers.<sup>154</sup>

On July 12, 1915, *Ramadan* began. Accordingly, the Minister of War ordered commanders of military regions that units in which Muslims served and who wanted to fast changed the times of dispensing meals for soldiers. In particular, coffee would be served immediately after sunset, followed by a meal after 30 minutes. The second meal was to be served around midnight. At the same time, the order contained information about whether it is *Ramadan* for Muslims and how it is practiced in Muslim countries. The order also mentioned three holidays falling on the 15th, 27th, and last day of *Ramadan*. The minister recommended that the soldiers should have more free time on these days and that they should receive a special meal on these evenings.<sup>155</sup> A similar order was issued by the Ministry of War on September 26, 1916, on the occasion of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice on October 8, 1916. This day was to be free from service for Muslim soldiers.<sup>156</sup> An order with similar content was issued by the President of the Council on September 22, 1917, in connection with the Feast of Sacrifice on September 26–27, 1917.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>154</sup> RGT to MFA, 24 Dec 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>155</sup> MW to Military Regions Commanders, 26 Jun 1915, SHD, GR 16N 195 (Maroc. Afrique du Nord (May 1915–April 1916).

<sup>156</sup> MW to Military Regions Commanders, 26 Sep 1916, SHD, GR 16N 196 (Maroc. Afrique du Nord (April 1916–May 1917).

<sup>157</sup> PC and MW, 22 Sep 1917, SHD, GR 16 N 197 (Maroc, Jun 1917–Oct 1918).

## Supporting the morale

Another essential point was that soldiers from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia were Muslims, and France was at war with the Ottoman Empire, in which Islam was the official religion. Therefore, it was essential that soldiers not believe they were fighting Islam. Consequently, during a visit to wounded soldiers in hospitals in the Arles region in October 1914, Consul Piat conducted an action explaining the causes and the essence of the war. In particular, Piat convinced Algerian cavalrymen to be directed back to the front after recovering from wounds that Germany was playing a double game against the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, Germans pretended to be defenders of the Ottoman Empire and Islam, but on the other hand, they did nothing to prevent the Sultan from losing other territories: the Balkans, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Tripolitania. “These words, like the coveted morning dew, went straight to these primitive and sincere souls, giving rise to numerous comments among them, putting us in a favorable light,” read the report of an officer named Galtier, who accompanied Piat. As a result of this propaganda campaign, a position became common among the soldiers, which one of them expressed as follows: “Until now I did not shoot German soldiers because I believed that they were friends of the Sultan. Fortunately, I see it differently now.”<sup>158</sup>

Officer Galtier reported another vital result of Piat’s visit. The sheikh of the Algerian tribes from Zawiya al-Hamil in the Bousaâda area, where the Algerian cavalrymen came from, wrote a letter to Piat that he expressed thanks to the French consul for such a skillful presentation of a problematic issue. This man was named Sid Ibrahim bin al-Hadj Muhammed, and he headed the local branch of the mystical brotherhood Rahmaniyya. He was engaged by the French authorities of the Algerian cavalry unit to serve as the spiritual leader of soldiers from the vicinity of his hometown. Galtier claimed that the sheikh was also highly respected in other regions of Algeria. In addition to thanking Galtier, this man informed Piat that he had prepared a proclamation (*khutbah*) in

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<sup>158</sup> MW: *Note présentée par l’officier interprète de 1ère classe Galtier, mis à la disposition du Général Commandat la XVe région, à Marseille, pour être employés auprès des Commandants d’armes des places d’Aix et d’Arles, sur la situation morale des troupes indigènes de l’Afrique du Nord, Dépôt des troupes indigènes de l’Afrique du Nord, Arles, 6 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.*

this matter addressed to his soldiers and all Algerian Muslims. Galtier considered this fact very important due to the possible wide resonance of the proclamation in many regions of Algeria and suggested that its author be received in audience by the President of the Republic, as this would increase his prestige in the ranks of Algerian soldiers directed to the front. At the same time, Galtier called for other Muslim religious leaders in Algeria and Morocco to prepare similar proclamations for local soldiers serving in the auxiliary units of the French Army.<sup>159</sup>

However, the political issue was not as simple as officer Galtier had imagined. The Governor-General pointed this out in a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on November 19, 1914. The French Governor emphasized that Sheikh Sid Ibrahim bin al-Hadj Muhammad was almost unknown outside his hometown, and therefore widespread dissemination of his proclamation would have counterproductive effects. Such an action might lead to the suspicion that the French authorities were using little-known religious leaders to incite the population against the Muslim Turkish authorities. The foremost religious leaders of the country would recognize that they had been marginalized and their social position was under threat. Therefore, the Governor-General was against Galtier's proposal that Sheikh Sid Ibrahim bin al-Hadj Muhammad was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honor and received by the President of the Republic. This move could encourage other local leaders to zealously declare their loyalty to France, which would raise suspicion among other leaders and Algerian soldiers that the French authorities were campaigning for loyalty and striving to disrupt Algerian society by replacing one social leader with another. Moreover, that threatened to cause severe shocks in the area managed by the Governor.<sup>160</sup>

However, the Ministry of War adopted the line of conduct proposed by Galtier, recognizing that the most important thing was the need to mobilize soldiers from North Africa to the front in Europe and the need to strengthen their belief that they were fighting for a just cause with the Governor's concerns about social peace in the region being premature.

<sup>159</sup> The text of the proclamation in Arabic and its translation into French can be found in the above document. It is interesting that in the original Arabic text, this man signed himself as "leader of the nation" (*ra'is al-qawmiyya*).

<sup>160</sup> GGA to MFA, Alger, 19 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

On November 16, 1914, Alexandre Millerand, Minister of War, received Sheikh Sid Ibrahim bin al-Hadj Muhammad in the audience after the French military authorities allowed the sheikh to visit the sites of North African soldiers in Arles, Tarascon, and Beaucaire. The minister also ordered that the sheikh's proclamation be propagated in the French and Arab press. He also considered it appropriate for the sheikh to visit the convalescence centers of the soldiers in the south of France and convince them that they were acting in a just cause by fighting alongside France.<sup>161</sup>

The meeting with the Minister of War was a manifestation of the sheikh's passionate loyalty towards France. The sheikh introduced himself as a representative of "Muslim soldiers" and "all their Islamic fellow believers." On their behalf, he assured the French minister of his total commitment to the French cause. On behalf of "all Muslims," he thanked "mother France" for protection and help in "escaping obscurantism and ignorance" while providing conditions for a dignified life. He then declared to fight alongside France "to the last drop of blood" against an enemy who had nothing to offer but "brutal and savage force." This enemy was Turkey, as the sheikh said openly: "It would be a great misfortune for us to be under Turkey again – an enemy of the Arabs from time immemorial." The sheikh concluded his speech with a request to God to protect France, which "would give us victory," and with the shout "Vive la France, vivent les Français". Minister Millerand thanked the sheikh for this evidence of loyalty to France, "so moving for every Frenchman," and, commenting on the arrival of "our faithful Algerian subjects (*sujets*) with the help of their French brothers, saying, "We will not forget it".<sup>162</sup>

The sheikh's visit was judged favorable by the Ministry of Colonies, and it was decided to spread the proclamation outside of North Africa. On November 21, 1914, the Minister of Colonies informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs that he had decided to send a proclamation to the governors of those French colonies in which Muslim communities lived with a recommendation to promote it to the broadest extent possible.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> MW to GGA, Bordeaux, 20 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>162</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>163</sup> Minister of Colonies (MC) to MFA, Paris, 21 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

Piat's mission and its results underlined the importance of continually supporting the morale of indigenous soldiers. In January 1915, the Ministry of War decided to send officials of Arab origin to the sites of the grouping of North African soldiers and rehabilitation centers, where soldiers from North Africa were treated to facilitate their compatriots' contact with the French military authorities and disavow spreading false information disseminated by Ottoman-German propaganda. These officials were to be acquainted with materials concerning the whole issue of *la politique musulmane* and be trained in the art of maintaining the spirit of loyalty of indigenous soldiers.<sup>164</sup>

The spirit of loyalty was crucial in so far as the soldiers' low morale could have harmed the attitude of their families towards the French authorities in their places of residence. This aspect of the presence of North African soldiers on the front in Europe was constantly taken into account by the French authorities. For this reason, the Ministry of War sent letters to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanding the regular payment of pensions and family allowances. On the other hand, the Ministry ordered the wounded and injured indigenous soldiers to convalescence centers in France and forbade them to be sent for treatment to their home countries. "The view of wounded soldiers, their stories, and the horrors of war could have caused a false impression of the nature of the war in Algeria and Tunisia,"<sup>165</sup> wrote minister Millerand. On the other hand, those officers and *indigènes* soldiers from the front, known for their loyal attitude towards France, were sent to Algeria and Tunisia to promote the French perspective on the causes and nature of war among the local population. These emissaries were first directed to their own families to create a favorable atmosphere for France in their loved ones' environment and then sent to central recruitment centers to encourage local men to report to military service in Europe.<sup>166</sup>

However, isolating North African soldiers from their own families caused an unexpected reaction from these soldiers. At the turn of December 1914 and January 1915, individual and group letters were sent to a deputy to the French Parliament from the department of Bouches-du-Rhône in the south of France, where their military units were stationed. In one of these writings, we read: "It is a great honor for us that we can

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<sup>164</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 5 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>165</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>166</sup> Ibidem.

ask you whether we are your enemies or your Muslim soldiers. Have we not shed enough blood for our dear mother-father, France? Have we not come here of our own free will and in large numbers?" The resentment of this group of soldiers was the prohibition of indigenous soldiers from going on vacation or convalescence to their countries. They judged it as discriminating against Muslims because this prohibition did not include Frenchmen from Algeria fighting on the French front. Muslim soldiers also complained about the behavior of their French commanders. "What hatred, what contempt of our commanders; when we have to report to them to arrange some of our affairs, we are treated like dogs [...] Where is our place?" The authors of the letter also referred to the policy of differentiating Algerian society in naturalization. It was commonly known that the rights of French citizens were granted to Jewish residents of Algeria before the war, denying the same rights to Muslim residents. Such a policy immediately gave birth to a sense of injustice and discrimination among Muslims. "Jews are treated as better than us, despite what we do for France. They received permission to travel to Algeria. If the interests of the service so require, travel permits should be withdrawn from all. Then everyone will be treated equally, and everyone will be happy," – wrote the soldiers.<sup>167</sup>

On December 24, 1914, minister Millerand replied to the MP's question, explaining that the length of leave for family visits for wounded soldiers after convalescence and before returning to the front could not exceed 3–4 days, which meant that soldiers from Algeria and Tunisia could not use it because access and return to these countries in such a short time was practically impossible. On December 5, 1914, the minister also issued an ordinance that soldiers leaving hospitals after healing from wounds could receive the weekly leave. According to the minister, this period was impassable, and family residence in Algeria and Tunisia could not be the basis for its extension. The minister's decision was a law, the violation of which resulted in the severest penalty.<sup>168</sup>

Finally, the Minister of War made it possible to extend the leave after healing wounds to eight days, but decisions concerning this matter were issued by the military authorities of the given unit. Now soldiers from North Africa began to complain that they were not treated the same as French soldiers. On January 3, 1915, a single soldier of Algerian

<sup>167</sup> MW: *Annexe à la lettre*, Chambre, Bordeaux, 13 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>168</sup> Ibidem.

descent wrote to a deputy from the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, complaining about the refusal to allow him to go to Algeria for convalescence after being wounded on the front. The military authorities he had applied for an 8-day leave of absence replied that only French residents in Algeria and Tunisia were entitled to take such leave. The soldier's complaint of discrimination was even more severe because he was an officer and had 17 years of service in the French Army.<sup>169</sup>

On January 15, 1915, a group of 110 soldiers in North Africa forwarded a supplication to the President of the Republic, requesting that they be allowed to return home and, *de facto*, be released from their service. The reason for this occurrence was religion. The supplication read that Muslim law did not allow separation from the wife to last longer than three months. In the event of a suspected husband's death, the wife should wait four months and ten days, after which time she was entitled to remarry. The authors of the supplication pointed out that in the case of Muslim soldiers who joined the French Army on August 1, the four months and ten days of separation had already passed, and their wives had the right to declare them dead and remarry. So they proposed that in their place, other men from their countries should be recruited, and they made a promise that after returning home, they would persuade their countrymen to join the French Army.<sup>170</sup>

### Not everyone is happy

On December 6, 1915, the Minister of War decided to finally dissolve the auxiliary corps of the Algerian *spahis* (*le Corps des Spahis auxiliaires algériens*). At the beginning of the war, this unit was set up to make full use of Algeria's human resources and "to enable Algerian *indigènes* families to show their loyalty and participation in the national war." However, during the war, the Auxiliary Corps proved to be minor and less valuable. In addition, from the beginning of 1915, the Ministry of War and the Algerian authorities began to receive increasingly more requests from soldiers of this corps asking them to be sent back home. In the Ministry of War, people began to fear rebellion

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<sup>169</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>170</sup> MFA to PR, Paris, 15 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

or minor signs of dissatisfaction with the service, adversely affecting soldiers' morale in other units. Therefore, on July 29, 1915, the Minister of War, in agreement with the authorities in Algeria, decided to evacuate the entire corps to Algeria, which took place in September. Since the evacuated soldiers were unsuitable for combat at the front, the Ministry ultimately disbanded their corps. This arrangement involved 1,500 soldiers. Those who wished could remain in the army, but only 14 people desired to do so.<sup>171</sup>

Based on the Ministry of War documents, it can be concluded that the cases of avoidance of military service were few and quite unusual. Even so, they were followed carefully so that they did not become commonplace. In January 1916, the Minister of Colonies raised the evasion of military service by Senegalese people who had settled "in large numbers" in Morocco, hoping to avoid being drafted into their country. The minister proposed that the law of October 19, 1915, on compulsory military service for Senegalese citizens should also apply in Morocco. Then it would include those who had settled in Morocco to avoid military service in Senegal. However, General Lyautey, the Resident-General in Morocco, spoke against this possibility, believing that the political situation in Morocco was very delicate, that there was a risk of a tribal rebellion at any moment, and no steps should be taken that could accelerate the development of events unfavorable for France.<sup>172</sup>

The consequences of the frontline soldiers returning to their places of residence aroused great concern. On October 6, 1917, the Resident-General in Tunisia drew attention to the moral uncertainty of Tunisian soldiers who, returning home on leave and waiting too long in Marseille for a ship, would make a row and indulge in drunkenness. The Resident believed that these soldiers should be placed in the barracks in Tarascon and Alais during his stay in Marseille. He was not opposed to granting *indigènes* holidays and sending them to Tunisia, but he felt that one should not give leaves to too large a group simultaneously and make every effort to ensure that the wait for the ship in Marseille be short as possible. "Besides, it was necessary to introduce strict discipline

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<sup>171</sup> MW to General Secretary for Foreign Affairs (MFA), Paris, 31 Dec 1915, AMAE G1666.

<sup>172</sup> MW to General Secretary for Foreign Affairs (MFA), Paris, 10 Jan 1916, AMAE G1666.

into such a group of soldiers so that they would not be exposed to certain ideas, which had been expressed for several months by an increasing number of them, and which said that Tunisia was a country occupied by the French.” Local notables signaled to the protectorate authorities that they would not be able to maintain order in their conscription districts if soldiers on vacation came to come to their districts and discouraged other Tunisians with their talks about Tunisia as a conquered country from joining the French Army. As the local authorities argued that they could not prevent such situations, the Resident-General proposed that soldiers returning to Tunisia on leave should receive a confirmation of arrival from the head of their military district, to whom they had to report and who would be entitled to assign them an escort of gendarmes to be brought to their destination in the event of visible intoxication or manifestations of disobedience. In the event of refusal to comply with such a decision, such cases should be reported to the military authorities.<sup>173</sup>

In order to raise the morale of the soldiers, on October 18, 1917, the Governor-General of Algeria visited wounded Muslims from North Africa treated in a military hospital in Carrières-sous-Bois. In his speech, he stressed that the Arabs had responded actively to France’s call to defend its law and civilization. He congratulated them for their bravery on the battlefield and assured them of France’s relentless concern for “their African children.”<sup>174</sup>

Nevertheless, it was constantly feared that demobilized soldiers, put on leave, or going to the front could cause disturbances in their behavior and lead to a large-scale outbreak of public discontent. On March 3, 1918, the Resident-General of Tunisia prepared a note stating that about 200 *tirailleurs* from Oran on that day, stayed for several days in Bizerte and waited for the forthcoming departure to the front, marched through the streets, and sang. They stopped at every mosque and prayed loudly. The police oversaw these events, and no incident occurred, but tension among the people of Bizerte was very high.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>173</sup> RGT: *Note pour le Général, Commandant de la Division d’Occupation de Tunisie*, Tunis, 6 Oct 1917, AMAE G1666.

<sup>174</sup> MFA to RGM and RGT and GGA, Paris, 20 Oct 1917, AMAE G1669.

<sup>175</sup> Civil Controller of Bizerte to RGT, Bizerte, 4 Mar 1918, AMAE G1669.

## The metropole is the most important

The symbiotic relationship between the metropole and the colonies, so emphasized and celebrated in the idea *la mission civilisatrice*, was seriously damaged by the war. The interests of the metropole turned out to be a priority, and in order to save these interests, the colonies were subjected to ruthless exploitation and depletion of all possible resources – above all – human resources. In August 1918, Paul Bluysen, a journalist and politician, Member of the Chamber of Deputies from French India, and known for his sympathy for the indigenous people, spoke about the subject. Bluysen traveled to Morocco to find out on the spot how the administration of this protectorate was functioning and in what form and degree the country supported France's war effort. It allowed him to look at the problem of the recruitment of *indigènes* as a whole. His article on the subject appeared in the August issue of *Colonies et Marine*.

Bluysen considered that the contribution of the Moroccan people to the French military effort was impressive and comparable to the assistance given to France by other “colored troops” (*des troupes de couleur*). At the same time, he had severe reservations about the protectorate administration's operational methods in recruiting soldiers and colonial workers. First of all, he advised against setting *a priori* the number of conscripts based on national population statistics, as they were based on estimates, and most often, on press reports. “Different newspapers give such different numbers in this regard that the whole problem is blurred. Indigenous populations are still being recorded, and even in reports from North Africa, let alone West Africa, there is no precise data on the size of these regions,” – he wrote. Besides, he believed that the survival capacity of *indigènes* on the front lines varied according to the climatic conditions in which the *indigènes* grew up; as a consequence, the age of being drafted into the army was premature for many *indigènes*, with the risk of destroying their organisms.<sup>176</sup>

The MP compared France's recruitment policy with the UK and concluded that they were completely different. French politics was subordinated to the promotion by France of a civilization mission among the colonial peoples and the efforts to make the *indigènes* assimilate

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<sup>176</sup> Paul Bluysen, Député, Chargé de mission au Maroc, «Le Recrutement des indigènes», *Colonies et Marine*, Aug 1918: 397, AMAE, G1669.

the benefits of European civilization. There were no such elements of indigenous policy in the British Empire. The British did promote Christianity, not civilization. They wanted to save the souls of the natives, but not to prepare them for Western civilization. This different approach to indigenous peoples reflected other approaches to recruiting *indigènes* into metropolitan armies. The British recruited the army by using high bonuses and pay and – if necessary – physical coercion. According to the article's author, the French recruitment policy was more liberal and focused on emphasizing that military service was a patriotic and civic duty. However, this policy should be more balanced and should consider each colonial country's situation; otherwise, it would be similar to British *direct recruitment* and result in irreparable economic losses in the colonies.<sup>177</sup>

In Algeria and Tunisia, Bluysen believed the French authorities initially took into account the interests of these countries but later opted for military methods of administration and handed over power to the commanders of the French occupation forces. The protectorate rules were respected only with Morocco, where the political situation was so fluid that excessive interference in the internal affairs of this country could undermine the position of the Sultan and the loss of influence by France. Bluyten praised Lyautey as the Resident-General of Morocco, who, by his actions, led to the economic boom of Morocco and cemented social peace in that part of the country where the Sultan's position was established. The methods of recruiting colonial soldiers and workers favored by Lyautey, i.e., financial incentives and social benefits, should be considered appropriate and effective. Thanks to these methods, the number of Moroccans fighting at the front or working for the needs of the front had doubled. However, even these 'liberal' methods had changed the economy and society. In Morocco, grain was grown, and this type of farming required many hands to work. Therefore, one needed to ask if a significant number of agricultural workers be left in the country. In Morocco, the agricultural land was located in the north, and each year it attracted people from the south to work there. Before the war, thousands of young men from the south of the country were looking for work in the north, some of them even migrating to Tunisia. Recruitment to the army after 1914 covered mainly those young

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 398–399.

*indigènes* from the south of Morocco, who, after the harvest of crops, were unemployed, and serving in the army was a way out of their difficult financial situation. However, when the next season of agricultural work arrived, these men were absent, and there were not enough hands to work in the north. In this way, the system of bonuses for military service and remuneration for work in France disrupted the functioning of the economic organism of Morocco.<sup>178</sup>

Bluysen called for a different system of recruiting soldiers. A central body to coordinate recruitment should be established in the protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco. Every major city should have a recruitment center headed by a French officer, who would send emissaries to the bazaars and tribes. Moreover, any military unit stationed in Morocco and returning to France could enlist Moroccan volunteers to its ranks for military training. Moroccan soldiers who had served their period in the military could be recruited again. In the case of Morocco, recruiting should only be carried out in southern cities with the help of indigenous agents who are familiar with the region. These recruiters would be making the first selection of volunteers. These men would then be screened by intelligence services and then taken by rail to the coast for medical examinations. After this stage, an average of about 60 out of 100 candidates would be recruited, and the rest would be assigned to work in ports, road construction, and other facilities in Morocco. In this way, tens of thousands of men could be hired seasonally in a period when there was no agricultural job for them. Colonial workers contracted to work in France and detained in concentration camps on the Moroccan coast before being sent to France had to be provided with adequate social conditions and medical care. In France, they needed to have conditions similar to theirs in Morocco, including food.<sup>179</sup>

The Bluysen project had other specific demands: to abandon the financial penalties imposed by patrons in France on Moroccan workers, promotion of indigenous soldiers to higher ranks in the army, guaranteeing jobs to veterans after returning to the country, creating relief funds for unemployed veterans, allocating land for farms for soldiers returning from the army or making veterans from auxiliary troops equal in pension entitlements with veterans from regular troops. The author

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 400–401.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 401–405.

was undoubtedly guided by his sympathy for *indigènes* and a desire to correct their plight; he protested against the mechanical application of procedures by the administration in the colonies. He also saw that the drainage of human resources from the colonies in 1918 threatened the economic balance of the colonies and the biological balance of indigenous societies. Such a situation was dangerous mainly because it threatened the primary goal of the imperial policy of France, which was the civilizational integration of colonies with the metropole. Therefore, the idea was to create more humane and equal conditions with the French for *indigènes*, while increasing the number of those who joined the French Army and those hired to work in the metropole. "This solution will only implement the idea of *justice immanente*, which constantly guides the policy of our colonial administration towards *indigènes*."<sup>180</sup>

These first days and months of the war showed the attitude of the French authorities to the question of the participation of North African *indigènes* in the Great War: striving to attract as many of them as possible to the French Army and direct them to the front in Europe; working to avoid any suspicion of discriminating against *indigènes* as soldiers of the French Army for the sake of peace in North African possessions; lack of complete confidence and the need to control Muslim soldiers.

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 406.





Moisselles. Muslim military hospital. Visit by Mr. Lutaud, Governor-General of Algeria. Mr. and Mrs. Lutaud in the middle of a group of wounded, November 1917 (VAL 396/091)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnante.fr/ark:/14707/a011432125371nuZhGS/01a2d5e363>

## Chapter 3

### Social Benefits

#### *Daily pay, high pay, and premiums*

In 1914, soldiers from North Africa serving in the French Army in North Africa and in the metropole – both conscript and voluntary enlistment – received a daily pay (*sold journalière*), a daily high pay (*haute-paie*) in the event of re-enlisting or signing the first or a second contract for voluntary service by conscripts who ended their compulsory service, and also bonuses for signing the first and subsequent contract of enlistment. The pay and high pay amount depended on the military rank, form of engagement, and length of service.

A conscript who served three years of service or extended service during the war received a daily pay of: 0.05 franc (private), 0.22 franc (corporal), 0.72 franc (sergeant), and 2.44 franc (second lieutenant). A soldier having enlisted in Algerian troops (except for the Second *Spahis* Regiment of Algerian troops) received: 0.22 francs (private), 0.42 francs (gendarmes), 0.57 francs (corporal), 1.12 francs (sergeants), and 2.79 francs (second lieutenant). In the Second *Spahis* Regiment, the daily pay was: 0.27 francs (private), 0.47 francs (gendarmes), 0.62 francs (corporal), 1.17 francs (sergeant) and 2.84 francs (second lieutenant). Soldiers signing subsequent engagements for three years or 18 months received a daily pay of the same amount as a conscript serving three years of service or service extended until the end of the war. The daily high pay paid from the French budget for soldiers from Algerian troops (except for the Second *Spahis* Regiment) was: for privates and corporals 0.15 franc on the first enlistment, 0.20 franc on the second, 0.25 franc on the third, and 0.30 francs on the fourth enlistment. For sergeants and second lieutenants, it

was: 0.20 francs on the first enlistment, 0.25 francs on the second, and 0.30 francs on the third enlistment. In the Second *Spahis* Regiment, this daily allowance was 0.15 francs for each subsequent enlistment and was the same for each military rank. Algerian *indigènes* received a bonus of 400 francs for voluntary enlistment for four years. The premium was 350 francs for the second enlistment, the third – 250 francs, and the fourth – 300 francs. The special 3-year re-enlistment premium was 250 francs, and for an 18-month enlistment, the premium was 125 francs.<sup>181</sup>

Tunisian *indigènes* who entered service in the 29th Infantry Section or the Naval Squadron were treated separately. For both the first and the second and subsequent enlistment, they received a recruitment bonus of 400 francs and a daily high pay of 0.35 francs, and an additional bonus of 700 francs for the first enlistment and 900 francs for the second and subsequent enlistment. *Indigènes*, with a university diploma, received a special bonus on being recruited of 800 francs.<sup>182</sup>

At the initial stage of the war, the amount of pay was regulated. The starting point for the regulation was the Algerian military remuneration system in times of peace. Both volunteers and recruits from forced recruitment received pay, and that both groups received equal pay per day. It was higher than for French soldiers of the same military rank and amounted to 22 centimes for Algerian infantry and five centimes for the French, respectively. Those residents of Algeria who volunteered to serve in the army received a one-time bonus (*la prime*) of 400 francs for signing up for four years. Recruited enlisted members served in the army for three years and received a one-time bonus of 250 francs. In re-enlistment or re-appointment, the regulations were as follows: on the first re-enrollment or appointment for four years, the one-off bonus was 350; on the second – 250 and the third – 300 francs. After the outbreak of war, regulations were modified. Under the decree of October 15, 1914, bonuses for conscripted soldiers in 1915 were set at between 250 and 400 francs. So they were higher than in peacetime, which was to assure further security

<sup>181</sup> MFA. Political and Commercial Affairs Department: *Tableau indiquant les soldes, hautes-paies et primes alloués par le Budget de la metropole aux militaires indigènes suivant qu'ils servent en France, en Tunisie ou au Maroc*, Paris, 30 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>182</sup> Regency of Tunis. French Protectorate Régence de Tunis: *Tableau indiquant les primes, hautes-paies, et indemnités diverses allouées par le Budget de la Régence aux Militaires Indigènes Tunisiens, suivant qu'ils servent au France en Tunisie ou au Maroc*, Tunis, 30 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

for families remaining in Algeria. For volunteers, the decree of August 3, 1914, provided for a bonus of only 100 francs, but it was to be paid every six months until the end of the war. Under the decree of October 14, 1914, this bonus could amount to up to 200 francs, depending on the rank, and it was renewed every six months, but only for 100 francs. On January 9, 1915, a new decree entered into force, which upheld the current regulations and stated that soldiers who joined the army between August 3 and October 14 were entitled to the first bonus of 200 francs, regardless of the rank.<sup>183</sup>

These decisions had a visible impact on the number of *indigènes* enlisting in the army. Algerian indigenous formations consisted of infantry (*tirailleurs*) and cavalry (*spahis*) regiments. However, few of them were assigned to the artillery, engineering troops, and other types of military. In Algeria, mainly volunteers were recruited. Recruits were appointed only when the voluntary recruitment was insufficient to meet the needs. It was also thought that forced enlistment was needed “so that the people of Algeria would get used to it, military duty in the French Army is the duty of every citizen.” In this way, from 1912, between 1,500 and 2,000 were appointed to arms annually. After the outbreak of war, the number of volunteers reporting to the army increased to such an extent that it was decided not to declare forced conscription in 1915. Before the war, 27 infantry battalions (each battalion numbered from 300 to 1,200 soldiers) and 20 cavalry regiments were stationed in Algeria. After the mobilization was announced, the infantry was increased to 34 battalions and the cavalry to 39 regiments. At the same time, ten auxiliary cavalry regiments were created. They were organized by volunteers whose numbers were constantly increasing. If in times of peace, up to 350 men enrolled in the army per month (about 300 to infantry and 50 to cavalry), from August 1914 to January 15, 1915, an average of 3,000 per month was reported monthly. In total, about 15,000 Algerian *indigènes* were recruited during this period, of which 14,100 were for infantry and 900 troopers. In addition, 2,250 men joined the auxiliary units.<sup>184</sup>

On October 14, 1914, a decree was issued to pay volunteers from Algeria and Tunisia between 100 and 200 francs as a one-time bonus

<sup>183</sup> MW: *Note sur les avantages pécuniaires, accordés aux Militaires indigènes algériens*, Paris, 13 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664; MW to GCC, 20 Jun 1915, SHD, GR 16N 195.

<sup>184</sup> Ibidem.

for joining units directed to the front in France.<sup>185</sup> This decision was to encourage young men to join the army. This sum was to be paid to their families to secure their existence, and this step was well received by those interested. However, delays in paying this security and other payments provided for by the law of August 4, 1914, resulted in the Ministry of War receiving complaints from soldiers fighting on the front that their families were destitute. This sluggishness of the French administration provoked a sharp reaction from minister A. Millerand, fearing a decline in the involvement of North African soldiers in battle-field operations.<sup>186</sup>

The daily pay for soldiers from all three North African countries was paid from the metropolitan budget, and in the case of high pay and premiums, the French budget covered only the expenses of soldiers from Algeria. Soldiers from Morocco and Tunisia received high pay and bonuses from their countries' budgets. The exception was a special one-time re-enlistment bonus for three years or 18 months for all soldiers regardless of their country of origin, which was paid from the French budget.<sup>187</sup> With time, it turned out that the budgets of both protectorates could not deal with so many expenses, especially since the soldiers began to demand compensation for their abandoned work in connection with the service in the army, and demand family allowances. Irregular payment of daily allowances caused tension and a sense of being wronged among the soldiers, which influenced the mood in the protectorates. French Residents in Morocco and Tunisia called for the burden of high pay and family allowances to be taken over by the French state treasury, but it was not accessible due to the existing legal regulations.

In April 1915, the Minister of War asked General Charles V  rand, Commander of the French Occupation Forces in Tunisia (*le Division d'Occupation de Tunisie*), to formulate a good solution to Tunisian *indig  nes* serving in the troops stationed and fighting in France. In response, V  rand prepared a comprehensive report in which he presented the most critical problems of Tunisian soldiers. Some of these problems pertained to indigenous soldiers from Morocco and Algeria.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>185</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 14 Dec 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>186</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>187</sup> MFA. Political and Commercial Affairs Department: *Tableau...*

<sup>188</sup> General V  rand, Commander of the Occupational Division of Tunisia, Minister of War of the Tunisian Government to MW, Tunis, 13 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

According to the Bardo Protectorate Treaty of May 12, 1881, France deployed regiments of its army in Tunisia, some of which consisted entirely of French soldiers and some of which were composed entirely of indigenous soldiers of both infantry, and cavalry. The Law on Military Service of January 12, 1892, was modified by the decree of June 28, 1899, to ensure that indigenous regiments were continuously completed annually by random selection to replace those who retired after three years of service. The numbers of these regiments were also gradually increased. The Tunisian Army consisted of four infantry regiments and four cavalry regiments. The fourth infantry regiment initially had four battalions, and in 1898–1899 it grew to six battalions, and then twelve. In 1912, the regiment was divided into two parts, and the 8th infantry regiment was created. In the years 1898–1899, the third battalion of foot artillery was supplemented by infantry regiments. Tunisian soldiers also supplemented the engineering company and administrative services at Bizerty Square, and in 1901 also a naval squadron.<sup>189</sup>

In 1915, Tunisian *indigènes* served in all units of the French Army stationed in Tunisia except the 4th *Zouaves* Regiment, the 4th *Chasseurs d'Afrique* Regiment, light infantry battalions and the Secretariats of the General Staff. The Bey cooperated with the French military authorities to conduct annual recruiting. The check-out system allowed the Tunisian administrative authorities to raise money to pay premiums to those who voluntarily enlisted in the military and high pay to those who enlisted again. These funds were also used to pay premiums and high pay for those Tunisian *indigènes* who voluntarily joined the Algerian regiments. In 1898–1899, it was considered expedient to create military reserves among the indigenous people, and on April 2, 1904, the Bey decree was issued on this matter. Reserves were made up of indigenous soldiers who were leaving active service. They remained in reserve for seven years. If they were called up to arms during this period, they received high pay, as in the case of soldiers who voluntarily enlisted in the army again. The existence of this reserve made it possible to appoint seven conscription years at the outbreak of the war. As a result, in 1915, there were 26,797 *indigènes* under arms in Tunisia, including 13,507 reservists. Of the 26,797 soldiers, there were 14,898 in France (4,875 at the front and 10,023 in reserve) and 2,632 in Morocco. The rest that is 9,267, were in Tunisia and

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<sup>189</sup> Ibidem.

could be sent to the front of the metropole at any time.<sup>190</sup>

Vérand, responding to the letter of the Minister of War, noted that in the case of indigenous conscripts serving in Tunisia, the war did not change the terms of their service, and therefore there was no need to raise their pay. The case of Tunisian soldiers sent to Morocco and France was different. The rank and file of Tunisian conscripts who were sent to Morocco and found themselves in Algerian troops received a daily pay of 0.37 francs, i.e., the pay of an Algerian conscript of 0.22 francs, who enlisted in the army voluntarily after completing compulsory service and received, therefore, an additional *haute-paie* of 0.15 franc. It came to a total of 0.37 francs a day. Such arrangements were made based on the tariff of September 11, 1912, and were beneficial for Tunisian conscripts, as in Tunisia, the pay for a private was 0.05 franc per day. When Tunisian soldiers began to be transferred from Morocco to France in connection with the outbreak of war, the Ministry of War decided on November 5, 1914, that their pay would be in line with the tariff of January 11, 1913, which in the case of an Algerian private was 0.22 francs daily. The comparison of Tunisian soldiers with Algerian ones was because no rules regulated the amount of soldiers' pay during the war in Tunisia. Vérand considered that the decision to treat Tunisian indigenous foot soldiers the same way as Algerian *indigènes* was fair and that the rule should apply to both conscripts and enlisted troops regardless of military rank. On the other hand, the campaign in France was much more challenging than serving in Morocco, and Tunisian *indigènes* should therefore receive in France the salary that was assigned to them in Morocco with subsequent modifications, but certainly not what was paid to them while serving in Tunisia. 18,898 Tunisians were to be paid at Algerian rates, of whom 14,898 were already in France, and 4,000 from the 1914 conscription were to be sent to the front. Vérand believed this solution, beneficial for Tunisian soldiers, could encourage Tunisians to enlist in the army. From August 1914 to April 1915, only 120 Tunisians had enlisted in the army.<sup>191</sup>

The pay issue for warrant officers (*adjudants*) was pending. Vérand believed that the pay for this group of indigenous non-commissioned officers should be equal to the pay of French warrant officers and consider seniority. The argument in favor of such a solution was that the pay of the indigenous officers was the same as the pay of French officers. Also,

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<sup>190</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>191</sup> Ibidem.

the pension amount for former indigenous service members with the grade of *adjudants* should be the same as for French soldiers, i.e., a minimum of 600 francs. This pension amount was provided for in the tariff attached to the Law of March 18, 1899, on pensions for French soldiers. This tariff was replaced by a new salary table on April 9, 1914, as an annex to the law on wages and salaries of a soldier of July 11, 1899, and article 85 of the finance law of July 13, 1911. The new table also mentioned a pension of 600 francs for the rank of *adjudants* for 15 years of service, and it was to be increased by 40 francs a year to 1,000 francs after 25 years of service. In the event of incapacity for service due to the loss of two limbs, the invalidity pension for the *adjudants* was 1,915 francs, and in the event of the soldier's death, the widow and orphans received a pension of 650 to 975 francs. For the lower ranks, the sums of pensions were lower.<sup>192</sup>

The pension amount for military *indigènes* was determined by the decrees of the President of the Republic. On July 18, 1913, a decree was issued specifying a minimum length of service and a minimum pension amount for *indigènes* from Algeria and Tunisia. The tariff in the annex to this decree specified that the minimum pension for all soldiers and non-commissioned officers should be 600 francs after at least 16 years of service. The decree referred to the law of March 18, 1899, regarding retirement benefits for non-commissioned officers and French privates, which provided a minimum pension amount for at least 15 years of service.<sup>193</sup>

Military pension due to retirement for soldiers of Moroccan origin was governed by a separate decree of the Council of State (*Conseil d'État*), which was presented for consideration of Parliament on February 19, 1915, after prior approval by the Ministry of War, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance. The project referred to the decree of July 18, 1913, on retirement provision for Algerian and Tunisian reservist soldiers and meant more favorable conditions for military service for the Moroccan people. Men of Moroccan descent could serve voluntarily in the regular branches of *l'Afrique du Nord* by decree of August 23, 1912. However, the number of Moroccans enlisting in these troops

<sup>192</sup> Ibidem. Loi complétant la loi du 11 juillet 1899 et l'article 85 de la loi des finances du 13 juillet 1911 par la création d'un tarif de pension correspondant aux emplois d'adjudant-chef et d'aspirant, in *Pensions militaires* (Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1917), 63, [https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k61148815/f69.item.r=Pensions%20militaires%20\(Paris%20Henri-Charles%20Lavauzelle,%201917\)](https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k61148815/f69.item.r=Pensions%20militaires%20(Paris%20Henri-Charles%20Lavauzelle,%201917)).

<sup>193</sup> Ibidem.

was not high proportionally to human resources in Morocco, which was regrettably reported in the introduction to the draft decree. The authors of the draft saw several reasons for the reluctance of Moroccans to enlist in the army. For some, the service period was too long; others were afraid of alienation in an environment dominated by foreigners, i.e., Tunisians and Algerians; others were deterred by strict discipline in the troops of the regular army. Those who decided to enter military service chose either Arab cavalry (*Goums mixtes marocains*) formations made up of local people or Moroccan Auxiliary Troops (*Troupes auxiliaires marocains*), where the discipline was not so strict and in which conditions prevailed more suited to their habits and temperament. Troops of the Arab cavalry (*Goums*) were created in November 1908 and were commanded by French officers, and their task was to assist regular troops of the French Army in combat operations. The Moroccan Auxiliary Troops were created by the transformation of the military guard of the Sultan of Morocco. After reorganization on November 8, 1910, they were commanded by French officers and served to assist the formation of the French Army in subduing the rebelling Moroccan tribes. The promoters of the new decree believed that the new law should encourage Moroccans to enlist in the units of the regular French Army and pass to the regular units from the auxiliary units. This incentive was to be the new provisions on retirement security for retired soldiers. The starting point for these new provisions was to assume that when switching from cavalry troops or from auxiliary units to regular units, continuity of military service was maintained as the ground for the pension at the transition to the reserve. The draft also expressed the view that all foreign soldiers enlisting in the service of French Army troops should have the right to a military pension paid by the French state treasury. Soldiers of cavalry (*Goums*) already had such a right but not the auxiliary troops. Therefore, in the case of the Moroccan Auxiliary Troops, the project assumed that these units had been serving the French state since at least 1910 and that the soldiers of these auxiliary units should be materially paid equal *goumiers*.<sup>194</sup>

Anticipating that *goumiers* would prefer to stay in their cavalry troops for as long as possible due to semi-domestic conditions and would only

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<sup>194</sup> MW: *Project de Loi relatif au passage dans les Corps réguliers des indigènes marocains ayant servi dans les Goums mixtes marocains et les Troupes auxiliaires marocains, et aux droits à pension des militaires marocains des Troupes régulières*, 19 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664.

move to regular army units at the end of service only to obtain entitlement to a military pension, it was decided to take into account in the calculation of the pension no more than seven years of service in the *Goums* cavalry troops. As for the number of retirement benefits, in the case of Moroccans, retirement benefits were equal to the military pensions received by Tunisians and Algerians according to the law of July 18, 1913. As for military ranks, when Moroccan soldiers moved from cavalry troops (*Goums*) and auxiliary troops (*Troupes auxiliaires marocains*) to regular units of the French Army, it was necessary either to keep the previous ranks or to appoint passing soldiers to lower ranks and possibly raise their rank after they had proved their bravery on the battlefield.<sup>195</sup>

Proposals for equal remuneration of soldiers from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia were supported by the French administration in these countries, as inequalities could cause dissatisfaction and turn into social disturbances. Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian soldiers communicated in operating bases, barracks, trenches, and hospitals. There, they exchanged information about how they were paid for their service and about the situation of their families. "I am afraid that when wounded soldiers are in hospitals or convalescing and are there with soldiers from other countries, they will compare their situation with that of other *indigènes*. So far, there are no signals from Tunisian soldiers that they are discriminated against, but it should be taken into account that such signals may appear. Tunisian conscripts will find out about two forms of discrimination during their treatment with other North African soldiers. The first is that they do not receive the 250 franc premium that Algerian conscripts receive. In the case of Algerian conscripts who are treated exceptionally, this bonus has constantly been increasing and is already higher than the bonus paid to soldiers from the enlistment. The second form of discrimination is that the families of Tunisian conscripts do not receive any benefits. The benefits system created by the Tunisian Government provides for family benefits only for reservists"<sup>196</sup> – wrote the Resident-General in Tunisia on August 5, 1917.

Resident Alapetite appealed to the authorities in Paris for help for the Tunisian authorities in solving the problem of benefits for the families of soldiers in a situation where the Tunisian budget was unable to cover the expenses for this purpose. The Tunisian authorities had stopped paying

<sup>195</sup> ICMA: *Projet de Loi*, 25 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>196</sup> RGT: *Note*, Tunis, 5 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668 (Jan 1917–Sept 1917).

allowances to the families of conscripted soldiers, believing that the soldiers received daily pay that was also a source of livelihood for the families, and announced that it would pay allowances only to the families of the reservists to encourage them to return to service. However, these announcements were exaggerated because the budget was short of money, and Alapetite believed that in a situation where the return of a reservist to the army meant a sure deployment to the front, to run out of money for family benefits could not be allowed. The resident believed the French budget should cover these expenses as they served French interests. The French Minister of Finance initially had reservations about this solution, arguing that the introduction of the allowance system by the Tunisian Government and the amount thereof had not been agreed upon with the French authorities, but finally admitted that such a solution was in the interest of France. However, this decision only perpetuated the injustice towards the conscripts. They were still treated worse than Tunisian reservists and worse than Algerian and Moroccan conscripts, whose families received family allowances. However, the authorities in Paris rejected the possibility of the French budget taking over the financing of such benefits, considering it to be a Tunisian matter. “The families of Tunisian conscripts are therefore deprived of what they receive from the families of conscripts from our other North African possessions”<sup>197</sup> – concluded the Resident-General.

Discussions on premiums and family allowances for Tunisian conscripts continued until the end of the war. The Ministry of War cited legal arguments that prevented the uniformity of the conscription situation in the three countries and explained why the situation of Algerian conscripts was better than that of the *indigènes* from Tunisia and Morocco. The Minister of War presented such argumentation on August 9, 1917, in response to the appeal of the Resident-General in Tunisia on August 5, 1917. When drafted into the army, the awarding of a premium to Algerian conscripts was related to the fact that the recruitment of *indigènes* to the army was a new phenomenon in Algeria, introduced by law in 1912. The authors of the decree of February 3, 1912, regulating conscription, decided that premiums would prevent possible dissatisfaction of indigenous people with compulsory service.

For this reason, the financial situation of the conscripts was adjusted to the situation of soldiers from the enlistment who received premiums

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<sup>197</sup> Ibidem.

for the enlistment. Following the outbreak of the war, some respected Algerian *indigènes* protested the payment of a commissioning premium to conscripts, believing it to be a mercenary system. However, the authorities did not decide to revise their policy in this regard for fear of an outbreak of social discontent. In Tunisia, compulsory military service was long-established, and conscription was the accepted form of military recruitment. Consequently, the French authorities considered that there was no reason to award Tunisian conscripts premiums, as was the case with Algerian conscripts, and all the more so as French conscripts did not receive such bonuses. Therefore, the Algerian system was unique in this respect, and the Ministry of War did not want to change it or adapt solutions in other countries to it.

On the other hand, the family benefits system for Tunisian *indigènes* was treated by Paris as an internal matter of Tunisia, which was a protectorate, and therefore a semi-independent state. The system created by the Tunisian authorities provided allowances to the families of reservists and conscripts maintained in the army after three years of compulsory service and to the families of enlisted soldiers who remained in the army after their contract term expired. This system did not grant family allowances to Tunisian conscripts who had completed their 3-year service on time. "If we would like to unify the system of family benefits, then the Algerian system should be introduced for Tunisian soldiers, which would mean granting family benefits also to the families of those conscripts who ended their service within the normal period of three years. However, full uniformization is impossible as Tunisian families cannot be granted benefits like Algerian families because many Algerian families are deprived of a single breadwinner. In Tunisia, the conscription system relieves the man who is the sole breadwinner from the service"<sup>198</sup> – wrote the Minister of War.

### Family allowances, indemnity, and compensation

In most French families, before the war, the man was the sole breadwinner. Hence, the families of men called to arms were entitled to a family

<sup>198</sup> RGT: *Note au sujet des observations relatives au traitement des militaires tunisiens, continue dans la lettre de 27 Juillet 1917, de M. Alapetite à M. de Peretti*, Tunis, 9 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

allowance to secure the family's subsistence. This was stated in the laws of March 21, 1905, and August 7, 1913. The application for the allowance was to be sent to the mayor, who transferred it to the prefecture. The gendarmes then verified the family situation of the person applying for the benefit. The law of August 5, 1914, provided for a family allowance of 1.25 francs per day, increased by 50 centimes for each child. During the war, new legal regulations were adopted: the law of August 9, 1915, granted benefits to the families of soldiers slain in the war or held in captivity; the law of March 31, 1917, increased the allowance for each child to 75 centimes; the law of August 4, 1917, increased the basic allowance to 1.5 francs a day per family; the law of September 29, 1917, granted an additional allowance in the event that, apart from the father, one of the sons was also mobilized into the army. The system of family benefits in connection with the war functioned until November 15, 1919.<sup>199</sup>

The social benefits system covered soldiers' families in colonies and protectorates. The French authorities there assessed it as an essential instrument for maintaining a "good mood". They tried to maintain it, despite the high costs associated with it, emphasizing that paying *indigènes* family allowances, compensation, and military pensions serves the interests of France.<sup>200</sup> Among the detailed matters, the material protection of the families of fallen soldiers and invalids of war turned out to be very important. The Bey of Tunis pointed this out in August 1914 in connection with the French authorities' proposal to include his subjects in war operations in France. The Tunisian ruler, pleading for the justice and generosity of France, appealed at that time that the social security

<sup>199</sup> La loi du 21 mars 1905, *Allocation pour soutiens indispensables de famille*, in *Ministère de la Guerre. Recrutement de l'armée* (Paris: Librairie militaire R. Chapelot et Cie, 1911), 2–33, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6262836b.r=loi%20de%201905%20allocation?rk=236052;4>; La loi du 7 août 1913, *Allocation pour soutiens indispensables de famille*, in *Ministère de la Guerre. Recrutement de l'armée* (Paris, Imprimerie librairie militaire, Charles-Lavauzelle et Cie, 1923), 115–116; La loi du 5 août 1914, *Recueil général des lois, décrets et arrêtés avis du Conseil d'État circulaires et instructions ministérielles* (Paris: Administration du Journal des notaires et des avocats et du Recueil général des lois, 1914), 210, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9764798j/f214.image.r=loi%201914%20allocation%E2%80%9999>; La loi du 31 mars 1917, *Recueil général des lois, décrets et arrêtés avis du Conseil d'État circulaires et instructions ministérielles* (Paris: Administration du Journal des notaires et des avocats et du Recueil général des lois, 1917), 95–96, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k97646593.image>.

<sup>200</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 12 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.

for Tunisian soldiers should be the same as French soldiers.<sup>201</sup> The Bey referred to the legal regulations provided for by the law of July 18, 1913, which concerned compensation for Tunisian soldiers for bodily injuries resulting from war operations and pensions for widows of those killed in the war. He emphasized that they were unfair as they provided lower compensation than for French soldiers.<sup>202</sup> In November 1914, families of soldiers directed to the front began demanding payment of family allowances, which additionally justified Bey's appeals.<sup>203</sup>

The issue of family allowance for families of soldiers fighting on the front was quickly settled by the Minister of War. On September 7, 1914, orders were issued that the law of August 5, 1914, and the decree of August 14, 1914, on material security for families of French soldiers fighting on the front should also be applied during the war to persons of Algerian origin. This order applied to both regular and auxiliary units.<sup>204</sup> On November 14, 1914, the Minister of War sent a telegram to the Resident-General in Morocco with information regarding the decision to include in the law of August 5, the families of Moroccan soldiers fighting on the front in France.<sup>205</sup> At the same time, the Ministry of War decided to pay financial benefits to families of Tunisian soldiers fighting in the French Army that amounted to one franc per day starting from September 7. This was more than the number of such benefits provided by the decree of Bey of Tunis of August 1, 1914, for Tunisian reservists called up in Tunisia due to the war. In this case, the payments varied from 25 to 75 centimes per day.<sup>206</sup>

Regarding compensation to soldiers for bodily injuries as a result of war, as well as pensions for the widows and children of those who had died in the war, the Ministry of War informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 3, 1914, that in the case of Tunisian soldiers, the amount of compensation and pensions would be determined after the end of the war following the law of July 18, 1913, which set rates for Algerian and Tunisian soldiers lower than those provided for French

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<sup>201</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 27 Aug 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>202</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 3 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>203</sup> General Drude Commander 45th Algerian Division to General Commander 33th Army Corps, 14 Nov 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>204</sup> MW to GCC, 10 Nov 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>205</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 15 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>206</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 3 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

soldiers.<sup>207</sup> On December 1, 1914, the Minister for War submitted a proposal to Parliament that the law of July 18, 1913, should also cover Moroccan soldiers.<sup>208</sup>

In early 1915, General V rand, Commander of the French Occupation Forces in Tunisia, received numerous petitions from the families of Tunisian soldiers sent to the front in France to pay them family allowances. The case was specific, as it concerned conscripts drafted into the army in 1911, detained in the army despite the expiry of the three years of compulsory service. However, it could have adversely affected the public mood, and the Resident-General petitioned the Ministry of War in Paris with a demand to regulate the issue of benefits for the whole family of Tunisian soldiers. As of March 1, 1915, there were 26,797 soldiers under arms, of whom 14,898 were in France, 9,267 in Tunisia, and 2,632 in Morocco. It had to be added three generations of reservists from 1901–1903, who had not been trained in time and were sent home for unlimited holidays. By March 1, 1915, 814 Tunisian soldiers were killed, and 307 were declared missing in France. General V rand recognized that Tunisia had made an enormous effort for France.<sup>209</sup>

Tunisian soldiers were guaranteed the right to family allowances, and this allowance was given paid from the Tunisian budget to families of reservists assigned to arms of 0.75 francs per day. This was provided for in the Bey decree of August 1, 1914. Under the decision of the Minister of War of France of September 7, 1914, families of Tunisian reservists sent to the front to France received an allowance of 1 franc per day. The expenses for this purpose were to be covered from the French budget. Due to the poor harvest of grains in 1914, the Tunisian authorities decided to help the reservist families in kind after the war and allocated grain worth 0.75 francs a day. This aid only concerned the families of the reservists. Since Tunisian conscription law exempted men who were the only breadwinners from military service, the families of conscription recruits did not receive family allowances. The 1911 conscripts remained in the army due to the outbreak of the war but were not treated as reservists, and their families were left without financial support. The situation was also

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<sup>207</sup> This decision was confirmed on November 30, 1914 – MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 30 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>208</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 1 Dec 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>209</sup> General V rand, Commander of the Occupational Division of Tunisia, Minister of War of the Tunisian Government to MW, Tunis, 13 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

complicated because, at the beginning of 1915, the Tunisian budget could not cover all expenses, and the allowances were not regularly paid. The Tunisian authorities also paid high pay to reservists stationed in Tunisia and France and high pay to contract soldiers, whose contracts were extended until the end of the war.<sup>210</sup>

In that situation, General V  rand considered that, first of all, it would therefore be fair that families of soldiers who ended their service but were detained in the army because of the war would receive family allowances on the understanding that the extended conscription period was *de facto* the same as a call-up for service from the reserve. There were 2,550 of these soldiers, some of whom were in reserve and their families received benefits, and some were sent to France and their families did not receive benefits, as the Tunisian authorities expected that the French authorities would pay the benefits, and so they treated soldiers from 1911 as conscripts whose families were not entitled to benefits. Subsequently, the Resident-General proposed that the entire burden of expenses for family allowances and high pay for Tunisian soldiers stationed in France and Tunisia should be taken over by the French state treasury. In particular, these were: (1) family allowances for reservists, 1911 conscripts and contract soldiers with extended contracts in France at the rate of 1 franc per day; (2) family allowances for reservists, 1911 conscripts and contract soldiers with extended contracts in Tunisia at a rate of 0.75 francs per day; (3) *haute-paie* for 1911 reservists and conscripts at a rate of 0.25 francs per day; (4) *haute-paie* for contract soldiers of 0.35 franc per day.<sup>211</sup>

V  rand's proposal was supported by the Resident-General, who stressed that Tunisian soldiers from the 1911 conscription did not demand a pay increase, but only the payment of the allowances to their families provided for by law for reservists called underarms.<sup>212</sup> However, decisions in Paris on this matter were not taken immediately. In October 1915, the issue of benefits for Tunisian soldiers was examined by the Minister of Finance, who pointed out that the family allowances for Tunisian reservists proposed by the French authorities in Tunisia were more favorable than that in force in Algeria. On the other hand, the high pay and bonuses for contract soldiers extending their engagement were exclusively Tunisian arrangements and applied only to Tunisian soldiers.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>211</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>212</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 30 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

They were set and adopted by the Bey Government without any consultation with the French Ministry of Finance. Minister Alexandre Ribot wrote that the arguments put forward by the Resident-General in Tunisia did not change his point of view on the matter. The proposed military allowance expenditure did not relate to any item in Tunisia's budget expenditure or national defense spending program. Payment of these benefits from the French budget would require the adoption by the Parliament or the President of an amendment to the budget law, which was possible but could have provoked opposition from the Algerian *indigènes*. The French minister was firm on the position that financing the recruitment of recruits should be made from the Tunisian buy-back fund.<sup>213</sup>

Vérand renewed his proposal in September 1915, pointing to a broader aspect of mobilization in the protectorate of Tunisia. Since the beginning of hostilities, the protectorate had provided the Ministry of War with 10,000 recruits, including 1914 and 1915 recruits and reservists from all earlier conscriptions starting in 1904, which amounted to the last 12 years of conscription. These 12 years included recruits from the 1911 conscription who ended their service on November 1, 1914, and recruits from the 1912 conscription who were supposed to leave service on November 1, 1915. Two-thirds of recruits were sent to France, and one-third remained in Tunisia at the disposal of the Ministry of War. Including volunteers, 32,000 *indigènes* were mobilized in Tunisia by September 1915 in connection with the war. One thousand two hundred ninety-three of them were killed, 9,976 were wounded, 250 were taken prisoner, with 410 being missed. Tunisian *indigènes* – both conscripts and volunteers – received a daily allowance from the French Ministry of War's budget and mobilized non-commissioned officers a daily allowance of 0.25 franc. Their families received an allowance of 0.75 francs per day for soldiers serving in Tunisia and 1 franc per day for soldiers sent to France. These allowances were an essential source of income, especially for the families of conscripts. In Tunisia, it was possible to buy out of military service, and as a result, only those conscripts whose families were too poor to collect the money needed for buying a man out of military service were sent to the conscription army.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>213</sup> MF to MW, Paris, 20 Oct 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>214</sup> RGT to MFA: *Imputation au budget de la Métropole des dépenses afférentes à la mobilisation des réservistes indigènes tunisiens*, Tunis, 16 Sept 1915, AMAE, G1665.

Finally, on December 30, 1915, in the *Journal officiel de la République française*, the decree of the previous day was published, which granted conscripted soldiers who, after completing 3-year military service, stayed in the army because of the war, the right to receive a family allowance because of the war. This decree applied to soldiers conscripted into the army in the years 1911 and 1912. This benefit was paid monthly by the *l'Administration centrale de l'Armée tunisienne* from the Tunisian budget and later compensated for by the French budget.<sup>215</sup> The French Ministry of Finance had only reservations as to the amount of this benefit. The Minister of Finance, in a letter to the President of the Council and at the same time the Minister of Foreign Affairs of January 16, 1916, reiterated that if the French budget would cover expenses for family allowances for Tunisian reservists to the amount of 0.75 francs for those serving in Tunisia and 1 franc a day for those sent to France, the remaining expenses – for conscription, conscript transport and high pay of 0.25 franc per day – should be covered by the Tunisian Government. The minister emphasized that the Bey authorities adopted the family allowance and high pay tariffs unilaterally meant that a Tunisian contract soldier extending his service contract and serving in France would receive an additional 1.25 francs per day in the form of family allowance and high pay. This expenditure would be more significant than receiving an *indigène* from Algeria and a French soldier. In conclusion, Minister Ribot included more general terms. It considered that the lack of funds in Tunisia for allowances for soldiers was the result of errors in the management of the military service buy-back fund, and the arbitrary adoption of the tariff of benefits by the Tunisian authorities confirmed his opinion that local authorities in colonies and protectorates had too much freedom in financial matters and created inequalities in the tariffs of benefits for which the Ministry of Finance could not be held responsible.<sup>216</sup>

In 1915, sick leave for wounded soldiers from Algerian and Moroccan auxiliary units was settled. On January 1, 1915, a decree was announced giving the Algerian soldiers from these units the right to sick leave, and on March 15, 1915, the Minister of War issued a circular number 3056-K, which defined the situations on the front entitled to use this leave.

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<sup>215</sup> RGT to PC and MFA, Tunis, 21 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>216</sup> MF to PC and MFA, Paris, 12 Jan 1916, AMAE, G1666.

On the other hand, Moroccan soldiers had to send an appropriate application to the Minister of War, if they wanted to take such a leave.<sup>217</sup>

Financial issues were a constant subject of correspondence between the French authorities in North Africa and the ministries in Paris. The critical position in these matters was the Ministry of Finance, which tried to shift part of the expenditure on benefits for soldiers to the Moroccan and Tunisian authorities. As a rule, French Residents in these countries took the opposite position, emphasizing that both protectorates were unable to bear the burden of military expenditure and that it was in France's interest to pay benefits to indigenous families. On January 12, 1917, the Resident-General in Tunisia wrote: "522,960 francs are needed to pay family benefits to those Tunisian 1913 conscripts who remained in the army as contract soldiers from November 1, 1916. It is in the interest of our policy to pay social welfare to indigenous people to sustain the good moods that have been maintained since the beginning of the war."<sup>218</sup>

In addition, tensions arose because the protectorates' budgets covered some benefits, and some by the metropolitan budget, and some benefits for the metropole were paid in advance by the protectorate authorities from their budgets. Compensation from the French budget came after some time, so some soldiers were still receiving benefits even though they were no longer entitled.

In August 1916, the Minister of Finance, in a letter to both the President of the Council and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, drew attention to the overpayment of family allowances for Tunisian reservists serving in France and demobilized due to wounds and injuries at the front. The regulations stipulated that a soldier leaving the service forfeited the right to family allowance, as he first received an indemnity and then a disability pension. The overpayments resulted from the fact that the Tunisian administration did not always inform on time about the demobilization of the soldier from service due to his inability to serve. The overpayments ranged from 30 to 60 francs per family, i.e., equal to 2-month allowances. In other cases, the amounts to be returned reached up to 600 francs. The total amount of the overpayment on this account was 20,000 francs, and its recovery was, according to the Minister of War, impossible due to the family situation of the soldiers transferred to the reserve. Under this condition, the Minister of Finance applied for the situation to be recognized

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<sup>217</sup> MW to GCC in North Africa, 12 May 1915, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>218</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 12 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.

as a *force majeure* and for the families of soldiers to be released from the obligation to return the overpayment, exception the families of deserters and convicts.<sup>219</sup>

Disability pensions, granted due to the inability of soldiers for further service, required regulation and unification. In June 1915, the Minister of War sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs a draft decree which equated soldiers of auxiliary units with soldiers of regular troops. When comparing the situation of the auxiliary units of the Algerian *Spahis auxiliaires* with the units of the Moroccan *Militaires auxiliares*, commissioned in France during the war under the provisions of the decree of February 13, 1906, modified on March 24, 1915, with an annex on the remuneration of soldiers serving in regular units, it turned out that indigenous soldiers from Moroccan auxiliary units, dismissed from service due to wounds suffered at the front or diseases acquired during the service, did not receive any benefits. The draft of the Minister of War provided for the treatment of auxiliary soldiers on an equal footing with indigenous regular troops dismissed from service due to incurable disease, that is, granting them an appropriate disability pension. The project also aimed to regulate the powers of these soldiers in the event of dismissal from service due to injuries or to fall ill in a garrison. The starting point for regulation was the wage tariff for indigenous soldiers from regular units in Algeria and Tunisia. In specific matters, the draft proposed that the soldiers of auxiliary troops, sent to their homes to wait for the ministerial decision to withdraw them from active service, would benefit, on the same terms as regular troops, from a special daily allowance and receive *haute-paie* also after leaving their unit stationed at the front. In *Spahis auxiliaires algériens*, the special daily allowance tariff was equal to that of military *indigènes* from regular units, even though auxiliary cavalry units were treated as second-class units. This tariff was equal to that applied to French soldiers, which was justified to create differences between indigenous soldiers unfit for military service and French soldiers unfit for health reasons and coming from the same places in Algeria. The minister believed that the adoption of the draft decree was extremely urgent, as soldiers withdrawn from service for health reasons could not be sent home without any means and must therefore remain in the main operating bases or barracks, which harmed

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<sup>219</sup> MF to PC and MFA, 19 Aug 1916, AMAE, G1667; MW to General Secretary for Foreign Affairs (MFA): *Indemnités familiales des réservistes tunisiens*, 23 Aug 1916, AMAE, G1667.

the morale of soldiers on active service (on active duty) and caused anxiety for families wondering why the wounded and the disabled did not return home.<sup>220</sup>

In May 1915, the Government proposed a new law to transform Moroccan auxiliary units into regular units, allowing Moroccan volunteers to be engaged under the terms of the August 23, 1912, decree, i.e., on the same terms as contracts for service with volunteers from Algeria. It meant that Moroccan volunteers could receive bonuses for each subsequent contract and apply for a pension after leaving the service.<sup>221</sup>

As regards invalidity, French legislation distinguished between two categories of war invalids: *réformé n° 1* and *réformé n° 2*, i.e., with the right to an invalidity pension on the criteria of age and length of service, and without the right to a pension. In February 1917, the Resident-General in Tunisia drew attention to the problematic situation of this second group of invalids. The Resident misused the application of the mother of a Tunisian veteran who was discharged from the army on May 21, 1915, almost two years earlier, due to tuberculosis and as a *réformé n° 2* did not receive a pension. His mother asked for the right to have the family allowance to be restored. The Resident believed that this situation could be referred to in two circulars of the Minister of Interior of April 3 and 6, 1915, stipulating that the parents of French reservists in the *réformé n° 2* group or temporarily as *réformé n° 2* were entitled to continue receiving the family allowance. Meanwhile, the administration of the Tunisian Army from the beginning of the war refused to pay the daily allowance for the families of soldiers included in the *réformé n° 2* group and who had been sent home from the army due to incapacity for further service. The commander of the French troops in Tunisia, informed about the use of various procedures in the metropole and Tunisia, asked Alapetite to apply in Tunisia the same procedures that were used in the metropole, i.e., to pay family allowances to families of Tunisian reservists, recognized as *réformés n° 2* on equal terms with the allowances paid to their French comrades in arms who found themselves in the same situation. In Tunisia, the group of the *réformé n° 2* numbered around 2,000 people, which meant an increase in expenditure by the French state treasury

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<sup>220</sup> MW to MFA, Paris, 25 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665; MW to Military Regions Commanders, 14 Aug 1915, SHD, GR 16N 195.

<sup>221</sup> General Dubois to GCC in North Africa, 14 May 1915, SHD, GR 16N 194.

by 2,000 francs a day. The sum of overdue payments was 700,000 francs and was also to be borne by the French budget.<sup>222</sup>

The Minister of War strongly supported the position of the Resident-General in Tunisia, and in a letter to the President of the Council of Ministers of April 21, 1917, stated that he believed disabled people of the *réformé n° 2* category were entitled to family allowance and that it should be paid until the end of the war.<sup>223</sup> The Minister of Interior also took a similar position. He believed that these rights resulted from the circulars of April 23 and May 11, 1915, and February 9 and October 4, 1916. These circulars said that the benefits were not due to a demobilized soldier only in the case when after leaving the army, he returned to the work situation from before the war, i.e., when he took a job that he had to leave due to being called to the army.<sup>224</sup> The issue of the allowance for families of disabled persons of the *réformé n° 2* category was settled on April 3, 1915, when the Chamber of Deputies adopted a law confirming that *réformés n° 2* were eligible for it. The only requirement for further payment of the allowance was the *réformé n° 2* declaration of returning home.<sup>225</sup> The family was also entitled to this benefit in the death of a disabled soldier at home during treatment. If he was the only breadwinner, the allowance was paid until the end of the war.<sup>226</sup> The allowance was also granted to those soldiers who were temporarily classified as war invalid without the right to a pension and were trying to obtain it.<sup>227</sup>

Among the detailed matters, the material protection of the families of fallen soldiers and invalids of war turned out to be very important. The Bey of Tunis pointed this out in August 1914 in connection with the French authorities' proposal to include his subjects in war operations in France. The Tunisian ruler, pleading for the justice and generosity of France, appealed at that time that the social security for Tunisian soldiers

<sup>222</sup> General Secretary for Foreign Affairs (MFA) to MF and MW, 22 Feb 1917, G1668.

<sup>223</sup> MW to PC and MFA: *Indemnité familiale des réservistes indigènes*, Paris, 21 Apr 1917, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>224</sup> MI to MW, Paris, 12 Apr 1917, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>225</sup> MI to the Prefects at Algeria: *Circulaire télégraphique (intérieur) relative au maintien et au rétablissement des indemnités prévues par la loi du 5 Août 1914 aux familles des réformés N° 2*, Paris, 3 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>226</sup> MI to the Prefects at Algeria and GGA: *Circulaire*, Paris, 4 Oct 1916, G1667.

<sup>227</sup> MI to the Prefects at Algeria and GGA: *Circulaire télégraphique (intérieur) relative au maintien des allocations aux familles des hommes mis en réformé temporaire*, Paris, 8 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

should be the same as French soldiers.<sup>228</sup> The Bey referred to the legal regulations provided for by the law of July 18, 1913, which concerned compensation for Tunisian soldiers for bodily injuries resulting from war operations and pensions for widows of those killed in the war. He emphasized that they were unfair as they provided lower compensation than for French soldiers.<sup>229</sup> In November 1914, families of soldiers directed to the front began demanding payment of family allowances, which additionally justified Bey's appeals.<sup>230</sup>

The granting of family allowances and pensions to the widows of indigenous soldiers was hampered by polygamy, which was common among soldiers in West and North Africa. On July 6, 1915, the Minister of War proposed to the Minister of Colonies to grant benefits to the amount of 200 francs to the families of the soldiers who died, and not one wife, but more applied for a pension from the deceased, with no documents confirming the deceased's marital status. Such a situation occurred in the case of Senegalese infantry soldiers. The Minister of Colonies agreed that the proposed allowance should be paid to the family immediately after the soldier's death but felt that everything should be done to establish the soldier's marital status and grant his family a pension after the death. The local authorities should provide the required documentation in West and Equatorial Africa. In connection with this position of the Minister of Colonies, the representative of the Minister of War in the Appeals Commission for Rents (*la Commission de révision des pensions*) declared that the Ministry of War would allocate funds from its budget for families who died in France and the Balkans, and the Ministry of Colonies announced that it would allocate funds to the families of those who died in Africa. After the adoption of the principle of granting pensions in the case of polygamous families, it was considered that the allowance to replace the pension would be reduced from 200 to 120 francs and would be paid when the family was notified of the soldier's death as an advance on the pension until the Commission granted it. The sum of 120 francs was equal to the annual pension for the widow of a slain Senegalese *tirailleur*.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>228</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 27 Aug 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>229</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 3 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>230</sup> General Drude Commander 45th Algerian Division to General Commander 33th Army Corps, 14 Nov 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>231</sup> MC to MW, Paris, 7 Sept 1915, G1665.

The same difficulties arose with North African Muslim soldiers. In February 1916, the Resident-General in Tunisia informed both the President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs that granting a pension to widows of deceased indigenous soldiers was difficult because of the personal status of Muslims, which allowed polygamy. In 1915, several applications for pensions of deceased soldiers were rejected due to difficulties in determining whom the pension should be paid. On the grounds of appeals from these decisions, typical behaviors in the families of Muslim soldiers were determined. It turned out that the widows of the deceased soldiers were quickly married off even before they were granted the pension; additionally, the granted pension became such an advantage for the widow that she got married almost immediately. Therefore, the French authorities did not know how to proceed: whether to pay the pension to the widow who was married when it was granted and whether to continue to pay the pension to the widow who was married after the pension was awarded. The children of the deceased soldier almost always remained in the soldier's family. Thus, the question arose whether the pension should be paid to the widow who had left the deceased husband's because she had already married another man or to pay the pension to the dead man's children. In June 1915, the commander of the French troops in Tunisia asked the Tunisian authorities to provide a legal basis for paying a pension to widows who married before granting them pension rights after their husbands. The question also concerned what obligations such women have towards the children of the killed soldier.<sup>232</sup>

In February 1916, discussions were held in several ministries related to the colonies and protectorates in connection with a new law on family allowances for soldiers. As granting pensions to widows and orphans of indigenous soldiers was often problematic because of polygamy and the lack of documentation, one of the proposals spoke of replacing the term "pensions" with the term *secours viager* understood as "aid to save lives". This allowance would be granted to widows annually on the ground of the applicant's financial situation. Women who would be financially satisfied with remarrying were not eligible for this allowance. In turn, in the case of orphans, the allowance would be automatically granted every year until the age of majority. However, this proposal was rejected because it

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<sup>232</sup> RGT to PC and MFA: *Indigènes tunisiens morts au service de la France. Pensions*, Paris, 7 Feb 1916, G1666.

was not considered proper to grant rights to widows and orphans of indigenous soldiers that the French military did not have.<sup>233</sup>

Further work was aimed at clarifying the rights of widows regarding children and then determining the part of the pension that the widows were entitled to. The starting point for the discussion was the French law of April 11, 1831, which applied to soldiers in the army and, in Article 28, it defined the obligations of the recipients of the military pension, in particular the obligations of the widow towards the children of the fallen soldier. The Resident-General in Tunisia undertook the task of coordinating French law with that of Islamic law and determined that in the case of Islamic law, the part of the military pension that remained with children was determined by the judge of the religious court and that it was usually a third of the pension. However, this was not the case in all judgments, and in many cases, the orphans did not agree with the judge's decision and demanded a more significant share for themselves. The lack of unambiguous provisions in Islamic law created the danger of unfair decisions being made and ruled out the possibility of using this law when distributing the pension between the widow and children. An unequivocal interpretation of the regulations was considered fundamental to preserving France's position in the protectorate of Tunisia, and the discussion took place at the highest political level. The President of the Council of Ministers proposed that decisions on widows and orphans' pensions should be taken by the General Secretariat of the Tunisian Government through a case-by-case examination, after which the case would be referred to a Tunisian court for a satisfactory judgment for both the widow and the orphans. However, the Minister of Finance found that such a solution was contrary to the provisions of the law of April 11, 1831, and Articles 203 and 205 of the Civil Code, which did not provide for the possibility of paying pensions to the father-in-law of a fallen soldier, who were often carers of orphans. In addition, it was not possible to transfer only a part of the pension to the deceased's widow without the adoption of additional legislation. French legislation only allowed for granting a full pension to the fallen widow and imposed on her obligations towards the children of the fallen. The case thus returned to square one.<sup>234</sup>

In April 1916, there was a breakthrough in discussing military pensions for widows and orphans of *indigènes*. The shortage of soldiers at

<sup>233</sup> MW to MC, Paris, 5 Feb 1916, G1666.

<sup>234</sup> MF to PC and MFA: *Pensions*, Paris, 11 Mar 1916, AMAE, G1666.

the front and the expected difficulties in the new recruitment campaign caused the Ministry of War to exert intense pressure on the other ministries, and on April 6, 1916, a joint draft of the Ministers of War, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs on military pensions was presented to the Chamber of Deputies. Article 1 said that in the case of military *indigènes* – Muslims or Israelites, not naturalized from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia – officers and non-officers who would die under conditions which entitled widows and orphans of French soldiers to receive a military pension, a pension would be awarded which would be shared between all living widows and orphans or groups of underage orphans (up to 18 years of age). The pension in the event of the death of an indigenous officer was to be equal to the pension of the deceased French officer, and in the case of non-officers, its amount was determined by the law of 18 July, 1913, on pensions for military *indigènes* from Algeria and Tunisia. It was provided for in Article 2. On the other hand, under Article 3, the pension or part of the pension ceased to be paid when the widow remarried or when the orphans reached the age of 18, or when the orphan married before 18. In the event of the widow's death or her remarriage, the right to receive the pension or part of it could be transferred to her minor children from a marriage with a deceased soldier and minor orphans by orphans over 18 years of age.<sup>235</sup>

The draft of the new law showed that the French authorities, mainly under pressure from the Ministry of War, made concessions to the families of the deceased soldiers and found a compromise between the French civil code and the provisions of Islamic law. At the beginning of July 1916, an Interministerial Commission for Military Pensions was established at the Ministry of Finance, which adopted the regulations for granting pensions and allowances for families of indigenous soldiers. The Commission's first meeting was held on July 20, 1916.<sup>236</sup> The proposal of dividing the pension into parts for a widow – or widows – and orphans was supported by both Residents in Tunisia and Morocco, which was positively received by the indigenous population.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Projet de loi, 6 avril 1916, AMAE, G1666. In October 1916, this age was lowered to 16 – see: MI to PC and MFA, 20 Oct 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>236</sup> MF to PC and MFA, 7 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>237</sup> RGM to PC and MFA: *Pensions aux familles des militaires indigènes morts au service de la France*, Rabat, 1 Feb 1917, AMAE, G1668.

### Job for veterans

The creation of workplaces for war veterans, especially for war invalids, in the state administration of Tunisia and Morocco was mentioned in the letter of the Minister of War to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of December 27, 1911. In response of January 26, 1912, the Minister of Foreign Affairs explained that his ministry does not envisage expanding the administration of the protectorate to create new jobs for former indigenous soldiers. On September 19, 1912, the decree concerning Algeria entered into force. This decree, modified on January 11, 1916, reserved for former indigenous soldiers in Algeria a certain number of jobs created for them at communes, departments, and central administration. These jobs were included in the employment tables of the Ministry of Interior. In the decree of January 11, 1916, it was stated that war invalids in the category *reformé no. 1*, i.e., permanently unfit for military service, and demobilized reservists due to wounds or diseases acquired during frontline service were to have the right to employment in the state administration for five years after the end of hostilities. In connection with these regulations, on June 11, 1917, the Minister of War asked both the President of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to also extend these regulations to Tunisian and Moroccan invalids and reservists who “deserve the same degree as their Algerian comrades-in-arms, that work in state administration.”<sup>238</sup> The minister proposed to create jobs in the Moroccan state administration for demobilized Moroccan soldiers who would have had at least three years of military service or who had volunteered for the duration of the war in regular or auxiliary units. The period of preference for them when applying for a job would be five years after the end of the war, and the preferences would include disabled people of the *réformés no. 1* and people demobilized due to wounds on the battlefield.<sup>239</sup>

The initiative of the Minister of War should be considered in the context of the discussion that was taking place at that time in the French Parliament. The Ministers of War and Foreign Affairs came under heavy pressure from a group of MPs to do more for the *indigènes* than to pay wages, family allowances, and enlistment bonuses to compensate for their participation in the war. When the project of granting French

<sup>238</sup> MW to PC and MFA, Paris, 11 Jun 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>239</sup> Ibidem.

citizenship to soldiers, discussed in 1915, collapsed, jobs could be such additional compensation. Such proposals were made on May 10, 25, and June 9, 1917, at the meetings of the Subcommittee for Islamic Countries (*Sous-commission des pays islamique*), operating within the Islamic Section of the Parliamentary Action Committee (*la Section islamique de Comité d'action parlementaire*), which was established by the Government initiatives to counteract German propaganda and gathered deputies and senators under the leadership of senator Étienne Flandin. The Subcommittee stressed the loyalty and faithfulness of the *indigènes* to France and called for the French authorities to do much more to honor the contribution of the *indigènes* to the war. In particular, it was suggested revising the hiring system in North African countries to provide jobs for those who fought at the front. In addition, the Islamic Section recommended that the Government consider granting land to Muslim combatants for their participation in the fight on the side of France.<sup>240</sup> The position of the Islamic Section provided that a question be formulated to the Government by deputy René Besnard concerning the possibility of employing war invalids and those who were demobilized due to incapacity for military service in the administration of the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>241</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked both Residents in Morocco and Tunisia to assess the possibility of securing jobs for *indigènes* who had become disabled. The Resident in Morocco, in a letter to the President of the Council of Ministers of August 13, 1917, referring to the initiative of the Minister of War, explained that the Moroccan authorities had long been sensitive to employing war veterans whenever possible. From the beginning of the war, *reformés no. 1* and *reformés no. 2* and the invalids from among the *goumiers* were employed in the administration of the protectorate as caretakers, guards in the prison service, at the post office and the telegraph, to clean rooms and sweep streets. Circulars of December 31, 1915, February 3, and June 24, 1916, imposed an obligation on the state administration to employ, first of all, former Moroccan soldiers who had been demobilized due to injuries on the war front in appropriate positions. The Residence also ordered the financial services

<sup>240</sup> Étienne Flandin, Senator, Chairman of the Subcommittee for Islamic Countries of the Islamic Section of the Parliamentary Committee to the President, 9 Jun 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>241</sup> RGT to PC and MFA: *Emplois réservés aux anciens militaires indigènes*, Tunis, 16 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

of the administration of the protectorate to employ war invalids in agriculture and trade. The Moroccan Invalidity Bureau (*Bureau d'Assistance aux militaires marocains réformés*) was established under the command of French troops in Morocco. Resident Lyautey greatly appreciated the efforts of the Sultan's administration and found it difficult to do anything else. The barrier preventing the employment of many Moroccan invalids was the poor command of French and the poor health of some candidates for manual work.<sup>242</sup>

The letter of the Resident-General of Tunisia of August 16, 1917, was considered similarly. Alapetite stressed that the employment of the former military was dealt with by the Tunisian authorities already in times of peace, and the Beylical decree was issued on this matter on July 18, 1909. In Tunisia, candidates for employment in the civil administration of the state were divided into four categories: (1) candidates with a good command of the French language and with certain qualifications necessary to perform a job in a specific position; (2) candidates with a good command of Arabic and sufficiently French; (3) candidates with sufficient knowledge of French; (4) candidates without any qualifications and for whom no criteria were to be met. From the beginning of the war, the Tunisian authorities received applications from demobilized military personnel for the following positions: messenger and coachman (*chaouch*) 86 (38 people were employed); gendarme (*oudjak*) – 34 (9); postman – 18 (9); cleaner – 29 (3); agricultural worker – 140 (21); prison caretaker – 34 (17); cigarette seller – 236 (62); bar worker – 91 (60). A total of 223 people were employed. According to the Resident-General, continued employment faced barriers – not because of a lack of vacancies, but because of the low qualifications of candidates. “Demobilized soldiers, especially those from voluntary enlistment, have basic habits and meager qualifications. They are often illiterate. Very few know French and most of them belong to the last two categories of job applicants. Therefore, it does not seem possible to increase the number of employees among war reservists and invalids”<sup>243</sup> – wrote the Resident-General.

The most significant employment opportunities for demobilized soldiers were in agriculture, trade, and crafts. The French administration

<sup>242</sup> RGM to PC and MFA: *Emplois réservés aux anciens militaires indigènes*, Rabat, 13 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>243</sup> RGT to PC and MFA: *Emplois réservés aux anciens militaires indigènes*, Tunis, 16 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

also asked the colonies to give preference to war invalids when employing *indigènes*. Employment of these people in positions dependent on the French administration was practically impossible because in Tunisia, all public services were subject to the Tunisian administration and were paid from the Tunisian budget. If someone was employed in the French administration, the French invalids were chosen because of their language knowledge and other qualifications. The Resident expressed that first-class invalids and soldiers transferred to the reserve due to front-line injuries would have a better chance of finding work if their priority in applying for a job was guaranteed by law. This law should also specify how long after hostilities disabled people would prioritize when applying for a job. Such regulations required the modification of the Bey decree of July 18, 1908.<sup>244</sup>

As a state official, Alapetite was obliged to present to his superior, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, all possibilities of fulfilling Deputies' request to the French Parliament. However, he opposed the idea of granting demobilized soldiers privileges and argued his position with a good knowledge of the nature of the *indigènes*, whom he referred to as Orientals (*les Orientals*). He wrote: "*L'Oriental* is unfortunately too much directed to derive only regular income from the public job position or other material benefits that this position brings him. Such a belief will develop even further among the *reformés no. 1* and reservists who think that the service they have done for France will make them creditors of the protectorate administration, that is, those who will have the right to demand that the administration provide them with jobs, while those who have not been injured will be deprived of this right. The control mission of the French protectorate over Tunisia is precisely to eradicate these old habits and make *indigènes* officials serving with devotion to the state that will feel justified in rewarding them by paying them for their dedicated work."<sup>245</sup>

Alapetite was in favor of France paying compensation to the disabled and all those injured in the war. At the same time, he believed that the recruitment of the protectorate staff should be carried out on substantive criteria: knowledge of French and appropriate qualifications to work in a specific position. Providing legal guarantees for the employment of war invalids was in the interest of the metropole, as it could encourage

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<sup>244</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>245</sup> Ibidem.

*indigènes* to enlist in the army, which led to an increase in the number of soldiers at the front. On the other hand, Alapetite assessed the situation in terms of the smooth functioning of the protectorate under his administration and the fulfillment by France of a civilization mission towards the *indigènes*. He was totally convinced of the rightness of this mission. Ultimately, he opted for the smooth running of the protectorate. “The Tunisian administration will only function well if its officials are not recruited from among demobilized soldiers. One should face this truth”<sup>246</sup> – we read in Alapetite’s report.

Despite the unfavorable position of the French administration in Morocco and Tunisia and the reluctance of the Governor-General of Algeria to prefer ex-soldiers when employing *indigènes* in the state administration, the needs of the war front turned out to be more critical. On December 2, 1917, the law was adopted (published on December 7, 1917, in *Journal officiel de la République française*), stressing that the positions in the civil administration in colonies and protectorates reserved for *indigènes* should – in line with their possibilities and qualifications – be made available on a preferential principle to former indigenous soldiers transferred to the reserve who were injured during military service or those who left the service and had a *bonne conduite* certificate. Consequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris asked General Lyautey to obtain permission from the Sultan of Morocco to issue the Sultan’s Edict (*dahir*), which would provide the same regulations as the French law.<sup>247</sup> The relevant *dahir* was issued by the Sultan on March 6, 1918.<sup>248</sup> Earlier, on February 21, 1918, the Bey of Tunisia signed a decree that contained the same regulations as the French decree of December 2, 1917.<sup>249</sup>

Another form of compensation for indigenous soldiers for having spilled blood for France was distributing land to soldiers returning home from the front after the war. Such a proposal was submitted by the Islamic Section of the Parliamentary Foreign Committee (*la Section islamique du Comité parlementaire à l'étranger*). On June 25, 1917, the President of the Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked the Resident-General

<sup>246</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>247</sup> RGM to MFA: *Emplois civils réservés aux anciens militaires*, Rabat, 2 Jan 1918, G1669.

<sup>248</sup> RGM to MFA, Rabat, 25 Mar 1918, G1669; MFA to PC and MW: *Minute N° 1696*, Paris, 22 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>249</sup> RGT to MFA: *Emplois réservés aux anciens militaires indigènes*, Tunis, 2 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.

of Morocco to comment on this proposal. In response, *La Direction des Affaires indigènes* in the French General Residence in Morocco formulated its position on the matter. “If *la Section*’s voice deserves attention, then the proposed idea cannot become the main means of solving the problem of remuneration of indigenous soldiers for their participation in the war” – we read in the Residence’s statement. “Of the demobilized indigenous soldiers, some receive pensions, others get jobs in the public sector, and still others own farms. Therefore, it would be advisable to limit the transfer of land to those who do not have any means of subsistence, while at the same time making sure that the recipients will not cash what they have received.”<sup>250</sup>

In Morocco, it was possible to obtain plots of land only under the old tradition of the Moroccan Sultans handing over land to the tribes fighting on their side against those tribes that did not want to lose their independence and rebelled against the Sultan’s rule. This tradition dated back to the 16th century, and the tribes fighting alongside Sultans were known as *quich*, literally ‘army’, or as *makhzen* tribes, from *makhzen* meaning central power. Lyautey proposed the following entry for the draft decree on tracts of land for ex-soldiers: “The parcel of land will be given to combatants for France who have no other benefits – that is, they do not receive a pension and have not received a job from the protectorate authorities and have no livelihood. The plot of land would be allocated from the communal lands of a given tribe and would be put into perpetual use. Upon the death of the user or his abandonment of the land, it would return to the tribe’s property.”<sup>251</sup> Resident Luaytey’s proposal was approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris and sent to senator Flandin, who headed the Islamic Section.<sup>252</sup>

If the Moroccan Resident-General was cautious about the land proposal, the Governor-General of Algeria criticized it and asked to reject it. “This project raises many objections,” says Charles Lutaud’s report of October 20, 1917. “The *la Section* proposal means granting compensation for military service in the form of land parcels as a principle, and not as a unique reward for bravery on the battlefield. Currently, the military

<sup>250</sup> RGM to PC and MFA: *Attribution de terres aux indigènes ayant combattu pour la France*, 31 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>251</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>252</sup> MFA to RGM, Paris, 18 Sept 1917, AMAE, G1668; MFA to senator É. Flandin, 10 Sept 1917, AMAE, G1668.

who served in the army until 1912 and were released from their duty of service are covered by a special system of exemptions from all kinds of duties, which places them in a privileged position compared to the French population. On the other hand, the indigenous military who have retired and received a military pension is already privileged, as their families also receive a daily family allowance. Accepting the proposal made by the *la Section* will be contrary to the principle of compulsory military service, as there is no reward for the obligation to do something. The duty of military service includes *indigènes* on a par with the French, who are not rewarded for fulfilling it.”<sup>253</sup>

According to the Governor-General, a better solution would be introducing awards for acts of valor, pensions, promotion, and employment opportunities in the civil sector for the disabled and reservists, and in exceptional cases granting land. The universal allocation of land in Algeria was so complicated that the arable land resources were insufficient, and there was a great demand for land on the French population. The French from the metropole wanted to settle in Algeria at that time, and from the point of view of French imperial strategy, the interest of the French in settling in Algeria had to be sustained because the influx of the French people was offset by a much higher birth rate among the indigenous population. The formal argument against the land proposal was the principle of justice. According to the Governor, rewarding *indigènes* will be unfair to the French. “If we provide the indigenous soldiers with the additional benefit of a plot of land, what can we provide for the French soldiers?”<sup>254</sup> – the Governor asked rhetorically.

To the authors’ satisfaction with the proposal to hand over land to soldiers, Lutaud proposed some steps to reward the indigenous veterans for their participation in the French war effort. The first could be to reserve a certain number of jobs in the civilian sector for indigenous ex-soldiers under conditions set by the authorities. The next, a reference to the decree of September 13, 1904, allowed, in emergencies and with the consent of the administrative authorities, to hand over a piece of arable land to the *indigènes*. The following step would be to find out to what extent land belonging to tribal communities was used. In Algeria, the

<sup>253</sup> Attachment of GGA to MI, 20 Oct 1917, in MI to MFA: *Attribution de terres aux indigènes musulmans ayant combattu pour la France*, Paris, 2 Nov 1917, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>254</sup> Ibidem.

communal lands were known as *arch* and covered up to about 1 million hectares. According to the Governor, these communal lands were fallow and could be handed over to demobilized indigenous soldiers, but it was to be expected that it would disturb social relations in the countryside and give rise to signs of discontent of the tribes.<sup>255</sup>

The Resident-General in Tunisia also spoke about the allocation of land for ex-soldiers. The resources of state-owned land in Tunisia were limited and were earmarked for colonization. Therefore, there was no arable land in the protectorate that could be used for other purposes – that was the opinion of the Resident-General. In the north of Tunisia, all state lands were taken over by *le Service de la colonisation*. The State Arable Land Reserve was in the south, and there, the Agriculture Directorate of the protectorate authority practiced the transfer of plots of land to *indigènes* who undertook to cultivate these plots for a certain period and to plant a certain number of olive trees on these plots. These activities were discontinued due to the mobilization of people responsible for allocating land plots to the army. There was still community land in the center and south of Tunisia, which had no specific legal status and was customarily used by nomads and semi-nomads. The Protectorate authorities did not allow this land to be taken over as private property for fear of dissatisfaction from its existing users. “Taking the above circumstances into account, it would be reckless to give the military hope that they will acquire the right to a piece of land after returning home from the war”<sup>256</sup> – concluded the Resident-General.

The position of the Governor-General in Algeria was transferred to the *Section islamique*, which was satisfied with the proposal to take the indicated steps. Senator Flandin only pointed to the need to inform the Algerian public about taking these steps.<sup>257</sup> It showed the true intentions of the Subcommittee set up to counter German propaganda, which accused the French authorities of indifference to the fate of indigenous soldiers to sow discord between France and the population of its Muslim possessions. Disseminating information about activities to be taken in favor of Muslim *indigènes* was more important than the effects of these activities.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>256</sup> RGT to MFA: *Attribution de terres aux indigènes musulmans ayant combattu pour la France*, 21 Dec 1917, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>257</sup> Comité Parlementaire, d'Action à l'Étranger, Paris, 11 Dec 1917, AMAE, G1669.

## Vegetables and physical fitness

French authorities in Paris and North Africa undertook and supported various initiatives to improve the fate of North African indigenous soldiers who were hospitalized for wound care or returned to their homes as war invalids.

On April 16, 1916, General Lyautey informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the initiative of the *Association des Oeuvres de la Croix-Verte* of Paris, which had proposed the creation in Morocco of training centers in agriculture and farm management for Moroccan war invalids. Until then, they had been employed as guards and caretakers. Since agriculture was the main occupation of the Moroccan population, instruction in new soil cultivation techniques could help to compensate for the physical handicap of the disabled. Lyautey supported the initiative and obtained a favorable decision from the Minister of Agriculture in Paris.<sup>258</sup>

According to *l'Instruction Générale No. 330 C1 / 7* of November 25, 1916, with further modifications, Moroccan military personnel were treated in France and then sent to convalesce in Morocco. On the French General Residence initiative in Morocco, the *Office du Gouvernement Chérifien et du Protectorat de la République Française au Maroc* was active in Paris, where its task was to help Moroccan soldiers who were undergoing treatment in hospitals. The office organized underwear, bedding, food, cigarettes, and rugs for soldiers.<sup>259</sup>

In June 1917, at the VL 37 hospital in Moisselles, on the initiative of General Piat, responsible in the Ministry of War for hospitals where Muslim soldiers were treated, rehabilitation courses for convalescents were organized. The new method consisted of healing through manual labor in the cultivation of vegetables. Thanks to small sums of money donated to the hospital by a charity organization, the garden was developed, and the first kilograms of vegetables were harvested in July. The experiment had two benefits. Convalescents recovered faster, and their morale was much higher than before treatment with the new method. In the report, the hospital's chief doctor wrote: "Arabs have a habit of prolonging their wakefulness. From the day we started working in the garden, we noticed

<sup>258</sup> RGM to MFA, Rabat, 19 Apr 1916; Minister of Agriculture to PC, 13 May 1916, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>259</sup> MW: *Hospitalisation des militaires indigènes marocains*, Paris, 1 Mar 1917, AMAE, G1668.

much less noise in the rooms where they slept. Working in the fresh air and little fatigue contributed to falling asleep faster and worked well for sleep.”<sup>260</sup>

The same treatment method was used at the Carrières-sous-Boins hospital. An additional benefit for the soldiers was the opportunity to earn money – 4.5 or 5 francs for 7 hours of work in the garden. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed its services in Rabat, Algiers, and Tunis: “Manual work brings nothing but benefits. The treated people stopped gambling and started saving money, which they either sent to their families or deposited at the hospital cash desk for safekeeping. Some have saved up to 90 francs.”<sup>261</sup>

French language courses were of great interest among the wounded soldiers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated them from the beginning of the war when soldiers from North Africa began to enter hospitals. Local school teachers were involved in teaching. The courses were conducted in hospitals in Bordeaux and the Paris region – particularly in Moisselle and Jardin Colonial. The interest in learning was so great that courses were introduced in all medical schools where North African soldiers were detained and in the main operating bases in Aix-en-Provence and Arles. Conducting the courses was supported by the Ministry of War, which recommended simple teaching of practical knowledge: writing applications and addressing official letters.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> MW: *Une colonie agricole dans un Hôpital musulman*, Mar 1918, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>261</sup> MFA to RGM, RGT and GGA: *Rééducation physique des blessés musulmans dans les hôpitaux de la région parisienne*, Paris, 12 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>262</sup> MFA to MW, RGT, RGM and GGA: *La création de cours de français dans les hôpitaux spécialement affectés aux soldats nord-africains*, Paris, 27 Mar 1918; MW: *Création de cours de français dans les Hôpitaux spécialement affectés aux Militaires Indigènes de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 23 Apr 1918; MW to Director of Health Service in the 15th Region: *cours de français aux militaires indigènes de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 23 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.



Arles (Bouches-du-Rhône). Moroccan Soldier's House, October 1915 (VAL 506/068a)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnante.fr/ark:/14707/a011490872319LLtVRA/6215dbef0a>

## Chapter 4

# Controlling Loyalty

### The danger of Pan-Islamism

The proclamation of *Jihad* or the Islamic Holy War against England and France by the Ottoman Sultan on November 14, 1914, in Constantinople raised how loyal to Paris would the Muslim soldiers from North Africa be.

The issue of the loyalty of Muslim soldiers was considered at the third meeting of the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs on December 31, 1914. It brought together undersecretaries of state in war, foreign affairs, colonies, and home affairs, with Abel Ferry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as its chairman. The French authorities examined the problem in a broader aspect of the loyalty of Muslim societies towards the metropole and maintaining social peace in the empire. The war was to engage the colonies where about 30 million Muslims lived, and they wondered what moods and attitudes would win out: loyalty to the metropole or hostility spurred by Turkish-German propaganda. The matter gained special significance after the announcement in Constantinople by the Sultan-Caliph *Jihad* against 'infidels,' i.e., the Entente states.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs gathered information about Pan-Islamic movements in India, Egypt, the Levant countries, and West Africa from the first months. In December 1914, a meeting took place between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the British Foreign Office envoys. The mood in the colonies was discussed after examining the possible impact of German-Turkish propaganda carried out among Muslims of the French and British colonies under the slogans of religious solidarity with the Turkish Sultan-Caliph. The main question was how

to oppose Germany and Turkey, calling Muslims in French and English colonies to disobey their metropolises and stimulate the development of pro-French and pro-British Pan-Islamic movements. The success of this strategy could also result in the weakening of Turkish influence in the Arab territories at that time within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>263</sup>

The Anglo-French meeting in Paris showed that Great Britain was confident of the loyalty of Muslims living in India, on the Arabian shores of the Persian Gulf, Egypt, and East Africa. Germany stimulated Pan-Islamic movements in the Muslim world. To balance the potential strength of these movements, the British mobilized the Muslim community in India gathered around the Agha Khan to issue a proclamation addressed to all Muslims. It said that Muslims were not obliged to participate in the Holy War, which the Caliph expected from them, because it was not about the interests of the entire Islamic world, but only about the particular interests of the Ottoman Government, which in addition was completed in the hands of Germans, i.e., Christians. The English gave this event wide publicity by publishing a declaration in the Arabic-language press in Egypt, among others. The Interministerial Commission decided that the Agha Khan declaration should also be circulated in the Arab press in French North Africa to impress the public. Members of the Commission considered that the British point of view on Pan-Islamism was completely convergent with the French position. Both sides considered that an attempt to elect another Caliph instead of the Ottoman Sultan would be too dangerous for the interests of Western countries, as it would be perceived as interference by the Christian West in Islam's internal affairs. It was recognized that mentioning the name of the Ottoman Caliph of Constantinople in Friday prayers in India or Algeria was only symbolic because Muslims obeyed their spiritual leaders.<sup>264</sup>

Referring to the Franco-British meeting and assurances from the British side about the lasting loyalty of Muslims in British dominions, the Commission attempted to determine how strong a link was French North Africa regarding the matter of loyalty. The most important country was Algeria, and the Commission decided to invite a representative of the Governor-General in Algeria to its meeting and directed its representative to Algeria to learn about the mood prevailing among the Algerian *indigènes*. It entailed collecting intelligence from among the leading

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<sup>263</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 31 décembre 1914*, 2–5, AMAE, G1670.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

families of Algerian notables about their views on the situation related to the war. Governor-General Lutaud supported this proposal and stressed in a telegram of December 30, 1914, that the nature of social moods in Algeria was the subject of his constant attention and that the behavior of prominent religious personalities in the north and south of Algeria was being monitored on an ongoing basis and reports on this topic were forwarded daily to Paris.<sup>265</sup>

Concerning the proclamation of the Holy War by the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph, the Commission took up the subject of possible attitudes of Muslim soldiers fighting in the French Army. Colonel Jules Hamelin, head of the African Section at the Ministry of War, identified two categories of "our Muslim soldiers." Those who were ignorant of the position that Turkey had taken in the war as a Muslim state and therefore had no views on the Turkish-German propaganda of the Holy War were the first category; the second was composed of those who were well aware of the war policy in Turkey and condemned the Turkish authorities urging Muslim soldiers to move to Turkey. Hamelin was convinced that Muslim soldiers from North Africa were loyal to France and saw the need for some extraordinary measures, such as assigning *mufti* or *imams* to Muslim units who would carry out religious services. This last issue gave birth to comments within the Commission, which indicated, on the one hand, that Muslims were strongly attached to their *imams* as spiritual leaders, and, on the other, the need to constantly monitor the mood among soldiers to ensure their needs, including spiritual needs. The first months of the war showed that soldiers from North Africa had adapted well to front conditions but showed mental fatigue, which should be responded to by sending clerics to the troops. The specificity of Islam as a religion was expressed in the fact that every Muslim could be an *imam* during prayer and that for this purpose, there was no need to create an *imam* position in the army. Such a position was not even found in the Turkish Army, and in Bosnia, where the Austro-Hungarian authorities had sent *imams* to official units, this did not have a significant impact on strengthening the morale of the soldiers because they treated *imams* as officials performing the functions provided for in the regulations, and not as trustees of their spiritual dilemmas. From the point of view of observing the mood among Muslim soldiers, the Commission recognized that

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 7.

officers-translators who were assigned to the wards and who visited wounded soldiers in hospitals played an important role.<sup>266</sup>

At the meeting on January 12, 1915, Octave Depont, the chief inspector of the *Communes mixtes*, participated as a representative of the Algerian authorities. In the beginning, Depont, an excellent expert on Algeria and the co-author of work on Algerian religious fraternities (*Les confréries religieuses musulmanes*, 1897), declared the total loyalty of the Algerian *indigènes* to France. The course of military mobilization evidenced this after the start of hostilities and the anti-German public mood following the bombing of Philippeville and Bône by the German cruisers *Breslau* and *Goeben*. Proclamations of the Governor-General that were made in connection with these events were very positively received by Algerian *indigènes* – concluded the Commission.<sup>267</sup>

In January 1915, minister Millerand assessed the situation as satisfactory in this respect. The attitudes of soldiers of Moroccan and Algerian origin who participated in the fighting did not raise any cause for concern. Only Tunisian soldiers required scrutiny, and a cause for concern about their loyalty to France was the dissatisfaction, which many expressed in letters to their families, that they had chosen to serve in the military outside Tunisia. According to the French Resident-General of Tunisia, Alapetite, such attitudes should be associated with widespread complaints in Tunisia about the deterioration of living conditions under war conditions. The Resident ruled out any link between these attitudes and the Turkish Holy War propaganda and concluded that they neither sympathized with Turkey nor threatened to destabilize the situation in Tunisia. Thus, the Ministry allowed indigenous soldiers from Tunisia and Algeria to return to their families for sick leave. A similar order concerning Moroccan soldiers was issued on October 23, 1915, and in this case with the proviso, the families of the soldiers had to agree to look after the convalescents. Nevertheless, the number of Tunisian soldiers repatriated from France was tightly controlled in the first months of the war, and military commanders were required to report on the views of the war to those soldiers who were scheduled to be repatriated.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 14–17.

<sup>267</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, 2, AMAE, G1670.

<sup>268</sup> MW to RGT, Paris, 9 Jan 1915, AMAE G1664; MW to MFA: *Au sujet des militaires marocains susceptibles d'aller en congé de convalescence dans leur famille*, Paris, 17 Nov 1915, AMAE, G1666.

## Limited trust

Muslim soldiers were under the constant supervision of special services and were constantly indoctrinated. Commanders of the military regions (*régions militaires*), into which France was divided, regularly received weekly reports from officers of these services, whose duty was to control the moods of indigenous soldiers. The French authorities published the Arabic-language magazine *Akhbar el Harb* (News from the Front), and political officers made sure that North African soldiers read the magazine regularly. On January 11, 1915, one of these officers named Auger prepared a report for the Commander of the 14th Military Region of Lyon regarding the events at the hospital in Oullins. In this hospital at the beginning of January 1915, the Médaille Militaire ceremony was presented to one of the officers of the 60th Battalion. On this occasion, the hospital director gathered a group of North African soldiers in the courtyard undergoing treatment at his institution and gave them a fiery patriotic speech. He emphasized the advantage of French civilization over German culture and thanked *indigènes* for their loyal service to France. Muslim soldiers received a packet of clothing and tobacco boxes from the wife of the Prefect of the Bouches-du-Rhône Department as a gift. In response, a letter of thanks was read from Muslim soldiers who expressed thanks to the staff of the Lyon hospital for their attentive care and assured them that “France can count on them and that it fulfills its duty to the end.” The letter ended with a request to God to secure France’s victory in the “fight against the perfidious German people and his king Wilhelm.” This event and a letter from *indigènes* soldiers to the hospital authorities in Oullins were published in *Akhbar el Harb*.<sup>269</sup>

In the case of Muslim soldiers, virtually every matter related to service on the front became delicate and political. In December 1914, the Bey of Tunis released 1901, 1902, and 1903 conscripts from the military, i.e., boys under 13. It sparked a discussion at the highest level in the Ministry of War. Minister Millerand recommended that the Resident-General exclude those Tunisian soldiers from the age group of the Bey’s edict who were already on French territory. It was necessary to act very carefully so as not to arouse anti-French sentiment in Tunisia, and the minister recommended that the Resident-General coordinate his activities with

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<sup>269</sup> Officer Auger to Military Governor in Lyon, Oullins, 14 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

General Moinier, who was responsible for the security of North Africa.<sup>270</sup>

Since the news of the atrocities of the war could weaken the morale of the population and discourage volunteers from joining the army, efforts were made to limit the transmission of these messages. For this reason, the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs concluded that the repatriation of Algerian workers from France in the first months of the war was a mistake. The repatriates could tell their relatives and friends about how they turned out to be unnecessary overnight, and they had to leave France in a hurry. It could weaken ties with France and the faith in the good intentions of the French authorities towards Muslims. The Commission even tried to establish who had been responsible for the repatriation of workers. However, it turned out that after the outbreak of the war, the production of many enterprises was disrupted, and, in the atmosphere of reallocation of production for the war, no one thought about keeping the unnecessary workers. The Commission acknowledged that the decision of General Lyautey in Morocco was appropriate on this point. The French Resident-General agreed with the Ministry of Public Works that Moroccan workers who found themselves in France at the outbreak of the war would be sent to work in mines with the consent of the Moroccan authorities.<sup>271</sup>

So as not to undermine the population's morale, the Commission decided that injured soldiers should not be sent home to North Africa. They could spread news and rumors about the conditions in which they fought at the front in their environment and exaggerate their merits, diminishing the role of metropolitan troops. Alapetite, the French Resident-General in Tunisia, was against sending wounded soldiers home for treatment, and he believed that soldiers who were returning to Tunisia sow panic with their stories, although this does not immediately raise anti-French attitudes. The Commission considered that, concerning the repatriation of wounded soldiers, it would be advisable to coordinate policies with all three countries – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – and that it was advisable to keep these soldiers in France for treatment.<sup>272</sup>

Regarding returning wounded soldiers to their homes in North Africa for treatment, the Ministry of War was guided by considerations other than the Commission, which expressed the position of the Ministry of

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<sup>270</sup> MW to RGT, Paris, 9 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>271</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 12 janvier 1915*, 11, AMAE, G1670.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of War looked after the morale of the soldiers at the front, and therefore, it was recognized that the opportunity to spend a recovery period in their cultural environment would strengthen this morale more than a hospital stays in France. So, on February 2, 1915, the Minister of War issued an ordinance regarding the holidays of indigenous soldiers and the possibility of spending those holidays in the country of origin. The ordinance was addressed to the commanders of military regions in France and the Commander-in-Chief of Land and Naval Forces in Algeria, the Resident-General in Morocco, and the General Commander of Occupational Forces in Tunisia. This document specified that indigenous soldiers who came from the front to their garrisons in Aix, Arles, Beaucaire, and Tarascon could be directed to leave for their home countries after obtaining permission from the Commander of the 15th Military Region in whose territory their garrisons were located. The length of holidays in Algeria and Tunisia could not exceed eight days. At the same time, the ordinance did not allow sending soldiers to their countries of origin directly from the front, thus bypassing their garrison in France. In the second part, minister Millerand ordered that in the case of long-term health leave, indigenous soldiers should be treated in the same way as French soldiers, i.e., that consent to obtain such leave should be given only in exceptional cases. The idea was that the family of the injured soldier would ask the local civil authorities for permission to bring him home and leave him in the care of his family until he was fully healed. Convalescence was usually extended at the family's request and was most often synonymous with vacation until the end of hostilities. In the case of indigenous soldiers unable to continue their service on the front, the minister ordered them to be repatriated to military garrisons in Algeria and Tunisia. They were subject to the general regulations concerning financial security for veterans of war.<sup>273</sup>

This ordinance, however, imposed certain requirements on those who were to be taken from the front to be individuals in their home countries. The garrison commanders in France were to issue permits and be sure of the loyalty of vacation soldiers to France. Accordingly, minister Millerand introduced quantitative amounts for repatriation. In the case

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<sup>273</sup> MW: *Congés et permissions de militaires indigènes de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris, 2 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664; MW to GCC of 15th Region, 15 Sep 1916, SHD, GR 16N 196 (Morocco. North Africa).

of Algerian soldiers, it was established that only 20% of those returning from the front to garrisons in the south of France could be repatriated to Algeria. In the case of Tunisian soldiers, this number was even lower and was set at 5%. The reason for this diversity and such a low number of Tunisian soldiers was the opposition of the Resident-General in Tunisia, and the General Commander of Occupational Forces in Tunisia, who believed that returning soldiers from the front were demoralizing the inhabitants of Tunisia. When the Minister of War issued the order, repatriation to Tunisia was completely suspended. However, Millerand believed that further containment would have a more negative impact on public opinion in Tunisia than limited and controlled repatriation, and therefore set the amounts at 5%. The criteria for selecting soldiers stipulated that their valor and generosity should distinguish candidates for repatriation on the front, and the officers who selected them had to be sure that the selected soldiers would pass on their front experience in their native countries and that they would encourage the call to join the fighting units in Europe. These rules only applied to slightly wounded soldiers who were to return after their recovery; seriously injured, sick, and mutilated were not subject to these principles and could be repatriated to their families without any significant formalities.<sup>274</sup>

It was a basis for the conviction of minister Millerand that the return of indigenous soldiers to their native countries might harm the social mood in these countries involved in the war. From November 1, 1914, to January 12, 1915, 107 Tunisian soldiers were allowed to leave their garrisons in Tunisia. Half of them were on 8-day leave and half as repatriates due to their inability to serve. In one case, due to the arrival of 17 wounded in Tunis, there were assemblies in the streets of the city which, according to the French authorities, "should not have taken place." People kept telling each other about the horrors of war they had learned from some wounded soldiers. Everyone also shared the names of those killed on the front, which was also reported by soldiers brought from Europe. According to the French authorities, around 60 desertions occurred from units formed in Tunisia, which were to be directed to the front. The soldiers fled to their tribes because they were only now aware of what was going on in the war in Europe. The gendarmes started looking for deserters, but their tribes defended their relatives, and as a result, there were clashes between the two sides. Following these events, the repatriation of soldiers

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<sup>274</sup> MW to GCC of the 15<sup>th</sup> Region, Paris, 2 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664.

to Tunisia was suspended. In the opinion of the French authorities in Tunisia, the suspension of repatriation calmed the public mood and led to the ceasing of the phenomenon of desertion in this country. In the future, it would be necessary to be particularly careful and choose the right moment to transport the wounded. It was also necessary to make sure that those who were granted permission to travel to Tunisia would not distribute messages causing panic. It could cause Tunisian Muslims to become more susceptible to the Ottoman authorities' propagation of the Holy War. It had to be avoided at all costs, and the French authorities in Tunisia believed that if the proper procedures could not be established for indigenous soldiers, the leave permits for French soldiers should also be canceled.<sup>275</sup> In order to limit the influence of the German Holy War propaganda on the people of North Africa, the censorship of correspondence from the front was introduced, and a ban on sending injured Muslim soldiers and war invalids to their place of residence was implemented.<sup>276</sup>

Similar objections arose about Moroccan contract soldiers who had expired and refused to renew their contract. In their case, it was decided to send them from Europe to Morocco, but not to release them home right away, but to keep them in garrisons to know their morale.<sup>277</sup>

### *At the Arles train station*

On February 7, 1915, El Mokri, the former Grand Vizier of Sultan Moulay Hafid, expressed his desire to visit wounded Moroccan soldiers undergoing treatment in military hospitals in France. This matter became the subject of discussion regarding the broader aspect of the participation of Moroccan soldiers in fighting alongside France. Their loyalty to France did not raise any reservations. In the opinion of the Ministry of War, Moroccan soldiers were more devoted to the cause than other Muslim soldiers. Nevertheless, the visit of the former great emir was not considered desirable. The position of Lyautey, the Resident-General in Morocco, proved to be decisive, as he recognized that the meeting of El Mokri with soldiers could stimulate a sense of national unity among Moroccans

<sup>275</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 9 Febr 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>276</sup> MW to General Commander-in-Chief 15th Region, 13 Nov 1914, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>277</sup> MW to General Commander-in-Chief of 15th Region, 15 Sep 1916, SHD, GR 16N 196 (Maroc. Afrique du Nord, April 1916–May 1917).

and evoke aversion to France. The official reason for refusing to grant permission for the former Grand Vizier's visit was that he did not hold any official position at that time, and it was not known on whose behalf he would address soldiers.<sup>278</sup>

This incident showed how sensitive the question of loyalty of Muslim soldiers was. In the context of intercultural relations, problems related to the functioning of military administration during the conditions of war took on a different meaning. One of the examples was the incident at the Arles train station. Troops of soldiers of Tunisian origin from the 4th and 8th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, who had been directed to the front, refused to enter the wagons. With the help of an interpreter, it was explained that the soldiers were protesting in this way for not having been paid a bonus for voluntary recruitment. According to the regulations, in cases of this kind, the soldiers immediately received 200 francs, and in the next two months, they would receive 100 francs. The delay in payments was from 1 to 4 months. The soldiers were persuaded to get into the carriages after being assured that they would receive the overdue payment. However, when leaving Arles, they shouted aloud in Arabic: "Payment in advance, payment in advance !" This matter was raised at the highest level of the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Treasury. It was also explained that the delay in remittance of payment was due to the specific situation of Tunisian soldiers who were subjected to the Bey of Tunis, who had signed a protectorate agreement with France. In the case of Tunisian soldiers, the payment was credited to them by the French Treasury Ministry, but at the request of the Tunisian Treasury Ministry. Waiting by the French financial services for a mandate from the financial authorities of Tunisia caused delays in paying soldiers their salaries. In addition, according to the decree of the Bey of January 31, 1915, the second and third tranche of the bonus were paid to Tunisian soldiers in those units in which they served, which further prolonged the delivery of their money.<sup>279</sup>

<sup>278</sup> MW to MFA, Paris, 12 Feb 1915; MW to RGM, Paris, 12 Feb 1915; RGM to MW, Rabat, 13 Feb 1915; MW to MFA, Paris, 15 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>279</sup> RGT to General Vèrand, Tunis, 26 Jan 1915; Ministry of Finance (MF): *Note de la Direction Générale des Finances. Le paiement en France des primes d'engagement ou de reengagement aus soldats tunisiens*, AMAE, G1664. The incident at the train station in Arles caused the dismissal of the commander of the main operating base, who was charged with not reporting the financial needs of soldiers to his supervisor – see: General Vèrand to RGT, Tunis, 30 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

In April 1915, events took place that posed with all severity the loyalty of soldiers from Africa. On April 12-14, three soldiers from the 7th Regiment of *Tirailleurs* deserted to the side of the Germans. On April 17-18, two soldiers from the 3rd Regiment of *Tirailleurs* deserted, and on April 21 and 22, over two more soldiers from the same regiment fled to the Germans. The last desertion took place on April 25, when one soldier from the 7th Regiment deserted. The case of desertion was examined at the level of the Minister of War, who on May 10, 1915, sent a relevant letter to the chief commander of the armed forces in North Africa. The minister wrote about 'many' (*plusieurs*) desertions and named Lieutenant Boukabouya one of the deserters. The command of both regiments conducted an investigation and concluded that the initiator of the escapes was Lieutenant Boukabouya. He was known for his pro-Turkish sympathies and made contact with the Germans while patrolling the front lines. Commanders of both regiments tried to hide the first desertions from their soldiers, but the matter became known, and the other deserters followed the example of Lieutenant Boukabouya.<sup>280</sup>

All deserters were from the Constantine region in Algeria, and the desertions were therefore it was concluded that the desertions were the result of pro-Turkish indoctrination by one of the local *marabouts* and to which deserters had succumbed even before joining the army. Although the command of both regiments considered that the cases of desertions were the result of individual decisions and not of the general mood in the battalions, it was decided to take steps to prevent any unrest. Significantly, the Boukabouya family in Algeria was placed under discrete surveillance and banned from leaving Algeria. The same steps were taken against the family of Corporal Traïkī, who fled with Boukabouya, and all the other deserters. Their families were also suspended from paying the soldiers' pay and financial allowances, which was undoubtedly very painful for these families. The property belonging to deserters and the property of their families was also sequestered, and they were deprived of the possibility of working in the state service. All units in which the *indigènes* served were informed about these decisions.<sup>281</sup>

Desertions have strengthened the lack of trust. The military command explained it by the hasty formation of military units in Algeria without

<sup>280</sup> MW to GCC of the Land and Sea Forces of North Africa in Algiers, 10 May 1915, SHD, GR 16N 194.

<sup>281</sup> Ibidem.

the military intelligence having checked loyalty towards France of the candidates for military service. Some candidates had to contest the affiliation of Algeria to France and put their faith in the pro-German agitators. They joined the army to go over to Germany and persuade other soldiers to do the same. Such an explanation said unequivocally that the public mood in Algeria itself caused the lack of trust in the soldiers. In May 1915, an order was issued to admit to the army only those indigenous Algerians whose allegiance to France did not raise any reservations.<sup>282</sup>

On November 5, 1915, the French steamer *Calvados* was torpedoed, sailing from Marseille to the coast of Morocco. Onboard were soldiers from the 4th battalion and the 8th Regiment of Moroccan *Goumiers*. One officer and 150 soldiers survived. The rest, 16 officers and 720 soldiers, drowned. The Moroccan battalion was returning to Morocco after several months of heavy fighting on the front in Europe, and families were waiting for soldiers in the port. The event was tragic and disastrous for the morale of the population: it could have caused protests and discontent on a large scale. Therefore, the command of the French Army in North Africa recommended publishing only brief information about this event in the French press and forbade any information on this subject to be published in the North African press. Another equally delicate issue turned out to be sending notaries to the Muslim soldiers at the front. In the fall of 1915, Muslim notaries assigned to the main operating base in Alais began receiving letters from Muslim soldiers requesting divorce on their behalf more and more frequently. The military authorities, however, could not take steps to fulfill these requests. Islamic law provided that a man who wanted to divorce his wife and could not tell her this in person could authorize someone to take appropriate legal action, but for this purpose, he had to appear in person before two Muslim notaries and register a declaration of divorce there. However, it was impossible to do so, as front soldiers could not be sent to the operating base to settle their personal affairs. The role of notaries assigned to the main operating bases was to provide legal services to the soldiers stationed there, i.e., to draft legal acts, but also to keep the soldiers' spirits up in the face of fatigue and the hardships of war, as well as to disavow false rumors that were spread throughout the *dépôt* in order to weaken the fighting spirit of the soldiers. Soldiers stationed at the operating base had the option

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<sup>282</sup> Ibidem.

of requesting a notary at any time to refer their case either to the French office of their place of residence or to the office of the local governor. Soldiers on the front did not have such a possibility, and some of them had been there from the very beginning of the war. The commanders of the 15th Military Region, where the operating bases for North African Muslim soldiers were located, had to address this to prevent the growing discontent of the indigenous soldiers. Therefore, it was decided that the only option was to send Muslim notaries to the front lines to travel with all the regiments containing North African soldiers. Soon the first Muslim notaries were sent for special training. The command recommended that when visiting soldiers at the front, notaries should be dressed in Tunisian or Moroccan fashion, as this would “take the soldier into his homeworld in his imagination” and help him overcome nostalgia for his native country.<sup>283</sup>

Similar ideas inspired the plan to send *imams* to the front as spiritual leaders of the Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian Muslims to keep up the soldiers’ morale. Some senators and deputies criticized their absence among soldiers fighting on the front lines. This matter was raised, among others, by Étienne Flandin, who repeatedly urged the Government not to give Germany reasons to criticize France for improper policy towards Muslims. One of Flandin’s most famous speeches was criticizing burying dead Muslim soldiers in mass graves. At the same time, Flandin was motivated by the desire to counter the argument from German propaganda that colonial soldiers could not practice religious services at the front. The Ministry of War asked the Governor-General of Algeria and the Resident-General of Tunisia to prepare appropriate *imams*. As an experiment, it was decided to first send them to barracks outside the fighting zone and to hospitals.<sup>284</sup>

Solving this problem turned out to be not as easy as it seemed in Paris. In Algeria, Governor Lutaud assigned Mufti El Mokrani Boumezrag to perform religious service in a military hospital for Muslims in the Military Region of Paris, and it was simple enough that the same man sought his inclusion in the army. In Tunisia, it turned out that Resident Alapetite managed to find only one *imam*, who agreed to go to France, but refused to go to the front and reserve the right to return to Tunisia at any time.

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<sup>283</sup> RGT to Consul General, Tunis, 9 Nov 1915, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>284</sup> RGM to MW, Fez, 11 Nov 1916, AMAE, G1667.

Alapetite explained such a weak response to the appeal of the Tunisian authorities by a lack of understanding of the idea of sending an *imam* to the front for religious service. The situation in Morocco was even more complicated, as in Morocco, the only *imam* was the Sultan, and no ministry of religion could appoint *ex officio* appropriate persons.<sup>285</sup>

This was explained by Resident Lyautey, who added that the French administration had created the position of Algerian *imams*, but the situation in Morocco was diametrically opposite that in Algeria and Tunisia. These two countries recognized the spiritual leadership of the Caliphate of Constantinople in the religious sphere, but Morocco did not recognize any sovereignty other than their Sultan, who was Morocco's only *imam*. „So I cannot create a new institution of a spiritual guide, as this sphere is reserved exclusively for the Sultan,” wrote Lyautey. At the same time, the Resident stressed the Sultan's total commitment to upholding the morale of Moroccan soldiers. From the beginning of the war, the Sultan had made two appeals to his subjects fighting at the front or staying in hospitals, in which he expressed his deep respect for their bravery and the war effort.<sup>286</sup>

In early 1918, the mood among North African troops visibly worsened. The troops felt war and separation from the family more and more intensively. On January 24, the Resident-General of Tunisia, Gabriel Alapetite, handed over a note to the Tunisian Police Chief and Colonel Hamelin of the Africa Section at the Ministry of War. It showed that if the steps taken to control the soldiers coming to Tunisia on leave yielded positive results, then the *tirailleurs* discharged from hospitals in France were the most troublesome at that moment. Many of them complained about low pensions and family benefits, but a new phenomenon was the reluctance of the injured to undergo treatment. The invalidity commissions had their hands complete as many convalescents scheduled to be sent back to the front found many reasons to be considered unfit for further service. “The Arabs, when they are wounded, strongly oppose being cured. This remark does not apply to everyone, but many,” we read in the Resident's note.<sup>287</sup>

Alapetite said the mood among Tunisian *tirailleurs* was terrible. “For some time, these military men, returning from the front, have shown

<sup>285</sup> MW to PC and MFA, Paris, 24 Dec 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>286</sup> RGM to MW, Fez, 11 Nov 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>287</sup> RGT: *Rapport of 18 Jan 1918*, Tunis, 24 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

a lot of arrogance, with poor discipline, even towards their superiors.” On January 16, 1918, the Resident-General himself witnessed an incident on one main street in Tunis – Avenue Bab Djedid – between a French captain and one of the Tunisian soldiers wounded at the front and convalesced in the barracks. When the French officer ordered the soldier to return to the barracks, the soldier flatly refused to obey the order and punched the officer in the face with his fist. About 50 *tirailleurs* and *zouaves* gathered around, but none of them made the slightest gesture to defend the officer who was publicly insulted and beaten. Only the Resident’s staff intervened and summoned the soldier, escorting him to the barracks. Some non-commissioned officers told the Resident that “these soldiers would not obey orders and they would soon be unable to command them.”<sup>288</sup>

Instances of indiscipline among Muslim soldiers were reported before, but this one was redundant. On June 26, 1917, the Commander of the Eastern Army Group reported that in *dépôt* in Cassis, where there were about 400 soldiers on their way to the front, there was a lack of discipline. “The soldiers reluctantly performed their duties and showed no respect to their officers who had served in the colonies, which should bring soldiers closer to them,”<sup>289</sup> – we read in the report.

German propaganda was eagerly picking up on reports of the insubordination of indigenous soldiers. As late as November 1917, the German newspaper *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* published an article saying that several steamers from Tunisia and Algeria landed in Marseille with Muslim troops, most of whom refused to go to France and participate in the fighting on the French front. According to German sources, this incident provoked a general uprising in Tunis, which had only been calmed down after the intervention of European troops. The local population expressed – according to *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* – such hatred of France that the French Government was forced to send European troops to Tunisia and dispatch troops consisting of local *indigènes* to Europe as quickly as possible. Paris’s reaction to the article was unambiguous. The Ministry of War took the message to be the unlimited imagination of its author and confirmed that Muslims from Tunisia, like Algeria and Morocco, continued to go to the front without any resistance “to defend their Mother Motherland” (*la Mère patrie*). Paris also denied any

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<sup>288</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>289</sup> Commander of the Eastern Army Group to MW, 26 June 1917, SHD, GR 16 N 197 (Maroc, Jun 1917–Oct 1918).

dislocation of military units described in the article and confirmed that some of the indigenous units were transported to Europe, but some were still in Tunisia and were fighting with the rebels in Tripolitania.<sup>290</sup>

### More information!

In June 1915, the Minister of War drew the attention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the urgent need to inform the public in North Africa about the steps France was taking to respect the religion of Muslim soldiers and to create conditions for them to practice this faith. It was necessary to publish such information, especially in the local press. It was mainly about the situation at the front and the conditions in which North African soldiers fought. Information on this subject was passed to the Governor-General of Algeria and the Residents-General in Morocco and Tunisia. After an appropriate selection, this information had to be published in the press. The minister pointed to the articles in the Algerian newspaper *Akhbar el Harb*, which in the January issue notified readers of the Ministry of War's instructions that indigenous soldiers who had been withdrawn from the front due to wounds or diseases were grouped in one place in a given region and placed in one hospital so that they can spend their time there following the recommendations of their religion and the customs of their daily life. In the issues of January 29, February 12, March 19, and May 7, 1915, the newspaper provided information about the places where these soldiers were detained, where they ate meals, and about the sanitary conditions in the places where they were grouped in order to emphasize that these soldiers had been satisfied with decent conditions for recovering their health. The minister considered that the example of the *Akhbar el Harb* newspaper was worth following. It was crucial to inform the Muslim public that Muslim soldiers were provided with religious services in the grouping places. The ministry was implementing a project proposed by the Governor-General of Algeria to send seven *imams* to the 4th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th Military Regions in France and to the Military Region of Paris, where there were the most hospitalized injured Muslim soldiers. The *imams* were to consult with the commanders of the regions and the hospital's chief doctors to provide

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<sup>290</sup> MFA, Political and Commercial Affairs Department, Africa, 30 Jan 1918, AMAE, G1669.

the wounded with appropriate conditions for practicing the faith, including the organization of places for prayer. Similar information should also appear in the French press.<sup>291</sup>

At the same time, *indigènes* had to be encouraged to declare their loyalty to France. In some cases, these declarations were so faithful that the French authorities wondered what more their publication would bring for them: harm or benefit. An example was the proclamation of Sid Ibrahim bin al-Hadj Mohammed, one of the Sheiks of the mystical fraternity in Algeria, who addressed wounded Muslim soldiers who were undergoing treatment in a hospital in France. We read: "O you who bravely fight for humanity following the recommendations of our Prophet ... O my brothers! After all, we know very well that France has shown us so much good and has so happily changed our social life by promoting progress in our country. Moreover! She did not hesitate to treat us as her children while ensuring our freedom and independence! God will make our virtues shine even brighter in the future. Bravery, one of these virtues, has already been demonstrated on the battlefield. Thanks to her, you saved yourselves and protected our Government."<sup>292</sup>

The efforts of the French authorities to increase the number of mobilized indigenous soldiers were supported by the Tunisian authorities. In September 1916, a French landowner from the Oran area sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Governor of the Moussa Region in Tunisia, criticizing Tunisians buying out of military service. "Each conscript should do the service alone, as this is a proof of affection for France. Governors designate young men from among tribespeople for military service, but later, families buy their sons out of service. It should not be like that. It is a patriotic duty, and everyone – whether rich or poor – should fulfill it," we read in the letter of the Tunisian governor. This person was closely associated with the administration of the protectorate as an adviser to the Chamber of Commerce, Inspector of Mosques and Cemeteries, and Chairman of the Chapter of the Legion of Honor in Tunisia.<sup>293</sup>

<sup>291</sup> MW to MFA: *Traitement des soldats musulmans*, Paris, 13 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>292</sup> Proclamation of Sid Ibrahim Elhadj Mhammed, chief of Zawia d'Elhamd (Bousaâda), Oct 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>293</sup> The Caïd of the Commune of Moussa to MFA, Saida, 15 Sept 1916, AMAE, G1667.

The actions of the military authorities to provide better conditions for Muslim soldiers were transmitted to the pan-Islamist press in other countries, especially in Egypt, which was an important center of Muslim religious life. The order of the Minister of War to bring *imams* from Algeria to the front to the wounded Algerian soldiers was recorded on July 6, 1915, by the influential (circulation 4,000 copies) Egyptian magazine *El Moayad*, known for the Pan-Islamist views of its editors and hostility towards France as an occupant of Muslim lands. This time, the editors reacted favorably to the French authorities. An anonymous author even glorified France: "France respects the feelings of Muslims. A nation that is at the peak of civilization development respects the faith of others. This news contradicts all previous accusations and lies; France respects the laws in Paris and in the colonies. The Poincaré Government continues to fulfill its duties and can be sure that its Muslim subjects will be ready to help France in difficult times."<sup>294</sup>

French authorities in Morocco and Tunisia arranged Moroccan and Tunisian notables to France to show that wounded soldiers were well looked after. Reports from these visits were published in the press. On July 25, 1915, Hadj Omar Tani, Governor of Casablanca, visited as envoy to Sultan Moulay Youssef, wounded Moroccan soldiers in Luchon, Vichy, Toulouse, and Paris. After the visit, he stated: "Before going to France, I was convinced that I would return with the most depressing impressions. Now I know that our wounded soldiers are cared for in France with the best possible care." In Paris, Hadj Omar Tani donated 2,000 francs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help wounded French soldiers – Christians and Muslims alike. This sum was allocated to the Red Cross.<sup>295</sup>

The proclamation of August 15, 1915, by the Sultan of Morocco to Moroccan soldiers serving in the army in France was also disseminated at the al-Azhar religious university in Cairo, where students from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco studied. The proclamation was distributed by the French military mission in Egypt, whose translator first checked the content of the proclamation in terms of its compliance with France's policy towards Morocco. The proclamation urged the soldiers to continue fighting side by side with the French soldiers and ended with a cry: "God is with you because you fight for what is right, and you will defeat the enemy."<sup>296</sup>

<sup>294</sup> Defrance, French Envoy to Egypt, to MFA, Cairo, 10 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>295</sup> Hadj Omar Tani, 25 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>296</sup> MW to MFA: *Proclamation du Sultan du Maroc à ses Troupes servant en France*, Paris, 15 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

### Under special supervision

Soldiers returning from captivity were under special supervision. It was known that in German prisoner-of-war camps and hospitals, they were subjected to German propaganda, which tried to draw them over to the Muslim side of Turkey. Commanders of Military Regions directed military counterintelligence officers straight to railway stations, where trains transporting soldiers from captivity arrived. On March 2, 1915, an officer named Auger was directed by the Commander of the 14th Military Region to the Brotteaux railway station in the Morand district of Lyon, with orders to conduct talks with soldiers from the first convoy of wounded Muslim soldiers. On March 7, a second convoy arrived. This officer spoke with 17 soldiers who were injured, almost all at the very beginning of the war. They were all badly injured. Some had lost their eyesight. All stated that the Germans treated them well; they were treated and received French or Belgian medicines. Everyone complained about poor food in the POW camp. For breakfast, they received a substitute for coffee, for dinner vegetables and potatoes, from time to time meat, and in the evening broth with flour. The meat portions were very tiny in the hospital, from 70 to 80 grams for one patient. Some received meat three times a day, and others – only once. Convoys with soldiers traveled to France through Switzerland, where the soldiers received other delicatessen food and tobacco. They were greeted with flowers and shouts “Vive la France”.<sup>297</sup>

Officer Auger cited statements from several soldiers. Mohamed Ben Bakkouche of the 6th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 1593, was treated at Coltz and later at Chauny and Avesnes, and he had lost his eyesight. This soldier testified that the Germans persuaded some captured soldiers to serve in the Turkish Army against Russia. Ahssen Ben Schrir of the 8th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 15.124, treated at Cassel and Zossen, near Berlin, said: “Civilians came to our camp and persuaded us to serve in the Turkish Army against Russia. The *tirailleurs* refused, but several of the *goumiers* agreed”. Belaid Mohamed of the 2nd Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 88.31, who was treated in Zossen, said that the Germans urged the wounded and treated soldiers to join the Turkish Army; those who disagreed were threatened

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<sup>297</sup> Officer Auger to Military Governor in Lyon: *Rapport de l'Officier Interprète sur l'exécution de sa mission*, Oullins, 8 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

and starved. A fourth soldier named Mohamed Ben Hady Salah, of the 4th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 3340, stated that one day a German, who had a newspaper in his hand, had come to their hospital, where they were being treated, and read to them that the Turkish Army was marching with the Germans on France and Russia, and suggested to the soldiers that they should take their side. The wounded soldiers were said to have answered him that “Algerians and Tunisians have nothing to do with the Turks”.<sup>298</sup>

Officer Auger later visited other Muslim soldiers at the Oullins hospital and concluded in his report that all the indigenous soldiers showed “great devotion to France”.<sup>299</sup>

On March 11, 1915, the last convoy with the captive wounded arrived at Brotteaux station, and on the same day, officer Auger questioned those who were to be transferred to Marseilles. Becheikh Ben Bou Abdallah, of the 6th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 18126, treated at Noys, Guise, and Cologne, said: “I heard from other wounded that the Germans were encouraging native soldiers to join the Turkish Army in order to fight the Russians. I must add that I heard that those who received such an offer declared that they would reject it, but if they were forced to enter service the Turkish Army, they announced that they would switch to the Russians at the earliest opportunity”. Laharaoui Baharaoui, of the 9th Regiment of *Tirailleurs*, regimental number 551, who was interned in Charleroi, replied when asked why he was serving as a Muslim against Turkey as a Tunisian he was a *protégé* of France. Then they tried to discourage him from serving under the banner of France, saying that the French were not giving him a fair military pension and that he would starve. Officer Auger considered such arguments of the Germans as perfidious innuendo, all the more so as the appearance of civilians in the POW camp was inconsistent with international conventions.<sup>300</sup>

Confidential Order No. 5196 9/11 on tracking the attitudes of indigenous soldiers was issued by the Ministry of War on November 23, 1914. As part of its execution, on March 14, 1915, officer Baruch from the 15th Military Region visited the auxiliary hospital, located in one of the schools in Marseille, where wounded soldiers from North Africa stayed who had been released from German captivity. These soldiers confirmed

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<sup>298</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>299</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>300</sup> Ibidem.

the information collected earlier from soldiers from the first transports returning from Germany, namely that hospitals and POW camps were visited by Arab origin dressed in Turkish Army uniforms and held talks with Muslim soldiers from Algeria. They spoke to them in this way: "You are serving under the orders of the enemies of Muslim law and the Muslim faith. You fight a war alongside your enemies. You are thus exposing yourself to the wrath of God. Thus, you doom yourselves to eternal damnation. The French laugh at your faith and declare a fight with God. But God said in the *Koran* that He would destroy all who stand against him and those who are at war with the chosen people. It is our duty to destroy the French. England, Russia, and France have done all the evil that the Islamic world has experienced. The time has come for you to stand up against them and defend your honor and show your devotion to the cause of God." Officer Baruch suspected that these emissaries were Algerian deserters from the French Army, hired by the Ottoman authorities to draw troops from North Africa over to the Ottoman side. However, as Auger emphasized, soldiers from Algeria refused to go to the Ottoman side and pledged allegiance to France.<sup>301</sup>

At the same time, steps had to be taken to strengthen the loyalty and fighting spirit of the soldiers undergoing treatment, and some of them were to return to the front. The Africa Section of the Ministry of War directed officers to hospitals who passed on information to wounded soldiers about the glorious deeds of their colleagues on various sections of the front with Germany. In April 1915, one of these officers visited Cochin and Chaptal and the hospital in Grand Palais in Paris, where he read the *tirailleurs* being treated there a note written by *le Service des prisonniers de guerre* on March 29, mentioning Muslim soldiers from North Africa in German captivity. The note gave the names of four soldiers who had shown great courage, preferring to suffer torture rather than agree with the enemy and become traitors. The names of these soldiers were included in the Golden Book of Infantry (*Livre d'or des tirailleurs*) because of their loyalty and dedication to France as their "adoptive mother" (*leur patrie d'adoption*). The note ended with the statement that these facts put Islam in a new, favorable light, and the courage of the soldiers mentioned is eloquent proof that there are no "savages or barbarians" among

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<sup>301</sup> MW: *Rapport hebdomadaire. Exécution des prescriptions Ministérielle et Confidentielle de 23 Novembre 1914 No. 5196 9/11*; Officer Baruch to Military Governor in Marseille: Marseille, 14 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

the Muslim defenders of France. Savages and barbarians are those who fight against them. These words caused great emotion among the wounded *tirailleurs*, who enthusiastically declared that “they will always be ready to shed their blood in defense of the honor of the French flag.”<sup>302</sup>

Despite many such declarations by indigenous convalescents, the leadership of the colonial services urged caution. On June 30, 1915, the Resident-General in Tunisia wrote a note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in which he expressed the opinion that Tunisian POWs returning from captivity, who had been subjected to German-Turkish propaganda in Germany, should not be allowed to be transported from Germany to Tunisia without proper control by counterintelligence at the border and concentration points. The Resident wrote: “We should be concerned that some of these *indigènes* might be German emissaries smuggled in among the wounded; these should under no circumstances be directed to Africa.”<sup>303</sup>

Counterintelligence followed all contacts of North African subjects with Germany, which was understandable under the war conditions. However, an additional aspect as the basis for these contacts could have incited the indigenous people to disobey the French authorities. In December 1915, an investigation was carried out in Tunisia concerning a soldier from the 4th Regiment of *Spahis* named Mohamed Cherif Tidjani. The question was whether the person had contact with a woman named Johanna Uber, who was German. Counterintelligence did not find that the woman was in Tunisia, but it established that Tidjani had frequent contacts with another Tunisian named Hassan Ben Mohamed Chelbi, who was detained in October 1914 on suspicion of activities that threatened the security of the state. It was also established that Hassan Ben Mohamed Chelbi had traveled to Germany on numerous occasions with his half-brother Hamda Zouiten from Batna after the war had started. In February 1914, Chelbi was in Egypt, where he met a German impresario who recruited black dancers for the ensemble and employed him as an interpreter. In this capacity, Chelbi traveled with a group of dancers around Germany. The findings of the investigation indicated the need to detain Chelbi.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>302</sup> MFA, Sous-Direction d'Afrique, 14 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>303</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 30 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>304</sup> RGT to PC and MFA, Tunis, 9 Dec 1915, AMAE, G1665.

Émile Piat, the Consul General of France in Morocco, who visited wounded Muslim soldiers treated in military institutions in Amiens, Boulogne, and Berck-sur-Mer, clearly expressed the attitude of the French military authorities towards Muslim soldiers. In his memo of this visitation, Piat wrote that he found soldiers in perfect moral condition. They expressed their gratitude to him for the excellent care they received from military doctors and nurses from the Red Cross, and priests and volunteers declared that they would return with enthusiasm to the front line after their recovery. These soldiers emphasized that it was the duty of their families to fight under the French flag. They believed that the Germans were barbarians after what they did in Belgium and our invaded departments. Piat judged some of the soldiers' statements to be too pompous, making them seem artificial but expressed the belief that Muslims remain loyal to France. On the other hand, he wrote: "However, we should not cease our efforts to strengthen their loyalty: Arabs and Islamized Africans have mood swings, and sometimes the smallest thing can lead to a change in their attitude towards someone. Where appropriate, such matters that should not be overlooked, may be delays in the payment of their due service fees or enrollment bonuses, as well as the bonus for the length of service."<sup>305</sup>

The Consul cited events at the Arles train station, where the delay in paying the enrollment bonus had caused deep dissatisfaction with North African troops. Some of them even refused to return to the front lines until the outstanding sums were paid. Punishing these reluctant soldiers severely was a practical solution, but Piat did not feel it was just and politically correct. At that point, the situation was about soldiers who had recovered from war injuries and returned to the front line for the third or even fourth time. It was better to remove the sources of discontent all at once, that is, to pay the outstanding wages to the soldiers. He felt signs of dissatisfaction for the same reason during his current visit. Some soldiers told him that they did not believe France would pay them the outstanding bonuses because France had no money. Others believed that the French authorities were playing with the payment of wages for delay purposes, relying cynically on that those soldiers who returned to the front would die and their families would not ask for their money. "This situation is very worrying," the Consul wrote, "and may harm Muslim

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<sup>305</sup> Officer Piat: *Note*, 10 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

troops in France, and threatens to reduce, if not completely, the number of volunteers enlisting in our army in Algeria.”<sup>306</sup>

Piat worked in North Africa and knew the mentality of the people there well. After hearing the soldiers’ voices of dissatisfaction, he concluded that this frustration could spread to the families of these soldiers and even lead to “armed revolts” against the presence of France. He believed that the French authorities had not taken sufficient steps to maintain Muslims’ loyalty and that the English Army’s situation was much better in this regard. The English took all possible steps to ensure the loyalty of the Indian troops, which in terms of combat value were much worse than the troops of the French *indigènes*. In particular, the British Government appointed a general who had spent most of his career in India dealing exclusively with Indian troops in France. This general introduced strict control over the correspondence sent to and sent by soldiers outside the units. On the other hand, it was made sure that Indian troops did not feel religious prejudice from British officers. The importance that France’s allies attached to the treatment of their colonial troops testified, according to Piat, to their belief that such treatment was the best form of counteracting German propaganda, which wanted to provoke soldiers from Asia and Africa to desertion.<sup>307</sup>

The latter Piat’s opinions were very characteristic of the position of the French administration in the colonies. Concern for indigenous soldiers stemmed not so much from a good heart, humanitarianism, or a sense of brotherhood. However, such motivations also existed, but from the fear of an outbreak of disobedience by Muslim subjects on a large scale and the desire to maintain discipline in the ranks of indigenous soldiers.

### Honors? Yes, but not too many

On January 26, 1916, the Minister of War sent the President of the Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, copies of the letter from the Governor-General of Algeria. The case concerned decorations for two indigenous Algerian soldiers. The Minister of War applied to award these soldiers *la Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur*, but the

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<sup>306</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>307</sup> Ibidem.

Governor-General of Algeria raised objections to both soldiers and was opposed to granting them decorations. Formally, the Governor objected to a row that the two soldiers started in an inn near the barracks, but the dispute was principled. General Galliéni, Minister of War, believed that the Military Medal and the Cross of War (*Médaille Militaire* and *Croix de Guerre*) were the most appropriate manner of rewarding North African soldiers for their participation in the war. The minister argued that many soldiers wounded at the front were sent back to their homes without any rewards for their faithful service. He considered that the matter had a moral and political aspect, vital because of the upcoming North African enlistment campaign. It was about an honorary award as compensation for the service performed, and the minister recommended to the President of the Council to award two soldiers named: Nichan Iftikhar from Tunisia and Ouissam Alaouite from Morocco. For Ouissam Alaouite, the Minister of War also asked for approval from the Sultan of Morocco and General Lyautey, the French Resident-General in Morocco. In the case of Nichan Iftikhar, an opinion was requested from the Bey of Tunis and Alapetite, the French Resident-General in Tunisia. Galliéni believed that the decoration of these two soldiers would be well received by other *indigènes*, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Colonies held otherwise. The Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed that the French policy towards the protectorates should uphold the belief of the *indigènes* being of low value and not undermine these beliefs by valuing them by granting them decorations and awards. He recommended keeping a special reserve in awarding *indigènes* decorations.<sup>308</sup> Alapetite shared this view and considered that the promotion of the Iftikhar soldier was by all means justified, as he had sustained severe wounds on the battlefield and showed great bravery.<sup>309</sup>

The response from Aristide Briand, the President of the Council, was ambiguous. He tried to reconcile the two positions – that of the Minister of War and the one of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He agreed that the matter had a moral aspect in the blood sacrifice of North African Muslim soldiers and a political aspect of the new military enlistment campaign. Ultimately, he expressed that policy towards the protectorates

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<sup>308</sup> MFA: *Note pour le sous-direction d'Afrique*, Paris, 6 Mar 1916; MW to RGM, Paris, 3 Mar 1916, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>309</sup> RGT to PC and MFA, Tunis, 14 Apr 1916, AMAE, G1666.

of Tunisia and Morocco may be detrimental both to refrain from rewarding too much and to reward too often.<sup>310</sup>

### "French Africa Day"

The French authorities and society recognized the efforts of the colonies to defend France and undertook many activities to commemorate the fallen and help the wounded and fighters at the front. These activities were related to colonial policy, but others were spontaneous and had purely humanitarian goals.

As early as August 5, 1915, the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs announced a project to organize a "French Africa Day" (*Journée de l'Afrique française*) in France to honor the victims of the war. It was proposed that a delegation of soldiers from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and French West Africa take part in these ceremonies in proportion to the number of these soldiers fighting in the French Army.<sup>311</sup>

In response to this initiative, the Resident-General of Tunisia declared that if the French authorities organize the *Journée de l'Afrique française* in the autumn in the metropole, then in Tunisia such a day would also be organized with local funds. However, Tunisia was too poor to participate in expenses for organizing this event in France.<sup>312</sup>

The initiative of the Commission was supported by the Governor-General of Algeria, stressing that, given the proportions of the number of soldiers mobilized to the total population, the colonies and protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia contributed more to the defense of France than the metropole. At the same time, he emphasized that both protectorates are too poor to contribute to the costs of organizing this project in the metropole. He suggested simultaneously organizing such a day in December 1915 or January 1916 in France and the colonies. "This would strengthen feelings of loyalty among the *indigènes* as they would find once more that their effort is appreciated. Given the number of wounded and captives, their families may be anxious about their fate. So they must know that the authorities are not indifferent to the fate of soldiers."<sup>313</sup>

<sup>310</sup> PC and MFA to MW, Paris 22 Mar 1916, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>311</sup> MC to MFA, Paris, 10 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>312</sup> RGT to GGA, Tunis, 25 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>313</sup> GGA to RGT and RGM, Alger 30 Aug 1915, AMAE, G1665.

The position of the Governor-General in Algeria and Residents in the protectorates meant that the initiative of the Commission was postponed, and the central authorities returned to it in 1917. Earlier in January 1916, “Africa Day” was organized by the association “L’Algérienne.” The celebrations were modest but were held under the patronage of the President of the Republic. The idea was to sensitize the public in France to the fate of colonial soldiers in the French Army. “L’Algérienne” was founded on December 1, 1914, under the law of July 1, 1901, and was registered under number 156,612. Its headquarters were in Paris, at 33 Boulevard Hausmann. It had around 500 members, and it aimed to visit wounded African soldiers treated in hospitals in Paris or its suburbs. They acted as intermediaries between the wounded and their families. Small gifts were bought and given to the wounded to support their morale. The association had no funds or income. It was not subject to any taxation. At the head of the Administrative Council of the Association was Irma-Séraphina-Paolina Régis – French-born in Italy. Her brother was Max Gis, who was the Mayor of Algiers. Paul Josselin, a naval officer on a pension, also came from Algiers. The association included senators, members of Parliament, professors of the Sorbonne, and lawyers – mainly retirees from Algeria and Tunisia. The association opened workshops where about 40 women worked for free for the injured.<sup>314</sup>

The presence of Muslim soldiers in the French Army was promoted by another association called “Friends of Muslims” (*Les Amitiés Musulmanes*). From 1915 the association published a newspaper under *Les Amitiés Musulmanes*, headed by Maurice Raynaud, member of Parliament and former minister. In the association’s declaration of May 5, 1915, we read: “France has nearly 30 million Muslims, and our armed forces have a large contingent of indigenous soldiers. This fact must be taken seriously, and the courage and loyalty of our Muslim soldiers are worthy of the highest respect. It is imperative that the French people learn about the fate of their Muslim soldiers and that France opposes the German propaganda that tries to undermine this with all possible force and by all possible means.” The association proposed to issue a postage stamp worth five centimes, the sale of which in the metropole and as colonies and protectorates would help raise a fund to help Muslim soldiers and their families. “Arab families will be grateful to us for creating such a stamp with

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<sup>314</sup> MI to MFA: *Sur la société „L’Algérienne”*, Paris, 12 Jan 1916, AMAE, G1666.

their children in mind. On the other hand, it will be an expression of the sympathy of the French for those brave people who shed their blood for our children in defense of our homeland,”<sup>315</sup> we read in the association’s statement.

The note about German propaganda was significant. At the end of 1915, the German Government published a White Book on the Allies calling up the *indigènes* to military service. The Germans were against mobilizing people of color from the colonies.<sup>316</sup> The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated the position on this matter. In January 1916, the American journal *The World* found a copy of this position and published it. The Germans claimed that France and England were sending the barbaric inhabitants of their colonies to the front, who were cutting off the heads and fingers of German soldiers to preserve them as war trophies. They hung necklaces made from the ears of German soldiers around their necks. They were highly ruthless on the battlefield and gouged out the eyes of the fallen, massacring their faces with knives and slitting their throats. These accusations mainly concerned Indian and Senegalese soldiers. Every second massacre was carried out with the permission of French officers. The German ministry appealed to humanity and civilization to withdraw troops of indigenous soldiers from Europe.<sup>317</sup>

The White Paper made similar conclusions. It contained statements of German soldiers and their letters to their families, pointing out the barbarity of soldiers from North Africa and Ghurkas, Sikhs, and Panthars, and Senegalese. “They gouged out their eyes, cut off their heads and ears, and wore them as war trophies.” The Germans claimed in the White Book that “these colored soldiers, brought up in other cultures, are committing crimes under English and French command not only from the point of view of the established rules of war but against civilization and humanity.” Witnesses to these crimes claimed that “these savage French helpers held innocent women and forced them into prostitution.” The White

<sup>315</sup> MW: *Note relative à la création d’un timbre à ETOILE ROUGE et majoration de cinq centimes en faveur de nos soldats indigènes par l’entremise des „AMITIES MUSEULMANES”*, Paris, 5 May 1915, AMAE, G1665; see also: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k941892d?rk=21459;2>.

<sup>316</sup> MW: *Comité de l’Afrique française*, Paris, 19 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668 ((Jan 1917–Sept 1917).

<sup>317</sup> *World* de 18 janvier 1916, in *Comité de l’Afrique française*, Paris, 19 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.

Paper accused the French military authorities of entrusting the clearing of the field after the battle to Senegalese or Moroccan soldiers, who were finishing off wounded Germans who could still be saved only to plunder them. Later the Senegalese sold these things. The black soldiers did not take prisoners. They molested women in POW camps and threatened to send them to Africa to brothels.<sup>318</sup> Counteracting this propaganda was one of the goals of the founders of the “Friends of Muslims” association.

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<sup>318</sup> *Völkerrechtswidrige Verwendung farbiger Truppen auf dem europäischen Kriegsschauplatz durch England und Frankreich*) French translation as: *Emploi contraire au droit des gens, par l'Angleterre et la France de troupes de couleur sur le théâtre de la guerre* in MW: *Comité de l'Afrique française*, Paris, 19 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.



Dixmude (Belgique). Algerian prisoners in winter clothing led from the front from Nieuport, fall/  
winter 1914 (VAL 526/033)

<https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/a01149087232103ncvx/f5a10fc2f9>

## Chapter 5

### Zossen: Cause for Glory or a Stain on Honor?

#### Muslim prisoners and plans of the Germans

On February 1, 1915, the French Consulate in Egypt passed information to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris that Emir Khaled, grandson of Emir Abd El Kader, had left Syria for Berlin in the company of Sheikh Kesberi. Sheikh Kesberi was a person known in the circles of anti-French Algerian emigration and had been presented to Wilhelm II during the visit of the German Emperor to Damascus. As it soon turned out, these people were called to Berlin by the German authorities in connection with the internment by Germany of 800 French soldiers of Algerian origin who had been taken prisoner. According to French sources in Syria, the German authorities intended to direct these soldiers to fight against the Russians. Because the soldiers did not want to sign a declaration of loyalty to the German authorities, the emperor called on Emir Khaled to use the authority of his grandfather, Emir Abd El Kader, to persuade the Algerians to move to Germany.<sup>319</sup>

In this way, the epic began, and it was the subject of careful attention by the French authorities until the very end of the war.

Some of the earliest information about French Muslim soldiers in German captivity was a note from the Consul General of France in Geneva on May 2 and 3, 1915, who wrote that a certain Ferid Bey and other

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<sup>319</sup> Annex to the political message of February 16, 1915, no. 61: *Prisonniers algériens en Allemagne*, AMAE, G1664.

Pan-Islamic agitators had left Geneva for Germany and that the purpose of their journey was a prisoner-of-war camp in Wünsdorf. There were supposed to be soldiers from North Africa handled by German officers who spoke Arabic to win the favor of the soldiers. These officers incited the captives to join the ranks of the Turkish Army, telling them that France and England treated them as *indigènes*, while the Germans wanted the Ottoman Empire as the state of Prophet Muhammad to liberate Muslim countries from European rule. The French Consul expressed concern that this propaganda could prove effective and would harm the morale of indigenous soldiers directed to the front. He suggested that some steps be taken so that the soldiers in captivity would know that France still cares for them.<sup>320</sup>

On May 25, 1915, *le Service des prisonniers de guerre* informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that 3,000 were interned in the Wünsdorf camp near Zossen in Germany, including Muslim prisoners of war – Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans. People from Turkey and Egypt visited them: Abdur Raschid Ibrahim, Halim Sabit Bey, and three members of the Egyptian national party: Mohammad Farid Bey, Dr. Fahmi, and Ali-Shamsi. They were all known propagators of Pan-Islamism and anti-colonialism. The Germans provided the prisoners of war with complete freedom to practice religion and installed the necessary equipment, i.e., baths, kitchens, and provided *halal* food. German newspapers informed readers of the intention to build a mosque for these prisoners. Seven German officers knew the Arabic language with the prisoners, and the German authorities subsidized the publication of an Arabic newspaper, which was distributed to prisoners.<sup>321</sup>

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the army command expected the Germans to draw Muslim soldiers to their side to form them into military units and direct them either to the front or for subversive purposes in North Africa. These assumptions were also shared by the command of British troops in the Middle East, which asked

<sup>320</sup> Consul General of France in Geneva to MFA, Geneva, 4 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>321</sup> MFA, Political and Commercial Affairs Department: *Note pour monsieur Piat*, 25 May 1915, AMAE, G1665; General Consul of France in Geneva to MFA, 4 Jun 1915, SHD, GR 16 N 197; MW to GCC: *Militaires indigènes prisonniers en Allemagne*, Paris, 23 Jun 1915, SHD, GR 16 N 195.

the French command how to deal with former French soldiers if they were captured in Mesopotamia as Turkish troops.<sup>322</sup>

These assumptions were based on statements and propaganda actions by German diplomatic services related to North Africa. One of the best known was the report by Count Gustav von Hardenberg, Consul General of Germany in Tunis and Algiers, before 1914. As an expert on Muslim affairs, von Hardenberg prepared a report on the treatment of African captives. He believed that demonstrating the power of Germany to these captives and emphasizing that Germany is invincible was a suitable method and should make the desired impression on the “color people,” thinking that Germany was their ally, and England and France were their enemies. At the same time, the former Consul expressed that the issue of the Islamic Holy War should not be emphasized in talks with Muslims because the Germans were for them the same infidels as the English, Italians, and French. Since England, Italy, and France had taken their territories, the most appropriate slogan for influencing Muslims should be “Revenge.” Von Hardenberg emphasized that Germany and its emperor were very popular in the Islamic world and that this fact should be used to draw the Muslim population to Germany.<sup>323</sup>

It was not a foregone conclusion that Germany’s strategy would fail to bring the desired results. The French authorities were not entirely sure of the loyalty of North African Muslims. This opinion was expressed by at least some decision-making centers in Paris, including the influential Department of Political and Trade (*Direction des Affaires politiques et commerciales*) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On February 19, 1916, the Department prepared an opinion on the loyalty of Muslim soldiers concerning the dismantling of Algerian auxiliary units and prisoners of war in the Wünsdorf camp. Algerian cavalry units were on the front in Flanders from October 1914, and after a year of service, they were disbanded as the Ministry of War found them of little use at the front. The soldiers of these units could enter the service of regular units, but out of 1,500 of them, only 14 declared willing to continue fighting under the banner

<sup>322</sup> British Embassy, Paris, to MFA, Paris, 16 June 1916, AMAE, G1666; the French command asked the British to hand over such prisoners to the French side – see MW to French Embassy, London: *Au sujet soldats indigènes faits prisonniers en Mésopotamie*, 1 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>323</sup> MFA: *Allemagne, Traitement des prisonniers des races africaines*, Paris, 7 Nov 1917, AMAE, G1668.

of France. The Department concluded that disbanding the unit was not the best solution as keeping such a large group under arms was the best way to control this group. "If out of 1,500 disbanded *goumiers* only 14 volunteered to continue fighting for France, then it can be assumed that at the moment, we have 1,486 ex-soldiers either dissatisfied with their current service or discouraged from continuing it. As long as these soldiers remained underarms, we could be sure about the safety of the south of our Algeria, where these people came from. Our Muslims over the past 27 months have given us no cause for concern about their loyalty, but how will the disbanded soldiers behave in the event of social unrest in Tunisia or southern Algeria?" According to the Department, as of October 6, 1915, the number of French Muslim soldiers in German captivity was 2,500. The Germans intended to hand them over to Turkey so that it would include them in its army. When writing the report, Turkey's front situation was very tense and the evacuation of Entente troops from Gallipoli was expected. The defeat at Gallipoli, combined with the appearance of French Muslims in the Turkish Army, could have had a very negative impact on the morale of North African soldiers fighting in the French Army and on the mood of the Muslim population in North Africa. Entente's prestige in the Islamic world would be severely tarnished, and this, in turn, would stimulate the activity of German-Turkish emissaries in North Africa agitating for the separation of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco from France.<sup>324</sup>

German propagandists spread rumors that the separation of North Africa from France by the hands of Muslim soldiers who had been captured by the Germans and joined the Turkish Army was very likely. On December 25, 1916, the Governor-General of Algeria handed over to the Minister of Foreign Affairs copies of the translation of two letters written in Arabic on October 2 and 16, 1916, by two soldiers from Algerian cavalry units, who were in German captivity. Both letters were addressed to local notables and were handed over to the French commander of the military region of Ghardaia. The letters were signed, which was to prove their authenticity. However, the fact that they were sent from a prisoner-of-war camp under censorship made one approach their content with caution. The first of these letters said that three groups of soldiers had left

<sup>324</sup> MFA, Political and Commercial Affairs Department: *Au sujet de licenciements des goumiers et du contentement de nos prisonniers musulmans de servir dans l'armée turque*, 19 Feb 1916, AMAE, G1666.

the Zossen camp and were directed to the south of the Sahara, near the border with Tunisia, to free the region from French occupation. The second one was written that 13 hundred soldiers left the camp in Wünsdorf and that “all *spahis* were healthy.” According to the French commander of Ghardaia, the last sentence of the second list was a cipher indicating that there were no Algerian *spahis* among the soldiers sent to the Sahara and that they had been loyal to France.<sup>325</sup>

On December 4, 1916, the Swiss newspaper *La Gazette de Lauzanne* wrote about the plans of the Germans to start an anti-French uprising in North Africa with the help of the captured Muslim soldiers. The article was carefully studied in the *Direction des Affaires politiques et commerciales* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the article, the German plans failed because the French *indigènes* remained loyal to France. Most of the Muslim prisoners of war were grouped in the camp in Zossen. Wilhelm II ordered the building of a wooden mosque there. The Turkish Ambassador, accompanied by a descendant of Abd El Kader, a Syrian named Ali Pasha, and several Egyptians and Tunisians who had gone over to the German side, arrived at the camp. The Ambassador emphasized that the soldiers were cared for and could practice their faith, while the camp administration provided them with routine food. He said that Ottoman Empire was an ally of the Central Powers, and the Ottoman Sultan would like Muslim soldiers to join him. Those who agreed to this would receive money to travel to Constantinople. However, this appeal had no effect. Several Algerian soldiers stepped out of the ranks and declared that they were French and not for sale. Even so, the ceremony continued to include the solemn and pompous declaration of the Islamic Holy War. A common prayer led by a Tunisian clergyman was ordered. Soldiers were again encouraged to switch to the Sultan’s side, but no one decided to do so. The newspaper assessed that the behavior of the prisoners testified to their attachment to France and marked the complete failure of the German plan for the Islamic Holy War as a means of subversion against England and France.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>325</sup> GGA to PC and MFA, 25 Dec 1916; (Soldats Musulmans, 1667); Captain Louis, Head of the Laghouat Annex, Indigenous Affairs to the Military Commander of the Ghardaia Territory, Laghouat, 17 Nov 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>326</sup> MFA, Political and Commercial Affairs Department: *Article de la Gazette de Lauzanne sur les prisonniers français musulmans*, 9 Dec 1916, AMAE, G1667.

## God is on the side of the Caliph

The data on the number of Muslim soldiers in captivity, especially those who joined or were conscripted into the Turkish Army, differ. On July 8, 1916, the French military intelligence reported from Constantinople that on May 25, 1916, trains with the transport of troops destined for Baghdad had arrived in that city over the past few nights. There were two divisions of Muslim prisoners of war; one of these divisions consisted of Algerian and Moroccan *tirailleurs*, and the other was of Russian Tatars. This news could not be accurate, as the division numbered at least 10,000 soldiers in the French Army. Previous information had not stated that such a large number of Muslim soldiers had been captured by the Germans.<sup>327</sup>

We know what happened with the soldiers in POW camps from the accounts of the soldiers themselves. Some were released from captivity due to their health condition and handed over to the Swiss authorities. A few managed to escape from the camp. Others escaped from the Turkish Army to which they were had been directed from the camp. British troops captured still others in Mesopotamia during battles with the Turkish Army, and then handed them over to the French authorities. They were all interrogated by the French military authorities and passed on their stories of being in captivity. These stories were pro-French, sometimes patriotic, emphasizing the loyalty and devotion to France and the heroism of prisoners who did not join the enemy ranks voluntarily despite many forms of pressure exerted by the Germans. This nature of the accounts is understandable given the circumstances in which they were drawn up. At the time of questioning by the French military authorities, the lives of these soldiers were hanging in the balance. They could be recognized as deserters and traitors and then shot. Some of them met this very fate: they were sentenced to death *in absentia* for treason.

The camp's origins for Muslim prisoners are mentioned in the account of a soldier from the 158th Infantry Regiment named Jean-Marie Darches, who was captured on October 11, 1914, and escaped to the French side on June 20, 1916. The soldier confirmed that in December 1914, the Germans grouped in the Hameln camp in one barrack all the French soldiers of Arab origin who had been in various camps. There were *tirailleurs*, *spahis*, *spahis auxiliaires* and *goumiers*. Then they were subjected

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<sup>327</sup> MW to MFA, 8 Jul 1916, No. 4387 9/II, AMAE, G1667.

to strong urging by the German military services. Civilians came to the camp and spoke French with *goumiers* who knew the language. German emissaries urged the soldiers to go to Turkey and join the army of the Sultan, who was their religious leader, and those soldiers, fighting alongside France, fought against the Sultan, for which Muhammad would refuse them entry to Paradise. They were also promised better food and release from forced labor. However, the *goumiers* flatly refused.<sup>328</sup>

From 1916 there was also a protocol from the interrogation of a *tirailleur* named Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud, who was a certified medical assistant from the Faculty of Medicine in Algiers. This soldier stayed in Zossen from the autumn of 1914, and on June 3, 1915, he was transferred to the second camp in Wünsdorf. There were 2,450 *tirailleurs* alone in Zossen. The second camp housed cavalymen from auxiliary units (*spahis auxiliaires*) and Russian Muslims, 3,000 people. Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud stayed in Wünsdorf until August 11, 1915, from where he was sent to the Laubau camp in Silesia and then repatriated to France on October 13, 1916. During his stay in the Zossen camp, approx. 1,000 Tunisians were formed into a battalion to fight on the Turkish side under former Lieutenant Boukabouya and Sergeant deserter Sedrati, a former school teacher from Djama Ezzitoune, Tunisia. In Wünsdorf, the Germans set up a recruitment office operated by Algerian and Tunisian prisoners of war to draw up soldiers ready to join the Turkish Army. The Germans suggested that Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud was sent to Baghdad as a medical worker with a monthly salary of 600 marks, which was a large sum of money. However, he refused, and because it was decided that it would not be possible to persuade him to join the Turkish Army, and that he had been significantly weakened due to typhus, he was repatriated to France.<sup>329</sup>

<sup>328</sup> MW to MFA: *Extrait du rapport du sergent-major Darches Jean-Marie, 158<sup>ème</sup> Régiment d'Infanterie, évadé d'Alemangne, au sujet de la pression exercé sur les contingents musulmans prisonniers*, 20 Jun 1916, AMAE G1666. Prisoners of war also wrote that in the camp in Wünsdorf near Berlin, the Germans were conducting an anti-French campaign in letters to their families – see The Administrator of the Mixed Municipality of Ammi-Moussa to the Prefect of Oran, Ammi-Moussa, 29 Nov 1915, AMAE, G1666.

<sup>329</sup> The First Class Interpreter Mercier, Head of the Assistance and Surveillance Service for the Indigenous Military of the Unit d'Aix, to the General Commanding the 15th Region, Marseille, 11 Dec 1916, AMAE, G1667.

Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud gives a detailed account of the life of the captives in Zossen. Turkish flags hung over the barracks. *Tirailleurs* were regularly collected in front of the mosque, informed about the Turkish Army's successes, and urged to go over to the side of the Ottoman Caliph. Most of them did not understand what was said because Turkish civilians spoke a literary Arabic language that they did not know. When these agitators' efforts were unsuccessful, the soldiers were starved for 5–6 days and forced to work hard. Then they were again offered to enlist in the Turkish Army and were told that they would receive a bonus of 500 marks, while the French only paid them 250 francs. Some *tirailleurs* agreed that this proposal was beneficial, and they were willing to enlist in the Turkish Army. Only the Moroccans immediately said that they would not go over to Turkey. When the moment came to sign the contract, the Germans changed their attitude towards the prisoners and stopped repressing them. Some Tunisians accepted the offer of service to the Sultan and signed engagements. However, there were few of them. After leaving Zossen Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud learned that the Germans had formed a battalion of Tunisians and Algerians to be sent to Turkey. In Zossen, Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud met Lieutenant Boukabouya, who was in the camp for eight days and actively persuaded the soldiers to move to the Turkish side. A man then came to the camp who declared that he was the brother of Emir Khaled, a captain of the French Army and the grandson of Abd El Khader. He talked to the prisoners and told them that his brother asked them that if they returned to the French Army, they should not shoot German soldiers but only fire in the air.<sup>330</sup>

At the end of the summer of 1915, the Muslim prisoners were transferred from Zossen to a new camp 6 km away in Wünsdorf. This camp had been constructed specifically for Muslim soldiers and was called Halbmöndlager. A mosque was built in this camp, and a recruiting office was

<sup>330</sup> Statement by paramedic Ouyahya Areski Ben Messoud, Aix en Provence, 8 Dec 1916, AMAE, G1667. The last news sparked the disbelief of the Resident-General in Tunisia, who found it unlikely that Emir Khaled, known as Captain Khaled, a graduate of Saint-Cyr, officer and sacrificial soldier in the front line of France in Europe, would be able to give such advice to soldiers. The Resident believed that the Germans and the Turks were manipulating the names of Emir Khaled and Emir Ali to drag Muslim soldiers to their side – see, RGT to PC and MFA: *A/s des déclarations d'un tirailleur marocain repatrié d'Allemagne*, Rabat, 18 Feb 1917, AMAE, G1668.

set up for prisoners of war from Algerians who could write and read. Tunisian prisoners were to make lists of all prisoners and deliver them to the so-called Turkish office where Tunisians living in Turkey worked and brought specially from Constantinople to convince prisoners to go over to Turkey. They told them, among other things, that Tunisia and Algeria had been separated from the rest of the Turkish provinces by France, but that this was a temporary situation and that Pashas had already been appointed, who would soon govern the two provinces. Most Tunisians listened to these statements and believed them. Conversely, Algerians did not believe these stories. The discussions between the various Tunisians and Algerians became more and more heated, and blows began. As a result, the camp authorities separated the Tunisians from the Algerians with a fence guards. Moroccans stayed aloof from these discussions and never joined in. Sanitary conditions in Wünsdorf were terrible, especially in winter. There were lice everywhere, and people fell ill with typhus. In three months of the typhus epidemic, at least 50 prisoners died. The author of this report also suffered from typhus but was cured in a military hospital in Zossen. On August 11, 1915, he was sent to the Laubau camp in Silesia, where conditions were better and discipline was less severe. There were 26 Muslim prisoners of war in this camp, and no propaganda action was conducted against them. They were all expelled from the Wünsdorf camp for conducting anti-German propaganda. In the Wünsdorf camp, the magazine *El Adell* (Le Droiture), officially edited in Constantinople and currently in Berlin, was distributed among the prisoners. According to the report, it contained false information about the events on the war fronts.<sup>331</sup>

The situation in Zossen in 1915 was reported by another soldier named Jacques Bannes, a sergeant from 32nd Company of the 7th Colonial Infantry Regiment and in civilian life, a school teacher from Bingerville in Côte d'Ivoire. In April 1915, the soldier was a prisoner of war in the Alten Grabour camp, from where he had been sent as a "Muslim soldier" to Halbmondlager. The Germans decided to group all Muslims in one place. In Zossen, there was a separate place for prayer called a mosque, but it was a room used to incite the soldiers to join Turkey. There were about 4,000 prisoners in the camp, including 3 thousand Algerians,

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<sup>331</sup> Ibidem.

Tunisians and Moroccans, and a few Senegalese. All the prisoners of war had to attend meetings where the outstanding achievements of Turkey were discussed. The Germans used various measures to persuade the prisoners of war to come over to their side. They tried to bribe the soldiers with additional cigarette rations. Those who tried to undermine the arguments of German propagandists received reduced food rations, were imprisoned, and were forbidden to correspond with their families. The prisoners were divided into groups of those who were willing to join Turkey and the most tenacious. The latter were assigned commanders known to use severe punishments on soldiers. The most resistant were sent to prison camps. Algerians and Moroccans remained loyal to France.

According to this soldier, the highest number of switching cases to the German side was among Tunisians. In June 1915, the report's author was sent to the Görlitz camp as a punishment for refusing to join the Turkish Army. Jacques Bannes stressed several times that the Algerians and Moroccans remained loyal to France, but the number of crossings to the enemy side was high among the Tunisians. Already in the new camp, he heard rumors that he could not verify that in Zossen that over 800 soldiers had joined the Turks. Finally, Bannes pointed to the role played by Lieutenant Boukabouya of the 7th Regiment of Algerian *tirailleurs* in the camp. He was a devoted assistant to the Germans and a fierce propagandist. After the capture of Przemyśl by the Germans and Austrians, he ordered the trumpeters to trumpet the *Au drapeau* in front of German flags. "I am accusing this officer of treason,"<sup>332</sup> concluded Bannes.

This report was sent to the Resident-General of Tunisia, who considered that the information was inaccurate. According to the Resident, the number of captured Tunisian soldiers could not exceed 715. All Tunisian prisoners were identified. As it was customary among Algerian *tirailleurs* to say that they were Tunisians, this might make the number of 800 Tunisian prisoners credible, but the Tunisian authorities quickly established the identity of all Algerians in Zossen. According to the Resident, out of 715 Tunisian prisoners of war in German captivity, 101 people volunteered to cooperate with the Germans. This number could be estimated because at the end of 1916, these people had stopped writing letters to their families. They did not send any complaints about bad treatment

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<sup>332</sup> Jacques Bannes, Teacher in Bingerville (Ivory Coast), Sergeant in the 7th Colonial Infantry Regiment, 32nd Company, 31 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.

by the Germans or the lack of food parcels. It was also possible that some of these people stopped writing because of the repressions in the camp. However, the number of 101 Tunisians who went over to the Germans was the maximum. In this situation, the claim that the Tunisians were the core of the group that had gone over to the Germans was exaggerated, emphasized Resident.<sup>333</sup>

### *My life in Halbmondlager*

The most extensive account of Zossen and the fate of Muslim soldiers in German captivity was made by the Algerian spahi Taouti Ben Yahia, a sergeant (*maréchal des logis*) in auxiliary cavalry (*spahis auxiliaire*). The soldier voluntarily enlisted in the army on August 25, 1914, and was taken prisoner on October 12, 1914. Since French prisoners of war could be sent to Switzerland for treatment from February 1916, Taouti Ben Yahia was transported on May 18, 1916, to Leysin, Switzerland, and on June 15, he was repatriated to France, where he was granted the status of *réservé no. 1*, that is, an invalid who was incapable of further military service. Taouti Ben Yahia returned home to write a letter to Professor Edouard Montet, an Arabist at the University of Geneva and the author of a booklet, *L'Islam et la France*. This publication was a response to the criticism of French policy towards Muslims, or rather the racism of French officers towards Muslim soldiers, included in the brochure entitled *L'Islam dans l'armée française* of 1915, written by El Hadj Abdallah, actually Rabah Boukabouya. The French authorized Professor Montet to supervise the conditions in which interned Muslim prisoners of war were held in Switzerland. Montet became a popular and well-liked figure among interned Muslims. During his monthly visits, he was interested in the internment regime and the possibilities for soldiers to practice religion. Thanks to Montet, the living conditions of the interned soldiers improved.<sup>334</sup>

The grouping of all Muslim prisoners in one camp took place in December 1914 after the German authorities reached an agreement with the Turkish side. Some of the prisoners assumed that the Germans were

<sup>333</sup> RGT to PC and MFA: *Au sujet de l'attitude des soldats musulmans de l'armée française internes à Zossen*, Tunis, 31 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>334</sup> Taouti Ben Yahia, Algeria, to Edouard Montet, Professor at the University of Geneva, 1 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

getting ready to send them all to Constantinople. However, the German camp overseers told them that it was about humanitarian considerations, namely allowing Muslims to practice their faith together and providing better conditions for soldiers from Africa and Asia. The German climate was very tough to bear. The author wrote that he left the Merseburg camp on December 31, 1914, with about 250 comrades. In Merseburg, prisoners of war were regularly indoctrinated. They were gathered at the assembly square, and the translator translated the commandant's information about the situation at the front into the Egyptian dialect. One of these communications was the news that Turkey had entered into a *Jihad* against Christian countries other than Germany and Austria. Another time the commandant said that England refused to hand over to Turkey two ships ordered earlier from British shipyards at the beginning of the war. The commandant assessed England's conduct as theft. Fortunately, Germany turned out to be generous and gave Turkey its two finest cruisers, *Breslau* and *Goeben*. Prisoners of North Africa were repeatedly reminded that all Russian prisoners of Turkish origin who were in Germany responded to the Ottoman Caliph's call and joined the Turkish Army fighting against Russia. The camp commandant addressed soldiers from North Africa another time, saying that Morocco was on fire because the French bombed Marrakesh to punish Moroccans who had revolted. They had spared neither women nor children. In response to this, several Algerians stepped forward and said that they did not understand what the German authorities expected of them as Algerians. "Many of us have worked in the French administration and have sworn allegiance to France that cares well for our families. As far as Morocco is concerned, the presented events do not interest us at all, as they concern a completely different territory", said the Algerians. According to the author of the letter, some Algerians made a declaration in which it was written: "You tell us a lot about religion, but you know as well as we do that we put *nationalité* first before religion; we are disciples of Muhammad, but above all we are French." This event took place on November 23, 1914, and 16 non-commissioned officers signed the declaration. A copy of this declaration was given to a French major named Fromant, who was the head of the sanitary section in the camp.<sup>335</sup>

The text of the declaration above demonstrated the polarization of views among indigenous soldiers about who they were. In the case

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<sup>335</sup> Ibidem.

of some, religious affiliations weakened, and national consciousness came to the fore. This was accompanied by the strengthening of the sense of ties with the metropole. On the other hand, the activity of Pan-Islamists, symbolized by Lieutenant Boukabouya, indicated that some soldiers were dissociating themselves from the secularist system of colonialism and felt a strong bond with religion. These soldiers heard the words of the Tunisian Sheikh Salah, who was in Zossen and had welcomed the prisoners from Merseburg. This man emphasized his descent from the Prophet Muhammad, which strengthened his authority in the soldiers' eyes. Sheikh told them that the French had forced them to serve in the French Army, but now in Germany, they would rest and regain strength. The conditions in Zossen were much better than those in Merseburg, where the barracks were still under construction, and the prisoners slept in the open for the first two weeks. In Zossen there was *halal* food, a bathhouse, and a prayer room. The trip to this camp itself was surprising. The prisoners were taken in cattle cars, but at each stopping station, people gave them bread and applauded. After some time, the astonished prisoners realized that the local people had been misled because they thought that Muslims from North Africa were going to the front to fight on the side of Germany and Turkey against the Russians. There were French soldiers in the camp, but the new arrivals of North African *indigènes* were placed in separate barracks and fenced off from the French. Even so, Muslim soldiers found ways to infiltrate the French, who, according to the German authorities, weakened the *indigènes'* tendency to join the ranks of the Turkish Army. Therefore, on February 9 and 19, 1915, Muslim soldiers marched in two convoys to Halbmondslager in the suburbs of Zossen, 5-6 km from the French camp. The new camp was clean and healthy. The village of Wünsdorf was nearby. The new camp could accommodate five battalions. One was an Indian battalion that arrived later. Soldiers who committed offenses ended up in a punitive company that practiced six hours a day in the snow and slept outdoors. 55 Irish prisoners of war, who joined the German Army, lived in a separate barrack. There was a mosque, a bathhouse, a canteen, and a schoolroom in the camp.<sup>336</sup>

The Sheikh Saleh mentioned above, already in his welcome speech, appealed to the prisoners who had arrived to join the army of the Ottoman Caliph. He gave the following reasoning for such a step. Sheikh said:

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<sup>336</sup> Ibidem.

*I am of Tunisian origin. I was a teacher in Tunis and had a well-paid job as a civil servant. However, I could not bear the French's injustice to the Muslims – my brothers in faith. I gave up everything and fled to Syria as a hajere (a forced emigrant). I soon became a close friend of Enver Pacha and entered Tripolitaine because of the Italo-Turkish War. Our brothers of faith in this new country respected me greatly. The French have never done as much good for us as our brothers in faith. The French have caused you nothing but misfortune. You pay high and unfair taxes and get none of it; your goods and real estate are taken away from you and transferred to foreigners – Spaniards or Italians; even Jews have more rights than you and at every level of administration are valued more than Arabs. Taking all this into account, you made the mistake of engaging in the French Army, which you serve without any benefit to yourself. Today, when Turkey has declared the Holy War against Christians, you prove that you are good Muslims. The Sultan addresses you through me; answer his call.*<sup>337</sup>

One of the prisoners, Houra Bouzare of Ténès, Algeria, replied to Sheikh that he had a different view of the current situation and hoped to improve his situation after the end of the war if France won it. "A child should not fight against his mother unless he is a coward," he said. The Sheikh did not like this answer but then became interested in the letter's author because he was from the south of Algeria. "He asked me what the situation was there and wanted to know about the most influential people in the region, especially the religious leaders." Taouti Ben Yahia replied that French domination in the desert area is so strong that Arabs living there voluntarily send their children to study in France, creating a network of ties between Algeria and France that determine Arab loyalty to France and cannot be torn apart. Another soldier, a Kabyle named Ben-abid Abdelmajid from Oued Amizour in Algeria, made a similar statement. He stated: "The Kabyles are, by their own voluntary choice, the basic Algerian troops in the French Army, and I am the 9th in my family to serve under the French banner." When asked: "Why is he fighting Germany if you are not a French citizen," he replied: "The Germans must understand well our solidarity with the French after they bombed the ports of Kabylia in the first days after the declaration of war."<sup>338</sup>

Each of the four battalions formed in the camp consisted of 1,000 soldiers who occupied 12 to 15 barracks. The battalion was commanded

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<sup>337</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>338</sup> Ibidem.

by a German lieutenant who was assisted by *feldwebel* – a non-commissioned officer with the rank of sergeant. The battalion was divided into four companies, commanded by a German non-commissioned officer, who had sergeants and corporals appointed from among the prisoners to help. The 1st Battalion initially consisted of captured prisoners and then volunteered to join the Turkish Army. The 2nd Battalion mainly was Tunisian. The third consisted of Moroccan and Algerian *goumiers*, civilians, and cripples. A large number of Arab prisoners of war had had their limbs amputated. Many had lung disease. The 4th Battalion consisted of the newcomers and those soldiers from the 1st Battalion who refused to join the Turkish Army. This battalion was not assembled until May 1915, after the arrival of new prisoners of war captured on April 22, 1915, at the Battle of Langemark. Immediately after arriving at the camp, the POWs were interrogated. Each of them was asked whether the French had treated him well; whether he enjoyed the same rights as the French; whether the law in his place of residence was the same for French and non-French; whether his religion was respected; whether his tax revenues were used to improve his situation; whether he volunteered for the army or was forced to; would he be pleased with the victory of Germany and Turkey in war. The Germans divided the interviewees into several categories: resistant, susceptible, *jeune algérien*, and others. The latter term meant a person faithful to France. The Germans sent the most reluctant – about 250 soldiers to various camps with Russian prisoners of war, and the remaining ones formed the 1st Battalion, which was to be the Holy Fighters' Battalion. This battalion was in a privileged position. Its soldiers received increased rations and went for walks under the supervision of guards. Magazines promoting the Holy War were distributed among the soldiers. The commandant's office forced some prisoners to photograph themselves against the background of the Turkish flag. The history of the Great War was taught in the classroom, and a geographical map of the world after Germany won the war was presented. It showed that the territories occupied by France in North Africa would return under Turkish rule. The battalion received blue, then grey, uniforms of German infantry with Turkish police caps, complete equipment, and a daily pay of 0.25 francs. The battalion received a banner and fanfare. To protect the 1st Battalion from the anger of other battalions, its barracks were fenced off with a wooden fence, and two machine guns were set up to prevent an attack on

the “renegades,” which was how the soldiers of the 1st Battalion were called in the camp.<sup>339</sup>

However, another way to put pressure on soldiers was withholding their repatriation. Many of the prisoners were in poor health and qualified for treatment in Switzerland, where they were interned after recovering and subsequently repatriated. French soldiers began to be transferred to Switzerland in February 1916, but prisoners of Zossen were ignored until May 1916. Petitions they wrote to the Camp Commandant for their internment in Switzerland were rejected. As a result of agitation and intimidation, 1,020 prisoners of war reported to the Turkish Army, according to Taouti Ben Yahia. They expressed their willingness to go to the battlefield against the Russian and British troops on the side of the Turkish Army. Four convoys of North African soldiers left the camp for Constantinople: in the summer of 1915, 10 soldiers left, on February 8, 1916 – 250 soldiers, in March 1916 – 750 soldiers, and in May 1916 – 10 soldiers. They were supposed to be mainly *algériens*, but this term also included the people of Tunisia. The rest of Taouti Ben Yahia’s account was based on the stories of his interlocutors from the camp, who were interned with him in Switzerland and then returned to their homes in Algeria. According to these interlocutors, the soldiers of the 1st Battalion in Constantinople were introduced to the Sultan himself. It happened during the Friday prayer in the mosque. The soldiers formed a line along which the Sultan passed. After some time, a group of them was sent to the Caucasus, and Mesopotamia. They were promised they would be sent to peaceful regions, but the reality turned out quite different. The conditions of service were harsh, and Turkish officers were constantly humiliating them. They decided to desert when they realized that they had made a mistake by joining the Turkish Army. However, no more than 50 managed to confuse their commanders and go over to the side of the Russians or the British. Of the 1,020 soldiers conscripted into the Turkish Army and sent to Constantinople in 1917, no more than 300 remained alive. The Turks shot some. Others shot themselves. Still, others deserted and went missing.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>340</sup> Ibidem. The camp authorities allowed prisoners to erect two monuments for their own: one in honor of French and British Muslims and the other – Russian Muslims. The monuments were unveiled on July 31, 1916, in the presence of the German-Turkish delegation from Berlin and the representation of prisoners of war.

### Soldier's death

The camp in Zossen was visited several times by diplomats from the Spanish Embassy in Berlin, which represented the interests of France in Germany. Reports on these visits can be considered impartial and factual. On December 22, 1916, an employee of the Embassy, Antonio Ferratges, was in the camp Halbmondlager in Zossen because of the death of one of the French Muslim prisoners. The soldier did not stop at the *halt* command and was shot by a guard. The Embassy, therefore, sent a verbal note to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a report on Ferratges's visit. There were 3,200 French Muslims in the camp, including 500 Tunisians, 200 Moroccans, and 2,500 Algerians. The prisoners formed a Relief Committee (*Comité de secours*), and Ferratges spoke to its members in the presence of witnesses. Each of the four battalions had a representative on the Committee. The prisoners received food parcels from charities in Tunisia and Morocco but complained that Algerian organizations were insufficient. Each soldier received a parcel every 35 days on average. Parcels with biscuits regularly came from France. The parcels were not shared with the 200 deserters who lived with the prisoners and volunteered to fight alongside Turkey. The Spanish diplomat had the impression that deserters had no choice but to join the Turkish Army. German propaganda was constantly working to bring Muslim soldiers over to Turkey, but the chairman of the Relief Committee assured his Spanish interlocutor that it was not having any success, as the soldiers were and would remain loyal to France. There were no rooms in the camp for work or punishment. Two hundred prisoners worked 4 hours a day on work related to the functioning of the camp. The barracks were underheated; extra blankets were needed. Sanitary conditions were good. Seventy-five soldiers had a cold due to underheating and were kept in the hospital barrack. The Swiss Commission responsible for qualifying prisoners for treatment and internment in Switzerland never was in this camp. The soldiers complained that some of the parcels sent to the camp had been torn open, and some of the parcels sent by families did not come. The prisoners complained of the severe discipline. There was an average of 14 penalties daily. The punished were kept in solitary confinement for several days.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Spanish Embassy in Berlin. French Affairs: *Note Verbale*, 8 Jan 1917, AMAE, G1667.

In April 1917, the French Consul in Rotterdam disclosed that he had obtained information from two French soldiers who had escaped from the camp in Dulmen. Algerian *tirailleurs* were kept in this camp. According to the reports of the escapees, some Algerian soldiers expressed their willingness to voluntarily join the Turkish Army and that they had been transported to the camp in Zossen. This information came from Algerian Israelites from the 9th Regiment of Zouaves who had been sent by the Germans to Zossen as Muslims by mistake. When the Germans realized their mistake, they sent the Israelites back to Dulmen, and then they related what they saw in Zossen. The *indigènes* in Zossen were divided into two groups – those who wanted to join the Turkish Army and those who refused to join the Turks. In total, three battalions were assembled in Zossen, which were to be sent to the Romanian front.<sup>342</sup>

After February 26, 1917, the Muslim prisoners of war interned in Zossen-Wünsdorf were transferred to Romania, where they were employed to work in the field. From February 26, 1917, to April 30, 1917 – the day of the subsequent visit of Spanish diplomats to Zossen – 2,450 French Muslims were sent to Romania. There were 701 sick, invalids, and 150 prisoners left in the camps, busy with cleaning works. The original camp was divided into two, and each had its administration. About 1,300 Russian Tatars were grouped in one of them. The prisoners complained the most about the climate. It was supposed to be better in Romania, and most prisoners wanted a change of camp. Several Algerians asked Spanish diplomats to plead with the Governor-General of Algeria to sent their naturalization certificates. They believed that if they had such a certificate, they would be transferred to a camp for French-born in Europe, where there were better conditions of captivity.<sup>343</sup>

On May 31, 1917, after another visit to Zossen, the Spanish Embassy sent another note to the German side, in which it drew attention to the irregular deliveries of food parcels and letters for prisoners. There was also a need to repatriate three prisoner-orderlies.<sup>344</sup> On November 20, 1917, another visit to the camp by Spanish diplomats took place. José

<sup>342</sup> Consulate General of France in Rotterdam to MFA, Political and Commercial Affairs Department, Rotterdam, 7 Apr 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>343</sup> Copy, in translation, of a report prepared by the Delegate of the Royal Spanish Embassy in Berlin, 31 May 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>344</sup> Spanish Embassy in Berlin. French Affairs: *Note verbale*, Berlin, 31 May 1917, AMAE, G1667.

de Carranza and Antonio Ferrantges provided a comprehensive report on that visit. In Zossen, there were 315 French prisoners of war in the camp, including 110 Tunisians, 172 Algerians, and 33 Moroccans. Two thousand nine hundred other prisoners of war from these countries were working in Romania at the same time and were housed in 4 camps. The soldiers had good conditions. There was an ample space open to prisoners. The sanitary conditions and administrative services of Spanish diplomacy were deemed adequate. The heating system still did not work, and that was one critical remark. The prisoners complained about the irregular and insufficient supply of biscuits. In the transport from August 22, 1917, 10 boxes with 216 kg were missing. The Relief Committee noted the severe difficulties in delivering biscuits and food parcels for prisoners of war working in Romania. From July 20 to October 18, only three biscuit wagons were sent there. The prisoners were informed that the management of railroads was unable to provide additional wagons for transport. On October 18, 7,000 parcels were sent, but the Committee still had 17.3 thousand in warehouses that deteriorated quickly. Tunisians said that what they got was enough for them. Algerians asked for more tobacco and oil. The Moroccans said they lacked everything. There were 19 soldiers with bronchitis in the infirmary. They asked for more beds and soap. They complained about the cold in the barracks. Prisoners were employed to work in the camp and did not complain about the too strict discipline. The Spanish diplomats concluded that the visit had left a good impression.<sup>345</sup>

### *For good luck*

From June 1916, the French authorities began to receive information that former French soldiers from North Africa were in the Turkish Army units. On July 20, 1916, the French military attaché in Romania informed about former French prisoners of war from German camps for Muslims in the 55th Turkish division in Baghdad. Similar news came from the British War Office that on June 12, the Commander of the British Expeditionary Corps in the Tigris region reported that Arabs were fighting in the Turkish units and that their unit had up to 1,000 soldiers. They

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<sup>345</sup> Copy, in translation, of a report prepared by the Delegate of the Royal Spanish Embassy in Berlin, 31 May 1917, AMAE, G1668.

arrived in the Baghdad area on May 11. They fought in Turkish uniforms, and most of them were directed to the Kut region. Other troops of Arabs and French prisoners of war from German camps were located near Aleppo in Syria.<sup>346</sup>

Soon refugees from Arab battalions began to enter the British troops. The British sent them back to Egypt for the French Military Mission in Egypt, which initially directed them to Algiers or Casablanca, depending on where they had come from. Tunisians were sent to Tunis via Algiers. In November 1916, Arab deserters from the Turkish Army were to be directed first to the main operating base in Alais, where they were to be monitored to see if they had not previously deserted from the French Army.<sup>347</sup> Not all French soldiers in Mesopotamia had deserted. Some were taken prisoner by the British. The French Minister of War assumed that these soldiers did not voluntarily come back to the side of France and should therefore be treated as suspects of treason. They fought with weapons against France's allies, and therefore against France. They could not be directed to their parent units right away as this could negatively affect the morale of other indigenous soldiers.<sup>348</sup>

On July 18, 1916, one such refugee was handed over to the French Military Mission in Egypt, and a British officer had previously been interrogated him. He was a Moroccan named Aiyesh Ben Mohammed, who was captured by the Germans on October 6, 1915, during the fighting in Champagne. He was severely injured and spent three months in hospital, where he said he was well looked after. This soldier, however, did not feel the slightest sympathy for the Germans, as he believed that the Germans fiercely fought the soldiers of his Moroccan regiment on the battlefield, often stabbing the wounded to death with bayonets. This soldier had been sent to the camp in Zossen, from where – as he emphasized – he was forced to join the Turkish Army along with the rest of the prisoners and sent to Constantinople. The soldiers from Zossen stayed in this city for 38 days, of which 24 were in the barracks and 14 in military training under the command of Turkish officers. There they received new uniforms. On May 1, the entire group – 400 North African Muslims, 40 Indians,

<sup>346</sup> Colonel de la Panouse, Military Attaché of the Embassy of France in England to General Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armed Forces, London, 20 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>347</sup> MW to PC and MFA, 11 Nov 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>348</sup> MW to PC and MFA, 14 Nov 1916, AMAE, G1667.

and a battalion of Russian Tatars arrived in Baghdad. During the trip from Zossen to Baghdad, the group of North African Muslims decreased from 500 to 400 due to disease and desertion. In Baghdad, Aiyesh Ben Mohammed deserted and, disguised as an Arab, initially tried to reach Egypt with four other Moroccans and three Indians. However, after 12 days, they returned to Aleppo and stayed there until the 24th day after their escape. They also learned about the offensive of British troops in the south of Mesopotamia and decided to return to Baghdad to get close to the front line and go over to the British side. They traveled through Nisibin, Mardin, and Mosul, where they met a group of British prisoners. They gave them a letter explaining their situation to the British at the front, but it was lost when the refugees crossed the river to Samarra. They were robbed there but managed to escape from the local Arabs and made their way to the outskirts of Baghdad. The fugitives advanced along the Tigris towards Nasiriyeh. Aiyesh was the only one who knew how to swim, and after having swum across the river and walking through the marshes for a few hours, he reached the British lines in the Imam-al-Mansour area. The interviewee emphasized that he and other soldiers had no choice and could not refuse service in the Turkish Army. He also stressed that the French subjects deserted *en masse* at every possible opportunity. He described it as ridiculous to suppose that North African Muslim soldiers might have been fighting on the Turkish side for religious reasons. The British officer who conducted the interrogation concluded his report by writing: "This young man is brilliant and has a great gift of observation and memorization of names. He has suffered five wounds and carries five bullets in his body, yet he is in great physical shape and mental disposition after such a long journey. If he is a typical Moroccan soldier, then his military unit must have great merits in the service."<sup>349</sup>

On May 20, 1917, the Vice-Consul in Bouchir, on the Persian coast of the Persian Gulf, informed that Algerian *tirailleurs* who had been taken prisoner at Verdun and on the Somme were liberated in Baghdad by the British. Some of these soldiers were forcibly conscripted into the Turkish Army and managed to get across the front line to the British side. From there, they were transported to Bombay and then to France. In Bombay, they approached the French Consulate to help purchase the necessary

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<sup>349</sup> Interrogation of a Moroccan rifleman who, enlisted by force in the Ottoman army, joined the English lines in Mesopotamia, French military mission in Egypt, 19 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1667.

supplies, especially tobacco, and the Consul gave them a grant from his own money. The Consul from Bombay pointed out that no one had notified him of this repatriation and proposed that the Consul from Baghdad should inform him of any such repatriation in the future.<sup>350</sup>

On August 6, 1917, the French Military Mission in Egypt informed Paris that the information collected from deserters showed that about 1,000 soldiers from North Africa had been recruited into the Turkish Army. About 800 of these recruits deserted, with about 700 dying in the desert, either killed or died of exhaustion. Most of these soldiers were Muslims from Algeria. The Mission report noted that indigenous soldiers who had been conscripted into the Turkish Army showed high morale and loyalty to France. The survivors declared their willingness to return to the front but asked to see their families first. On September 18, 1917, the Mission repatriated to Marseilles four Algerian soldiers, five Tunisian *tirailleurs*, and one Moroccan. They all had escaped from the Turkish Army.<sup>351</sup>

Other deserters from the Turkish Army were sent home *via* Bombay, directed from Mesopotamia by the British. On July 17, 1917, the French Consul in Egypt reported that on July 13, 92 former French Muslim soldiers, who had previously been seized in Baghdad by British troops, were embarked in Bombay, from where they were sent to Suez.<sup>352</sup>

On March 25, 1918, the French Consulate in Mesopotamia sent information from Basra to Paris that the first Algerian soldiers had been brought to Mesopotamia by the Turks as early as January 1916. According to eyewitnesses, this month, two regiments of Algerian soldiers arrived in Baghdad. They were in relatively good condition, that is, not worse than the condition of Turkish soldiers, but were dissatisfied with the situation in which they found themselves. In the Zossen camp, they had said, they felt subject to France but succumbed to German propaganda because of religious arguments. The reality that they collided in Constantinople strengthened their original conviction that the Turks were their brethren in faith, but they were French subjects. On the way to Baghdad,

<sup>350</sup> Consulate of France in Bombay to PC and MFA: *Tirailleurs algériens repatriés*, Bombay, 7 Aug 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>351</sup> Colonel Bailloud (Cairo) to MFA: *Soldats musulmans français incorporés dans l'armée turque*, 6 Aug 1917, N° 45, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>352</sup> PC and MW to MFA: *Au sujet des Tirailleurs algériens libérés par les anglais à Bagdad*, Paris, 18 Sept 1917, AMAE, G1667.

they had to sell some of their equipment to buy some cigarettes and other essentials that the Turkish soldier was deprived of. Some were so disappointed by their situation that they only smirked ironically when local interlocutors expressed their sympathy. Propaganda, which turned out to be effective in the camp and created a thread of solidarity with the Turkish Muslims, no longer withstood the first clash with reality and ceased to impact. It was replaced by disappointment, contempt, and finally hatred. Turkish officers showed them their superiority and humiliated them at every step. During the retreat of the Turks from Kut, Diala, and Persia, several Algerian soldiers saved themselves by joining the British. Those who found themselves in the British camp were sent back to France.<sup>353</sup>

One of them was Sakhri Mohamed Ben Ahmed, interrogated at the French Consulate in Basra on April 9, 1918, and who had previously been captured by the British at Samarra. He was a soldier of the 7th Regiment of *Tirailleurs algériens*, 3rd Battalion, and 10th Company. He was probably the French soldier who had stayed in captivity the longest, as he had fallen into the hands of the Germans on August 24, 1914, on the Belgian front. He spent two years in German camps, where he worked hard at building and repairing roads. Upon his arrival in the camp, Germans confiscated his military record book, watch, and about 120 francs. In August 1916, he was sent to Constantinople in convoy with a thousand other French Muslim soldiers, primarily Algerians. Upon their departure, the Germans ordered them to take off their French uniforms and put on Prussian uniforms. They traveled to Constantinople for no more than 17 days. They were poorly fed and mistreated. They were sent to Ras-el-Ain, where they arrived after 17 days (five days on the trains and 12 days on foot). From Ras-el-Ain, they reached Mosul after another 17 days of walking. Fifty of them stayed on the train due to illness and exhaustion. In Mosul, the Turks were very strict with them. They directed them to repair roads. They were beaten for the slightest offense, reproaching them for their service to France. During the first six months of their stay in Mosul, several hundred deserted deep into the country. Ahmed said Algerian Sergeant-Major Birrebh from the 2nd Regiment in the German camp had deserted on the Belgian front. The Germans gave him freedom as a reward for desertion. He oversaw the convoy as far as Mosul, where he

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<sup>353</sup> Consulate of France in Mesopotamia to MFA: *Soldats musulmans français incorporés dans l'armée turque*, Basrah, 25 Mar 1918, AMAE, G1669.

was appointed lieutenant in the Turkish Army. He maltreated all French subjects. He died under the blows of three Algerians and two Tunisians, whom he had tried to prevent from desertion. Of the 950 troops that arrived in Mosul, 400 deserted, and 250 died of disease or were killed. The rest were included in the Turkish Army in Nissibin. Ahmed escaped from the unit and found refuge with the Arab tribes. He fled from them and turned himself over to the British at Samarra. <sup>354</sup>

The French authorities wondered how to help soldiers conscripted into Turkish troops and residing in remote Mesopotamia or Syria to return to their native countries and units. It was considered that these soldiers would join the army of Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, who could help them escape. <sup>355</sup> In April 1917, Hussein was asked to take all possible steps to free the French Muslim soldiers from the Turkish Army. He proclaimed to soldiers from the Maghreb and Senegalese people to abandon service in the Turkish Army and come to him where he would board them on a ship and send them to their country. He also promised 10 pounds sterling to each of the inhabitants of Arabia who would help refugees from the Turkish Army get to Mecca or Janbo. The proclamation also said the Germans had forced the Maghreb soldiers to join the Turkish Army. This provision was addressed to those who agreed to serve the Turks voluntarily and feared reprisal by France. However, the actions of the Sharif of Mecca had a limited impact on the further course of events due to the huge distances between Mesopotamia and Mecca and the development of the situation in Mesopotamia, where British troops quickly gained an advantage over the Turks. <sup>356</sup>

A separate matter was the fate of the French subjects from North Africa who found themselves in Syria at the outbreak of the Great War. They were forcibly conscripted into the Turkish Army and were directed to auxiliary battalions, where they worked on repairing roads and transporting ammunition. In 1917, when the British were on the offensive in Mesopotamia and Palestine, these people tried to get to the British side. The British first sent them to a military camp near Cairo as internees,

<sup>354</sup> Consulate of France in Mesopotamia to MFA: *Soldats musulmans français, Sakhri Mohamed ben Ahmed*, Basrah, 10 Apr 1918; *Déposition de Sakhri Mohamed ben Ahmed*, Basrah, 10 Apr 1918, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>355</sup> Colonel Brémont, Head of the French Mission in Hedjaz to MFA, 13 Oct 1916, AMAE, G1667.

<sup>356</sup> French Mission in Hedjaz to MFA, 16 Apr 1917, AMAE, G1668.

then handed them over to the French. The French Military Mission in Egypt repatriated these people to Marseille, from where they were sent to their homes in North Africa.<sup>357</sup>

### Heroes, not traitors

In December 1917, the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked the President of the Council of Ministers, on behalf of the French Consul in Calcutta, whether Muslim soldiers, former prisoners of war incorporated into the Turkish Army, who had been interned after crossing the British line in Mesopotamia, and then transferred to India, where they waited for further repatriation, should be paid and, if so, to what amount. The answer of the President of the Council of Ministers was unequivocal – former prisoners of war should receive their pay as soldiers on active service. Because this amount was different in each of the North African countries, until the return of these soldiers, they should be paid at the level of French soldiers, and after their return to their units, they should receive compensation up to the amount of their country's pay and a high pay appropriate to their rank and length of service.<sup>358</sup>

Despite the confirmed facts of desertions and strong assumptions that some soldiers voluntarily went to the side of Turkey and would spread the enemy propaganda after their return home,<sup>359</sup> the Ministry of War took the position that most of the soldiers remained faithful to France and were forcibly incorporated into the Turkish Army. Soldiers were constantly urged to join the Turkish units. The reference by the Germans of religious solidarity between Muslims and the authority of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph had a strong influence on the imagination of many Muslim prisoners. Not all of them knew what was going on outside the camp, what forces were involved in the war, and what both sides were fighting for. The Germans isolated them from those who doubted what the Germans told them and did not want to submit to German agitation. The Moroccans who had their Sultan were the most reluctant, and the exposure by the Germans of the Ottoman Sultan as a Muslim leader by the Germans did

<sup>357</sup> MW to PC and MFA: *Nord Africains échappés de camps turcs et réfugiés dans les lignes anglais d'Orient*, Paris, 24 Jul 1917, AMAE, G1668.

<sup>358</sup> PC and MW to MFA, 15 Dec 1917, AMAE, G1669.

<sup>359</sup> GGA to MFA, Alger, 28 Sept 1917, AMAE, G1668.

not appeal to them. The authorities of the camps for Muslim prisoners of war used various forms of pressure. The prisoners were told that France had turned away and had forgotten them and that she did not want them repatriated. False rumors, such as the July 1916 revolt of the Moroccan infantry during the fighting on the Somme, were spread.<sup>360</sup> The prisoners were finally afraid for their lives.

Lt. René Doynel de Saint-Quentin of the French Military Mission in Egypt, when questioning soldiers who had escaped from the Turkish units to the British and were handed over to the Mission, wondered about the motives that prompted North African soldiers to join the Turkish Army. He gave a clear view on this issue. From the report that Doynel de Saint-Quentin prepared in August 1916 based on the interrogation of the Moroccan soldier Aiyesch Ben Mohamed and the field journal of the German officer, Ltd., Fritz Grobba, intercepted by the English intelligence service, who commanded a battalion of Muslim prisoners on their way from Zossen to Istanbul, it appeared that the prisoners were forced to join the Turkish army.<sup>361</sup>

In October 1917, Doynel de Saint-Quentin interrogated four soldiers who had escaped from the Turkish units in Mesopotamia and Persia and crossed the front line to British troops. They were then handed over by the British to the French base at Port Said. The first was Corporal Ali Ben Saad, regimental number 2674, of the 8th Regiment of Tunisian *Tirailleurs*, 1st Company, conscripted in 1912 and captured in Arras on September 25, 1915. The second was Bou Zia Bou Djaraf class, number 6183, of the 3rd Regiment of Algerian *Tirailleurs*, 15<sup>th</sup> Company, conscripted in

<sup>360</sup> GCC to Chief of the General Staff, 27 Jul 1916, AMAE, G1667. The command of the French Army denied this, stating that there was no Moroccan infantry on the Somme, but only Algerian and Tunisian. In other sections of the front, “the feelings of loyalty of the Moroccans to their new homeland were unshakable, as was the case of the Algerians and Tunisians.”

<sup>361</sup> Mission militaire française en Egypte, Note no. 63, Lt. Doynel de Saint Quentin *Les prisonniers musulmans français à Zossen et à Constantinople (d'après le tirailleur marocain Aiyesch Ben Mohamed et le journal de campagne du Lieutenant Allemand Grobba)*, Cairo, 13 Aug 1916, AMAE, G1667. Fritz Grobba survived and served in the German diplomacy until the end of the second World War – see W.G. Schwanitz, “The Jinnee and the Magic Bottle.” Fritz Grobba and the German Middle Eastern Policy 1900–1945,” in *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945* (Markus Wiener, 2004), 87–117; also B. Rubin and W.G. Schwanitz *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 111.

1908, wounded and captured at Charleroi on August 21, 1914. Another interrogated was *tirailleur* Abd El Kader Ben Djemal, number 1071, of the 8th Regiment of Algerian *Tirailleurs*, 11th Company, incorporated in 1910 and also taken prisoner at the Battle of Charleroi. The fourth interrogated was *tirailleur* Ahmed Ben Mohamed, number 12224, who served in the 1st Regiment of Algerian *Tirailleurs*, 3rd Company. He was a Moroccan who had lived in Algeria since childhood. He had served in the army since 1913 and was wounded and then taken prisoner at Charleroi in August 1914. Each of the interrogated persons presented a different argument for joining the Turkish Army in Zossen. Corporal Ali Ben Saad was first interned in a war camp for ordinary prisoners, possibly in Quedlinburg, and later transferred to the camp for Muslim soldiers in Zossen. He claimed that when he was transferred to Zossen and spoke with a French colonel from *L'Armée d'Afrique*, he advised him that if the Germans wanted to send him to the Turkish Army, he should agree and then flee at the first opportunity.<sup>362</sup>

All four soldiers confirmed that, upon arrival in Baghdad, their battalion had been divided into companies that were either assigned to support road construction and security work or were sent towards the Persian border and Persian territory. The 1st Company was placed in a garrison at Kermancha, Persia; the 2nd Company – on the roads leading to Baghdad, then directed through Khanikin to Kermancha and further as far as Hamadan in Persia; the 3rd Company was in the Khanikin area, and the fourth was in the Kermancha area. At the time when the Russian offensive began, the companies were evacuated from Persia to Mesopotamia. The 1st Company was directed by Karind, Kasr-i-Schirin to Kerkouk and from there to the south. Bou Zia Bou Djaraf deserted it near Salahi three days' march from Samarra. Corporal Ali Ben Saad, who deserted separately, reached the British lines after four days of marching. The 2nd Company found themselves on the outskirts of Samarra when the English captured Baakouba. All of the repatriates stated that their battalion had lost a significant number of people to disease and desertion. The Turks did not severely punish desertions. Of course, there were executions, and Ali Ben Saad witnessed seven, and Abd El Kader Ben Djemal witnessed four. However, many cases ended in prison for 2–3 months,

<sup>362</sup> MW, Doynel de Saint-Quentin: Note N° 78, *Africains français évadés des camps turcs en Mésopotamie et réfugiés dans les lignes anglaises d'Orient*, Cairo, 23 Sept 1917, AMAE, G1669.

and Bou Zia Bou Djerf and Ali Ben Saad only managed to escape the third time. The combat capacity of the battalion decreased in the spring of 1917. The 1st and 3rd Companies that left Zossen in March 1916 totaled 250 soldiers. One hundred soldiers were in the 2nd Company and from 60 to 75 in the 4th Company. In total, there were 350 to 400 soldiers in four companies. Considering that 140 soldiers crossed the British and Russian lines by October 1917, there was a shortage of about 400 people. It could be assumed that some of them took refuge in the mountains of Anatolia, but many of them died of diseases or in Turkish hospitals. Others were killed as deserters by Turkish gendarmes or by bandits.<sup>363</sup>

*The longer you question the soldiers with Zoss, wrote Doynel de Saint-Quentin, the more one becomes convinced that it would be a mistake to believe that the Germans had to put them under some great pressure to send them to the Turkish Army. Although the Germans did not leave them a choice of the direction of their departure, they did not have to overcome in any particular way their particular opposition to their departure to Constantinople. The moral pressure exerted in Zossen by German-Turkish propagandists under the slogans of Islamic brotherhood and the attacks of Tunisian and Moroccan traitors against France had no visible effect. Hearts remained unmoved. Africans had their honor. Physical pressure in the form of being deprived of cigarettes and increasing and then underestimating food rations was irritating, especially as it was coupled with promises to increase food rations in Turkey, but could only affect the attitudes of the soldiers to some extent and was not the reason why Africans accepted their departure to Constantinople not in the mood of resignation and surrendering to fate, but with real satisfaction.*

According to the interrogated accounts, very few people tried to evade in order when the 1st Battalion received the order to depart. The disabled, slightly wounded, and disabled were included in the battalion for its full completion, and none protested against it. Everyone wanted to leave the tightly closed German fortress as soon as possible and find themselves in the “Turkish caravanserai, open to all winds.”<sup>364</sup>

The main motive for voluntarily joining the Turkish Army was the hope of finding a “door” open in Turkey towards either Russia or England. This idea arose among French officers in POW camps and was later

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<sup>363</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>364</sup> Ibidem.

propagated by soldiers and veterans and became widespread. It was taken over by all the soldiers of the 1st Battalion on the route from Constantinople to Hamadan, marked by hundreds of escapes on this “route of martyrs, which became evidence of great martyrdom and loyalty to the homeland,”<sup>365</sup> concluded Doynel de Saint-Quentin in his report.

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<sup>365</sup> Ibidem.



Sainte-Menehould. Departure of General Lyautey, July 28, 1915 (VAL 107/135)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnanterre.fr/ark:/14707/a011593078348s5WsLq/37b73ddaff>

## Chapter 6

# The 1915 Discussion on Naturalisation

### Millerand's initiative

On November 20, 1914, Alexandre Millerand, the Minister of War, sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in which he expressed the view that the war and the participation of Algerian soldiers in it had created a new situation in the matter of naturalization and made it necessary to take steps to resolve this issue. The Minister proposed to create formal and legal possibilities for Algerian soldiers to choose between their current personal status and the naturalization and acceptance of French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) as “compensation for their loyalty to us.”<sup>366</sup>

The possibilities for obtaining French citizenship were regulated in the case of Algeria by the sénatus-consulte of July 14, 1865, on naturalization in Algeria; the decree of April 21, 1866, on naturalization in Algeria, containing implementing provisions for the sénatus-consulte of July 14, 1865; the decree of October 24, 1870, amending certain sections of the sénatus-consulte of 1865 and the decree of April 21, 1866, on naturalization in Algeria; the decree of January 31, 1912 modifying the conditions of enlisting and enlisting in the army in Algeria; the decree of February 3, 1912, regarding the recruitment of a recruit from *indigènes* in Algeria and finally, the decree of August 3, 1914, concerning the recruitment of Algerian *indigènes* to indigenous troops during the war.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 20 Nov 1914, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>367</sup> The texts of the documents, see: -0 No. 820, Chambre des députés, 1 avril 1915, Annexes, 11–26, AMAE, G1665.

The sénatus-consulte of July 14, 1865, said that indigenous Muslims were French but were subject to Muslim law. At their request, they could become French citizens in the sense that they agreed to be subject to French civil and political regulations. Persons who were at least 21 years old could apply for French citizenship. Among the rights possessed by Algerian Muslims was the right to join the French Army voluntarily, though they could only serve in Algeria. The decree of April 21, 1866, specified that Muslim *indigènes* and Algerian Israelites had to appear in person before the mayor in their place of residence or before the head of the local Arab Bureau to apply for French citizenship and declare that they wanted to be subject to French civil and political rights. Then the relevant protocol was written. At that point, the mayor or head of the Arab Bureau interviewed the applicant concerning his moral correctness, and in the event of a positive assessment, he referred the case to the Governor of Algeria, who forwarded it to the Ministry of Justice. The final decision was made by the Council of State. If the apprentice was a soldier in active service, the report on the declaration of acceptance of French citizenship was prepared by either the commander of the corps or the commander of the unit in which the applicant soldier was serving.

The decree of October 24, 1870, canceled articles on general assumptions but introduced additional procedures. In particular, the Governor-General had to consult the Consultative Committee before sending the declaration to the Ministry of Justice. Each naturalization application was sent to the court that had issued the applicant's criminal record certificate, and the declaration dossier was kept in the prefecture of the department where the indigenous applicant lived.

The naturalization of the inhabitants of Tunisia was governed by the decree of the President of the Republic of October 3, 1910, on naturalization in Tunisia. Naturalization could be requested by persons over 21 years of age who had lived for at least three years, either in Tunisia, France, or Algeria, and their last place of residence was Tunisia. In the case of performing vital tasks for France, this period could be reduced to one year. People who could speak and write French had the opportunity to request naturalization. These people were divided into two groups: (a) Tunisian soldiers who were already contracted for voluntary service in the French Army based on the law of April 13, 1910; (b) Tunisian subjects who could not enter the military service as incapable of this service but who had diplomas: doctor, lawyer, pharmacist of the 1st grade, or had

an intern title in a hospital or had a degree of doctor or bachelor of humanities. The graduation diploma of *l'École centrale des arts et manufactures*, *l'École des ponts et chaussés*, *l'École supérieure des mines*, and *l'École du génie maritime* were also considered. The decree also lists other higher education institutions: *l'Institut national agroéconomique*, *l'École du haras* in Pin, *les écoles nationales d'agriculture* in Grignon, Montpellier and Rennes, *l'École nationale des eaux et forêts*, *l'École des hautes études commerciales* and *les écoles supérieures de commerce* accredited by the state.

The right to apply for naturalization was also granted to those who received a medal in the competition announced by *l'École nationale des beaux-arts*, *Conservatoire de musique*, and by *l'École nationale des arts décoratifs*. A Tunisian subject could apply for naturalization also in the case of marrying a French citizen and having children in that relationship, doing work of particular importance for the interests of France in Tunisia for a minimum of ten years, and performing tasks of particular importance in France.

After making the appropriate application, the wife of a Tunisian subject who successfully underwent the naturalization process and his adult children could be subject to French personal status without additional conditions, i.e., based on the same decree, which had been the basis for the naturalization of their husband and father. The minor children of a foreigner who became a naturalized Frenchman or the wife who survived him became naturalized Frenchmen and had the opportunity to renounce French citizenship within a year of reaching the age of majority.

In the case of a Tunisian subject, the application for naturalization was submitted to the office of the French administration of the protectorate, which prepared a report on the applicant's past and morality, and then sent the application to the Resident-General. The Resident-General, in turn, forwarded it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, and from there, the application was directed with the annotation of the Ministry of Justice to the President of the Republic. The regulations on the naturalization of Tunisian subjects did not say anything about the possibility of granting French citizenship to soldiers for their services to France on the battlefield. Similarly, the subjects of the Sultan of Morocco could apply for French citizenship on the same terms as all other foreigners.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 30–35.

Millerand's proposal had two aspects. On the one hand, it referred to broader discussions about the possible naturalization of Muslim inhabitants of Algeria and, in this respect, did not go beyond the colonial discourse of the Third Republic. However, he stated, "the moral attitude and civic education of Algerian Muslims were not adequate for them so far to be able to exercise their civil rights fully consciously, but those of them who are so brave and gloriously shed their blood for their adopted mother, they are becoming more and more worthy of acquiring the rights of a French citizen".<sup>369</sup>

On the other hand, the issue of naturalization had a military and political aspect as it would lead to an increase in the number of volunteers from North Africa to join the army, which would reduce the number of soldiers called up to serve in the army from France. From a political point of view, making a decision enabling the people of Algeria to obtain the rights of French citizens would weaken the power of propaganda carried out by the Ottoman Empire and Germany, aimed at separating the Muslim world from France. In addition, such a decision would meet the expectations of the *Jeunes-Algériens* community, which advocated the close integration of Algeria with France but demanded the same citizenship rights for the people of Algeria that the French had. At the same time, the minister expressed the view that the opposition of many political circles in France to the naturalization of the Algerian population for fear of the far-reaching effects of this decision was unjustified because, according to him, only a tiny part of Algerian society would benefit from the right to naturalization, as the majority will want to keep their current personal status (*statut personnel*).<sup>370</sup>

Millerand stressed that naturalization should not be mandatory but only allowed for North African soldiers who would like to do so, similar to the rules when granting French citizenship to the sons of immigrants born in France.

In December 1914, Millerand referred the naturalization issue to the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs, emphasizing the particular bravery of North African soldiers on the front, as evidenced by the number of reports (*citations*) from the battlefield and the number of requests by commanders for decorations for their soldiers. Soldiers from Muslim formations were mentioned in these reports and

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<sup>369</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>370</sup> Ibidem.

conclusions more often than could be due to their higher proportion compared to the number of French soldiers in the overall composition of the French Army. The minister said that naturalization should apply to those soldiers who were active in the zone of direct fighting on the front, which the Ministry of War should confirm at the request of those interested in obtaining the rights of a French citizen.<sup>371</sup> Following this statement by Millerand to the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked French Residents in Tunis and Rabat for an opinion on this subject.<sup>372</sup>

### The proposal of the Interministerial Commission

The Interministerial Commission took up Millerand's proposal at its meeting on December 31, 1914. The meeting was chaired by Abel Ferry, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Commission also included: Deputy Director for Asia and Oceania at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Director for Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head of the Algerian Department at the Ministry of Interior, Head of the Africa Department at the Ministry of War, Head of the Department of West Africa and French Equatorial Africa at the Ministry of Colonies, Head of the Muslim Affairs Department at the Ministry of Colonies, Deputy Head of the Department of West Africa and French Equatorial Africa at the Ministry of Colonies, and Director of the Asia Department and head of the cabinet of the Minister of Colonies.<sup>373</sup>

Millerand's proposal gave birth to some doubts and questions. Marechand, responsible for Muslim affairs in the Ministry of Colonies, noted that the possibility of naturalization had not yet attracted Muslims' attention because, for many, it was associated with apostasy and for everyone with a departure from Muslim personal status. He supported his thesis with the example of indigenous officers. Although the formalities for applying for naturalization had been considerably simplified in their case, their interest in naturalization was minimal. Duchêne from

<sup>371</sup> MW to MFA, Bordeaux, 5 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>372</sup> MFA to RGM and RGT, Paris, 14 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>373</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 31 décembre 1914*, 16–18, AMAE, G1670.

the Ministry of Colonies stressed that nothing should be imposed on anyone in this matter and that the possibility of naturalization should be a matter of free choice. Bèze, head of the Algerian Section at the Ministry of Interior, explained to the other Commission members what formalities Algerian *indigènes* had to complete to obtain French citizenship. The first step was a declaration expressing the desire to obtain citizenship, the second – an interview (*l'enquête*) in the place of the residence conducted by administrative authorities about the morality of the applicant, and finally, if the interview was positive – a decree of the Council of State on granting citizenship. Summarizing the discussion, Ferry admitted that an Algerian *indigène*, having the right to obtain French citizenship, in practice rarely received it. At the same time, he outlined the direction the Commission should take in this matter, saying that in the case of soldiers fighting on the front, it should move towards simplifying the procedures for applying for citizenship.<sup>374</sup>

At its next meeting on January 13, 1915, the Interministerial Commission formulated its draft law on the naturalization of soldiers. Article 1 said that French *protégés* from Algeria, Tunisia, and the French zone of Morocco who had participated in the fighting on the front since August 3, 1914, could obtain the rights of a French after reaching the age of majority, i.e., 21 years of ages, and without paying any fees. Thus, the project of the Commission expanded Millerand's offer to include indigenous soldiers from Morocco and Tunisia. These persons would be given citizenship under a decree issued by *le Garde des Sceaux* after expressing such a wish with the opinion of the Minister of War attached. The members of the Commission decided to treat all North African soldiers equally, although they stated that in the case of Morocco and Tunisia, the Commission's proposal raised legal doubts because Morocco and Tunisia were sovereign. In the case of Algeria, the legal situation was clear because Algeria was part of France, and naturalization was applied to Christians – Maltese and Levantines – who lived in Algeria and from 1870 towards Jews. The Commission did not doubt that granting citizenship to Algerian soldiers was the moment to emphasize that their personal status was the only thing differentiating them from the French.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>375</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 13 janvier 1915*, 7–8, AMAE, G1670.

Further discussions on this matter showed that what for the Commission was “the only thing,” for others, it turned out to be an obstacle preventing them from taking even a tiny step towards the naturalization of *indigènes*.

The Millerand initiative was met with the criticism of Algerian *assimilationnistes*. Dr. Belkacem Bentami, the author of the naturalization project in 1912, found the project of the Interministerial Commission too restrictive, as it provided for the possibility of naturalization only by those soldiers who directly participated in the fighting on the front. As a consequence, soldiers serving in auxiliary units would be deprived of such a possibility. In addition, the project in question left the decision on who deserved the right to naturalization in the administration's hands, which issued the applicant a certificate of political correctness (*le certificat de bonne conduite*). It was well known that the French administration in Algeria was hostile to plans for the naturalization of Algerian Muslims. In addition, the project *de facto* excluded women from applying for naturalization for cultural reasons. Muslim women could not, for reasons of morality, appear in person before the mayor or civil official asking for a certificate of political correctness because, in this way, they jeopardized their reputation as a woman. In this case, acting through intermediaries space was created to manipulate women's will. Dr. Bentami expressed the view that certificates of “good behavior” should be issued by judicial and not administrative authorities.<sup>376</sup>

Finally, the French administration in North Africa brought the strongest arguments against naturalization. On 19 January, 1915, Gabriel Alapetite, the French Resident-General in Tunisia, expressed that the Interministerial Commission's proposal on naturalization applied in Algeria, where there was a distinction between those who had French citizenship rights and those who did not have these rights. However, this was not the case in Tunisia. The purpose of France's policy in this country was to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants, not to change their citizenship. “Obtaining for Tunisian citizens the right to vote on matters concerning France would not bring them any benefits,” – wrote the Resident. He explained that a Muslim who was a naturalized French citizen was treated as an apostate in his country. The active exercise of French civil rights conflicted with Muslim family law and personal status.

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<sup>376</sup> MFA: Dr. Bentami à M. le Député, Paris, 15 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

Specifically, it was about polygamy and the unequal position in the inheritance of property under Muslim law. Alapetite strongly spoke against the adoption of any naturalization law without consultation with the Tunisian authorities and without considering changes in the family and legal situation of the beneficiaries of such law.<sup>377</sup>

The Resident also did not believe in the effect of cultural diffusion, i.e., settling Tunisia by French *colons* and the assimilation of Muslims to the European concepts of civil and family law; he believed that this policy would have no effect. Those *indigènes* who knew how French society worked and were aware of the rights and obligations arising from French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) did not apply for it. Those who applied for it were ignorant of the rights and obligations attached to French citizenship at the time of their applications, and most of them were soldiers urged to apply for citizenship by their French commanders. "In Tunisia, there are Muslims who are well educated and familiar with the organization of our society, who elegantly speak French, and are therefore able to understand the rights and obligations of a French citizen under the Civil Code. These people may have applied for naturalization, but so far, none of them has benefited from this possibility."<sup>378</sup>

The Resident-General was convinced that the facts demonstrated that adopting French citizenship did not change Muslims and did not change the customs in Tunisia. On the contrary, those who had received higher education in France and were well acquainted with French society believed that our civil rights were unacceptable to them because they threatened their traditions, intellectual heritage, their ethical and aesthetic views, as well as their understanding of what human dignity and family were. It meant a complete failure of the policy of assimilation of Muslims, as evidenced by, according to the Resident, only two cases known to him of Tunisians adopting a French lifestyle. These people even converted to Christianity, but they were orphans raised by *les Pères Blancs*. They married Christians, which led them to be ostracized by their environment as cultural traitors. Islamic status and personal status under French law were incompatible, and Muslims had to give up part of their status if they

<sup>377</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 19 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664. The Resident General used the words *une hiérarchie des races and des nationalités*. The basis of the inequality of political status was, therefore, the division into races.

<sup>378</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 16 May 1916, AMAE, G1665.

wanted to be active French citizens. This mainly concerned polygamy and the position of a woman.<sup>379</sup>

The French Resident in Tunisia believed that facilitating naturalization by simplifying procedures would only improve statistics but would not indicate that *indigènes* had accepted republican values that form the core of French citizenship. "The problem of reconciling these values with the personal status of a Muslim will not automatically disappear with the act of naturalization but will be hidden under the guise of formal acceptance of obligations imposed on a naturalized person as a French citizen. One should not turn a blind eye that the conflict will not exist under the skin – tensions between the naturalized person and the French state and between the French state and the naturalized person's family will be constant,"<sup>380</sup> wrote the Resident. According to the Resident, the source of these tensions was a gradual change of habits, customs, and values, and the consequences of these tensions would be felt primarily by the family. The new situation would also include the wife of a naturalized soldier who would acquire new rights and adapt to the new social role determined by these rights and obligations. Acceptance of French citizenship by a person who was brought up in a Muslim environment and was functioning within Muslim personal status did not mean immediate assimilation, but acculturation following naturalization was inevitable.<sup>381</sup>

### The Governor-General of Algeria speaks

On January 20, 1915, Charles Lutaud, the Governor-General of Algeria, sent a draft decree on naturalization and commented on the draft of a decree on the naturalization of the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs to the Minister of Interior. The Governor's project was prepared by *la Direction des Affaires indigènes*, operating at the office of the Governor-General of Algeria. The comments were made primarily about the attitude of the Algerian Muslim population to war. According to the Governor-General, Algerian Muslims allegiance to France did not raise the slightest doubt. What was more, some Muslims had voluntarily decided to fight for France and had given their lives for it. The Governor

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<sup>379</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>380</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>381</sup> Ibidem.

believed that in the face of such attitudes of “our Muslim subjects” (*nos sujets musulmans*) it was necessary to “raise the rank of citizenship for those who deserved it due to service”.<sup>382</sup>

Naturalization was, therefore, to be a reward for loyalty to France. The Governor-General supported the message of the main point of the project of the Interministerial Commission, which provided that soldiers who participated in the fighting in the war zone could address the Minister of War directly for granting them the rights of a French citizen. At the same time, he raised reservations as to the legitimacy of including in one point the joint Algerian and French *protégés* from Tunisia and Morocco. The Algerians were subject to French legislation as residents of a department of France, and the Tunisians and Moroccans – to the legislation of their countries. Therefore, the project had to discuss the situation and procedures for each group of soldiers separately. According to the Governor-General, in the case of *indigènes* from Algeria, their situation was sufficiently regulated by the sénatus-consulte of July 14, 1865, and the decree of October 14, 1870. Although both legal acts did not speak of soldiers fighting at the front, the Governor considered that the general provisions of these acts also included the case of soldiers. According to the Governor, the only contradiction was related to the age of applicants for naturalization. The new proposal of the Interministerial Commission abolished age restrictions, which conflicted with the decrees of 1865 and 1870, stating that naturalization could be applied after reaching the age of 21 under the principle adopted in general French legislation.<sup>383</sup>

In procedural matters, the Governor-General considered that the principles of the decree of April 21, 1866, (*Décret Crémieux*) had to be taken into account because of their simplicity and compatibility with higher-order usage. This decree allowed applicants to submit applications for naturalization to the powers of military authorities (head of the

<sup>382</sup> GGA to MFA: *Rapport au Conseil de Gouvernement*, Alger, 20 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>383</sup> The sénatus-consulte of July 14, 1865, concerning the state of people and naturalization in Algeria, was a law consisting of five articles inspired by the Saint-Simonian Ismaël Urbain relating on the one hand to the personal status and the naturalization of the “native Muslim” and the “native Israelite” (*l’indigène musulman et de l’indigène israélite*), and on the other hand to the naturalization of “a foreigner who justifies three years of residence in Algeria” (later called *Européen d’Algérie*). Article 5 announced the decree implementing the law of July 14, 1865, which was promulgated by Emperor Napoleon III on April 21, 1866.

corps or top-level officer in the formation of indigenous soldiers) or civil offices (mayor or administrator). These applications may be submitted in person or *in absentia*. After examining them and conducting an interview, the case was referred to the Governor-General, who referred it to the Minister of Justice. The Governor considered that the Interministerial Commission text did properly grant applicants new rights compared to existing naturalization law, except that the mere submission of a new project of the Commission was a guarantee for applicants that their application would be considered. However, the procedure for examining these decisions had to be subject to existing regulations and correspond to categories, including political correctness (*la moralité*) and the transfer of being in a monogamous relationship, further diminishing the innovative nature of the Commission proposal. The only benefit for the application was the abolition of the new payment plan paid when applying. In the current naturalization law, it amounted to 175.25 francs.<sup>384</sup>

The Governor-General concluded that the new law would not increase the number of applications and naturalization of the indigenous Algerian population. In 1865–1914 in Algeria, French citizenship was granted to 1,611 people of the Muslim religion, which meant that 34 people were granted this right every year. During this period, the total number of naturalizations was 36,981. Although the annual average for Algeria increased to 50 in later years, this average was still meager compared to the total Algerian population of 4,720,526 in 1914. According to the Governor, the reasons for this were cultural. Muslims in Algeria treated the adoption of French citizenship as apostasy, and those who applied for citizenship were renegades. In turn, this was conditioned by a lack of knowledge about the benefits of adopting French citizenship for the development of civilization and the reluctance to naturalize on the part of Muslim religious brotherhoods. The General-Governor concluded that the very law, even the most perfect, would not change this situation and that successful assimilation required taking steps to change the population's attitude concerning the benefits of naturalization.<sup>385</sup>

The main difference between the project of the Interministerial Commission and the project of the Governor-General of Algeria was that

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<sup>384</sup> GGA to MFA: *Rapport au Conseil de Gouvernement*, Alger, 20 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibidem*.

in the draft of the Commission, the soldier was given the opportunity to apply for the rights of a French citizen (Article 1). In the project of the Governor-General, he was given the opportunity to submit a declaration of citizenship (*déclaration d'option* – Article 1). This difference was fundamental because in the first case, the applicant received the rights of a French citizen unconditionally at the time applying, and in the second case – his declaration could be unregistered and therefore rejected. He acquired the rights of a French citizen only at the time of favorable consideration of his declaration. According to the designer, the word *l'option* had a critical meaning, as it meant that the applicant had chosen French personal status at the time of French citizenship at the expense of Muslim personal status.

In addition, both projects differed in the following matters: (1) The Commission considered that the right to apply for naturalization should be granted to both Algerian subjects and Muslims living in Tunisia and Morocco (Article 1), while the Governor-General project only referred to Algerian Muslims (Article 1); (2) the Commission proposal stated that the right to request naturalization should only apply to those soldiers who joined the military service after August 3, 1914 (Article 1), while the Governor-General envisaged that all Algerian *indigènes* who served in the army by conscription would be covered by this right under the decree of February 3, 1912, and by voluntary recruitment, regardless of when they were in service (Article 1); (3) the Commission proposal provided for an environmental interview about the applicant, but did not specify what the interview would be about, and in addition, it would be carried out by military authorities reporting to the Minister of War without the colonial administration (Articles 2 and 4), and the project by the Governor-General provided for a more complex procedure for an environmental interview on *bonne conduite* with the participation of the colonial administration (Article 2); (4) in the case of the Commission's proposal, the applicant's declaration was forwarded to the Ministry of Justice by the Minister of War (Article 2), while in the project of the Governor-General by the colonial administration, i.e. the Governor-General of Algeria (Article 2).

In addition, in the Governor-General's draft, Article 3 required the applicant to state the names of the children and wife in the declaration. Article 4 added that when the applicant submitted the declaration of French citizenship, his wife indicated in the declaration should apply in person

and make a written declaration that he or she was adopting or refusing French citizenship.<sup>386</sup>

The draft provided four reasons for the Ministry of Justice's refusal to register a selection declaration. The first was the lack of a certificate of good behavior. The second reason was the applicant's wife's refusal to accept French citizenship, the third was the applicant's involvement in a polygamous relationship, and the fourth was the statement of *indignité*.<sup>387</sup>

The Interministerial Commission considered the Alapetite letter and the draft of the Governor-General of Algeria at its meeting on January 25, 1915. Abel Ferry, who chaired the meeting, agreed with Alapetite that Tunisia's situation was different from Algeria's and that the naturalization of the Algerian *indigènes* could be considered separately. On the other hand, he pointed to international conditions and Germany's activity in introducing itself as a defender of Muslims and criticizing France for the alleged lack of political generosity towards Muslim soldiers fighting alongside her. From this point of view, preparing the text of the decree relating to all Muslims of North Africa would mean that German propaganda would be stripped of its central argument. Indeed, the reform of naturalization law should not have been abandoned. "It would be a real paradox that the war of 1870 brought electoral rights to Algerian Jews, and the war of 1914 did not bring such rights to Muslims fighting alongside us," said Ferry. In response to Alapetite's objection that the decree of naturalization adopted in Paris and concerning Tunisian subjects might mean interference in the internal affairs of the protectorate and thus violate international law, Ferry replied that this situation would be normalized by consultations with the Bey administration in individual cases of Tunisians applying for naturalization. The discussion which arose in the Commission in connection with Alapetite's objections concluded that the new decree on naturalization would first and foremost be a gesture of France seeking an appropriate form of remuneration for *indigènes* rewarding their participation in the war alongside France. Because the most significant value was French citizenship, the decree would demonstrate the generosity and gratitude

<sup>386</sup> GGA to MI: *Projet de décret sur l'admission à la qualité de citoyen français des indigènes algériens servant ou ayant servi dans l'armée française. Réponses aux critiques de la Commission des Affaires Musulmanes*, in *Projet de décret concernant les militaires indigènes algériens*, Alger, 10 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665; The project of the Governor-General see: ICMA: *Séance du 25 janvier 1915*, 23–25, AMAE, G1670.

<sup>387</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 25 janvier 1915*, 24, AMAE G1670.

of France. In this situation, the conditions for applying for naturalization mattered considerably less, and one should not be under the illusion of the practical consequences of adopting the new decree.<sup>388</sup>

The Commission recognized that while its draft allows a soldier on the front to obtain citizenship quickly while still on the front, the Governor-General's project is delaying this possibility due to more complicated procedures. Commission members assessed that if the Governor's project were adopted, soldiers would have to wait 5-6 years to be able to take advantage of the benefits of the new law, which meant that naturalization efforts were more difficult for them than in the case of the procedures envisaged by the *sénatus-consulte* of 1865.<sup>389</sup>

A member of the Commission, Duciène, proposed a compromise solution, which was to be semi-naturalization. The idea stated that one was allowed to vote in some French colonies without being a French citizen. This proposal raised the question of what civil rights such half-citizens could have. Finally, this proposal was rejected, and complete naturalization was considered a better way for France to show *indigènes* gratitude for their sacrifices to France in the battlefields of war.<sup>390</sup>

At the same time, the possibility of modifying the existing decrees on naturalization by adding to the criteria for applying for French citizenship the participation in combat on the war front since 1914 was discussed. The decree of May 25, 1912, providing the possibilities and conditions for applying, was this kind of act for the naturalization of the population of French West Africa. It gave such an opportunity to people at least 21 years of age and had worked at least ten years in public or private service. They also knew French in speech and writing and had proof of "good behavior and habits" (*de bonne vie et mœurs*). This decree, however, did not speak about the possibility of applying for naturalization for merits on the battlefield. Moreover, it gave broad powers to the colonial administration, which could challenge the applicant's postulate that he had met the criteria for applying for French citizenship. Finally, due to the more favorable propaganda overtones, this proposal was also rejected.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 23–35.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 19.

## Discussion in the Chamber of Deputies

On January 27, 1915, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies (*Commission des Affaires extérieures de la Chambre des Députés*) presented a resolution on the treatment of Algerian and Tunisian soldiers on an equal footing with “their comrades, the French and Israelites.” The resolution was agreed with by the Ministers for War and Foreign Affairs and adopted by the Committee unanimously. Its chairman, deputy Albin Rozet from the district of la Haute-Marne, stated that “for the sake of equality and justice, it should be that people who are equal before death are also equal before the law.”<sup>392</sup>

General Hubert Lyautey, the Resident-General in Morocco, was a strong opponent of the equality bill. In a telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on February 4, 1915, he stated that the naturalization of Moroccan soldiers for their merits on the battlefield is not favorable from the point of view of France’s political interests, as it would weaken the authority of the sultan in the eyes of his subjects. The case was delicate because Moroccan society was made up of many tribes that could disobey central authorities at the slightest sign of weakening their powers. This position was also taken by the Sultan himself. Only those who would decide not to return to Morocco could exercise the right to naturalization, but in the case of soldiers returning to their country, this right would harm the Sultan’s sovereignty and his Government in exercising power over the inhabitants of his kingdom.<sup>393</sup>

The Committee on Foreign Affairs proposal concerning the naturalization of soldiers fighting on the front was sent on February 19, 1915, to Rabat, and Lyautey shared the fears and reservations earlier raised by Alapetite. In Lyautey’s letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of February 21, 1915, we read: “I emphasize that these reservations are even more justified in the case of Morocco, because our occupation of this country is much more recent and is not yet completed; in a situation where the attributes of the power of the sovereign [Moroccan Sultan – J. Z.] are of a religious nature, Caliph [Ottoman – J. Z.] may submit his claims to sovereignty over Morocco on the basis of Koranic law, thus strengthening

<sup>392</sup> Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Paris, 29 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1664.

<sup>393</sup> RGM to MFA, Rabat, 4 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1664.

his political power.” Lyautey found the naturalization issue particularly sensitive to France’s interests. He further wrote that

*the introduction of naturalization in a general way will undoubtedly be seen as a limitation of his Sultan’s sovereign power; it is obvious that for every Moroccan, naturalization will mean being cut off from the roots and that he will thus become an apostate; paradoxically, what is supposed to be a boon to him, on the contrary, will prove to him a state of humiliation (état d’infériorité) in his own country; naturalization decisions may have different effects than intended. If they are to be a sign of ennoblement, they will not be received by the Moroccans. Moroccans are very sensitive to their traditions, and the loyalty they show us today is the result of their belief that we respect their traditions; what seems most likely to destroy what we have been creating here for two years is the suspicion that our occupation, instead of maintaining justice and security, is directed at changing their personal status; this step will deprive them of the illusion that they remain independent. I do not think that it is appropriate to invoke the granting of naturalization rights to Jews in Algeria after the war of 1870, because, given the attitude of Muslims to Jews, this decision – generally directed at all Jews – has undermined the value of French citizenship in the eyes of Muslims; in addition, Moroccans will feel humiliated by the fact that the same privilege will be given to Senegalese people, whom they consider to be inferior. I suggest limiting the naturalization rule to Algeria if possible. Such a step will not cause envy among Moroccans because they do not want to become like Algerians. They believe that the situation of the indigenous people in Algeria is worse than theirs because Algerians are removed from any participation in public life, and their indigenous traditions are insufficiently protected. The saying “We don’t want to be the new Algeria” is popular among Moroccans. I was surprised by this formula when I came to Fez in 1912, and I have been following it ever since. Attributes of the Sultan’s power should be maintained at all costs since they determine the integrity of Moroccan society; hasty decisions should be avoided so as not to lose existing achievements in the name of future successes, which may be illusory, as was the case with the naturalization of Jews after 1870.<sup>394</sup>*

Lyautey also expressed the belief that the indigenous service in the French Army on war fronts deserves the highest recognition and should

<sup>394</sup> RGM to MFA, Rabat, 21 Feb 1915, No. 72, AMAE, G1664.

be rewarded. Such rewards should be additional material benefits and honorary awards at the local level but passed on by the Sultan in consultation with the Resident-General. "Such a distinction will be sufficient," – emphasized the Resident-General.<sup>395</sup>

### The response of the Governor-General of Algeria

On March 10, 1915, the Governor-General of Algeria sent two letters. The first was addressed to the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs chairman. The second letter was sent to the Ministry of Interior. The first letter referred to the comments concerning his draft on naturalization, which the Interministerial Commission formulated at its meeting on January 25, 1915. The Governor emphasized that the general view of the Interministerial Commission that the French authorities in Algeria had not so far facilitated the naturalization of the Algerian *indigènes* was due to a misunderstanding of the intentions of his project, which he forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 20, 1915. The Governor-General's Administration had always been guided by the provisions of the decree of October 25, 1870, on naturalization. His naturalization project was not intended to block reforms of naturalization regulations – he emphasized in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>396</sup>

The Governor-General also referred to the detailed critical remarks of his draft formulated by the Interministerial Commission on January 25, 1915. He considered some of them justified, but others he rejected. He agreed that the first article of his project, which referred to *tout indigènes musulmans algériens*, should remove the word *musulmans* to enable it to also apply to the naturalization of *indigènes israélites*. The same article it was stated that naturalization could be attained by persons "after maturity," and the Governor agreed to the entry "after reaching the age of 21". He also agreed to the modification of the second article so that, instead of applying for a certificate of good behavior, the commander of the unit would issue a certificate confirming the presence of a soldier in his unit. This meant simplifying the entire procedure. These

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<sup>395</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>396</sup> GGA to MFA, Alger, 10 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

modifications did not change the main content of the project, which the Governor-General drew up.<sup>397</sup>

The Governor-General also commented on the draft of the project adopted by the Interministerial Commission at its meeting on January 13, 1915, and expressed the view that the proposed naturalization for soldiers, being a reward for their actions on the battlefield, was discretionary and as such was no different from the discretionary naturalization (*la naturalisation de faveur*) provided by the sénatus-consulte of 1865. From this point of view, he considered that there was no need for a new naturalization law. Finally, he pointed out that nothing would justify the proposed removal of Algerian civil authorities – mayors, administrators, prefects, and the Governor-General – from the naturalization process.<sup>398</sup>

The Governor-General's letter of March 10 was accompanied by an annex in which the Governor commented on the remarks made by the Interministerial Commission on his naturalization project, expressed at the Commission meeting on January 25, 1915. He expressly referred to criticism of article 5, which according to the Commission, first granted the applicant French citizenship, and then took it away. The Governor-General admitted that the applicant's declaration of willingness to take French citizenship had legal effects and could be considered as receiving new citizenship, but only if the application was successful. This approach was in line with the principle of retroactivity, which was widely used, and the Governor-General saw no reason why it should not be applied if a French Muslim subject sought to be subject to French law. The option of refusing citizenship was to make the applicant aware of the meaning of the term *la qualité de citoyen*. Persons obtaining citizenship complied with French law and could enjoy civil and political rights, but they also had to be aware of the obligations that imposed a new status. The prospect of receiving a refusal was to discourage those declaring themselves *indigènes* and unaware of their obligations regarding French citizenship.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>397</sup> GGA to MFA: *Projet de décret concernant les militaires indigènes algériens*, Alger, 10 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>398</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>399</sup> GGA to MFA: *Projet de décret sur l'admission à la qualité de citoyen français des indigènes algériens servant ou ayant servi dans l'armée française. Réponses aux critiques de la Commission des Affaires Musulmanes*, 10 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665; The project of the Governor-General see also in: ICMA: *Séance du 25 janvier 1915*, 23–25, AMAE, G1670.

The Commission considered that Article 1 of the Governor-General's project was restrictive in that it did not cover the *indigènes* of Israelites who could not benefit from the Décret Crémieux and did not include those *indigènes* who adopted Christianity. It was considered that this entry should be changed to *tout sujet ou protégé français*. The Governor-General considered that there was no need to formulate particular points regarding non-naturalized Algerian Israelites, as they were not required to have compulsory military service under the decree of February 3, 1912, as was the case with Muslims. Secondly, the number of volunteers joining the army among non-naturalized Algerian Israelites was virtually zero. In contrast, Algerian Muslims who converted to Christianity were very few, and their case did not deserve to be included in the draft decree separately. Their change of religion did not change their social situation and their political rights. Because the decree of February 3, 1912, on compulsory military service included them, the Governor-General thought that they were also covered by the regulations on the naturalization of Muslim soldiers.<sup>400</sup>

The Governor-General stated that he did not understand the Commission's conviction that his project had a hidden goal, which was to defer the possibility of naturalization by soldiers, because the period of a 3-month-wait for administrative decisions proposed by him proposed was sufficient to gather the necessary information about the applicant, and it would be kept. At the same time, the Governor spoke ironically of the Commission's expectations regarding many naturalization applications from front soldiers and the immediate political effects of naturalization. "It is an illusion to think that the effects of the new law will become apparent during the war. Can you imagine that indigenous soldiers will enjoy French citizens' rights when the state elections are not held because of the war? After all, this is not about formal possession of French citizenship, but about the active use of it," reads the Governor's comments on the Commission's assessment of his project. The Governor's skepticism about the new law's effectiveness also resulted from his observation of Muslim behavior in Algeria. He wrote: "It has been known for a long time that Algerian *indigènes* do not seek naturalization because it changes their

<sup>400</sup> GGA to MFA: Annex: *Projet de décret sur l'admission à la qualité de citoyen français des indigènes algériens servant ou ayant servi dans l'armée française. Réponses aux critiques de la Commission des Affaires musulmanes*, 5–6, Alger, 10 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

family system and inheritance rules.” The fact that French civil law, if it were to be applied in its entirety, would conflict with Muslim law was also acknowledged by the *Jeunes-Algériens*. “Naturalization imposes a military duty on them and discredits them in the eyes of their fellow believers. Another disincentive to applying for naturalization are cases of rejection of applications by the Algerian administration, which applicants perceive as their humiliation” – we read further on. The Algerian administration was guided by its arguments when rejecting the application. Namely, it considered that applications for naturalization were submitted mainly by people with poor reputations in their environments – less respected and uneducated – which depreciated the value of French citizenship.<sup>401</sup>

Comparing the two projects – the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs and the project of the Algerian administration – the Governor-General of Algeria found that the project prepared by his administration was more desirable for several reasons. First, this project only talked about those soldiers who have served in the army since the outbreak of war in 1914, and the Commission project included all indigenous soldiers who have ever served under the banner of France, and this practically burst the naturalization process based on the *sénatus-consulte* of 1865. Secondly, the Governor’s administration project provided for the possibility of rejecting the applicant’s declaration, and thus allowed the French authorities to control the naturalization process, while the Commission proposal assumed citizenship by submitting a simple declaration whose registration could not be rejected by the French authorities. Thirdly, the Governor’s project spoke of a transition period for consideration of the application and the possibility of submitting such an application up to a year after the end of hostilities. As a consequence, it was suitable for soldiers, while the Commission proposal did not provide for such a possibility.<sup>402</sup>

The discussion on the General-Governor and the Interministerial Commission projects showed how vital procedural issues were and how different interpretations can be made of the text. The controversy that the discussion gave birth to showed that both parties took a different position on procedural issues but shared that granting citizenship was the most essential value that France could pass on to soldiers fighting alongside her. The Commission’s proposal was very general and expressed more

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 16 and 25–26.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 20–21.

political intentions related to the environment and the needs of the Ministry of War than legal solutions. The Governor-General was more detailed in his project and placed his project in the context of imperial policy and saw it in line with other legal acts that were in force at the time, indicating possible legal and political complications if adopted.

The colonial administration, whose point of view was clearly expressed by the Governor-General of Algeria, believed that state authorities could not get rid of control over the naturalization process, as this could harm the functioning of the colonies and the position of France in the colonies. On March 5, 1915, the Minister of Colonies sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs his position on the project of the Interministerial Commission. It expressed complete agreement with the position of Alapetite and Lyautey on this matter. Both residents considered that the Commission's proposal was underdeveloped and needed significant changes. "I think it will be a mistake on our part to take the proposed proposals in a hurry and without proper preparation regarding the naturalization of our subjects, even if they are currently serving under our banners" – we read concerning the position of the Minister of Colonies.<sup>403</sup> The Ministry of War did not go into procedural details. Similarly, some MPs believe that the most crucial point was the declaration of goodwill on the part of France. All in all, it was about appearances and propaganda overtones in the name of recruiting new soldiers (Ministry of War) or ideas of broadly understood humanitarianism (some deputies).

Ultimately, the Interministerial Commission was in favor of preparing many texts concerning the naturalization project by the colonial administrations, which would reflect local conditions in individual parts of the empire. It was a gesture of goodwill – whether members of the Commission were openly speaking – which would show parliamentary consideration of projects on naturalization as proof that France – aware of the loyalty of its subjects fighting under its banner – decided to open the opportunity for them to enter the French national community (*l'accession à la nationalité française*) on the assumption that the beneficiary accepted the values of French republicanism which resulted in resigning from Muslim personal status and thus agreeing to cultural assimilation<sup>404</sup>.

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<sup>403</sup> MC to MFA: *Naturalisation des militaires indigènes*, Paris, 11 Mar 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>404</sup> ICMA: *Séance du 25 janvier 1915*, 23–25, AMAE, G1670.

The discussion showed a broad spectrum of views on what naturalization could be and what form it should take. It would be a one-off political act that would not fundamentally change the structure of social relations in the empire. This was evidenced by the fact that the Commission rejected the adoption of the draft of a single legal act for all *indigènes* providing for universal naturalization and supported the submission to the National Assembly of several projects relating to specific parts of the French Empire. In particular, it was a separate project for North Africa. The Commission members thus shared the view of the French colonial administration regarding the specific conditions of naturalization in individual colonies, and concerning North Africa, agreed with the Governor-General of Algeria that the conditions in Algeria were different from those in Morocco and Tunisia. Therefore, the intention would be to prepare two separate naturalization projects for Algeria as well as Tunisia and Morocco. This was also supported by the legal aspect, as the status of the Algerian Muslim *indigènes* was included in the *sénatus-consulte*, and for this reason, the act on naturalization could not be modified by decree.<sup>405</sup>

### Draft of liberal MPs from April 1, 1915

On April 1, 1915, the Chamber of Deputies heard a new draft law on the facilitation of naturalization by Muslim soldiers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The draft was submitted by four deputies – Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Louis Doizy, and Lucien Millevoye – known for their liberal views on the rights of the colonial population. Deputies began with high patriotic tones, listing war operations involving indigenous soldiers from North Africa. Such behavior of Muslim soldiers was a complete disappointment for German propaganda, which hoped that the slogans of a holy war between Muslims and non-Muslims would drag soldiers from North Africa to the side of Turkey. The loyalty of North African soldiers to France was total, and the bravery of Tunisian recruits from the 1912 enlistment in the recent battles of Charleroi and Reims was especially emphasized in the orders of the Minister of War and statements of the Governor-General of Algeria. “Everyone, no doubt, will agree that this lasting loyalty deserves immediate compensation from the sovereign

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 17.

nation,” we read in a speech by deputies. “This matter should be considered separately from the issue of electoral reform, announced for a long time and expected to be carried out after the end of the war. For France, it is an obligation to find a form of compensation for *indigènes* who fight for her and show devotion to her cause. The highest satisfaction they can receive from France will be French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) as the most valuable form of compensation.”<sup>406</sup>

Liberal deputies have clearly stated the purpose of their project. It was to create such conditions for the naturalization of indigenous soldiers that their applications would not be dependent on the goodwill or the whims of the state administration in Algeria and the administrative authorities of the protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia. The law in force at that time allowed the French administrative authorities to refuse the application of French applicants.<sup>407</sup> Consequently the first Article of the new law would refer to Muslim soldiers from Algeria and give them the right to receive the rights of a French citizen (*la qualité de citoyen français*) by a simple declaration of the acquisition of those rights after reaching the age of 21 and at any time. The only condition was to attach a certificate of good behavior from a superior in the army. Active or former Tunisian and Moroccan soldiers could not obtain French citizenship by simple declaration because Tunisian and Moroccan were foreigners for French law. However, the principle that they would receive full French citizenship rights and their declaration (application) of the desire to receive French civil rights could not be rejected by the French administrative authorities.<sup>408</sup>

The draft of the four deputies was more of a political declaration than a law taking into account the existing legal system. The authors did not ask any naturalized French citizens to give up their native culture in favor of French culture. We read:

*Some will probably have objections as to the effects of the new law because the number of applications for naturalization will not be significant. However, this is about the symbolic significance of our proposal. We believe that it is not too zealous to ex officio give one group of people the right of a French citizen as compensation for their attachment to France, and on the other hand – let them retain their personal status as a Muslim to which*

<sup>406</sup> Chambre des Députés: Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Louis Doizy, Lucien Millevoe, Proposition de Loi, No. 820, 1 avril 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>407</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>408</sup> Ibidem.

*they are so attached and which we constantly respect. Our proposal does not mean that these people are obliged to apply for citizenship. When proposing to grant indigènes citizenship, we do not put ourselves in the position of someone who assesses their behavior because whether they accept citizenship or reject such a possibility depends on their beliefs and self-assessment of their situation. The proposed law will no doubt show that France knows what gratitude and dignity are; in this way it will reward individual units and show the magnitude of the entire indigenous population.*<sup>409</sup>

The authors of the draft law were convinced that the new law would significantly impact the future of France's relations with the indigenous population, as it would be a step in overcoming mutual prejudices. They were more politically than culturally conditioned, for the Muslim faith alone determined these relations to a lesser extent than the activities of religious brotherhoods and political groups. The authors were concerned with the ideas of Pan-Islamism, which increasingly influenced Muslims and turned them hostile to European civilization. According to the authors, France was losing Muslims and steps had to be taken to regain them. The law on the naturalization of soldiers would be such an action.<sup>410</sup> The design and thinking of liberal deputies remained within the framework of *la mission civilisatrice* but was groundbreaking in the perception of Muslim culture by politicians. Until now, it was believed that it was incompatible with republican values. The authors of the project, "allowing" naturalized soldiers to stick to their Muslim personal status, "suggested that the coexistence of two cultures within one European civilization is possible." A severe obstacle was polygamy, which was prohibited by French law, but liberal deputies saw this phenomenon as temporary, and history confirmed their suppositions.

Refuting the allegations that France granting *indigènes* citizenship from Morocco and Tunisia was contrary to the protectorate agreements that France had concluded, the authors of the project explained that their proposal did not violate France's treaty obligations to the protectorates because could France give up its prerogative to grant French citizenship to foreigners, including French *protégés*. An example of using this prerogative was the decree prohibiting economic relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary, ratified by the Chamber of Deputies on September 27,

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<sup>409</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>410</sup> Ibidem.

1914. This ban covered the territory of France and the countries under the French protectorate.<sup>411</sup>

### Lyautey's stand

The draft of the four liberal deputies was sent on April 3 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Resident-General in Morocco, who soon commented. Resident Lyautey gave it a brief assessment: it posed a threat to the French presence in North Africa, so it must be rejected in its entirety without even attempting to adapt it to any circumstances. It was necessary to find a different formula for expressing our national recognition and appreciation to the Moroccan soldiers fighting on the front.<sup>412</sup>

The Resident's arguments were political and legal. Political issues were about intending to grant citizenship to all soldiers who fought or would fight alongside France. According to the Resident, such generalization was too far-reaching, because in the case of Morocco, it marked the emergence of "a military caste, enjoying a special statute, coming from classes that are neither the most respected layers in Moroccan society, nor would we like to support them for the security of our interests. In addition, according to the authors of the project, obtaining citizenship will be a privilege obtained automatically by the military caste. At the same time, the elite are educated people who deal with trade and agriculture, having nothing to do with military service".<sup>413</sup>

The project, therefore, reconciled the traditional social structure and threatened social disorders; it could give birth to the dissatisfaction of the social elite concerning the current privilege of soldiers, and this elite supported the influence of France in Morocco. According to Lyautey, it was based on false premises, which were the belief that *indigènes* would treat the granting of French citizenship as an honor and a boon. "This will not be the case, for this step will make him a pariah in his country; cut him off

<sup>411</sup> Ibidem. On June 9, 1915, Rozet, Leygues, Doizy, and Millevoye submitted a new text for their project, which differed mainly in that in Article 1 a provision was introduced that a soldier applying for naturalization could not maintain polygamous relationships – see *Proposition de loi (de M.M. Albin Rozet, Georges Leygues, Doizy et Millevoye (nouveau texte)*, 9 juin 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>412</sup> RGM to MFA: *Naturalisation des militaires indigènes marocains*, Rabat, 15 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>413</sup> Ibidem.

from his roots and discredit him in the eyes of his countrymen, especially the most influential and respected. Applying for naturalization will mean losing honor and his social degradation.” The Resident added that there are many examples of naturalized people who encounter difficulties and are ostracized and isolated; they experience this from local authorities and their surroundings. Lyautey referred in this case to Alapetite, Resident-General in Tunisia, who called the naturalized soldier “un déraciné et un apostate”.<sup>414</sup>

The legal argument against the project was polygamy. French law did not allow polygamous associations, while in Morocco, they were widespread. A naturalized soldier entering into a polygamous relationship would violate French law and face the consequences. Lyautey did not think polygamy was bad in Morocco. He wrote:

*Only insufficient knowledge of Moroccan society can justify the belief that polygamy is proof of a fall and backwardness. For a long time, polygamy in Morocco formed the basis of family organization and proclaiming that monogamy is a state of superiority and that from a French point of view, it is the only regulator and the only acceptable norm will be a challenge for customs, social and religious traditions, and a real offense to the Sultan and the entire elite, as well as for the whole society. I claim that every Moroccan who decides to apply for naturalization will realize that he will have to agree to monogamy, which will be contrary to his habits and his tradition, and besides, isolate him from his environment and his race.*<sup>415</sup>

According to Lyautey, the project contained risky statements. The Resident acknowledged that the authors’ statement that Tunisian and Moroccan soldiers should be treated in the same way as Algerians, and therefore be given the same rights to naturalization that their “Algerian brothers” had or otherwise they would feel humiliated, testifying to complete ignorance of the psyche of *indigènes* from North Africa.

*If the Moroccan and Tunisian indigenous people do not treat naturalization as a boon – as I wrote earlier – he will not feel humiliated by the fact that the proposals addressed to Algerians are not directed at him either. Speaking openly about Moroccans’ feelings for indigènes in Algeria, they are one of the main obstacles to our Morocco’s military and political penetration. For a Moroccan who is begging for his independence and status, the Algerians are people who have not only been conquered but are also those*

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<sup>414</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>415</sup> Ibidem.

*who have been reduced almost to slaves. The Moroccan will not stop at anything to not be brought back to the same state by us. Any sign of assimilation of the Algerians is antipathetic to him.*<sup>416</sup>

Criticism of the naturalization project became an opportunity for Lyautey to evaluate French policy in Algeria and compare it with the one he led in Morocco. Lyautey believed that France had made many mistakes in administering Algeria. "On the other hand, it cannot be said that we are ignorant of knowledge about Islam and the Arab and Berber population. It would be a paradox if we did not use the experience of the last 80 years of managing Algeria." This experience said that Morocco and Algeria differed from each other, and it would be inappropriate to apply the same measure to these two countries. In Algeria, power was dispersed, and there were no elements of the state structure and a hierarchical social organization on which France could rely. In Morocco, it was the other way around, with there being a solid state organization and a social organization centered around the person of the Sultan. As a result, after some perturbations related to the introduction of a protectorate in Morocco, "the reconstruction of an efficiently functioning society was relatively easy compared to Algeria."<sup>417</sup>

The most important was the attitude of the French authorities towards the local population. It was completely different. In Algeria, *indigènes* were treated by the Europeans as a "lower race" and removed from administering public affairs. They felt humiliated because of it. Their pride was hurt. Lyautey writes:

*I have experienced too much in Algeria in the last 40 years not to feel and understand these moods. An example would be the ceremony at the Oran General Council (Conseil général d'Oran) attended by Muslim members of this institution. Most of them were notables of noble origin from known families, and many of them were awarded the Legion of Honor orders. They were always seated at the end of the table, placed one at a time, not form a group, which made them like islands in a sea of French people, and they were ignored by the French, who rarely made protectionist gestures towards them. I also participated in the Supreme Council of Algiers (Conseil supérieur à Alger), where Muslim delegates sat. However, no one worried about their presence at the meetings, which debated the most important matters for Muslims, and nobody informed them about the results*

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<sup>416</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>417</sup> Ibidem.

*of these meetings, nor did anyone ask for their opinion. There could have been no more painful sensations, and I have never left these meetings without the feeling that these people can only be deeply humiliated, hurt, and carry only a sense of harm and dissatisfaction.*<sup>418</sup>

It was different in Morocco. *Medjless* in Fez, the elected city council, consisted exclusively of *indigènes* and only managed the city with great success under our discreet control. In Rabat, the High *Medjless* for Criminal Cases, indirectly controlled by *Secrétaire Général Chérifien*, made decisions as to the highest authority in the most important legal matters and retained absolute independence and an essential role in establishing legal norms. "You could also point to meetings of city council committees held effectively under the leadership of city leaders. I can assure you that in Morocco, the official ceremonies of the protectorate authorities, to which officials of the Sultan Administration or the grand *caïds* from Marrakech were invited, were nothing like the Algerian ceremonies from the point of view of protocol and seating at the table *indigènes*"<sup>419</sup> – Lyautey wrote.

The final argument for rejecting the draft was the question of the Sultan's sovereignty in light of the protectorate treaty. The Resident believed that the proposed form of naturalization of Moroccan soldiers violated the fundamental principle of the protectorate agreement concluded with the ruler of Morocco, which spoke of the sovereign authority over his subjects. Supporters of the naturalization of soldiers believed that the decree, in this case, would not violate the protectorate treaties concluded by France with the rulers of Morocco and Tunisia, just as the treaties did not violate the decree of September 27, 1914, which forbade the French and French *protégés* from maintaining economic relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary by declaring all previous acts null and void as contrary to a given ban. However, Lyautey believed that between these two situations, there was no analogy; otherwise, one could think that the law on naturalization – as new – annuls the provisions of the previously adopted, i.e., the treaty on the protectorate, regarding the sovereignty of the Sultan over the subjects. "Is it possible to compare activities specific to the economic policy, motivated by the state of war, with the legal and political order, which permanently transfers the Sultan's sovereignty over all categories of his subjects without exception?"<sup>420</sup> – Lyautey asked.

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<sup>418</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>419</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>420</sup> Ibidem.

According to Lyautey, the project was an attack on the sovereignty of the Sultan, on the basic principle of the protectorate, and – an attack on the Moroccan status because it treated this status as inferior, thus opening the field to undermining the system of the protectorate and France losing all related benefits. Article 15 of the Madrid Agreement of 1880 provided that a subject of the Sultan of Morocco who acquired foreign citizenship abroad upon his return to Morocco could retain foreign citizenship only with the consent of the Sultan. After adopting the new naturalization law, France would have to ask the Sultan for permission to allow naturalized Moroccan soldiers to retain French citizenship. The Resident considered that it would put the Sultan in an ambiguous situation, as refusal could lead to tensions with the protectorate. Consent would jeopardize his reputation in the eyes of Moroccan opinion and weaken his position as both a signatory to the Madrid Convention and the spiritual leader of the Moroccans. In this respect, Morocco differed from Tunisia, where the Bey was not the spiritual leader of his subjects, as was the case with the Sultan of Morocco. For this reason, Tunisian subjects who obtained foreign citizenship outside Tunisia did not have to turn to Bey for permission to retain that citizenship.<sup>421</sup>

Lyautey and Alapetit defended the protectorate as the most appropriate organization for maintaining the conquered peoples. Lyautey wrote: “I declare that this project will be perceived as a painful blow not only by the sultan, but by the entire state administration of the sultan, as well as by all those who feel Moroccan, and especially those who support our position in Morocco with the consequences that our positions in this country will be undermined and start to waver in their very foundations, which will go to the wasted effort of the last three years to create a solid political foundation for our presence in this country.” The French Resident in Morocco believed that annexations could not be allowed as justified actions in colonial policy, because “soft politics” created the best conditions for “economic development of a given country, stimulation of trade and industry, overcoming social inertia and stimulating general activity necessary for the introduction indigenous society in modern life and the use of all vital resources of this country.”<sup>422</sup> For Lyautey,

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<sup>421</sup> RGM: *Note de la naturalisation des militaires indigènes*, Rabat, 15 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibidem*.

the protectorate system allowed local people to preserve their customs and traditional life arrangements, including social institutions and the “illusion of independence,” and was the only way to permanently link a dominated population to France.

Lyautey did not question the legitimacy of showing gratitude to indigenous soldiers for faithful service, but he thought there were other ways to show it. He wrote: “Unlike the authors of the project, I believe that a better way of showing gratitude to Moroccan soldiers will be monetary rewards and employee salaries, increased pensions for injured and reservists, compensation honoring merits, insurance guarantees while allowing them to remain on their personal status and live according to native norms and values in their communities, that they will not have to abandon and which will accept them with honors after the war.”<sup>423</sup>

### Project of overseas deputies of May 20, 1915

On May 20, 1915, the Chamber of Deputies proceeded to discuss another draft naturalization law prepared by a group of deputies from overseas departments and colonies: Joseph Lagrosillière, Albert Grodet, Achille René-Boisneuf and Gratien Candace from the Caribbean, Georges Boussenot and Charles Marie Gasparin from Reunion, Blaise Diagne from Senegal and Ernest Outrey, who was a deputy from Cochinchine. Boussenot and Gasparin were activists of the radical socialist party, and Outrey belonged to the radical left and represented the colonies’ interests, advocating the facilitation of naturalization for *indigènes* and guaranteeing their political rights. In the case of a given project, its authors were also guided by lofty ideas – they talked about “the bravery and loyalty of indigenous soldiers and their great dedication in the face of a terrible war against the enemies of civilization, democracy and the rule of law for their magnificent metropole, which is their mother-homeland (*la Mère patrie*). People of all races and skin color, under our protection, declared their participation in the war and gave evidence of deep patriotism and national solidarity. There is not a single governor, ruler, or administrator in our Asian and African possessions who would not spontaneously and cordially express a desire

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<sup>423</sup> Ibidem.

to help – by sending people or money – to defend our Homeland against the threat from the enemy.”<sup>424</sup>

The necessity of showing gratitude was evident in this situation. Since the highest political value was the rights of a French citizen, allowing indigenous soldiers to acquire these rights, and thus entering the family of French citizens, became the most appropriate decision of the French Government and Parliament. The indigenous soldiers deserved it all the more because of their characteristics – “they had a noble disposition, they were faithful, responsible, capable of immediate enlightenment, and their heart was able to feel the most delicate nuances of emotionality.” According to the authors of the project, Great Britain intended to do likewise. The British authorities had repeatedly emphasized the heroic effort of the subjects from the colonies on the fronts of the Foreign War and announced that after the end of hostilities, they would give their *indigènes* the best protection. It was therefore predicted that war could have a substantial impact on the relationship between the “white race” and the “colored races”, and the authors of the project believed that this relationship should change – and, as some British journalists wrote, “colored races” in the British Empire should have the right to become a British citizen, just as *indigènes* in French possessions should be given the right to acquire the rights of a French citizen.<sup>425</sup>

Therefore, the project, known as the Lagrosillière project, referred not only to Muslim soldiers from North Africa but also to all *indigènes* in French possessions. Allowing *indigènes* to exercise the rights of a French citizen was moral in a situation where soldiers from the colony shed blood for France, but it also had political overtones – as it was about strengthening the empire by changing colonial policy. The authors of the project recognized that the policy of the Third Republic of top-down assimilation carried out with administrative methods under the slogan of liberating these people from civilizational backwardness was a mistake. These people were at different levels of development, and the policy of assimilation had to be carried out differently depending on local conditions. “True colonization is not only the conquest and administration of the

<sup>424</sup> No. 935. Chambre des Députés. Session de 1915. Annexe au procès-verbal de la séance du 20 mai 1915. *Proposition de loi ayant pour objet de déterminer les conditions d'acquisition, par les indigènes de l'Algérie, des colonies et pays de protectorat, des droit civils et politiques ou de la qualité d'électeurs au titre indigène*, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>425</sup> Ibidem.

territory but, above all, the gradual habituation of the local population to the presence of another civilization and the absorption of the territory to the metropole. Otherwise, colonies will be in danger, and relations with the metropole will be uncertain and unpredictable. A great nation cannot colonize except by the attractive force of its size”<sup>426</sup>

French civil rights were to be part of this force. The project’s authors came out with idealistic assumptions that all *indigènes* want to become French citizens and that in this pursuit, they would only manage goals higher than privileges and material benefits. Forced assimilation was a mistake, but the project’s authors did not foresee it: granting citizenship was supposed to bring indigenous values closer to the republican values and French political culture, and therefore ultimately should promote acculturation and assimilation. To achieve this strategic goal, France should even make some concessions to local cultures. Article 13 of the draft stated that the family of a soldier applying for naturalization automatically obtained French citizenship. It was the case with the monogamous family. On the other hand, being in a polygamous relationship did not disqualify a soldier from applying for naturalization. His application was to be considered individually, but he was not rejected *ex officio*.<sup>427</sup>

The main elements of the project were: (1) it treated the problem of naturalization more widely than all previous projects, as it referred to all inhabitants of the French empire who did not have French citizenship rights regardless of their religion and ethnicity; (2) it gave the right to request naturalization not only to those soldiers who fought on the fronts of the present war, but to all those who ever served in the French Army, and even their sons (Article 9); (3) the project also gave the right to apply for naturalization to those *indigènes* who were officials in the French administration (Article 15); (4) naturalization was voluntary (Article 1); (5) political rights arising from the possession of French citizenship were understood as human rights provided for in the Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights of 1789; (6) naturalization eliminated fiscal inequality, which was treated by the authors of the project as a violation of human rights; (7) the project introduced equality under criminal law and eliminated the system of disciplinary penalties *indigènes* under the *indigénat* system in force in Algeria (Article 18); (8) the project excluded naturalization from the control of administrative authorities and transmitted it to the judiciary. The only

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<sup>426</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>427</sup> Ibidem.

thing the project required from the soldier-candidate for French citizens was reading and writing in French (Article 9). In the case of an official, that requirement was morality and loyalty (Article 15). Article 18 of the project was critical. It provided for equal electoral rights for those *indigènes* who obtained naturalization. They were exempt from all additional fees and taxes, and the *indigénat* system ceased to apply to them.

The project was directed to territories that had a different status in the system of the French empire, and their inhabitants exercised various rights. The Indian population in Pondichéry, Karikal, Yangoon on the Coromandel Coast, Mahé on the Malabar Coast, and Chandernagore in Bengal already had full citizenship rights (*capacité civique et civile*). In this case, the draft lifted administrative decisions that restricted these rights, particularly the decree of September 20, 1899, which introduced a second electoral list for *natifs* in elections for local authorities. If the bill were adopted, one French citizen would be on which *natifs* would be next to the French. One also needed to abolish any distinction between Hindu, metropolitan, or Creole origin officials in the state administration. The *indigènes* of Senegal had special political rights, particularly the right to vote in municipal, cantonal, and legislature elections. Still, they were not treated as French citizens, and the French Civil Code did not refer to them. The draft of the new naturalization law aimed to remove these contradictions and give the citizens of Senegal full civil and political rights. The population of Martinique had the same civil and political rights as the French colonies as early as 1848, and in Oceania, all subjects of King Tahiti had the full rights of French citizens as mentioned in the decree of Annexation of December 30, 1880 (Article 3). The situation of the islands' inhabitants, which were not part of the kingdom of Pomaré, was different. The inhabitants were not involved in the en block naturalization mechanism, and the decree of December 28, 1885, granted them the right to elect representatives for the *Conseil général*, but they were not French citizens except in cases of individual naturalization. The Council of State ruled that the *indigènes* of the Marquises, Gambier, and Rapa Islands could not participate in the election of the delegate to the *Conseil supérieur des colonies*. This inequality was corrected in part by the decree of July 13, 1894, which gave all those who had the right to vote in the *Conseil général* elections the right to elect a delegate to the *Conseil supérieur des colonies*.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Ibidem.

On June 16, 1915, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies began discussing two new draft naturalization laws tabled by MPs Georges Boussenot and Paul Bluysen. Projects were previously submitted by Albin Rozet, L. Millevoye, G. Leygues and Doissy, and Lagrosillière. Comments were also submitted on two earlier projects. The first draft of the four liberal deputies was assessed as unfair to *indigènes* from India. They were entirely omitted by Albin Rozet and the other three authors, even though they had fought as bravely as others on the war fronts and were faithful to France. It was also recognized that the project was not consistent with North African soldiers themselves, as it did not distinguish those who were called up before the war based on the decree of February 1912 from those called to service during the current warfare. If naturalization was a form of reward for a blood sacrifice made to France in the war against Germany, then the draft law should cover only those soldiers who found themselves in the army after the outbreak of war. The disadvantage of Lagrosillière's proposal was, in turn, its vast scope. In the opinion of many discussants, adopting this proposal would mean a radical social change and reorganization of the economy, electoral system, and political situation in the colonies, which would revolutionize the entire economic organization and the electoral and political systems of the colonies. It was recognized that this proposal must be modified and its scope limited in many respects according to the state of development of local societies.<sup>429</sup>

The new Bluysen project provided that *indigènes* from Algeria and colonies who had served or were serving in the army for no less than three consecutive years, had a certificate of good behavior issued by the relevant military authorities and could read and write in French acquired the right to request French authorities to grant them civil and political rights, which they could benefit from on a par with other French people. Under the same conditions, *protégés* from Tunisia and the French zone of Morocco could obtain naturalization. Article 2 provided that the person interested in naturalization should address the application to his head of the corps or in the event of termination of service, to the mayor of his residence, or the civil or military administrator at the place of stay. The letter was accompanied by a birth certificate or court certificate confirming the date of birth. Article 3 stated that the applicant indicated

<sup>429</sup> „La Naturalisation des Indigènes. Georges Boussenot et Paul Bluysen déposent deux propositions de loi,” *Presse Coloniale*, 16 Jun 1915, AMAE, G1665.

in his application the names of his children and the date and place of their birth, and if he was married, he also gave the name of his wife and the date of marriage. Subsequently, the mayor or administrator stated in the presence of two French witnesses that the applicant had spoken and written French, and the results of this test were recorded in the minutes. Under Article 6, three days after the submission of the application, the authorities to whom the application was submitted sent a copy of the application to the magistrate of the place of residence or to the regiment in which the person concerned serves was serving or to the administrator who acted as a magistrate. On receiving a copy of the application, the municipality entered it into specially created registers and kept it there under Articles 40 and 43 of the Civil Code. Within 24 hours of receiving a copy of the application, the magistrate interviewed the applicant in two cases: (1) whether the applicant had committed any unlawful acts; (2) whether the application met the criteria for naturalization. In the case of countries under the protectorate, the survey should have indicated the differences in the level of penalties for committed crimes between local and French law, as these differences could have had an impact on limiting civil and political rights. Article 9 provided for an appeal in the event of a refusal to grant French citizenship rights. The appeal would have to be within 20 days of the refusal's reception. However, if the person appealing against the refusal decision did not manage to gather evidence for his application, did not meet the conditions for obtaining citizenship at the time of revocation or if it was confirmed that he did not qualify for citizenship due to French law, then the magistrate or administrator acting as a judge canceled the appeal within five days of filing it.<sup>430</sup>

Georges Boussenot's suggested that the naturalized *indigène* assumes all obligations and benefits from French citizens' rights. Any restrictions on the exercise of these rights were excluded. *Indigènes* who were naturalized could not be second-class French citizens and should have the same civil, military rights and obligations as other French citizens. The fulfillment of these duties was inevitably associated with the *indigène's* departure from his personal status. One of the proposed decree articles stipulated that *indigène* soldiers, awarded for fighting on orders or decorated with a medal, could obtain citizenship while maintaining their personal status. In this case, they could exercise their electoral rights, but only to demonstrate knowledge of the French language. Because in

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<sup>430</sup> Ibidem.

disciplinary and criminal matters, they would still be subject to the law of *indigénate*, their citizenship would be of an honorary title. As for the others, i.e., those who had fought at the front but did not receive either a medal or distinction for following orders, in the event of relinquishing the possibility of obtaining citizenship, they would be granted certain financial privileges, mainly in the form of an increased military pension, which they would acquire after serving a certain number of years in the army. These privileges would be included in a separate legal act.<sup>431</sup>

Bousseno's proposal strongly interfered with the Muslim's personal status. It said that every French subject applying for naturalization who had several wives under his personal status would have to report to the French registry office and marry one of his wives. After naturalization, relationships maintained with other wives would be treated as extra-marital relationships, which would have serious legal consequences for these women and their children born from a naturalized soldier relationship.<sup>432</sup>

### Return to the old policy

On July 1, 1915, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a letter from the Resident-General in Tunisia assessing naturalization projects submitted to the Chamber of Deputies. The Resident was strongly opposed to these projects and the naturalization of soldiers for war merits. He wrote:

*Since the personal status of Tunisian Muslims is based on religious law, the only effect of naturalization will be the pressure from religious proselytes and the native environment, directed against a naturalized person who will be warned that, as a Muslim, he cannot reject his second, third or fourth wife because she is not his first wife and agrees that his daughters have the same right to inherit as his sons. If naturalization could be canceled after it turned out that the person still complies with Muslim law instead of French civil law, I would agree to the naturalization project. However, the act of naturalization is irrevocable, and the naturalization of soldiers fighting on the front will be another reason for concern for their families – anxiety that increases as the war continues. It will be seen as*

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<sup>431</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>432</sup> Ibidem.

*a hidden catechization of Muslims; those who return naturalized will not be perceived by their environment as their own. The opinions and possible behavior of these soldiers' families must be taken into account; their natural environment.*<sup>433</sup>

The Resident pointed out that the idea of granting citizenship to indigenous soldiers from Tunisia may be discredited because, among Tunisians, there was no spontaneous pursuit of French naturalization in anticipation of the material benefits it brings. In other words, the Resident thought that French naturalization did not bring the candidate enough benefit to make it attractive. Since the adoption of the decree of October 3, 1910, only five Tunisian *indigènes* have committed themselves to accept the conditions set out in the naturalization decree, which means that they would comply with the French Civil Code. The Resident-General in Tunisia compared the compensation of the courage of Muslim soldiers by granting them French citizenship to “rewarding brave Muslim soldiers who died from wounds to the way of granting them the right to burial according to the rites of the Catholic religion.”<sup>434</sup>

On July 15, the Governor-General of Algeria sent his second comment to the projects. His anxiety was primarily caused by Article 18 of the Lagrosillière project regarding the place of naturalized indigenous soldiers in the electoral process. They created a new category of voters and, according to the Lagrosillière project, they were guaranteed at least half the seats of other indigenous representatives when the *indigènes* debated separately from the French and at least one-third of the seats attributed to other indigenous representatives when the *indigènes* debated together with the French. The Governor reminded everyone that *communes* were the second level of the administrative division after the department in Algeria, as in metropolitan France. There were three types of communes in Algeria: full exercise communes (*communes de plein exercice*), mixed communes (*communes mixtes*) and native communes (*communes indigènes*). In the first ones only, organized in the same way as communes in the metropole, *indigènes* had the right to elect their representatives to municipal councils. In mixed communes, subordinated to civil authorities and in *communes indigènes* subordinated to military authorities, municipal councils (*les conseils municipaux*) were replaced by municipal

<sup>433</sup> RGT to MFA, Tunis, 1 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>434</sup> Ibidem.

commissions (*les commissions municipales*), in which representatives of the indigenous population were not elected but appointed by administrative authorities.<sup>435</sup>

It was easy to see that by adopting Article 18 of the Lagrosillière project that naturalized soldiers would have the right as new voters to choose their representatives for all existing or future *assemblées* in which *indigènes* sit fundamentally changing the organization of communes, i.e., administrative division, and in particular, *communes mixtes* and *communes indigènes*, to which *indigènes* could not yet choose their representatives. According to the Governor-General, the adoption of the principle of the population choosing *communes mixtes* would lead, in the case of communes with a predominance of tribal people, to fierce competition between tribes and, as a result, social disorder and bloodshed. "I believe," wrote the Governor, "that the election section should be removed from Article 18, or a provision should be made that this section does not apply to *communes mixtes* and *communes indigènes*. We will have to limit – and for a long time – *indigènes'* election to community assemblés (*assemblées communales*) and only in those cases where the indigenous people are in constant contact with the French population, i.e., to full exercise communes."<sup>436</sup>

The Governor's comments also concerned the composition of the electoral college in those communes in which *indigènes* had the right to elect their representatives to municipal councils. According to the regulations in force in this matter, an *indigène* who wanted to be on the electoral list had to be at least 25 years old and had lived in the place for at least 2 years. He also had to either own a property, be a farmer, licensed buyer, or public administration clerk, have a university degree or honorary distinction, or finally, be a military man with a certificate of good conduct during service. Lagrosillière's proposal created a new electorate, consisting of (1) former military personnel who did not need to have a good behavior certificate; (2) *indigènes* able to write and read, but without having a university degree; (3) *indigènes*, who acquired electoral rights only because their sons served in the army; (4) *indigènes* who could write and read in their own language and for whom this was the only criterion for

<sup>435</sup> GGA to MI: *Naturalisation. Proposition de loi déposée par M. Lagrosillière. Observations supplémentaires*, Alger, 14 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibidem*.

obtaining the right to vote. "I am categorically against creating these new categories of voters. This suggestion is contrary to all logic. In pursuit of remuneration for soldiers for military service, he puts good soldiers and bad soldiers at stake"<sup>437</sup> – we read in the Governor's letter.

The project was conflicted with other applicable regulations. It envisaged granting French citizenship to persons after the age of 21, and they acquired the right to vote at that moment, while the decree of January 13, 1914, introduced the age limit of 25 for the acquisition of electoral rights. According to the Governor-General, the contradiction between the legislation in force and the proposed new law was more critical because the decree of January 13, 1914, was compatible with the Hanafi School of Islamic law. This school was quite widespread in Algeria and predicted that a man would reach social maturity at 25. The most widespread in Algeria, Maliki School of Islamic law, did not specify the age of a man's social maturity and only said that adulthood is achieved at the time of financial independence from parents. The decrees of April 7, 1884, and January 13, 1914, were therefore liberal compared to the Islamic law because they provided electoral rights at the age of 25, thus often before the man had become independent from his parents. The Governor considered that the reduction of the voting age to 21 was too far-reaching to the Muslim tradition and that the right to vote must not overtake the capacity for civil acts.<sup>438</sup>

The last issue raised by the Governor-General of Algeria was the issue of language. The Lagrosillière project allowed indigenous soldiers to obtain citizenship if they met the only criterion, i.e., knowledge of Arabic. The Governor had said it was unnatural to reward French citizenship for people who prefer to communicate in Arabic rather than in French. The case had additional local overtones. The French administration in Algeria believed that the Berber language – only spoken because it was not written – was gradually being replaced by Arabic, which was the language of Islam. In this way, the French authorities treated the Berbers Arabized as a counterweight to the anti-French sentiment of some of the Arab population. The disappearance of the Berber language was pointed out by the scientific works of Edmond Doutté and Émile-Félix Gautier – ethnographers from *l'Université d'Alger* and *l'École supérieure des lettres*

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<sup>437</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>438</sup> Ibidem.

d'Alger. "This phenomenon is not favorable from the point of view of French interests because the Arabization of indigenous people strengthens their Muslim mentality and increases the distance that separates them from us. In other words, we have no interest in recognizing Arabic as something that works in our favor".<sup>439</sup>

Lutaud also commented on the Boussenot project of June 24, 1915. He found it less liberal for *indigènes* than the sénatus-consulte of 1865, because it allowed one to apply for naturalization only if he lived in the colonies and was contrary to French legislation, which gave the right to acquire citizenship regardless of the person's place of birth and residence. In addition, the proposal did not specify the form of the declaration and did not specify to whom it should be submitted; hence, it did not provide any guarantees against the arbitrariness of the administrative authorities in determining whether the applicant meets had met the necessary conditions. It was no better in this respect than the sénatus-consulte of 1865. "It corresponds neither to our political interests in Algeria nor to the interests of the local population,"<sup>440</sup> summed up the Governor-General.

On July 31, 1915, a turning point in the discussions about the naturalization of indigenous soldiers as a form of moral compensation for their war merited for fighting for France took place. On that day, the *Direction des Affaires administratives et techniques* at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared a note for the Political and Commercial Affairs Department – the second most important department at the Ministry – with an opinion about the Lagrosillière project on naturalization law. The authors of the note fully supported the position of the Governor-General of Algeria. They concluded that the project seriously disrupted the nature of naturalization, which was still a favor that the state authorities could grant or refuse after the investigation of the person applying for naturalization. In the project, this favor would be replaced by the acquisition of citizenship as a legal good because the acquisition of citizenship by certain persons was socially and therefore legally acceptable. The regime of acquiring citizenship as a legal good was approved by the Civil Code and applied to descendants of the French and sons of foreigners born in France. The basis for citizenship was their attachment to France, resulting in either from roots or upbringing in the French community. However,

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<sup>439</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>440</sup> GGA to MI, Alger, 15 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

the exercise of this right was subject to certain restrictions, and administrative authorities might refuse to register a declaration of acquisition of citizenship if the applicant was not worthy of it. "Now, according to the discussed project, these restrictions will be lifted against *indigènes*"<sup>441</sup> – concluded the authors of the note.

This conclusion was crucial for the future. Later, state administration institution documents only confirmed the validity of the assessments formulated in July 1915. One of the arguments later raised the belief that indigenous soldiers were not properly prepared to understand the value of French citizenship that could be offered to them.<sup>442</sup> It did not close the discussion about granting political rights to colonial peoples. On the contrary, this discussion continued both in parliament and at meetings of the Interministerial Commission. Anti-colonialists were still active. However, the note of July 1915 opened such a wide field for reflection on the nature of naturalization, especially the place of possible adopted law in the French legal system, that it practically ended the possibility of a fast legislative path for the decree on the naturalization of indigenous soldiers.

On December 3, 1915, Georges Leygues, MP, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (*Commission des Affaires extérieures*) of the Chamber of Deputies, wrote to the President of the Council of Ministers, Aristide Briand. He stressed the "loyalty and deep attachment" of the Algerians

<sup>441</sup> MFA, Administrative and Technical Affairs Department: *Note pour la Direction des Affaires politiques et commerciales*, Paris, 31 Jul 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>442</sup> On February 13, 1916, the Minister of War gave the President of the Council, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Interior information based on the weekly report of an interpreter officer who was responsible for the supervision of indigenous soldiers in one of the military metropolitan regions. It implied that several Muslim soldiers who had learned from the newspapers about the Government's project to grant them citizenship did not hide their dissatisfaction with this project, "which, it seems, is not understandable to them. I tried to explain to them – wrote the French officer – that the intention of the authors of the project was only to create for indigenous soldiers the opportunity to take advantage of the privileges that French citizenship grants, but they did not cease to believe that we intend to deprive them of their personal status for France to create greater opportunities to embrace their compulsory military service due to the lack of soldiers on the front". These soldiers reasoned in this way that granting them citizenship would give France greater possibilities for carrying out conscription based on universal obligation, and not selectively by lot, which was the case of unnaturalized *indigènes* in Algeria – MW to PC and MFA, 13 Feb 1916, AMAE, G1666.

to France and recalled the promise of reforms made by the Chamber of Deputies on February 9, 1914. These reforms had been “studied in a mature way” (*mûrement étudiées*) for many years and were suitable for implementation at any time. Leygues asked on behalf of himself and George Clemenceau, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, for a reform that would improve the moral and material situation of the *indigènes* in Algeria. The reform would consist of (1) establishing a new naturalization regime for the *indigènes* that would not be bound by the necessity to reject his personal; (2) the extension of *indigènes*’ electoral rights. The proposed changes resulted from understanding the need to pursue a “liberal policy towards *indigènes*, which should be clearly defined and harmonized with French policy’s overall goals and plans.”<sup>443</sup>

After G. Clemenceau became President of the Council of Ministers on November 16, 1917, the discussion gained new momentum. Clemenceau was not a sympathizer of the *colons*, and in 1914 he favored reforming the status of Muslims in Algeria. In 1917, he was even more convinced that the blood sacrifice that the indigenous Algerians had sacrificed for France required their political rights to be dealt with. Clemenceau recalled Algeria’s Governor-General Lutaud and appointed Célestin-Charles Jonnart as his successor. Jonnart, who was already the governor of Algeria from 1900 to 1901 and from 1903 to 1911 and owed his position to the *colons*, personally Eugène Étienne also understood that the war changed the situation and the laws that govern the status of the indigenous Algerians should be reformed. In January 1918, Jonnart proposed changes to the law giving Muslim soldiers the rights of French citizens while maintaining their Muslim personal status. This proposal provoked a protest from the colonial community similar to the one in 1915. There were also arguments of opponents of Jonnart’s proposal. It was said in the Chamber of Deputies that the Muslim mentality was completely different from the European mentality, and the new law would initiate changes that threatened France’s position in Algeria.<sup>444</sup>

Despite the opposition, the new law was passed on February 4, 1918. It introduced many changes in the status of Algerians, especially in education. Regarding the fundamental issue, i.e., the political rights of a French

<sup>443</sup> Letter of December 3, 1915 from deputy G. Leygues to the President of the Council (PC) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), ICMA, 16 Dec 1915, AMAE, GR 1670.

<sup>444</sup> “Les Réformes musulmanes au parlement,” *La Presse Coloniale*, January 19, 1916,

citizen, the new law turned out to be far from the expectations of many Algerian Muslims. It made it possible to enjoy the full political rights of a French citizen, but on the condition that he gave up his Muslim personal status. Jonnart's Law thus repeated the position of the *colons* expressed so clearly during the discussion of the naturalization of soldiers in 1915.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> J.J. Cooke, "Tricolour and Crescent: Franco-Muslim relations in colonial Algeria, 1880–1940," *Islamic Studies* 29, 1 (Spring 1990), 68.



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# Chapter 7

## The New French

### Report of the Resident-General in Tunisia

In April 1915, at the height of the discussion on granting the rights of a French citizen to *indigènes* who served in the French Army, the Resident-General in Tunisia sent a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the behavior of those Tunisian *indigènes* who had been naturalized. The Resident compiled a list of Tunisian Muslims who had been naturalized under the decrees of the President of France of February 29, 1899, and October 3, 1910, and collected information concerning their lifestyle. At the same time, he compiled confidential information about the behavior of these people as employees of public services and Tunisian railways to determine to what extent Muslims who received naturalization identified themselves with the legal culture of France.

The French Resident was interested in the influence that French codes exerted on naturalized Tunisians and what changes in the mentality and behavior of these new French (*néo-français*) took place after obtaining French citizenship. The questions posed by the Resident were as follows: (1) whether in Tunisia a naturalized French person complied with the provisions of the French Civil Code regarding marriage, or still with the provisions of the *Koran* and (2) whether in the matter of educating his children, especially his daughters, a naturalized Frenchman in Tunisia tried to adapt to a lifestyle consistent with the French civil code, or whether he remained in a world defined by Islamic law. The report was based on detailed information received from his subordinate Civil Controllers (*contrôleurs civils*), who supervised individual governorates on behalf of France in the protectorate system. These were

in particular: the Report of the Civil Controller from Djerba, where naturalized French of Algerian origin lived on December 16, 1913; the letter of the Civil Controller on the situation in the cities of Grombalia, Sousse, Kairouan, Sfax, Djerba, Kef and Bizert during the period from 18 to 29 January 1915; the letters of the same official of Grombalia and Sousse of January 30 and February 1, 1915; the letter of the Director General for Agriculture in the Protectorate of February 3, 1915; the Report of the Civil Controller in Kairouan of February 4, 1915; the letter of the Director of the Phosphates Factory and the Railway Board in Gafaa of February 6, 1915; the letter from the Director General of the Public Works Board of February 9, 1915; the letters of the Civil Controller at Kairouan of February 9 and 10, 1915; the Grombalia Civil Controller's Report of February 11, 1915; the letter from the Director General of the Post Office of February 13, 1915; the letter from the Director General of the Education Board of February 16, 1915; the letter from the Secretary General of the Tunisian Government of February 18, 1915; the letter from the Director General of the Finance Board of February 18, 1915; the letter of the Director of the Railway Road Administration in Bône-Guelma and prolongements of February 22, 1915, and the report of the same director of February 25, 1915.

### Acculturation first

In January 1915, according to the Resident's report, 73 Tunisians who were naturalized French lived in Tunisia, three of whom were naturalized under the decree of July 29, 1887, 64 under the decree of February 29, 1899, and six under decree of October 3, 1910.<sup>446</sup>

"While browsing the census of young people who would be of military age in 1914, I noticed that the local Tunisians who are naturalized French do not report to the French authorities [i.e., to the Controller – J. Z.] the fact of the birth of their children," wrote the Civil Controller from Djerba in 1913. He proposed that the sons of naturalized French people over 20 years of age should be included ex officio in the 1914 conscription register and not wait for their father to register them.

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<sup>446</sup> RGT to MFA: *Enquête sur la situation des naturalisés musulmans*, Tunis, 5 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

As for younger children, he believed that their parents should have applied for their children to return to their original nationality because they did not represent any “French element”.<sup>447</sup>

In a letter of January 18, 1915, the Civilian Controller from Grombalia asked the Resident-General, how he was to deal with two residents of Grombalia who had become naturalized French, one of whom was a gendarme. Neither one nor the other had shown any change in their mentality or way of life. They did not speak French, and they had recourse only to a judge of an Islamic court in legal matters. Although both reported the birth of their children to the French registry office, one of them, as it turned out, had three wives at the same time.<sup>448</sup>

Thirty six naturalized French lived in the Governorate of Sousse. Their personal status and the personal status of their family had not changed in the slightest since their naturalization. They behaved exactly like other Muslims. Most of them did not know French. They should have reported their sons to serve in the French Army, but they had not. Most of them applied for naturalization during military service. The Civilian Controller who wrote the report stressed that the French regiments stationed in Tunisia did not pay attention to the fact that the conscripts recruited into these regiments did not speak French. He believed that this should be changed.<sup>449</sup>

The Civil Controller at Kairoun wondered why the *indigènes* had applied for naturalization and concluded that individuals who applied for naturalization were from lower social classes, most often in military service. They were urged by the French and indigenous officers to do so and had no choice but to obey their officers' wishes. These soldiers knew that they would not have to pay *medjba* tax as French citizens and would be less dependent on local notables and *caïds*, or provincial governors. *Medjba* was a poll tax paid in Tunisia by all the Bey's subjects after the age of 17. In 1885, *medjba* accounted for about 20% of Tunisia's tax revenue and was very unpopular. “This hands-on approach to naturalization does not change the lifestyle and mentality of the new French. With their departure from the military, the *indigènes* lose touch with French behavior patterns and organizational culture. Their children

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<sup>447</sup> Civil Controller of Djerba to RGT, Djerba, 23 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>448</sup> Civil Controller of Grombalia to RGT, Grombalia, 18 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>449</sup> Civil Controller of Sousse to RGT, Sousse, 18 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

most often become pure *indigènes*, and their births are not registered with French registry offices. Their children do not know the French language,” wrote the Controller. According to him, naturalization should be canceled in the case of people who did not cooperate with the French authorities, thus constituting a category of French who “weakened our national prestige”. Naturalization should cover only those *indigènes* whose evolution towards the French language, ideas, and customs was so advanced that naturalization would only complement this evolution from the legal point of view. Attached to the letter was a list of seven naturalized French living in Kairouan, three of whom were naturalized in the military, one in the police, and one was naturalized by birth (his father was naturalized).<sup>450</sup>

The fact that most *indigènes* applied for naturalization while serving in the military and that this naturalization was purely mechanical was confirmed by other Civil Controllers. The Director of the Railway Company from Sfax-Gafaa referred, for example, to an employee of the railway station in Sened, who was a lighting operator after serving many years in the 4th Regiment of *Tirailleurs tunisiens*. This man was an orderly in the army of one of the French officers, and there was no doubt that he had applied for naturalization on the inspiration of his superior. After being released from the military, his civilian life was utterly similar to that of his neighbors. It was indistinguishable from another employee who started working on the railroad after completing his military service. As a French citizen and reservist, the man was surprised when he was summoned to report to the unit for military training. The report ended with the statement that the exemption from paying the poll tax and freeing themselves from the power of local notables answered the question of what benefits naturalization had brought *indigènes*. At the same time, the author of the report was sure that “patriotism and loyalty to us are unknown to these people; they do not show the slightest aspirations to change their moral and material situation.”<sup>451</sup>

This point of view was shared by the Civil Controller and the French Vice-Consul from Sfax. His administrative district was inhabited by three naturalized French of Muslim origins: one Algerian, a lawyer,

<sup>450</sup> Civil Controller of Kairouan to RGT, Kairouan, 19 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>451</sup> Director of Railway Company in Sfax-Gafaa to RGT, Sfax, 6 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

and two Tunisians, a retired gendarme. According to the Controller, the naturalized French of Muslim origins formed two groups: the first were those who, because of their profession, were in constant contact with the European element; the second category were Tunisians who were naturalized based on the decree of July 29, 1887, as soldiers, and in most cases as orderlies of officers. Officers suggested that obtaining French citizenship was beneficial from many points of view and that they would support their applications as a reward for faithful service. The mentality of the new French in the first group was constantly under pressure from French customs and behavior. These people spoke French, and in some families, this also applied to women who usually showed their faces to the local authorities when they were approached on some matters. "The mentality of the second group is invariably Muslim, quite different. They neither speak nor write in French and treat French naturalization as an escape from Tunisian jurisdiction. Naturalization is beneficial for them as it gives them legal protection, but they do not appreciate being French and do not try to get closer to what is the essence of French citizenship."<sup>452</sup>

Not all *indigènes* sought to reap the benefits of French citizenship. For many of them, naturalization in the army was one of the formal activities performed as part of their official duties. After leaving the army, they did not feel that what had happened while serving had any meaning for their lives. Thus, their lives in civilian life did not change in any way.<sup>453</sup>

### From naturalization to assimilation

The French administration understood naturalization as a means of civilizing the *indigènes* and a road leading to a 'higher culture.' We read about it in the report of the Civil Controller of Djerba of January 23, 1915. The Civil Controller did not notice any change in the mentality of the behavior of naturalized French in his district and, most importantly, no identification with the French state and its values. For these

<sup>452</sup> Civil Controller and Vice-Consul of France in Sfax to RGT, Sfax, 20 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>453</sup> Director of Railway Company in Bône-Guelma to RGT, Tunis, 20 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

people, he believed, being naturalized French was about looking out for their interests and using the status that naturalization had given them to derive personal gain from it. Their lifestyle did not differ from that of other Tunisian Muslims. As a rule, they disregarded the obligation to report the birth of their children to the French registry offices. If they did not report the birth of their sons to the French Consulate, their sons were not registered on conscription lists for the French Army, and the Tunisian authorities did not call them to serve in the Tunisian Army because they were the sons of naturalized French. They got married, divorced and remarried following Islamic law, and did not speak or understand French. “They raise their children under their customs and do not make the slightest effort to civilize,” – emphasized the author. He ironically concluded his report by writing that the only sense he saw of naturalizing *indigènes* was to form a group of French voters who would obediently vote as they were told.<sup>454</sup>

In some cases, the acculturation of *indigènes* who became French citizens was discernible but judged by French administrators only to occur on the surface. The Civilian Controller from Kef informed the Resident on January 27, 1915, that two naturalized French people lived in his area. One of them was sent as a soldier in the gendarmerie with a unit to Morocco and was stationed there, and the other served in the local gendarmerie. The man who lived in Kef spoke French well and assisted Europeans in matters concerning relations with the Tunisian authorities; he had completed all the formalities related to being naturalized French, and in particular, he reported the birth of his children at the French Consulate. However, as regards his lifestyle, nothing changed, i.e., he lived like other Muslims. Two of his daughters, who were of school age, never went to school, and his son only attended the Koranic school at the mosque. Another naturalized Frenchman of Algerian origin in Kef was a non-commissioned officer in the *Spahis* expedition unit and had settled in Kef 32 years earlier. He married a Spanish woman, knew French well, and “adapted to our customs – as far as external observations can determine it” – wrote the author of the report.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Civil Controller of Djerba to RGT, Djerba, 23 Jan 1915; Civil Controller of Sousse to RGT, Sousse, 1 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>455</sup> Civil Controller of Kef to RGT, Kef, 27 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

Eight naturalized French lived in Bizerte, and all of them were naturalized during their military service. One of them was a customs officer in the port, the second one operated a motorboat in the port, and the rest did not have a permanent job and were engaged in various simple jobs. None of them wore either a beret or a cap – which would indicate a change of mentality for the Controller – but only a *chechia* [traditional Tunisian hat also known as *fez* or *tarboosh* in the Maghreb countries – J. Z.] – a symbol of Arab-Muslim culture to the Controller. The Civilian Controller of Bizerte thus had a different view of the relationship between naturalization and acculturation than his colleagues, who believed that naturalization should be the culmination of the acculturation process. In this case, naturalization should initiate acculturation, and the first visible step on the way was to change the headdress.<sup>456</sup>

Several reports indicated wearing the *fez* on one's head as a symbol of belonging to the Arab-Muslim culture. Another such symbol was going to an Arab café. On the Bône-Guelma railway, an *indigène* named Balit lived. He was brought up by *les Pères Blancs* and naturalized in 1907 while working on the railroad. He was a very dedicated worker and eventually was promoted to station manager in Matur-Sud. He registered his marriage with a Muslim woman with a French Administrator, although he divorced only in a *Sharia* court. However, he was a practicing Catholic and received regular communion. He spoke French very well and wore European clothes outside of his railroad service. He claimed that he would only remarry a Catholic woman, marry in a church according to French law and bring up the children to be French. His director, however, noticed a few “blemishes” on the image of this man as a wholly assimilated person. We read in the report: “Despite clear signs of progressive assimilation, it must be said that he wears a *fez* outside of his service hours. Moreover, he enjoys visiting traditional Arab cafés during his spare time.”<sup>457</sup>

The *néo-français* group – if it grew to the size of social strata as a result of an overly liberal policy of naturalization – would threaten the enduring governance of countries where the administration consisted of *indigènes*. The Civilian Controller of Grombalia presented this point of view on January 30, 1915. Naturalized persons maintained

<sup>456</sup> Civil Controller of Bizerte to RGT, Bizerte, 29 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>457</sup> Director of Railway Company in Bône-Guelma to RGT, Tunis, 20 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

a pre-naturalization mentality, but at the same time, they pretended to be independent as French citizens from the leaders of local communities and did not observe some rules of the local law. If such people were few, their presence was imperceptible, but if there were more and more of them, their behavior would lead to chaos in the country's administration. "Besides, if they vote in elections as French citizens, what values will they stand for?" The Controller believed that only the naturalization of *indigènes* who were well acquainted with French culture would not raise political problems and that only such naturalization should be the point of reference when considering applications by *indigènes* for French citizenship.<sup>458</sup>

The Civil Controller from Kairouan reported that it was not those *indigènes* who had become naturalized in his district, but the families of some notables firmly attached to Islam, including the *Mufti* family, who wanted to move closer to French culture. These families tried to get their children into the French school to better learn the French language and civilization. Meanwhile, three naturalized French citizens in Kairouan returned to their traditional life after leaving the military. One came from a tribe of nomads who had camped near Kairouan, and it was hard to expect that there he would assimilate himself and his children to the rights and duties of a French citizen. The second was a worker in a mine and lived a solitary life. He had also received naturalization in the army after serving 15 years. In the case of the third man, one could speak not so much of approaching the French culture but as returning to his Arab-Muslim roots. This man was a policeman and spoke French fluently. He was born by a French mother and an Algerian father who had become naturalized in 1878. He married a cousin who did not know any French. They had four children who were registered with the French Consulate. The sons attended an Arab-French school where only *indigènes* studied. The daughters went to a Koranic school, and there was no doubt that they would be taken home from school when they reached puberty. The family of this man, who was formally French from birth, was entirely indigenous, and not only did they not socialize with the French environment, but they even avoided it.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Civil Controller of Grombalia to RGT, Grombalia, 30 Jan 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>459</sup> Civil Controller of Kairouan to RGT, Kairouan, 4 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

The French community living in Tunisia could favor the rapprochement of the French political culture and organizational patterns. However, contacts between the new French and the French *colons* were minimal. The new French, as a rule, did not report to the French authorities to register the birth of their children or file tax returns. An example was the payment of the *istitane* personal tax, which replaced the *medjba* poll in 1913 and was paid by both Tunisians and French. The former paid to the offices of the *caïd*, i.e., the Tunisian governor, the latter – to the *Administration des Finances*, the institution of the administration of the protectorate, dealing with the financial affairs of Europeans, including the *colons*. *Indigènes* who obtained naturalization, as a rule, did not report to the institutions of the protectorate so that they would be treated as equal to the French, and therefore *l'Administration des Finances* did not treat them as part of the European population of Tunisia. They were called upon to pay the *istitane* by the governors' services, which was an arbitrary decision because these naturalized French lived like other *indigènes*. There were two naturalized French people in the *caïdate* of Kairouan, and neither of them applied to *l'Administration des Finances* to pay the personnel tax. However, both signed up to the *Société indigène de prévoyance*, which was established in 1907 as a benefit fund supporting indigenous farmers. They must have been destitute, as they had not paid the 1914 *istitane* tax of 10 francs, nor the annual fee of 2.5 francs for membership in the loan and assistance fund. Both were on the register of French military services, and one of them was called up as a reservist to the local *zouaves* battalion. The man did not know French and had three daughters, whose birth he had not reported to the French authorities.<sup>460</sup>

### Complexities of acculturation

Some *indigènes* treated French citizenship rights as a distinction and felt obliged to live in harmony with the new culture without abandoning their native culture. As a result, they gave rise to phenomena of rather superficial cultural syncretism. An example was one of the General Directorate of Public Works employees, about whom the Director of this institution wrote on February 9, 1915. This employee received French

<sup>460</sup> Civil Controller of Kairouan to RGT, Kairouan, 9 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

citizenship in 1911 while serving in the army. He was already married to a French woman at that time, but according to Koranic law. After naturalization, he considered it appropriate to marry the same woman again, but in the Catholic Church, as he believed the French Civil Code required it. This man constantly showed his admiration for the models of French civilization and believed that the favor he experienced from the French authorities in receiving naturalization placed him above his fellow believers, who remained only Tunisians. After 25 years of exemplary work in the vineyard, he was assigned to work in the fishing guard, which meant promotion to a higher position and linked his promotion to being a French citizen. His children wore traditional Tunisian clothes but attended a French school.<sup>461</sup>

Among the General Directorate of Post and Telegraph employees in Tunis, there were three naturalized French. They all worked as postmen. Two of them obtained French citizenship while serving in the army, and the third was the son of a naturalized person. The first was named Ammar, but he preferred to be called *Ghilès*. He was born in Algeria and was raised there by *les Pères Blancs*. He was naturalized under the Presidential decree of November 8, 1903. Despite being raised by *les Pères Blancs*, he hesitated whether to choose the Catholic religion or stick to his ancestors' religion. So he went to both the mosque and the church depending on the place and circumstances. After naturalization, he visibly leaned towards being French. He married an European in the registry office and applied the French Civil Code in his daily life. His children attended a French school and practiced the Catholic faith. A second man named Ahmed was also raised by *les Pères Blancs* and converted to Catholicism early. However, he later returned to Islam. He married an Arab woman and lived according to Arab customs. His daughter went to the French school from time to time. Ahmed's behavior was strongly influenced by his wife – a fanatical Muslim, who forbade him from contacting the French community, and therefore he was a completely passive French citizen. The third naturalized postman was named Mohammed, and although he was the son of a naturalized French citizen, he lived according to Muslim customs. He married in a Koranic court and did not register his daughter's birth in the French Office. On the other hand, his 8-year-old daughter attended a secular

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<sup>461</sup> Director-General of Public Works to RGT, Tunis, 9 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

French school, and there were disputes in her family as to whether the girl should cover her face when she reached puberty or not. According to the report's author, the family was inclined to remain in the Muslim tradition but to seek to enjoy the privileges provided by French citizenship. The influence of wives on the absorption of French culture by naturalized persons was decisive.<sup>462</sup>

Some *indigènes* were naturalized French in the second or even third generation. It was especially true of people from Algeria who lived in Sousse, Mehdia, and on the island of Djerba. It was unknown under what circumstances and for what reasons they "became French," but it certainly happened in Algeria in the period preceding the introduction of the protectorate over Tunisia. Rabah was one of them. In 1911, he was hired to work at the railway station in Bône-Guelma. He was raised by *les Missionnaires d'Afrique* and his wife by *les Soeurs Blanches* from Michelet (Algeria). They both came from families already naturalized and got married under the Civil Code, having a church wedding in the parish of Ouar Zow (commune Michelet). Two of their children had French names alongside Muslim ones and were declared at birth in the registry office. Rabah and his wife spoke French fluently. They both dressed and acted in European style. They drank wine with dinner. They wanted to provide their children with a European education – the same they received from their ancestors, who adapted French customs and the Catholic religion. "If we assume the three-stage scale of full admission to the great French family," – wrote the Director of the Railways Company from Bône-Guelma – "Rabah is on the second degree of this scale."<sup>463</sup>

However, the fact of coming from a naturalized family did not continuously deepen acculturation. In many cases, even those who were practicing Catholics after following their fathers returned to the practices of the Muslim environment. Most often, naturalized French of Tunisian origin tried to combine Muslim and French principles of social life. For this reason, conflict situations arose. In April 1915, the Resident-General asked the Commander of the French Army in Tunisia to draw the attention of one soldier to the obligation to provide his wife

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<sup>462</sup> Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Office to RGT, Tunis, 13 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

<sup>463</sup> Director of Railways Company in Bône-Guelma, Tunis, 20 Feb 1915, AMAE, G1665.

with a means of subsistence. This soldier was a naturalized French citizen and was married to a French woman. He decided to divorce her according to Muslim customs, i.e., telling her three times that he was divorcing her. Then he went to the Tunisian court to register the divorce there. However, the court ruled that the divorce carried out by the soldier under Muslim law could not be considered valid as the marriage had been concluded before a civil registrar under French law. The Resident-General saw no reason for the soldier not to continue his marriage duties in this situation.

### *The naturalization of soldiers is a mistake*

The data from the questionnaires prepared for the Resident-General by the French administration in Tunisia were unambiguous: most of the *indigènes* became naturalized French in the French Army and after leaving the army, i.e., a few to a dozen years after naturalization, they were in the same cultural situation in which they were at the time of obtaining French citizenship. “Newly naturalized Muslims live, except in a few cases, indigenously, just like their co-religionists, both in terms of appearance – headdress and clothing – but also in respect to mentality, language, and customs. Many of them are illiterate and do not speak French; in most cases, they are already married or remarried in the presence of the judge of an Islamic court. Their wives are veiled and locked up. Some of them practice polygamy. As a rule, they do not report their children to the French civil authorities. As a result, their sons cannot be included in the French military recruitment records. Due to ignorance, they are not able to exercise their mandate as French electors. They are not in contact with *les Contrôleurs civils* and refer their affairs to *caïdat* officials. Depending on their interests and situation, they enjoy both the rights arising from the status of *l’indigène* or the rights of a French citizen”<sup>464</sup> – wrote the Resident-General.

This state of affairs was unacceptable to the French colonial administration. The dynamic concept of citizenship was appropriate for the employees of this administration. That meant that the citizen of France should actively practice citizenship in the sense that he should fulfill

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<sup>464</sup> RGT to MFA: *Enquête sur la situation des naturalisés musulmans*, Tunis, 5 Apr 1915, AMAE, G1665.

the obligations that he assumed with his citizenship. The title of citizen of France was the highest value and could not be the source only of the *petit bonheur*. The concept of citizenship arose from history and culture and combined political rights and obligations from history and culture.

Consequently, French citizenship was linked to the particular culture, and its active practicing assumed the acceptance of this culture – if not all, then certainly some of its elements, and, above all, the law. Finally, naturalization was related to acculturation. According to some, naturalization was the culmination of acculturation; according to others – it was supposed to initiate it, but everyone associated naturalization with the acceptance by naturalized *indigènes* of elements of French culture. Service in the French and local armies, where the French were officers, was treated as the first stage of acculturation. *Indigènes* learned the French language, patterns of organization, and behavior.

The first stage was to lead to others, but deep and anticipated acculturation cases were sporadic. Most of the naturalized soldiers who were naturalized in the army returned to their environment and culture after they finished their service. The Resident associated such developments with the *Koran* regulating all aspects of a Muslim's life. The separation of the secular and religious spheres was a concept of European societies, and this concept was utterly alien to the mindset of a Muslim. It was not possible to actively practice French citizenship without abandoning the personal status of a Muslim. It was the price one had to pay for the title of being a French citizen. If the protectorate authorities wished to abide by French law, they would be forced to take legal action against those naturalized *indigènes* whose behavior would be follow the *Koran* and Muslim tradition but would be a crime under European legislation. Many Tunisian soldiers were Bedouin, and the Resident predicted serious legal complications after they were naturalized and returned to their environment. First, that person could marry a second and subsequent wife, an offense under French law applicable to a naturalized person. If a naturalized person wished to comply with French law and divorced his first wife, an oral form of divorce under Muslim law would not have legal force. A Muslim divorce could be annulled, was therefore temporary, and there would be a return to polygamy. If the first marriage was broken, their marriage to their second wife would still not have legal force from the point of view of the French Code because it was concluded as polygamous, and therefore in violation of the Civil

Code. The situation among the Bedouin communities was even more complicated as tribal customs were more critical than Muslim law, and therefore marriages were concluded before the tribal elders without any written act. If marriages were not contracted in these communities before a *Sharia* judge, it was even less possible to marry under foreign (French) law. The Resident also foresaw problems with inheriting the estate of a deceased naturalized French person by his children from several marriages in the case of polygamy and the purchase and sale of real estate. The source of these troubles was the differences between French law and Islamic law.

The Resident-General believed that granting citizenship to indigenous soldiers led to the formation of a layer of *indigènes* who were formally French but had nothing to do with the mentality of the native French. If they were to change their attitude towards French legal culture, it would mean that their social environment would turn away from them as apostates. The internal conflict of the naturalized French citizen concerning his personal status would undoubtedly spread to family relations, which would lead to anarchization of social life. "All the information and conclusions collected in the preparation of the questionnaire allow us to conclude that the adoption of the decree granting indigenous soldiers the rights of a French citizen through a simple declaration without mature reflection and careful consideration of each application for naturalization from Muslims mobilized to the front in the belief that their devotion and their involvement would entitle them to national recognition would be a grave mistake"<sup>465</sup> – concluded the Resident-General.

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<sup>465</sup> Ibidem.





Strasbourg. Republic Square. The parade of Algerian *Tirailleurs* in front of President Poincaré, December 12, 1918 (VAL 317/144)  
<https://argonnaute.parisnante.fr/ark:/14707/a011503651967oVHrlj/af4afd5f69>

# Conclusion

The presence of Muslim soldiers in the French Army raised many problems for the French authorities. The war determined a quick reaction of the French military and civil authorities to the cultural diversity in the army. The fact that military enrollment in North Africa was largely voluntary due to fears that indigenous peoples would protest against compulsory service forced the French authorities to make concessions to some of the assumptions of colonial policy, as, in this way, a steady flow of Muslim recruits was secured to the army. The procedures and the laws governing the presence of Muslim soldiers in the military introduced the social security regulations for the Muslim soldiers on an equal footing with French soldiers.

The issues of regulating social benefits were mainly of a financial aspect. The military authorities tried to implement these regulations as soon as possible to ensure good morale in the army. The French authorities in Algeria and both protectorates also did not protest. Conversely, they supported these regulations to ensure social peace in their area. However, the French authorities were less generous when the war ended, and soldiers were not as needed during the war. On December 7, 1918, an instruction on the demobilization of soldiers was issued, which confirmed that indigenous soldiers from North Africa who voluntarily enlisted in the army and whose service period was extended due to the war would have this included in the retirement period. At the same time, the instruction stated that the family allowance system created for French demobilized soldiers did not cover indigenous soldiers from North Africa.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> MW: *General instruction no. 26559 9/11 of 7 Dec 1918 on demobilization*, 22 Dec 1918, SHD, GR 16 N 198 (Maroc, Nov 1918–Mar 1919).

The attitude of the French command to Muslim soldiers conscripted into the French Army or fighting on the European front from an enlistment was characterized on the one hand by the appreciation of courage and sacrifice in the fight against Germany, and on the other hand by suspicion and uncertainty about full loyalty. To understand the reasons for this contradictory relationship, the fate of those Muslim soldiers taken captive by the Germans has been broadly discussed. The fact that some of them joined the Ottoman Army had to be taken into account by the French command and the few desertions of soldiers from North Africa, but it was used as an argument for preserving the colonial hierarchy.

The most important question was whether to treat *indigènes* as citizens, and thus on a par with the French, or still as subjects, that is, as an inferior race. The Ministry of War, which was in charge of the situation on the front, needed soldiers, and treating the *indigènes* on an equal footing with the French soldiers from the metropole would be beneficial to keeping the colonies interested in military service and maintaining a steady flow of recruits into the army. It is the reason why in November 1914, the Minister of War, Millerand, submitted a proposal to grant indigenous fighting soldiers French citizenship. This initiative, however, clashed with another priority of French colonial policy, which was to maintain the existing hierarchical social order in the colonies and protectorates, and resulted in a heated discussion. It revealed a deep polarization of views on the desirability of adopting a new naturalization decree. A group of liberal deputies in the parliament and colony deputies submitted a draft decree on naturalization. They proposed the naturalization of soldiers and all *indigènes*, which meant significant changes in the electoral law, tax system, and the way of administering the empire. These projects were criticized by the French administration in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco as premature due to the level of civilization development of the colonies and therefore dangerous to the interests of France. The basis of this order was the assumption that *indigènes* are an inferior race compared to Europeans. The Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs submitted its project in which it tried to reconcile the needs of war-related to increasing the number of volunteers from North Africa to serve in the French Army with the need to stabilize the imperial system.

The materials presented in this book relate primarily to the colonial history of France. In 1901, significant changes took place in the so-called native policy, and “the principle of legislative assimilation was

rejected for a new policy aimed at the advancement of Muslims within their civilization".<sup>467</sup> The new policy was defined as the policy of the association. However, the discussion on granting soldiers the rights of French citizens, conducted since 1915, raises doubts that the changes to the native policy were fundamental. The course and results of the discussion on the naturalization of soldiers indicate that cultural assimilationism remained a condition for political participation despite the departure from legalistic assimilation. According to opponents of the naturalization of soldiers, Muslim personal status was incompatible with the French concept of civil rights. Consequently, an *indigène* had to give up Muslim personal status if he wanted to receive French citizenship. In other words, if he wanted to become French, he had to stop being a Muslim. Liberal deputies did not set such a condition – a naturalized *indigène* could keep his native status at the moment of naturalization. However, in this case, too, it was ultimately about assimilation. The difference was in the order: in the first, case assimilation was to precede naturalization; in the second, it was its consequence. In the political sphere, in both cases, it was about preserving the empire. Even Albin Rozet, the strongest supporter of the indigenous case, did not go so far as to demand the abolition of indigenous disciplinary authorities.

The presence of Muslim soldiers in the French Army during the Great War concerns the cultural diversity of societies and the policy of the authorities towards cultural minorities, now known as the politics of multiculturalism. In the French Army during the Great War, the future problems of multicultural societies focused like a lens. France had to deal with them immediately after the war because many colonial workers brought to France settled permanently in the metropole. The main problem was the equality of rights – cultural, social, and political. The procedures adopted in the military and the laws governing the presence of Muslim soldiers in the army have created a comprehensive model of multiculturalism aimed at providing social peace and political integrity. However, this model represented a particular form of the politics of multiculturalism and contained a contradiction of significant consequences. Indeed, on the one hand, it recognized the cultural identity of non-Europeans and promoted the idea of cultural pluralism in contrast to the politics of

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<sup>467</sup> Ageron, *Modern Algeria*, 74; see also, R.F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890–1914* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 106–133.

cultural assimilation. On the other hand, it stressed a *de facto* domination of the indigenous French culture, thus constraining transculturation or the process of merging and converging the two cultures.

However, equality of rights was only one side of the problem; the other was equal duties. Opponents of the naturalization of soldiers emphasized this other side. Algeria Governor-General Lutaud and Tunisia and Morocco Residents Alapetite and Lyautey asked what it meant to be a French citizen and enjoy the rights of a French citizen? They saw rights and obligations within the concept of citizenship, which was derived from the Revolution of 1789. It was the concept of active citizenship, assuming respect for the law and fulfillment of civic obligations, i.e., active republicanism. Lutaud wrote in a comment to the criticism of his project by the Interministerial Commission for Muslim Affairs that the point was not to grant citizenship to anyone formally but to let the new citizen know his civic duties and fulfill them. Such thinking accepted the division into citizens and subjects and the domination of French colonies over the indigenous population in the colonies and protectorates, but it was within the political correctness that developed in the Third Republic. Those who proposed to naturalize *indigènes ex officio* and give them full citizenship rights were outsiders who believed all could share political values regardless of culture. However, their forces were too weak to implement the proposed changes, even though they did not represent a complete break with the French imperial tradition, but only a modification of that tradition.

A breakthrough in the thinking of the entire political class was necessary, and it was too early for that during the war years. On the other hand, the discussions in 1914–1918 did not go unnoticed. They contributed to the erosion of unequal thinking in terms of my-citizens, them-subjects. C.-R. Ageron commented on this by saying that in the French Army after 1918, the French and the *indigènes* had the same pensions.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans*, vol. 2, 1212.

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“North African Muslims gave their best sons to fighting for France and responded enthusiastically to France’s call to join the fight against Germany. [...] They showed loyalty to the degree that amazed even the greatest Arabophobes. In this situation, we ask the French authorities: are the indigenous soldiers – conscripts and voluntary enlistments for the entire duration of the war – going to die as patriotic defenders, or are they cattle led to slaughter?”

The author of these words was Lieutenant Rabah Boukabouya, an *indigène* from Algeria, a school teacher from Constantin, and a lieutenant in the Algerian units of the French Army. In 1915, he deserted along with 70 other soldiers and was sentenced by the French military to death as a traitor *in absentia*.

During 1914–1918, the French Army deployed almost three hundred thousand Muslims from North Africa. The French authorities had to manage several challenges provoked by this fact. The first challenge was the cultural diversity of the newcomers. The Muslim soldiers had to eat, drink, to be healed and buried according to their tradition. The second challenge was the necessity of providing wages, enlistment bonuses, invalidity, and military pensions for soldiers and their families.

At the center of the book’s narrative is French authorities’ third challenge, the naturalization of the *indigènes*. On November 20, 1914, Alexandre Millerand, Minister of War, proposed to create formal and legal possibilities for Algerian soldiers to choose between their current personal status and the acceptance of French citizenship (*la nationalité française*) as “compensation for their loyalty to us.”

Finally, this idea was rejected. The answer to why this happened requires explaining the historical context of the events in question, particularly the political culture of France during the Third Republic.