“Frenchmen from Algeria”:
The 1943 Campaign to Restore the Crémieux Decree and its Limits

By Zoë Mermelstein

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Thesis Advisor: Jennifer Johnson

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Introduction

In 1870, the French government passed the Crémieux Decree, extending French citizenship to the indigenous Jews living in the annexed territories of Algeria. After forty years of French occupation, the Decree’s passage marked Algerian Jews as the first and only indigenous population in colonial Algeria to receive collective, automatic French citizenship. This distinction would remain for the next seventy years: while the indigenous Arab and Berber populations continued to live under Mosaic Law, designating them as subjects but not citizens of France, several generations of Algerian Jews were born into French citizenship.

But in 1940, the Vichy government assumed control and abolished the Crémieux Decree, denaturalizing Algerian Jews.\(^1\) This policy accompanied a slate of anti-Jewish Aryanizing legislation and the incarceration of Algerian Jews in labor camps.\(^2\) However, after Allied forces recaptured Algeria in 1943, French High Commissioner of North Africa General Henri Giraud upheld Vichy policy by re-abrogating the Crémieux Decree through his eponymous Ordinance. The Giraud Ordinance sparked an international outcry from European and American Jewry. The American Jewish Committee (AJC), the advocacy organization that led the American effort to restore Algerian-Jewish citizenship rights, quoted Adolphe Crémieux, the creator of the Decree himself, in a June 1943 report outlining their opposition to the abrogation:

“By an admirable foresight (which the believers call divine foresight) the law of God can, with the Israelites, be linked with the law of the land...Today, the Jews no longer want to be slaves subject to the yoke, but Frenchmen subjected to the law. Also all enlightened Jews of France and Algeria, headed by the Consistories,


\(^{2}\) Ibid.
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said to the Government: ‘Make 33,000 Frenchmen out of 33,000 Native
Israelites.”

Here, the AJC amplified the shared “regenerative” project between the French State and French Jewry to solve the “Eastern Jewish Question” and emancipate Algerian Jewry through French citizenship and the secularization of Jewish belief systems. Since Jews had received French citizenship in 1870, the AJC argued, Algerian Jewry had shed their indigeneity to the Maghreb and assimilated into France not only “as a sine qua non for French citizenship” but also to achieve Jewish enlightenment. Yet despite devoting six pages to Adolphe Crémieux’s biography and his ideas about Algerian Jewish citizenship, and another three pages to “opinions of French intellectuals,” the report did not quote a single Algerian Jew on the matter of their own disenfranchisement. This absence begs the questions: How did Algerian Jews conceptualize their own citizenship and identity? Had the AJC spoken to an Algerian Jew before launching an advocacy campaign on their behalf? And if they had not, what might they be getting wrong?

This thesis addresses these questions. It traces the American-led advocacy campaign of 1943 to restore the Crémieux Decree and the subsequent struggles of Algerian Jews to restore their social and economic standing to its pre-war status between 1944 and 1948. I argue that American Jews’ advocacy did not center the needs or perspectives of Algerian Jews, but was rather part of their Europe-oriented efforts to combat Nazism during World War II.

The American-led advocacy campaign provides a case study of the limits of Western advocacy, even by groups of shared religious heritage, in the simultaneous context of crisis and

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3 Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, American Jewish Committee, June 1943, 5.
5 Ibid., 1.
6 Ibid., 2-7; 30-33.
colonialism. The AJC and its Jewish partner organizations mustered a mammoth organizing effort, with little help from non-Jewish allies, pressuring the US government to address the genocide of European Jewry. The aid American-Jewish advocates offered to European-Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors was necessary, well-executed, and involved painstaking strategizing. Yet the Eurocentric nature of American Jewish advocates’ political goals meant that they did not establish relationships or substantive organizing infrastructure in Algeria, either in 1943 or in subsequent years as Algerian Jews continued to face significant challenges.

The flaws in American-Jewish advocacy had practical and discursive impacts. American Jews were doubly complicit in undermining Jewish-Algerian indigeneity. First, they upheld French colonial narratives which homogenized Algerian Jews and conflated French citizenship with indigenous identity. Second, they imposed a Western, secularized Jewish identity on Algerian Jews in constructing an international Jewish peoplehood, erasing the particular regional nature of Algerian Judaism. Moreover, the American-Jewish campaign never involved Algerian Jews substantively in their activism, instead confining their relationship- and organization-building efforts to metropolitan French Jews. Therefore, the campaign presented two practical problems. First, it failed to address the roots of antisemitism in Algeria, which had developed locally since 1870 and arose from both left- and right-wing European settler movements. Second, it contributed to the organizational exclusion of Algerian Jews from the creation of an international, Ashkenazi-dominated Jewish community, which emerged in response to World War II and the Holocaust.

The topic of Jewish-Algerian citizenship is important as it relates to broader questions of Jewish and North African identity, particularly within colonial and non-Western frameworks. The prevailing narrative of North African Jewry, and Algerian Jews specifically, excludes them
from Algerian and Arab culture, history, and heritage and flattens the diverse reality of Algerian history. It accepts rhetoric rooted in antisemitic colonial sources by arguing that as non-Muslims, Algerian Jews inherently distanced themselves from native identities and communities. According to this understanding, Algerian Jews lost their indigenous claims to the Maghreb after the Crémieux Decree made them French citizens in 1870; they voluntarily rejected Maghrebi identity and acculturated to French civil and Jewish institutions, achieving acceptance from the European settler community. By extension, this understanding considers their mass exodus to France after the conclusion of the Algerian Revolution in 1962 a foregone conclusion.  

This understanding allows France to ignore the long history of antisemitic violence that European settlers inflicted in Algeria, while projecting that history onto its former colonial subjects. It ignores the heterogeneity not only within the broader Algerian indigenous community, but also within the Jewish-Algerian community itself. The Westernization and erasure of Algerian Jewish identity also masks the Maghrebi nature of their Judaism. And finally, the preoccupation with citizenship as a defining mark of Algerian Jewish identity overlooks the diverse ways that one can construct and define indigeneity beyond national belonging.

This case study provides a new interpretation of the reasons and dynamics by which Western Jewish advocacy centered European, Ashkenazi Jews and excluded North African Jews from the international Jewish peoplehood that formed amidst World War II and the Holocaust. It explores the ways that American Jews’ advocacy on behalf of Algerian Jews conformed to French colonial narratives and demonstrated blind spots and prejudices towards Algerian,

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non-Ashkenazi Judaism, despite their shared religious background and desire to practice allyship. This thesis sheds light on the pervasive, international influence of French colonial rhetoric in narrowing the bounds of Algerian Jewish identity. It also highlights a ripple effect of the Holocaust beyond Europe by illustrating how and why the necessary crisis response marginalized and erased Arab Jews. As American Jewish advocates mobilized limited networks and resources to mitigate the overlapping, intercontinental crises Nazism created, they relied upon flawed, surface-level knowledge of French colonialism and Algerian Jewry that they received from French-Jewish allies. They lacked the time, expertise, and prior relationships necessary to cultivate relationships with a community unfamiliar to them and whose disenfranchisement they considered a secondary threat to the mass extermination occurring in Europe.

**Terms: “Algerian Jews” and “indigeneity”**

For the sake of clarity and continuity, and in the absence of better terms, I employ the terminology that other scholars of Algerian Jewry have used and refer to the general population of Jews native to the territories of French Algeria as “Algerian Jews.” I further follow the definitions of prior scholarship in using the term “indigenous” to refer to the native Jews who are the focus of this thesis. The Jewish communities and individuals whom this thesis discusses, like their Muslim and Berber neighbors, possessed connections to the land of the Algeria that predated the imperial era by several centuries. Their ancestors’ arrival in Algeria occurred in two main waves: the first during the Roman Empire, around the first century BCE, and the second in
the 14th and 15th centuries CE, as Sephardic Jewish refugees fled religious persecution in Spain.⁸

These terms are imperfect. Algerian Jews would not have identified as “Algerian,” a national category that did not yet exist in the 1940s. As chapter three will discuss in greater detail, their indigenous identities were more local and did not conform to nationalism; rather than identify as “Algerian” they were more likely to identify according to their town or city (for instance, as a *juif oranois*, or a Jew of Oran). Algerian Jews during the 1940s were also unlikely to self-identify as *indigènes* (translated literally, indigenous people). I use the category of “indigenous” to identify people who possessed native, ancestral connections to the land of Algeria. However, as Dominique Gros has noted, the meaning of the term “*indigène*” changed throughout the period of French occupation.⁹ After the Crémieux Decree distinguished Jews from the rest of the indigenous population, it morphed into a loaded sociopolitical identifier, denoting the low civil status of native Berber and Muslim people who did not possess French citizenship.¹⁰

**Scope**

This thesis analyzes the five-year period beginning with the American-led advocacy campaign of 1943 to reinstate the Crémieux Decree and then traces Jewish attempts to restore their former lives and rights between 1943 and 1948. There are practical and methodological reasons for this tight chronological focus. First, the archival record that I have accessed

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¹⁰ Ibid., 42.
documenting Jewish efforts to reintegrate into colonial Algeria only extends until 1948, although the challenges Algerian Jews faced assuredly continued past that point.

Second and more important, significant political shifts between 1947 and 1948 marked turning points in both Jewish and Algerian nationalism which changed the dynamics and implications of Algerian-Jewish citizenship and belonging, as well as American-Jewish interventions in Algeria. Between 1944 and 1947, the French government pursued a reform agenda that attempted to extend limited citizenship rights to the entire indigenous population of Algeria, ending with the Organic Statute of 1947. This statute created a two-tiered system of electoral colleges, the first for Europeans and Jewish Algerians already designated as citizens under the common civil code, along with certain upper-class Muslim Algerians, and the second for the rest of the indigenous population that had previously lived under Mosaic Law.11

The end of the citizenship reform agenda after 1947 marked a turning point in the growth of the nationalist movement by discrediting the notion of deriving rights from within the colonial system and increasingly prompted Muslim Algerians to demand Algerian citizenship.12 This thesis does not address Jewish negotiations with Algerian nationalism as it manifested during the revolutionary period, which other scholars have already addressed, instead focusing on the largely unstudied post-war reforming period of citizenship politics and Jewish advocacy efforts in response to French citizenship policies.13

While this thesis studies the development of Algerian Jews’ relationship to an international (European- and Ashkenazi-dominated) Jewish diaspora, it does not examine

Zionism or Algerian Jewish views on it. The founding of Israel in 1948 changed Jewish individual and institutional strategies surrounding Jewish Algerian citizenship by creating a third option for national belonging beyond Algeria and France. And although growing debate and awareness existed around the creation of a Jewish State in Algeria, Zionism did not play a significant role in the abrogation or restoration of French citizenship rights during the period in question, because Algerian Jews largely identified with and desired French nationality. Most considered repatriation to a Jewish state an unviable and gratuitous alternative, viewing the idea as a threat to their French citizenship.

Zionism became a more central issue to Jewish-Algerian national belonging and to international Jewish advocacy efforts in Algeria during the revolutionary period of the 1950s, which Sung Choi addresses in “Complex Compatriots: Jews in post-Vichy French Algeria.” While the AJC’s position changed after 1948, at the time of their 1943 campaign, the organization saw Zionism as a damaging distraction to the present threat of the Holocaust that “subordinated other Jewish issues to the problem of the political structure of Palestine.” In fact, the wide-ranging American-Jewish organizations forming the Joint Emergency Committee temporarily set aside their divergent views on Zionism for the sake of unity in supporting

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16 For example, Algiers resident Ruth Shahar turned to Zionism following the loss of French citizenship as a teenager. However, her friends, schoolteachers, and parents alike considered this reaction extreme and asked questions such as why she wanted to “exile herself.” Shahar, interview by Nicole Cohen-Addad, March 11, 2003, digital video file, The Jeff & Toby Herr Oral History Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn81497.
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Algerian Jewry and the anti-Holocaust effort.\textsuperscript{19} This thesis offers a fresh perspective on the role of Ashkenazi Jewry in marginalizing Maghrebi Jewish identity, which prior scholarship has studied disproportionately from the lens of Mizrahi experiences within the context of Israeli nationalism.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Literature review}

This thesis engages with recent scholarship that has complicated traditional understandings of North African Jewish identity and position within the French colonial empire. This body of literature has responded to earlier work that (with a few exceptions)\textsuperscript{21} romanticized Jewish experiences under French colonialism and assumed greater separation and antisemitism from indigenous Muslim populations.\textsuperscript{22} It has refuted the argument, rooted in colonial rhetoric, that North African Jews assimilated into French society and were even innately more Western in character than other indigenous populations. More broadly, this recent scholarship has pushed back against a traditional, hindsight-oriented understanding of nationalism as key to identity formation during the colonial period.

\textit{French Mediterraneans} and \textit{Colonialism and the Jews} are two important recent anthologies that challenge conventional narrative about Algerian Jews. \textit{French Mediterraneans}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} The AJC received backlash for partnering with Zionist organizations in the Joint Emergency Committee, and had to justify to its members that fighting the Holocaust demanded temporary unity. See Edward Pinsky, “American Jewish Unity During the Holocaust — the Joint Emergency Committee, 1943,” \textit{American Jewish History} 72, no. 4 (June 1983), 478; 483.
\end{itemize}
Mermelstein counters the traditional historical narrative that colonized peoples “looked to or benefited from France.” It highlights the diversity of colonized regions and peoples and the consequential diverse, complex effects of French colonialism upon them. *Colonialism and the Jews* expands upon *French Mediterraneans* by establishing Jews as diverse actors and middle men — both privileged and colonized under French rule — within the colonial system. Using the French Empire as a case study for “paradoxes of inclusion and exclusion” and the function of minority populations in colonial contexts, *Colonialism and the Jews* introduces a new framework for understanding the modern Jewish experience beyond the paradigm of the nation state. It also challenges traditional understandings of antisemitism and Jewish belonging in colonial North Africa by exposing the damaging and arbitrary socioethnic categories which the French colonial government imposed. Finally, it places the Vichy regime in a larger context which demonstrates that its jolting impact upon Jewish notions of citizenship were entrenched within the French colonial governments which preceded and succeeded it.

This thesis also draws upon Lital Levy’s work to establish Arab Judaism as a valid historical category of identity. Levy understands identity as formed through lived experience. She intervenes against the anachronistic conception of nationalism during the colonial era as central to identity formation and against the notion of identity formation as a strictly ideational process. Therefore, she creates a model to challenge the traditional understanding of Arabness,

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27 Ibid., 458.
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Jewishness, and the possession of French citizenship as mutually excluding categories. She creates a new understanding of identity as formed through lived experiences: because of the cumulative lived experiences of Algerian Jews in the 1940s — including with antisemitism, French citizenship, economic and professional dealings, their family and religious heritage, and their attachment to land and communities within Algeria — I contend that they occupied a middle position between Frenchness and Arabness.

Within the larger body of recent literature on Algerian Jewry, this thesis builds upon a few important works which have studied citizenship and the Crémieux Decree in French colonial Algeria. These studies have used the subject of Jewish-Algerian citizenship to examine the existence and impact of structural French antisemitism in colonial Algeria. This thesis builds upon and contributes to the historiography by using citizenship to study the impact of French colonialism on Algerian Jews in international spheres. By illuminating the origins and dynamics of antisemitism in colonial Algeria, these prior works on citizenship provide the foundational context necessary to evaluate the limits and flaws in American-Jewish advocates’ perception and treatment of the challenges facing Algerian Jews. For example, although American-Jewish advocates understood the antisemitism fueling the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree as originating from the Vichy government, Daniel Schroeter places it in continuity with the colonial government’s history of disenfranchisement and anti-Jewish racializing policies.28

Meanwhile, in Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1962, Sophie Roberts studies the connection between the politics of citizenship and French antisemitism. She examines the evolution of political antisemitism in colonial Algeria from

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1870-1962 and the impact of this development on Algerian-Jewish identity and efforts to derive citizenship rights. Similar to Schroeter, Roberts corrects the historiographical preoccupation on the Vichy years and places that regime’s racializing laws in a broader continuity of French antisemitism. She demonstrates that colonial governance and European settler society built a foundation of systemic antisemitism — originating from both left- and right-wing ideologies — long before anti-Judaism became an official state project under Vichy rule.29

In addition, Jessica Hammerman argues that between 1954-1962, mainstream Algerian-Jewish leaders adapted to the instability of Jewish legal status and the French colonial system. They shifted their public characterization of Adolphe Crémieux’s legacy according to changing political circumstances in order to cement their status as French citizens while attempting to maintain their lives in Algeria.30 This thesis builds upon Hammerman’s novel interpretation of the relationship between citizenship and Algerian-Jewish identity formation. Hammerman refutes previous historiography by indicating that French citizenship did not determine the nature of Algerian-Jewish identity, which remained dynamic during the colonial period and well after World War II — as late as the revolution itself.

Although these studies contribute significantly to understanding French citizenship and Jewish Algerian experiences within the colonial system, they skim over the immediate aftermath of World War II, instead jumping between the clear ruptures of the Vichy regime (1940-1942) and the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962).31 Although these moments were critical turning points

in Jewish-Algerian history, the preoccupation with the Vichy regime dilutes the impact of the French republics which framed Vichy takeover and strategies, having controlled Algeria for seventy years prior to and nearly two decades after the three years of Vichy rule. Further, most of these studies use the history of Jewish citizenship in Algeria as a vehicle to expose the antisemitism and damaging divide-and-conquer tactics of the French colonial apparatus. Joshua Schrier, Ethan Katz, and Pierre Birnbaum have widened this discussion by exposing the participation of French Jewry in forcibly assimilating their Algerian coreligionists.32

However, their studies do not implicate the Jewish diaspora beyond the metropole because they focus on the French civilizing mission as it manifested between the late 19th century and the interwar period. This thesis addresses unanswered questions about the ways that the French imperial project altered not only indigenous Jewish belonging and identity within Algeria, but also in international spheres. The campaign to restore the Crémieux Decree provides a case study to explore the impact of French colonialism on Western Jewry’s perception of Algerian Jews and on Algerian Jews’ relationship with the international Jewish community that crystallized in response to the Holocaust. This thesis launches a critique of international advocacy, specifically of American Jews who were complicit in the French colonial project even as they attempted solidarity with their Algerian brethren. It contributes a new interpretation of the damaging, international ripple effect that French colonialism had on Jewish identity and belonging. Finally, while recent scholarship on Jewish-Algerian citizenship has uncovered a wealth of archival material from the French colonial regime, this thesis contributes to the historiography and elevates Algerian-Jewish voices by incorporating oral histories into the

Chapter outline & methods

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter examines the context and development of French citizenship policy towards northern Algerian Jews from the French occupation of Algeria in 1830 until 1940, when the Vichy regime seized control of Algeria.34 Drawing principally upon secondary literature, this section provides foundational context for the following chapters. In the decades following the passage of the Crémieux Decree, municipal politics, antisemitism advanced by European settler communities, and the assimilating project that French Jewry led on behalf of their government, encouraged both Algerian-Jewish separatism and assimilation. Algerian Jews maintained a distinct Mahgrebi heritage and a unique culture of antisemitism developed in Algeria separately from the metropole in response to Jewish citizenship. The two factors of Algerian-Jewish agency and historical settler discrimination made the problem of restoring the Crémieux Decree in 1943 more complex than eliminating the vestiges of the fascist Vichy regime.

The second chapter examines the American-led advocacy campaign to restore the Crémieux Decree after the Vichy regime abrogated it and Giraud re-abrogated it. This chapter relies upon an extensive array of digitized archival sources, including AJC files, Jewish-American newspapers, and the Foreign Service Institute of the Office of the Historian’s Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series.35 This chapter demonstrates that the

33 Two principal sources of these new archival materials are the French Overseas Territories Archives Department in Aix-en-Provence and the Ben Zvi Institute Documentation Center on North African Jewry in Jerusalem, both of which have become accessible to historical research relatively recently.

34 I specify “northern” Algerian Jews because Berber Jews of the M’zab valley in the Sahara did not receive citizenship rights in 1870 and would continue to live under Mosaic Law until the citizenship reforms of 1944-1947.

35 For AJC archives, see aic_archives.org; for the NLI JVL, see jewishvirtuallibrary.org; for the FRUS archives, see history.state.gov/historicaldocuments.
advocacy campaign centered Jewish advocates’ aims in Europe as they combated the Holocaust. For this reason, American Jewish advocates aligned with French colonial rhetoric about Jewish citizenship and assimilation and did not establish substantive, long-term infrastructure in Algeria or relationships with Algerian Jews.

The third chapter uplifts the voices and experiences of Algerian Jews themselves between 1943 and 1948 in order to illustrate discursive and practical problems with the 1943 American-Jewish advocacy campaign. This chapter draws upon previously unstudied oral testimonies of Algerian Jews housed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), conducted in French between 2003 and 2019. By analyzing the discussion of their own identity, this chapter refutes the American-Jewish conflation of citizenship with social and ethnic identity and demonstrates that Algerian Jews simultaneously identified with French nationalism and Maghrebi indigeneity. These oral histories give voice to a diverse cross-section of the Algerian-Jewish community and correct the flattening American conception of Algerian identity. Chapter Three also examines formal requests by Algerian Jews to the French colonial government to reclaim jobs and property that the Vichy regime had robbed and which restoring Crémieux alone did not resolve. The continued struggles that Algerian Jews faced after 1943 to restore their rights, along with the lack of aid from American Jewish advocates, highlights the limits of a short-term advocacy response that did not entail substantive relational work with Algerian Jews themselves.

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36 Many of even the earlier oral histories were not widely available until 2011, when interviewer Nicole Cohen-Addad donated them to USHMM.
37 One precedent for an oral testimony-based study of Algerian Jews is Friedman, Colonialism & After.
38 These archival sources are originally from the Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence but I accessed copies through USHMM.
I. Algerian Jews, French Citizenship, and the False Narrative of Assimilation, 1870-1940

“[My father’s] name sounded Arab, he spoke Arabic with ease. His grandfather spoke only Arabic, wrote in Arabic, dressed like an Arab. Someone who saw his picture above our dinner table could only assume: an Arab. And yet, ‘Arab’ wasn’t the word used to talk about him (or us). I was a kid when I asked: are we French? A firm answer: Yes. — We came from France with the French, the colonists? — No, we were here before the French. — So, we’re Arabs? — Not exactly. — Then what? — Jews.”

Denis Guénoun’s childhood recollection of his father struggling to explain their position in colonial Algerian society captures the ambiguous middle ground that Algerian Jews came to occupy between Frenchness and indigeneity following the passage of the Crémieux Decree in 1870. The more conventional historiographical approach to the Crémieux Decree — which recent scholarship has complicated — long commemorated the Crémieux Decree as an emancipatory measure for Jewish Algerians. This understanding assumes simplistically that indigenous Jews benefited from the French imperial project and shifts blame for antisemitism in the imperial era to the majority-Muslim colonized population. For example, Norman Stillman’s 1991 history marvels that the Decree granted its stakeholders full civil equality and that “only

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forty years from the time of French invasion, the Jews of Algeria went from being dhimmis\textsuperscript{41} in a preindustrial, traditional Islamic society to being citizens of a modern, secular European state.\textsuperscript{42}

In reality, naturalizing Algerian Jews made the question of their belonging more fraught and complex. This chapter argues that the Crémieux Decree both isolated Algerian Jews from their fellow French citizens and undermined their claims to indigeneity. French Jews advocated the Crémieux Decree both because they considered their Algerian coreligionists’ indigeneity shameful and because they aimed to support their country’s \textit{mission civilisatrice}. Following the Decree’s passage, French-Jewish institutions collaborated with the French imperial government to secularize and assimilate Algerian Jews. Nonetheless, Jewish enfranchisement galvanized European settlers to construct a sociopolitical system founded upon antisemitism, which prohibited Jewish equity or assimilation between 1870 and 1940.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{The transition to the \textit{mission civilisatrice} & the passage of the Crémieux Decree}

France employed extreme military force to seize control of Algeria in the four decades following its 1830 invasion. Overt violence characterized the takeover of Algeria, as the French army sacked cities, confiscated property, destroyed masjids, and slaughtered indigenous communities.\textsuperscript{44} From 1831-1876, the French army murdered an estimated 825,000 Algerians as it extended its control through campaigns into the Algerian Sahara.\textsuperscript{45} This approach constituted official state policy, as military officers such as Baron de Jomini, who advocated conquest

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} A historical term referring to the protected, but still second-class, status Jews and Christians held under the Islamic Empire.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Norman Stillman, \textit{The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times} (Philadelphia and New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 27.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Charles-Robert Ageron, \textit{Les Algériens Musulmans et La France (1871-1919)} (Presses universitaires de France, 1968), 588.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Benjamin Brower, \textit{A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France’s Empire in the Sahara, 1844-1902} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 14-16.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 4-5.
\end{itemize}
through psychological warfare, developed the imperial strategy in Algeria. Indeed, during the mid-19th century, French colonial authorities debated not the use of violence, but rather whether they should exterminate or merely subdue the indigenous Algerians. Although apologists attempted to downplay the extent of these massacres, they did not deny the militaristic approach to takeover. Instead, they justified soldiers’ colonization of Algeria by claiming that Algerians were “warlike” savages who had initiated extreme violence through “African warfare.”

This period of overt conquest, pacification, and war ended around 1870, when the Third Republic took over from the Second Empire following its collapse during the Prussian War of 1870-1871. In 1881, the need (and justification) for martial rule diminished further when France secured Tunisia as a protectorate; this victory reduced the French military’s preoccupation with securing the Algerian-Tunisian border, controlling Algerian movement, and preventing cross-territorial arms trade between potential dissidents. The Third Republic was no less committed to maintaining control over Algeria than the Second Empire. But it came to power in the midst of war and following decades of extreme violence in Algeria which threatened to undermine France’s credibility in Europe as a champion of democracy. Although systematic violence continued in Algeria throughout the French occupation, the nascent metropolitan government officially sided with Saint-Simonian reformers (Christian socialist and pro-democracy intellectuals) who advocated for civil government and assimilationism in Algeria.


over more pro-military social conservatives.\textsuperscript{52} Therefore, the Third Republic appeared to depart from its violent past and rule over a period of relative stability, further entrenching its presence in Algeria by establishing civil and democratic European institutions.\textsuperscript{53}

The shift to the new model of the \textit{mission civilisatrice} included an emphasis on citizenship. Codifying and expanding the citizenship rights and local governing institutions of European settlers in Algeria, including those who had come from countries other than France, allowed them to concretize their legal claims over the land.\textsuperscript{54} Meanwhile, naturalizing indigenous Algerians could potentially legitimize a central claim of the \textit{mission civilisatrice}, that Algeria was an integral part of France, while cultivating colonized subjects’ loyalty to the imperial government. In 1870, then-interim Minister of War Isaac Adolphe Crémieux made this case in order to pass his eponymous decree, which naturalized Jewish Algerians under common French civil status.\textsuperscript{55}

Although indigenous Jewish enfranchisement remained unpopular within both metropolitan and settler circles, Crémieux situated his Decree within the nascent \textit{mission civilisatrice}. Through this strategy and by capitalizing on a moment of political chaos created by the Franco-Prussian War and transition from the Second Empire to the Third Republic, Crémieux managed to push the Decree through without significant public debate.\textsuperscript{56} French politicians, believing that adding 35,000 new French citizens could increase the chances of long-term

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.; see Abi-Mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity} for a history of the Saint-Simonian project in Algeria.
\textsuperscript{53} McDougall, \textit{A History of Algeria}, 86; Abi-Mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity}, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{56} McDougall, \textit{A History of Algeria}, 115; Brett, “Legislating for Inequality,” 457.
security in the colony, acquiesced to the idea of Jewish naturalization amidst this wartime context.  

Crémieux acted without the consent of the Algerian-Jewish community. In fact, although he and other liberal French Jews began advocating for Algerian-Jewish citizenship in 1833, the only Algerian Jews who offered formal support were a handful of notables from Oran and Constantine in 1869. These individuals were already highly assimilated, elite figures whose opinions on citizenship did not represent the Jewish-Algerian community as a whole. Five years prior, the Senatus-Consulte of 1865 had granted both Jewish and Muslim indigenous Algerians the right to apply for French citizenship on an individual basis. However, the Senatus-Consulte required Muslim and Jewish applicants to abdicate their personal status in the name of devotion to the French secular state. This personal status allowed indigenous Algerian Jews to elect their own religious leaders and to use their own religious institutions to self-govern around matters such as marriage and divorce. Algerian Jews and Muslims alike considered the idea of forsaking their religious legal governance an apostasy. Further, Algerian Jews objected to the notion of transitioning to religious leadership under French Consistory rabbis who did not share their customs. Therefore, very few Algerian Jews chose to apply for naturalization.

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58 Roberts, Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 9.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 453.
However, with the passage of the Crémieux Decree in 1870, French politicians claimed that only Algerian Muslims wanted to retain their religious legal systems and institutions, while Algerian Jews were ready to accede to the civilizing mission, abandon their Maghrebi culture and religious practices, and assimilate French society and governance. Crémieux was aware that this narrative was false, having traveled to Algeria seventeen times to visit the Jewish community there.\(^64\) Rather he intentionally disregarded his coreligionists’ desires, declaring: “Do not say to them, be French if you care to, because voluntarily, they will not abandon the law of God.”\(^65\)

As this quote indicates, Crémieux did not advocate Jewish-Algerian citizenship rights because he saw his coreligionists as equals and wanted to amplify their desires. Although as a Jew himself he desired to further Jewish rights and prosperity, Crémieux adhered to an ideology Ethan Katz has dubbed a “Franco-Judaism,” popular among the French Ashkenazi bourgeoisie, which supported patriotic devotion to France as a secular, egalitarian republic.\(^66\) Like other Franco-Judaists who supported his call for Algerian-Jewish citizenship, Crémieux considered the *mission civilisatrice* the path to Jewish success, both for Algerian Jews and for metropolitan Jews seeking power and acceptance within the ranks of the French government. Therefore, Crémieux and his fellow French-Jewish advocates viewed their Algerian coreligionists through an Orientalist lens even as they attempted to support them. Crémieux and his fellow French-Jewish advocates considered Arab culture and society a degenerative force against Algerian Jewry.\(^67\) They viewed Algerian Jews’ indigenous religious and cultural practices, as

\(^64\) Friedman, *Colonialism and After*, 10.
\(^65\) Adolphe Crémieux, as quoted in Friedman, *Colonialism and After*, 10.

In order to solve the so-called “Jewish Eastern Question,” Crémieux and other Jewish members of the French political elite sought to foist a “regenerative” intervention upon Jewish Algerians that leveraged citizenship rights to strip them of their Maghrebi indigeneity.\footnote{Roberts, \textit{Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria}, 5; Schrier, \textit{Arabs of the Jewish Faith}, 4.}

Crémieux and his French-Jewish colleagues intended for the Crémieux Decree to inculcate Algerian Jews not only into French civil law but also into French “family values.” The Crémieux Decree used the same legal definition of citizenship as the Senatus-Consulte of 1865, which Algerian Jews had rejected. Like the Senatus-Consulte, it constructed French citizenship as a replacement for Algerian Jews’ indigenous identity.\footnote{Judith Surkis, \textit{Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930} (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2019), 57.}

It defined Jewish “native” law and French civil law as incompatible and required that Algerian Jews submit both to secular governance under French law and religious governance under the French Central Consistory of the Jewish People (henceforth, the Central Consistory). Unlike the Senatus-Consulte, the Crémieux Decree automatically naturalized Jews, rather than allowing Algerian Jews to opt into citizenship. Further, it applied only to Jews, thus isolating them from the majority of the indigenous population that was Muslim and Berber.\footnote{Legal reforms to extend opportunities for citizenship to Muslim Algerians differed from the Crémieux Decree in that it provided only civil inclusion and did not allow indigenous Muslims to join the French cultural “family.” Surkis, \textit{Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria}, 211-212.}

Algerian Jews accepted citizenship in 1870 without significant resistance, but not because they identified culturally with or felt ultimate loyalty to France. This understanding views Algerian identity formation from a point of hindsight by assuming that nationality would have
superseded communal, religious, or tribal identities and implies that Jewish Algerians welcomed or benefited from the French colonial project. Rather, citizenship presented a means of surviving and deriving rights in the colonial order. For example, one Jewish man in Sasportes explained in 1875, “We all want to be French for business…so foreigners no longer abuse us. But for all that concerns marriage and repudiation, we want to remain Jewish.”

**Continued violence during the mission civilisatrice**

As previous historiography on the civilizing mission in French colonial Algeria has demonstrated, the policy shift between the Second Empire and Third Republic from military rule to the civilizing mission did not reflect the daily reality of terror and intimidation that continued on the ground. No iteration of the French state successfully produced a universal regime with perfect correspondence between state policy and colonial governance, or even between the regional departments themselves. As much as the French government needed to rationalize its colonial empire in accordance with its professed republican ideals, European settlers and local colonial leaders manufactured a binary power dynamic between colonizer and colonized through visible, dehumanizing displays of might. Therefore, local rule reproduced violence cyclically, with military and settler forces asserting extrajudicial authority through force. That is not to say that administrative officials of the Third Republic or Fourth Republics were unwilling or unaware agents in such abuse and inconsistencies, for the state sponsored several successive settler migration programs in earnest after 1839 (and beginning as early as 1831). Rather, the

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creation of a settler colony and enforcement of colonial hegemony by local actors created a more diffuse system from which the office of the Governor General and the metropolitan government could distance themselves.

From 1870 and through the interwar period, military forces and European settlers throughout Algeria continued to assert control through force where tactics more analogous with the *mission civilisatrice* were perceived to fall short. Settlers continued the razzias, or punitive raids designed to terrorize Algerians in rural areas and devastate them economically, a signature tactic of Thomas Bugeaud, Governor-General of Algeria from 1840-1846. For instance, in 1916 – 70 years after Bugeaud’s regime and 46 years into the Third Republic – resistance to state-led conscription to fight in World War I led to a violent military crackdown in the Aurès region. When French agricultural development projects in the Sahara failed – intended to display France’s great works to Algerians and to the world – the soldiers tasked with leading these efforts reverted to physical force. And although the French Empire touted its *Service de santé* as a shining example of service to colonized subjects in enacting its *mission civilisatrice*, enforcement of “sanitary regulations” often resulted in injurious, stringent quarantines for Muslim villagers.

In short, through a multi-layered system of national and colonial governance, France could doubly assert control by portraying colonialism as a positive republican good while still enacting the violence that contradicted those ideals. Colonial authorities boasted of assimilationism and the *mission civilisatrice*, notions which justified colonialism yet muddied the

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78 Clark, “Expressing Entitlement in Colonial Algeria,” 453.
distinction between colonizer and colonized. As Frantz Fanon noted, military police acted as the dividing line and “spokesmen of the colonizer and regime of oppression” on behalf of the French state because they lacked the same visibility to the broader world and therefore did not have to hide their use of force.⁷⁹ As Benjamin Brower has argued, assimilationism and terror tactics proved a particularly lethal combination in furthering the French Empire’s divide-and-rule strategy. While the former denied Algerians a cohesive national identity, the latter destroyed tribal and communal social bonds and inhibited their capacity for grassroots resistance.⁸₀

In line with these trends, Jewish-Algerian citizenship demonstrates the contradictory nature of civil rights reforms under the Third and Fourth Republic. As part of the French government’s divide-and-conquer strategy, citizenship both afforded Jewish increased civil rights while isolating them from other indigenous communities. Furthermore, the mere possession of citizenship was often insufficient to guarantee Jews access to full civic participation. Rather, Jewish citizenship highlights the disparity between official state policy and the complex, fluid reality of settler colonial rule. Metropolitan officials gained credibility in upholding the myth of the civilizing mission and Crémieux’s Franco-Judaism, incentivizing Jewish Algerians to accept French rule in exchange for promised rights and social mobility. But in reality, the question of Jewish citizenship and indigeneity at the local level remained fraught, dynamic, and contested throughout the colonial period; the establishment of Crémieux in 1870 did not resolve but rather exacerbated this conflict.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 3-4.
Left-wing antisemitism and the *crise antijuive* of the 1890s

European settlers rebuked the law with vengeance from the time the Franco-Prussian War ended in 1871.\(^{82}\) Whereas the French government sought to legitimize its empire and assert its claim to Algeria by shifting to civilian rule, settlers remained concerned with maintaining their social supremacy over the indigenous populations among whom they lived.\(^{83}\) They did not see Jewish Algerians – either in 1870 or in the following decades – as French, but rather as colonized, foreign “Arabs of the Jewish faith,” distinguished by their “savagery, poverty, dirtiness, dishonesty and lasciviousness.”\(^{84}\) Just like the rest of the Algerian population, the prospect of Algerian Jews becoming enfranchised posed a frightening political threat to European minority rule. Therefore, as Hannah Arendt pointed out in protesting General Henri Giraud’s abrogation of Jewish French citizenship in 1943, visible antisemitism – as opposed to more general Orientalism and anti-Arab prejudice – increased after 1870 among the European settler population.\(^{85}\) Settlers had always possessed general prejudice towards the indigenous population, but the Decree triggered specifically anti-Jewish animus by offering native Jews the prospect of equality. Close competition between the two main settler political parties, the Opportunist and Radical Republicans, meant that Jews had the potential to swing elections in favor of the more conservative Opportunists, for whom they tended to vote.\(^{86}\) Throughout colonial Algeria but particularly in Algiers, Oran, and Constantine (the three Jewish strongholds) antisemitic newspapers cropped up, municipal politicians scrubbed Jewish Algerians from

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\(^{83}\) Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, 7.


electoral and military draft lists, and militant antisemities established anti-Jewish electoral leagues (*ligues antijuives*) with the explicit aim of abrogating the Crémieux Decree.\(^{87}\)

Racial antisemitism reached its peak in the *crise antijuive* of the 1890s. Metropolitan politics, namely the Dreyfus Affair and a series of economic crises, contributed to the rise in violent antisemitism.\(^{88}\) However, the Naturalization Law of 1889, which extended automatic citizenship to *néos*, sparked the crisis.\(^{89}\) Néos were European settlers of non-French (predominantly Maltesian, Spanish, and Italian) heritage who had begun migrating to Algeria in the 1860s.\(^{90}\) These migrants faced xenophobia at the hands of the French settlers (*français d’origine*) who labelled them a “foreign peril.”\(^{91}\) In colonial Algeria, social status was important to various settler populations’ ability to compete with one another for scarce resources and privileges from the French administration. While they still ranked below *néos* in the rigid colonial order, Jews presented a threat as status competitors. Citizenship, however, lent *néos* greater status by giving them the right to vote. This privilege offered *néos* the opportunity to assert their dominance over Algerian Jews and ingratiate themselves with the elite *français d’origine*.\(^{92}\) These social dynamics stoked the flames of existing antisemitic sentiment and structures within colonial Algeria.

During the 1890s, *ligue antijuives* became increasingly active through *néo* participation. In addition to organizing violent pogroms against Jewish communities, these leagues mobilized antisemitism in order to suppress the Jewish vote, destroy Jewish candidacy for office, and elect

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\(^{88}\) Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria*, 82.  
\(^{89}\) Abi Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 204.  
\(^{90}\) Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria*, 56-57.  
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 50.  
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 60.
European candidates at the municipal level. Radical Republicans played to néo voters’ left-wing antisemitism by portraying Jewish Algerians as money-grubbing capitalists. They exploited néo’s status anxieties by accusing Jews of voting for the Opportunists in a bloc, following blindly the political views of their rabbis or local Consistories. The français d’origine who ran these leagues, and had previously excluded néos, now attracted them by providing antisemitism as an opportunity for nationalist inclusion. Leveraging their newfound importance to the Radicals as a voting bloc, néo candidates rose to political prominence in their own right. As Ageron has argued, since néos’ antisemitism was also an expression of “psychological and passionate resentment” against the French government that had forced them to compete with Jews for resources and status, this nationalism did not extend to the metropole. Rather, this phenomenon, which Steven Uran has described as antisemitic “hypernationalism,” was a separatist ideology specific to colonial Algeria.

**Algerian-Jewish assimilation**

Simultaneously as European *colons* resisted Jewish assimilation, the French government collaborated with metropolitan Jewry to reify the false narrative of the civilizing mission and the French-Jewish regenerative project, while isolating Algerian Jews from the rest of the indigenous population. The French-Jewish institutions of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) and the Central Consistory led the effort to dismantle traditional Algerian-Jewish institutions and

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93 Ibid., 37.
94 Ibid., 39; 56.
95 Ibid., 58.
forcibly secularize indigenous Algerian Jews. The Consistory, which Napoleon established in 1808 to govern and secularize the religious and congregational life of Jews in the metropole, had established a small branch in Algeria in 1845.\textsuperscript{100} Meanwhile, Adolph Crémieux had founded the AIU in 1860 to “bring a ray of civilization into settings that had deteriorated as a result of centuries of oppression and ignorance” and to “decommunitize” Jewish communities throughout French colonial North Africa.\textsuperscript{101} Both the Consistory and the AIU gained a clearer mandate over Algerian Jews once they became French citizens.

By 1873, three years after the Crémiuex Decree, the French government had reduced the scope of the Algerian rabbinate and tasked the French Consistory with replacing the traditional Talmud Torahs that Algerian Jews had hitherto attended.\textsuperscript{102} The Consistory attempted to quash Jewish resistance to French civil life. For example, in 1872 the Central Consistory wrote a letter to the Consistory of Algiers demanding that it ban members from participating in religious ceremonies — including the right to bar mitzvah, burial, divorce, or holding religious office — if they refused to participate in French civil marriage.\textsuperscript{103} In response to many Algerian Jews’ refusal to abandon their families’ traditional synagogues, the Law of 1905 officially reorganized Algerian Jewish communities, placing each under the direction of a branch of the Consistory.\textsuperscript{104}

As a result of the \textit{crise antijuive}, Algerian Jews finally began to embrace French assimilation as a means of securing acceptance and safety.\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Néos} affirmed their own Frenchness

\textsuperscript{100} Paula Hyman, \textit{The Jews of Modern France} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 82.
\textsuperscript{102} Smith, “Citizenship in the Colony,” 39.
\textsuperscript{103} Friedman, \textit{Colonialism and After}, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{105} Roberts, \textit{Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria}, 110-111.
by denying Algerian Jewish citizenship and lumping them with disenfranchised Arabs. This tactic created a competitive atmosphere that forced Algerian Jews to exaggerate their Frenchness as well. In addition, Algerian Jews resorted to invoking France’s civilized, egalitarian nature when requesting government interventions against antisemitic violence. In 1896, the AIU established offices in Algeria and began sponsoring “religious” after-school programs to promote modernization, secularization, and assimilation. The AIU took a calculated approach, attracting members in droves by marketing their after-school programs as self-defense classes against antisemitic violence. In reality, the AIU’s curriculum propagated a regenerativist education, which glorified the French government and historical French figures like Vercingetorix. The AIU also banned their pupils from wearing traditional Jewish-Algerian clothing, which they condemned as “attire of dishonor.”

Despite the AIU and Consistory’s significant progress in Europeanizing French Jewry, Algerian Jews did not fully acculturate. In fact, Algerian Jewish publications continued to display a diversity of thought towards citizenship and identity into the 1930s. There are three key reasons for the incomplete assimilation. First, Algerian Jews did not lose or forget their Maghrebi religious heritage. Even as the AIU attempted to take over Algerian-Jewish religious life, the local rabbis and teachers who had once led Talmud Torahs (the religious institutions predating French intervention), continued to teach at the Algerian Consistory. In this setting,

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111 Ibid.
these religious leaders prevented the Algerian Consistory from Europeanizing entirely and competed with the more assimilationist AIU for membership.\textsuperscript{114}

Second, Algerian Jews never stopped interacting with other indigenous people. There is debate as to the extent that Crémieux fomented antisemitism among Muslim Algerians. However, recent historiography provides compelling evidence to suggest that although the privileges bestowed upon the naturalized population created some class tension with middle- and upper-class Jews, it had a negligible impact in inciting racial antisemitism, which stemmed mainly from the settler community.\textsuperscript{115} In the isolated incidents wherein Arab Algerians participated in antisemitic violence, the Europeans who organized the pogroms had often paid them to do their dirty work, suggesting that they were more motivated by economic need than hatred.\textsuperscript{116} Further, assimilation varied along class lines: while wealthy, urban Jews experienced greater pressure to Europeanize, poor and working-class Jews were more likely to share space and customs with their Arab and Berber neighbors.\textsuperscript{117} Jewish merchants, for instance, participated in an “economic dualism” wherein they sold goods to both Arabs and Europeans to sustain their livelihoods.\textsuperscript{118} Jews living in rural communities or in \textit{commune mixtes} -- neighborhoods that integrated Muslim and Jewish residents -- were most likely to continue interacting with other indigenous people uninterrupted.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115}In addition, for examples of evidence indicating continued solidarity and interaction with Muslim Algerians, see: Geneviève Dermenjian, \textit{Antijudaïsme et antisémitisme en Algérie coloniale: 1830-1962} (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2018), 175-176; Todd Shepard, \textit{The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 243; Friedman, \textit{Colonialism and After}.
\textsuperscript{116}Roberts, \textit{Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria}, 72-75.
\textsuperscript{117}Gosnell, \textit{The Politics of Frenchness}, 149.
\textsuperscript{118}Prochaska, \textit{Making Algeria French}, 124; 127.
\textsuperscript{119}For studies on such communities, see Bahloul, \textit{The Architecture of Memory}; Friedman, \textit{Colonialism and After}, 32-57.
Third, Algerian Jews were unable to overcome the violence and discrimination of the European settler population. European and French *colons* built political, architectural, and ideological barriers to maintain their superior positions in the rigid colonial hierarchy. Even as Algerian Jews moved into European-style buildings, city planners ensured that they would live on separate streets from European settlers. As Prochaska has argued, a colonial society distinct to Algeria formed between 1890 and 1914 — the peak of antisemitic violence — which excluded both Jews and Muslims, regardless of citizenship status. The history of the Jewish-Algerian community and relationship to French citizenship thus reveals the dissonant impact of settler violence on Jewish-Algerian identity: it both drove Algerian Jews to pursue assimilation as a means of protection and segregated them from the rest of the naturalized population.

**Building a right-wing foundation for Vichy antisemitism**

While antisemitic political organizing began to decline in the beginning of the 1900s following the *crise antijuive* of the 1890s, it did not disappear. For instance, in 1914 Dr. Jules Molle, the mayor of Oran, founded the “*Union Latine,*” which celebrated the shared “Latin” (or in other words, Western) heritage of its members. Molle used this organization to cull support for antisemitic legislation while maintaining sufficient electoral support to stay in office, despite the 30,000 Jews who lived in Oran and turned out at high rates to vote. In April 1925, he spread rumors that the AIU had bribed the Synagogue of Oran so that its congregants would vote

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121 Ibid., 206.
122 Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria,* 133.
123 Ibid.
as a bloc.\textsuperscript{124} Molle continued such activities into the 1930s such that Oran was already rife with institutional antisemitism and the ruling class already sympathetic with the ideals of the Vichy regime as it began to take control over metropolitan France and North Africa.\textsuperscript{125}

Whereas leftist ideology dominated the \textit{crise antijuive} of the 1890s, antisemitic political organizing morphed into a more right-wing movement throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Members of the \textit{Croix de Feu} (Cross of Fire), a mass fascist organization active in both the metropole and Algeria, terrorized and perpetrated violence against Algerian Jewish communities in urban areas, such as by inciting the infamous Constantine pogrom of 1934.\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Croix de Feu} adherents came to dominate the \textit{ligues antijuives} by the 1930s, contributing to the advancement of antisemitic legislation and disenfranchisement campaigns.\textsuperscript{127} Although the \textit{Croix de Feu} represented a shift from socialist to fascist rhetoric, the organization showed a willingness to collaborate with leftist “comrades” in the \textit{ligues} who shared its “desire for preserving the existing social order.”\textsuperscript{128} Ultimately, the \textit{Croix de Feu} advanced the same goal of maintaining settler supremacy as the leftist movements preceding it.

In 1940, the Vichy government seized control of Algeria. Building on Algeria’s foundation of antisemitism, Vichy leadership rapidly introduced a slate of Aryanizing antisemitic laws.\textsuperscript{129} On October 7, the first wave of this legislation abolished the Crémieux

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{La Flamme du Midi} (June 1936), quoted in Irvine, “Fascism in France and the Strange Case of the Croix de Feu,” 283.
\textsuperscript{129} Collot, \textit{Les Institutions de l’Algérie durant la période coloniale}, 96.
\end{footnotesize}
Decree: a fascist regime had realized left-wing European settlers’ decades-long dream to strip Algerian Jews of their French citizenship.\textsuperscript{130} While it did not introduce racial antisemitism to Algeria, the Vichy takeover represented a severe rupture in Algerian Jewish history which has garnered significant scholarly interest. For example, some scholars have examined the extent to which the Vichy laws isolated Jews from the rest of the Algerian indigenous population; others argue that it provoked increased loyalty (or, in the exceptional case of Jews who joined the Communist nationalist movement, abandonment) to the French state as they realized the tenuous nature of their citizenship; and recently, some scholars have attempted to place the Vichy impact and strategies within a colonial context.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1943, Operation Torch liberated French colonial Algeria from Vichy control. The Allied forces installed Henri Giraud, himself a former official and recent defector from Vichy France, as the new leader of French Algeria. While Giraud removed the vast majority of the anti-Jewish laws, he incited global outrage when he re-abrogated the Crémieux Decree on March 14, 1943. Giraud justified himself using an argument of negative rights. He claimed that Nazi propaganda had aroused antisemitic fervor among Algerian Muslims and that stripping Algerian Jews of their citizenship rights would “eliminate all racial distinction” among the indigenous Algerian population and dissuade Muslim Algerians from committing antisemitic violence.\textsuperscript{132}


This argument held little truth and in fact echoed both left-wing néo and Nazi talking points.\textsuperscript{133} As a few savvy Jewish newspapers and individuals pointed out, Giraud more likely acted out of his own antisemitism and fears of Jewish Algerians as political threats in municipal elections, while consulting with the US State Department for talking points in line with Allied democratic ideals and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{134} The next chapter will explore the advocacy of American-Jewish organizations, who entered the thorny and unfamiliar terrain of colonial Algerian antisemitism for the first time in leading an international campaign to reverse Giraud’s decision and restore citizenship to Algerian Jews.

\textsuperscript{133} For examples of Nazi fabrications of Muslim antisemitism, see “Fraternal Organizations Now Serving with AJC,” \textit{The Sentinel}, November 4, 1943.
\textsuperscript{134} Hannah Arendt, “Why the Cremieux Decree was Abrogated,” \textit{The Contemporary Jewish Record} (1943), \url{http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/CR11.PDF}; William Zukerman, “Events of the Week,” \textit{The Reform Advocate}, Nov. 5, 1943.
II. The Joint Emergency Committee & the Campaign to Reinstate the
Crémieux Decree, March-October 1943

General Giraud announced that he would uphold Vichy precedent and re-abrogate the Crémieux Decree on March 19, 1943. His ordinance reified the goals of European settlers who had worked to disenfranchise Algerian Jews since 1870 without garnering international objection. But in the context of World War II, this latest injustice captured the attention of American- and European-Jewish watchdogs. Stateside, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) immediately mobilized the Joint Emergency Committee for Jewish Affairs, the coalition of Jewish-American organizations it had convened to combat the Holocaust. The AJC and the Joint Emergency Committee spearheaded a seven-month lobbying campaign which pressured the Roosevelt Administration to negotiate rights for Algerian Jews with the Allied French. An extensive media campaign involving a wide range of Jewish-American publications complemented this behind-the-scenes maneuvering, building public sympathy and dissent on behalf of disenfranchised Algerian Jews. As the AJC boasted in a 1945 memorandum for its Committee on Peace Problems, this effort proved instrumental to Charles de Gaulle and the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) ultimately restoring the Crémieux Decree and French citizenship for Algerian Jews.\(^{135}\)

Previous scholarship has critiqued the impact of the French government, local settler rule, and the Vichy regime on Algerian Jewry. However, by focusing on these colonial and antisemitic entities, it has overlooked the potential flaws in the advocacy of American and European-Jewish organizations offering aid to their Algerian brethren. This lapse is partially due to the brevity of

American advocates’ involvement in Algeria during World War II, occurring during the under-studied period between Operation Torch and the Algerian War of Independence. In addition, in studying the Holocaust era, when Jews faced so many clear enemies and enjoyed so few allies, it may be tempting to assume American Jewry — one of the few groups offering aid and themselves facing immense tragedy — played a purely positive role. For instance, in *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria*, which focuses on the mechanics of French and settler antisemitism but mentions the American effort only in passing, Sophie B. Roberts lauds the events surrounding the abrogation of Crémieux in 1943 as a seminal turning point for Algerian Jews in connecting itself to world Jewry.¹³⁶

It remains necessary to examine critically the role of American Jewry in advocating for the reinstatement of French citizenship for Algerian Jews, precisely because of the turning point Roberts notes. However, the notion that the AJC and other Jewish-American advocates — primarily Ashkenazi and of European origin — could speak to Algerian Jewish needs and desires because of their shared religion and peoplehood ignores the vast differences in the two groups’ cultural, national, and ethnic identities and their consequential political perspectives, goals, and privileges. Further, when considering advocacy by American Jews in 1943 one must take into account the long shadow cast by World War II and the Holocaust, which shaped and motivated all American-Jewish international advocacy efforts at the time.

Roberts’ assessment assumes that in becoming a cause of Western Jewry, Algerian Jews facilitated partnerships and secured a voice in that community. This chapter finds that that was not the case. Even if it were, Algerian Jews were not entering into an established Western-

Ashkenazi-dominated\textsuperscript{137} international community through the Crémieux affair; that international Jewish community was coalescing and building new infrastructure in response to the Holocaust. Studying the American intervention surrounding the Crémieux Decree allows for a deeper understanding of the colliding impact of the Holocaust and colonialism on the marginalization and erasure of Algerian Jews — and Arab Jews more broadly — within international Jewish circles.

This chapter traces the developments of American-Jewish advocacy to reinstate the Crémieux Decree on behalf of Algerian Jews from the announcement of the Giraud Ordinance on March 14 until the Allied French restored citizenship to Algerian Jews on October 22, focusing on the lobbying efforts of the AJC and the WJC and the media coverage of the American-Jewish press. I argue that American Jews centered European narratives and voices in advocating the reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree. In doing so, they doubly undermined Algerian Jews’ Maghrebi identity. First, they privileged European Judaism in constructing a diasporic Jewish identity and solidarity. Second, they characterized French citizenship as a marker of national identity — as opposed to a mere legal designation — and a guarantor of equality.

\textbf{Beginning the campaign}

The AJC sprang into immediate and vigorous action following Gen. Giraud’s announcement that he would follow the Vichy regime in re-abrogating the Crémieux Decree.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{137} A note on terms: Ashkenazi Jews refers to Jews originating from Eastern Europe, who constituted the overwhelming majority of European and American Jewry at the time and were the primary victims of the Holocaust. Indigenous Algerian Jews, depending on if their ancestry originated from the Middle East or Spain, may identify as Mizrahi or Sephardic.

\textsuperscript{138} For Giraud’s statement, see “Yellow Badge in France: Naturalization to be Revoked,” \textit{Palestine Post}, March 15, 1943,
Through the Joint Emergency Committee for Jewish Affairs it had convened to coordinate Jewish American efforts and overcome internal divisions during wartime, the AJC rapidly mobilized its ten American partner organizations. Including B’nai B’rith, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, the group spanned denomination and included both political and religious leadership. The Joint Committee also corralled political support from Jewish advocates close to the Roosevelt Administration and from Congressman Emanuel Celler, a prominent Jewish Democrat from New York, who advocated for refugee rights throughout World War II. By March 17, 1943 — a mere three days after Giraud’s announcement — AJC President Joseph Proskauer had sent a letter to Sumner Welles, the US Undersecretary of State, expressing alarm and requesting an audience to discuss the issue. The next day, the AJC and WJC sent a joint delegation led by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a long-time ally of President Roosevelt and President of the American Jewish Congress (a different albeit similarly named advocacy organization from the AJC), to speak with Welles.

The AJC-WJC joint delegation is striking because the AJC had not maintained close relationships with its peer organizations in Europe before World War II. They initiated relations between the WJC and the Joint Emergency Committee in November 1942 to coordinate their

Joseph Proskauer to Sumner Welles, March 17, 1943.
“Jewish Delegation Sees State Department on Giraud’s Abolition of Cremieux Law,” JTA, March 19, 1943.
advocacy surrounding the Bermuda Conference of April 1943. The Bermuda Conference was the AJC’s top policy priority of 1943, as it was where Allied governments would formulate their response to the problem of European-Jewish refugees. Partnering with European Jewry in support of the Crémieux Decree had two benefits. First and most relevant to the task at hand, the Emergency Committee was aware that a key element of US war-time propaganda strategy involved establishing itself as a foil to fascism and a leader of democracy to the international community. Incorporating an international dimension into the lobbying effort strengthened the Emergency Committee’s plea to the US government to support Algerian-Jewish citizenship rights. Second, the cause of Algerian enfranchisement offered an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with organizations like the WJC and the Consistory of the Jews of France, less than a month ahead of their critical joint intervention at the Bermuda Conference.

This fledgling partnership did not involve a similar effort to build relationships with Algerian Jews. The AJC was not a grassroots organization. Its organizing strategy centered the Yiddish principle of shtadlanut, which entailed forging and leveraging influence with government officials to effect change. Algerian Jews did not possess institutional influence with the French government or with other Allied powers. They also lacked representation among the upper echelons of French-Jewish institutions with whom the Emergency Committee allied itself. Therefore amplifying their voices, even as victims, would not be a priority for the AJC.

The same day as the AJC-WJC American delegation visited Welles, Baron Edouard de Rothschild, French Jewish financier and President of the Jewish Consistory, publicly condemned

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143 AJC “Memorandum on the history of the Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs” (Committee on European Jewish Affairs, September 28, 1943), 1.
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the abrogation and demanded action from the Roosevelt Administration. Two days later, the WJC doubled down, sending a delegation of prominent French Jews who had fled the Vichy-controlled metropole — not including any Algerians — to press Welles further. On March 23, George Backer, a former Roosevelt campaign staffer, a long-time activist on behalf of European Jewish refugees fleeing Hitlerism and the sitting propaganda policy director for the Office of War Information, sent an additional letter. Backer leveraged his authority on American propaganda strategy. He emphasized the importance of reinstating Algerian Jewish citizenship to promote global democracy and argued that Giraud was imitating Hitler. If the State Department did not act, he warned, it would “seriously impair the prestige of our country and weaken us in the democratic element in every part of the world.” To this last advance, a beleaguered Welles at last responded that he had already inquired into the matter on Rothschild’s behalf.

American-Jewish motives

The American-Jewish community and its institutions took such a sudden interest in the affairs of Algerian Jews more out of a desire to help Western Jewry than Algerians themselves. Their motives stemmed from their ongoing efforts to halt the Nazi scourge and systemic European antisemitism. As Proskauer’s successor, Jacob Blaustein, would later write tellingly in

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146 Benedict, “Reaction to Events Overseas,” 197.
148 George Backer to Sumner Welles, March 23, 1943.
a 1950 preface to an AJC report entitled, “The Social and Legal Status of the Jews of Morocco,” American Jews “learned their geography the hard way” as the reality of a global war brought seemingly endless news about lands and peoples of which they had been ignorant. In the case of North Africa, the major event which first captured American attention was Operation Torch, the Allied invasion which wrested North Africa from Vichy control — with significant help from Jewish Algerian soldiers — between November 1942 and May 1943. But, Blaustein noted, sustaining the AJC’s attention was the tragedy of the Holocaust, which had created a twisted urgency for expanding the organization’s conception of Jewish peoplehood beyond the West: “With the decimation of Jewish communities in Europe, those in North Africa and Southwest Asia have assumed greater importance to us.”

Indeed, in his initial letter to Undersecretary Welles, Proskauer emphasized that he would not bother the State Department with the issue were it not for the “grave implications [of the Giraud Ordinance], affecting not only the status of Jews in Algeria, but possibly of [Jews in] other lands.” B’nai B’rith, one of the AJC’s allies and peer organizations, echoed Proskauer’s concern, warning in its newsletter that the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree could set a precedent that would imperil post-war reconstruction in Europe. Algeria, unlike other parts of France’s empire in the Maghreb, was not considered a colonial territory, but rather an incorporated part of France since its annexation in 1834. Therefore, Operation Torch provided the first liberation of Vichy-occupied “France” and made Algeria the de facto center of Allied French control. In the minds of Proskauer and other Jewish-American activists, this meant that

152 Blaustein, preface to *The Social and Legal Status of the Jews of Morocco*, ii.
153 Proskauer to Welles, March 17, 1943.
Algeria represented a litmus test for the ability and commitment of the French government — and European powers at large — to stop the spread of antisemitism and reverse anti-Jewish legislation in the wake of Nazi fascism. Although stopping the Third Reich was in the obvious interest of Algerian as well as European Jews, this approach was limiting because it meant that American Jews were not considering the implications of citizenship, subjecthood, and the long-term needs of Algerian Jews under colonial rule as they constructed their demands of the US and French governments.

Algeria also provided an opportunity for the AJC and other American Jews to hold their own government accountable and build pressure on the US to remove Giraud from power. General Giraud not only copied the Vichy regime by re-abrogating Crémieux; he also echoed Axis propaganda when he justified this policy decision by claiming that he was restoring republican égalité and laïcité by equalizing the status of Algerian Jews and Muslims and assuaging an alleged rise in Muslim anti-Semitism. Himself a former Vichy official, Giraud was an immensely suspicious figure to American Jews. Proskauer, for instance, expressed concern to Undersecretary Welles that disenfranchising Algerian Jews could be part of a larger plot for Giraud, whom the AJC felt had gone further than the Vichy government did under Nazi pressure during its occupation of Algeria, to advance antisemitic state policy into post-war France. Meanwhile, George Backer went as far as to warn that Giraud was emulating Hitler and could be on the precipice of destroying French democracy.

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157 Proskauer to Welles, May 17, 1943; Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC, June 1943, 19.

158 Backer to Welles, March 23, 1943.
But the United States was responsible for installing Giraud as the French High Commissioner, with whom they had struck a deal to join the Allied cause and whom they considered a safer alternative than the “radical” Charles de Gaulle, then leading the CFLN from exile.\textsuperscript{159} Concerned that restoring Jewish Algerians’ pre-Vichy rights might create a perception that France was favoring them over Muslim Algerians and hinder the Arab appeasement campaign the Allied forces launched after Operation Torch, “some brilliant mind in the State Department” had assuredly played a role in conceiving General Giraud’s justification for re-abrogating the Crémieux Decree.\textsuperscript{160} The strategy of French advocates like the WJC delegation and Baron Rothschild to lobby the Americans rather than their own government attested to its power; as Edwin James, the managing editor of the \textit{New York Times}, predicted, it was not a matter of when France would relent, but rather “when the State Department would restore the Decree.”\textsuperscript{161} The AJC had spent months begging an unyielding Roosevelt administration to admit Jewish refugees and to distance itself from Vichyists, and as of March was working to build pressure for the US and its allies to address these problems at the Bermuda Conference in April.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{Westernizing Algerian-Jewish citizenship}

\textsuperscript{159} Giraud was only one of many Vichy officials with whom the United States struck deals and then elevated to power. along with other Vichy officials, such as Governor General of Algeria Marcel Peyrouton, who promulgated the first law of Oct. 7, 1940 that abrogated the Crémieux Decree as the Vichy government’s Minister of the Interior. \textit{Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree}, AJC, June 1943; William Zukerman, “Events of the Week,” \textit{The Reform Advocate}, November 5, 1943; David Schroeter, “Between Metropole and North Africa,” in \textit{The Holocaust and North Africa}, ed. Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 19-20.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{161} “Editor Predicts Cremieux Decree Will be Restored,” \textit{American Jewish World}, July 9, 1943, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{162} State Department’s Attitude on Abrogation of Cremieux Decree Termed Surprising,” \textit{JTA}, May 9, 1943, \url{https://www.jta.org/1943/05/09/archive/state-departments-attitude-on-abrogation-of-cremieux-decree-termed-surprising}; Zukerman, “Events of the Week,” Nov. 5, 1943; Zukerman, “Events of the Week,” \textit{The Reform Advocate}, July 16, 1943; Charles Bensen, “Capital Letter,” \textit{B’nai B’rith Messenger}, April 9, 1943. For discussion of the joint work of the AJC, American Jewish Congress, the WJC, and more than a dozen other Jewish organizations to organize following the disappointing results of the Bermuda Conference simultaneously as they organized in support of Jewish Algerian citizenship, see AJC “Joint Emergency Committee Minutes,” March 29, 1943; April 2, 1943; April 10, 1943; May 24, 1943, \url{ajcarchives.org/ajcarchive/DigitalArchive.aspx}.
The disenfranchisement of Algerian Jews represented an additional opportunity for Jewish-American advocates to demand an end to US complicity in Western antisemitism and simultaneously raise popular support for Charles de Gaulle in Giraud’s stead. Beyond the ulterior foreign policy motives of the American Jewish community in advocating for Algerian Jews, institutions like the AJC — which were predominantly white and Ashkenazi — were not immune to the Western and colonial context in which they existed, received information, and organized. In addition to foreign politics, prejudice against the Arab world also influenced the Westernizing approach of Jewish American activists.

By early April, *B’nai B’rith* op-ed columnist Charles Benson noted that opponents to organizing for Algerian Jews’ citizenship argued that the question of their citizenship “should not be looked at as a problem, but as a ‘native’ problem.” Evidently, the similar “oriental” nature of Algerian Jewish language and dress to other Arab people and their consequential foreignness to “an ordinary American” had created discomfort. Since the article did not specify who was objecting, it is unclear how vocal they were or how widespread this view was in reality. Nonetheless, this recalcitrance suggested a crucial blind spot in Jewish American conceptions of a shared diasporic identity. Benson’s decision to refute this objection suggests that it was popular enough that proponents of solidarity with Algerian Jews were aware they needed to counter it. Non-Western Jews, these dissenters implied, were not their people and were therefore unworthy of their solidarity.

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165 Ibid.
Despite their rapid response, the AJC and its allies were not exceptional in their open-mindedness towards or nuanced understanding of Maghrebi Jewry. Rather, in line with French colonial rhetoric, they considered Algerian Jews to have become “enlightened,” having embraced French identity and denounced the Arab tradition and society which had torn them asunder from their ancestral roots as “native Israelites.” In “Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree,” a 34-page report released in June 1943, the AJC laid out a version of history nearly identical to one the WJC produced in a report of its own the same month. In line with the regenerative ideology of the French Jewish actors that had led the project to assimilate Algerian Jewry through the Consistory and the AIU, the report demonstrated enormous sympathy for — and a basic historical inaccuracy regarding — the French colonial project. The report claimed that when the French troops invaded Algeria, in contrast to the Muslim population which “violently oppressed” them, the Jews welcomed them and thier mission civilisatrice as a liberating force from enslavement under the yoke of Turkish rule. Incidentally, the American version departed from the WJC report in assigning less blame for antisemitism to the rise of fascism among European settlers in Algeria and more to innate Muslim antisemitism. This historical understanding did not only deny the long history French colonial violence. Striking considering the source, it also denied the pre-Vichy antisemitism which had enabled Vichy anti-Jewish policy and would continue to impact Jews following Operation Torch.

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166 Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC, June 1943, 5.
168 Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC, i; 4.
Furthermore, the report falsely argued that, indicative of their innate superiority over their Muslim counterparts, Algerian Jews had assimilated not merely upon becoming French citizens in 1870, but as soon as the French invaded in 1830 and they “accepted the jurisdiction of… the white man.” Following this logic, the AJC constructed French citizenship not as a matter of civil rights but rather as a source of national and ethnic identity, in line with AIU and Consistory rhetoric. According to the report, benevolent French rule created Muslim and Jewish subjects separate but equal; citizenship did not give Algerian Jews any privileges relative to their Muslim neighbors, who “already enjoy[ed] freedom of religion, of speech, and of press.” Rather, by retaining their personal status, the only privileges that Muslims retained were their right to continue practicing their “backwards” traditions, including polygamy and the continued use of their religious institutions and schools. On the other hand, the report argued that Algerian Jews had proven themselves worthy of citizenship through submission to the republican value of *laïcité* and patriotic sacrifice by renouncing their religious institutions and submitting to mandatory conscription.

As a consequence, the report implied that the advantage Jews derived from French citizenship was transformation into whiteness, as official citizenship as decreed by Crémieux meant that “the difference between the French and non-French Jews is now only a difference of religion, and not of race.” Here, the American-Jewish authors not only bought into the French-Jewish idea of secular regeneration through the *mission civilisatrice*, but also projected their own perspectives and racial anxieties onto Algerian Jewry. American Jewish advocacy

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170 *Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC*, i-ii; 7.
171 Ibid., 7.
173 *Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC*, 7.
174 Ibid., 10.
organizations had struggled throughout the 20th century to both condemn white racism that conflicted with their self-image as a persecuted people, while simultaneously asserting their whiteness in order to achieve inclusion and acceptance.\textsuperscript{175} In the 1940s, the organizations of the Emergency Committee — particularly the AJC, B’nai B’rith, and the American Jewish Congress — addressed this problem by adopting a new civic discourse of universalism, hinging on the notion of the United States as a melting plot. This discourse allowed them to condemn domestic racist policy as un-American and anti-democratic, while presenting themselves as part and parcel of white America.\textsuperscript{176} While the notion of Algerian Jews possessing a distinct community and heritage may have felt threatening to American Jews, French-Jewish assimilationist rhetoric aligned with their concept of universalism.

The voices that the AJC and its peers chose to amplify in promoting the Algerian Jewish cause reflect the campaign’s Holocaust-centered, Eurocentric motives and approaches. In the first edition of its monthly magazine following the announcement of the Giraud Ordinance, the AJC introduced the scandal to the public and published an article by the notable German scholar and Holocaust refugee, Hannah Arendt, entitled “Why the Crémieux Decree was Abrogated.”\textsuperscript{177} Although Arendt was neither Algerian nor even French, the \textit{Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)}, an international newspaper and the syndication source for many smaller American publications, accepted her as the decisive source in the matter, announcing to its readers that as a “student of French politics,” she had revealed the true story behind the Giraud Ordinance.\textsuperscript{178} She was not the

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 196-197.  
\textsuperscript{177} Hannah Arendt, “Why the Crémieux Decree was Abrogated,” \textit{The Jewish Contemporary Record}, April 1, 1943, 65-69.  

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only prominent figure associated with the Holocaust whom advocates and the press substituted in for Algerian Jews directly impacted by the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree. Varian Fry — a New York Times reporter who exposed Hitler’s implementation of the Final Solution and whom the State of Israel later recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations — outlined a very similar argument to Arendt’s in an article which appeared in the New Republic and on which the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported.179

Arendt aimed to alert the public to the systemic antisemitism and Vichyism that Giraud perpetuated in his leadership over France, the Americans’ would-be ally. In crafting her argument, Arendt offered a more astute overview of the events leading to Giraud’s announcement than the AJC’s report would outline in June. She made an incisive critique of French leadership and of European settlers in propagating antisemitism in Algeria and seeking to maintain their social supremacy.180 Contradicting Giraud’s warnings of Muslim antisemitism, which he claimed Nazi propaganda had incited, she cited French army officials who scapegoated newly-enfranchised Jews for riots occurring between 1870-1873 and argued that the colonial French presence in Algeria constituted the greatest source of antisemitism.181 She acknowledged the role of French Jewry, as leaders and developers of the Central Jewish Consistory and the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Algeria after the adoption of the Crémieux Decree, played in advancing their country’s imperial agenda through a project of forced assimilation.182


180 David Schroeter notes that despite providing an otherwise thorough historical background, Arendt did not address the Vichy Statut des Juifs which originally abrogated the Crémieux Decree, thus omitting important context about the full egregiousness of her efforts. Schroeter, “Between Metropole and North Africa,” 19-20.

181 Arendt, “Why the Crémieux Decree was Abrogated,” 118.

182 Ibid., 116.
Arendt was indeed well-poised to convince the *The New Republic’s* American audience to change their likely positive opinion of France, their country’s ally against the Nazi menace. She had expert credentials, having published her first English-language article, outlining the systemic antisemitism of the Third Republic, in the American journal *Jewish Social Studies* a year prior. Moreover, she had escaped both Nazi Germany and Vichy France, fleeing to New York in 1941; her refugee status leant her further authority and would have provoked an emotional reaction from her readers. However, Arendt also possessed inherent limits as a scholar educated and brought up in Europe. Echoing Franco-Judaic values, she predicated her argument of Algerian Jews’ right to French citizenship upon the idea that they had transformed into “loyal French citizens” and renounced the personal status she characterized as arcane and despotic. In doing so, she followed regenerativist ideology and constructed French citizenship as an issue of national identity and belonging, rather than mere civil rights, for Algerian Jews. Whereas Muslim Algerians chose to derive their civil rights from the traditional laws and forms of self-governance, Jews participated civically and found political representation through the French political system. Therefore, Arendt concluded, French citizenship could be considered a mere privilege for Muslim Algerians but a fully-fledged right for Jewish Algerians according to the basic principles of “French law, language, and civilization.”

In addition to promoting individuals such as Arendt and Fry as spokespeople for the plight of Algerian Jews, which demonstrated the European- and Holocaust-oriented nature of the activism surrounding the Crémieux Decree, American-Jewish newspapers tended to rely on

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184 Ibid., 117; 122.
185 Ibid.
186 Ibid., 121.
Gaullist French sources for information. These sources, which included French individuals and New York-based Gaullist newspapers like *Pour la Victoire* and *France-Amérique*, parroted French colonial rhetoric which denied Algerian Jewish indigeneity and drew an equivalence between citizenship and cultural and ethnic assimilation. For instance, in denouncing the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, Henri Perrin, a Columbia professor and French scientist, declared without providing evidence, “The word ‘natives’ applied to Algerian Jews is purposely deceitful. The Algerian Jews have enjoyed French citizenship for three generations… they have fully acquired French civilization, they speak French, think and feel as other Frenchmen, they are French.”

Perrin’s assumptive position mirrored that of De Gaulle himself, who declared, “Under the law of the Republic, present-day French Algerian Jews are as much citizens of France as Giraud himself.”

Perrin, ignoring the long history of French antisemitism in Algeria prior to the Vichy takeover, implicitly lauded the effect of French colonialism and civilizing mission on the lives Algerian Jews. At times, this erasure of French antisemitism occurred more explicitly, such as when former French Nationalist deputy Henri De Kerillis placed sole blame for antisemitism in Algeria on the Vichy regime and the evidently impressionable Arab population it had ruled. De Kerillis argued that Giraud’s abrogation could have been justified in March, as he sought to reassert control over Algeria and placate the indigenous population whom the Vichy government had barraged with antisemitic propaganda. However, now that “German guns [no longer]

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thundered on Algerian soil,” the time had come to restore the justice of the French Republic and liquidate antisemitism from Algeria once again.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Securing “victory”**

While French officials and prominent advocates of European Holocaust victims dominated the public awareness campaign surrounding the Crémieux abrogation, negotiation with the State Department continued behind the scenes. Welles responded to Rothschild, Proskauer, and Backer’s initial inquiries with the same basic message: Giraud had abrogated the Crémieux Decree out of concern for ensuring equality among Jewish and Muslim Algerians.\footnote{“Welles Defends Giraud on Jews,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1943, \url{https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1943/03/28/83910953.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0}; Sumner Welles to George Backer, March 24, 1943.}

The subtext of Welles’ justification was that the State Department considered its Arab Appeasement campaign — a key component of its broader pro-democracy efforts — of utmost importance to the Allied war effort in the aftermath of Operation Torch and was therefore loath to risk arguing Giraud’s point.\footnote{Edwin Wilson, the American Representative to the Political-Military Commission at Algiers, summed up the US position when he informed De Gaulle that his government “was not thinking politically about France, but thinking solely in terms of getting on with the war and defeating Hitler.” Edwin C. Wilson, “Memorandum of Conversation, by the American-Representative to the Political Commission at Algiers,” Nov. 10, 1943, \url{https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943v02/d157}.}

On May 17, Proskauer, in line with the arguments presented in the press, responded to Welles with a nine-page truncated version of the longer report on the Crémieux Decree that the AJC would compile by June. He protested that the Crémieux Decree created no discrimination because Algerian Jews, unlike their Muslim counterparts, had voluntarily abandoned their religious customs and traditions in compliance with French law.\footnote{Joseph Proskauer to Sumner Welles, May 17, 1943; “Statement Regarding the Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree,” AJC, May 17, 1943.} The report also tied Giraud to...
his Vichy past and the Nuremberg laws by arguing that he was advancing “racial legislation” through his re-abrogation of the Decree. On May 20, Welles for the first time in his correspondence acknowledged (albeit with some hedging) the antisemitic nature of the Giraud Ordinance. He responded that he was hopeful that the French authorities would soon “remove the last vestige of the belief on the part of the people of the United States that the present French authorities in North Africa have undertaken measures which are Anti-Semitic.”

The correspondence between Welles and Proskauer indicates why the World War II context which pushed the AJC and the other members of the Joint Emergency Committee to take notice of Algeria in the first place may have incentivized them to exaggerate the pro-French colonization position laid out in the AJC’s report, “Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree.” By painting a rosy picture of French rule prior to 1940, both by arguing that Muslim and Jewish Algerians had enjoyed complete equality and full civil rights under the ante quo, Proskauer could more easily convince the State Department that the Crémieux Decree was immaterial to its Arab appeasement campaign. And by pinning the existence of any antisemitism solely on the Vichy regime, he could more easily discredit the former Vichy Giraud whom American Jews considered detrimental to the future of European Jewry.

On October 22, 1943, De Gaulle, having finally ousted Giraud, reinstated the Crémieux Decree. A thankful Joseph Proskauer kickstarted a chorus in the Jewish press, lauding the US Government and the CFLN for their “courageous rectification of an error and humane righting of a wrong.” In his statement on the restoration, Proskauer again echoed universalist

194 “Statement Regarding the Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree,” AJC, 9.
195 Sumner Welles to Joseph Proskauer, May 20, 1943.
197 AJC, AJC President Joseph Proskauer’s statement on the restoration of full French citizenship to the Jews of Algeria (Press Release, October 22, 1943); “American Jewish Committee Lauds Restoration of Cremieux Decree,”
American-Jewish principles. He emphasized that Algerian Jews had earned their citizenship rights because of their identification with and assimilation to France, having “declared their willingness to accept the correlative duties of adherence to French law and social customs.”

And calling the CFLN’s decision a “hopeful augury for the prompt restoration of democracy in all Nazi-occupied territories upon their liberation from the Hitler yoke,” he reiterated the admirable yet European-centered motives of the AJC’s seven-month campaign on behalf of Algerian Jews. A year later, after following up with the CFLN to make sure that the Crémieux Decree was still standing as promised, the AJC declared their mission complete, content in their reassurance that the reinstatement of the Jewish citizenship guaranteed that France would maintain its “traditions of emancipation and equality” devoid of racial discrimination.

Conclusion

In 1943, American Jewish advocates confronted a herculean task, as they attempted to overcome internal divisions and present the only major united front pressuring the US Government and the Allied forces to protect and defend European Jews, all while absorbing the unspeakably traumatic personal and cultural impact of the Holocaust.

In taking a Eurocentric approach — by upholding colonial narratives that French Jews had helped develop regarding the regenerative assimilation of French Jews and the benevolence of the mission civilisatrice — American Jewish activists narrowed the bounds of Algerian and

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199 Ibid.
international Jewish identity. First, they centered Western, Ashkenazi identity in defining a burgeoning diasporic Jewish peoplehood. Second, they divorced Algerian Jews from their Maghrebi roots by characterizing French citizenship as a greater indicator of national and racial identity than a marker of civic rights and responsibilities.

The ideology undergirding American-Jewish advocacy had practical as well as discursive implications. The organizations composing the Joint Emergency Committee ended their campaign as they began it: lacking relationships or investment in Algeria. In leading the Committee’s efforts, the AJC relied on and further developed advocacy networks that included metropolitan French Jewry but excluded Algerian Jews. Moreover, the campaign did not address the roots of the problems facing Algerian Jewry. Instead, it presented Vichy antisemitism as an anomaly and argued that Jews were inherently equal and assimilable by virtue of holding French citizenship, reinforcing the idea of French colonization as a positive force for the Algerian Jewish community. As a result, the AJC declared a premature victory in Algeria, overlooking the oppression that the French Empire had inflicted prior to the Vichy Empire and would continue to inflict in its aftermath.
III. Algerian Jews following the Reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree: Identity and Continued Challenges, 1943-1948

In 1945, Algiers native Ruth Shahar confided to one of her friends that even though the French government had restored their citizenship two years prior, she no longer believed that they, as Jews, were French. Taken aback, her friend, a proponent of Jewish-French nationalism, attempted to convince her that she could still benefit from French citizenship even if she was disillusioned with it as an identity: “Nationality means nothing, wear it like a shirt,” she suggested. “We can’t change nationalities like we change shirts,” Shahar countered, “I’m done. [My Frenchness] no longer exists.”

This painful conversation is only one of many that assuredly took place within the Algerian-Jewish community in the years following the 1940 abrogation, March 1943 re-abrogation, and October 1943 restoration of the Crémieux Decree. The traumatic loss of French citizenship — a right that Algerian Jews had received automatically and that European settlers had worked to overturn for seventy years — demanded a reckoning with the complex reality of Algerian Jewish identities and rights within the French colonial system.

Although they led a seven-month campaign on behalf of Algerian Jews, the AJC and its partner organizations were not privy to such conversations. They did not engage with or prioritize the Algerian Jews for whom they advocated; for this reason, their intervention was insufficient. By recentering Algerian Jewish perspectives on their own identity and their self-advocacy as they attempted to reintegrate and reclaim rights within French colonial Algeria...

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201 Ruth Shahar, interview by Nicole Cohen-Addad, March 11, 2003, digital video file, The Jeff & Toby Herr Oral History Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (henceforth USHMM), Washington DC, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn81497. The interview, like all the interviews this thesis draws from, was conducted in French. All quotes are my translation.
from 1943-1948, this chapter will illuminate the central limits of the American-led campaign to restore the Crémieux Decree in 1943. First, while the majority of Algerian Jews indeed wanted to see their citizenship restored, their identity was more complex than the narrative the Americans propagated, which exaggerated the centrality of nationalism in identity formation and thereby diminished Algerian Jewish indigeneity to the Maghreb. Oral histories of Algerian Jews reveal that French and indigenous identity were not mutually exclusive, as Algerian Jews expressed both simultaneously.

Second, the Joint Emergency Committee only organized an emergency response targeting Vichyism and aiming to restore the Crémieux Decree, not a long-term effort necessary to restore Algerian Jews’ pre-war rights and correct the root causes of systemic antisemitism in French Algeria. Archival records of Jewish Algerian attempts to restore their stolen jobs and property indicate the continued obstacles and discrimination Algerian Jews would face in navigating the French colonial system’s complex and disorganized restitution process.

**Algerian-Jewish identity and indigeneity**

As the previous chapter demonstrated, American-Jewish advocates largely predicated their campaign to restore the Crémieux Decree upon the assumption that adopting French citizenship entailed complete assimilation of Algerian Jewry into French culture and society and the abandonment of their supposedly “backwards” Arab roots.\textsuperscript{202} This approach, borne of a combination of orientalism, political strategy, projecting American- and European-Jewish experiences of antisemitism, and organizational overextension in the midst of an unprecedented crisis, overlooked the true political and ideological diversity within the Algerian Jewish

\textsuperscript{202} *Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree*, AJC, June 1943, 7.

This lapse is unsurprising given the scant evidence either of communication between the Joint Emergency Committee or any of its constituent groups with native Algerians; or of American Jewish news sources covering first-hand Algerian accounts, with the exception of a few elite figures (with a high degree of access to and inclusion in French-Jewish institutions) such as Chief Rabbi of Algeria, Morris Eisband. The bulk of communication that did occur was indirect. Some smaller Jewish newspapers, including the *Reform Advocate* and the *Sentinel*, also relayed sparing *New York Times* coverage of Algerian Jewish leadership. Meanwhile, the Americans’ peer French Jewish institutions, like the European branch of the WJC and the Central Jewish Consistory, relayed the positions of key Algerian Jewish leaders with whom they had preexisting rapports and professional relationships.

In reality, Algerian Jews who lived through the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree possessed a dual identity. On one hand, they considered their French nationality a birthright. In particular, the French public school system ensured that Algerian Jews grew up speaking French and immersed in French values of patriotic devotion and *laïcité* (secularism). On the other hand, Algerian Jews possessed sophisticated indigenous identities, rooted in a local sense of Maghrebi-Jewish peoplehood whose origins predated nationalism. Throughout the dozens of oral histories this thesis examines, interviewees never introduce themselves unprompted as “*juifs algériens*” (Algerian Jews). Rather, they identify themselves according to cities and towns. As Algiers native Julien Zenouda explains, most Jews he knew would not use the adjective

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“algérien” to describe themselves because they identified as French, not Algerian, nationals. Still, they did not introduce themselves as “français,” which implied they were settlers or from the metropole. Rather, they used city-specific adjectives: perhaps they were juifs algériois, constantinois, or bônois (Jews of Algiers, Constantine, or Bône). Emphasizing the highly local nature of Algerian-Jewish identities, several Jews who moved from other parts of North Africa, or even from different cities within Algeria, remember distrusting and experiencing difficulty integrating into the tight knit Jewish communities they discovered in their place of destination.

Because Algerian Jews were a diverse and highly localized population, they expressed and balanced their dual identities in diverse ways. But across the board, the rupture that the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree presented was incapable of erasing their indigenous connection to Maghrebi land and culture, even if it may have necessitated that Algerian Jews become more vocal about French citizenship rights and national belonging. Even the most assimilated sect of Algerian-Jewish society, members of the bourgeoisie living in the largest and most Europeanized cities, recall a continued attachment to a distinct Maghrebi Jewish heritage that predated and could coexist with nationalist leanings.

For example, Josy Adida-Goldberg grew up in a middle-class household in the European quarter of Constantine. Yet even as Adida-Goldberg’s father, Mr. Adida, raised her to speak French, wear Western dress, and listen to European music, he ran the Talmud Torah (technically

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207 Ibid.
under the purview of the French Consistory) in Constantine, which he had established “according to indigenous tradition and maintaining all particularity.” In a poignant expression of the Adida family’s interwoven identities, Mr. Adida’s funeral march proceeded to the tune of Chopin as the Rabbi, as worshippers walked alongside the casket wearing the traditional North African Jewish garb that the AIU curriculum had castigated as “attire of dishonor.”

As in the case of Adida-Golberg’s family, many observant Jews, who often identify themselves in interviews as “traditionalists,” used religious practice and tradition to assert and preserve their indigeneity, resisting the secularizing and Westernizing efforts of the Consistory and the AIU. Like Adida-Goldbergs’s father, Algerian Jewish interviewees seldom refer to their local synagogues according to their official name — as a Consistory branch — but continue to call them Talmud Torahs, the traditional name for congregations prior to the Law of 1905 that reorganized Jewish-Algerian religious institutions. The continued use of “Talmud Torah” reflects the fact that although the French Consistory governed Jewish-Algerian synagogues after 1905, the Algerian religious leaders who ran these institutions and led services day to day did not change. Observant Jews also retained and passed down their proficiency in Judeo-Arabic dialect through religious practice.

Constantine native Mebourah Zerbib recalls that even by the time of his upbringing in the 1930s, his devout parents taught him Jewish prayers in Arabic, which he only learned to translate into Hebrew after attending classes at the AIU.

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213 Zerbib, interview by Frankston.
Further reflecting the particular, localized character of their Judaism, interviewees explain that their coexistence with indigenous Muslims in their communities influenced their religious practice. Claudie Moy of Oran recalls that her father consulted their local mosque to discuss difficult religious questions. Her uncle worked with Arab neighbors in the 1930s to transcribe the Oran Jewish community’s traditional Arab music, which had passed down through oral tradition, and transliterate it into Hebrew. And as Tlemcen native and self-proclaimed traditionalist Marcel Charbit laughed when asked about his family’s kosher observance, “Algerian kashrut is like soup” — all mixed up. Because they often patronized Muslim butchers, Algerian Jews developed unique kosher standards. They incorporated halal customs, such as allowing for an imam rather than a rabbi to bless their meat. Such interfaith activity occurred mutually; Jews whose families owned kosher butcher shops cite Muslim customers as their largest source of business — even throughout the war and Vichy takeover. Zerbib, meanwhile, cries as he remembers the neighbors who used to send his family platters of cakes during Ramadan.

Whether or not they were religious, working class Algerian Jews and those who lived outside of the largest cities with the largest European populations — namely Constantine, Oran, and Algiers — maintained indigenous communal ties through their personal and economic relationships with their Arab neighbors. Butchers, jewelers, merchants, mechanics, grocery store owners, and farmers who relied upon Arab business continued to speak Arabic and teach it to

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214 Moy, interview by Cohen-Addad.
216 Laskar, interview by Frankston.
218 Zerbib, interview by Frankston.
their children.\textsuperscript{219} In smaller towns and cities with more freedom from French governance, Arab, Berber, and Jewish residents were more likely to live among one another instead of in segregated neighborhoods, allowing for casual social interaction. For instance, in Tlemcen the Jewish community gained respect and provided entertainment through their sports club, “Les Fraternels,” while Muslim and Jewish students in the town of Cherchell played together in a local soccer league.\textsuperscript{220}

Granted, the majority of Algerian Jews resided in large cities where the colonial apparatus enjoyed greater — but not total — success in imposing the colonial social order and separating Muslims, Jews, and Christians.\textsuperscript{221} But even in highly-segregated contexts, interviewees hold differing attitudes towards the Arab versus settler populations in their cities. Most describe an ignorance of their Arab neighbors, who knew not to cross certain streets into European and Jewish neighborhoods (unless to provide working class labor, such as housekeeping).\textsuperscript{222} This separation often fomented class tension and distrust. However, the Algerian-Jewish interviewees unite in their fear and resentment of the European settlers whom they identified as the source of antisemitic violence and discrimination.

The antisemitism Jews experienced at the hands of their fellow French citizens colored their sense of Frenchness. On one hand, they aligned with American advocates’ adamant emphasis of their French identity in that their external expression of French national pride

\textsuperscript{219} Charles Malka, interview by Frankston, Oct. 1, 2010, USHMM, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn42308; Zerbib, interview by Frankston;
\textsuperscript{221} According to a 1941 census, the majority of Jews lived in urban areas, where they were more likely to rub shoulders with the European settler population, 80% of whom resided in cities. André Chouraqui, “Algeria,” \textit{The American Jewish Year Book} 56 (1955), 427, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23604899.
\textsuperscript{222} Shahar, interview by Cohen-Addad.
intensified as a rebuttal to increasing antisemitism. But on the other hand, they distinguished their French national identity from that of Europeans. As Julien Zenouda explained, while life in Algiers secularized his family, they never assimilated, because their difference from settlers was clear: “They were French from France, I was French from Algeria. It’s simple.” National unity was impossible in a setting where French colonial governance actively created social fragmentation and settlers “united under the flag of antisemitism.” Here, Algerian Jews departed from the American campaign’s universalist argument that as French citizens, they must “think and feel as other Frenchmen.” They recognized that they shared civil rights with French citizens by virtue of their common citizenship. However, they recognized the sociocultural experiences and identities that distinguished them from settlers and endowed them with a truer, native connection to Algeria.

The Algerian-Jewish response to the Crémieux Decree

Just as Algerians as a whole possessed a multitude of views at the time regarding the best path to achieving rights and liberation from colonial injustice — and because of their diverse experiences with indigeneity and French citizenship — Algerian Jews held diverse views about French citizenship. As a result, the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree elicited differing reactions. Previous scholarship has given voice to some more leftist Algerian Jewish politicians and activists of the 1940s. For some, the abrogation of Crémieux cemented the notion that

223 Ibid.
224 Zenouda, interview by Cohen-Addad.
225 Ibid.
solidarity with Muslim Algerians was a better option than continuing to struggle for rights and acceptance within the French system.

For instance, Dr. Marcel Loufrani and Dr. Elie Gozlan founded *Cercle du Progrès* (Circle of Progress) in the 1930s, a local Algiers-based advocacy organization which advocated Muslim-Jewish solidarity and had sought assimilationist reforms for all Algerians since 1935. For instance, Dr. Marcel Loufrani and Dr. Elie Gozlan founded *Cercle du Progrès* (Circle of Progress) in the 1930s, a local Algiers-based advocacy organization which advocated Muslim-Jewish solidarity and had sought assimilationist reforms for all Algerians since 1935. At the same time, Loufrani and Gozlan were members of the pro-assimilation Comité des Etudes Sociales (CAES), an organization of Jewish intellectuals founded to promote Jewish solidarity and defend Jewish interests during World War I, where they worked to push their colleagues further left. The loss of French citizenship galvanized Gozlan and Loufrani, who continued *Cercle du Progrès’* work with the Algiers Muslim community throughout the Vichy years. At the CAES reunion of 1942, Gozlan declared the Crémieux Decree insufficient and warned against a particularist approach towards restoring Jewish rights, reminding his peers, “For two years, the Muslim people of Algeria have resisted all the campaigns of incitement which strove to pit them against the Jews.” It would be a grave error, Gozlan admonished, for Jews to facilitate the division that their foes so desired advocating only for their own enfranchisement instead of that of the entire indigenous population.

Gozlan and Loufrani had learned from *Cercle du Progrès’* past coalition work with the CAES in support of the Violette-Blum project of 1936 to expand citizenship rights to all Algerians, which had damaged their credibility with Algerian nationalists. In December 1942, Algerian nationalists Ferhat Moufdi Zakaria and Ferhat Abbas questioned the sincerity of Gozlan

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231 Ibid., 102.
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and Loufrani’s support for Muslim-Jewish fraternité, referencing their record on Violette-Blum. Gozlan and Loufrani intensified their message in response, affirming that they would never accept a resolution to the Crémieux scandal that did not also address Muslim rights, heralding a swift denunciation from CAES President Henri Aboulker, who was pursuing cooperative efforts with Gaullists and metropolitan Jewish organizations to restore Crémieux.232 The loss of Aboulker’s support does not appear to have phased Gozlan and Loufrani, whom the Vichy takeover had pushed further left from seeking mere Muslim-Jewish solidarity within the colonial system to an irredentist vision of an indigenous Judeo-Arab state.233 They shared Abbas’ conclusion that the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree demonstrated the inherent unreliability of French citizenship as an emancipatory solution.234

The idea gained some traction: by February 24, a French intelligence report noted that a rival Jewish faction to Aboulker had begun canvassing in Algiers advocating for Muslims and Jews to make collective demands to the French government.235 And by late March, Loufrani had taken a pledge of solidarity not to apply for French citizenship and began hosting banquets to help Abbas recruit sympathetic Jews.236 Indicating Loufrani’s legitimacy and belonging within the Jewish community even as he rejected the particularism inherent in attempting to restore the Crémieux Decree, he managed to convene Zakaria with the Chief Rabbi of Algiers, Maurice Eisenbeth, and Abbas with the President of the Consistory of Constantine, André Bakouche, in

232 Ibid.,106; Intelligence report on Jewish political activity, Algiers, Feb. 24, 1943.
236 YBZ AEP 8705-8711: Monthly report about indigenous activity in the department of Constantine, March 1943.
January and February meetings.\textsuperscript{237} Although Aboulker and the CAES’ agenda ultimately prevailed and irredentism remained a fringe view, Gozlan and Loufrani suggest that Algerian Jewish institutions and communities were not operating within a vacuum, isolated from the broader political changes sweeping Algeria. What may have appeared an easy solution to American Jews — reinstating Crémieux and affirming Jews as Frenchmen once and for all — was actually being negotiated meaningfully and provoking division even within elite, highly Europeanized Jewish institutions and communities.

Further, the CAES was a particularly Algerian Jewish institution, whose very existence emphasized the incompleteness of Jewish acculturation and prioritized Jewish identity and solidarity even as it sought greater rights and inclusion through French nationalism. The political choice to advocate for French citizenship did not entail acculturation and an abandonment of Jewish indigeneity, as the American Jewish Committee suggested in its June 1943 report.\textsuperscript{238} Although Aboulker did not share Gozlan and Loufrani’s universalist views and was more willing to continue working politically within the colonial system, he resisted the AIU and the Consistory’s assimilating efforts and expressed his indigeneity by cultivating Jewish community on his own terms.

Indeed, the rising antisemitism and the French government’s clear complicity in it during the 1930s had reinforced for Algerian Jews the limits to their assimilation for years leading up to the Vichy takeover. Josy Adida-Goldberg, for one, laments the fact that the French did nothing to stop the Constantine Pogrom of 1934.\textsuperscript{239} Likewise, Georges Bouhana, a resident of Oran, discusses the “Pétainist” nature of the pied noir (French settler) population, particularly within


\textsuperscript{238} Abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, AJC, June 1943.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
Spanish and French Alsacian néo communities.\textsuperscript{240} Here, Bouhana references Philippe Pétain, the Marshal of France following World War I who joined forces with the Nazis to become the leader of Vichy France and bore responsibility for the regime’s persecution of Algerian Jewry.\textsuperscript{241} In Bouhana’s mind, the Europeans he lived alongside, who had largely cheered Pétain’s abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, had committed similar (albeit unsurprising) perfidy.\textsuperscript{242}

Nonetheless, the explicit antisemitism of the Vichy regime and the revocation of the Crémieux Decree did not elicit as much shock or panic to Algerian Jews as it may have to outside viewers like advocates within the Joint Emergency Committee. American Jews, after all, were unfamiliar with the continuous reality of antisemitism and disenfranchisement campaigns under French settler rule since 1870, emerging from both the political left and right. By the time the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree caught American attention in 1943, Algerian Jews had already been grappling with intense antisemitism, endemic among the European settlement communities and the local governments they dominated, for decades leading up to the Vichy regime — not in spite of, but precisely because of their French citizenship.\textsuperscript{243}

American Jews framed the problem of Jewish disenfranchisement and structural discrimination as beginning in 1940 with the Vichy menace. Algerian Jews situated the Vichy government in a larger context of continuous settler violence. Algiers resident Sylvain Fitoussi contended that settlers’ tradition of antisemitism caused them to implement Vichy legislation even more harshly than the Vichy government itself enacted in the metropole.\textsuperscript{244} Other interviewees refer to the antisemites that terrorized them during the Vichy years as members of

\textsuperscript{240} Bouhana, interview by Frankston.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{244} Fitoussi, interview by Cohen-Addad.
the *Croix de Feu*, the fascist political group most active in Algeria during the 1930s.\(^{245}\) Rather than importing antisemitic ideology and legislation, Algerian Jews understood the Vichy regime as a convenient cover for settlers to realize their own antisemitic policy goals, including the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree.\(^{246}\) Therefore, the help they may have desired from the AJC and its partner organizations would have entailed harnessing their connections to the US and French governments for a more radical and longer term purpose: holding Charles de Gaulle’s government accountable to restore Jews’ pre-war rights and pressing it to address the roots of antisemitism within the colonial apparatus.

However, the AJC’s ignorance of the history of citizenship and antisemitism in Algeria when it began its 1943 campaign was not the only issue at play. Responding to Algerian Jewish needs after the fact also ran counter to the AJC’s post-war goals and strategies in Europe. As the war ended, organizations like the AJC transitioned from addressing the immediate threat of the Holocaust to focusing on rehabilitation and the resolution of European Jewish statelessness in its wake.\(^{247}\) This effort entailed currying favor with the new CFLN government, both to encourage measures to reintegrate Jews in the metropole and to support the creation of a Jewish state in mandatory Palestine, thereby discouraging casting a spotlight on French, post-Vichy antisemitism.

**Practical challenges to restoring rights, 1943-1948**


\(^{246}\) For example, see Zenouda, interview by Cohen-Addad; Moy, interview by Cohen-Addad; Shahar, interview by Cohen-Addad; Sylvain Moshe Fitoussi, interview by Cohen-Addad, May 12, 2004, Herr Archive, USHMM, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn81490.

\(^{247}\) For AJC recommendations and positions, see Marc Vishniak, *The Legal Status of Stateless Persons* (New York: Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems of the AJC, Nov. 6, 1945); AJC, *To the Counselors of Peace: Recommendations of the American Jewish Committee* (New York, March 1945).
As Algerian Jews understood, the Vichy regime had exploited a pre-existing culture of antisemitism. Therefore, antisemitism would remain a pervasive social force in Algeria long after Operation Torch. The politicians who had laid the groundwork for the Vichy regime of 1940-1942 would continue to populate the ranks of French colonial governance well after Operation Torch. Indeed, Jasmine Laskar, a native of the village of Bou Saâda, recalls that the Pétainists did not begin to disappear from the colonial government until at least 1946.  

Neither the end of the Vichy era nor the restoration of citizenship could guarantee Jewish equality or integration with the European settlement population. What is more, the loss of citizenship and other Vichy anti-Jewish legislation promulgated by the Statut des Juifs had material consequences which required a lengthy rebuilding process even under the best of circumstances. After de Gaulle restored the Crémieux Decree in October 1943, Algerian Jews still faced an uphill battle to reclaim the property and jobs that the Vichy regime had stolen and which the French colonial government and settler populations would resist returning.

The return of Jewish businesses and property from European and French hands held a still deeper socio-political significance than Algerian Jews’ (still critical) practical need to restore their livelihoods and address fascism among European settlers. In the highly-stratified Algerian colonial society, where various naturalized populations competed with one another for limited resources and privileges from the French administration, néos (Italian, Spanish, and Maltesian settlers who immigrated to Algeria and became naturalized French citizens after 1889) enjoyed a higher social status than Algerian Jews (but an inferior one to settlers of French ancestry). Nonetheless, business-ownership and positions in the French administration provided an

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248 Laskar, interview by Frankston.  
249 French citizens in Algeria included naturalized European immigrants, (or néos, predominantly of Maltesian, Spanish, and Italian descent) and native French settlers (or français d’origine), and Algerian Jews.  
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opportunity for social mobility that could make Jewish Algerians more threatening status competitors to the néos. Therefore, the prospect of returning Jewish jobs and businesses would have triggered long-standing status anxieties within both the left- and right-wing European settler communities.

Indeed, the archival record of Jewish requests for reintegration and the return of property demonstrates many Jews continued struggling to assert their rights as citizens of France for years after the restoration of the Crémieux Decree, into the late 1940s. Some sought the return of personal property lost after the passage of Vichy “racial laws” of 1942, while others sought the restitution of their jobs and businesses. On May 15, 1947, Mr. Gaston Allouche wrote to the Prefect of Constantine requesting the allocation of a new work car to replace his Citroën, which military authorities had requisitioned in 1943. Notably, the military had taken the car after Operation Torch, indicating that authorities under Giraud’s leadership continued the Vichy antisemitic policies which had affected Salomon.

While the actions (or inactions) taken in response to many complaints are unknown (such as in the case of Allouche), some petitioners followed up many times over the course of years and garnered attention across several levels of the colonial government. These case files paint a more clear picture of the obstacles stacked against Jewish petitioners, who were faced with single-handedly navigating the sprawling, multi-layered French colonial bureaucracy, daunting in its size, inefficiency, lack of transparency, and willingness to perpetuate antisemitic discrimination. The case of David Boukriss, a resident of Blida who had been ousted from his

251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.
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job as a judicial officer in accordance with the Jewish Statute on December 11, 1942, indicates the magnitude of this challenge.255 Three years after his initial termination, Boukriss sent a complaint to the French Minister of Labor alleging that each time he had secured new employment since the end of the Vichy regime, his employer had summarily fired him.256 In doing so, Boukriss’ superiors cited mysterious “obligations” of which he knew not the source.257

Boukriss’ complaint travelled between several layers of the colonial administration before he received a response. The Minister of Labor referred the matter to the Minister of the Interior, who referred it to the Plenipotentiary Governor of Algeria. The Governor informed the Minister of the Interior several months later that Boukriss had been restored to his job at a new posting in Saida after the Decree of June 5, 1943 reversed the Vichy-era work restrictions against Jews.258 Located over 360 kilometers from his original posting in Miliana, Boukriss’ “reintegration” into the workforce would have further disrupted his life by requiring that he move to a new community and environment. This forced move exemplifies continued hardships that Jewish civil servants endured — even the relatively lucky ones who regained employment — beholden to the French government to restore their pre-war positions after the Vichy regime ousted 80% of them.259

However, the Plenipotentiary Minister explained, the local Justices of the Peace had raised complaints upon Boukriss’ arrival about his work performance. Many of the complaints these settler officials levied were vague and ad hominem, including the allegation that he had a

257 Ibid.
258 ANOM 81F 849: Le Ministre Plénipotentiaire Gouverneur Général de l'Algérie au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 4 Mars 1946.
poor attitude and that he had demonstrated intent to refuse to complete his assigned work.\textsuperscript{260} The Justices’ two more specific complaints were that Boukriss had sought bribe money from a farmer for a favorable verdict and that he had sought reimbursement for transportation costs that he had not incurred.\textsuperscript{261} The Minister provided no evidence to support these claims, which align with stereotypes of Jews as greedy thieves and money grubbers that wartime economic troubles in North Africa exacerbated.\textsuperscript{262} Shedding further doubt on the validity of these allegations — and indicating state complicity with local settler antisemitism — the French government officials who responded to his inquiries refused to provide him with any reasons for his termination.\textsuperscript{263} In persistent and increasingly frequent correspondence between 1945 and 1947, Boukriss repeatedly demanded answers to no avail.\textsuperscript{264} When the Minister of the Interior finally responded to Boukriss he did not include a reason for denying the request, claiming that he was not at liberty to inform him further on the matter.\textsuperscript{265}

Alexandre Stora experienced a similarly protracted and vexing process as Boukriss when he requested rights to reintegration into his former role as the contractor of local markets in Khenchela, a \textit{commune mixte} in the Department of Constantine, and indemnity for his losses.\textsuperscript{266} While Stora was able to regain ownership over one of the stores in January 1944, the Tribunal of Constantine had continued to grant Vichy sympathizer Louis Brusset control over two of his other shops, the Edgar Quinet and Zoui markets, citing a contract signed during the Vichy regime.

\textsuperscript{260} Le Ministre Plénipotentiaire Gouverneur Général de l’Algérie au Ministre de l’Intérieur, 4 Mars 1946.  
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{262} Simon, \textit{The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa}, 248.  
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{265} ANOM 81F 849: Ministre de l’Intérieur à David Boukriss, 2 Mai 1947.  
\textsuperscript{266} ANOM 81F 849: Alexandre Stora to G. Couture, June 9, 1945.
that was not set to expire until 1956. Similar to Boukriss, whose request traveled between several levels of colonial governance across the metropole and Algeria before it received any answers, the correspondence regarding Stora’s requests exposes the way that bureaucratic inefficiency slowed the process of reintegration for Algerian Jews. In sum, Stora’s case involved the Governor General of Algeria, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Finances, the Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria, the Prefect of Constantine, the Commissioner of the Interior of Algiers, the Civic Chamber of Constantine, and the Administrator of Khenchela between 1943 and 1945. Such back-and-forth helps explain the slow process of reintegration for Algerian Jews. Beyond that, it demonstrates that the inefficiency and unwieldiness of a many-layered colonial bureaucracy could enable and prolong the discriminatory activity occurring on the ground in Algeria.

Another significant aspect of Stora’s case is that he solicited help from allies in the metropole. Jean Pierre-Bloch, the Assistant Commissioner of the French Minister of the Interior and a member of the International League against Antisemitism (LICA), communicated with the Algerian government on Stora’s behalf in November 1945. It was only after Bloch brought the case to the attention of the higher-ranking French authorities that Stora was allowed to have

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267 Prefect of Constantine to Algerian Director of the Interior, Sep. 10, 1944; Alexandre Stora to the Chief Administrator of Khenchela, May 4, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to Algerian Minister of the Interior, Jan. 1, 1945.

268 ANOM 81F 849: Minister of the Interior to the Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria, Sep. 22, 1945; Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Finances, June 30, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to the Minister of the Interior, Oct. 31, 1945; Bordereau d’envoi de pièces, Office of the Minister of the Interior, Oct. 31, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to Commissioner of the Interior of Algiers, Sep. 22, 1945; Prefect of Constantine to Plenipotentiary Minister, Sep. 10, 1944; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to the Prefect of Constantine, Dec. 18, 1943; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to the Minister of the Interior, Oct. 26, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to the Minister of the Interior, June 4, 1945; Prefect of Constantine to the Governor General of Algeria, May 18, 1945; Stora to the Administrator of Khenchela, May 4, 1945; Minister of the Interior to the Minister of Finances, March 31, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria to the Minister of the Interior, March 4, 1945; Minister of the Interior to the Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria, Feb. 10, 1945; Plenipotentiary Minister of Algeria the Governor General of Algeria, Jan. 11, 1945.

another hearing before the Tribunal of Constantine on July 21, 1945, after two years of back-and-forth. This time, the Tribunal found Brusset guilty of continued Vichy activity, stripped him of his electoral privileges, and reinstated Stora’s rightful ownership.270

Stora’s reliance on LICA for help speaks to the long-standing connection and advocacy efforts that the metropolitan organization had cultivated, in partnership with not only the CAES but also local Muslim organizers, following the Constantine Pogrom of 1934.271 Both the AJC and the French government’s files on disenfranchised Algerian Jews lack evidence that Algerians reached out to American advocates, despite the seven-month advocacy and media campaign that the Joint Emergency Committee had waged on their behalf. This silence in the archival record testifies to the Americans’ failure to establish substantive communication and relationships with the community that constituted the theoretical focus of their efforts.

Stora was not the only person to seek support networks outside of Algeria to navigate the grueling process of integration and hold the French government accountable. V. Montefiore, a Tunisian-Jewish merchant with Italian citizenship living in Algiers, got the Italian embassy to intervene on his behalf.272 Montefiore sought justice after two Christian individuals had demanded ownership over his shop in 1942; when he refused, the Vichy Aryanization Service appropriated his commercial goods and incarcerated him in an internment camp.273 Although the Vichy sympathizers and collaborationists who formed the more local rungs of the Algerian colonial government often had the biggest impact on Algerians’ daily lives and freedoms, the

273 V. Montefiore to the Director of Registration of Algiers, June 19, 1948.
metropolitan French government did outrank them. If an individual possessed important connections outside of Algeria, the archival record shows that they could leverage those relationships to contact the metropolitan French government and more easily (albeit slowly) overcome the obstacles they faced.

This trend of Algerian engagement with a broader Jewish international network makes the Americans’ absence from these files more conspicuous. The American government, as the de facto leader of the Allied powers, continued to exert enormous control over France for the duration of the war and its aftermath. If LICA, a French-Jewish watchdog organization, suddenly commanded enough respect in 1945 Paris to prompt interventions by the Ministers of the Interior and Finance in the decision of a civil tribunal — much less the Italian embassy in 1948, a mere three years after the fall of Mussolini — then American Jewish organizations, with proven ties to the Roosevelt Administration, would likely have commanded influence.

In turn, the lack of continued attention on the plight of Algerian Jews is striking, especially given that French Jews — with whom American advocates did have partnerships — were continuing to organize through organizations like LICA, albeit less publicly than surrounding the Crémieux Decree.\textsuperscript{274} Despite the fact that reinstating the Crémieux Decree was only the first of many necessary steps for Algerian Jews struggling to rebuild their former lives and derive rights through the French colonial system, the Americans heralded it as a victory and refocused their efforts solely on Europe. Political strategy drove this blind eye towards ongoing Algerian persecution. First, as the previous chapter outlined, a central component of the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{274} Of course, French Jewish organizations also played politics; following the reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree, they declined to advocate for Mzabi Jewish inclusion in French citizenship, despite local calls for such reform, because of its potential to be strategically damaging to their relationship with the French government. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, \textit{Saharan Jews and the Fate of French Algeria} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 107.}
American advocacy campaign had been the narrative that citizenship was that since the passage of the Crémieux Decree in 1870, Algerian Jewry had become Frenchmen; that they had fully desired and that French society had fully welcomed and acculturated them, unconditionally and without significant controversy. Therefore, they asserted French citizenship as a guarantor of rights within the colonial system for Algerian Jews.

Further, American Jewish organizations — waging war against the worst atrocity committed against the Jewish people in modern history — were not developing long-term approaches, but more likely (as the Joint Emergency Committee’s name would suggest) addressing emergencies as they arose. This problem speaks to a core unintended consequence of attempting to engage in advocacy for a hitherto unfamiliar community within the global Jewish diaspora. World War II had placed severe resource strains on the AJC and its partner organizations, and they had not allocated sufficient time or energy to establish meaningful relationships and partnerships in Algeria or to continue due diligence after the glaring problem of the revocation of citizenship had been resolved. As it was, American-Jewish organizations were struggling to maintain unity on their priorities; four days after the reinstatement of Crémieux, the American Jewish Committee withdrew from the American Jewish Conference, an umbrella organization of American-Jewish organizations and institutions, in protest of “the subordination of other Jewish issues to the problem of the political structure of Palestine.”

This controversial decision fractured relationships between advocates who had united for the Crémieux campaign,

275 “American Jewish Committee Leaves American Jewish Conference; Zionist Members Resign,” *JTA*, Oct. 26, 1943, https://www.jta.org/1943/10/26/archive/american-jewish-committee-leaves-american-jewish-conference-zionist-members-resign. It should be noted that the AJC did not object to Zionism, but rather the prioritization of Zionist aims while the Holocaust was still occurring. Other American Jewish entities opposed Zionism at the time on the basis of such concerns as buying into the antisemitic racialization of world Jewry. For example, see “Rosenwald, Wolsey Attack Political Zionism in Cincinnati; Neumann, Heller Reply,” *JTA*, May 28, 1944, https://www.jta.org/1944/05/28/archive/rosenwald-wolsey-attack-political-zionism-in-cincinnati-neumann-heller-reply.
prompting three leaders within the AJC to resign and four smaller organizations to disaffiliate from the AJC the same day. 276

The American advocates’ lack of follow-through testifies to the fact that the fight for the Crémieux Decree was less of an investment in the Algerian Jewish community than it was a continued aspect of their struggle to halt antisemitic regimes like the Vichy government and to aid European Jewry. In February of 1945 the AJC Committee on Peace Problems indicated its awareness that two years after the reinstatement of French citizenship, “procrastination and malice” had prevented full reintegration of and justice for Algerian victims of the Vichy regime. 277 Yet needling de Gaulle over this problem may have jeopardized progress in the metropole, where Jews had benefited more substantially from the new government’s anti-Nazi and anti-Vichy reforms. 278 As a result, as late as 1950, the American Jewish Committee had made substantial headway with and investment in French Jewry by establishing a Paris office there in 1947. 279 This office, the first the AJC established outside the US, marked a turning point in the AJC’s becoming a global role and presence. Yet the AJC acknowledged that it had yet to establish meaningful local relationships in Algeria and claimed that it would prefer to allow Algerian Jewish organizations to continue their internal advocacy efforts independently.

276 The individuals who resigned included David de Sola Pool, President of Hadassah, and two former Presidents of the Zionist Organization of America, Judge Morris Rothenberg and Judge Louis E. Leventhal; the organizations who disaffiliated included the Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Service, the Order Sons of Zion, the Independent Order Brith Abraham, and the Free Sons of Israel. “American Jewish Committee Leaves American Jewish Conference; Zionist Members Resign,” JTA; “Fraternal Groups Leave the American Jewish Committee; Minneapolis Federation Resigns,” JTA, Oct. 31, 1943, https://www.jta.org/1943/10/31/archive/fraternal-groups-leave-american-jewish-committee-minneapolis-federation-resigns.


278 Ibid., 6.

Conclusion

“I don’t know how the absorption of my father’s family into the mystical body of France was carried out… I asked [my father], ‘Is it a good thing?’ [He responded], ‘We were swept up; the future carried us away.” - Denis Guénoun, *Un Sémite* 280

In June of 1943, the AJC wrote a report about the Crémieux Decree and the nature of Jewish-Algerian citizenship that did not quote a single Algerian Jew. Instead, they invoked Adolphe Crémieux and his argument that Jewish Algerians could secure emancipation by shedding their indigeneity to the Maghreb. 281 This thesis began by asking, and has addressed, how that report may have looked different had it centered Algerian Jewish voices instead.

The answer, of course, is neither satisfying nor clear-cut because the Algerian-Jewish community did not speak with one voice. At its core, this thesis has challenged the persistent myths that the Algerian-Jewish community was homogenous and that the Crémieux Decree nullified Algerian-Jewish indigeneity. The AJC and the Joint Emergency Committee readily believed and propagated these myths over the course of their seven-month campaign. In reality, the generalizing category of “Algerian Jewry” represented many different communities. These communities ranged from the segregated, Europeanized capital city of Algiers, to smaller towns like Bougie and Cherchell where indigenous Jews, Berbers, and Muslims could interact more freely. 282 As the oral record illustrates, Algerian Jews were diverse in their political leanings, Jewish practice, economic class, occupation, and attitudes towards their Arab neighbors. They included religious leaders and proud proponents of secularism; Arabic-, Judeo-Arabic, and

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282 Azoulay, interview by Frankston; Allouche, interview by Cohen-Addad; Moy, interview by Cohen-Addad.
French speakers; farmers, butchers, storeowners, merchants, mechanics, and soldiers. They adopted a wide variety of tactics to preserve and assert their Maghrebi heritage, as well as to secure safety, civil rights, and inclusion as subjects and citizens of French Empire.

The Joint Emergency Committee’s 1943 campaign to restore the Crémieux Decree essentialized Algerian Jews’ Frenchness. Yet Algerian Jews’ nationality was only one element of the complex identities that formed through their lived experience in Algeria. The rich diversity of Algerian Jews’ perspectives and experiences meant that their indigeneity and their relationship with French citizenship manifested differently from person to person. Many indeed considered French citizenship a birthright and a source of pride. For others, citizenship was merely a benefit to be worn “like a shirt” and harnessed to derive economic advantages, civil rights, or safety in the context of colonialism.283 Either way, French citizenship did not negate the indigeneity of the Jewish communities who had lived and thrived on the land of Algeria alongside other Maghrebi peoples since antiquity.

French citizenship did represent a shared experience and identity that linked the otherwise highly particular Jewish communities of Algeria. The universal reception of French citizenship after 1870 required all Algerian Jews to negotiate systemic antisemitism and forced assimilation. As Chapter One demonstrated, Jewish enfranchisement disrupted the rigid colonial hierarchy and triggered status anxiety among French and néo settlers. Socialist movements, peaking in the 1890s, and right-wing movements, gaining steam in the 1920s and 1930s, systematically built colonial political systems entrenched in antisemitism. By 1940, Algerian Jews already possessed deep experience with and trauma from systemic exclusion,
disenfranchisement, and antisemitic violence. The Vichy abrogation of the Crémieux Decree in 1940 realized not only Nazi but also settler goals.

The French civilizing project inculcated the indigenous Jews of Algeria in French values of secularism and patriotic loyalty. French Jewish institutions led this mission on behalf of their country as they pursued their goal of “regenerating” and emancipating their Algerian coreligionists. Organizations like the Consistory and the AIU attempted to assimilate Algerian Jews into secularized, Jewish-French culture. But even for those who secularized and embraced French culture, the continuous reality of antisemitism under French rule prevented Algerian Jews from total assimilation into France.

This thesis has shown that the American-led advocacy campaign was, from its origins, an endeavor that centered upon the Holocaust and political circumstances in Europe. As Chapter Two discussed, the AJC’s campaign allied itself with French-Jewish proponents of the regenerative project and upheld the conventional French narrative that the colonial project and the mission civilisatrice in Algeria positively impacted and uniformly assimilated Algerian Jews. They also described French citizenship in universalist terms that projected American Jewish political ideologies onto Algerian Jewry. Over the course of a seven-month lobbying campaign, the American Jewish Committee and the Joint Emergency Committee consistently centered the voices of French-Jewish Holocaust and French Gaullist advocates in lieu of Algerian Jews.

These narratives and tactics were necessary for the AJC and its allies to apply pressure on the US and French governments and to maintain their influential political ties during the war and in its immediate aftermath, as the Joint Emergency Committee attempted to rescue and rehabilitate European-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The crisis response that the AJC and the Joint Emergency Committee formulated to help their European brethren was effective and
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answered dire need. However, along the way, Algerian Jews became collateral damage as the Joint Emergency Committee swept their cause of citizenship up in its Holocaust advocacy. The international menace of World War II introduced Algerian Jewry to the AJC and its allies for the first time. Realistically, the Americans simply did not possess the networks, flexibility, or know-how to combat the Holocaust while simultaneously forging new partnerships in Algeria.

Chapter Three highlighted Algerian voices in order to demonstrate the ways that the Joint Emergency Committee’s campaign misrepresented Algerian-Jewish identity. Algerian Jews resisted assimilation, and ultimately occupied a middle position between Frenchness and indigeneity. Algerian Jews showed agency in their own identity formation by adopting myriad strategies to preserve and affirm their indigenous ties to the land and cultures of Algeria. Observant Jews sustained their distinctively Maghrebi religious heritage and practices. And of course, the Consistory and the AIU could not confine Algerian Jews to Jewish institutions and communal life; they continued to interact socially and economically with indigenous Muslim and Berber neighbors, speak Arabic, and pass down indigenous culture within their families.

Further, Chapter Three demonstrated that the American advocacy campaign did not engage with or understand the complex reality of Algerian-Jewish history and therefore did not respond to Algerian Jewish needs. In oral testimonies, Algerian Jews demonstrate consensus in castigating European settlers — as opposed to the short-lived Vichy regime or the Muslim and Berber indigenous population — as the source of antisemitism and the greatest threat to their civil rights and citizenship. The struggles that Algerian Jews faced demanded long-term advocacy, not just emergency aid in the context of wartime. Had the AJC or other organizations within the Joint Emergency Coalition worked to formulate a longer term response and
engagement with their Algerian brethren after the immediate emergency of Crémieux’s abrogation, they may have been able to better serve Algerian Jewry.

To achieve true enfranchisement and freedom from discrimination, Algerian Jewry needed allies to press the French government to address the root causes of antisemitism in French Algeria. Certainly, Algerian Jews who struggled to restore their pre-war livelihoods, property, and rights between 1943 and 1948 could have benefited from the continued vigilance of influential international allies like the AJC. Unfortunately, criticizing French colonialism and exposing the legacy of antisemitism that transcended the Vichy regime conflicted with the AJC’s efforts to curry influence with the Allied governments and to reduce the devastation of the Holocaust upon European Jewry.

This study of advocacy by and on behalf of Algerian Jews surrounding citizenship rights from 1943-1948 leaves much room for further study. For one, this thesis did not examine the particular case of the Berber Jews of the Mzab region, to whom the Crémieux Decree did not apply and who continued to live under Mosaic Law, like the rest of the indigenous Algerian population, following the reinstatement of the Decree in 1943.284 A next step to this examination of American and Algerian Jewish advocacy surrounding the Crémieux Decree would be studying Mzabi Jewish self-advocacy during the French citizenship reform efforts from 1944-1947, as well as the efforts of international Jewish actors —including the AJC and its affiliates —after about 1949, when they “discovered” the cause of Mzabi Jews and attempted to convince them to move to Israel.285

This case study has exemplified the limitations inherent to emergency aid by faraway Western organizations who—despite a common diaspora heritage and religion—did not sufficiently establish relationships with or a nuanced understanding of the community they aimed to serve. The AJC not only assumed that Algerian Jews held monolithic views towards citizenship and identity; in relying upon French Jews to inform their 1943 campaign it subsumed Algerian Jewry within Ashkenazi French Jewry. Their advocacy prioritized European Jewishness, erased the indigenous Maghrebi character of Algerian Jewish peoplehood, and excluded Algerian Jews from nascent diasporic coalitions.

These trends would further solidify in the aftermath of World War II and the Crémieux affair, as the AJC further developed institutional ties with metropolitan Jews but that excluded Algerian Jewry. The story of advocacy surrounding Algerian-Jewish enfranchisement illustrates the rippling international impact of French colonialism upon its Jewish subjects’ identity formation and belonging beyond the borders of Algeria and the metropole, as Western Jewry dominated the global Jewish identity and solidarity that emerged in response to the atrocities of the 1940s.
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