

Conscription, Citizenship, and French Algeria

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Abstract:

This paper questions why the Third Republic of France imposed conscription on Muslim Algerians in 1912. This action is peculiar because conscription was a tenant of French citizenship, which the French thought that Muslim Algerians were too inferior to have. A politician named Adolphe Messimy, the members of the Third Republic in control of the government in 1912, and a group called the Young Algerians convinced France to contradict its laws and beliefs to impose conscription. They did so because the self-interests of all three groups met at one moment in time and wanted conscription. This paper meticulously explains the motives of Adolphe Messimy, the Third Republic, and the Young Algerians to explain why each agreed to conscription. This research fits into the broader schematic of French Algerian history because it argues that Algeria, in part, gained its independence in 1962 due to the imposition of conscription in 1912.

Introduction:

When France invaded and colonized Algeria in 1830, the French government did not intend to immediately make the indigenous Muslim Algerians French citizens. Instead, France made them French subjects governed by both French and Koranic law. The French exempted Muslim Algerians from conscription. Conscription was a duty of French citizenship, and the French thought that Muslim Algerians were too inferior to be French citizens.¹ However, in 1912, the French government imposed conscription on the Muslim Algerians, while still keeping their legal status as subjects of the French Empire. This research focuses on why the French government searched for loopholes in its own laws and contradicted its own beliefs in order to impose conscription.

This paper discusses the way the French government imposed conscription on Muslim Algerians without granting them citizenship. It also examines how France refused to acknowledge the ideology of equality, liberty,

and fraternity for Muslim Algerians. With its colonies, France neglected to uphold the beliefs it had held in high regard since the French Revolution. This research adds to the discussion of colonial history because it demonstrates the contradictions of French colonial thought. France thought Muslim Algerians were too inferior to be citizens, but it conscripted them anyways. This research also explains how France dealt with these contradictory thoughts in order to achieve its aims. Adolphe Messimy (1869-1935), the Third Republic of France (1871-1940), and the Young Algerians (1907-c.1923) convinced France to impose conscription on Muslim Algerians in 1912 because of their respective self-interests.

Historical Background:

Under orders from Charles X of the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830), France invaded Algeria in 1830. Charles X thought that the conquest of new territory would pacify France and prevent revolution, but it

¹ Edward Behr, *The Algerian Problem* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1961), 30; Jacques Bouveresse, *Un parlement colonial? Les Délégations financières algériennes 1898-1945:*

L'institution et les hommes (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2008), 798.

did not work.² France conquered new territory, but Charles X lost his throne. Later, the French empire annexed Algeria in 1834, and then officially made it a part of the French administrative system in 1881.³ Algerian resistance against the French takeover collapsed after 1860, except for a few major revolts in 1864, 1870, and 1871.⁴ The revolts of the nineteenth century remained in French memory for the remainder of French Algeria's existence, and underpinned every official interaction between the imperial power and its colony after 1871.

France designed Algeria as a settler colony. The French government encouraged European peasants to move there with promises of free grants of land; though, the government neglected to mention that it had taken the land from the indigenous Algerians. The French government ruled in Algeria only to satisfy the desires of the settlers, known as the *colons*.⁵ Thus, it lost any respect from the average Muslim Algerian it may have received otherwise. The government also satisfied the *colons* by restricting Muslim Algerians to work only in the agricultural sector; whereas the *colons* were in charge of the industrial sector.⁶ This policy allowed *colons* to prosper, while Muslim Algerians found themselves restricted economically and politically.

The Ministry of the Interior in Paris appointed, at the top level, a Governor-General, who governed Algeria. France divided the colony into three *départements* which corresponded to the three major cities:

Oran, Algiers, and Constantine. France then divided the *départements* into districts and county councils. The French government used a system of indirect rule, where French officials controlled the tribal chiefs who governed the Muslim Algerians.⁷ Each *département* only had one representative in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris. Muslim Algerians occupied about one third of the possible representative seats in their local governmental bodies, while *colon* representation made up the other two thirds.⁸ The lack of representation added to the feeling that France ruled over every aspect of life for the Muslim Algerians. The French-Algerian relationship was one of French dominance over the colonized. This is demonstrated by the French refusal to allow them any right to a say in their own governance. In 1913, Adolphe Messimy, who was the Minister of War at the time, summed up the governance of Algeria with the statement, "We do not govern the indigenous people, we command them."⁹

Being a Muslim in French Algeria:

By the start of World War I, five million Muslims lived in Algeria.¹⁰ Only those Muslim Algerians who had applied for French citizenship were citizens.¹¹ French law governed Muslim Algerians, but they had the right to be tried in Muslim courts for non-criminal cases and the right to be governed by Koranic Law. These rights were known as the

² Ferhat Abbas, *Le Jeune Algérien* (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1981), 11.

³ Peter Dunwoodie, "Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance in Francophone Algerian Writing of the Interwar Years," in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia M.E. Lorcin (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 68.

⁴ Anthony Clayton, *The Wars of French Decolonization* (Essex, England: Longman Group UK Limited, 1994), 26.

⁵ Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria*, trans. Michael Brett (London: Hurst and Company, 1991), 57 and 81. The settlers were from France, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Cyprus.

⁶ Behr, 34.

⁷ Clayton, 27; Ageron, *Modern*, 29; Behr, 39-40.

⁸ The Third Republic of France, *La Loi du 9 décembre 1884, portant modification aux lois organiques sur l'organisation du Sénat et l'élection des Sénateurs*; Cherif Benhablyès, *L'Algérie française vue par un indigène* (Algiers: Imprimerie Orientale Pontana Frères, 1914), 119.

⁹ Adolphe Messimy, *Le Statut des Indigènes Algériens* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1913), 36.

¹⁰ The term "Muslim Algerians" refers to the Arab and Berber populations in Algeria.

¹¹ Bouveresse, 797.

statut personnel.¹² In the *Sénatus-Consulté* of July 14, 1865, the French government decreed that Muslim Algerians were French subjects, and could only obtain French citizenship through an application process. There are important differences between being a subject and being a citizen. A French subject, in Algeria, was governed by both French and Koranic Law, but did not have the right to vote. A French citizen, on the other hand, was governed solely by French law, and all male citizens could vote.

The Decree of October 24, 1870 and the Law of February 4, 1919 defined the application process for citizenship. The former said that the Muslim Algerian applicant must be twenty-one years old and must be able to produce a birth certificate to validate his age. The 1919 Law made the process for citizenship much more difficult. In addition to the 1870 Decree's criteria, the applicant could obtain citizenship if he had never been hostile to France, if he served with distinction in the military, if he had a naturalized-indigenous parent, or if he held a public position in Algeria. The Law of February 4, 1919 also instructed the Governor-General to conduct an investigation to verify the information in the application. If the claims were true, the applicant would become a French citizen. However, the principal condition for obtaining French citizenship was to give up one's right to the *statut personnel*. The average Muslim Algerian did not want to be French, and keeping the *statut personnel* allowed him not to be. Due to this sentiment, only thirteen hundred Muslim Algerians applied for citizenship by 1914, and, by 1936, only

twenty-five hundred had applied out of a population of five million.¹³

Muslim Algerians were the only indigenous group France barred from French citizenship. The French government had granted citizenship to Jewish Algerians, indigenous and *colons*, in 1870. Furthermore, the French *colons* and their descendants, known as *pied-noirs*, were guaranteed French citizenship at birth. France also automatically granted non-French European settlers citizenship. That left Muslim Algerians as the only population in the colony that did not automatically receive French citizenship at birth. They were the only group that had to apply for it individually. In contrast to the other groups, France did not grant Muslim Algerians citizenship because it saw them as inferior. They were inferior because they were not European and Christian.

As part of their governing strategy, the French pursued a policy of assimilation. This was an imperial policy for justifying the occupation of Algeria by claiming that France was civilizing the indigenous population. Assimilation was the French colonial ideology that Muslim Algerians would eventually become culturally French through exposure to French settlers and French schooling. The principal example of assimilation was the city of Algiers where the Arab architecture of the Casbah mixed with the architecture of the French port.¹⁴ The French attempted to assimilate the population by requiring that Muslim children go to Arab-French schools, and by requiring that French be the official language of the colony.¹⁵ In France, children learned that Algeria had been a part of France since 1830 just like Brittany had been part of France since 1491.¹⁶ However, the

¹² Behr, 38.

¹³ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 27; Clayton, 27; Behr, 38.

¹⁴ Vincent Duclert, "La France Coloniale," in *La République Imaginée: 1870-1914* (Paris: Belin Litterature et Revues, 2010), 567.

¹⁵ Ageron, *Modern*, 42.

¹⁶ Behr, 38.

assimilation policies only worked on a small population of educated Muslim elite in Algeria. Some members of this elite formed the pro-French group called the Young Algerians.

Despite the ideology of assimilation, the French still treated the Muslim Algerians as inferior subjects. Due to the Muslim Algerian revolts against France in 1870 and 1871, the French government introduced *Le Code de l'indigénat* in 1874, added to it in 1881, and modified it again in 1890.¹⁷ *Le Code de l'indigénat* gave the French officials in Algeria the power to fine or imprison Muslim Algerians without trial if they accused them of subverting law and order.¹⁸ *Le Code* highlights the repressive measures against Muslim Algerians, which affected seven to eight thousand Muslims each year. The Young Algerians made the dissolution of these repressive measures one of their conditions for accepting the imposition of conscription.

Adolphe Messimy and the Third Republic:

From 1871 to 1900, France rebuilt its army because it needed to remain a world power after the “cruel disasters of 1870-1871,” meaning the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁹ France was in the process of reforming its army at the turn of the century because a number of politicians—who were children during the Prussian defeat of France in 1871—began to gain political power and were eyeing Germany with apprehension. Two such politicians were Adolphe Messimy and Raymond Poincaré, who were the

Minister of War and the president of France at the beginning of World War I, respectively.

The Franco-Prussian War resulted in a defeat for France and the loss of the Alsace-Lorraine territory to Germany. After this defeat, many politicians delivered anxious speeches about Germany, worried that it would invade again. Messimy himself wrote that the French military’s *raison d’être* was to be an instrument of vengeance against Germany. He wrote that if the French army was not reformed and another war with Germany occurred, France would lose disastrously.²⁰ Poincaré also reflected this sentiment by writing that a country must be ready to defend itself.²¹ Both gentlemen wanted a strong army to defend France against invasion from Germany. However, Messimy was the more vocal of the two because he had a plan to alleviate this fear.

General Adolphe Messimy began his political career in 1902 as a representative for Paris in the Chamber of Deputies. He ended that same career as the Minister of War at the end of August 1914. He was the Secretary of the Naval Budget in 1903, the Secretary of the War Budget from 1905 to 1906, the Minister of the Colonies from March 1911 to June 1911, and the Minister of War from June 1911 to August 1914.²² Messimy’s work with the war budget and as the Minister of the Colonies persuaded him that Germany was a threat to France, and that Muslim Algerian conscripts could augment the French army.

Imposing conscription on Muslim Algerians was not a new idea. Several generals and a commander had suggested imposing

¹⁷ Jean-Claude Vatin, “L’Algérie des Français,” in *L’Algérie Politique Histoire et Société* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1938), 133.

¹⁸ Ageron, *Modern*, 53.

¹⁹ Joel A. Setzen, “Background to the French Failures of August 1914: Civilian and Military Dimensions,” *Society for Military History* 42, no. 2 (April 1928), 87; Raymond Poincaré, “Military Service,” in *How France is Governed*, trans. Bernard Miall (London: T. Fisher UnWin, 1913), 359.

²⁰ Adolphe Messimy, “Réorganisation nécessaire de L’Armée: Au Lendemain du Vote de la Loi de Deux Ans,” *La Revue Socialiste* 39, no. 234 (June 1904), 701 and 698.

²¹ Poincaré, 355.

²² “GEN. MESSIMY DIES,” *The New York Times* (New York), September 1, 1935; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens Musulmans et la France: Volume 2* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 1071-1072.

conscription in 1845, in 1857, in 1864, and in 1881, but the government did not consider the idea viable until Messimy began proposing it in 1907.²³ Known as *Le Projet Messimy*, Messimy's plan was to conscript Muslim Algerians because he reasoned that Algeria could supply seventeen thousand soldiers to augment the army.²⁴ Messimy supported his project by writing that France and its colonies could create a robust army, and easily surpass Germany in terms of manpower.²⁵ Messimy's fear of Germany invading again was his incentive for imposing conscription on Muslim Algerians. His fear explains why he continued pursuing the project until it came to fruition in 1912.

In 1909, the Chamber of Deputies, the French legislative branch in France, started earnestly discussing conscription. Once Messimy pointed out that most of the objections to imposing conscription were coming from Germany, the military authority supported the plan.²⁶ The discussion of *Le Projet Messimy* highlights the extent to which Messimy and the Third Republic feared Germany. It also emphasizes how both thought it was in their self-interest to prepare to counter any invasion from next door. In 1911, a month after Messimy became the Minister of War, he attempted to create three battalions out of non-voluntary Muslim Algerians, but, since the Chamber of Deputies did not agree to this plan, the government stopped him.²⁷ About six months later, the Third Republic released the Decree of January 31, 1912, and then the Decree of February 3, 1912.²⁸ Both imposed conscription and specified the method of recruitment for Muslim Algerians. On February 24, 1912, the

Governor-General of Algeria received instructions on how to implement the decrees.²⁹

Just like that, France implemented an idea that had been floating around since 1845 due to its anxiety over the rising, threatening, military presence just across its eastern border. Messimy's and the Third Republic's fear of another defeat if Germany decided to invade was their incentive for imposing conscription. However, the government in Paris did not discuss granting the Muslim Algerians citizenship in return for conscription. It is probable that Messimy and the government thought that the Muslim Algerians would not ask for any sort of compensation. They were wrong.

The Young Algerians:

According to Cherif Benhabylès, a member of the Young Algerians, the Decrees of January 31 and February 3, 1912 "provoked a great emotion in all of Algeria."³⁰ Ferhat Abbas, another Young Algerian, wrote that many resented the imposition of conscription because the French government asked Muslim Algerians to fight for French soil, which, for many, was a place they had never even seen.³¹ After the announcement of the decrees, many Muslim Algerians fled to places such as Syria in order to avoid being drafted.³² The historian does not explain why they chose to go to Syria. It is assumed that they saw Syria as a better place to live than French Algeria. The newspaper, *Le Rachidi*, echoed the anger of those who remained when it wrote, in response to the decrees,

²³ Bouveresse, 797; Messimy, *Le Statut*, 27.

²⁴ Bouveresse, 797.

²⁵ Adolphe Messimy, *Notre Œuvre Coloniale* (Paris: E. Larose, 1910), 49; Messimy, *Réorganisation*, 703.

²⁶ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1069-1070.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1072.

²⁸ Bouveresse, 802; The Third Republic of France, *Le décret du 3 février 1912: Décret relatif au recrutement des indigènes algériens*.

²⁹ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1073.

³⁰ Benhabylès, 117.

³¹ Abbas, 38.

³² Bouveresse, 799.

“No military service without compensation.”³³ The acquisition of political compensation for military service would become the formal occupation of the Young Algerians. This was the root of their incentive to agree to accept conscription.

In 1907, two assimilated Algerians known as Sadek Denden and Khélil Kaid Layoun founded the Young Algerians in Bône, Algeria.³⁴ Soon, the group grew throughout the colony to include other assimilated, culturally French, elite Muslim Algerians, such as Dr. Benthami Ould Hamida. Dr. Benthami studied in Montpellier and had obtained French citizenship in 1906 despite the rigorous bureaucratic application process. He then became a municipal counsellor in Algeria in 1908 and was re-elected in 1913. Lastly, he was the head of the Young Algerians sometime before the group faded out of existence in the 1920s.³⁵

The Young Algerians wanted the right to vote granted to all Muslim Algerians who had a French education. They were also in favor of assimilation. Lastly, they agreed with *Le Projet Messimy* because conscription would help to assimilate Muslim Algerians by making them, at least nominally, equal to their French counterparts.³⁶ The principal goals of the Young Algerians were equality through political reform with the French and assimilation for all Algerians. These goals set the Young Algerians apart from the rest of the population because only French-educated Algerians wanted to become French. However, the rest wanted to remain Arab and wanted freedom from French occupation.

On June 8, 1912, the Financial Delegation of Algeria voted to send a delegation of Young Algerians led by Dr. Benthami to Paris

to demand political compensation for Muslim Algerians peacefully accepting conscription.³⁷ Messimy presented this delegation to a committee headed by Poincaré. The Young Algerians gave their demands, known as the Young Algerian Manifesto, to this delegation. They demanded raising the minimum age of conscription from eighteen to twenty-one, reforming the repressive regime against Muslim Algerians, actual representation for Muslim Algerians in the governments of Algeria and Paris, and equal taxation so that Muslim Algerians did not have to pay more than their French counterparts.³⁸ Lastly, the Young Algerians asked the government to grant Muslim Algerians the rights of citizenship, such as the right to vote, without legally making them French citizens. This was attractive to Muslim Algerians because they were able to keep their *statut personnel* and experience the benefits of citizenship. These demands were given as part of the exchange between the Young Algerians, Messimy, and the Third Republic for Muslim Algerians to peacefully accept conscription.³⁹ Though the Young Algerians did not threaten to revolt against the French, the fear that Algerians would revolt was always present in French minds. The angry reaction from Muslim Algerians to the decrees imposing conscription frightened the French. So, although the Young Algerian delegation never vocally threatened to revolt against the French government, there was a perceived threatening tone.

Messimy made a special report to the Chamber of Deputies on July 2, 1912 asking the Chamber to accept the manifesto, while also insisting to the Young Algerian delegation that they peacefully accept military

³³ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1041.

³⁴ David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 232; Ageron, *Modern*, 77.

³⁵ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1049-1050.

³⁶ Prochaska, 233; Ageron, *Modern*, 77.

³⁷ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1041.

³⁸ Benhabylès, 118.

³⁹ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1042.

service.⁴⁰ The Third Republic then agreed to the Young Algerians' demands. The government issued the Decree of September 19, 1912, which removed the repressive administration measures, such as the *Code de l'indigénat*.⁴¹ It later issued the Law of July 15, 1914 that planned to remove all repressive measures after five years, but it still allowed the French officials in Algeria to watch anyone who they thought were suspicious.⁴² The demands were agreed to, but the government postponed implementing them until after World War I. For example, the government did not implement equal taxation until 1919, but then it ended this reform a year later.⁴³ The Third Republic postponed granting Muslim Algerians the right to vote for over two decades. In 1936, it seemed likely that Muslim Algerian males would be granted the right to vote, but the bill was rejected. They did not secure the right to vote until their independence from France in 1962.

The combined self-interests of Adolphe Messimy, the Third Republic, and the Young Algerians resulted in the imposition of conscription on Muslim Algerians and their acceptance of it. The fear of Germany by those in political power in France created the need to conscript Muslim Algerians, while the Young Algerians used this need to achieve some political reforms. France imposed conscription on Muslim Algerians, but it did not grant them full French citizenship, per the Young Algerians' request. This was because the French thought that Muslim Algerians were inferior and the Young Algerians knew that Muslim Algerians would not accept conscription if they had to give up their *statut personnel*. The decision not to grant full citizenship is extraordinary because the

French government achieved its interest of augmenting the army, and the Muslim Algerians were promised the political rights of French citizenship without being forced to give up their right to be governed by Koranic Law. It is also astonishing that the Young Algerians had equalized, at least on paper, the Muslim Algerians and the French. The imposition of conscription seemed to have benefitted everyone. At least, so it seemed in 1912.

World War I:

According to Messimy, conscription incorporated 2000 Muslim Algerians into the army by 1913 on the contingent that there would be 45,000 young men fit for service each year after.⁴⁴ However, the other sources consulted do not confirm if this occurred. By August 1, 1914, about 4000 conscripts were in the army. They were called *tirailleurs*, meaning infantrymen, in order to differentiate them from the French troops.⁴⁵ When World War I began in August 1914, Germany invaded France and nearly made it to Paris. France managed to hold off Germany, but the price was a standstill on the Western Front with trench lines rarely moving for the next four years.

The sources consulted do not say if any of the Young Algerians served in the war. Even so, Algeria provided a total of 173,000 soldiers, including Muslim Algerians and *pié-noirs*. However, it is not discernible as to how many died. Charles-Robert Ageron, the premier historian of French Algeria, says that about 25,000 Muslim Algerians died, while Ferhat Abbas, a Young Algerian and an Algerian nationalist, claimed that 80,000 died.⁴⁶ Abbas also claimed that Algeria sent

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1075 and 1045.

⁴¹ Bouveresse, 803.

⁴² Ageron, *Modern*, 78; Bouveresse, 796.

⁴³ Ageron, *Modern*, 73 and 80.

⁴⁴ Messimy, *Le Statut*, 9.

⁴⁵ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1077; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Historie de l'Algérie Contemporaine: Volume II* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 256. *Tirailleurs* refer to the infantrymen from the French African colonies.

⁴⁶ Ageron, *Modern*, 78; Abbas, 38.

250,000 men, both Muslim and *pied-noir*, to the war, so his numbers are most likely wrong. Abbas is also probably wrong because his claim came from a political essay that he wrote with the purpose of demonstrating French mistreatment of Muslim Algerians. This bias probably contributed to inaccuracy in his estimations.

Despite the discrepancy in statistics, dying in a war fought to defend France's liberty scarred the Muslim Algerians. France demanded that its colonial troops defend the liberties of the right to vote, the right to equal representation, equality, and fraternity. France and other European powers denied these liberties to their colonial subjects. Forcing colonial troops to fight for liberties that they did not have was one of the reasons for the birth of nationalist and anti-colonial movements in the mid-twentieth century.

Messimy's military career in World War I was short-lived. He was the Minister of War at the start of the war, and tried to speed up the mobilization of colonial troops to counter the rapidly advancing German army.⁴⁷ Unfortunately for him, the Third Republic removed him from office because it made him the scapegoat for the failure of the French strategic plan (Plan XVII) to stop the Germans. As some form of compensation, the government gave him command of the 162nd Infantry Division, which he held until 1919.⁴⁸ He appears to have removed himself from the political sphere after the war because he did not hold an elected office after 1919. Messimy was one of the driving forces for imposing conscription, but his participation in the government diminished after passing the Decrees of January 31 and February 3, 1912.

World War I ended with a victory for the Third Republic over Germany. However, it

ended in a loss for the Young Algerians, who disappeared as a group by 1923. The Young Algerians disappeared because only one demand from their Manifesto was met. The group demonstrated that reform was almost impossible. The group dissolved because Algerians started to become discontented with a French regime that would not reform, despite a colonial delegation asking it diplomatically to through its own imperial language. France attempted equal taxation in 1919, but then terminated the policy in 1920.⁴⁹ The Third Republic reintroduced *Le Code de l'indigénat* in 1920 and made it more repressive in 1922.⁵⁰ This demonstrates the failure of the Young Algerians to make France stop its oppressive measures against Muslim Algerians. The Young Algerians failed to achieve their goals of giving Muslim Algerians the political rights of French citizenship. Even worse, the application process to become a citizen became more restrictive with the introduction of the Law of February 4, 1919. This restriction aided in the dissolution of the Young Algerians because the law dissuaded people from wanting to become French. This was because becoming a French citizen was no longer worth the effort the application process took. It also added to Algerian discontent with the French regime and with the Young Algerians for failing to achieve any sort of reform through nonviolent protest.

"It is evident that the long battle of Messimy had only succeeded in a mediocre result and the conscripts were not yet even a handful," Ageron argues.⁵¹ Ageron claims that *Le Projet Messimy* had a mediocre result because France only conscripted about five thousand Muslim Algerians out of a population of five million. However, I argue that *Le Projet Messimy* did not succeed because

⁴⁷ Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1962), 149-150.

⁴⁸ "GEN. MESSIMY DIES."

⁴⁹ Ageron, *Modern*, 73 and 80.

⁵⁰ Ageron, *Modern*, 80.

⁵¹ Ageron, *Les Algériens*, 1077.

it cannot be determined if the addition of Muslim Algerians to the French army actually helped France during the war. I think that France and Germany would have been at a near standstill no matter how large their respective armies were. This is because the military commanders did not account for the tactics of trench warfare and modern weaponry to result in mass slaughter, nor did they change their strategies in the face of this killing. The military commanders continued to command their soldiers to charge at the enemy's trench, which responded with machine gun fire. This strategy resulted in massive casualties, but the commanders did not stop making their soldiers charge. It is possible that if both France and Germany had smaller armies, the war would have ended sooner. No one else would have been left to throw at the enemy to die in no man's land.

The Third Republic betrayed both Messimy and the Young Algerians after imposing conscription. Messimy was the scapegoat for the government because Plan XVII did not prevent the German army from besieging Paris in the first few weeks of the war. The Third Republic removed him from political power, and then he retired from politics after 1919. The Young Algerian delegation led by Dr. Benthami left Paris in 1912, assured that its Manifesto's demands would be met. Save for one, they were not. The Third Republic did not seriously implement any of the promised political reforms, except for the trial run of equal taxation, but even that only lasted a year. The Third Republic did not grant the political rights of citizenship to Muslim Algerians. Thus, it seemed that peaceful talks could not bring about reform nor equality.

Nonetheless, the Young Algerian delegation achieved something remarkable. They explained their concerns and demands to their imperial power by using the legal

language of France. Even more extraordinary, the members of the imperial government listened to the delegation, instead of dismissing and ignoring it. However, France did not implement the promised reforms. This failure of the Third Republic to keep promises demonstrated to Algerians that peaceful protests could not create reform, let alone equality for Muslim Algerians.

Military service in World War I profoundly affected the Muslim Algerians. The 1920s saw the creation of anti-colonial and nationalistic movements in nearly all of the colonies that had served in the war, no matter to which empire the colony belonged. The colonies after both world wars changed because they had seen the supposedly-superior and civilized Europeans slaughter each other. Significantly, the imperial powers told the colonial troops that they were fighting to defend the liberties that the powers denied to them. These three things were the basis for the anti-colonial movements and decolonization that occurred in the mid to late-twentieth century. The anti-colonial movement in Algeria, known as the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), used armed resistance against France starting in the 1950s. This led to the bloodiest instance of decolonization in Africa, known as the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). In 1958, in the middle of the war, France granted Muslim Algerians, as a whole, unconditional French citizenship. It was too little, too late. In 1962, Algeria achieved its independence from France due to the FLN's effective guerrilla warfare. The FLN owed its creation to the experiences of those who had fought in the world wars, which occurred *en masse* due to Messimy, the Third Republic, and the Young Algerians imposing conscription on Muslim Algerians in 1912.

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