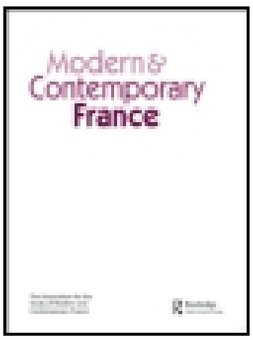

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Antiracist memories: the case of 17 October 1961 in historical perspective

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Abstract

This article examines the causes and subsequent cover-up of the massacre of Algerians by French security forces on 17 October 1961, and assesses the place and symbolic importance the memory of this massacre has come to occupy within Algerian immigrant communities and antiracist groups since the 1970s. These groups have actively campaigned for official recognition of the extent of and responsibility for the massacre. Finally, the article reflects on the way in which the 17 October massacre is often discussed in relation to Vichy, and the ambivalent conclusions which can be drawn from this in relation to France's coming-to-terms with its colonial past.

The idea of a *devoir de mémoire* is commonly heard in contemporary France, most frequently evoked in relation to Holocaust memory.[1] However, antiracist groups have, over the past 20 years in particular, also called on French society to come to terms with its colonial past. The pivotal event which, for campaigning groups, links previous forms of racism to present hostility towards Maghrebi migrants and their descendants in particular,[2] is the massacre of between 50 and 200 Algerians by French police and *gendarmes* on and around 17 October 1961, during and after a demonstration by the main Algerian nationalist organisation, the Front de libération nationale (FLN).[3] The Algerians were protesting on 17 October against a night curfew placed on them by the Paris prefect of police, Maurice Papon—Papon's idea being to stop both FLN attacks on security forces, and undermine fund-raising in the cafés. Police tactics against this peaceful demonstration of around 25,000 men, women and children, were to arrest 11,538 people. Those killed that evening and over the following days were shot, beaten, tortured or drowned in the Seine or canals, in both central Paris and the outskirts, their corpses dumped or placed in anonymous graves. The other protestors detained were eventually released, or 'repatriated' to detention centres in Algeria.

This article does not seek to offer a detailed history of the massacre, nor of the state cover-up, already amply covered elsewhere.[4] Rather, while studying aspects of

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the causes of the massacre, it concentrates on how the initially successful state cover-up slowly gave way to greater visibility from the late 1970s onwards, due to the campaigning by antiracist and immigrant-based groups focusing on the memory of 17 October. Illustrating Richard Terdiman's definition of memory as 'the modality of our relation to the past',[5] these groups' counter-memories denounce the past and present forms of physical and symbolic racial violence, be that from the police, judicial system or general public—all implicated, in albeit different ways, in the 17 October massacre and its subsequent cover-up. The history of this specific memory therefore offers an interesting perspective on historical remanence, on the modes of transmission of social memory within migrant and solidarity groups, and the politically marginal place such groups have occupied. By historicising memory, it is possible to see the changing social and political significance of the same event within antiracist discourses over a 40-year period, an event which, it will be argued, remains overshadowed in many respects by the legacy of Vichy.

How was such a massacre possible?

Any explanation for the Paris massacre has to come to terms with several overlapping time scales in order to understand how the effects of colonial ideology were reworked into the French decolonising context. From this perspective, the exceptionality of the Paris massacre was simply that it took place in metropolitan France. The wide-scale killing of French colonial subjects and citizens in the colonies and dependent territories (often in the context of political opposition to French rule) was a well-established feature of French colonial governance, as attested by Sétif (1945)[6] and Madagascar (1947),[7] to name only postwar examples. From the 1920s onwards, French fears that the growing numbers of Algerian migrants would be attracted to Algerian nationalism and/or Communism, had given rise to police surveillance, political repression involving mass round-ups, and, in the press, a discourse of criminalisation.[8] From 1947 onwards in particular, police, army and (apparently) more benign social welfare measures reflected tactics prevalent within Algeria,[9] and there was a considerable transfer of key colonial personnel between Algeria and France. Therefore, the colonial functionaries who came and went across the Mediterranean brought prejudices with them in addition to the policies they implemented. As a police report as early as May 1947 succinctly put it, '[...] le problème nord-africain dans la Métropole est devenu non plus une question de prévention mais une question de répression'.[10] Furthermore, security forces opened fire on the Algerian section of the Paris 14-July march in 1953, thus providing an eloquent example of the violence inflicted on Algerians *before* the outbreak of the war. This resulted in seven dead, six of whom were Algerian, guilty of holding aloft Algerian nationalist banners. During the ensuing parliamentary debate, Algerian *député* Abdelkader Cadi asked: 'Pourquoi la police perd-elle son sang-froid en présence d'Algériens? [...] pourquoi cette différence de traitement?'[11] These already high levels of hostility and security-force violence towards Algerians would be exacerbated from 1954 onwards.[12]

Public indifference to such developments was not total. The French organisation

that was most consistent in its denunciation of policing methods was the Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et pour la paix, or MRAP, founded in 1949 as an extension of communist-affiliated Jewish Resistance groups.[13] MRAP activists highlighted the continuity of state racism from Vichy to the Fourth and Fifth Republics. For the MRAP, while it may have been easier for police officers to 'spot' an 'Algerian' in 1958 than a 'Jew' in 1943,

> [...] les erreurs sont toujours possibles : un de nos amis, instituteur, israélite, nous signalait l'autre jour qu'il avait été arrêté à la sortie du métro dans une rafle d'Algériens. La forme de son visage l'avait rendu 'suspect': l'inspecteur sans doute s'était trompé de quelques années.[14]

The parallels the MRAP established with previous forms of racism would become a central theme of subsequent memory activism, as we shall see. The Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques (MTLD), the FLN and other Algerian-based organisations also mobilised against police violence and official and media stereotyping,[15] as did the Secours populaire français, Trotskyist and anarchist groups, *porteurs/porteuses de valise*, anticolonial collectives and the Parti socialiste unifié.[16] However, these groups—which would show solidarity with Algerians after the massacre—were very marginal within the Left, divided among themselves, and had little mass appeal. Social relations outside the workplace between French and Algerian workers were limited.[17] The FLN decision to undertake military operations in mainland France in August 1958 brought a further deterioration of the situation, as did the continuing internecine conflict between rival nationalist factions. In response, Papon was installed as *préfet de police*. Papon brought over the *harki* police units in 1960, and used his extensive experience of *pacification* in Constantine (1956–1958). The inability (or reluctance) of senior police officers to control the anger of their uniformed officers faced with armed FLN attacks, was also a major factor.[18] In moving to demonstrate against a curfew, which was severely disruptive of its organisation and fundraising, and to recapture the symbolic space of the capital, the FLN drew a terrible official response.[19] De Gaulle was wary of appearing weak in order to placate the pro-*Algérie française* lobbies, and also wanted to maintain a strong bargaining position when negotiations would eventually resume with the Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne.[20] The massacre was therefore the result of long-term and seemingly 'normalised' repressive governance, public indifference and antipathy, and short-term conjunctural factors linked to the late war period.

The immediate aftermath

Maurice Halbwachs suggested that if an event were accorded wide importance at the time and could 'constitute an event' ('faire événement'), only then would that event thereafter be inscribed within a group's collective memory.[21] In fact, the massacre constituted an event in this Halbwachsian sense only for the Algerian communities and those solidarity groups previously described (and in different ways), rather than throughout French society. This helps to comprehend how and why the massacre was

to disappear from the memory of many political parties and individuals within the space of only a few months, and how it would require the deliberate, campaigning cultivation of memory for it then to be transmitted more widely throughout society.

Many reasons explain the difficulty of ensuring that the memory of 17 October remained alive. The main sites where the killings took place were dispersed in the suburbs as well as in central Paris, some in closed spaces such as the Palais des sports. In addition, many bodies were thrown into the Seine or canals, thus rendering problematic the choice of a particular memory site on which to focus commemorations. One refers to a date—17 October (although the killings were spread over several days)—rather than a specific place, as is the case for the Charonne massacre. The official removal of bodies to unmarked graves further complicated any possible commemoration.[22] There was a well-established security force policy of 'anonymising' those Algerians it had killed, removing all distinguishing papers and belongings. [23] As David Le Breton suggests, 'il est socialement absurde de concevoir des hommes sans visage dont on puisse se souvenir'.[24]

Various other tactics were successfully deployed in the cover-up. First, the official narrative was that violence had been started by Algerians, that the security forces had acted in self-defence, and that there were three victims, not more. Second, through censorship and repression, the state prevented the widespread dissemination of testimonies that compromised the official version.[25] Third, even those high-ranking civil servants critical of police tactics, such as Michel Massenet, head of 'social services' for Algerians, refused to publicise their unease.[26] Fourth, Papon managed to block the judicial enquiry into the deaths by opening criminal investigations.[27] Longer-term factors include the unanimously voted amnesty legislation and selective access granted to archives.[28] This deliberate occultation should also be seen within the wider process of organised forgetting that covers the War in its entirety, a process no doubt aided by the lack of many of the memory frameworks (*cadres sociaux de la mémoire*) that form the essential structural, conceptual elements of space, time and language shaping predispositions to remember or forget.[29] Jean-Pierre Rioux has underlined the absence of a single memorial site either in France or Algeria, or of any clearly definable dates with which historical actors could identify, the result being a fragmented memory of the Algerian War across and within a whole range of social groups.[30] It is only since the law of 10 June 1999 that the Algerian War has been officially qualified as such.[31]

However, the need for active state intervention to cover up the massacre stemmed from protests that did occur. Broadly speaking, most dissent came from far-left and anticolonial groups. The mainstream Left was experiencing endemic disunity due to the Cold War, over what attitude to adopt regarding de Gaulle, and the linked question of how best to support French withdrawal from Algeria. Well aware that the official death toll was false, but in line with the broader mainstream consensus which de Gaulle was building on Algeria, the Groupe parlementaire socialiste decided not to protest forcefully, and the *Bureau national* of the PSU of 18 October regretted the 'quasi impossibilité de faire un véritable meeting commun' owing to disunity on the Left.[32] Relatively small-scale demonstrations did take place in Paris and elsewhere, the largest, on 20 October, comprising 1500 Algerian women and children.[33] Of the

32 protests linked to 17 October, 20 were composed entirely of Algerians.[34] Anticolonial and antiracist student and teacher groups protested where possible, but lacked the 'relais organisationnels susceptibles de soutenir un grand mouvement de masse'.[35] Some everyday forms of solidarity—so rare on 17 October itself—did therefore subsequently occur, both in the workplace and outside.[36]

Opposition groups used two main discursive themes. The first of these—that repression in Algeria had been transported to France—was already in wide circulation within anticolonial and antiwar groups.[37] For example, *Les Temps modernes* wrote: 'née à Alger, la "ratonnande" s'installe à Paris'.[38] As the MRAP had been doing for a decade, a second, more controversial theme highlighted the similarities between police tactics during the Vichy period and those now being used against Algerians. A petition published in *Les Temps modernes* drew a direct parallel between the Algerians held in the Palais des sports after 17 October and those Jews imprisoned at Drancy prior to deportation: 'entre les Algeriens entassés au Palais des sports en attendant d'être "refoulés" et les Juifs parqués à Drancy avant la Déportation, nous nous refusons de faire la différence'.[39] *Esprit* disagreed, declaring it 'inutile […] de pratiquer des assimilations historiques'.[40]

The growing historiography of the late period of the Algerian War contrasts these low-key reactions to 17 October with reactions to the killing by police of nine protestors (eight of whom were PCF members) at the Charonne metro station on 8 February 1962.[41] However, the undeniable 'discriminatory sympathy' in operation does not explain everything: the political context in February 1962 was different from that of October 1961. During the intervening period, the mainstream Left had unified temporarily around opposition to the OAS, campaigned for an end to the War and against repressive police tactics at anti-OAS demonstrations; however, the massacre may well have acted as a catalyst in the widening of a revolt against what the state was doing in the name of its citizens.[42] The general strike of 13 February 1962 to mark the burial of the Charonne protestors constituted the largest political demonstration in Paris since February 1934. Charonne clearly did 'constitute an event' *à la* Halbwachs. After Charonne, the Left could refer to both the 1930s and the recent anti-Poujadist antifascism. In addition to being a well-known métro station, Charonne was at the heart of the Left's symbolic space, between *République* and *Nation*.[43] In contrast, there was no well-established tradition of republican antiracist campaigning against colonial racism, with easily identifiable dates, themes or well-known key figures that could have provided an ideological anchorage for moral protest after 17 October. The PCF was to subsume the memory of 17 October within the memory of Charonne, and socialist groups did not challenge such a representation. Jacques Panigel's underground film *Octobre à Paris*, shot in 1962, was a rare example of Vichy, 17 October and Charonne being brought together, closing with the narrator saying: 'La porte se ferme sur l'Algérien. Mais ne partez pas! Le 17 octobre continue! La porte va se rouvrir/C'est sur nous qu'elle rouvre! Sur nous qui ne sommes pas des bicots, qui n'étions pas des youpins, il y a vingt ans!'[44]

How and why the underground memory resurfaced

Before examining how and why the massacre's memory would invest the public domain, it is necessary to consider both the question of memory transmission, and the socio-political factors explaining the receptivity of individuals and groups to a given memory and the messages this carries.[45] In the case of the Paris massacre, two main aspects of memory transmission are studied. First, transmission within Algerian communities in France since 1961 across the generations. Second, the groups' ability to transmit this memory 'horizontally' to other, non-experiential groups, in order to create solidarity through what Halbwachs called a 'mémoire empruntée'.[46] The term 'memory vectors'[47] will be used to refer, for example, to immigrant rights groups, antiracist groups, far-left groups and their mobilisations and publications which, in the absence of any official memory vectors, have spread these 'oppositional' forms of memory.[48]

In Algeria, 17 October is the *Journée nationale à l'Émigration*. However, the massacre's importance in post-independence Algeria has fluctuated. The decimation the repression brought to FLN structures, the rapid resumption of negotiations, and the fact that over the war period this massacre was one of many examples of repression, have, at times, ensured little visibility for the massacre.[49] Similarly, the FLN single-party state held an ambivalent attitude to Algerian migrants in France, and wrote out from the history of Algerian nationalism the Messalist current (Mouvement national algérien) to which many Algerians in France were attached until the late 1950s. A more pluralist history of the war has been tolerated since the 1980s.[50] The pro-FLN Amicale des Algériens en France marked the 25th anniversary of 1961 by calling for a 'mémoire solidaire [et] conviviale' between the French and Algerian peoples.[51] The memory of 17 October as carried by the Algerian migrant communities and antiracist and immigrant-rights associations has therefore had to negotiate a space between the negation of the French state, and those dominant memories provided by the Algerian state (evoking the memory partially and inconsistently) and the mainstream French Left, which subsumed the memory within antifascism.[52]

For Algerians in France during the period until the mid-1970s, the major vector of memory transmission was the family. The survival of this private, familial memory is all the more remarkable, given the many factors proper to emigration that have affected memory transmission across the generations: geographical mobility and uprootedness; rehousing away from *bidonvilles, cités de transit* and inner-city districts which could have constituted memory sites; the return of migrants to Algeria due to labour rotation, redundancy, retirement or deportation; intense socio-economic disadvantage; and lack of access to cultural resources in the French context. More generally, Algerian migrants sometimes do not speak openly of the hardships endured.[53] Some parents probably deliberately shielded their descendants from knowing the full horrors of the massacre.[54] Silence is, of course, not the same as forgetting. As for many migrant communities, it was often the most politicised Algerian parents who transmitted the memory to their descendants.[55] Those familial memories are not homogeneous. While the massacre is usually remembered for the

severe physical, emotional and economic consequences the repression brought, for some 17 October is remembered more positively, as an example of self-affirmation in the public sphere of a previously marginalised community; or, for some Algerian women, of a spatial and political visibility from which they were often excluded.[56]

Neither formalised, closed or institutionalised, the memory of 17 October was available to be used by Algerians and other racialised groups as a strategic resource in their opposition to racism in France from the early 1970s onwards, first by the pro-Maoist Mouvement des travailleurs arabes (MTA), which brought together manual workers and students from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria in particular. The MTA campaigned against the racially motivated killings of Algerians in Paris and Marseille from 1971 onwards.[57] The MTA's protest against the killing in police custody in Versailles of Algerian Mohamed Diab, led the MTA organisers to route their (banned) protest demonstration of 16 December 1972 along that area of the Grands Boulevards where the police had fired on protestors on 17 October 1961.[58] Aware of the different political context since 1961, the organisers nevertheless drew a parallel with the continuing high levels of racism and socio-economic precariousness faced by Algerians. The march on the Justice Ministry started from '*Bonne nouvelle = le cinéma Rex*—où les Algériens avaient rougi les pavés de leur sang en octobre 1961. […] Cet appel permettait de faire pleins feux sur les horreurs que connaissent aujourd'hui aussi les immigrés'.[59] Campaigners refused to allow the victims of racial attacks to sink into anonymity, contrary to what had happened in previous decades.[60] However, it was in the early 1980s that antiracist and immigrant-based associations attempted more systematically to invest the public domain with the memory of the massacre.

Some former MTA activists, along with the descendants of Algerian migrants raised in France, formed the autonomous counter-cultural Sans frontière (SF) media project (1979–1985) which, through its publication of the same name, was the first main vector of 1980s memory activism.[61] SF brought together the two closely linked themes within which memory of the massacre remains inscribed today. First, within calls to re-evaluate the memory of past and present migrations to France and, second, within campaigns against racial violence. With the official ending of primary migration in the post-1974 period, and the fading 'myth of return' once harboured by many migrant parents, most of the descendants of Algerian migrants conceived of their futures in France rather than elsewhere and therefore sought to understand better their parents' trajectories. These factors helped explain both the significance of, and the increased receptivity to, the theme of memory among Algerian migrant communities and other racialised groups.

Sans frontière sought to remind all young people active within the autonomous antiracist movements of the period 1980–1985, that their action should be situated within a long-established tradition of political activism and defence of rights of racialised groups. Unlike many of their parents, however, SF activists possessed the cultural capital to express demands in the French public sphere.[62] SF challenged media images (but also the views of some younger participants in the 1983 *Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme*) that the parents' generations had been submissive and fatalistic.[63] SF therefore looked to create intergenerational solidarity between

migrant parents and their descendants. In 1984, SF activist Farid Aïchoune, after a spate of racist murders of young people of Maghrebi origin, declared: 'de la tuerie du 14 juillet 1953 au massacre du 17 octobre, en passant par les assassinats de Maghrébins ces dernières années, la même haine semble traverser les générations, à travers certaines couches de la population'.[64] Memory was thereby used as a 'narrative of resistance' to racism, and a focal point of the search for an identity politics in the face of an increasingly hostile media and political discourse on the theme of 'immigration' from the late 1970s.[65]

The relevance of the massacre to groups outside as well as within the Algerian communities is arguably explained by the fact that its memory fulfils a metonymic function, representing, in condensed form, many of the aspects of racism in contemporary France. These include the daily manifestation of the racist gaze in the 'picking out' by police of racialised groups for identity checks.[66] This, in turn, has led to the denunciation by these young people of their being considered as a 'corps-cible'.[67] Furthermore, when there is a racially motivated killing or attack, the police officer or other perpetrator usually escapes what the victims consider to be full justice, or the police or courts fail to recognise the racial intent behind the crime.[68] Rather as the cause of *L'Algérie française* had done during the Algerian War, the emergence of the Front national (FN) has crystallised and given greater confidence to the various racist constituencies within French society. SF's antiracist counter-memories articulate the composite nature of contemporary racism which blends both novel and long-standing ideologies and practises reworked in a new historical context.[69] These memories of racism help to bring together diverse racialised groups configured as sharing a 'community of suffering'[70] in relation to racism, and who demand equality, social justice, and increased citizenship. Memory thus has a 'transversal' function,[71] creating solidarity across national, ethnic and class identities, especially where the massacre is evoked as but one of a range of instances of state violence to have affected different groups. For example, SF insisted on the need for the massacre to be remembered alongside Charonne: both were part of a colonial history with which French society had yet to come to terms. As Aïchoune write: 'le sang des uns ne peut laver celui des autres, nos racines sont sanguinolentes—et la mémoire ne peut faire son choix [between 17 October and Charonne]'.[72] The Mouvement des droits civiques (MDC) held its 17 October commemoration at Charonne in 1990.[73] A collective linked to the 1984 antiracist social movement Convergence '84 pour l'Égalité advocated mobilising 'autour de l'histoire et des commémorations de dates permettant de reconstituer une mémoire collective. Exemples: 8 mai 1945 (massacre de Sétif), 17 octobre 1961 (massacre des Algériens à Paris), 16 juillet 1942 (rafle des juifs au Vél d'Hiv), date de proclamation de la commune et d'autres dates à trouver qui permettent l'ouverture à d'autres communautés […]'[74] These examples illustrate Tzvetan Todorov's call for memory to be used to comprehend the sufferings of other groups, rather than simply to reflect inwardly the preoccupations of one's own group(s).[75] Crime writer Didier Daeninckx draws out these links in *Meurtres pour mémoire*, where Vichy is figured alongside 17 October, the linking chain being a thinly disguised equivalent of Papon.[76]

These developments within antiracist campaigning in the decade 1980–1990 were

contemporaneous with the growth in unofficial public memories of the Algerian War, helped by the democratisation of access to media resources.[77] Another significant factor was the growing openness on the mainstream Left to (re-)examine 17 October. Many former far-left activists rejoined the Parti socialiste (PS) and re-infused the PS with the memory of 17 October, and 1981 saw the end of three decades of Gaullist-inspired rule.[78] SOS-Racisme was arguably representative of such a development on the mainstream Left; for the then president Harlem Désir, 17 October 'fait partie de notre culture politique', due to the founding activists' (former) far-left and student politics, and the numerous descendants of Algerian migrants in the association.[79] Yet it is ironic that the mainstream media interest in 17 October, which is noticeable from 1980–1981 onwards, was probably prompted more by these developments on the mainstream Left than by SF campaigning.[80] Indeed, in 1985, one year after the first commemoration in Paris of 17 October organised by (among others) SF, MDC and Radio-Beur, the same organisations held a ceremony separate from SOS-Racisme's commemoration. Notable also was Jean-Louis Péninou's article in *Libération* on 17 October 1980, which triggered much of this new media interest.[81] Péninou denounced what he saw as the Left's different value systems: universal condemnation after the racist bomb attack on the rue Copernic synagogue (3 October 1980), and the Left's comparative indifference to forms of racism linked to France's colonial and post-colonial history. The links and differences between attitudes to anti-Semitism under Vichy, and postcolonial racism are therefore a constant in any militant consideration of the memory of 17 October.

The 1990s—'Pour le droit à la mémoire?'

The 1990s witnessed a continuation of the theme of 17 October within the memory of migration and the construction of solidarity between racialised groups in their opposition to racism, while, at the same time, seeing the development of more demands addressed to governments. The 30th anniversary in 1991 saw some 10,000 demonstrators follow the symbolic route from the Canal Saint-Martin to the Rex cinema, marching under the banner 'Non au racisme, non à l'oubli. Pour le droit à la mémoire'.[82] This march and its extensive media coverage, a colloquium at the Sorbonne, the publication of Einaudi's *La Bataille de Paris* and Anne Tristan's *Le Silence du fleuve* (based on Mehdi Lallaoui and Agnès Denis' film of the same name),[83] all ensured that the massacre resurfaced as an important theme in the 1992 commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the end of the Algerian War. This renewal of interest—journalistic, academic and militant—helped to reveal the historical complexity of the massacre and its legacy. It also finally brought about a recognition from the PCF of the symbolism of 17 October, as affirmed by Claude Billard: 'cet hommage aux martyres d'hier, victimes du colonialisme, et l'action d'aujourd'hui pour la défense des droits et le respect de la dignité sont intimement liés.'[84]

The association Au nom de la mémoire (ANM; 1990–) has been one of the key vectors of this memory activism. It sets out to 'faire que la mémoire ne soit pas une matière figée, mais toujours en mouvement, impliquant un travail de fond ras-

semblant beaucoup de partenaires'.[85] Both the MRAP and ANM share a similar framework in relation to the memory of colonial massacres and the Algerian War, namely that: 'L'amnésie collective et le non-dit qui recouvrent cette période douloureuse, entretiennent le racisme anti-maghrébin'.[86] Official recognition of past atrocities is a necessary first step towards a more respectful attitude towards those groups still incurring hostility. For MRAP president Mouloud Aounit, 'Il faut une réparation symbolique à ce qui s'est passé. Il faut que la mémoire soit partagée par tous, que toutes les victimes soient reconnues comme telles, et que cela soit accepté par toutes les composantes de la société'.[87] Similarly, the ANM's Mehdi Lalloui argues that '[…] une histoire partagée par tous contribuera au respect de l'autre et, d'une certaine façon, à une réconciliation des peoples des deux rives de la Méditerranée'.[88] Such a 'mémoire critique'[89] stresses that any future project for French society can only be realised once the plurality of visions of France's colonial legacy has been officially recognised.

Since the early 1990s, both the MRAP and ANM have insisted that historians be allowed access to essential archives. With the added stimulus of the Papon trial (October 1997–April 1998), which publicised his role as *préfet* in 1961, this access is now beginning to be granted for certain researchers.[90] Although the numbers and identity of the dead are still unclear, Papon's claim of three deaths on 17 October has been refuted both by the conservative Mandelkern report of 1998 on the police archives, and the bolder Géronimi report of 1999 on the judicial archives, the latter report estimating the death toll at 48.[91] During Papon's failed attempt in February 1999 to prove defamation by Jean-Luc Einaudi,[92] the deputy public prosecutor Vincent Lesclou used the term 'massacre', and, in an official indictment of police behaviour, stigmatised the security forces on 17 October as 'jouets de la haine qui les a aveuglés'.[93]

Thus in the late 1990s, the 17 October massacre once again returned to the political agenda via a link with Vichy. As previously, this has attracted controversy. Several voices were critical of any comparison between Vichy and massacres during the Algerian War as evoked at Papon's trial, with Rousso in particular asking: 'Peut-on (ainsi) faire l'équation entre les rafles anti-juives de 1942–1944 et les massacres d'Algériens de 1961, et donc entre Pétain et de Gaulle? Absurde!'[94] However, none of the memory activism analysed in this article (perhaps with the exception of *Les Temps modernes* in November 1961 referred to above) has ever sought to equate 17 October within the logic of genocide. The parallels established by activists highlight the police techniques involved, the singling-out of a social group—very often racialised—for violent treatment, the impunity of those responsible and subsequent official reluctance to disclose information, and the messages this sends out to racialised groups (and their persecutors). One of the lawyers for the civil parties in the Papon trial expressly praised the 'solidarité dans le malheur' which Einaudi's testimony of 16 October 1997 had created between the descendants of those deported under Vichy and the descendants of the dead on 17 October.[95] If properly contextualised, historically speaking such parallels can help to strengthen awareness of past crimes committed in the name of the state, and to increase citizenship through reaffirming the importance of official accountability of state agencies, their policies

and employees.[96] Such parallels also question any over-reductive vision of racism that sees it merely as an emanation of the extreme Right.

Conclusion

Over the past few decades, memory activism concerning the Paris massacre has contained an important 'vertical' function, by addressing demands to successive governments for the symbolic recognition of the extent of and responsibilities for the massacre, and for the opening of archives. Such activism has continued the well-established horizontal, transversal function of memory activism within antiracism, and which works to solidify internal bonds within social groups, to form collective identities, and to transmit memories to other groups. The memory of 17 October is a good example of the 'revenge' of post-1968 civil society on the state described by Pierre Nora.[97] It also provides an example of 'revenge' within civil society, of the hearing of newer voices and assertions of agency in relation to the established Left, as the result of autonomous social movements campaigning against racism. This article has situated the causes, nature, occultation and recovery of memory of 17 October within the *longue durée* of colonial and postcolonial history. Very often, we have seen the figure of Vichy haunt and complicate these separate but interrelated histories, providing a vital comparative link to other forms of racism. And yet the evocation of Vichy within antiracist discourses is not devoid of ambivalence, for, on the rare occasions where the 'tabou de l'objet'[98] of colonial and postcolonial racism is lifted, it is as if this can only be by means of reference to the Vichy period, with which French society is coming to terms more readily. This reminds us that what James Clifford calls the 'discrepant temporalities'[99] of racialised postcolonial migrant groups—for whom the key dates and events of national history do not, will not and cannot tell the whole story—are only beginning to force recognition by French society at large.

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