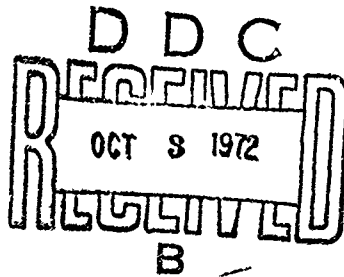


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ALGERIAN MILITARY DEVELOPMENT: THE PROFESSIONALIZATION  
OF A GUERRILLA ARMY

William B. Quandt

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ALGERIAN MILITARY DEVELOPMENT: THE PROFESSIONALIZATION  
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INTRODUCTION

At a time when some conventional armed forces are discovering the virtues of guerrilla and other forms of irregular warfare, the opposite case of a guerrilla army being modernized and professionalized is of particular interest. Since independence, the Algerian government has attached a high priority to transforming its loosely structured guerrilla forces of the interior into a respectable conventional military establishment modeled on both French and Russian patterns of organization. Despite the shift away from popular warfare as a mode of defense in independent Algeria, the regime has consistently supported guerrilla movements elsewhere and has advised other Arab countries to adopt a variant of "people's war" to combat Israel. The Algerian military doctrine available for export, then, is one of guerrilla warfare, while at home the emphasis has been on acquiring modern weapons and training recruits in specialized skills.

An assumption underlying this study is that the type of guerrilla warfare developed by insurgents and national liberation movements is in fact inappropriate to the defense of an existing state, and consequently is always dropped by successful rebels. The reasons for this initial reluctance to adopt the idea of popular defense on behalf of an established regime are easy to discern. The crucial task facing a newly independent government is to concentrate authority, to exert control over territory, to forge an administrative apparatus -- in short, to create a state. Guerrilla armies are too undisciplined and independent to fit into the state structure in the early phases of independence. Political considerations dictate the desirability of a reliable defense force under the command of professional officers. The lure of modern, sophisticated

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equipment, frequently available at deceptively low prices, further encourages the process of professionalization and weakens those who call for popular militias, territorial defense forces, and the like.

In the cases of two other countries with past histories of guerrilla warfare, namely Yugoslavia and Indonesia, this first stage of professionalization took place. One may anticipate that the new state of Bangladesh will likewise seek to bring the partisan forces, the Mukti Bahini, under control and create a "proper" army with expensive equipment. These decisions are not likely to be made on military grounds alone, but rather for political control purposes.

The problem with creating a conventional army by means of modernization and professionalization *à l'américaine* or *à la russe* is that the process becomes costly. Modern arms are expensive and require considerable care and handling to remain operational. Arms suppliers may offer attractive terms, but most require some form of repayment, whether in hard currency or in more overtly political coin. At some point, a country intent upon conserving both its independence and its foreign exchange may look for alternatives to buying defense via the route of creating a "modern" military establishment. The choices that will be made depend critically upon the availability of equipment from abroad and the nature of the threat facing the country (or of one's own imperial designs).

In the event of a serious threat of invasion and without large doses of outside assistance, the likelihood of adopting ideas of people's war to defend the established order may be quite high. Political and topographical considerations will enter into the decision to adopt a form of territorial defense, on the Yugoslav model, that combines a core of professional soldiers and a mass-based citizen army.\* A prior history of partisan warfare probably makes the move toward territorial defense more likely, and certainly helps to legitimize the decision.

Indonesia, with experience of guerrilla warfare in the 1940s, also went through the stage of acquiring huge quantities of modern weapons during the 1950s and early 1960s. Following the abortive communist coup of 1965, however, several forces developed that led to a change in defense posture. First, the Soviet Union ceased to supply sophisticated weapons, and U.S. military aid only partially compensated

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\* A. Ross Johnson, "Total National Defense in Yugoslavia," Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, P-4746, December 1971.

for this loss; second, foreign adventures were renounced and priority was given to internal security. This led to the reassertion by the Indonesian military of a variant of territorial defense aimed at preventing the growth of insurgent groups with outside support.\* Here again, prior experience with guerrilla warfare probably facilitated the shift away from an expensive conventional army toward a more flexible form of defense and internal security.

Algeria has yet to pass through the inevitable stage of modernization and professionalization, and may never do so because of the absence of any credible outside threat or internal insurgency. Nonetheless, the early fascination with modern, heavy equipment and large, Soviet-style divisions, has already given way to a preference for motorized brigades possessing high mobility and a well-trained Gendarmerie for purposes of internal control. Much of the sophisticated weaponry acquired in earlier years remains in storage or is inoperable. To a modest degree, the costs of conventional defense are being learned, and in their advice to others the Algerians continue to preach the virtues of popular warfare. The study of the Algerian case, then, can help to illustrate some of the political reasons for abandoning popular defense after independence, while at the same time clarifying the conditions under which alternatives to conventional military practices are seen as desirable in the modern state.

#### PRE-INDEPENDENCE STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

For more than seven years, from 1954 to 1962, Algerian nationalists struggled to gain independence from France. While the objectives of the nationalist movement remained remarkably consistent during these years, the military dimensions of the war with France changed dramatically. Initially the *Front de Libération Nationale*, or FLN, could

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\* An early formulation of the indigenous Indonesian defense doctrine can be found in Guy J. Pauker, *The Indonesian Doctrine of Territorial Warfare and Territorial Management*, Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, RM-3312, November 1963.

count on the active support of only a few hundred poorly armed men. A very modest variety of guerrilla warfare, relying primarily on sabotage and occasional ambushes, was the most that could be achieved. The major effort of the FLN in the early years of the revolution was to organize the population, especially in the rural areas, rather than to engage in costly battles with the French.

After nearly two years of fighting, in August 1956 the FLN held its first organizational Congress in the Valley of the Soummam. By this time support for the FLN had grown dramatically, and some arms were beginning to reach the guerrilla forces of the interior, the *maquisards*. Political considerations, however, remained the dominant concern of the FLN leaders at the Congress of the Soummam and the principle was formally adopted that military actions should remain subordinate to politics. The politicians had already begun to sense the difficulties of controlling and disciplining a widely dispersed guerrilla movement, and efforts were made to introduce some structure and clear lines of authority into the *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN). Formal ranks were designated within the army, rules of conduct were codified, and official leadership structures were designated. The dominance of the politicians over the guerrilla leaders was made clear in the designation of a five-man supreme body called the *Comité de Coordination et d'Exécution* (CCE) which included only one guerrilla fighter. A broader assembly was also named, the *Conseil National de la Révolution Algérienne* (CNRA), and here again the guerrilla fighters were scantily represented, primarily being found among the alternate delegates rather than the full members.\*

At the direction of the leaders of the CCE, military actions took on a sharply political character. A general uprising of the population was called for, but failed to materialize. In order to force a polarization in the Muslim community between the pro-French and pro-FLN

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\* For more detail on these ruling bodies, see the author's book, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria 1954-1968*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969, pp. 99-107.

positions, the FLN called a strike that was widely observed. By the early part of 1957, urban terrorism was begun as a conscious tactic of the FLN. The French response was rapid and brutal, leading to the Battle of Algiers, a critical event in the course of the Algerian war for independence.\* The French victory over the urban guerrillas was achieved at the cost of alienating a vast portion of the Muslim population, but did nonetheless succeed in temporarily weakening the FLN by driving the CCE leadership out of Algeria. On a *de facto* basis, power shifted from the political leaders of the CCE to the guerrilla leaders of the interior regions. At the next CNRA meeting in August 1957, this change was ratified by creating a new CCE of nine members, which included the five colonels who had headed Algeria's military regions (*willayas*).

The emergence of the guerrilla leaders as the key power holders within the FLN was accompanied by the growth of a gap between the internal military forces and the institutions of the revolution which came to be located in the "sanctuary" region of Tunisia. In addition to geographic distance, French military actions succeeded in cutting the internal guerrilla forces off from large amounts of outside assistance. This was done by the practice of *quadrillage*, a system of careful control over population and territory within Algeria, and the construction of anti-infiltration barriers along the borders with Morocco and Tunisia. By late 1958, the result of these actions was to bring the guerrilla situation under control within Algeria, and to reduce the flow of arms into the country from abroad. The guerrillas were contained, though not defeated, and for the next few years the *maquisards* in the central parts of Algeria lived an essentially autonomous existence. Only in the border areas were the possibilities of political influence from the FLN authorities located in Morocco and Tunisia significant.

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\* Pontecorvos' brilliant film, *The Battle of Algiers*, vividly portrays this part of the Algerian war for independence.

As the fortunes of the guerrilla forces declined during 1958-1959, a new military factor appeared on the scene. As early as the fall of 1957, regular army units of the ALN had been formed along the Moroccan and Tunisian borders under the authority of a *Commandant des Opérations Militaires*. These troops received modern equipment and were organized as a conventional army. They justified their existence in these sanctuaries by tying down large numbers of French troops on the Algerian side of the borders, thereby supposedly relieving pressure on the internal guerrillas. In addition, efforts were made, often successfully, though at high cost, to cross the barriers in order to get arms to the interior forces.

During 1959, the dual command over the external forces was weakened in favor of an integrated General Staff (*Etat Major Général*), formally created by the CNRA in early 1960. The chief of staff was a young officer who had been commander of the regular forces stationed in Morocco, Houari Boumediene by name. Three groups now struggled for control of the military effort. Boumediene, as head of the regular "external" forces, held a strong hand, but was nonetheless challenged by internal guerrilla leaders and their supporters. A second group of challengers to Boumediene's control of the army consisted of the former guerrilla fighters who had become leaders of the FLN within first the CCE and later the Provisional Government. When the guerrilla leaders of the interior threatened to overthrow the Provisional Government by means of two separate plots during 1959, Boumediene was instrumental in crushing these incipient rebellions and upholding the authority of the FLN. In return, however, he demanded, and in January 1960 received, full control over the ALN, leaving political matters to the Provisional Government.\*

As the Provisional Government began to negotiate with the French in 1961 over terms of independence, Boumediene and the ALN expressed strong misgivings but agreed not to undermine the efforts to reach

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\* See Yves Courrière, *Les feux du désespoir*, Paris: Fayard, 1971, pp. 31-48.

a settlement. Nonetheless, the lines of future conflict were clearly drawn as Algeria finally achieved its long-sought freedom in 1962. The guerrilla leaders of the interior, who had borne the weight of the battle for over seven years, opposed both the Provisional Government and the external army under Boumediene. At the first opportunity, the Provisional Government attempted to assert its authority by dismissing Boumediene and his staff. On the eve of independence, the danger of civil war was imminent.

#### THE POST-INDEPENDENCE CRISIS

The long-standing conflict between the Provisional Government and the General Staff of the army under Boumediene came into the open at the Tripoli Conference in early June 1962. Boumediene and two members of his staff refused to vote in favor of the Evian Agreements ending the war for independence. During the ensuing month, two large coalitions of forces began to emerge around the Provisional Government and Boumediene's external army. The guerrilla forces of the interior, who had felt abandoned during the last years of the war, threw their support to the Provisional Government. Boumediene, in addition to the armies in Morocco and Tunisia, managed to control the *maquisards* in the border regions. Aside from these military forces, many Algerians had hastily mobilized themselves into the FLN once independence was certain, and consequently a large number of poorly trained and inexperienced armed men were roaming the countryside, willing to offer their assistance to the strongest group in return for recognition of their status as militants.

In brief, the Provisional Government possessed some degree of legitimacy, but had only minimal control over any armed forces. The guerrilla leaders who supported the Provisional Government did so more out of opposition to Boumediene's conventional forces than respect for legality. In comparison, Boumediene had effective control over a large number of fresh troops. The French had removed obstacles to the entry of these forces in Algeria. But the General Staff lacked both a legitimate claim to power and a popular base of support. To



remedy this deficiency, Boumediene agreed to support the pretensions of the most famous of the so-called "historic leaders" of the Revolution, Ahmed Ben Bella, who had been languishing for nearly six years in a French prison. Ben Bella's prestige, coupled with Boumediene's army, resulted in a political-military victory over the demoralized Provisional Government and the die-hard guerrilla forces of the interior. By late September, Ben Bella had been elected Algeria's first President and had named Boumediene as his Minister of Defense.

#### RECONVERSION OF THE ALN

Given the means by which Ben Bella had come to power, it was unlikely that he would seek to preserve Algeria's guerrilla traditions within the context of the defense of the newly independent state. On the contrary, the urgent need was to reestablish order and security in the countryside, and for this purpose a centrally controlled, disciplined professional army seemed necessary. The only danger would be that the army might soon realize that, as the major prop of the regime, it could easily do without the ambitious and erratic Ben Bella. In the immediate postwar period, however, Ben Bella's major enemies came from the ranks of the ex-guerrillas, and consequently he was initially willing to see a modern professional army develop under Boumediene as an instrument of political control over the still dissident and restive countryside.

The *Armée Nationale Populaire* (ANP), as it was rechristened, immediately faced the need to demobilize many of the 130,000 or so men who made up the ALN at the time of independence. The creation of a professional army of about 60,000 men organized into several military regions became the objective of Boumediene's early efforts. Pockets of guerrilla resistance were eliminated, politically difficult individuals were dropped from the ANP, and several French-trained officers with modest revolutionary credentials but impressive technical skills emerged as key figures around Boumediene. For the first year of Algeria's independent existence, Boumediene concentrated on formidable organizational tasks in converting the jumble of guerrilla and conventional forces into a semblance of a modern army. In addition, a

more subtle struggle with Ben Bella over control of the armed forces took place, resulting in a consolidation of Boumediene's authority in early 1963 with the appointment of two of his protégés as heads of military regions.\* The need for large quantities of sophisticated arms had not yet arisen, as the ALN had an ample supply of light equipment and the French had left behind trucks, communications equipment and military facilities.

During the first year of independence, open debate on political issues was allowed. One of the issues that received attention was the role of the army. Former guerrilla leaders in particular, but also politically motivated enemies of Boumediene, were worried by the growing power of the regular army. The one-time spokesman for the guerrilla forces of *wilaya* IV (Algerois), Lieutenant Allouache, stated that "We are opposed to a classical type of army, in other words a professional army, an unproductive army, a drain on the resources of the country."\*\* The head of the FLN, Mohamed Khider, echoed similar sentiments as he called on the ANP to return to the barracks and submit to political control.\*\*\* By April 1963, however, Khider had

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\* For a more detailed treatment of this period, see I. William Zartman, "L'Armée dans la politique algérienne," *Annuaire de L'Afrique du Nord*, 1967, Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1968, pp. 263-275.

\*\* Cited by Zartman, *ibid.*, p. 270. Allouache was arrested in June 1963, along with Mohamed Boudiaf. Boudiaf's views are spelled out in his book, *Où va l'Algérie?*, Paris: Editions Librairie de l'Etoile, 1964, p. 196. "Our country has no need for a large professional army cut off from the masses. Our military tasks are essentially to defend against possible aggression. To avoid spending an excessively large amount of our budget on ultra-modern weapons, our power will reside in the participation of the masses in the battle. Our type of military organization should follow from that necessity; it should be decentralized, it should take the form of militias, whose fundamental components would correspond to local groupings. A small number of technicians, valued officers, and a corps of instructors for the militia -- that is what the permanent army should consist of."

\*\*\* Khider's thoughts on the army are contained in an article published in *Le Monde*, August 12-13, 1962, in the midst of the post-independence crisis. "The national army will be a state organism. The state will direct it and determine its needs and responsibilities. It will get its means from the state and its moral authority from the

lost his position in the Party, and a few days later Boumediene was named first Vice President.

By summer 1963, several of Ben Bella's opponents were calling for his overthrow, and plots against the regime were unveiled every few weeks. Guerrilla bands sprang up in the countryside, and a number of prestigious leaders were expelled from the Party.

In defending Ben Bella's regime against dissidents, Boumediene and the regular army were playing much the same role as in 1959-1960, when the *Etat Major* protected the authority of the Provisional Government, despite its own reservations about the policies of the legitimate rulers. Unlike the earlier experience, however, in mid-1963 few observers doubted Boumediene's loyalty to Ben Bella. It would take another major crisis and significant changes in the capabilities of the regular army before Boumediene was seen as having ambitions to power in his own right.

#### THE OCTOBER 1963 CRISIS

Independent Algeria has twice experienced major crises involving the use of military force. One was an armed uprising in the remote mountainous area of Kabylia. The other was a brief border war with Morocco. Not entirely by coincidence, both occurred in October 1963. Thus, the newly formed *Armée Nationale Populaire* faced its first test of strength against simultaneous internal and external threats. The outcome of this combat experience had considerable impact on subsequent military developments, primarily in the direction of intensifying the search for modern arms and professional training. One victim of the October 1963 crisis was the romantic view of guerrilla warfare as an appropriate form of defense for independent Algeria. The costly path

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people. . . . The National Liberation Army intends to conform to the principle of the separation of powers, a purely democratic idea to which our country is particularly attached. The Army knows that the restoration of civilian power and authority of the State should take place within the framework of the separation of powers. From this analysis, it follows that the Political Bureau, repository of national sovereignty until a Congress is held, must assume responsibilities based on these notions."

of modernization was instead embarked upon with determination by the army, although within a political context in which Ben Bella sought to undermine the growing influence of Boumediene within his own regime. Political and military considerations became inseparably intertwined during Algeria's second year as a free state.

Following Ben Bella's election as President in September 1963, dissident elite members became increasingly outspoken in their criticism of the government. A clandestine opposition party issued communiqués, and in the traditionally troublesome Kabylia region guerrilla bands were constituted under the leadership of several distinguished figures from the revolutionary period.

Meanwhile, Morocco's long-standing claims to parts of Algerian territory were being pressed with renewed vigor. Some contacts between the Moroccans and the Kabyle insurgents seem to have taken place. Ben Bella's harassed regime was coming under pressure from two directions. In this tense atmosphere, Boumediene left on a trip to Moscow, presumably to acquire arms. The search for equipment from the Soviet Union had now begun in earnest.

Ben Bella, who feared becoming a captive of Boumediene almost as much as he did his domestic and foreign opponents, took advantage of his Defense Minister's absence to appoint a former guerrilla leader, Tahar Zbiri, as Chief of Staff of the ANP. Boumediene viewed this at the time as a hostile maneuver, but reacted by trying to win Zbiri to his point of view rather than allowing Ben Bella to play divide-and-rule politics.

As the situation in Kabylia deteriorated during early October, Ben Bella showed some reluctance to order the army to put down the insurgency. Ben Bella had a high regard for his own bargaining skills, and generally tried to keep lines open to his erstwhile enemies. Not so with Boumediene. Upon his return from Moscow, the army began to move into Kabylia. About this time, however, fighting broke out with Morocco in the border areas around Tindouf and Figuig. The Moroccans had a well-trained and well-equipped army, and generally acquitted themselves well on the battlefields. The Algerians, lacking the equipment and logistics capabilities of their enemy, were nonetheless

able to mobilize large numbers of experienced soldiers to send to the front. Even more importantly, however, Ben Bella was able to use the Moroccan threat to divide his internal opponents. After two weeks of sporadic fighting on the Moroccan front, the military leader of the Kabyle insurgency, Mohand oul Hadj, responded positively to Ben Bella's call for national unity. Without Mohand oul Hadj, the remaining Kabyle dissidents were unable to constitute an effective force to challenge the Ben Bella government, and soon withered away under pressure from the ANP.

In early November, the border war was ended without any territorial changes of importance. Boumediene, however, was not pleased with the performance of his troops, or with Ben Bella's maneuvers, which had led to the reintegration of some guerrilla leaders into the army. For the next year and one-half, a covert struggle went on between Boumediene, who was intent upon modernizing and professionalizing the ANP, and Ben Bella, who sought to offset Boumediene's influence by promoting the interests of the former guerrilla leaders.

Ben Bella's political strategy for survival led to the reintroduction into Algerian military debates of the notions of popular defense on behalf of the regime -- "protecting the revolution" -- and to the reinstating of ex-guerrillas in positions of power. Boumediene's opposition to both of these developments was apparent to insiders, although few outside observers suspected trouble. As early as December 1963, Boumediene seems to have decided that Ben Bella would have to be removed.\* But before launching a coup, Boumediene wanted to be sure that the army was fully under his control. In addition, he hoped to neutralize the opposition of the former guerrillas and even to bring them to his side in the dispute with Ben Bella. To accomplish his ambitious goals, Boumediene set out to modernize the army, to build a sophisticated communications network, and to promote reliable officers.

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\* Boumediene later claimed that toward the end of 1963, Ben Bella had tried to incite an army officer to arrest the Minister of Defense and other senior officers. (Interview with M. Hasanayn Haykal, reprinted in *Revolutions Africaine*, November 6-13, 1965.)

On the political front, he appeared to be conciliatory toward the President, while actively negotiating with those guerrilla fighters whom Ben Bella was trying to promote to counter Boumediene's position of strength.

The forum in which the role of the military was most extensively debated was the Algiers Party Congress of April 1964. Boumediene and his colleagues had played virtually no role in preparing for the Congress. Instead, a group of Marxist intellectuals, whom Ben Bella was sponsoring in another effort to weaken the power of the army, took the lead in drafting the Charter of Algiers. This document, which called for Party control of the army and for the creation of popular militias, was unacceptable to Boumediene, and he and his closest supporters threatened to resign on the eve of the Congress.\* Ben Bella, probably fearing a coup d'état, worked to soften the anti-army tone of the Charter somewhat, and the Congress ended with Boumediene still in power and the issue of the role of the army nicely fudged.\*\* The popular militias, which were to be created for the defense of the revolution, were to receive their training from the regular army.\*\*\*

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\* During the Congress, Boumediene was attacked for surrounding himself with former officers in the French army rather than revolutionaries. He defended himself on the grounds of their competence. See Arslan Humbaraci, *Algeria: A Revolution That Failed*, New York: Praeger, 1966, pp. 196-197.

\*\* See excerpts in Appendix B.

\*\*\* It has been alleged that Ben Bella told Che Guevara of his fear of a Boumediene-led coup as early as Guevara's July 1963 visit to Algiers. Guevara's advice was to arm the people to defend the regime. This may well have sparked the interest in popular militias. Muhammad Harbi's campaign for Popular Militias is discussed in Humbaraci, op. cit., p. 125; also see Appendix B for an article by Harbi. Militias were formally created in July 1964, but during the summer a shipment of arms from Egypt, presumably destined for the militias, was blown up on board ship in the harbor at Annaba. Some suspected the army of carrying out this operation, although no evidence seems to exist one way or the other. Boumediene later accused Ben Bella of wanting to "dissolve the Algerian liberation army and substitute for it a party militia." Quoted in *Le Monde*, July 10, 1965.

After the Party Congress, Boumediene set about accomplishing three tasks before moving against Ben Bella. The first was to absorb the large quantities of modern arms that began flowing into Algeria as a result of the 1963 arms agreement with the Soviet Union. Training and organization received considerable attention during 1964.\* Second, the ANP was active in eliminating remaining pockets of dissidence in the countryside, especially during the summer of 1964. By the fall, Algeria, for the first time since independence, was virtually free of internal threats to the regime from guerrilla groups. Third, Boumediene methodically began the process of winning over Ben Bella's supporters, including former rivals such as Zbiri and Mohand oul Hadj. By the spring of 1965, these three goals had all been attained. Only an appropriate opportunity was now required in order to oust Ben Bella.

The Afro-Asian Conference, which was to be held in Algiers in the summer of 1965, provided a convenient screen for planning the coup against Ben Bella. It also raised the incentive for deposing the President, whose international prestige was likely to rise as a result of the Conference, thereby strengthening his domestic position. Finally, the Conference required elaborate security arrangements for visiting heads of state, and it was therefore relatively easy to move armed units into the capital without arousing suspicion. The timing of the coup was also influenced by Ben Bella's continuing efforts to weaken Boumediene's authority. By mid-1965, the issue at stake was really who would eliminate whom. As it turned out, Boumediene moved first, in a brilliantly executed coup. The final irony of the events of the morning of June 19, the date of the coup, was that Tahar Zbiri, the man appointed by Ben Bella as Chief of Staff in order to check Boumediene's influence, was the one to carry out the arrest of his former patron.

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\* See *The New York Times*, November 8, 1964.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS UNDER BOUMEDIENE

When Boumediene came to power in mid-1965, he did so with the support of the army, as well as that of the Gendarmerie, the police, much of the bureaucracy, and a large number of Ben Bella's ministers and presumed friends. In addition, several prominent ex-guerrilla leaders were included in the Council of the Revolution, but their specific tasks were those of organizing the Party, not running the army.\*

As President, Boumediene retained the position of Minister of Defense, although operational responsibilities were turned over to the competent Secretary-General, Abdelkader Chabou,\*\* and the heads of Algeria's five regions. For the first time since independence, Boumediene was free to press forward with the modernization of the armed forces without major political constraints.

After a brief quarrel with the Soviet Union following Ben Bella's ouster, Boumediene traveled to Moscow in December 1965, once again presumably seeking arms.\*\*\* The visit appears to have been successful, for the following year Algeria received substantial quantities of advanced equipment. Modernization took on a Russian tone as Algeria put together a mechanized infantry division out of its formerly fragmented infantry battalions; officer training was intensified; an air force made up of MIG-21 fighters and IL-28 bombers gained in strength; and the budget for defense increased by about 30 percent from 1965 to 1966, reaching its highest mark since independence, \$130 million.

The years 1966 and 1967 were troubled ones for Boumediene, characterized by internal dissension and economic stagnation. The ability to reward the armed forces, with modern equipment and high status, probably

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\* Boumediene was later quoted as saying, "ideological discussions in Algeria lead nowhere. What matters, above all, is economic independence and rapid development. The problem of the continuity of the revolution arises everywhere and often -- as in Yugoslavia -- the guerrilla fighters have to turn over power to the managers." *Jeune Afrique*, No. 359, November 26, 1967, p. 19.

\*\* Chabou died in a helicopter crash in 1971.

\*\*\* He had been to Moscow earlier in the year, in May, and an agreement on arms could have been signed then.



ensured the survival of the regime during this difficult period. A further stimulus to military spending, however, was the renewal of tension with Morocco in the spring of 1967. By this time, Algeria clearly outstripped Morocco in armed power, although not necessarily in organization, training, and logistics. Nonetheless, Algeria could boast of having the third strongest army on the continent, after South Africa and Egypt, and it no longer depended upon enthusiastic but poorly armed guerrillas for its manpower.\*

As tension along the Moroccan border decreased after the spring of 1967, developments in the Middle East took on an ominous cast. By late May, war between Israel and Egypt seemed a distinct possibility and no Arab state could afford to remain entirely on the sidelines, especially a state with Algeria's revolutionary credentials. Thus, when war erupted on June 5, Algeria joined the battle with large doses of rhetoric and smaller amounts of material assistance. Distance and time worked against an effective Algerian contribution, which was probably just as well for the ANP, given the balance of forces. Nonetheless, some Algerian aircraft were flown to Egypt and eventually a brigade arrived and took up positions along the cease-fire lines.

The private Algerian reaction to the 1967 war was more important than these public gestures of solidarity. Algerian leaders were shocked and angered at the ineptness of Egyptian defense. They were also irritated by the cautious role played by the Russians once hostilities began. From their vantage point several thousands of miles from the front, they advised the Arabs not to accept the cease-fire, but rather to fight on, guerrilla style, thereby forcing Israel to overextend herself and suffer the costs of prolonged mobilization.\*\* Needless to say, the Egyptians, Syrians and Jordanians were not particularly pleased with this advice. Nonetheless, they agreed to delegate

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\* See Stuart Scharr, *The Arms Race and Defense Strategy in North Africa*, American Universities Field Staff Reports, December 1967.

\*\* These ideas are spelled out in *Révolution Africaine*, No. 340, August 28-September 3, 1970; and *El Djeich*, March 1969, p. 31.

Boumediene to visit Moscow on behalf of the Arab states. The meeting was not a happy one, and Boumediene returned to Algeria determined to put his own house in order, leaving the eastern Arabs to fend for themselves, while trying to reduce his own dependency on the unreliable Soviets.

Before these good intentions could be acted upon, however, the long-standing political conflict between the ex-guerrilla leaders and the professional army men had to be resolved. Boumediene had tried to avoid a break, but by fall of 1967 internal quarrels were coming into the open. The most serious threat came from the Chief of Staff, Zbiri, who openly defied Boumediene in November. Rumors of an impending coup circulated in the following weeks, as negotiations between rival factions met with failure. Finally, after Boumediene had dismissed some of the Party leaders, a feeble coup attempt was indeed staged by friends of Zbiri on December 14-15. Greatly misjudging their support in the army, the conspirators managed only to direct a small number of tanks toward Algiers. Well before the tanks could pose any serious threat, the air force went into action, and within hours the armored column had been destroyed and most of the participants in the coup arrested. Zbiri escaped, but was unable to rally support in the countryside.\*

Five years of professionalization of the army seem to have paid off, and in 1968 Boumediene was able to capitalize on a newly achieved stability and security to direct the country on the path of economic development. In addition, he began to adapt the armed forces to the needs of the country in a more flexible manner and at a lower cost than had previously been the case.

#### ADAPTATIONS: THE MILITARY IN A DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

During 1968, the year following the abortive Zbiri coup, a fundamental shift took place in Algerian political life. Previously, much

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\* Since December 1967, Boumediene has held the positions of President, Minister of Defense, and Chief of Staff. A close associate, Ahmed Kaid, has been head of the Party.

of the attention of Algeria's leaders was absorbed by internal quarrels and threats to the regime; subsequently, security and stability provided a base on which to plan for economic and social changes.\* In addition to these favorable internal developments, foreign threats were minimized as Boumediene moved to improve relations with both Morocco and Tunisia. With respect to the major powers, Algeria sought to increase its independence by diversifying the sources of its external support.

One result of these orientations in the military field was a reduction in the size of the defense budget to about \$100 million, a level which has remained constant since 1968.\*\* To offset Algeria's heavy dependence on the Soviet Union for arms, agreements were reached with France in 1969 for the supply of 28 Fouga-Magister trainer aircraft, as well as some light arms. Algerian officers continued to attend French military schools, and even within Algeria the most advanced officer training programs were conducted by the French. In addition, the well-trained and highly mobile Gendarmerie force of about 8,000 men received both French training and equipment.\*\*\* Responsible for internal security, the Gendarmerie was nonetheless subordinate to the Ministry of Defense and was headed by a close colleague of Boumediene, Colonel Bencherif.\*\*\*\*

In the regular army, two changes of note occurred after 1968. First, the large Soviet-style structure of the army was broken down

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\* See the author's article, "Algeria: The Revolution Turns Inward," *MID EAST*, August 1970.

\*\* There may, of course, be hidden defense costs that are not accounted for in the official figures. Some sources place 1970 defense spending as high as \$174 million.

\*\*\* In July 1971, French assistance to the Algerian Gendarmerie was suspended. Whether this reflected anything more than the current political crisis is unknown.

\*\*\*\* After the ouster of Zhiri, Bencherif was the only active colonel in the Algerian military until promotions of five other officers to that rank in June 1969. Three more officers were made colonels in July 1970. Colonel is the highest rank in the ANP.

into four motorized brigades of about 2,500 to 3,000 men each. In addition, there were about fifty independent infantry battalions. Emphasis seemed to be shifting from heavy equipment to mobility and light arms. Rather than spending scarce resources on significant quantities of expensive arms, the Algerians set about trying to absorb those they had already received as a result of the 1963 and 1965 agreements.\* (See Appendix A for the current status of the Algerian armed forces.)

A second shift of emphasis in the army was renewed attention to the nation-building potential of the army. This had always been a part of the ANP's self-image, but not until 1969 was a "National Service" established which recruited and trained young men not only in the rudiments of warfare, but also in skills appropriate to economic development.\*\* The experiment is too recent to judge, but nonetheless reflects the fact that the armed forces are no longer only concerned with defense and security.\*\*\* In the rather relaxed environment of the early 1970s, with neither internal nor external threats of any significance, the major objective of Algerian policy has been to promote rapid economic development, and to this goal the army is expected to contribute.\*\*\*\*

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\* In early 1971, a new arms agreement with the Soviet Union seems to have been concluded, but the details of its contents and its size are unknown. The agreement may have been designed to replace some of the equipment left behind by the Algerian forces that withdrew from Egypt after the August 1970 cease-fire.

\*\* See *El Djeich*, October 1971.

\*\*\* The *Service National*, along with the Association of Ex-Combatants, could be used as a reserve force in the event of a national emergency.

\*\*\*\* This should also help to legitimize the regime, for as Zartman points out, op. cit., p. 266, as the army professionalizes it loses its legitimacy as a revolutionary force.

CONCLUSION

The case of Algerian military development demonstrates some of the complex political factors that affect the transformation of guerrilla forces into a professional army. From comparisons with the Yugoslav and Indonesian experiences, it appears as if an initial stage of creating a professional, Western-style army is inevitable in a newly formed nation-state. The advantages to an incumbent regime of controlling a unified armed force greatly offset any ideological compulsions to retain a partisan, decentralized army.

Later stages of development, however, are less easily predicted. At some point the high costs, both monetary and political, of modernization of the military establishment along Western lines will become obvious to any highly nationalistic elite. The choices that will then be made seem to depend heavily on external circumstances, as well as some domestic political constraints. If a threat of large-scale invasion is recognized, as occurred in Yugoslavia after 1968, the creation of territorial defense forces, capable of mobilizing a large portion of the population, may be decided upon. A professional army core will still be maintained, but substantial resources will be devoted to acquiring light arms for the territorial forces.

In the Algerian case, the Yugoslav model is unlikely to be followed, despite a shared belief in the merits of partisan warfare. For the Algerians, the missing ingredient is the threat of large-scale invasion. At most, border conflict with Morocco might occur, a contingency for which motorized brigades have recently been formed. Internal security is primarily handled by a highly mobile Gendarmerie force.

The advantages to the Algerians of pursuing this path of military development are that it is relatively inexpensive; it reduces dependency on the outside world by diversifying sources of supply; \* it poses no

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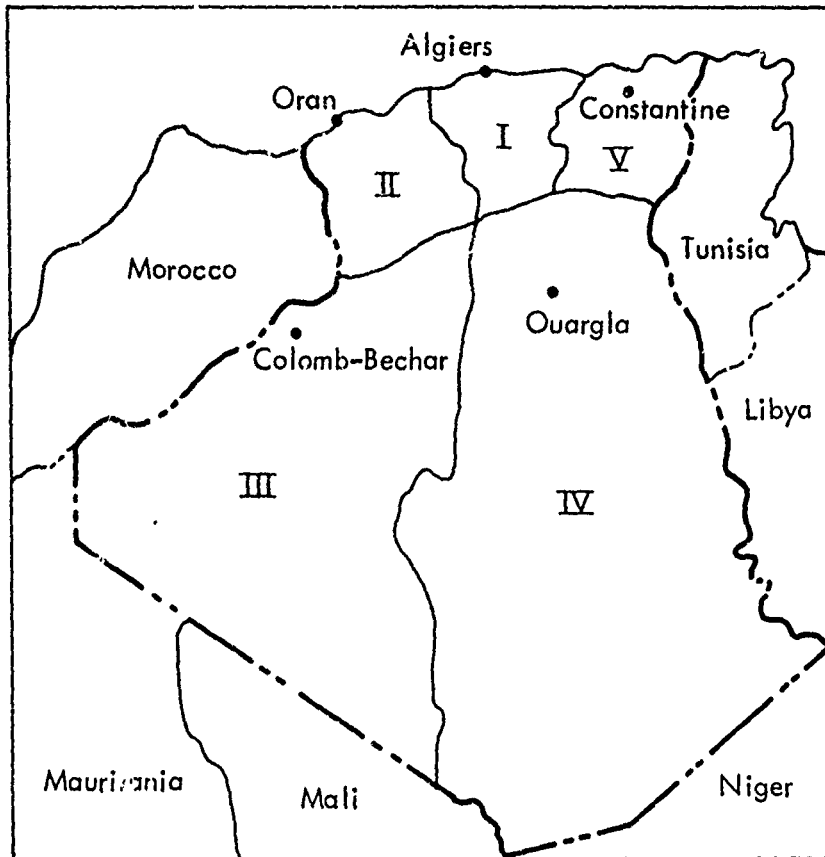
\* By December 1970, the French had given up all of their military bases in Algeria. Despite persistent speculations that the Soviets might try to acquire the base of Mers al-Kabir for their use, no evidence supports this prediction. In fact, Boumediene has gone out of his way to deny that the Soviets have even asked for such a base, arguing that they know they would be turned down. In an interview with

overwhelming threat to neighbors, but can adequately handle any border conflicts that might develop; and finally it attempts to direct the energies of the armed forces toward development. The result is not a particularly formidable military machine, but seems to be reasonably well-suited to the needs of Algerian society at this stage in its development.

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C. L. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*, February 2, 1971, Boumediene said he bought arms from the Soviets because of the very acceptable conditions they offered. "When other conditions are offered by other nations on a more favorable basis," he said, "we will buy from them."

## Algeria's Military Regions

Commanders of Military Regions: 1971 - 1972

- |                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| I. Algiers         | - Colonel Belhouchet          |
| II. Oran           | - Colonel Bendjedid           |
| III. Colomb-Bechar | - Colonel Zerguini            |
| IV. Ouargla        | - Major Muhammad Attilia      |
| V. Constantine     | - Colonel Benahmed Abdalghani |

Appendix ATHE ALGERIAN MILITARY STRUCTURE, 1971-1972\*

The Algerian armed forces consist of about 55,000-60,000 men, nearly all of whom serve in the Army. In addition, a Gendarmerie of 8,000 is under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Defense. The Air Force and Navy consist of about 3,000 men each. In recent years, the defense budget has run around \$100 million, or 3 percent of GNP. Military assistance amounting to over \$250 million since 1963 has come primarily from the Soviet Union. Nearly 2,000 foreign military advisers and technicians work in Algeria, three-fourths of whom are Soviets and one-fourth French. Algeria also sends its officers to both France and the Soviet Union for training.

Algeria is organized into five military regions, each headed by a senior military officer (see map, p. 22). In recent years, four motorized brigades have been formed to replace one existing mechanized division. Each of these brigades contains 2,500 to 3,000 men formed into three infantry, one tank, and one artillery battalions. In addition to the four motorized brigades, nearly fifty infantry battalions exist, along with small numbers (2 to 5) of artillery, tank, commando, parachute, cavalry, armored car, and engineering battalions.

The army possesses over 350 light and medium tanks, more than 400 armored personnel carriers, and a large inventory of artillery pieces.\*\*

Most of this strength is concentrated in the Algiers and Constantine regions (numbers I and V), although forces could be redeployed on short notice, for example to the Moroccan frontier.

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\*The following description and data are largely derived from *The Military Balance: 1971-72*, London: The Institute of Strategic Studies, 1971; and *Al-Nahar Arab Report*, Vol. 2, No. 47, November 22, 1971.

\*\*The Gendarmerie also has about 50 armored cars.



The Air Force, with over 150 combat aircraft, consists primarily of MIG 17s and 21s, as well as 24 IL-28 light bombers and 28 Fouga-Magister armed trainers. Of the first-line aircraft, some are held in storage, with only about half assigned to operational units at four major air bases throughout the country.

The Algerian navy is the smallest of the services, with the mission of coastal defense. It possesses a modest number of missile patrol boats of the Komar and Osa class.

Appendix BDOCUMENTS ON THE ALGERIAN MILITARY

The following selections consist of excerpts from documents, articles, and speeches that deal directly with Algerian military developments. Since Algerian independence, there has been a paucity of discussions of military issues, especially of operational doctrines. Instead, most debate has been over the political role of the army and its nation-building roles. The one publication in Algeria devoted to military affairs, *El Djeich*, generally deals with socioeconomic issues, foreign policy, and routine matters involving the armed forces.

In the selections that follow, the emphasis of the Ben Bella regime (pre-June 1965) on Party control of the Army, on continuity with the traditions of the war for independence, and on the desirability of popular militias for the defense of the revolution should be noted. By contrast, the Boumediene regime has stressed the technical capabilities of the army, the specialized training programs that have been developed, and the role of the armed forces in economic development. In neither period were there public discussions of narrowly defined military strategy, with the exception of Boumediene's advice to other Arab states to pursue the conflict with Israel by guerrilla rather than conventional warfare.

Note: Some passages are italicized for added emphasis.

## THE ALGERIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1963

(Selections)

Preamble

The Popular National Army, yesterday the Army of National Liberation, was the spearhead of the war for independence; it remains in the service of the people. It participates, *with the Party*, in political activities and in the edification of new economic and social structures in the country.

Article 8 - The National Army is a people's army. Faithful to the traditions of the war for national liberation, it remains at the service of the people and the orders of the Government. It insures the defense of the Republic's territory and participates in political, economic and social activities *within the framework of the Party.*

Article 43 - He [the President] is supreme commander of the Republic's armed forces.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE CHARTER OF ALGIERS, April 1964  
(Selections)

Chapter II, The State

Section 13

The Liberation Army constituted an important factor in the victory of the Algerian people over French colonialism.

Composed of militants, the ALN was not only a fighting force, but also a defender of the revolutionary transformations brought about by armed struggle.

Born of the ALN, the ANP is one of the components of the State that is not a relic of colonialism as are the other existing state instruments. Its problems and its difficulties stem from its history during the war for liberation and the need for its reconversion after independence. This reconversion aimed at creating an instrument adapted to administrative, political, economic and social tasks, a force animated by the revolutionary values that were forged during the war.

The ANP is one of the instruments for the defense of the Revolution. The revolution and its victories can only be protected by a force capable of defending them. The ANP, at the service of the people and responsive to the orders of the government, is above all a school for citizens and militants. *The Party is responsible for the political education of the Army.*

*The search for combat methods, structures and techniques necessary for a modern army should not in any case be undertaken independent of the experiences of the liberation war, just as it should not lead to an underestimation of the political-military framework. . . .*

*The ANP should contribute to the military training of militants and citizens grouped into popular militias . . . for the defense of the Revolution.*

The definition of military policy in its broad lines is the responsibility of the government within the framework of the Party's orders.

Party Statutes

Article 24 - The Role of the Party within the ANP.

The political work of the Party within the units of the ANP is carried out by the political department of the army, under the direct control of the Political Bureau. *The politicization of the army should take into account its specific conditions, notably with respect to discipline and the unity of command.*

[Note: The Tripoli Charter of 1962 had spoken of "the work of politicizing the army and the creation within it of Party cells," a considerably stronger formulation of Party control than adopted in this document.]

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MOHAMED HARBI, "LES FUSILS DE LA COLÈRE," IN  
*RÉVOLUTION AFRICAINE*, NO. 72, JUNE 13, 1964\*

(Selections)

Counterrevolutionaries should know that, faced with the choice between revolution and the peaceful approach that we have thus far maintained, we will choose *armed revolution*, if that is the price of success.

Counterrevolution, by adopting certain methods, is trying to weaken the attachment of the masses to the regime, to its leaders. It also is trying to weaken the popular revolutionary desire to go forward.

As we wrote last week, "*the only valid response to these acts is to set up POPULAR MILITIAS, as the Party Congress stipulated. Arming the people is one of the principal acts by which the revolutionary will of the leaders is demonstrated. It is the only way to galvanize our energies.*" Last week arming the people seemed to be a preventive measure. Now it is an urgent response [to counterrevolution].

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\* Written after several \_\_\_\_\_ went off in the port of Algeria on June 10, 1964.

## THE ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE POPULAR NATIONAL ARMY\*

Translated from

*Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1965, p. 9

The Algerian Popular National Army (ANP), successor to the Army of National Liberation, demonstrates by its reconversion an original aspect rarely found elsewhere. *Not only is this army, in its classical sense, a force for territorial defense and for protecting the gains of the revolution, but it also plays a major role in all areas of economic development of the country.*

The ANP, contrary to the classical concept, is not a force which lives apart from society; it does not form a caste; it is not encrusted with years of tradition; it was created at the time of the outbreak of the revolution and is made up of peasants and workers.

*As the battle spread and became organized, the army developed and acquired the most modern equipment.* From the stage of hunting rifles, primitive explosives and grenades, from diversionary actions and sabotage, the army passed to the stage of more homogenous armament and training: instructors, monitors, political commissars, logistics specialists, and communications experts all came to reinforce and improve fighting ability. This structure was controlled by a General Staff responsible for the armed struggle, for planning operations, for training specialists in the use of anti-aircraft weapons, bazookas, mortars, rifles, machine guns, finally reaching the ultimate stage of heavy artillery.

This type of combat, forged in heroic circumstances, led to Algeria's independence and the destruction of the colonial system.

*Unification, reconversion, modernization, equipment, formation of personnel -- these were the principal problems that the army had to face after independence.*

Today, the new battle is for building the country; it is the battle of the people for survival. The ANP, made up of men of the people, close to the people, has no other ideology or objectives than those which guide the people: the victory of the disinherited masses, the peasants and the workers, over the alliance of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists.

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\* Probably written by the Political Branch of the ANP.

This is why, since independence, the ANP has devoted all of its efforts not only to modernizing its equipment to assure its role as defender of the national territory and of the gains of the revolution, but also to training its cadres. For this purpose, the ANP created about twenty schools run by officers. Thanks to their devotion, and their revolutionary faith, these schools now function normally and form the technicians needed for the modernization of the ANP. With this same objective, the army has sent many officers to foreign schools and academies (including French ones) to receive advanced training.

This realistic policy of training cadres has permitted the creation of an air force, a navy, a tank corps, and now our army can use the most recent arms.

President Boumediene, in a speech, has underlined the necessity of this technical orientation of the ANP and said: "It is by following this path that the ANP will become a modern army. There is no alternative, if our country wants to have a revolutionary army capable of crushing plots and acts of sabotage or aggression that our enemies are preparing. For, if on one hand we should lead the peaceful battle of building socialism, on the other hand we must build an army capable of defending and protecting socialism. Thanks to the formation of naval officers and pilots, a navy and air force were created. Logistics, tanks, communications, engineers, and maintenance all followed the same course to provide the nation with all its means of defense and work."

As a complement to the technical training of its men, the army looks after their ideological orientation, since technical training can only be useful if it is used on behalf of the people. *The technical development of our army is necessary for the economic development of the country*, since the civilian and military sectors have close ties and influence each other.

The planned development of our army will correspond to the development of our country. The army, conscious of its economic and political responsibilities, will insure complete training for its future cadres. The National School for the Cadres of the Revolution already fills this role. A training ground for cadres, the National School of Cadets of the Revolution, looks after the revolutionary formation of young Algerians.

This school does not form an elite imbued with its superiority, cut off from the people by a caste mentality. Rather, by means of a broadening education which expands the horizons of the cadets, placing them in contact with the economic and social realities of the country, it forms trustworthy elements, conscious of their duties, close to the people, whom they will serve as the most efficient and disinterested cadres later on. They will pick up where their elders leave off, and will be capable of leading the country toward the edification of a society in which social justice will reign.

This technical, professional and ideological formation which our leaders are implementing is important not only for the army, but also for all other sectors in the life of the nation.

By its structures, its discipline, and the ideology of its soldiers, the ANP can be a very important productive force. It contributes to different tasks in the construction of the country, in professional training, in assisting the disinherited masses, all of which are activities which influence the economy. The engineering corps alone can help in reforestation, building bridges, power stations, factories, roads, and other work.

Several units of the army are already building villages (especially in Oranie), managing farms and cooperatives. During all of the reforestation campaigns, entire battalions of the ANP worked with the people. The ANP lives and develops at the same pace as the people. In perfect harmony, the ANP is building a socialist society at the side of the people. It is trying to form soldiers who, in the economic area, will have broad knowledge, who will be able to work in a variety of positions, depending on the needs of our society.

Situated at the head of the revolution and socialism, the cadres of the army are called on to collaborate closely with the national organizations and other sectors of activity throughout the country. The ANP, in close collaboration with the disinherited masses, will know how to protect and strengthen the gains of the revolution. The reinforcement of self-management committees and of the cooperative movement will take place along with the radical elimination of all forms of exploitation of the people and the fight against speculators, profiteers and demagogues.

\* \* \* \* \*

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE, October 30, 1969

(Selections)

The edification of the State, in its broadest sense, requires the simultaneous constitution of an armed force. This operation has proceeded according to our plans. The army of peasants and workers, the army of the poor, is each day being transformed into a modern army equipped with the most recent techniques and composed of dozens, if not hundreds of engineers and technicians. Although carried out in silence, without vain publicity, this action has nonetheless met our expectations. . . .