

**Marxist theory in African settler societies:
Algeria and South Africa**

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Claims about Marxism's weakness on the national question notwithstanding (Davis 1976: 10), Marxists in African settler societies offered creative analyses of the national and closely-linked land questions – contributions that have been largely neglected. Marxist influence in Africa was diffused from coastal areas via ports and cities and along rail lines, which allowed the distribution of political propaganda. Its impact as a theory and a political movement was felt primarily in settler societies with urban proletariats, particularly South Africa and Algeria, colonized respectively by the British and French imperial states.

Marxism's development in these countries reflected their distinctive conditions. While both experienced ruthless military conquest, the massive land expropriation of the indigenous people and the imposition of rigid sectional divisions, there were crucial differences. Firstly, Algeria's geographical proximity to Europe pulled it far more closely into European crises than South Africa. Secondly, Algeria had an indigenous Muslim landed elite that supported French colonization, and a significant section of its labor force migrated to France, becoming a displaced proletariat. South Africa, by contrast, lacked an indigenous black landed elite, and its labor migrated internally, within the country. Thirdly, Algeria was pulled between two aspirant global religions, Islam and Christianity, which reinforced the social and political divisions between the settler and indigenous populations. In South Africa, Christianity subsumed the localized indigenous religious beliefs, and social cleavages were cross-cutting, as blacks and whites often shared common religious values despite the pernicious racial inequalities.

This chapter examines Marxist thinking in these countries during the 1950s, a decade of increasing anti-communist repression.¹ In South Africa the 1948 National Party electoral victory on an apartheid program accelerated racial polarization. The Cold War offered a

¹ This discussion draws on Drew 1996, 2000, 2012, 2014 and 2017.

convenient rationalization for repression; the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act squeezed the space available for public political discussions and protests. In Algeria, the outbreak of armed struggle in 1954 made open debate and protests increasingly untenable. Due to the Cold War and the desire to placate the United States, the French state hunted Algerian communists with disproportionate fervor. Marxists nevertheless theorized the national and land questions, issues that were central to their national liberation struggles.

The two socialist movements were shaped by their relationships with their imperial metropolises. The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was founded in 1921 as an autonomous section of the Comintern. South African socialism was variegated, crystallizing into communist and Trotskyist tendencies, and the organizational pluralism facilitated intellectual debate. By contrast, the *Parti communiste français* (PCF), launched in 1920 included three Algerian federations; only in 1936 was an autonomous *Parti communiste algérien* (PCA) formed. The PCF and later the PCA occupied all the political space on the anti-colonial socialist left, the Socialist Party retaining its colonial heritage. Thus, the crucial discussions about the national and land questions were between the PCA and the PCF and the PCA and Algerian nationalists. Although Algerian communists' dependency on their French counterparts initially hindered their theoretical work, Algerian communism's changing demography and the pressure of the war of independence led to important Algerian Marxist contributions.

Marxists in colonized societies invariably endorsed Lenin's view that the right to national self-determination was fundamental for democracy and working class internationalism, typically interpreting national self-determination as independent statehood (Löwy 1976: 96). The French state claimed Algeria as part of France, but the Muslim majority lived as a conquered and oppressed people. Early twentieth-century Algerian nationalists argued for equal rights within the French state, but by the Second World War they were demanding independence, while Algerian Marxists oscillated between equality and independence. By contrast, despite South Africa's colonial origins, in 1910 it became a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. Marxist debates hovered between those who saw the oppressed black majority as a colony needing self-determination and those who believed that the problem could be solved through full democratic rights for all.

South African and Algerian Marxists were influenced by the differing timing, interpretation and application of Comintern policies. In the 1920s, as the prospects of revolution in Europe

waned, the Comintern gave more attention to anti-colonial and national liberation struggles, which were seen as means to undermine imperialism. The Comintern's 1928 Sixth Congress argued that peasant struggles could destabilize imperialism until capitalism's contradictions led to its collapse. For the Comintern, the national and land questions in colonized societies overlapped. Indeed, the two questions were inextricably linked: not simply because colonizers seized the land of the colonized, but because, as Frantz Fanon (1968: 44) aptly noted, "land is the source of bread, and above all, dignity."

Marxism in South Africa

In South Africa, the native republic thesis introduced by the Comintern in 1927-28 lay the foundations for subsequent debates on the national and land questions. The thesis called for "an independent Native republic, as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' government," positing a peasant-based rather than a proletarian struggle. Given Marxism's historic concern with the urban working class, the thesis caused great acrimony within the CPSA, catalyzing waves of expulsions and the development of a Trotskyist movement.

With the adoption of the urban-oriented People's Front and the outbreak of the Second World War, the CPSA put the native republic thesis aside and concentrated pragmatically on trade union and electoral activities. As a result, despite their tiny numbers, Trotskyists played a disproportionate role in theorizing the national and land questions, arguing that the difficulty, if not impossibility, of achieving democratic rights – whether land or franchise rights – would push the black population towards a permanent revolution. They began with the problem of how to link urban and rural struggles – a challenge given the country's vast size and poor infrastructure. The organized urban proletariat – overwhelmingly white, racist and protectionist – could not be a working class vanguard. Thus, Trotskyists stressed the significance of migrant labor to link urban and rural movements. Because of migrant labor's exposure to urban ideas, they saw it as a vanguard able to transmit political ideas from town to countryside.

But the two main Trotskyist groups, the Fourth International Organisation of South Africa (FIOSA) and the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA) disagreed about whether to organize on the basis of objective class position or consciousness as reflected in beliefs and aspirations. The FIOSA's Moshe Noah Averbach (Mon 1945) argued that aside from minute numbers of farmers scattered about the reserves – territory to which Africans were relegated – rural Africans had little or no land and were aspirant peasants only, while those on white farms were

agricultural proletarians. This “tribal proletariat” – proletarian in outlook, peasant in aspiration – was the potential vanguard of an alliance of urban and rural workers jointly oppressed by their lack of democratic rights and united in their struggle against the color bar. By contrast, the WPSA saw the land question as the alpha and omega of the South African revolution. Arguing that the African majority’s national aspirations flowed from land hunger, it proposed the slogan “Land and Liberty” – the demand of an 1870s Russian underground group. WPSA activists organized Africans in reserves on the basis of their land hunger, hoping to prevent capitalists from using migrant workers as strike-breakers.

Trotskyism’s practical impact came from those who joined the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), notably the WPSA’s Isaac Bangani Tabata, who campaigned for the All African Convention (AAC), a NEUM affiliate with a rural Eastern Cape constituency, and the FIOSA’s Hosea Jaffe, a leading figure in the NEUM’s predominantly Western Cape Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (CAD) movement. The NEUM was founded in 1943 on the basis of a Ten Point Programme of minimum democratic demands to be achieved on the basis of non-collaboration with the racial system. Point 7 called for “Revision of the land question,” explaining that

the relations of serfdom at present existing on the land must go, together with the *Land Acts*, together with the restrictions upon acquiring land. A new division of the land in conformity with the existing rural population, living on the land and working the land, is the first task of a democratic State and Parliament.

The 1950s was a decade of virtually continuous rural upheaval as people protested government intervention in the reserves. The AAC campaigned against the 1945 Rehabilitation Scheme, which entailed culling cattle and resettling people into reserve-based villages. Anti-Rehabilitation protests intertwined with struggles against the Tribal Authorities who collaborated with apartheid and accumulated wealth by so doing (Tabata 1945; Mbeki 1964:34, 40-42).

AAC activists saw rural Africans as peasants or aspirant peasants, interpreting the abolition of restrictions on acquiring land to mean the right to buy and sell land. Tabata argued that rural Africans could not be mobilized on a slogan of nationalization as from their perspective the state’s trusteeship of reserve land was tantamount to nationalization. Since the legal right to

buy land without the means to do so could never satisfy land hunger, he maintained, rural Africans would eventually reject capitalism. Thus, the legal right to buy and sell land would become a pivot of a permanent revolution.

Tabata's stance was criticized by Jaffe and his Anti-CAD followers and by Trotskyists of the Cape Town Forum Club. Jaffe argued that Point 7 implied firstly, a democratic redivision of the land rather than socialist collectivization; secondly, legal equality on the land; and lastly, the right to buy and sell. Redivision entailed the expropriation of large landowners, the abolition of white control of land and the allotment of land to smallholders on an equal household basis. Jaffe believed that migrant workers or 'peasant-workers' would apply the technical and cooperative practices learned in their urban worksites to agricultural production, preferring individual titles to non-marketable land. The dispute became so heated that the NEUM split in December 1958.

The Forum Club's Kenneth Jordaan (1959) maintained that the land question was not the sub-soil of the South African revolution. Rural Africans were a proletarianized reserve labor force who no longer looked to land for subsistence. Unlike the bourgeoisies of classical democratic revolutions, South Africa's white bourgeoisie could never satisfy black democratic demands. Its democratic struggle was "being waged without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie" (1959: 333). Precisely because South African capitalism was premised on the lack of democratic rights, democracy would undermine it.

Despite the AAC's hopes, Jordaan continued, industrial South Africa lacked the large peasantry upon which to develop a black farming class. Its bourgeoisie relied on the super-exploitation of proletarianized reserve-dwellers and would never allow them to withdraw from the labor market to develop as independent farmers. Thus, the AAC's position was not progressive from a working-class perspective, while the Anti-CAD's call to break up and redistribute large, productive capitalist landholdings was economically unviable, and its assumption that Africans had a prior land claim and would abandon industry, utopian. In contrast to Tabata, Jordaan proposed nationalization to allow the continuation of large, mechanized farms, enabling a gradual transition to collectivization.

The CPSA had disbanded shortly before the Suppression of Communism Act. Seeking a space for debate, Communists and sympathizers formed the Johannesburg Discussion Club, whose proceedings published only one paper on the land question (Sanders 1952). In 1953 some former Communists regrouped as the underground South African Communist Party (SACP),

which stressed the national over the class struggle and sought a close relationship with the African National Congress (ANC). In the mid-1950s communists helped draw up the Freedom Charter, a democratic program similar to the Ten Point Programme, but with more social democratic content and without the stress on non-collaboration. Adopted by the Congress of the People in June 1955 and the ANC in 1956, its land clause stated: 'The Land Shall Be Shared Among Those Who Work It!'

In March 1960 the outbreak of the Eastern Cape Phondoland uprising and the police massacre of unarmed Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) demonstrators at Sharpeville and Langa transformed the political terrain. A State of Emergency was declared on 30 March, and the ANC and PAC banned on 8 April. The SACP's Govan Mbeki was writing a book about Transkei politics, focusing on the evolving political consciousness manifested during the Phondoland uprising. Like Tabata, Mbeki recognized migrant labor's importance: The 1952 ANC-led Defiance Campaign had been successful in Port Elizabeth and East London, where migrant workers maintained close links with rural kin. Tabata and Mbeki both stressed the reserve population's political solidarity, rather than its class differentiation. They both saw the relationship of urban and rural protests as one of intense, short-lived urban protests periodically intersecting with slower, longer-lived rural protests.

In 1961 several South African groups launched sabotage attacks. But sabotage only intensified the state's crackdown. Influenced by the Phondoland uprising, Mbeki (1964: 130-31) proposed guerrilla struggle. He and his comrade Joe Slovo drafted a discussion document on the armed struggle. While Mbeki stressed the rural population's peasant aspirations, Slovo – like Jaffe – believed that reserve dwellers were peasant-workers. Impressed by the Chinese revolution, Slovo felt it necessary to appeal to them on the basis of land hunger (Sanders 1952). This discussion, like that of the Trotskyists, was cut off by the arrest and imprisonment of the left-wing groups strategizing about armed struggle.

If the land question was crucial for South Africa's liberation struggle, so was the question of who constituted the South African nation. South Africa's distinctive feature was the legal codification of white supremacy, which divided the population into separate sectional groups – generally called national or racial groups. A key Marxist debate concerned whether to accept these groups as the starting point for political organizing or try to transcend them from the outset. Communists retained the Comintern's colonial conception. While aspiring to a non-racial society, they nonetheless operated within a multi-racial and multinational paradigm,

exemplified by the ANC-led Congress Alliance. Influenced by Soviet thinking about the progressive role of national democratic movements in the Third World, Michael Harmel (1954) argued that South Africa was characterized by white monopoly capitalism with colonial conditions for the black majority – two nations in the same state. Lionel Forman distinguished between bourgeois nationalism and people’s nationalism, suggesting that the black proletariat’s rapid growth raised the possibility of a Chinese-type “people’s movement.” Since South Africa comprised nations and aspirant nations, working class policy must guarantee their right to territorial and administrative autonomy, along with individual freedom of movement (Forman 1954a).

Trotskyists recognized that racial divisions were internalized in popular consciousness, and this was reflected in the NEUM’s federal structure, but they nonetheless maintained that there was one South African nation. Rejecting the colonial analogy, they argued that British imperialism had refashioned pre-capitalist remnants to produce a political dualism – democracy for whites and a slave colony for blacks. “The color bar is the iron hoop which binds together the whole structure of imperialist-capitalism,” argued Averbach (Mon 1944: 326). Breaking the color bar would undermine this structure and lead to its collapse.

Communists used Stalin’s (1913: 8-11) empirical definition of a nation as: “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” – despite the definition’s obvious lack of fit with multilingual Africa and its variance with Lenin’s distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations (Löwy 1976: 94-8). The NEUM (1951) staunchly rejected Stalin’s definition, arguing that the South African nation comprised “the people who were born in South Africa and who have no other country ... as their mother-land ... All that is required for a people to be a nation is community of interests, love of their country, pride in being citizens of their country” (Karis and Carter 1973:495). Nation-building must begin with principled rather than ad hoc unity against the *herrenvolk* notion of a master race, the NEUM insisted. This required repudiating those who collaborated with the state’s divide and rule policies.

Jordaan (1951) countered that the basis for Non-European unity was the common lack of democratic rights – not color. The NEUM’s emphasis on a *herrenvolk* master race obscured class divisions and implied that blacks and whites constituted two inherently antagonistic blocs. The modern racial system was the result of rapid imperialist intervention in a white settler

society. The political demands of the liberation movement, Jordaan concluded, must coincide with the economic tendency towards increasing black proletarianization.

In an unusual exchange between communists and Trotskyists at a 1954 Forum Club symposium, the SACP's Jack Simons (1954) argued, in contrast to Harmel (1954) and Forman (1954b), that South Africa's national question could not be solved by the traditional demands of oppressed nations for autonomy, self-determination or secession, but by legal and social equality. Because the color bar stifled the development of a black bourgeoisie and prevented any significant class differentiation amongst the oppressed, the working class would play the dominant political role within the liberation movement, which would, accordingly, reflect the common interests of all workers rather than specific group interests, reinforcing South Africa's tendency to develop into one nation rather than a multinational society.

For the Trotskyists, Jordaan (1954) similarly argued that South Africa was characterized not by conflicting nations, but by a dominant group oppressing other people of the same nation. Hence, the national question could not be solved through formal independence but through democracy; in this respect, the national and democratic struggles converged. South Africa's white bourgeoisie would not lead this democratic struggle, and unlike China, India and Indonesia, South Africa had no significant black bourgeoisie. Black South Africans were overwhelmingly workers or impoverished rural cultivators. The black proletariat, whose aspirations would inevitably conflict with capitalism, must lead the democratic struggle, resulting ultimately in a permanent revolution.

The SACP shelved discussion of the national question once it accepted the Freedom Charter, whose national clause proclaimed: "All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!" Despite its assumption of group rights, the Freedom Charter was open-ended enough to lend itself to a variety of interpretations. Nonetheless, it sparked a dispute within the ANC. The Natal ANC argued that the national clause emphasized racial divisions over nation-building. Similarly, Africanist Robert Sobukwe argued that multiracialism negated democracy by promoting group rather than individual rights, giving disproportionate representation to whites while denying the indigenous majority their rightful possession of the land (Karis and Carter 1977:65-66, 317-20). Ultimately, just as the NEUM had fractured over the land question, the ANC fractured over the national question, as Africanists split off in 1959 and formed the PAC, claiming undue white communist influence.

SACP and ANC activists formed the armed struggle group *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) on a non-racial basis, suggesting that communists found multi-racialism increasingly impractical. The SACP's thinking, nevertheless, still reflected the native republic thesis. Its 1962 program maintained that South Africa was characterized by "colonialism of a special type," that national democracy was a precondition for socialism and that it should continue its alliance with the ANC. Like the native republic thesis, colonialism of a special type assumed a two-stage process based on a multi-class, multi-racial alliance for national liberation as a stage towards socialism.

Marxism in Algeria

If the native republic thesis provided the foundation for South African Marxist debates, in Algeria the demand for independence had an analogous impact. The political environment was extremely inhospitable to communism. The *côte de l'indigénat* (native code) compelled Muslim Algerians to strict obedience to the colonial regime, imposing harsh punishments for infractions that were not illegal in France but were unlawful in Algeria when committed by Muslims and making it illegal for them to join political parties. This made recruitment of indigenous Algerians exceptionally difficult. Repression made left-wing activism extremely risky. The communist party was banned twice during the colonial era and once again, following independence.

In May 1922 the Comintern published its *Appel de l'Internationale communiste pour la libération de l'Algérie et de la Tunisie* – a call for the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia. Noting the hazards posed by repression, the Comintern urged French workers to support the struggle of North African workers and French soldiers and sailors not to shoot them. In that way the French working class could assist the national revolution while attacking French imperialism. The call for independence led to increased repression by the French state and to a spate of resignations and expulsions from the PCF's Algerian region. Dissenting voices argued that a socialist revolution in France was a precondition for socialism in Algeria – especially given the backwardness of the Muslim landed elite. Nonetheless, by the decade's end, their numbers depleted, communists in Algeria had accepted independence as policy.

However, the matter was re-opened in the late 1930s. The PCF argued that the fight against fascism necessitated a strong united France; independence was sidelined. In February 1939, as war clouds loomed over Europe, the PCF general secretary Maurice Thorez provided the rationale for Franco-Algerian unity, namely that Algeria was a "nation in formation" needing

French guidance. While the PCF supported the right to self-determination, this right did not mandate separation. The PCA was the Algerian organization best-suited to lead this nation in formation because it was open to all, irrespective of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Most Algerian nationalists scornfully rejected the proposition that Algeria was not yet a fully formed nation. The PCA was divided about the thesis. However, its advocates observed that at least Thorez spoke of an Algerian nation, albeit one in the process of development, and in March 1939 the majority accepted it. Once the Second World War erupted, the union of France and Algeria was seen as even more necessary. Anti-fascism was counterpoised to anti-colonialism, which was constructed as divisive. The PCA had a heated debate, but ultimately followed the PCF. This position exacerbated tensions with the Algerian nationalist movement, which developed rapidly during the war, particularly after the November 1942 Anglo-American landing.

While the PCF emerged from the world war strengthened and, for many, heroic, this was not so for the PCA. Tensions between nationalists and communists peaked following the May 1945 massacre of Algerians around Sétif and Guelma. Viewing the massacre through anti-fascist lenses, the PCA initially claimed it had been precipitated by fascist provocateurs. But the scale of the massacre – probably tens of thousands – compelled a rethink. From 1946 on the PCA gave greater attention to the national question – despite loyally maintaining the nation in formation thesis – and attracted young Algerians concerned that the nationalist parties were not addressing social justice issues. As increasing numbers of Algerians joined the PCA, they pushed the issue of national oppression.

The post-war French state resisted any real reforms. Thus, the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) announced itself on 1 November 1954 with coordinated sabotage attacks across the country. Within months sabotage became a guerrilla war led by the FLN's *Armée de libération nationale* (ALN). When the FLN launched armed struggle from the rural, mountainous regions most urban communists, having prioritized urban workers, were caught off guard. However, the PCA quickly provided clandestine support to the FLN, hoping to continue open political and trade union work for as long as possible. But it was under tremendous pressure from both inside and outside its ranks to join the armed struggle or risk increasing marginalization. In June 1955 it launched its own armed units, the *Combattants de la libération* (Liberation soldiers), which later merged into the ALN. As the war ground on, open political discussion became impossible. When the government dissolved the PCA on 12 September 1955,

communists went underground or overseas. The mass arrests of August 1957 left Bachir Hadj Ali and Sadek Hadjères as the two remaining PCA political bureau members inside Algeria.

French troops used torture routinely, and while in prison the Marxist journalist and PCA member Henri Alleg wrote *La Question* (1958), the powerful account of his own torture that sparked an outcry in France and was read by South African Marxists such as Neville Alexander. The war's escalating intensity and the pressure from Algerian communists compelled the PCA to develop its own distinctive position vis-à-vis French communists, not least concerning the national question. Indeed, on 16 January 1956, with the war in full swing, the PCF's Léon Feix had finally admitted that Algeria's nation in formation was a nation in fact (Sivan 1976: 243-58).

In January 1957 the PCA launched *Réalités algériennes et Marxisme*, a theoretical journal whose name reflected the concern to apply Marxism to Algeria's specificities. The first issue was produced in Algeria, but underground publishing was too difficult, so the PCA's external wing in Prague took it over. Its second issue in 1958 included a substantial article by an anonymous contributor, which showed the evolution of thinking on the national question compared to Thorez's nation in formation thesis. Algerian nationalism was rooted in love of land and liberty, values which could be traced back to the Berbers, the author began. The Arabs had introduced Islam, but allowed the Berbers to retain their customs and social organization, laying the basis for an Algerian nation embracing multiple cultures. Capitalism had facilitated the territory's economic unification. But colonialism – by closing mosques and independent schools, imposing the French language and decreeing Arabic as foreign – had been a step back for Algerian nationalism. Nonetheless, it had leapt forward during the Second World War and been further fueled by the Sétif massacre (Anonymous 1958: 4, 9; Sivan 1976: 250-53).

The author implicitly recognized the limitations of Stalin's empirical definition of nationhood for transforming Algeria. Envisioning a democratic and multicultural Algeria, the author modified Stalin's conception of nationhood to include subjectivity. Independent Algeria would not only include the Arabo-Berber people – who fit Stalin's criteria – but Jews and Europeans. Jews had lived in North Africa for centuries, and although the 1870 Crémieux Decree had split them off from Muslims, by identifying as Algerian they could become part of the Algerian nation and state. Similarly, Europeans would not be at home in France; they could be integrated into the Algerian state as citizens and workers, and progressive Europeans, as part of the Algerian nation (Anonymous 1958: 17, 21).

The article contended that communists had overestimated European workers' anti-colonialism, while underestimating the impact of their superior conditions vis-a-vis Algerian workers on their political consciousness. But Algeria was incontestably Arab, and their cultural imprint would inevitably increase after independence. Algerians would never accept incoming president Charles de Gaulle's notion of integration, and any positive relationship between the two countries necessitated that France recognize the Algerian nation. The equality of Algerians and Europeans was impossible under the colonial economic framework. That framework must be broken, a task that fell to Algerians, concluded the author (Anonymous 1958: 23-9).

Just as the unrelenting war compelled Algerian Marxists to rethink the national question, so it pushed them to analyze the land question. Reflecting the rapidly evolving guerrilla struggle, in 1961 Hadj Ali, living underground, published an analysis of the land question that he presumably discussed clandestinely with his communist wife Lucie Larrivière and his comrade Hadjères, also in hiding. He began with the brutal French conquest and expropriation, followed by the concentration of land, the devastation of forestland and increased desertification. Alongside European landowners, indigenous feudal-like landowners retained their traditional exploitation while introducing capitalist methods. All this led to a major decline in peasant living standards, a fall in the number of sharecroppers and a sharp increase in agricultural workers. This resulted in widespread hunger, with peasants seeking work in Algerian and French cities. "Le paysan algérien est devenu esclave sur la terre de ses pères" [the Algerian peasant has become a slave on the land of his fathers] (Hadj Ali 1961: 16-21).

Like their South African counterparts, Algerian peasants demanded "Land and Liberty," their support for the slogan indicating that Algeria's democratic struggle was at its base a peasant revolution. Like Mbeki, Hadj Ali stressed the rapidly developing political consciousness of rural people. Participation in the struggle helped the rural poor to throw off their inferiority complex vis-a-vis both the colonizers and the feudal elite. Thus, revolutionary organization developed very rapidly into a guerrilla struggle based on mutual reciprocity between the ALN and the rural poor. On the one side, peasants supplied food to the ALN, while agricultural workers contributed to the struggle at night after work. On the other, the ALN seized land abandoned by Europeans fleeing the war-torn countryside and redistributed it to peasants (Hadj Ali 1961: 11).

In contrast to Tabata and Mbeki's emphasis on rural solidarity, however, Hadj Ali stressed rural class divisions – precisely because rural Algeria was highly differentiated. The PCA and

the working class needed the support of poor peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural workers, he noted. It was also important to unite with middle peasants who had not betrayed the national liberation struggle, to win over small European cultivators, to neutralize medium-sized European farmers and isolate the large-scale European and Muslim landowners. Once the war was over, it was crucial to satisfy the aspirations of poor peasants and rural workers through the return of their stolen land and to give land to those who would work it. This accorded both with the national interest and was embedded in popular belief through the Koranic verse: “La terre à ceux qui la font fructifier” [Land to those who cultivate it] (Hadj Ali 1961: 12-13, 23-4, 28-29).

While the PCA recognized that the war of independence was a peasant war for land, it still stressed proletarian leadership. Peasants were prone to “an ideology that expresses itself occasionally in acts of a distorted character, to the discredit of the just character of the national struggle ... creating the impression of a chauvinist, racist, fanatical struggle.” Proletarian leadership was required to control spontaneous violence (Hadj Ali 1969: 252-3; Taleb Bendiab 2015: 314-15). The difference with Fanon could not have been starker: “The starving peasant ... is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays.” Yet nationalist parties neglected peasants, who “alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain” (Fanon 1968: 61, 66, 109).

The PCA’s April 1962 independence program reflected these articles on the national and land questions. It stressed that the future Algeria would belong to all Algerians working together in a vibrant civil society for the national good. Algeria would be an independent sovereign democratic republic with a formal constitution enshrining human rights, the neutrality and non-interference of the state in religion, the mutual respect and tolerance of religious beliefs, the prohibition of racial discrimination and the full equality of women. It also advocated the expropriation of large land holdings without compensation. While nationalization and socialization of the principal means of production and collectivization of agriculture were not sufficient conditions for socialism, it maintained, they would provide its basis (PCA 1962: 16-17, 19).

In turn, the PCA program undoubtedly influenced the FLN’s independence program, adopted at Tripoli in May-June 1962. This advocated a popular democratic revolution based on the leadership of the rural masses supported by the urban poor and middle class and reflecting socialist and collectivist values. The FLN’s organ *El Moudjahid* (1961, 1962) had published

extracts from Fanon's (1968) *Damnés de la terre* [Wretched of the Earth]. Like Fanon, the Tripoli program's authors saw the peasantry as the leading force of what was first and foremost an agrarian revolution with three principal tasks: agrarian reform, agricultural modernization, and the restoration and conservation of natural resources (FLN 1962: 81-2, 112-13). The PCA and the FLN put forward very different notions of post-war Algeria, the former's reflecting political pluralism, and the latter's a one-party state. In November 1962, soon after independence, the FLN banned the PCA.

Conclusion

South African and Algerian Marxists responded creatively to the increasing repression of the 1950s. Their analyses of the national and land questions reflected their distinctive national conditions. Thus, South African Marxists stressed migrant labor and rural solidarity, while their Algerian counterparts emphasized rural class divisions. Their analyses were also affected by their geopolitical positions. South Africa's distance from Britain allowed the South African left to develop with relative autonomy, while the left's organizational pluralism stimulated Marxist thinking, although sectarian rivalries limited the impact of their theoretical contributions. By contrast, Algeria's geographic proximity to France allowed the PCF to maintain intellectual dominance for several decades. While the PCA's initial dependence on the PCF impeded its theoretical development, the influx of Algerian members and the rapidly evolving conditions during the war of independence compelled Algerian Marxists to develop their own distinctive positions. Repression both stimulated and impeded theoretical work. On the one hand, political repression fueled theoretical work; on the other, faced with sweeping arrests and exile, continuing this work inside the two countries became extremely difficult. Whatever the weakness of European Marxism in addressing the theory of nationalism, colonialism – especially settler colonialism, with its national oppression and land expropriation – posed the national and land questions acutely, and African Marxists took up the challenge.

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