

12.2 The Amicale des Algériens en Europe 1962-1992

The post-Cold War era has been marked by homeland governments' efforts to maintain ties with expatriate populations. The Algerian state pursued similar goals through the Amicale following independence.

Perhaps the best example of a sending state projecting a form of governance to its citizens abroad was Algeria from 1962 to 1990. Algeria achieved independence from France only after an eight-year-long conflict that cost 1 million lives. During the war of independence, the major Algerian revolutionary party, the National Liberation Front, had created a substantial organizational membership and infrastructure in metropolitan France. After the cessation of hostilities, the National Liberation Front organization in France was transformed into the *Amicale des Algériens en France* (AAE).

The head of the AAE was usually also a high-ranking official of the ruling National Liberation Front and of the Algerian government. The AAE enjoyed quasi-diplomatic status in France. It represented the interests of Algerian emigrants in Algerian policy-making circles as well as vis-à-vis the French government. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the AAE virtually monopolized the representation of Algerians in France, although it was opposed by rival groups, like the outlawed Movement of Arab Workers, a revolutionary communist organization with ties to radical Palestinian factions, which played a key role in organizing large protests involving many migrant workers against attacks on Algerians and other North Africans in 1973 (Miller, 1981: 89-104). The AAE opposed the French government's decision in 1981 to grant aliens the right to form associations (Weil, 1991: 99-114). Prior to 1981, associations of foreigners required government authorization in order to operate, which condemned anti-Algerian regime parties to clandestinity. The 1981 reform undercut the virtual AAE monopoly, and open opposition to the Algerian regime soon flourished.

The Algerian government was particularly concerned by the ability of Muslim fundamentalist groups, such as the Islamic Salvation Front, to operate openly in France, which they could not do in Algeria. This concern was shared with other non-Islamic governments in predominantly Muslim societies such as Turkey and Tunisia.

Political dissidence expressed on French soil presaged the fundamentalist victory in the December 1991 elections in Algeria, although many Algerians who voted for the Islamic Salvation Front were not so much voting for an Islamic republic as protesting against authoritarian and corrupt National Liberation Front rule. The influence of French policies with regard to aliens' associations illustrates how international migration binds together the politics of two societies.

References:

- Miller, M. J. (1981) *Foreign Workers in Western Europe: An Emerging Political Force* (New York: Praeger).
- Weil, P. (1991) *La France et ses Étrangers* (Paris: Calmann-Levy).