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FRENCH
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FORMS OF DESIRE



INAUGURAL FILM PROGRAM AT
THE ALGERIAN CINÉMATHEQUE
CINEMA OF RESISTANCE — ZINEB
SEDIRA, YASMINA REGGAD,
SAM BARDAOUIL, TILL

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REGGAD THE DECENTERED TRAVELER

THE CINEMA OF RESISTANCE



Zineb Sedira, 2021.
Cinecittà studios,
Rome, Italy

PROGRAM

- JANUARY - THE CINEMA OF RESISTANCE
- FEBRUARY - TRIBUTE TO LUIS BUNUEL
- THE COMPLETE WORKS OF S.M. EISENSTEIN
- MARCH - AMERICAN BURLESQUE
- THE WESTERN AFTER "HIGH NOON"
- THE ITALIAN CINEMA FROM "SENSO" TO "TERRORIST"
- APRIL - TRIBUTE TO ERIC VON STROHEIM
- RICHARD QUINE: THE COMEDY OF CHARACTERS
- LENIN'S BIRTHDAY
- STEPHAN BOSUSTOW : THE UPA REVOLUTION
- CZECHOSLOVAKIAN ANIMATION CINEMA
- MAY - GERMAN SILENT MASTERS
- FANTASY CINEMA
- YOUNG BULGARIAN CINEMA
- JUNE - EXPRESSIONISM
- THE EPIC FILM
- JULY - JAPANESE CINEMA
- TRIBUTE TO JERRY LEWIS
- TRIBUTE TO JEAN VIGO

"Six Months of Activity," first program of the Algerian Cinémathèque in 1965. Archives of the Algerian Algérien de la Cinématographie (C.A.C.), Algiers, Algeria

To inaugurate its activities, the CINEMATHEQUE's repertory room had to devote a cycle of screenings to the resistance of peoples against their aggressors.

The first day paid tribute to the struggle of the Algerian people.

This was followed by a selection of the best works in the genre from around the world with productions that either exalted the resistance of peoples or highlighted the stupid

and ferocious nature of useless wars, without forgetting the vengeful humour that has always been the best weapon of the unjustly oppressed weak.

Of course, given the current development of the film industry, these films were particularly focused on the resistance movements of the European peoples.

A daily broadcast on R.T.A. (Radiodiffusion Télévision Algérienne) presented each programme.

FILM DE RESISTANCE

EDITORIAL

The Editors,
Zineb, Yasmina, Sam, and Till

psychoanalytical reading of history that is founded on guilt, an Oedipal complex that stems from the history of violence perpetuated on the indigenous population. It is, therefore, the duty of the law to control the colonized subjects' desire, especially when it becomes political, and penalize them when acting on it in order to prevent the new order that was installed by the colonizer from collapsing. While focused on Australia's politico-legal history, Rogers' complex proposition allows us to draw parallels between the Algerian colonial experience (among others) and an unexpected, yet relevant geo-historical setting, providing an unconventional decentered perspective on the inherent correlation between desire and political emancipation.

Part of our series of commissioned texts, "When We Dreamed of Being Directors" by Léa Morin offers an insightful analysis of the transformation of Algeria's militant cinematographic structures from institutions born of the desire to reflect a people's struggle for independence into a vehicle for a first generation of Algeria-trained filmmakers who, in the early 1960s sought to capture (or not) the post-liberation realities of a society "under construction."

In "An Unexpected Intruder," Nadira Laggoune-Aklouche recalls the critical response Assia Djebar's iconic film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* initially received in Algeria in 1978. Laggoune-Aklouche retrospectively situates the film as a counter-position to a male-dominated cinematic milieu and testimony to the growing aspirations of the feminist movement as well as the nascent desire for an Algerian cinema to come. The film program that Róisín Tapponi has put together shows that this promise was largely fulfilled. Quoting in its title the often-overlooked Berber writer Fadhma Aït Mansour, "Va ma fille, Dieu fasse que ton soleil perce les nuages," Tapponi's selection of ten films directed by women working across a wide range of genres reveals an intergenerational continuity in Algerian cinema and its diaspora. Tapponi highlights the shift from the *gardiennes d'images* [image safe-guards] to *passeuses* [channelers]. She brings out the filiation between the works of Assia Djebar and Habiba Djahnine and the most recent films by Sonia Kessi and Wiame Awres—representatives of the acclaimed Bejaïa Doc workshop, as well as the fantasy movies of visual artist Sara Sadik.

While reading our *Algiers* issue, you can listen to "Silenzio e sospiro," a playlist compiled by Nabil Djedouani. It opens with Miles Davis' improvised soundtrack for Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*, a precursor of French New Wave cinema, and finishes off with Bosa Nova legend Nara Leão's rendition of the song *Joana Francisca*, written by Chico Buarque for Carlos Diegues' 1973 eponymous Brazilian film. In a perfect loop, both films feature the renowned French actress Jeanne Moreau as a heroin embroiled in plots of in-

trigue and desire, not unlike some of the singers in Djedouani's playlist, including the legendary Syrian figure Asmahan, long-accused of being a World War II spy, whose 1940 song "يا حبيبي تعال الحقني" [My love come to my rescue] is a fixture in the canon of Arabic music.

As an artist, Zineb Sedira has always treated her work as a means of amplifying a multiplicity of voices, from the personally related to the historically relevant. In a similar gesture, she invites her friends and peers to critically yet playfully address the notion of desire. The voices of Laure Prouvost, the previous tenant of the French Pavilion in 2019, and of the artist duo Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Zineb's longstanding art comrades, are made present through various materials drawn from existing artworks that reveal their creative process. They are joined by "The Decentered Traveler," aka Yasmina Reggad, who conveys by means of word and image, and not without humour, the behind the scenes of her research trips with Zineb Sedira over the years, and in preparation for the exhibition at the French Pavilion in Venice.

If none of the items mentioned so far have succeeded in whetting your appetite, the center spread featuring a collage designed by Zineb as a collectable poster should do the trick.

Where does desire lie? In physical gestures, fleeting words, old markings on faded surfaces, rolls of film lost, found and lost again? In the lifelong pursuit of an artwork, in an illuminating intuition, or perhaps in a moment of hesitation? Laure Prouvost gives us a clue: "Ideally here would be a door for where you want to be."

Zineb Sedira, 2017. Archives
of the Centre National de la
Cinématographie et de
l'Audiovisuel (C.N.C.A.),
Algiers, Algeria



“When we dreamed of being directors”



حزب جبهة التحرير الوطني
 اتحاد الفنون السمعية البصرية
 UNION DES ARTS AUDIO-VIS
 ORGANISATION PROFESSIONNELLE DES CINEASTES ALGERIENS

CINEMA :

“A photo from our youth at the Algiers Film Institute when we dreamed of being directors...” captioned filmmaker Merzak Allouache in tribute to Farouk Beloufa, who died in 2018.¹

In the mid-1960s, Allouache and Beloufa were students at the National Institute of Cinema and Television in Ben Aknoun. Located in the heights of Algiers, this “ephemeral” school trained only one class of filmmakers, technicians, and actors between 1964 and 1966.

After 1962, the newly independent Algeria sought to train its executives and set up new institutions. From being a weapon of combat during the war of liberation, the cinema had to become a tool for the development of the new Algerian society.

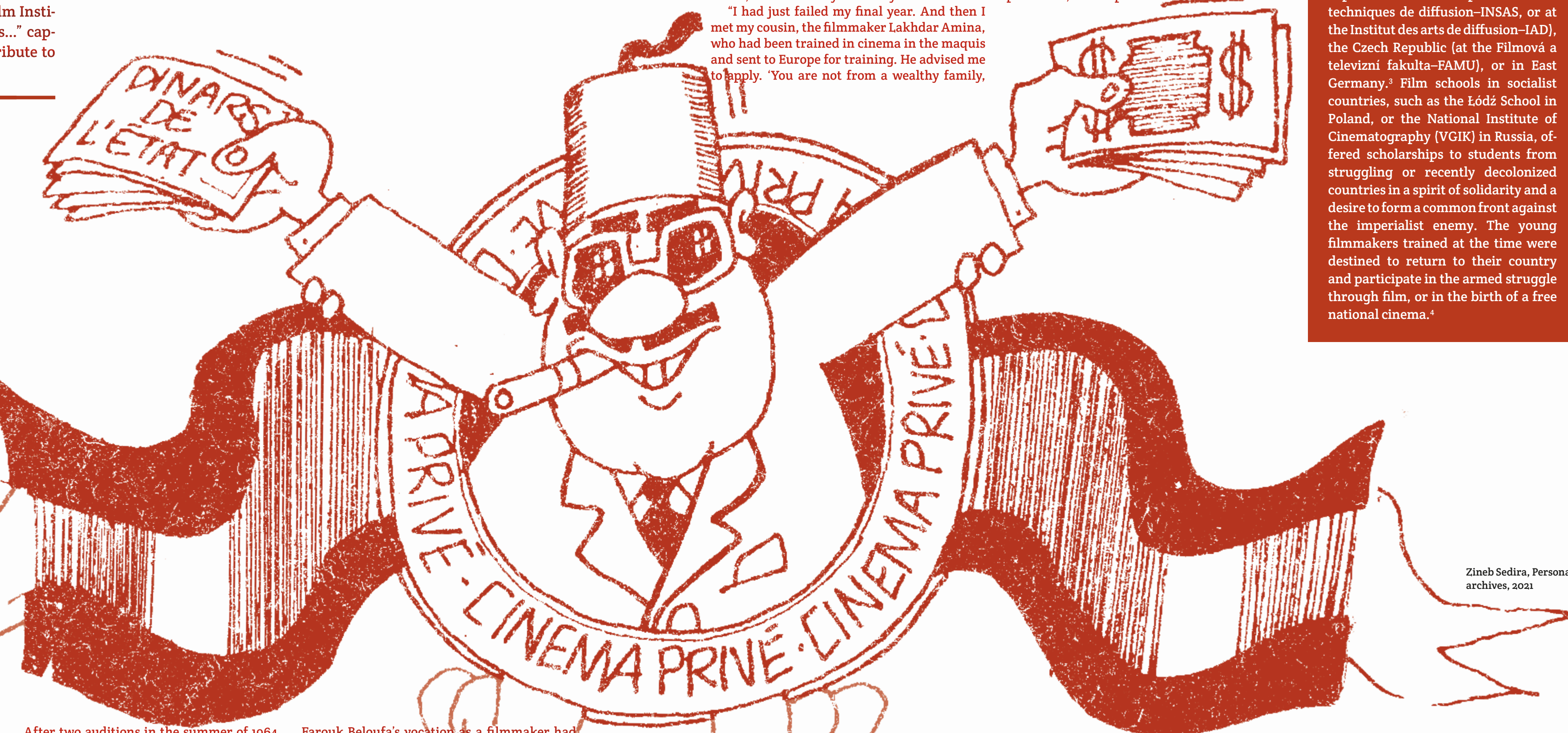
At the end of the War of Independence, the first cinematographic structures were created, mainly by the hero-filmmakers of the Algerian revolution: the Ben Aknoun audiovisual center, the Actualités Algériennes, and the Casbah Film company.⁵

In August 1964, in a bid to unify these structures, they were grouped together within the Centre Cinématographique du Cinéma Algérien (CNC). This led to the creation of the National Film Institute, in charge of training filmmakers, and the Algerian Cinémathèque, which opened its doors to the public in January 1965 with a week dedicated to “resistance films.”⁶

But how could a wartime cinema “born in the flames,” conceived as a tool of the struggle for liberation and which sought to show the truth of a people in struggle, evolve into an art capable of reflecting the realities of a society under construction? What kind of cinema for an independent Algeria? What role for free Algerian cinema?

So many questions that the future students of the INC who came to take the entrance exam in the summer of 1964 were yet to ask themselves.

For this new generation, it all began with a simple advertisement published in the “Examinations and Competitions” section of the *Alger Républicain*. The daily, like other national newspapers, relayed each day the multiple career possibilities that were then open to Algerian youth. The INC wished to “provide serious training to all young Algerian men and women called upon to contribute to the development of national culture.”⁷



Zineb Sedira, Personal archives, 2021

Farouk Beloufa’s vocation as a filmmaker had long been affirmed. “He was brilliant. He had the most intellectual baggage and energy,” says Yazid Khodja.¹² Others would never have dared to aspire to it, even if the passion was there. “My father saw an advertisement in the newspaper. The Film Institute was recruiting young people through an entrance examination. He knew that I was more of an artist. When I was younger I used to make a kind of cinema at home. I had created a device. I put up a white paper screen. I made a hut for the darkness. And then, behind the white paper screen, I

would make cut-outs of characters that I would animate. And I would do the voices, the music, everything. The kids who came to see it, they paid 20 cents. And then with the money I collected, I went to the real cinema. I took the entrance exam so as not to disappoint my father, but I didn’t believe in it. And for me, the Institute was still a school... But there was the word ‘cinema,’” recalls the cartoonist Slim (Menouar Merabtène).¹³ And others still find themselves there, almost by chance: “I did very poorly as a student and I found myself working at a very young age at the post office in Algiers. And one day this ad appeared in the newspaper. I was with a group of friends, we made a bit of music, I had no idea, nor any desire to make films; we wanted to become the Beatles. We said to ourselves, ‘Cinema—why not?’” says Allouache.¹⁴

“I had just failed my final year. And then I met my cousin, the filmmaker Lakhdar Amina, who had been trained in cinema in the maquis and sent to Europe for training. He advised me to apply. ‘You are not from a wealthy family,

what are you going to do? With the cinema you will meet people, you will travel,” says Khodja, who for a long time was part of the management team of the Algerian Cinémathèque.¹⁵

Even the Director of the Ahmed Hocine Institute evokes the fragility of the project, “Chérif Belkacem, then Minister of National Orientation to which the information had been attached, asked me to create a training center. It was set up without many resources, we were installed in buildings under construction. [...] We had Polish teachers. We didn’t really know where we were going.”¹⁶

Classes began on 15 September 1964 in the empty buildings of the Cité des Asphodèles in Ben Aknoun where the CNC had just been set up. Most of the students lived there too. Three Polish professors, the couple Kaminski and Lesnevitch

Algerian cinema was born from struggle, within the cinema unit of the Ministry of Information of the GPRA (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic), supported by young foreign filmmakers such as René Vautier, Pierre Clément, and Stefan Labudović, all committed to Algerian independence.² The maquis was the first film school. Young aspiring filmmakers went to learn the trade in schools in France (at the Institut des hautes études cinématographiques-IDHEC), Belgium (at the Institut national supérieur des arts du spectacle et des techniques de diffusion-INSAS, or at the Institut des arts de diffusion-IAD), the Czech Republic (at the Filmová a televizní fakulta-FAMU), or in East Germany.³ Film schools in socialist countries, such as the Łódź School in Poland, or the National Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Russia, offered scholarships to students from struggling or recently decolonized countries in a spirit of solidarity and a desire to form a common front against the imperialist enemy. The young filmmakers trained at the time were destined to return to their country and participate in the armed struggle through film, or in the birth of a free national cinema.⁴

1. Published on the Facebook social network page by Merzak Allouache on April 18, 2018. Unless otherwise indicated, all the translations from the French original have been made by the translator.

2. To read on Algerian cinema and the War of Independence: Mouny Berrah, “Histoire et idéologie du cinéma algérien sur la guerre,” in *La Guerre d’Algérie à l’écran*, ed. Guy Hennebelle, *CinémaAction* 85 (1997): 144–183. Ahmed Bedjaoui, *Cinéma et guerre de libération. Algérie, des batailles d’images*, Algiers (Algiers: Chihab, 2014).

3. For example, for Algeria, Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina studied in Prague, Mohand Ali-Yahia in East Berlin, and Ahmed Lallel in Łódź. On foreign students at FAMU, Prague, see Tereza Stejskalová, ed., *Filmmakers of the World United! Forgotten Internationalism, Czechoslovak Film and the Third World* (Prague: Tranzit, 2017); Olivier Hadouchi, “Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina and Boubaker Adjali: The Careers of Two Algerian Filmmakers Who Attended FAMU,”

in Stejskalová, *Filmmakers of the World*, 123–136; Léa Morin, “Poland to become a filmmaker: artistic experiments, political struggles, continental and cinema at the school of Łódź in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Cinema3*, <https://cinema3.com/Lodz-Casablanca>.

4. For Rachid Boudjedra, however, these foreign trainings cause a disconnect: “In order to lead filmmakers toward Algerian realities and have them admitted by the popular audience, they need to be trained in Algeria.” Rachid Boudjedra, *Naissance du cinéma algérien* (Paris: Éditions François Maspero, 1971), 62–63.

5. The Ben Aknoun audiovisual center, whose objective was “not only to ensure education through film throughout Algeria, but also and above all to train image and sound technicians,” was directed by René Vautier and Ahmed Rachedi. See René Vautier, *Caméra citoyenne: mémoires* (Rennes: Apogée, 1998), 187; the Actualités Algériennes were directed by Lakhdar Amina; while the Casbah Film Production Company directed by Yacé Saadi co-produced, in particular, Gillo

Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* (1966).

6. *Alger Républicain*, January 25, 1965, Shows section, advertisement for the “Resistance Film Week” at the Algiers Cinémathèque (ex-cinema Le Club), Ramadan timings, including, notably, *Eroica* by Andrzej Munk (Poland), *Stronger Than the Night* by Slatan Dudow (GDR), and *The Carabineers* by Jean-Luc Godard (France).

7. Formula used in the announcement of the results of the admissions of actors, *Alger Républicain*, February 17, 1965.

8. Figures put forward by Ahmed Hocine in his interview with Wassyla Tamzali, in Wassyla Tamzali, *En attendant Omar Gatlato* (Algiers: Éditions ANEP, 1979).

9. Alongside Merzak Allouache, Farouk Beloufa, Mohamed Ifticène, Yazid Khodja, Menouar Merabtène, we can also read the names of other personalities of Algerian cinema such as Sid Ali Mazif, Ali Fettar, Yahia Debboub, Jacques Abdoun, Boubaker Tourqui, and Rabah Laradji. (“Candidates Admitted to the National Cinema Centre,” *Alger Républicain*, August 14, 1964.)

Some names do not appear on this list, but they did follow the courses, such as the editor Rachid Benallal, with whom it will be necessary to speak to go further in writing a history of the INC. 10. A drama class also opened in February 1965 after a competition. See the list of provisionally admitted candidates in *Alger Républicain*, January 27, 1965, and the list of definitively admitted candidates in *Alger Républicain*, February 17, 1965.

11. Telephone interview with Mohamed Ifticène, June 29, 2021.

12. Telephone interview with Yazid Khodja (also known as Lyazid Khodja), June 11, 2021. Born in 1945, Yazid Khodja died on July 11, 2021 in Marseille.

13. Telephone interview with Slim, July 4, 2021.

14. Interview with Merzak Allouache, June 24, 2021.

15. Telephone interview with Yazid Khodja, June 11, 2021.

16. Wassyla Tamzali, *En attendant Omar Gatlato* (Algiers: Éditions ANEP, 1979).